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France at Reims: The Fourteenth Centenary of the Baptism of Clovis, 1896

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In 1896 the city of Reims became a site of pilgrimage, the site of series of congresses and a series of festivals. Under the inspiration of the cardinal archbishop Benoît-Marie Langénieux and with the official sanction of Pope Leo XIII who accorded a papal jubilee, Reims attracted seventy pilgrimages, the delegates to eight special congresses and a whole host of Catholic dignitaries who attended the ceremonies to commemorate the baptism of Clovis, honoured as the first Christian king of France. While the congresses have attracted interest in terms of the Church's new concern with social issues in the wake of the encyclical *Rerum novarum* and of the evolution of the French Christian democratic movement, little attention has been devoted to the fourteenth century fêtes overall.¹ This paper explores the nature and meaning of the celebrations of 1896. In particular, it is interested in arguments developed about French history and French national identity. The festivals - attended by none of the official representatives of the Third Republic - shed light on the relationship between Church and state. On the one hand, at least on the part of the episcopate, there was a formal, if often grudging, acceptance of the Republic and democratic institutions, in line with papal directives. On the other, although a close association with royalism had been abandoned, on the part of many, counter-revolutionary language had not: to accept the Republic was not to accept the Revolution. While negotiating their troubled relationship with the Republic that unhesitatingly proclaimed itself as the inheritor of the revolutionary tradition, the attendees at the Reims festivals elaborated a particular understanding of French national history. An analysis of the Reims centenary reveals a rethinking of the relationship of the French church to republican institutions and democratic practices and the articulation of a Catholic nationalism that challenged the official republican reading of the French nation.

The official calendar of festivals stretched from Easter to Christmas Day, but the high point was unquestionably reached in October, which witnessed firstly the translation of the relics of Saint Remi to a new reliquary and secondly the solemn renewal of the 'baptismal promises of France'. In the name of the 'saintes anges de la France...Clothilde, Geneviève et Jeanne d'Arc', Langénieux appealed to God:

refaites avec notre pays...l'alliance que votre serviteur Remi a signée jadis avec nos pères les Francs du cinquième siècle...Car la France qui vous implore aujourd'hui, c'est la France de Clovis...la France de Charles Martel...la France de Pépin et de Charlemagne...la France d[u] [Pape] Urbain II...la France de Saint Louis...la France religieuse et pieuse.

¹ On Christian democracy, the *abbés démocrates* and *fin de siècle* French Catholicism: Jean-Marie Mayeur, 'Catholicisme intransigeant, catholicisme sociale, démocratrice chrétienne', *Annales ESC*, 27 (1972), pp. 483-99; idem., 'Les Congrès Nationaux de la « Démocratie Chrétienne » à Lyon, 1896-1897-1898', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 9 (1962), pp. 171-206; idem., 'Tiers ordre franciscain et catholicisme sociale en France à la fin du XIXe siècle', *Revue de l'histoire de l'église de France*, 70 (1984), pp. 181-94; Philip G. Nord, 'Three views of Christian Democracy in *fin de siècle* France', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19 (1984), pp. 713-27; Stephen Wilson, 'Catholic Populism in France at the time of the Dreyfus Affair: The *Union Nationale*', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10 (1975), pp. 667-705; Vicki Caron, 'Catholic Political Mobilisation and Antisemitic Violence in *Fin de Siècle* France: The Case of the *Union Nationale*', *Journal of Modern History*, 81 (2009), pp. 294-346. Specifically on Reims: René Rémond, *Les deux congrès ecclésiastiques de Reims et de Bourges* (Paris: Sirey, 1964). Some effort has been made to redress the balance with a set of brief essays in Michel Rouche (ed.), *Clovis: Histoire et Mémoire*, 2 vols., (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1997): Yves-Marie Hilaire, 'Les célébrations du XIV^e centenaire en 1896', I, pp. 683-94; Jacques-Olivier Boudon, 'Le cardinal Langénieux, l'épiscopat français et le XIV^e centenaire du baptême de Clovis', I, pp. 695-707; Jérôme Grondeux, 'Le thème du baptême de Clovis dans la *Revue des Questions historiques*', I, pp. 729-38; Jean-François Boulanger, 'La Mémoire au service du présent', I, pp. 738-51.

