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PRIESTS, PRELATES AND PEOPLE

A History of European Catholicism since 1750

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CHAPTER TWO

Catholicism in Revolution: 1789–1815

IN 1789 France slid into a revolution which could have been avoided, but whose consequences were inescapable. This was a revolution like no other. The issues that it addressed were universal in nature and respected no national boundaries. The revolution was to change for ever the nature of politics and the place of the individual within society. For Catholicism, too, the revolution was a watershed. The link between religion and the state was not broken, but the preconception that the state was sympathetic towards a particular religion was. To be sure, this precedent had been set in the American Constitution of 1787–88, but outside the American context it had not fully registered. As the French Revolution inaugurated a new basis for social organisation, substituting citizens for subjects, it also ruptured the centuries-old belief that membership of the state was dependent upon affiliation to a particular denomination. It was no longer necessary to be a believer in a particular faith, or indeed to have any faith at all, in order to be a member of the new French state. Religious opinions were placed on the same level as any other ideology. Scarcely less significant was the fact that the revolution affected the leading European Catholic state. In no other country were there so many Catholics; in no other country was the Church so well organised and autonomous; in no other country had the Catholic Reformation made such headway; in no other state were there so many monastic houses. Moreover, no other country was so central, both geographically and culturally, to Europe. In short, the reverberations of the revolution in France were bound to be felt well beyond the Alps and the Pyrenees, and they were to echo throughout the modern age. For much of the nineteenth century, and indeed the twentieth, the Church, not just in France, struggled to contend with the changes wrought by the revolutionary and Napoleonic epoch.

The Rupture, 1787–90

Throughout the eighteenth century, the French Church took a not wholly undeserved pride in its fiscal competence. It was thus ironic that it was the profligacy of the state which ultimately set in train a course of events that destroyed the edifice of the old regime, including the Church. From 1786, faced with a debt of over 5 billion *livres*, the government unsuccessfully put

forward a series of reforms. Driven by the impending threat of bankruptcy, Louis XVI finally gambled upon calling a meeting of the Estates General, the principal representative institution of the French kingdom which had been in mothballs since 1614, hoping for a substantial grant of taxation in return for some limited overhaul of the state apparatus. The elections to the Estates General, which were accompanied by the submission of lists of grievances from each of the three orders of society, the *cahiers de doléances*, raised expectations that the forthcoming assembly, which met in May 1789 at the royal palace of Versailles, would deliver a wholesale regeneration of French society and institutions. The crown's failure to satisfy these hopes, and its inept handling of the Estates General, led to a loss of royal control and a disintegration of the old regime monarchy. The financial crisis had become a constitutional one. The popular uprising in Paris on 14 July, fuelled both by economic distress and the fear of royal troops encircling Paris, which led to the fall of the Bastille, forestalled the King's attempt to reassert his absolutism through a military *coup*. These developments allowed the deputies at Versailles to assume power, and to embark upon a legislative programme far more ambitious than anything previously contemplated, aiming at nothing less than complete national regeneration.

There was no inevitability either to the outbreak of the revolution, or to its course. Just as in 1787, when the full extent of the royal debts had been exposed, nobody had foreseen the direction in which events were to move, likewise in 1789 no one could have perceived how matters were to unfold. At each stage, the revolution could conceivably have followed a different course yet, at each juncture, it became ever more radical. It should also be stressed that, at the time, the heterogeneous participants in the revolutionary turmoil were not always aware of the full significance of their actions, which were being driven by three interrelated impulses: their insistence upon the nation as the source of sovereignty; the influence of Enlightenment ideas; and the overwhelming imperative to reorganise state finances, all of which directly impinged upon the Church.

The question which most rapidly came to the fore was that of sovereignty. After the deputies assembled at Versailles in May, they had to decide whether to vote by head or by order; underlying this was the issue of whether they represented the sectional interest of each of the three orders or that of the nation as a whole. The Third Estate insisted upon the latter, and was joined by a number of *curés* from the clerical deputies, frustrated by the myopic vision of the bishops, together with a smattering of nobles, angered by the exclusivity of their peers. The deadlock was finally broken on 27 June when Louis XVI capitulated and ordered the rump of clerical and noble deputies to join with the Third Estate, who ten days previously had significantly adopted the mantle of 'National Assembly', thus implying that they spoke for the sovereign nation. This marked the end of the clergy as a separate order within society, leaving the Church in an exposed position, less able to mobilise its corporate strength to influence affairs.

A further turning point for the Church came with the proclamation of the

Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 26 August 1789. Intended as a statement of first principles to underpin the task of national renewal, and drawing heavily on the writings of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, this document has often been interpreted as *the* defining moment in the secularisation of France and, for arch-conservatives typified by Joseph de Maistre, it was an essentially anti-religious statement. This latter standpoint is misleading. That the deputies were not hostile to religion is evidenced by the invocation of the 'Supreme Being' in the preamble, a term which had regularly been used by devout Catholics throughout the eighteenth century, and by the reference to the rights of man as being 'sacred'. There is no doubt, however, that this revolutionary document fundamentally altered the place of Catholicism in French society and politics.

To begin with, the Declaration effectively ended the traditional relationship between Church and state. In future, the Church was no longer to enjoy separate corporate status with concomitant privileges. Article 3 declared, 'no body nor any individual may exercise any authority which does not derive explicitly from the sovereign nation'.[1] The Church's advantaged position was dealt a further blow by the insistence that Catholicism should be treated as one faith among many. Article 10 stated, 'no one must be troubled on account of his opinions, even his religious beliefs'. The insertion of the word 'even' might suggest to us today a grudging acknowledgement of toleration; instead, as René Rémond suggests, it should be viewed in its proper eighteenth-century context, reflecting a long-held notion that Catholicism did not possess a monopoly of the truth.[2] Effectively, the Roman faith had been placed on a par with other religious beliefs. Membership of civil society was no longer coupled with religious conformity, thus bringing to a close the confessional state. Full toleration of other denominations was, as a result, not long in coming. A pre-revolutionary edict of November 1787 had already given limited concessions to Protestants; full civic rights were conferred in December 1789. Emancipation for France's 40,000 Jews took longer, but in September 1791 they too became fully-fledged citizens. Like Catholics, Jews and Protestants were expected to be Frenchmen first and believers second; none should aspire to comprise a distinct corporation.

The concept of national sovereignty lent the Declaration coherence and posed yet further challenges to Catholicism. Locating sovereignty in the people rather than in the monarch, the deputies were not prepared to brook any restraints upon their legislative competence. All institutions derived authority from the nation and, implicitly, existed to perform such functions as the state required. As Armand-Gaston Camus, a specialist in canon law, pointed out in 1790: 'The Church is part of the state. The state is not part of the Church.'[3] It was but a short step from this position to treating the Church as a department of government, just like any other. The language used by many deputies during the debate on the Declaration, and on religious matters more generally, was revealing. The clergy were referred to as 'public officials', 'officials of morality', 'officials of instruction', who, in the words of Robespierre, were charged 'with responsibilities over public happiness'.[4] Such a perception

accorded well with the Enlightenment approach which had emphasised the social and utilitarian role of ecclesiastics, especially the parish priests, at the expense of their sacerdotal functions.

Not surprisingly, it was the regulars, traditional targets of anti-clerical abuse, who were the first to be affected by this outlook, as well as by the anti-corporatist sentiments of the Assembly. In October 1789, this body voted to prohibit the taking of monastic vows, and in February of the following year existing vows were abolished; monks and nuns were given the choice of leaving their orders, with a state pension, or being regrouped into a smaller number of houses to live out their days. Only those orders involved in charitable and educational work were exempt, although the time would come when they too were subject to discriminatory legislation.

The doctrine of national sovereignty adumbrated in the Declaration also implied a new concept of belonging. The day after the Declaration's proclamation, the Assembly rejected a motion which would have made Catholicism the state religion. When a similar proposal was put forward by the Carthusian Dom Gerle, on 13 April 1790, he was persuaded to drop it before a vote could be taken on the grounds that it would engender hostilities between Catholics and Protestants. Instead, the Assembly agreed upon a motion that the subject of religion was too 'majestic' a matter for legislation, and that its attachment to religion was anyway beyond question. This was a fudge which satisfied nobody. The logic of the Assembly's actions was inescapable. Once the state had uncoupled religious belief and membership of civil society, and accepted the equality and plurality of faiths, there was no way in which Catholicism could be allowed to reassert its primacy. What this meant, of course, was that Catholicism had ceased to be a badge of national identity, at least in France. Increasingly, citizenship was the mark of belonging to a nation. The way was thus opened for the emergence of a modern nationalism which would ask questions of Catholicism's allegiance throughout the nineteenth century: Rome or the state?

The discussion of Dom Gerle's motion had been tumultuous, but this was as nothing compared to the passions aroused by the Assembly's most significant piece of legislation in respect of the Church, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which was voted on 12 July 1790 and reluctantly approved by the King at the end of the following month. This measure was part of the Constituent Assembly's wider package of reforms which impinged upon every aspect of France's institutions and society. As one of the elements of the old regime which had been most criticised for its internal inequalities, wealth and selfish behaviour, there was no question of the Church remaining untouched by reforms which were designed to facilitate efficiency and the general happiness of the people. The deputies wanted a streamlined Church more closely aligned with their own utilitarian views of religion. In this way, they moved yet closer towards making the Church a department of state.

Yet if the desire to bring the Church within the general ambit of reform made legislation inevitable at some point, the overwhelming pressures for change remained financial. On the momentous night of 4 August 1789, the

deputies, impelled both by the rising tide of disorder in the countryside and by a wave of altruistic enthusiasm, had agreed to abolish feudal privileges of all kinds, including the Church tax, the tithe. This deprived the clergy of its major source of income. Moreover, the debts inherited from the monarchy had not gone away, and Necker's gloomy reports did nothing to underplay the seriousness of the situation. Groping for some means to offset the crisis, the deputies fixed envious eyes upon the riches of the Church. Although they exaggerated the extent of these, some erroneously believing that ecclesiastics possessed one-third of the land of France, there was no doubt that the Church was wealthy and that corporate privilege had allowed it to evade its fair share of the fiscal burden under the old regime. Accordingly, in November 1789, the deputies voted to put ecclesiastical property, up to a value of 400 million *livres*, at 'the disposal of the nation'.[5] This vague wording, and the implication that only monastic properties would be affected, was designed to reassure clerics. But as the economic crisis deepened week by week, and as the Assembly issued increasing quantities of paper money, the *assignats*, backed by the clerical lands, the deputies were obliged to go further and ordered a wholesale confiscation of Church property which was to be sold off. In coming to this decision, the deputies were no doubt alive to the loyalty to the revolution which would be engendered by creating a constituency composed of buyers of ecclesiastical property. Deprived of tithes and landed wealth, the clergy would henceforth be economically dependent upon the state, and this inevitably necessitated some reorganisation of the Church to make it as 'cost-effective' as possible.

An Ecclesiastical Committee was established to produce proposals. When a first, and moderate, draft was produced, this was foolishly blocked by the two bishops on the committee, leading an increasingly frustrated Assembly to pack the body with more radical deputies. The document produced in May 1790 went much further than anyone had initially envisaged. The episcopate was reduced from 136 to 83, with one bishop per department. Parish boundaries were to be rationalised. The anomaly of the Avignon enclave was effectively ended by the stipulation that no foreign ecclesiastic should have jurisdiction over the French clergy. All ecclesiastical offices, except those with cure of souls, were abolished, thus paring down the clergy to bishops, parish priests and curates. Clerical salaries were to be paid by the state, and were readjusted significantly downwards in the case of the prelates. Most controversially, the clergy would in future be elected to their positions by the same colleges of laymen – including non-Catholics – who voted upon all government officials; and bishops would merely notify the Pope of their election rather than seek canonical institution from His Holiness.

The proposals in the Civil Constitution were a pot-pourri of Gallican, Jansenist, Enlightenment and revolutionary precepts. The Gallicanism was reflected in the autonomy given to bishops in relation to Rome and priests in relation to bishops, and in state responsibility for ecclesiastical affairs. The Jansenism was to be perceived in the desire to strip the Church of the accretions of centuries and to return it to its apostolic purity. The Enlighten-

ment shone through in the desire for rationality and order in the Church's structures, and the wish to make religion fulfil a social function. The revolutionary ideology was contained in the application of the principle of national sovereignty which necessarily entailed the election of clerics. To be sure, Jansenists had advocated elections in the past, but the franchise would have been restricted to fellow ecclesiastics.