His audience consisted of four cardinals, six archbishops and 38 bishops, including the bishops of Liège, Luxembourg and Montreal.² This was undoubtedly an impressive tally, though well short of the entirety of the French episcopate whom Langénieux had invited to celebrate the *neuvaine* of Saint Remi. Julien de Narfon's prediction that Langénieux would struggle to assemble the majority of a divided episcopate was realised.³ Critical republican newspapers argued that the majority absented themselves out of personal dislike for Langénieux, an ambitious mediocrity.⁴ Nonetheless, it was hard not to deem the ceremonies a success - they were less vulnerable to mockery than Langénieux's earlier initiative to revive the cult of Pope Urban II in 1882.⁵

In addition, there were the pilgrimages, ranging from small parish pilgrimages to substantial affairs - most notably the 2,000 strong *Jeunesse Catholique* pilgrimage, or the grand Paris pilgrimage, again 2,000 strong, headed by the archbishop, cardinal François Richard. In this era of pilgrimages (notably Lourdes, Paray-le-Monial and Rome) these were not incidental to the celebrations but integral: Langénieux, under the influence of corporativist ideas of comte René de La Tour du Pin Chambly, envisioned the pilgrimages as delegations from the various elements of the social body.⁶ At the *Congrès National Catholique* which succeeded the *neuvaine* ceremonies considerable weight was given to the act of pilgrimage: the Assumptionist Vincent de Paul Bailly argued that the centenary was in essence 'a continual pilgrimage of France'.⁷ The social reformer and industrialist Léon Harmel, who chaired the committee co-ordinating the congresses and pilgrimages, boasted of the scale and success of the Reims pilgrimages at the congress of the Assumptionist *La Croix* in September.⁸ Indeed the cardinal himself, notwithstanding successive official assessments of him as 'un ambitieux' with a liking for the notability but a disregard for the poor, was an enthusiast for pilgrimage who had led *La France du travail* workers' pilgrimages to Rome.⁹ There were also the associated congresses - again primarily intended to assemble representatives of the natural organic corporations of France. The centre-piece was the *Congrès National Catholique*, held over the five days 21-25 October. By then Reims had already hosted the Catholic youth congress, the Franciscan Third Order congress, the Catholic circles congress, the Christian workers' congress, the Catholic press congress and a remarkable and unprecedented ecclesiastical congress which drew 700 priests from 69 dioceses under the presidency of the *abbé démocrate* Jules Lemire. Depending on interpretation, the first French *Congrès de la Démocratie Chrétienne* was either held in Reims in May or later in November in Lyon.¹⁰ The relative novelty of such congresses - the first two Christian workers' congresses had been held in Reims in May 1893 and May 1894 - points to the fact that the Reims *fêtes* reflected a new concern for organisation on the part of

² *L'Univers*, 6 October 1896.

³ Julien de Narfon, *Le Figaro*, 13 September 1896.

⁴ In *Le Journal* (8 March 1896) Jean de Bonnefon predicted, 'les prélats protesteront pour la forme mais seront enchantés du triste échec de leur collègue.' His elevation to the episcopate in 1874 was put down not to talent, but to the President of the Republic Marshal Patrice MacMahon's wife's liking for him. This should be balanced against the fact that Mgr. Joseph Foulon of Besançon favoured him to succeed cardinal Joseph-Hippolyte Guibert of Paris when it seemed that the government might block the succession of Guibert's coadjutor Mgr. François Richard. See François Guédon, 'Autour du ralliement. Les intrigues contre Mgr Richard et l'attitude de Mgr Foulon', *Revue de l'histoire de l'Église de France*, 44 (1958), pp. 86-99.

⁵ See Pierre-Louis Péchenard, *Triduum solennel pour la restauration du culte du bienheureux pontife Urbain II, célébré dans le cathédrale de Reims les 27, 28 et 29 juillet: compte-rendu générale des fêtes* (Reims: Imprimerie Coopérative de Reims, 1882); *Après les fêtes* (s.l. s.d.) [1882].

⁶ De La Tour du Pin had wider ambitions, wanting delegations from the corporations that made up the social body to draw up *cahiers* - a project he had originally pushed in the 1889 'counter-centenary' movement.

⁷ *Congrès national catholique tenu à Reims du 21 au 25 octobre 1896: compte-rendu générale* (Lille: Librairie St Charles-Borromée, 1897).

⁸ Report s.d. [1896], to ministre de l'intérieur et des cultes, A[rchives] N[ationales] F¹⁹ 5626.