Despite the uncongeniality of much of the document to many of the clergy, there was a willingness, even on the part of the episcopacy, to co-operate. The Archbishop of Aix, Mgr Boisgelin, spoke for most when he lucidly explained that the Church understood the need for reform, but it could not accept the competence of the Assembly to legislate on its own. Although he made no reference to the specifics of the proposed Civil Constitution, it is clear he had in mind the redrawing of ecclesiastical boundaries and the election of clerics as areas touching upon the Church's spiritual, rather than its purely temporal, affairs. For the former in particular to be altered, the Church must be consulted. He therefore proposed the summoning of either regional or national councils which would allow the Church to confer its blessing. Significantly, he made little reference to an appeal to the Pope, a reflection of the enduring Gallican outlook of the French clergy. He was whistling in the wind. For the Assembly to have consented to such councils would have been an acknowledgement of the Church's corporate status and an affront to the sovereignty of the nation.

Once this course of action had been rejected, the bishops (with the exception of Talleyrand, the Bishop of Autun, and Gobel, the future Archbishop of Paris), together with most of the clergy, withdrew from debates in the Assembly. The deputies tacitly left it to Cardinal de Bernis, the French ambassador to Rome, to secure papal approval, refusing to approach Pius VI openly. While deploring the Civil Constitution, the Pope was unwilling to condemn it publicly, fearing a schism of the French Church, and therefore temporised by referring the matter to a committee of cardinals which deliberated for eight months. But if Rome hoped that the Assembly, in the interim, would water down the proposals, it was to be sorely disappointed. The Civil Constitution was voted through on 12 July 1790 and sanctioned by a reluctant Louis on 24 August; it was an action he regretted until the end of his days. Unwilling to brook any further delay, which was holding up the sale of ecclesiastical lands, believing that most clerics would in any case accept the new Church order, and unaware that Pius VI was implacably opposed to the proposed changes, the deputies decided to force the issue and, on 27 November, decreed that all ecclesiastics should swear an oath accepting the Civil Constitution or lose their positions.

This was to be the first serious breach between the revolution and the Church. Although by the end of 1790 the clergy had been driven to a position of intransigence, up to this point there had at least been an attempt to maintain a consensus. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that the rupture between Catholicism and the revolution may be seen as inevitable. At issue was a clash between two different perceptions of the nature and relationship of Church

and state. The deputies from the Third Estate, and many of the nobility, were not anti-religious, but they were unsympathetic to the revealed religion of the Catholic Church and came to articulate a deistic approach which emphasised man's capacity for self-improvement. They fully accepted the need for a cult of some kind as a means of maintaining the social order and providing a moral code for those too ignorant to develop one of their own. Jacques Dinochau, the deputy-cum-journalist, was unusually frank when he stated: 'Religion is the first foundation of the social order; it is the cornerstone of the edifice … It would be most unfortunate if the common people did not believe in God; if one's valets, one's business agents, one's tradesmen, and one's workers did not believe in God.'[6] Nevertheless, the deputies resented the autonomy of the Church, and the developing ideology of national sovereignty merely increased their determination to limit ecclesiastical independence. Against this perception was a view elaborated by most, though by no means all, of the clergy, which emphasised the hierarchical nature of religion, the corporatist structure of the Church and its independence in matters of faith. Ecclesiastics generally were just as willing to be good citizens under the revolution as they had been good subjects under the King. What they were not prepared to accept was state encroachment on the spiritual capacity of the Church.

Catholicism and Counter-revolution

While there were a handful of people, most famously the King's brothers, the Counts of Artois and Provence, who refused to countenance any form of change from the outset, a majority of men and women appear to have welcomed the revolutionary events of 1789 with some degree of enthusiasm. As changes occurred, and the reforms of the Constituent Assembly were nothing if not extensive, hostility to the revolution began to manifest itself. Peasants were disappointed at the failure to abolish seigneurialism in its entirety, and disliked the intrusiveness of new bureaucratic systems. Municipalities, and a handful of large cities, griped at the administrative reorganisation which privileged some at the expense of others. Old regime office-holders balked at the loss of jobs and income, and it was the lesser nobility, whose titles alone distinguished them from the Third Estate, who were most concerned at the disappearance of aristocratic status. In the big cities there was increasing disquiet over the revolutionary government's failure to make available adequate and cheap supplies of bread, a counterpart to which was the resentment of parts of rural France which regarded the revolution as an urban phenomenon. All this added to a growing town–country divide; yet if there was increasing hostility and some lawlessness there was no counter-revolution. Discontent was inchoate, not least of all because Louis, although detesting so much of what was happening, refused to present himself as a figurehead around whom opposition could coalesce. Into this *mélange* of dissatisfaction entered those clergy who were aggrieved at the prospect of swearing an oath which was, in their eyes, tantamount to a surrender of ecclesiastical authority. Religion

was about to make counter-revolution respectable and provide it with a conscience.

The King sanctioned the decree imposing the oath on the clergy on 26 December 1790, and the oath-taking ceremonies, conducted in front of municipal authorities, began the following month. Timothy Tackett's magisterial study has illuminated the patterns that emerged.[7] Overall, 60 per cent of the *curés*, 51 per cent of the *vicaires* and 7 of the 136 old-regime bishops took the oath, but these statistics mask considerable regional variations. For instance, 96 per cent of the clergy in the department of the Var became jurors whereas less than 10 per cent followed suit in the Bas-Rhin. Variables such as age, income, seminary training and social origins have some part to play in explaining the patterns of acceptance and rejection of the oath. Above all, Tackett argues, the clerical response is best understood by reference to the two models of priesthood in existence before 1789. On the one hand, there was the Tridentine clergy, obedient, hierarchical and highly trained, who saw themselves as masters of the laity and who stressed the importance of the Church as an autonomous institution. Such men tended to reject the pledge. On the other was the model of the 'citizen-priest' who regarded himself as part of the people and privileged his social role as promoter of public welfare and happiness. Clerics of this type opted for compliance. Additionally, there is a significant correlation between the map of oath-taking and that of religious practice under the old regime, with the non-jurors predominating in those regions of relative piety, and the jurors being located in areas of relative dechristianisation. Thus oath-taking was concentrated in the Paris basin, the Dauphin, Provence and the sizeable range of central departments, whereas refractory priests were most commonly found in Brittany, Normandy, Languedoc and Gascony. And it may be noted that there is a significant correlation between patterns of oath-taking and patterns of religious practice in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It seems likely that, in reaching a decision, the clergy were not swayed by lay attitudes; however, the Tridentine non-jurors were supported by their parishioners because they were generally found in districts that had accepted a clericalised model of religion in which ecclesiastics were recognised as separate and dominant. Conversely, in those localities where citizen-priests were found, religion was regarded by both laity and clergy as a matter of general concern over which the state enjoyed authority.

While the Civil Constitution had succeeded in establishing a body of clerics who were financially dependent on the state and supposedly supportive of the revolution, it also created a wide range of powerful enemies who would foment the forces of counter-revolution. On 13 April 1791, Pius VI issued the encyclical *Charitas quae* condemning the Civil Constitution as heretical, schismatic and subversive. Once thought to have produced a rash of clerical retractions, this papal intervention probably swayed few. Without waiting for Rome, a number of refractories had already denounced the revolutionary document and began a campaign to undermine the oath-takers. A series of unseemly incidents occurred as non-jurors ostentatiously held services at the

same time as the constitutional priests, refused to hand over the keys to the presbytery, hid the chalices, condemned the sale of Church property and proclaimed that the sacerdotal offices of a constitutional were null and void. Most of the *ancien régime* bishops joined the burgeoning number of nobles who had taken refuge abroad, whence they bombarded their flocks with pastoral homilies against the revolution. In parts of France, the laity rallied to the refractories, the catalyst for disorder frequently being the attempt to oust the local non-juror and to replace him with a constitutional, the 'intruder' as he was typically and significantly referred to. Even at this stage, women were conspicuous in their attempts to defend the old religion. In the eyes of such laity, these oath-takers were unworthy to hold office, a view repeated in traditional historiography which has all too frequently portrayed them as renegade monks, opportunists and clerical herbivores; in truth, the constitutionals were often well motivated, spiritually able and high-minded, the best-known example being the abbé Grégoire.

Taken overall, the business of oath-taking had been a defining moment. More than anything else, it ended the revolutionary consensus which had been present in 1789. It is sometimes interpreted as offering the 'ordinary' people of France a chance to express an opinion on the changes introduced thus far. By choosing whether to accept a juror or to support a refractory priest, people could manifest their feelings about revolutionary reforms more generally. Though this may have been the case, the oath is best seen as a seminal event in its own right which served to shape longer-term attitudes towards the revolution. Parishioners were genuinely concerned with the retention or loss of their priest, and these concerns dictated the attitude they displayed towards the issue of the oath.

It was no less a watershed for the clergy. The oath had created a body of refractories whose loyalty to the revolution was, by definition, suspect. Additionally, it had prompted a substantial number of clerics, including most of the old regime bishops, to join the emigration, and to campaign against the revolution from abroad. They were nearly joined by the King who, on 21 June 1791, attempted to flee France, only to be halted at Varennes and returned to Paris in disgrace. All along Louis had been deeply disquieted by the religious policies of the Assembly and had done his best to thwart measures against the refractories. In the declaration he left behind when quitting the capital, among complaints about the trimming of the civil list and the upkeep of the royal stables, were more substantive grievances about the Civil Constitution. The incident at Easter, when the King was prevented from taking mass from a non-juror at Saint Cloud, probably precipitated the decision to flee. The cause of the King and that of religion were thus conflated.

In the event, after the flight to Varennes the crown had little choice but to agree to a new political constitution, which provided for a limited monarchy and the election of a new chamber, the Legislative Assembly, which supposedly would become the platform on which the revolution could be consolidated. This was an entirely fresh body since a self-denying ordinance prevented the deputies from the Constituent Assembly standing for election. The candidates

who put themselves forward tended to be local administrators from the new revolutionary bureaucracy, men who had often seen at first hand the obstructionism of the refractories. Few clerics stood in the campaign to assuage this underlying antipathy towards non-jurors. Unsurprisingly, the Legislative Assembly pursued increasingly draconian religious policies. Refractories were deprived of their pensions, were forbidden from wearing clerical dress, were declared to be 'suspect', and became targets for both official and unofficial hostility. The onset of war served only to consolidate the refractories as hate figures.

War and Dechristianisation

On 20 April 1792 France declared war on Austria, a decision which was the product of domestic politics: those on the left saw it as a means of flushing out and cleansing France of the revolution's enemies; those on the right regarded it as an opportunity to reassert royal control through foreign assistance. Subsequently extended to include the rest of Europe, the conflict endured until 1815, driven initially by revolutionary zeal and latterly by Napoleon's insatiable appetite for conquest.

The war revolutionised the revolution. In 1792–93, the French suffered a series of reverses along their northern frontier, coupled with the treason of their leading general, Dumouriez. Internal counter-revolution, centred upon the Vendée, was reignited. Additionally, a complex admixture of local rivalries, hatred of Paris, and social dissatisfaction produced so-called Federalist revolts in key urban centres. The very survival of the revolution was at stake. In response, the Convention, which succeeded the Legislative Assembly as the governing body of France in September 1792, moved towards the establishment of a republic, executing the King in January 1793, and introduced the form of government known as the Terror, a process facilitated by the predominance of militant politicians who had cut their teeth in the 'rough-and-tumbril' of previous assemblies and local administration. Political life in the new Assembly was dominated by factional infighting, virtually incomprehensible to the outsider, which resulted in the triumph of a hard-left grouping known as the Montagnards.