⁹ Assessments of Langénieux: préfet Marne au ministre de la justice et des cultes reports, 16 September 1879, 27 December 1881, 20 September 1888. AN F¹⁹ 5610. *L'Univers* (26 October 1889) reporting on the 1889 *La France du travail* pilgrimage, noted that Langénieux had also led pilgrimages in 1885 and 1887.

¹⁰ Mayeur, 'Les Congrès Nationaux.'

Catholics. To paraphrase an associated publication, Christian France was to be found at Reims in 1896.¹¹

Alternatively, the title of the bi-monthly publication published to coincide with and report upon the jubilee year pointed to a more ambitious claim: France at Reims in 1896.¹² Simply put, the Reims festivals were a celebration and powerful assertion of the Catholic traditions and identity of France. As such they were inescapably in dialogue with the official celebrations of 1889, centenary of the French Revolution. 1889 had presented a narrative of France as the revolutionary nation, forged through the Revolution and united around the universal values of 1789. The celebrations of 1889 confirmed and restated the linkage of the Third Republic with the emancipating revolution, as signalled in the elaboration of a symbolism derived from the Revolution, most notably in the adoption of the *Marseillaise* as the national anthem and the *quatorze juillet* as the national festival.¹³ To celebrate 1896 was to advance an alternative narrative of the French nation.

In this alternative version of national history, 496 marked the foundation of France: in a lapidary phrase coined by Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, 'France was born in an act of faith on a battlefield'. The formation of France resulted from divine intervention - the Frankish king Clovis, inspired by his Christian wife Clothilde, called on God at the battle of Tolbiac and in the wake of this providential victory converted to Christianity. His baptism at the hands of Saint Remi on Christmas Day 496 represented the baptism and birth of the French nation and the inception of a 'national pact', which bound France to the service of the Church.¹⁴ In his apostolic letter according the papal jubilee Leo XIII wrote, 'C'est dans ce baptême mémorable de Clovis que la France elle-même a été comme baptisée; c'est de là que date le commencement de sa grandeur et de sa gloire à travers les siècles.'¹⁵ It was proposed that not merely would Langénieux renew France's baptismal promises, but that every church in France should do so on the exact anniversary of Christmas Day. The ceremonies of 1896 were a call to France to resume her allotted role as the premier Christian nation, 'la fille aînée de l'Église', defined by her Christian mission. In short, France was indeed the carrier of universal values - but not the values of 1789, but the values of the Christian faith.¹⁶

The idea of celebrating the centenary was first raised by Langénieux in 1890 - thus in 1896, when urging bishops to attend the commemorative ceremonies he was able to remind them that either they in person or their predecessors had assented to his plans in 1891.¹⁷ Whether explicitly conceived as a response to 1889 or not, for Catholic opponents of the Republic the 1896 centenary was an ideal opportunity to seize upon. Ever since Napoleon III's Italian policy had deprived the papacy of French backing, Catholic polemicists had insisted upon the authentic Christian traditions of the nation. The anti-clericalism and secularising legislation of the Republic of the 1880s only sharpened this sense of a divorce between the French government and the national tradition. Whereas Charlemagne, St. Louis and the papal zouaves represented fidelity to the national tradition and France's baptismal pact, the Revolution and Napoleon III's abandonment of the papacy represented a rejection of France's allotted role, the violation and rupturing of the pact. The defeat of 1870-71 represented the divine punishment of an apostate nation. The logic of Langénieux's attempt to return France to

¹¹ Mgr. Benoît-Marie Langénieux (ed.), *La France chrétienne à Reims en 1896. XIV^e centenaire du baptême de Clovis et de Francs* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1897).

¹² *La France à Reims en 1896 - Bulletin des fêtes du XIV centenaire du baptême de Clovis*

¹³ See e.g. Pascal Ory, 'Le centenaire de la révolution française', in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (3 vols., Paris: Gallimard, 1997), I, pp. 465-92; Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au Pouvoir: l'imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1880 à 1914* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989).

¹⁴ On the Reims myth see Jacques Le Goff, 'Reims, ville du sacre,' in *Les Lieux*, I, pp. 649-733.

¹⁵ Cited in *Lettre pastorale de l'évêque de Vannes* (Vannes: Galles, 1896), enclosed with préfet Morbihan to ministre de l'instruction publique, beaux-arts et cultes, 22 February 1896. As préfets' reports indicate, the apostolic letter was published in virtually every diocese, regardless of the provisions of the Organic Articles. AN F¹⁹ 5627.