The blame for the setbacks, both at home and abroad, was attributed to counter-revolutionary conspirators: nobles, hoarders, paid agents of the British and, above all, the refractories. In September 1792, prompted by fears that Paris was about to be overrun by foreign troops, mobs invaded the prisons of the capital, killing some 1,400 people, including 300 clergymen and three bishops. The previous month, on the 26th, a decree had ordered the deportation of refractory clergy; and after July 1793 any non-juror who had disobeyed the injunction faced either the death penalty or deportation to Guyana, the so-called 'dry guillotine'. By the autumn of 1793, over 30,000 clerics had fled the country and those who remained on metropolitan soil led a hunted and fugitive existence. In the words of Albitte, a *représentant en mission*, they were 'sacerdotal vermin' to be ruthlessly exterminated.[8] It is estimated that some 16,000 people

perished in the Terror, of whom nearly 1,000 were clergy, though these figures take no account of the numbers who died in prison, or were executed without trial, or were killed in the military campaigns in the Vendée and elsewhere.

As a corollary to this assault on the non-jurors, there was an attack on the Constitutional Church and Catholicism in general. This offensive is commonly referred to as the dechristianising campaign, though this term imputes a specious homogeneity to an episode which lacked central direction and which was characterised by enormous regional texturing both in its incidence and in its effects. It is best understood as a series of local campaigns originating in the provinces. The instigators and overseers were the *représentants en mission*, delegates sent out by the Convention. The best-known included Joseph Fouché in the Nièvre, Claude Javogues in the Loire, André Dumont at Abbeville and Rochefort and Châteauneuf-Randon in the Massif Central. There were other, albeit lesser-known, dechristianisers among the 150 or so representatives, such as Bô in the Lot, Bassal in Franche-Comté and his successor Lejeune, who invented the portable and collapsible *guillotine de table*. Local militants, drawn from the political clubs, were the shock troops of these campaigns, occasionally assisted by the so-called revolutionary armies comprising working-class townsmen.

Dechristianisation involved a number of elements, although its particular characteristics in any given area were determined above all by the proclivities of the representative. Crudely speaking, we may distinguish between two aspects in the campaigns, although it should be stressed that the dividing line was often very blurred. First, there were those 'negative' activities which aimed at nothing less than the destruction of the fabric, personnel and faith of Catholicism. Bells, crosses and statues were removed from churches, which were then shut down. Revolutionary 'trees of liberty' replaced wayside shrines and crosses. All forms of public worship were prohibited. Street and village signs were altered to remove any religious connotation, babies were given sound revolutionary or classical names such as Lycurgus or Brutus, and adults underwent debaptism ceremonies. The Constitutional Church itself, a creation of the revolution, was now destroyed. Its clergy were obliged to abdicate their priestly functions, sometimes undergoing humiliating public renunciations of their office. Occasionally they were obliged to marry; it was surely a back-handed compliment to the success of the Counter-Reformation Church, in making celibacy a defining characteristic of the clergy, that marriage was taken as the ultimate proof of their rejection of clerical status.

The second, and purportedly positive, aspect of dechristianisation involved the provision of ideological substitutes for Catholicism. On 5 October 1793 the Convention adopted the republican calendar in place of the Gregorian one: the birth of the Republic on 22 September 1792, not that of Christ, was designated year I; the *décadi* replaced Sunday as the day of rest; henceforth, revolutionary festivals, not saints' days, both marked the passage of time and provided public holidays. Months in the new calendar were named after the climate or the agricultural cycle (thus Thermidor was the hot month and Vendémiaire the wine harvest) and the days were named after fruits, flowers

and animals. The historian Richard Cobb delighted in pointing out that Hébert and his cronies were guillotined on the day of tulips. The theme of Nature also occupied a prominent place in the twin revolutionary cults of Reason and of the Supreme Being. The ceremonies marking the cult of Reason were remarkably eclectic: they comprised the celebration of revolutionary martyrs such as Marat; the 'deification' of Liberty, Truth, Equality, Victory and Nature; and the propagation of every kind of materialist, deist and atheist philosophy. For the first time in the eighteenth century, atheism acquired some measure of respectability: at Nevers, Fouché had the entrance to the cemetery inscribed with the bleak phrase, 'Death is an Eternal Sleep'. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the revolutionaries, for the most part, were deists; and a number of celebrations of Reason had included reference to the Supreme Being well before 7 May 1794 when Robespierre sponsored the decree establishing this cult. The edict set out its creed and litany. These comprised a belief in a deity who punished vice and rewarded virtue and a regular cycle of festivals to be held on the *décadi*. The cult was inaugurated at Paris on 8 June at a great festival choreographed by Jacques-Louis David. Robespierre, the cult's architect and master of ceremonies for the day, carried sheaths of wheat and flowers and processed through ranks of young girls in white-lawn dresses before setting light to a *papier-maché* effigy of atheism from which emerged a rather blackened statue of Wisdom.

How may the origins and functions of decristianisation be explained? As we have already noted, the war was fundamental to its genesis. This had been initiated with the intention of exposing traitors. As the military situation went from bad to worse, counter-revolutionaries were discovered everywhere, more often than not among the ranks of the non-jurors. It is not difficult to see why these non-jurors should have fallen under suspicion. Their loyalty had been suspect from the moment they rejected the oath to the Civil Constitution; their links with the *émigrés* and the inflammatory actions and speeches of some of their number had clearly established them as traitors. There was also a general feeling that the enemies of the state should pay for its defence, which helps to explain the early attacks on church properties. As the representative Bassal commented: 'It is time to assure the Republic that indemnity which it has the right to claim from those who have dealt it the most grievous blows.'[9] Stripping churches of anything which could be channelled into the war effort and turning them into warehouses provided a first blooding for many militants, and once this threshold had been crossed it was easy to move on to a more systematic iconoclasm.

It was, however, the constitutional clergy who were the pre-eminent victims of the rising tide of paranoia. Once again, the internal uprisings and military setbacks were calamitous for them. The Constitutional Church had been established as a revolutionary instrument, designed to inculcate loyalty to the new regime, to propagate its values and to wean the peasants away from their attachment to counter-revolution. This the constitutional clergy had signally failed to do. Moreover, the constitutional clergy were tainted by their association with the political faction known as the Girondins who had been

toppled during the internecine fighting in the Convention by the all-conquering Montagnards. They had failed the regime and were now regarded as a fifth column. What the state had created, it would now destroy by removing all support for the Church and forcing its clergy to abdicate. The peremptory treatment of both refractory and constitutional clergy set a precedent which would be imitated by anti-clerical governments throughout Europe in the nineteenth century; it created visceral folk memories among the peasantry; and it left an enduring legacy of mistrust between Catholics and anti-clericals.

From an attack on the priest, it was a short step to an attack upon the faith itself. Increasingly, Catholicism had come to be regarded as the ideology of fanatics who fought indiscriminately for the return of throne and altar. It was a tool used by reactionary elements to dupe the peasantry, an alien and corrosive creed which stood in opposition to the true interests of the French nation. Catholicism therefore had to be destroyed if the revolution was to survive. Yet the revolutionaries feared that if there was no substitute for a discredited Catholicism, the people would drift into idleness, disorder or worse. Like the *philosophes*, the leaders of the revolution regarded some form of cult as essential to social stability. Moreover, as Marie de la Révellière-Lépaux opined, when a false cult was overthrown, it was necessary to replace it so that, phoenix-like, it could not rise from its own ashes. Hence the need for the establishment of the revolutionary cults of Reason and the Supreme Being. As well as serving as substitutes for Catholicism, the cults were also intended to educate and transform men so that they understood the nature of the revolutionary changes and were morally worthy of the new institutions which had been created for their benefit. Although nineteenth-century Catholic historiography all too often portrayed the dechristianising episode as 'the product of the deepest villainy' (the abbé Barruel), even 'Satan at work in humanity' (Père Félix),[10] in truth the revolutionaries were, for the most part, deeply virtuous men concerned to create a new moral order. As Robespierre, the architect of the cult of the Supreme Being, remarked: 'It is not an empty word that makes a republic, it is the character of its citizens.'[11] Thuriot, the experienced *représentant en mission*, echoed this thought: 'All religions are but conventions. Legislators make them to suit the people they govern. It is the moral order of the republic, of the revolution, that we must now preach, that will make us a people of brothers, a people of *philosophes*.'[12]

In addition to educating and regenerating the citizenry morally, the cults had a further function. The declaration of a Republic on 22 September 1792, the execution of the King the following January, and the dechristianisation campaign marked a final and total rejection of both monarchical and ecclesiastical authority, the twin underpinnings of the *ancien régime*. Yet the revolutionaries were both elated about what they had achieved and anxious about the future. While they aggressively asserted the values of the new regime, they also searched for new sources of authority to legitimate and guarantee the durability of the revolution's achievements. Accordingly, in their festivals, speeches, propaganda and art, the revolutionaries drew upon symbols which carried an implication of the eternal, of permanence, of solidity, of un-

changeability. Many of these were drawn from antiquity. The revolutionary cults also made use of Nature. Here was an immutable force, constantly regenerative, a source of new beginnings, and something which was ordered, since it was governed by the laws of the universe. Reason was additionally deployed; ever since the Enlightenment it had been posited as a more reliable guide to truth than faith. And, finally, the Cult of the Supreme Being brought back the truly transcendental as the foundation for the moral truths which so exercised the revolutionaries. If in 1789 they had attempted to nationalise the Church in the service of the revolution, in 1794 the revolutionaries attempted the same thing with God.

Measuring the impact of dechristianisation is no easy matter, not least of all because it was regionally varied. Towns suffered more than the countryside, because the agents of dechristianisation, the members of the clubs and the committees of surveillance, were urban-based. The presence of a 'revolutionary army', or the lack of it, also affected the operation of the campaign. Above all, the attitude of the local representative was paramount in determining the intensity and the character of the local campaign. He alone had the authority to set dechristianisation in motion; he alone could alter the power structures within a department so as to bring to prominence local priest-haters; he alone determined the nature of the campaign, often importing into a department ideas and techniques used elsewhere. The most fervent dechristianisers – Joseph Fouché, André Dumont and Collot d'Herbois – linked their religious policy to a wider programme of social egalitarianism. This involved comforting the afflicted by afflicting the comfortable by, for example, redistributing the property of the well-to-do among the poor. Conversely, those territories least affected were overseen by more moderate representatives for whom dechristianisation was not a priority. Thus, the Var and the neighbouring Alpes-Maritimes in the south-east corner of France were placed under the tutelage of Salicetti, Moltedo and Augustin Robespierre, Maximilien's younger brother. Here, dechristianisation was limited to the appropriation of church plate and the removal of religious symbols from public view.

Many facets of dechristianisation were superficial in impact. The revolutionary cults failed to grasp the public imagination and did not survive the execution of Robespierre in July 1794. Not only were they resisted in acts of protest against an unpopular regime, they fulfilled none of the essential thaumaturgic and therapeutic functions of popular Catholicism. Cold and abstract, they brought no magic to assuage the pains and perils of everyday life, no consolation to provide solace in the hour of death. The revolutionary calendar continued to enjoy official observance until 1806, but was widely ignored by the popular classes despite attempts to fine those who worked on the *décadi* and who continued to treat Sunday as a day of rest. Good republican names, such as Fraternity, Endive and Brother Coriander, were adopted by only a few; the case of Beauvais, where more than half the children born in the Year II were given revolutionary names, was wholly atypical.

The most dramatic impact of dechristianisation was on the Constitutional Church. Threatened with death, imprisonment and the loss of income, around

20,000 constitutional priests abdicated and tendered their letters of ordination. An unknown number simply ceased their religious offices, and between 6,000 and 9,000 married. Additionally, all but a handful of France's 40,000 or so churches were closed by Easter 1794, and many were sold off, demolished or put to use as warehouses or factories. The disappearance of large numbers of priests and the ending of regular public worship necessarily disrupted the practice of Catholicism. A generation of children thus came of age without having any form of clerical instruction. Many who lost the habit of routine religious observance during the revolution never regained it, and also lost something of their respect for the office of priest. During the eighteenth century, political infighting within the Church had largely been confined to the upper echelons, whereas the *curé* himself stood outside this wrangling. In the 1790s he could not avoid it, and the clergy revealed itself to be hopelessly divided and just as sectarian as the politicians. This devaluation of the priesthood was to have a lasting impact upon public perceptions. Here was but one reason why the Church could never hope to re-establish the institutional power it had enjoyed under the *ancien régime*.