¹⁶ On this influential concept see René Rémond, 'La fille aînée de l'Église', in *Les Lieux*, III, pp. 4321-51.

¹⁷ Mgr. Langénieux, circular letter to French bishops, 16 January 1896, AN F¹⁹ 5627.

her traditions was self-evident. 1896 echoed on a far grander scale the cardinal's actions of 1889, when in what he described as 'a truly patriotic event', he had led the worker pilgrims of *La France du Travail* into the Church of Sainte Pétronille in Rome to formally renew 'our old national tradition of devotion to the Papacy'.¹⁸ 1896 might also be seen as an amplification of Catholic celebrations in 1889, when certain sections of the Catholic community chose to ignore the Revolution, identifying other anniversaries to celebrate. Most notably, attention was drawn to the bicentenary of some of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart at Paray-le-Monial.¹⁹ In this strategy the Catholic narrative of God's benevolence to France could be fore-grounded, with no sense that the official ceremonies and discourse had to be directly confronted and opposed. Adherents of the cult of the Sacred Heart might contrast the basilica of Montmartre with Gustave Eiffel's secular iron tower, but attacking the Revolution and its commemoration was not their focus.

The comparison with what has been called 'the counter-centenary' of 1789 is worth developing. For 1889 witnessed a range of anti-republican counter-revolutionary strategies. For some there was a powerful imperative to confront and denounce the Revolution and its self-proclaimed progeny, the Third Republic. Polemical publications, most famously Mgr. Charles Émile Freppel's *La Révolution française à propos du centenaire de 1889*, denounced the blood-soaked nature of the Revolution. Freppel, legitimist bishop of Angers and deputy for Finistère, constructed a classic counter-revolutionary demonology of the Revolution, identified as 'décide dans l'ordre social'. He was also associated with an organised counter-centenary movement in the shape of a series of provincial assemblies, in imitation of those that preceded the opening of the États-Généraux in May 1789. The movement had two goals. First, the assemblies were to protest against the Third Republic and its version of history. It was important to assert, as Freppel did, that not only was the Revolution 'satanic', as the original counter-revolutionaries had argued, but that there was a monarchical reform movement. Any reforms that might be applauded - in particular the removal of seigneurial privileges - originated in the intentions of the monarchy, ready to act on the advice of the *cahiers*.

Secondly, the assemblies were tasked with drawing up a new set of *cahiers*, outlining the abuses and illegitimacy of the Republic. Alongside the identification of new abuses a reform program was outlined, indicating the remedies for the ills of the Republic and setting out a vision of a re-Christianised France. Necessary reforms included measures of decentralisation and even, especially in the pronouncements of La Tour du Pin, a corporate model of representation that would reflect the interests of natural collectivities. This reformist manifesto made sense in the political context of 1889, namely the Boulangist crisis. The prime movers of the counter-centenary, clerico-Legitimists such as comte Albert de Mun, believed in the prospect of a Boulangist electoral victory opening the door to a restoration of the French monarchy. What was crucial was to prevent the restored monarchy from repeating the mistakes of the Bourbon restoration that followed the fall of Napoleon. Unless the Pretender, the comte de Paris, rejected both centralisation and the concept of a parliamentary monarchy founded on universal suffrage the restoration would fail in its allotted task of re-Christianising France.

¹⁸ 1889, 1891 pilgrimages of *La France du Travail*: préfet Marne au ministre de la justice et des cultes, 22 June 1891, enclosing and summarising *Lettre Pastorale* 160 and *Compte-rendu des conférences ecclésiastiques* 1891, AN F¹⁹ 2566.

¹⁹ On the Sacred Heart see Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000). On Catholic commemoration in 1889 see Steven Kale, 'The Countercentenary of 1889, Counterrevolution and the Revolutionary Tradition', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 23 (1997), pp. 1-28; Martin Simpson, 'Taming the Revolution?: Legitimists and the Centenary of 1789', *English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), pp. 340-64.