Catholicism was not fatally wounded by dechristianisation, yet its practice was qualitatively altered. In the short term, there was a 'privatisation' of religion. Religious observance and instruction could no longer be paraded in the public sphere, but were instead restricted to the home. In the longer term, the elimination of the priesthood made room for much greater lay activity in religious matters, a phenomenon that was especially marked in the aftermath of dechristianisation when the laity took it upon themselves to reopen churches and to hold services, and even to conduct masses at which laymen officiated. This was something with which the Church would have to come to terms, just as it had to accept the reappearance and proliferation of popular forms of practice which, in the early part of the eighteenth century, it had tried to suppress or control. Festivals, the ringing of church bells to ward off bad weather and the cult of saints re-emerged with a fervour. As the republican newspaper *L'Observateur* commented in 1800: 'The follies of the carnival have reappeared with the mass. They have perhaps never started so early nor been so noisy … How is it possible to reconcile this attachment of some people to pagan institutions with their apparent zeal for a religion which has always outlawed them.'[13]

The final and unexpected impact of dechristianisation was to emphasise the gender dimorphism of religion which had been dimly apparent in the eighteenth century, and which was to become even more marked in the nineteenth. As we have seen, before 1789 women were more likely than men to make bequests to religious institutions; they were more regular attenders at mass; and the women's orders and congregations displayed an impressive vitality which contrasted markedly with that of their male counterparts. It will be further recalled that these developments owed much to what may be termed 'alternative sociability'; Catholicism provided women with opportunities for social discourse and with outlets for their energies and talents that were otherwise denied them in a patriarchal society. The revolution exacerbated

this trend, offering opportunities for men in the army and the political process, for example, but shutting women out. Religion was one domain they could make their own. Women were, quite literally, at the forefront of the resistance to the introduction of the *intru*; they defended calvaries, shrines and churches against the attacks of the dechristianisers; they took the lead in the aftermath of dechristianisation in re-establishing and reopening churches; and, in the enforced absence of the priest, they usurped the role of religious instruction. In a ceremony at Le Puy the drink-sodden representative Albitte tried to force the local *béates*, the term applied to particularly pious lay women, to swear a civic oath. In an act of collective defiance, they lifted their skirts and bared their backsides to express their contempt. In this defiance of revolutionary authority, women drew upon the role they had traditionally adopted during the *ancien régime* when they had frequently been at the forefront of bread riots, capitalising upon the fact that revolutionary officials, like their pre-1789 counterparts, adopted a lenient attitude to their displays of public disorder, which were blamed upon the hysterical and illogical qualities of the feminine mind. 'We are only women,' cried the females of Toucy in 1795 as they broke open the church doors, 'they don't do anything to women.'[14] In the nineteenth century, this gender stereotyping would became further entrenched. In the minds of the anti-clericals and republicans, both in France and elsewhere, the supposed intellectual and emotional frailties of women would always make them susceptible to clerical influence and a belief in superstition.

Such developments could not have been foreseen in 1789 when all the deputies had attempted to do was to remove the most obvious abuses from the Church and to bind it together with the state in a manner not that dissimilar from the old regime. As the revolution gathered momentum, and particularly as it became radicalised under the influence of the war, religion became the most divisive of issues. Far from underpinning the new regime, it provided a rallying point for the revolution's enemies. In the eyes of many Catholics, the revolution was above all an attack upon them and their beliefs. These sentiments would not disappear. As one woman who attended a mass held at Paris in August 1989 to atone for the crimes of two hundred years earlier, put it: 'We … have explained (to our children) what their teachers never tell them: that the revolution was directed above all against Catholics.'[15] In the 1790s, this was a sentiment espoused by co-religionaries outside France's frontiers. It is to the impact of the revolution abroad that we must now turn.

The Revolution Abroad

Until 1793, the rest of Europe watched events in France with a mixture of glee and horror: glee that the most powerful military state in western Europe was reduced to a cypher, allowing the other great powers a latitude in their foreign policy which permitted the assault on Austria's Belgian domain (hereafter referred to simply as Belgium) and the partition of Poland; horror at the atrocities perpetrated in the name of the revolution and the overthrow of the

monarchical principles of government. Up to this point, the only direct contact between the rest of Europe and France was in providing homes for the exiled clergy. Of 30–40,000 non-jurors who fled abroad, some 5,000 went to Rome, 6–8,000 to Spain, and perhaps 10,000 to Protestant Britain, an influx that was to have significant effects on the standing of the Catholic minority there, as we shall see. It was as the tide of war began to turn, and the French armies enjoyed successes in the field, that Europe experienced, at first hand, the impact of the revolutionary reforms. By 1799, certain of the French conquests had been incorporated into the French state as departments: Savoy and Nice (1796); Belgium (1795); Geneva and Mulhouse in Alsace (1798); and parts of the left bank of the Rhine. The remainder of the Rhineland was captured but never formally integrated into the French nation. Additionally, several satellite republics were established: the Batavian Republic (1795–1801), formerly the United Provinces; the Cisalpine Republic (1797–99 and 1800–02), previously Lombardy, the Duchy of Modena and eventually sections of the dismembered Venetian Republic; the Helvetian Republic (1798–1803), hitherto the Swiss Confederacy; the Ligurian Republic (1797–1805), previously Genoa; the short-lived Parthenopean or Neapolitan Republic (1799), created out of the Kingdom of Naples; and the Roman Republic (1798–99), centred upon the Holy City.

It might be thought that the French revolutionary armies would have imposed wholesale the anti-religious policies applied in the homeland. Yet this was far from the case. In practice, the picture was far more chequered and depended on several variables: the proximity to France; the attitude of the indigenous population; the fervour of the local army commander; the existing religious balance; and the previous geopolitical arrangements. Broadly speaking, Belgium and the Rhineland witnessed violent anti-Catholic policies whereas elsewhere change was more moderate and accommodating.

Initially, Belgium was leniently treated, the occupiers not wishing to stir up resentment among an Ultramontane population which, when confronted with the reforms of Joseph II, had already shown a proclivity for militant behaviour. Matters changed in the summer of 1794, when there was a brief period of dechristianisation, coinciding with events in France. The following year, Jews and Protestants received full equality and Church and state were separated. It was not, though, until 1797 that the French vigorously pursued an anti-Catholic campaign, largely because of supposed clerical involvement in a peasant uprising in the Ardennes provoked by the imposition of conscription in the area. The government response was to order the immediate deportation of over 7,000 priests who refused to swear an oath of hatred against royalty, one of two anti-royal declarations imposed on the French clergy in 1795 and 1797. Religious orders, seminaries and the Catholic University of Louvain were closed, and the wearing of clerical garb prohibited. Up to 1,000 priests were arrested; many of the remainder went underground, protected by a sympathetic population. Although they continued to conduct a clandestine ministry, and although a substantial body of clerics remained in Belgium, the experience of the three years between 1797 and 1800 was sufficiently disruptive of clerically-led religious life as to encourage the emergence of individualistic

forms of lay piety, just as had happened in France. Lay persons buried the dead, baptised children, led prayers and so-called white or blind masses were held, at which a layman rather than a priest officiated.

In the Rhineland, religious policy likewise fluctuated. To begin with, the Catholic clergy were harshly treated because of their refusal to countenance union with France, but the arrival in 1797 of General Hoche, who had seen at first hand in the Vendée the effects of anti-religious legislation upon a fervent population, marked the advent of a period of moderation. Although police measures remained in place, the exercise of religion was permitted within churches, clerics continued to be salaried by the state, monasteries were allowed to stay open and the structures of the Church were more or less firm, despite the earlier abolition of ecclesiastical principalities. The General's death shortly after taking charge and the opposition to French rule from a number of ecclesiastical *émigrés*, who based themselves on the right bank of the Rhine, inaugurated a return to more draconian measures, and numerous priests and monks were driven underground.

Unlike in Belgium and the Rhineland, across the border in the Batavian Republic, formerly the United Provinces, Catholics were in the minority and had suffered discrimination at the hand of the ruling Protestant elites. Small wonder that many of them, including the clergy, rallied to the Patriot Party which overthrew the existing regime with French assistance in 1795. Their reward came immediately. The constitution of the new republic provided Catholics with full civic and religious rights and freedoms, and the overwhelming majority of the clergy happily swore the oath of eternal hatred of the old regime which was demanded of them. Catholicism flourished under the new order. Three seminaries and dozens of new churches were opened; and there was, ironically, no shortage of priests thanks to all those clerics who had sought refuge in Holland in order to avoid persecution in Belgium and the Rhineland. This new-found confidence in the direction of their own affairs led many Catholics to question whether they were not better off free from the authority of Rome, an issue which for the time being remained unresolved thanks largely to the fact that the papacy was preoccupied with fending off French aggression in Italy.

The situation in Switzerland was not altogether dissimilar in that Catholics were a minority of the population. Under the *ancien régime* they had formed the majority in only seven of the cantons, where they dominated both the religious and political life. The formation of the Helvetian Republic in 1798 provided the Swiss with a single central government, though the cantons were retained. While those Catholics who lived in Protestant cantons benefited from the introduction of religious freedom, in areas where they had previously held sway their influence was dramatically reduced. This, together with the introduction of legislation abolishing tithes and canon law and nationalising some monastic lands, created a degree of discontent which led to armed rebellion, albeit on a small scale. The potentially divisive issue of religion had been contained under the *ancien régime*, but it had now come to the fore. Four draft constitutions failed before 1803, and Napoleon would get no closer to

resolving the problem, even though he reverted to a looser federal structure. As we shall see, a compromise was reached in 1815, in part by restoring the *status quo ante* of 1798, but religion remained a combustible element, sparking to life in the 1840s when the seven Catholic cantons formed the Sonderbund to defend their religious identity.

Within Italy, French religious policy was moderate on the whole. This resulted from the pragmatism of the young general Napoleon Bonaparte, whose brilliance as a strategist was equalled by his sensitivities as a politician. He was aware that, on the one hand, the French invaders had been welcomed by many, including priests and officials, who were glad to see an end to Austrian and papal interference. On the other, he was conscious of the depth of popular religious feeling and was keen not to antagonise this, particularly since Italy was a milch cow expected to contribute substantially to the funding of the war. So it was that in the Cispadane Republic (made up of the Duchy of Modena and the former papal provinces of Romagna and Emilia), Bonaparte initially consented to Catholicism becoming the established religion, even though this flew in the face of French revolutionary principles, because he was eager to mobilise popular support. This provision was subsequently overturned when the territory was absorbed into the Cisalpine Republic, where Jacobin administrators were keen to prosecute a range of anti-clerical measures including the abolition of the regulars and compulsory civil marriages, though they failed in their attempts to nationalise all Church lands. The separation of Church and state, which was characteristic of the Cisalpine Republic, was repeated in the Neapolitan Republic. Of all these complex arrangements, it was the constitution of the Ligurian Republic, formerly Genoa, which was most indulgent towards Catholicism. For a minority of Catholics – a rainbow coalition of Jansenists, reformers, crypto-Jacobins and others known as Catholic Democrats – French rule had briefly suggested the possibility of a renewed and revitalised faith, independent of Rome, with the Church stripped of the accretions of the past. But their hopes were dashed, partly by their failure to secure popular support, and finally by Bonaparte's political settlement with the papacy after 1801.

The impact of the French revolutionary changes upon Rome and the papacy will be discussed later, but some mention must be made here of Britain and Ireland, regions which never witnessed the invasion of French troops, but which were nevertheless affected by the turmoil on the Continent. Within England, changes were already afoot before 1789, particularly with respect to the social contours of Catholicism which had begun to alter quite markedly in the last decades of the eighteenth century and which would continue to do so down to the mid-nineteenth century. Despite the collapse of the Jesuits, the enthusiastic missionary activities of the 400 or so priests operating in England produced a burgeoning number of converts, many of whom were found in areas traditionally short of Catholics such as south-east Lancashire and the East Riding of Yorkshire, as well as in the industrial towns of northern England. At the same time, the domination of English Catholicism by landed families such as the Norfolks began to diminish. These

trends agitated the Protestant popular classes, among whom Catholicism was identified with treason, loyalty to a foreign power, superstition, trickery and despotic government. The Gordon Riots of 1780 were a manifestation of these prejudices, which were still evident over three decades later. Cardinal Consalvi, Cardinal-Secretary of State, on a visit to England in 1814, thought it prudent to wear lay attire rather than his purple to avoid the risk of being assaulted in the street. Nevertheless, among the educated elites at least, there was a growing willingness to countenance the removal of the disabilities under which Catholics had laboured since the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Indifference, deism, and a belief in the values of toleration, together with a decline in the fear of popery, all contributed to this sentiment. The attitudes and actions of Catholics, who were anxious to play down theological divisions and to stress the common bonds which united all Christians, further facilitated this process. As the pre-eminent Catholic preacher James Archer argued, polemic and controversy should be eschewed in favour of the promotion of intra-denominational Christian precepts. Moreover, Catholics were deferential and accommodating, anxious above all to join the political nation not to destroy it, even if this meant making substantial concessions. All this eventuated in the passage of a Relief Act in 1778 which gave Catholics access to the armed forces, allowed them to run schools and to transmit property, and ended some penal legislation against priests. In truth, the Act did little more than legalise existing practices.

The impact of the events in France undoubtedly helped to resolve lingering doubts about the loyalty of Catholics. They, along with other dissenting groups in England, rallied forcefully to the support of the crown and the nation in the common struggle against the tyranny of the revolution which had mercilessly persecuted the French Church and clergy. No longer was it so easy to accuse them of disloyalty and allegiance to a foreign cause. The arrival of over 5,500 or so French clergy, 700 of whom were encamped at the royal estates in Winchester, together with some 150,000 lay French exiles of all types, provided an additional fillip to the Catholic cause. As Kirsty Carpenter has suggested, there was a real fear among English Catholics that the ostentatious piety of these continental arrivals would disfigure traditional patterns of practice and attract unwanted attention.[16] Such anxieties proved unjustified, as the *émigrés* adapted well. Collections were even organised within Protestant churches for the relief of those who were destitute. For some, England became a permanent home. It is calculated that over 1,000 clerics stayed on after the Concordat was published in France in 1802. Such *émigrés* were instrumental in refounding suppressed houses, notably that of Douai, alongside new colleges at Ushaw and Oscott, which contributed to a revitalisation of ecclesiastical life. Their life was made easier by the Second Catholic Relief Act of 1791 which removed almost all restraints on religious practice, save that mass was not permitted in buildings with a bell or steeple, and regulars were not allowed to wear their habits in public. Although Catholics were admitted to the professions, greater civic and religious freedoms would not be granted until 1829 and subsequently.

The impact of the revolutionary events in Ireland was more complex. Here, Catholics comprised the overwhelming majority of the population, of whom 95 per cent were peasants. Land-ownership among this group had fallen from 14 per cent to 5 per cent between 1700 and 1770. Lacking social or economic security, they were further denied a meaningful role in the political process, since even propertied Catholics could not vote or sit in parliament. The Irish parliament itself was Protestant, but possessed limited legislative powers and fell under the sway of London because of its venality. As for the executive, this was almost exclusively English. There also existed an Anglican Church which had shown no inclination to proselytise among Catholics, and was chiefly concerned with fending off the threat of Protestant dissent. With so many ingredients for resentment, it was surprising that Ireland was generally calm throughout the eighteenth century. Admittedly, there were agrarian disturbances from the 1760s onwards which sprang from the attempts by Protestants, under demographic pressure, to evict Catholics from their land-holdings in Ulster. There was a sectarian edge to these protests as Catholic Defender groups were formed to resist aggression, but in essence these were economic not religious in inspiration. Dissatisfaction was contained essentially because the Catholics lacked political leadership, many peasants remained unaffected by the penal legislation, and well-to-do Catholics were able to prosper both as land-owners and as merchants during the course of the eighteenth century. The latter's ambition was to secure equality via constitutional means, not to overthrow the existing political order by conflict, and certainly not to separate themselves from the British state since their livelihoods much depended on trade with England and its American colonies. London, in turn, valued the contribution of Ireland, both for the food it supplied and for the recruits it provided for the British armies, and it was this symbiosis which led the British government to encourage Catholics to pursue demands for equality through constitutional means.

Events in France radicalised the Irish situation. Inspired by the liberal spirit of the revolution in its early stages, Protestant dissenters and Catholics, who both laboured under penal legislation, became more vocal. Initially it was Protestant Nonconformists in Ulster, congregated together in the Society of United Irishmen (1791) led by Wolfe Tone, who campaigned for equal rights for all men irrespective of their religion. Catholics also lent support to this campaign, and soon joined the United Irishmen in large numbers. This involvement convinced the ruling Protestant elite that the Catholic Church at all levels – Rome, bishops and priests – was the principal element in the agitation. To be sure, the lower clergy, drawn from the ranks of the peasantry, living and working among their flocks, were sympathetic towards the distress of ordinary people. So too were the bishops. Yet the hierarchy was also extremely wary. Trained in continental seminaries, prelates had seen at first hand how easily popular protest could get out of control, and knew only too well that the Church was incapable of harnessing it. They were further aware of the innately conservative position of Pius VI and had no wish to upset Rome, which had its own difficulties fending off French intervention. So it

was that their pronouncements, which expressed sympathy for the misery of the common people while deploring the resort to popular violence, all too often appeared equivocal. Ironically, this lent further credence to Protestant fears that they were conniving at revolution.

Various limited concessions were offered by the English government but these only succeeded in exacerbating sectarian tensions: the Protestant elite feared that it marked the end of their political and social dominance; Catholics were disappointed by the inadequacy of the proposed changes. In the course of the 1790s, rural rioting and terrorism became commonplace with Catholics and Protestants divided into rival gangs, notably the Defenders and the Peep o' Day Boys, who drew on a tradition of agrarian violence. Catholics, who by now had effectively colonised the United Irishmen, were driven increasingly towards a republican and nationalist stance, and enlisted the support of the French who sent troops in both 1796 and 1798. This marked a change in the fundamental nature of Irish patriotism. Hitherto it had been Protestant or interdenominational in character; after the 1790s, it was to have a Catholic hue, although complete separation from the British state was not an option to be explored, at least for the moment.

The threat of French involvement, together with full Catholic emancipation, so frightened the Protestant Ascendancy that a backlash ensued, with the revival of Orange lodges and the use of troops on a wide-scale basis. When, in 1798, the United Irishmen believed their only hope was a full-scale insurrection, this was brutally crushed at the cost of some 12,000 lives. Worried at the prospect of further rebellions by both Catholics and Protestant dissenters, aided by more sizeable French support, and troubled by what the intransigence of an unreconstructed ruling elite might lead to, the government in London moved towards a policy of direct rule from Westminister which culminated in the Act of Union, passed in 1800 and to take effect from 1 January 1801. William Pitt, as Prime Minister and architect of the union, had regarded Catholic emancipation as integral to a settlement of the Irish Question, with an oath of loyalty to the crown a prerequisite of membership of the political nation. However, this strategy foundered upon the stubbornness of George III, the 'rock above water' as Wilberforce termed him, who refused to contemplate such a radical solution.[17] As a result, emancipation did not form part of the Act of Union, and Pitt's resignation removed from government its chief proponent. The issue would not disappear from the political agenda. The addition of 4 million Irish meant that one-quarter of the population of Britain was now Catholic, and their constitutional disabilities could not be permanently ignored.

After 1801, Catholic emancipation could not be divorced from the Irish Question. This linkage was unwelcome to many English Catholics, who preferred to continue a long-standing policy of quietist assimilation into the political order. Such an approach stood in marked contrast to that of most Irish Catholics, though not at first the bishops, for whom emancipation had come to be seen as a means to the establishment of a new political and social order. Additionally, suspicion of the purportedly unreformed and backward nature of Irish Catholicism, 'a strange assemblage of strong faith and much

superstition', as Sir James Throckmorton put it in 1806, remained common among the English gentry in particular.[18] The alleged superstition of Irish Catholicism contrasted with the thoughtful and refined character of the faith in England. There was also concern that something of the autonomy long enjoyed by English Catholicism might be lost through the Act of Union, given the long-standing, albeit erroneous prejudice concerning the susceptibility of the Irish to the whims of Rome. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that the papacy would cease to regard Britain as a lost cause, now that one in four of its population was Catholic. For the moment, however, Rome had plenty of problems closer to home.

Rome and Revolution: the Last Pope?

Rome was not well placed to meet the challenges posed by the French Revolution. The inherent weaknesses which had been largely concealed during the eighteenth century were to be brutally exposed in the 1790s. Economically backward, lacking a powerful army, intellectually enfeebled, and incapable of proffering strong leadership, Rome was not helped by the fact that it also became a refuge for French *émigrés* who presented the elderly and infirm Pius VI with a blinkered and lop-sided view of the world. The papacy thus found itself responding to events rather than controlling them, to such an extent that many observers believed that the very office of pontiff would not survive into the nineteenth century.

From the outset, papal policy was marked by dithering and misjudgement. The lack of protest when, in 1789–90, the French abolished annates and proposed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy led to a belief among revolutionaries that Pius VI would eventually legitimate the new order, especially since the Avignon enclave gave them a bargaining counter, and disinclined them to listen to the concerns of the French clergy. As we have seen, papal reticence derived from a fear of provoking the French Church into schism, although this was precisely what eventuated with the formation of the constitutional clergy. A further error of judgement was made over the French declaration of war in 1792. Cardinal Maury, a French non-juring priest, was dispatched to the Diet at Frankfurt to drum up support for the allied war effort. 'The pope has need', declared Maury, 'of [the princes'] swords to sharpen his pen.'[19] Such statements convinced the revolutionaries that the papacy was hopelessly counter-revolutionary. So too did Pius's reaction to the execution of Louis XVI. The Pope denounced the act as one of murder and bemoaned the treatment of Catholics in France. In the meantime, little was done to curb the popular excesses against French representatives in the Eternal City which led to the death of the French legate, Basseville. Paradoxically, by placing himself firmly in the camp of counter-revolution, Pius VI was storing up problems for himself, since he lacked the military and financial wherewithal to resist French aggression under the inspired generalship of the young Napoleon Bonaparte which in 1796 resulted in the annexation of Lombardy and the most prosperous sections of the Papal States, Ravenna and Bologna.

With the Directory pressing for Napoleon to take Rome and declare it a republic, and with the papacy only too aware of the proximity of French troops, an armistice was agreed on 20 June 1796, the terms of which imposed a tribute of 21 million *scudi*, the handing over of 100 works of art, 500 manuscripts from the papal collections and the exclusive access of French ships to Roman ports. Pius VI also issued instructions to French Catholics to remain loyal to their government and to recognise the Republic, but the Directory wanted more: a reversal of his earlier condemnations of revolutionary religious legislation, in particular the Civil Constitution, which it was hoped would draw the sting from the uprisings in the Vendée. Pius balked at this and, in September, he ended the armistice and began to form a citizens' militia to defend Rome. Napoleon's response further highlighted the military weakness and poor diplomatic judgement of the papacy. His forces simply occupied the remainder of the Papal States. While Rome itself was spared, at least for the moment, churches elsewhere were plundered, and the Marian statue at Loreto was despatched to the museum of Egyptian antiquities at Paris. The terrified Pius hastened to sign a peace at Tolentino in February 1797, which doubled French fiscal exactions, and he renounced papal possessions in Avignon, the Venaissin, Bologna, Ferrara and the Romagna, the first time a pope had signed away part of his temporal patrimony.

Tolentino did not resolve matters. Having just quashed royalist and Catholic electoral gains in the elections of 1797, the more anti-clerical elements of the Directory, including La Révellière-Lépeaux, Barras and Reubell, wanted to see nothing less than the disappearance of the papacy as an institution. General Haller, the French Commissioner to Rome, declared: 'This Babylon, gorged with the spoils of the universe, must feed us and pay our debts.'[20] Taking their cue from such sentiments, a group of Jacobin sympathisers in Rome tried to plant several trees of liberty, leading to rioting and the accidental death of the young French General Duphot, who had been betrothed to Napoleon's sister. Personal affront now entered the picture as Napoleon's troops entered Rome on 15 February 1798, twenty-three years to the day after Pius's coronation. The Vatican palace was ransacked, booty was seized, a republic was declared and a popular uprising brutally suppressed. Partly at the instigation of La Révellière-Lépeaux, who wished to destroy the spiritual and temporal power of the papacy and replace this with a deistic cult, a pagan altar was erected in St Peter's Square. The terminally-ill Pius, who was now eighty-one years of age, begged to be allowed to die in Rome, but he was placed instead under house arrest in Siena, where he was effectively unable to perform any of his duties. 'A man can die anywhere,' sneered General Berthier.[21] Fearing that Pius might become a focal point for resistance to French rule, in March 1799 he was bundled into a carriage and taken off across the unforgiving terrain of the Alps to France, even though he was now almost paralysed. He died at Valence on 29 August 1799. Humiliation accompanied him to the end. He was buried by a schismatic constitutional priest, and the local prefect recorded his death thus: 'Citizen Braschi, exercising the profession of pontiff'.