While 1896 might recall the celebrations of the Paray apparitions, it was a far cry from the counter-centenary movement. In the first place the political context was utterly transformed. Boulangism had failed and with it most royalists conceded that the prospects of a restoration were bleak. Albert de Mun, who had supported the royalist tactic of investing in Boulangism with certain misgivings, came to the conclusion that restoration was an impossibility.²⁰ At the same time, Leo XIII adopted a new policy towards the Third Republic: the *ralliement*. This shift in attitudes was presaged by the dramatic symbolic toast to the Republic offered by cardinal Charles Lavigerie in 1890 and confirmed in an encyclical of 1892. Catholics were advised to recognise the legitimacy of the Republic without *arrière-pensée*, thereby removing the chief plank of royalism, which held that only under monarchy could the rights of the Church be respected.²¹ De Mun, as leader of the *Œuvre des cercles ouvrières* movement and former president of the *Association catholique de la jeunesse française* was prominent in 1896, but as a loyal *rallié* rather than a clerical royalist. In the second place, de Mun's presence in 1896 reflected not only the *ralliement* but also a new concern for the social issues, in line with papal pronouncements in the shape of the 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

Indeed, despite the concern for the traditions of France, the commemoration of 1896 was marked by innovation. The Church demonstrated its engagement with the 'social question', particularly in the Christian workers' congress, held under the auspices of the Catholic industrialist Léon Harmel, who, accompanied by Langénieux, had led a ten thousand strong workers' pilgrimage to Rome.²² The novelty of Reims was also signalled in the prominence of the *abbés démocrates* and members of the revived Franciscan Third Order. An associated development was the increasing prominence of anti-Semitic language that paralleled the more familiar anti-masonic discourse.²³ It was notable, for instance, that at the Catholic youth congress a study section was devoted to the question of organising an anti-masonic and anti-Semitic campaign, while the section on the promotion of Catholic interests adopted a resolution to form 'action committees' to encourage the struggle against 'the masonic and Jewish spirit'.²⁴ It is the contention of this paper though, that despite the significance of these innovations, attention needs to be paid to the fêtes overall, to the language, logic and meaning of commemoration. What does commemoration reveal about Catholic thinking about nation and what do the fêtes reveal about Catholic thinking about and approaches to the Republic?

I

In 1892 cardinal Richard, archbishop of Paris, declined the invitation to attend the celebration of the centenary of the Republic in the Panthéon, on the grounds that the Catholic pain over the de-consecration of the church of Sainte Geneviève (which had taken place in 1885 in the context of the state funeral of Victor Hugo) was still too fresh. He concluded, 'cette abstention n'a aucun caractère d'hostilité aux institutions républicaines ... mais nous sommes convaincus que la meilleure garantie de stabilité pour le gouvernement républicain se trouvera dans le respect des traditions

²⁰ See Bertrand Joly, *Conservateurs et nationalistes en France, 1885-1902* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2008).

²¹ This explains the violent hostility evinced towards Lavigerie by elements of the right – Paul de Cassagnac's *L'Autorité* and the monarchist *Gazette de France* denounced the cardinal's ideas, while a letter addressed to the editor of *Le Figaro* (20 November 1890) opined, 'Le cardinal Lavigerie s'est assermenté. Pour moi il n'est plus qu'un schismatique.'

²² Reims had already hosted the first two Christian workers' congresses in 1893 and 1894, again organised by Harmel. Republican critics derided the workers' pilgrimages; after mocking 'le ridicule « Dieu le veut ! » de Clermont' (a reference to Langénieux's sponsorship of the cult of Urban II) Jean de Bonnefon scornfully referred to Langénieux and Harmel's 'dix milles qui n'étaient que neuf cents'. *Le Journal*, 8 March 1896. In the context of the 1889 *La France au travail* pilgrimage Clovis Hughes commented, 'l'ouvrier chrétien est tout ce qu'il y a de plus décoratif et les évêques finiront par le faire monter en épingle.' *La France*, 17 October 1889.

²³ Mayeur, 'Tiers ordre'; idem., 'Les Congrès Nationaux'; Caron, 'Catholic Political Mobilisation'.

²⁴ Summary report in *L'Univers*, 15 May 1896.

chrétiennes de la France.²⁵ The radical *La Lanterne* concluded that Richard's absence indicated the impossibility of any true peace: 'Jamais, jamais, l'Église n'amnistiera pas à la Révolution française.'²⁶ The expiatory masses held in Paris to atone for the crimes of the Revolution were held to be indicative of the Church's position.²⁷

As this example indicates, the *ralliement* was no simple matter. Though Mgr. Louis Isoard of Annecy, a vocal advocate of Lavigerie, baldly stated, 'la monarchie est impossible', the *ralliement* required more than a pragmatic recognition of durability of the Republic and the exhaustion of anti-republican politics.²⁸ Faith in the *ralliement* required a fundamental rethinking of the Republic. This did not mean an acceptance of the *status quo*: Isoard's acceptance of the Republic was expressed in a combative language that made it plain that the Republic to which he was prepared to rally was that of president, former marshal of France, Patrice MacMahon's *ordre morale* regime of 1873-77. He argued,