Although Rome had been ill-placed to influence international affairs at the close of the eighteenth century, Pius had been a weak, timid and egotistical pope whose misfortune had been to live in a turbulent era which demanded clear judgement and leadership, something which he was incapable of providing. As has been frequently noted, the manner of Pius's death did more for the standing of the papacy than any of his actions in life, turning him into a martyr. It remained to be seen, however, whether his successor Pius VII would be able to resurrect the fortunes of the papacy in the face of the seemingly unstoppable onslaught of Napoleon's armies.

Napoleon and Religion

The young general who came to power as First Consul in the *coup* of Brumaire, 9 November 1799, and who had himself proclaimed Emperor in 1804, was a man of seeming contradictions. He claimed to embody the principles of 1789, used the rhetoric of revolution, and indeed could not have enjoyed such a meteoric career without the opportunities offered by the collapse of the *ancien régime*. But in truth, he operated less on the basis of principle than of pragmatism, drawing indiscriminately on an eclectic mix of ideas and practices, choosing whatever worked best. This was to be perceived in all areas of Napoleonic rule, whether it be his land settlement, the creation of a new nobility, the overhaul of finances, the restructuring of government, or the introduction of a new legal code. It was no less apparent in the domain of religion. Personally, Napoleon had little need for spiritual nourishment and his scrutiny of Enlightenment texts, as well as his personal experience, had left him profoundly sceptical of the claims of revealed religion. Speaking with Bertrand, when in exile on St Helena in 1816, he argued that there was no historical proof of the existence of Christ while acknowledging that 'Mohammed, on the other hand, was a conqueror and a sovereign, and his existence is incontestable.'[22] However, his personal doubts about the truth of religion did not blind him to its power as an instrument of public policy. The revolts in the Vendée had proved the dangers of affronting people's religious beliefs; and, as a natural disciplinarian, the mob frenzy of the Paris crowd had confirmed his view of what might happen when society's rules broke down. While in Italy, he had been impressed by the influence of the clergy, and preferred to control rather than to fight them. He thus had a lively awareness of the utility of religion as a social cement: 'You believe that man can be man without God … man without God, I have seen him at work since 1793. That man, one does not rule him, one shoots him: I have had enough of that type of man.'[23]

In practice, Napoleon was prepared to embrace any religion which suited his purpose. He was to boast that he had quelled the uprising in the Vendée by becoming a Catholic; that he had successfully won over the Egyptians by thinking of embracing Islam; and that he had secured the acceptance of popular opinion in Italy by becoming Ultramontane. He would have rebuilt the Temple of Solomon had he been the ruler of the Jews; in 1806 he did

indeed restore the grand Sanhedrin of the Jews. Yet Catholicism he valued above all. Deism was dismissed for its want of moral certainty; Freemasonry he mocked for its bizarre rituals and its secrecy; Protestantism he distrusted because it lacked the organisational structure and hierarchy which was integral to Catholicism. On 5 June 1800 he informed the clergy at Milan, 'The Catholic religion is the only religion that can make a stable community happy and establish the foundations of good government', adding that, 'the faith was like an anchor which alone could save France from the storm'.[24]

Ever the pragmatist, on coming to power in 1799 Napoleon had three objectives apropos his religious policy. The first was to secure an accommodation with the Church so as to siphon off the energies of the revolt in the Vendée. The second was to use Catholicism to legitimate his regime. As a soldier, with a strong sense of military discipline, he was always uneasy with the fact that he had illegally usurped power, and he constantly sought means to underpin his regime. This was to be done by an appeal to a popular mandate in the form of plebiscites and the retention of parliaments, together with the re-creation of a nobility. Ecclesiastical approval would also be useful in this regard and would play well with the strongly Catholic areas of his burgeoning empire, notably Belgium and the Rhineland, and would undermine the claim of his European enemies, particularly Austria, that they were the upholders of the Catholic religion. Finally, he looked for a definitive religious settlement which would delineate the role, social standing and influence of the Church so that it served as a bulwark of stability, and functioned more or less as a department of state.

Napoleon moved swiftly to effect a *rapprochement* with the Church. In the Vendée, he allowed the open practice of Catholicism under the leadership of clerics who were obliged only to take an oath of fidelity to the constitution. He further ordered the body of Pius VI, which still lay unburied at Valence, to be interred with full funerary honours. This eased the way to the start of negotiations with the newly elected pope, Pius VII (1800–23), the former Benedictine monk, Barnabà Chiaramonte. 'Tell the pope', Napoleon declared, 'I want to make him a gift of 30,000,000 Frenchmen.'[25] For his part the novice pontiff, who as Bishop of Imola had preached the infamous 'Jacobin' sermon at Christmas 1797 urging an acceptance of the legitimacy of the revolutionary government, was eager to end ten years of schism and to begin his reign with a reconciliation between the Church and France, still viewed as the most prestigious Catholic country in Europe. Such a settlement could only redound to the prestige of the papacy itself, enabling it to reassert its primacy within the Church and affirm its independence of the secular powers. It was clear, however, which side was operating from a position of strength. Napoleon's decisive victory in 1800 over the Austrians at Marengo re-established French control over Italy, once again casting a doubt over the future autonomy of the Papal States in which Pius VII was tentatively introducing reform.

In the ensuing negotiations, which lasted a long eight months, both sides proved exceedingly obdurate, although it was Napoleon who was the more bloody-minded. The document which was finally signed at 2 a.m. on 16 July

1801 was both brief and apparently reasonable. The preamble acknowledged Catholicism as 'the religion of the great majority of the French people',[26] a wording which did not altogether please the Curia which had initially demanded that Catholicism should be the 'dominant' faith. Article 1 permitted the free and open practice of Catholicism, albeit in a way that did not disturb public order; Articles 2 and 3 foresaw the reorganisation of dioceses after consultation between Paris and Rome and the consequent resignation of bishops where necessary; Articles 4 and 5 placed the nomination of prelates in the hands of the First Consul, canonical institution being subsequently conferred by the Pope; Articles 6, 7 and 8 obliged bishops and priests to swear an oath of fidelity to the government and to recite prayers for the salvation of the consuls and republic; Articles 9 to 12 dealt with the internal organisation of the Church; Article 13 asserted the inviolability of the lands seized from the Church during the revolution; Article 14 made a vague promise of a 'suitable salary' to clerics to be paid by the state, while Article 15 allowed endowments to the Church; and the catch-all Article 16 conferred upon the First Consul the same rights as had been enjoyed by the *ancien régime* monarchy over the Church, without specifying what these entailed. A final article accepted that, in the event of a non-Catholic assuming the position of First Consul, the Concordat would be renegotiated.

Whereas the terms of the above agreement appeared reasonable and balanced, the longer Napoleon pondered them the less he liked them, concerned that they did not sufficiently strengthen the state's hand over the Church. He was also aware of the need to deflect criticism from anti-clericals who opposed any agreement with the Church – for this reason the Concordat was referred to as the Convention de Messidor – and he was wary of the growth of any kind of opposition at a time when his hold on power was still tenuous. The Constitution of Year X (1802), which effectively cemented his dictatorship by making him First Consul for life, still lay in the future. Napoleon therefore unilaterally added seventy-seven Organic Articles to the Concordat. Ostensibly these dealt with the policing arrangements referred to in Article 1, but in practice they went much further. Government approbation was required before papal pronunciations could be published, councils convoked, new parishes established and private chapels set up. A uniform catechism was introduced, church weddings could not precede the civil ceremony, cathedral chapters were reduced to merely ceremonial function and the powers of papal delegates were severely circumscribed. Any breach of the articles was treated as a criminal offence and was referred to the Council of State, the keystone of Napoleonic government. Additionally, clerical salaries were specified: a mere 15,000 francs per annum for an archbishop, of whom there were to be ten; 10,000 francs for each bishop, who numbered sixty in total; and 1,000 to 1,500 francs for the 3,000 or so parish priests. Although it was not specifically referred to in the Organic Articles, the creation of a Ministry of Cults in 1801 reinforced a drive towards government oversight of ecclesiastical matters.

It is commonly argued that the Concordat, together with the Organic Articles, was a victory for Napoleon and marked the end of ecclesiastical

independence of the state. To be sure, clerical freedoms had been severely circumscribed, Catholicism was recognised only as one religion among others, and the Church had acknowledged something of the legitimacy of the revolution by accepting its successor, the Consulate. Nevertheless, the Church also made significant gains. In the first place, the Napoleonic settlement was founded on the basis of an agreement between Church and state, and was not the result of a government *diktat*, thus implicitly recognising the authority of the Holy See and its ability to concede privileges to the state. In this way, Rome preserved something of its authority, just as it had done by the negotiation of concordats in the early modern period and as it would do again in the nineteenth century. Additionally, the papacy rescued from schism the most important national church in Europe while strengthening its claim to intervene in its affairs. This was to be perceived most clearly with respect to the position of the bishops who comprised two groups, the *ancien régime* prelates appointed by the King and the constitutional bishops who had survived the revolutionary onslaughts under the courageous leadership of Henri Grégoire. To reconcile the two groups was impossible and the only way forwards was to start afresh. Forty-eight prelates agreed to resign, but thirty-seven (mainly *ancien régime* bishops) refused, and continued to exist as the so-called *petite église* which ultimately came to naught, although in some regions this minor schism persisted until the Second Vatican Council. Their sees were declared vacant by Pius VII and the episcopacy was renewed under the terms of the Concordat. Such an exercise of Roman authority over the Gallican Church would have been impossible before 1789 and marked a new stage in the relationship between papacy and Church in France, and helped to lay the foundations for a developing Ultramontanism within the French clergy.

To sign the Concordat was one thing, but to reconstruct the Church in France was quite another. The task was made easier by the generally high quality of the new bishops. Well educated and conciliatory, they approached their jobs with commendable fairness and assiduity, overcoming the administrative difficulties of having to govern new dioceses which had been put together with reference to both the pre- and post-1789 situations. Even though a majority of the newly appointed bishops were refractories, they lacked that collegiate sense which had characterised the old regime episcopacy, not least because the Napoleonic Church no longer had a body equivalent to the pre-revolutionary General Assembly of the Clergy which had provided a corporate sense of identity, but merely a series of ranks and offices through which orders were barked.

More troubling were the shortage and quality of the parish clergy. Well over 3,000 of those who had resigned their office, apostatised or married during the 1790s now sought reconciliation with the Church and presented themselves for scrutiny before the legation led by Cardinal Caprara, who had been appointed to handle this sensitive task. Former refractories also presented themselves for service, and they dominated the ranks of the Napoleonic Church, often making life difficult for the constitutional clerics. But even when such recruits were taken into account, there were insufficient clerics of

the right kind available. Many were aged, temperamentally unsuited to the demands of parish life and wholly unqualified for the cure of souls: former regulars, *émigrés*, ex-canons and prebendaries. By 1808, almost 10,500 parishes, over 20 per cent of the total, remained vacant. Some areas of France, particularly the Vendée where counter-revolution and repression had been most intense, were especially short of clergy: barely half the *ancien régime* clergy were eligible for office in 1801 and nearly one-third of these would die within the decade. The department of the Var was obliged to depend upon Italian priests until the 1820s. Poor career prospects and low salaries did little to entice new ordinands. In the period 1801 to 1815, there were only 6,000 recruits, the same number as had come forward in the year 1789 alone. Small wonder that the average age of priests was high and rising: over one-third were in their sixties in 1809. The seminary system, which had been one of the highlights of the French Church in the eighteenth century, was unable to furnish the replacements needed, even though seminarians were excused military service until 1809. There was also a shortage of teachers, buildings and income, for no provision was made to fund the seminaries. Clerical recruitment was increasingly from the ranks of the peasantry, and herein lay the roots of the anti-urban and anti-liberal attitudes which characterised the nineteenth-century lower clergy. Additionally, the Concordat had enormously strengthened the authority of bishops within their dioceses. The majority of priests had no security of tenure, but served at the bishop's pleasure. So it was that the Richerist dream of the eighteenth-century lower clergy of a synodal and democratic Church, which had initially led some ecclesiastics to favour the revolution, had been stymied.* Priests discovered themselves looking increasingly to Rome as a counter-balance to episcopal despotism; paradoxically, the bishops themselves looked to the Eternal City as a counter-weight to the despotism of the state. One of the unlooked-for products of the Napoleonic religious settlement was thus the emergence of a strong Ultramontane sentiment among all levels of the French clergy.