Vous n'êtes pas la personnification nécessaire de la République....Il est permis de se faire une autre idée de ce régime. La République que vous avez inauguré...est une République étroite, intolérante, persécutrice et athée, tandis que la République que vous auriez pu établir...eût été une République large, tolérante, juste envers tous, respectueuse des droits de la religion et du clergé.²⁹

Those who followed Isoard's lead argued that the Republic had been captured by 'sectaires', namely the freemasons, formally condemned by Leo XIII in the 1884 encyclical *Humanum genus*. In this reading the *ralliement* was an appeal to Catholics to free the Republic from their despotic grip. In a contrasting approach, Jacques Piou, deputy of the Haute-Garonne, looked to a new political centre that united moderate opportunist republicans with clerical *ralliés* against the radical and socialist left.³⁰ Those associated with Piou argued that republicans could not be expected to display any sympathy to demands to restore the Church to its privileged position. The goal of these *ralliés* was to claim the Church's legitimate rights on the basis of the essential principles of the Republic. As Étienne Lamy wrote to Langénieux in November 1896, 'Catholics must appeal to the ideals on which modern society is based in order to vindicate their belief.'³¹

Not all found themselves persuaded. The intransigent and legitimist Mgr. Freppel of Angers adopted an entirely opposed position, expressed in an article in *L'Anjou*, held to be written at his instigation: '[la République] ne changer[a] pas de nature, parce que si elle devenait autre chose elle cessait d'être la République française, c'est à dire la forme la plus radicale, la plus anti-chrétienne de la Révolution.'³² Cardinal Richard's initial statement of 1891, couched as a reply to those who had sought his advice, though less violent in tone, was still distinctly hostile.³³ Unfortunately for advocates of the *ralliement*, Freppel's position was endorsed by portions of the left who confirmed the bishop's charge that anti-clericalism was intrinsic to the regime. Arthur

²⁵ Cardinal Richard to Charles Dumay, directeur des Cultes, 21 September 1892, AN F¹⁹ 5582.

²⁶ *La Lanterne*, 21 September 1892.

²⁷ In Paris a mass was held on 22 July 1889 for the first two victims of the Revolution. In 1892, under the inspiration of Mgr. Maurice le Sage d'Hauteroche d'Hulst, rector of the *Institut catholique de Paris*, a commemorative mass was held to mark the 'centenaire du martyr des évêques et prêtres assassinés.' See *La Revue religieuse du diocèse de Rodez et de Mende*, 16 September 1892. Note also the erection of a luminous cross on the scaffolding of the Sacré-Cœur basilica in Paris on 14 July 1892.

²⁸ Isoard, cited in *Le Soir*, 25 November 1890.

²⁹ Isoard cited in *Le Figaro*, 24 November 1890.

³⁰ Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics, 1890-1898* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1965). For the origins of this idea: Jean El Gammal, 'Un pre-ralliement: Raoul-Duval et la droite républicaine, 1885-1887', *Revue de l'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 29 (1982).

³¹ Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, 91.

³² Cited by Ranc in *Paris*, 23 November 1890.

³³ Isoard wrote to the cardinal that he would need to develop his position considerably; to alienate all those who saw themselves as republicans would doom his enterprise to promote a Christian France to failure. That the royalist Charles Chesnelong had welcomed the cardinal's position was not promising. See Guédon, 'Autour du ralliement', p. 97.

Ranc argued in *Paris* that though Freppel was wrong to believe the Republic anti-Christian, the *ralliement* was an impossibility. In a mirror-image of the bishop's polemic he attacked the anti-Republican nature of the Church:

Vous feriez à l'Église toutes les concessions imaginable, qu'elle ne se désarmerait pas, qu'elle ne changerait pas de nature, de doctrines, d'essence parce qu'elle est l'Église et ne peut être autre chose, parce que son idéal....c'est une théocratie où la société civile serait entièrement subordonnée au pouvoir religieux. Entre l'esprit de la Révolution et l'esprit de l'Église, entre l'esprit de 1789 et l'esprit théocratique, pas de trêve possible.³⁴

To accept the Republic was to accept its heritage, the Revolution. In this logic, to be a *rallié* was not merely to accept that Republic, but to renounce any prior attachment to counter-revolution. In the elections of 1893 Piou found his professions of republicanism rejected by his radical opponent, who argued that republicanism required an acceptance of the Revolution and the secularising *loi scolaires*.³⁵ Certainly, republicans had no intention of abandoning the secularisation policies enshrined in the *lois scolaires*. The sacrosanct nature of these measures would prove a stumbling block to efforts to construct an effective electoral union between Catholic *ralliés* and conservative republicans in 1898.³⁶

The fourteenth centenary fêtes were therefore conceived and held in the context of a concerted but less than wholly successful effort to rethink the relationship between Church and Republic. The conciliatory tone of Leo XIII's encyclical of February 1892 was at variance with the previous month's declaration of the five cardinals of metropolitan France. Though both distinguished between the form of the regime and its laws, the cardinals' declaration radiated hostility to the 'sectes anti-chrétiennes [qui] aient la prétention d'identifier avec elles le gouvernement républicaine et de faire d'une ensemble de lois anti-religieuses la constitution essentielle de la République.'³⁷ If the pope wished to prioritise pacification and conciliation, the episcopate was largely of a different mind. Yet this problematic relationship with the government did not mean the episcopate was blind to the dangers of compromising identification with monarchists or imperialists. In his *Instruction Pastorale* of 1891, proposing the celebrations, Langénéieux had insisted that, 'cette manifestation conservera un caractère essentiellement religieux et patriotique; c'est avec un désir sincère de concorde et de pacification que nous en jetons l'idée.'³⁸

This consistent theme was amplified in 1896. In the first place, there were signs of the *ralliement* yielding fruit. In 1894 the opportunist minister Eugène Spuller

³⁴ Ranc in *Paris*, 23 November 1890.

³⁵ Jean Bepmale *profession de foi*, 1893 election, Saint-Gaudens *circonscription* (Haute-Garonne), A[rchives] D[épartementales de l']H[aute]-G[aronne] 2M 46. It has also been argued that radicals were determined to denounce the *ralliement*, recognising the political threat of a moderate opportunist-rallié centre. See Eugen Weber, 'About Thermidor: The Oblique Uses of a Scandal', *French Historical Studies*, 17 (1991), pp. 330-42.

³⁶ See David Shapiro, 'The *Ralliement* in the Politics of the 1890s', in idem. (ed.), *The Right in France, 1890-1919* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), pp. 13-48. Shapiro argues that Étienne Lamy lacked the political intelligence to recognise that while conservative republicans could never countenance the repeal of the laws, they might concede the relaxation of their application. Shapiro's belief that Lamy held out for revision of the laws is disputed by Sedgwick, who had access to Lamy's papers: *Ralliement*, p. 155.

³⁷ Cardinals Florian Desprez (Toulouse), Charles-Philippe Place (Rennes), Foulon (Lyon), Langénéieux (Reims) and Richard (Paris), *Exposé de la situation faite à l'Église en France et déclaration des Éminentissimés cardinaux* (Besançon: H. Bossanne, 1892). The original text of the *Exposé* was drafted by the royalist Mgr. d'Hulst, but considerably modified by cardinal Langénéieux and cardinal Foulon. Mgr. Henri-Louis Chapon (Nice) suggested that if Foulon had been entirely responsible for the document 'the frank acceptance of the republican form' might not have been 'drowned in the enumeration of grievances.' See Guédon, 'Autour du ralliement', p. 98. R. Schnir labelled it, 'la profession de foi du clergé catholique réfractaire au ralliement': 'Un épisode du ralliement. Contribution à l'étude des rapports de l'Église et de l'État sous la troisième République', *Revue d'histoire moderne*, 9 (1934), pp. 193-226 at 193. The two texts were not necessarily seen as distinctively different, however, as demonstrated by Langénéieux's decision to print the two together in a circular to the priests of his diocese.