If Napoleon had anticipated that the Concordatory Church would be a faithful servant of his regime, he was to be disappointed. To be sure, the Church preached compliance with the conscription laws. It also accepted the Imperial Catechism of 1806, significantly drawn up by the Ministry of Cults, albeit with serious reservations with respect to Article 7. This threatened with damnation all those who refused adherence to 'Napoleon I, our emperor, love, respect, obedience, loyalty, military service … because God … has made him the agent of His power and His image upon earth'.[27] The Feast of the Assumption of 15 August was followed by the feast of St Napoleon, an early Christian martyr whose pedigree always remained distinctly dubious. Yet the

* Edmond Richer, a syndic of the Sorbonne in the seventeenth century, had argued that councils of the Church were superior to the papacy and that the spiritual authority of parish priests, as heirs to the seventy-two disciples, was on a par with that of the bishops. In the eighteenth century, his viewpoint was adopted by many parish priests in France who opposed 'episcopal despotism', wanted a greater voice in Church affairs and who sought a more equal division of the Church's wealth.

Church could not be stopped from going its own way, at least in some spheres. Prefects in the dioceses of Aix, Bayeux, Bordeaux, Nancy and Rennes turned a blind eye when constitutional clergy were illegally forced to swear humiliating recantations. Prefects further ignored the reconsecration ceremonies for those churches which had been supposedly sullied by constitutional uses as well as the collective rebaptism and remarriage ceremonies undertaken by those who had had recourse to the services of the constitutional clergy. More seriously, some bishops presided over open-air festivals even though these contravened police regulations over public assembly. After 1809, when Napoleon treated Pius VII in much the same way as the Directory had handled Pius VI, the prelates became ever more outspoken in their criticisms of his government, and privately longed for the restoration of the Bourbons.

The Concordat made no mention of the regular orders, and the revolutionary legislation suppressing them was not rescinded. While Napoleon had some admiration for the military organisation of the Jesuits, he was deeply mistrustful of all male orders, believing them to be useless 'unprofitable creatures', subversive and inherently disloyal because of their outside allegiance. Moreover, the male regulars fell beyond the control of the bishop whose authority in respect of the secular clergy the Concordat had done much to strengthen. In practice, some limited restoration of the male congregations took place. Those allowed to function were concerned primarily with the provision of elementary education and public welfare, more or less free of charge, thereby not imposing financial burdens on the state. Such orders included the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Ignorantins. Tolerance was also extended to those orders, such as the Lazarists and the Fathers of the Holy Spirit, which were instrumental in propagating French culture and *esprit* abroad. Conveniently out of the way, those orders based in the mountainous terrain linking France with Italy and Spain were allowed to survive, providing convenient stop-overs for travellers, thanks in part to the generosity the canons of St Bernard had displayed to Napoleon himself on his way to the battle of Marengo.

Much greater indulgence was displayed towards the female religious who were regarded as less of a political threat and who, above all, were engaged in utilitarian social functions. In some instances, they were even given official encouragement and blessing. Once again, it was those *congréganistes* concerned with education, care of the sick and poor relief that benefited most. These included the Daughters of Charity, who were permitted to return in 1800, and the Sisters of Mercy who, in 1805, were put under the protection of Napoleon's mother. A number of new congregations, stimulated by official toleration, also sprang up. These were mainly local in influence, and were devoted to philanthropic activities, notably the education of girls, a reflection of Napoleon's own misogynistic attitudes which viewed women as deeply inferior to men and incapable of rational thought. So it was that the Sacred Heart Society was founded in Paris in 1800, the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary at Ghent in 1806, the Sisters of Notre Dame at Amiens in 1804 and the Daughters of the Holy Cross at Poitiers in 1807. Concerned at the

proliferation of local initiatives, Napoleon attempted to enforce some overarching authority upon the congregations in 1807 but, in the event, he had to be content with setting out common guidelines for their operation. Without this window of opportunity, it is inconceivable that the startling growth of the women's orders in the nineteenth century could have got under way.

Something of the nature of nineteenth-century popular religious practice in France was also to be shaped by the revolutionary and Napoleonic experience. In the first instance, there was a growing laicisation of religion. Under the Directory, the Church had been restored at the initiative of the laity, who reopened religious buildings, refurbished wayside shrines and even held services, including masses, with a lay person officiating. Freed from the tutelage of the clergy, lay people became accustomed to taking the lead in religious practices, a trend which could not be easily reversed. In the aftermath of the schism of the French Church, priests no longer commanded the same respect and had been shown wanting in several regards, not always able to offer guidance and leadership. Suggestions after 1814 that tithes might be re-established were met with absolute hostility and there was reluctance to provide financial support for the returning *curés*. The parish priest of Rognon in eastern France complained that, 'certain people say that they do very well without their *curés*'.[28] In a related development, one may point to the resurgence of popular religious practices which the eighteenth-century clergy had sought to control or stamp out altogether, but which were now reinstituted by a laity liberated from clerical supervision. The cult of the saints, the establishment of wayside crosses and shrines, night-time pilgrimages and processions, the use of benedictions, all made a comeback. Finally, and perhaps most significantly in the long term, there was a noticeable feminisation of religion which built upon the leading role of women in the defence of the faith during the high point of dechristianisation in particular, and reinforced an eighteenth-century trend towards a gender dichotomy in religious matters. In part, this reflected women's search for areas of empowerment, since they were effectively excluded from so many spheres of public life under the revolution, as they had been in the pre-1789 period. It also emerged out of a 'dearth, disease, devotion' syndrome. Bearing the brunt of the economic privations which were intense, especially for the poorest elements of society in the 1790s when the harvests were seriously disrupted, women sought consolation in religion.

In ways unlooked for, the Church in France regrouped and laid the parameters for religious life in the nineteenth century. No less significant were the effects of the Napoleonic regime on religious life in the rest of Europe.

Napoleon and Europe

An accident of geography ensured that it was the Catholic states of Europe which were principally affected by the Napoleonic conquests since they lay adjacent to the French frontiers and, with the important exception of Spain where Napoleon's hegemony was never complete, were the first areas of

Europe to be occupied by French forces. It has been noted that Belgium, early on, bore the brunt of occupation. It will further be recalled that revolutionary legislation was applied in its full vigour from 1794, and the imposition of a Napoleonic regime brought some easing of the situation. Diocesan boundaries were redrawn, the Concordat of 1801 was put into effect and the free practice of Catholicism permitted. The fact that none of the constitutional bishops was put into a position of responsibility additionally eased matters. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the religious situation in Belgium was reconciled. A *petite église*, linked to that in France, persisted; seminarists resented the obligatory teaching of Gallican precepts; the parish clergy havered when told to advocate obedience to the conscription laws, fearing the wrath of their parishioners; Napoleon's occupation of the Papal States in 1809 aroused some animosity; and there was little enthusiasm for Bonapartist propaganda in the shape of the Imperial Catechism.

The Napoleonic impact upon Germany was yet more considerable. By the end of 1794, the revolutionary armies had reversed their earlier defeats and had overrun the Rhineland. The defeat of the Second Coalition and the resulting Treaty of Lunéville in 1801 produced further French gains and, in 1806, Napoleon united his German satellite states into the Confederation of the Rhine, ending the thousand-year-old Reich. Lands on the left bank of the Rhine were annexed to France and here French religious policy held sway. The properties of the Church were expropriated, monastic orders were closed, and the terms of the Concordat of 1801 were applied. The ecclesiastical principalities, which had combined secular and spiritual power in the person of a prelate, were secularised. Moreover, since lay princes who had lost land were compensated by the acquisition of ecclesiastical properties on the right bank of the river, ecclesiastical power disintegrated here as well. The Imperial Recess of 1803 declared that the sovereignty of the ecclesiastical rulers was now at an end. Only one prince-bishop remained, Dalberg, the client of Napoleon, who was made primate of all Germany with his see at Regensburg.

The wholesale reorganisation of the ecclesiastical structures of the Holy Roman Empire had implications which went far beyond the ending of the medieval prince-bishoprics. The Holy Roman Emperor lost his special role as protector of Catholicism. The privileged constitutional position of the Roman faith, shored up by the presence of numerous ecclesiastical principalities which enjoyed separate representation at the Diet and the existence of three prince-bishops who sat in the electoral college, was ended. Accordingly, the faith was increasingly at the behest of the secular authorities who were keen to subvert the independent position of the Church. In Württemberg and Baden, for example, the Church was placed under the control of a single ministry, regular orders were dissolved and their lands sequestrated, diocesan and parish boundaries were redrawn and the lower clergy, salaried by the state, took on the characteristics of a civil bureaucracy. Only three Catholic universities – Freiburg, Münster and Würzburg – remained, and theology faculties were instead established inside state establishments. Many Catholics now found themselves under Protestant rule. As it happened, such princes were in some

respects more benign than their Catholic counterparts, as they were eager to demonstrate their even-handedness in matters of faith. Nevertheless, Catholics were not free of discrimination, and in Prussia they were treated as second-class citizens. Although unperceived at the time, the turmoil of the Napoleonic era had laid the foundations for the emergence of Prussia as the leading German state, something which was to have deleterious consequences for Catholicism both inside and outside the German lands. Paradoxically, the same upheavals contributed to a growth of Ultramontanism. The death of the ecclesiastical principalities saw off some of the most intransigent and independent advocates of Febronianism; and there was an increasing tendency for the state-dominated churches to look to Rome as a counter-weight.

The effects of the Napoleonic interlude upon Spain were multiform and, in some respects, conflicting. Even before the arrival of French troops, in 1798 Charles IV (1788–1808) and his favourite Manuel de Godoy had confiscated the lands of some religious houses, forced the sale of some charitable properties and obliged the Church to contribute to a state loan. One effect of the state's aggressive regalism was to widen the division between the upper clergy, who proved best capable of defending their wealth, and the lower clergy, who in practice bore the brunt of the state's financial demands and accordingly became increasingly impoverished. A second result was to heighten tensions between traditionalists in the Spanish Church who believed in the unyielding maintenance of its institutions and privileges, and the reformers who recognised the need to adjust its organisation and methods if Catholicism was to survive the new exigencies. The process of state encroachment on the Church was furthered when Napoleon pushed aside the new King, Ferdinand VII, and put his brother on the throne in June 1808. Joseph moved quickly to close the monasteries and sequestrate Church property. These measures were bitterly resented by the monks themselves, the 'beastly friars' as Napoleon called them, and were likewise resisted by the peasantry who united in defence of the Catholic faith against the invading French 'infidels'. Significantly, however, when a national Cortes emerged at the head of a liberated Spain in the period 1810–13, no real attempt was made to restore the Church to its former ascendancy. Dominated by a liberal elite, the Cortes meeting at Cadiz did indeed recognise Catholicism as the national religion, and St Teresa of Avila was made co-patron alongside St James, but the closure of monasteries and the expropriation of Church lands continued, the papal nuncio was expelled when he protested, and in 1813 the Inquisition was suppressed. The following year, the Bourbon Ferdinand VII was again put on the throne and many looked for a wholesale return to the old regime. The new King restored the Inquisition, permitted the re-establishment of the Jesuits, and reopened monasteries. Yet there were limits to Ferdinand's indulgence. Only a small proportion of former Church properties were restored and there was no attempt to create a theocracy. In this sphere at least, Ferdinand pursued policies almost identical to those of the eighteenth-century Spanish rulers, appointing over sixty bishops. If Catholicism had been confirmed as the badge of identity in Spain, nevertheless the Church paid a price, for it had relinquished much

of its autonomy to the state. Moreover, most clerics were now hostile to any liberal reform of politics or society, convinced that this was 'a rebellion against God and human society', as the newspaper *El Catolico* would put it in 1840; a pattern had been established that would endure until the twentieth century.[29]

Whereas Napoleonic hegemony in Spain was never complete, Bonaparte enjoyed more success in bringing the Italian states into his empire. Religious policy was broadly in line with that pursued in France, although Napoleon, perhaps wary of upsetting clerical and popular susceptibilities, allowed the Church greater freedoms. Michael Broers has pointed out that the Emperor was keen to refashion the Church so that it operated as a servant of the state and to employ the clergy in the role of 'a sort of moral gendarmerie', as one contemporary put it.[30] At the same time, he could not ignore the wealth of the Church, and his need to exploit this grew as the fiscal demands upon his empire became ever more pressing. Towards the end of his regime, this led him to adopt a more combative policy apropos the Church which alienated many clerics who, up to this moment, had been surprisingly quiescent, not least because they had a sneaking sympathy with some of the Bonapartist reforms, although it should be stressed that regional variations in this respect were pronounced. Moreover, many of the French administrators developed a contempt for the local culture and religion, contrasting this unfavourably with their own advanced views. As one of them, Degerando, noted:

> Religion as it is understood by Enlightened men and felt by virtuous men, as it generally exists in France – that is as the product of a reasoned and reasonable conviction, whose main aim is to improve morals – is scarcely even perceived to exist by the Romans … Relics, indulgences, the Forty Hours, the rosary, the little medals are what interests them; reading the scriptures would be a profanity; and whoever should discourse to a Roman of these august and simple truths, the existence of the author of all things, would be suspected of heresy, if not of atheism.[31]

These themes in French attitudes towards, and treatment of, Catholicism are perhaps best illustrated in the case of the former Cisalpine Republic, reorganised as the Italian Republic in 1802, and further restructured in 1805 when these territories became the Kingdom of Italy which also incorporated Lombardy, Venetia and Romagna, a former papal territory, and not the last of Rome's possessions to become a part of this entity. Here, the Concordat of 1803 was closely modelled on that of 1801, but, for example, allowed the retention of Church lands, gave clerics jurisdiction over marriages, provided for subsidies towards the seminaries and even permitted the existence of cathedral chapters. Above all, Catholicism was recognised as the religion of the state. After 1805, matters took a turn for the worse, and Napoleon was inclined to deal more brusquely with the clergy as his relations with the papacy deteriorated. The introduction of the French Civil Code, legalising divorce, was badly received, as was the introduction of the Imperial Catechism in 1807, although a question mark must remain over whether this was widely deployed, especially in remote mountainous areas. Entry into religious orders

was at first tightly regulated, then the orders were banned and their properties sequestrated. A decree of April 1810 removed from Lombardy and Venetia almost all of the 800 or so monasteries and convents which had existed in 1796. In Venice, the extensive lands belonging to the lay confraternities were also taken over. Paradoxically, as in France, a small number of new orders, principally concerned with educational and charitable functions, were established with state blessing. This might have contributed to a nineteenth-century revival of the regulars and congregations, but in 1814 the secular clergy was in a sorry state. Priests might have welcomed state salaries and the redrawing of parishes, but there was a real crisis of recruitment, as elsewhere in Europe, and the clergy had lost something of its grip over lay religiosity. In 1809, the Bishop of Vercelli bemoaned the fact that a third of the faithful no longer attended Easter communion.

Across on the western seaboard of Italy, Bonaparte likewise tightened his grip – Piedmont, Genoa, Tuscany, and eventually Rome in 1808 becoming a part of France itself, divided into departments and governed directly from Paris, although Rome was accorded the status of the 'second city'. All these territories became subject to the French Concordat of 1801, as well as the Civil Code. While there was a wooing of the secular clergy, there was a fierce onslaught on the regulars culminating in their dissolution in 1808. As in the Kingdom of Italy, the Church might have emerged in a fitter and leaner state, at least in regard to its organisation, but again it was short of personnel and had lost something of its status within society.

Matters turned out rather differently in the Kingdom of Naples where Napoleon's brother, Joseph, succeeded the Bourbon King Ferdinand in 1805. Joseph immediately embarked upon radical reform of the Church, which until then had been largely cocooned from the turmoil of the revolutionary and Napoleonic decades, beginning with the destruction of monasteries and priories, almost all of which had been dissolved by 1809. Well over a thousand monasteries were sold off, and in 1815 the clergy possessed less than 13 per cent of national property compared to over 25 per cent in 1800. A concordat was promised but foundered on the refusal of Pius VII to countenance a sizeable reduction in the number of dioceses from an astonishing 131 – almost as many as in *ancien régime* France which had five times the population – to a more sensible fifty. In this traditionally 'priest-ridden' area, Joseph had wanted to cut the numbers of seculars and reorganise parishes along more rational lines, but only limited progress was made as he left to become King of Spain in 1808. His successor, General Murat, was preoccupied with military matters. Bizarrely, although the impact of the French was less severe in religious affairs in the Kingdom of Naples than in the north of the peninsula, popular hostility tended to be greater, reflecting the relative backwardness of southern Italy.

Events in Italy naturally rebounded on the papacy whose relationship with Napoleon deteriorated steadily after 1801. Pius VII had suppressed his deep misgivings about the Concordat in the interests of restoring France to the bosom of the faith, yet several points of conflict remained, particularly on the part of Napoleon. The Pope's refusal to annul the marriage of Jérôme,

Napoleon's brother, to an American Protestant, was a particular grievance to the French ruler, a man who set tremendous store on family loyalties. When, in 1804, the Pope travelled to Paris, against the advice of the Curia, for the coronation of Napoleon as Emperor, Bonaparte was deeply irritated by the fervour with which the pontiff was greeted. Many people who had undergone marriage and baptism during the time of the Constitutional Church pressed forward to receive absolution and a fresh blessing from the pontiff. The coronation ceremony itself was to increase the hostility between the two men. The Pope refused to go ahead with the occasion until Napoleon and Josephine went through a Christian rite of marriage, something which was conducted the day before the crowning itself. In Notre Dame, Napoleon would not allow Pius to place the crown on his head, lifting it himself from the altar. The newly-anointed monarch went through with this ritual, which was deeply irritating to him, only because he appreciated and needed the legitimacy that papal confirmation bestowed. As he himself complained: 'Nobody thought of the pope when he was in Rome. My coronation and appearance in Paris made him important.'[32]

It was, though, the situation in Italy that occasioned the most serious breach between Paris and Rome. Pius was more angered than the clergy in the peninsula by Napoleonic religious policy there, resenting the break-up of dioceses and the imposition of the Concordats of 1801 and 1803. Above all, it was the attempt by Napoleon to incorporate the Pope and the Papal States into the French Empire that most rankled. A steady drip of papal possessions found themselves in French hands: Romagna (1801); the port of Ancona (1805); and the Kingdom of Naples (1806), a papal fiefdom. Continuing papal refusal to close ports to the allies, an action which Pius declared would be tantamount to an act of war, and Napoleon's confidence after the stunning defeat of the Austrians at Austerlitz, thus removing the last significant defender of the Catholic cause, opened the way for the French occupation of Rome itself in January 1808.

When, in July of that year, Pius refused to abdicate his temporal sovereignty, he was taken north to Savona where he was held in isolation. Meanwhile, the remaining papal possessions were annexed to France; Pius responded by excommunicating 'the robbers of Peter's patrimony', although he carefully avoided mentioning Napoleon by name. Tempers flared again when Pius refused to acknowledge Napoleon's divorce and remarriage to an Austrian princess, Marie-Louise, and would not grant canonical institution to any of the clergy nominated by Napoleon to vacant sees. These were becoming numerous throughout Europe as aged prelates died off. To circumvent this growing problem, Napoleon summoned a Council of the Imperial Bishops in Paris at which eighty-five agreed, after much cajoling, to permit institution by an archbishop in lieu of papal conferment. Those cardinals and bishops who dared defy this were dispersed to provincial towns and a number exiled to Corsica. Exasperated by papal intransigence and worried lest the Pope was liberated by the heretical English, whose frigates lay off the coast of Italy, in June 1812 Napoleon ordered that Pius be brought to Fontainebleau. Troubled

by a serious urinary infection, the Pope had to stop every ten minutes on the arduous twelve-day journey to relieve himself. He arrived 'more dead than alive', having been given the last sacraments.[33] Napoleon was not there to meet him, having embarked on his disastrous Russian adventure. The Emperor returned, his army decimated, but certain enough of himself to bully and physically assault Pius, who was eventually forced to sign a humiliating concordat. According to the terms of this, the Pope would no longer possess any temporal power; the location of the pontiff's seat would be decided later, although Napoleon clearly had Paris in mind; and papal authority over the appointment of bishops was severely curtailed. Napoleon ordered the proclamation of the Concordat throughout the empire, to the particular dismay of the so-called 'black cardinals', those who had snubbed the command to attend the Emperor's marriage to Marie-Louise and who had remained a symbol of ecclesiastical intransigence. Pius later repudiated the Concordat, but the letter he sent to Napoleon was suppressed by the Emperor. The brutal treatment of Pius would enhance further the status of the office of pontiff, in much the same way as had the 'martyrdom' of Pius VI. Yet, ultimately, the survival of the papacy depended upon the victory of the allied powers. In April 1814, Napoleon abdicated, returning from a brief exile only to be decisively defeated in June 1815 at Waterloo, the irony being that the head of the Catholic Church owed his salvation to a military coalition, only one of whose members was a co-religionary.

Conclusion: Revolution in Retrospect

The revolutionary and Napoleonic decades constituted the most momentous epoch for Catholicism since the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century. No country within Europe was unaffected, yet it was France which underwent the most traumatic impact. On the European stage, it could no longer claim to be the most Catholic of nations. The mantle of Catholic leadership had fallen upon Austria, even though few at the time perceived this clearly; even fewer recognised how ill-placed the Habsburgs were to discharge this responsibility in the nineteenth century when the international balance of power increasingly favoured the Protestant states, Prussia on the Continent and Britain overseas. Internally, once again, it was France that was most severely dislocated, though many of the changes that occurred there may be perceived elsewhere, albeit in a less pronounced fashion. The physical structures of the Church had been overturned, quite literally in some instances. Secularisation had been advanced in several senses: through the devaluation of the clergy; through the destruction of churches; through the depletion in the numbers of priests; and through the disruption in the habits of regular practice. A laicisation of religion had also taken place, with a reassertion of popular devotional practices, including the cult of the saints, the formation of pilgrimages as well as the first emergence of lay activists who would reach their fullest prominence under the Restoration. In the realm of ideas, materialist ideologies had gained a foothold and respectability, even if they had not always mustered a widespread

following. More serious for Catholicism, in the long term, was the emergence of new ideologies, most notably liberalism and nationalism which, despite being in their infancy, promised a stormy adolescence. Catholicism would take refuge in the embrace of reaction, conservatism and Romanticism, rejecting all things modern and storing up problems for later in the century when progressive elements within the Church struggled to come to terms with the contemporary world.

In the sphere of Church–state relations, it was now the latter which very clearly had the upper hand. In this area, the revolution merely exacerbated existing trends and even the most pious of rulers was not going to relinquish easily his oversight of clerical matters. National churches looked to the papacy as a counter-weight to the influence of the state, thus giving rise to an Ultramontanism which further emphasised the conservative nature of the faith. Rome itself had been exceedingly fortunate to survive. There had been more than one moment when contemporary observers believed that they were witnessing the death of an institution. Yet survive it had. In the short term, its status had been revived by the sufferings endured by both Pius VI and Pius VII, although these might quickly have been overlooked had it not been for a more significant longer-term development. The Napoleonic wars had made the existence of the Papal States a concern of international diplomacy and had demonstrated that pontifical authority was reliant upon the survival of temporal sovereignty. Buttressed by diplomatic support, and lapping up Ultramontane sentiments to the full, the Pope now had a voice that was listened to in a way which had not been the case in the eighteenth century. What had remained the same was the underlying weakness of Rome. When it suited the interests of the great powers to ignore papal injunctions, they did so. This disregard would become ever more blatant in the late nineteenth century when nation-states were consolidated, most awkwardly within Italy itself; yet, for the first half of the nineteenth century, Rome enjoyed something of a honeymoon as a conservative mood enveloped the Continent.