³⁸ Langénéieux, 1891 *Instruction pastorale*, cited in *La France à Reims*, 1 November 1895.

announced an 'esprit nouveau', assuring Catholics of his desire for appeasement.³⁹ *Rallié* deputies supported the moderate Opportunist ministries of Jean Casimir-Perier (December 1893-May 1894), Charles Dupuy (May 1894-January 1895), and found the Jules Méline ministry (April 1896-June 1898) particularly congenial.⁴⁰ Secondly, and more immediately, the radical government of Léon Bourgeois (November 1895-April 1896) was decidedly suspicious of the planned events. The *ministre de cultes*, the anti-clerical Émile Combes believed that inviting all bishops to attend the *neuvaine* was a clear violation of the Organic Articles, which regulated Church matters. Langénieux was forced to reiterate the apolitical nature of the festivals ('une œuvre de pacification et d'union sur le terrain large du patriotisme') and argue that it was in no sense an assembly of the episcopate, merely a hope that all bishops might attend at one time or another.⁴¹ *La Croix* mocked the government's discomfort with religious celebrations in the cartoon, 'Téléphone d'Outre-Tombe': « Allo! M. Clovis! C'est moi...Bourgeois! Pourriez-vous faire démentir votre baptême? Ça nous gêne pour autoriser les fêtes en votre honneur. »⁴²

To some it seemed self-evident that the Reims fêtes were in essence monarchical. In 1894 the radical *La Justice* accused Langénieux of having conceived the project 'awaiting a restoration' and commented caustically that doubtless the cardinal was in possession of a new *Sainte Ampoule* that he was keen to employ.⁴³ From across the political spectrum royalists agreed, declaring, 'Reims appartient à l'histoire de la monarchie française et en cette année du quatorzième centenaire du baptême de Clovis, les royalistes y seraient plus qu'aucun chez eux.'⁴⁴ Yet, Langénieux was determined to avoid the royalist appropriation of the fêtes. In a well-publicised gesture he refused the request of the *Jeunesse Royaliste de Bordeaux* that their standard might be displayed in the cathedral over the course of the celebrations.⁴⁵ In his apolitical celebrations Langénieux was to re-interpret a myth that for much of the nineteenth century had been employed precisely to legitimate monarchy. As Christian Amalvi points out, for monarchists the baptism of Clovis demonstrated that, 'L'union indissoluble du Christ et de peuple français s'étant en effet opérée par la médiation royale, seule la monarchie est par essence capable d'incarner, pour les siècles des siècles, « la France unie ».'⁴⁶ Calla, a leading light of the *Jeunesse Royaliste*, told delegates at a banquet to mark the Saint-Philippe, 'autrefois nos rois...savaient se proclamer chrétiens....nous avons rêvés de belles fêtes de Clovis avec *l'Absent* pour les présider.'⁴⁷

Royalists had to content themselves with their own unofficial Reims congress in December, the *Réunion royaliste d'études sociales*. They could find a measure of consolation in the presence of La Tour du Pin, a key figure in the official fêtes, who served on the organising committee. At the royalist congress he presented a report on the monarchy and representation, testifying to his obsession with the corporatist organisation of society. The monarchy, he argued, stood for those rights of association

³⁹ Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, p. 75; Jacques Piou, *Le comte Albert de Mun, sa vie publique* (Paris: Spes, 1925), pp. 159-61.

⁴⁰ See Sedgwick, *Ralliement*. Piou, in his biography of Albert de Mun argued that there had been a real possibility of effective electoral co-operation with Méline's opportunists in 1898, wrecked only by the political folly of Étienne Lamy's *Fédération électorale*. See *Le comte*, pp. 171-7.

⁴¹ A note to Combes (February 1896) on a proposed National Congress of Bishops in August raised the question of legality. AN F¹⁹ 5627. *La France à Reims*, 1 April reported the anxieties of the *ministre de cultes*, the question of the violation of the law of 16 germinal an X and the assurances provided by Mgr. Langénieux.

⁴² *La Croix*, 8 April 1896.

⁴³ *La Justice*, 13 March 1894. In the Clovis myth, this phial, containing the holy chrism used to anoint the kings of France at the Reims coronation ritual, was brought from the heavens by a white dove. It was destroyed during the Revolution. See Le Goff, 'Reims'.

⁴⁴ *Réunion royaliste d'études sociales à Reims* (Paris: Oudin, 1897), p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Le Matin*, 25 March 1896. The Toulouse *Jeunesse royaliste*, who had hoped that Roger Lambelin, leader of the *Jeunesse royaliste*, would present their banner to Langénieux, decided instead to send it to the Pretender, the duc d'Orléans – it could be taken to Reims at the latter's coronation. *Le Temps*, 26 March 1896.

⁴⁶ Christian Amalvi, 'Le baptême de Clovis: heures et malheurs d'un mythe fondateur de la France contemporaine, 1814-1914,' *Bibliothèque de l'École de Chartes*, 147 (1989), pp. 538-610, at 584.

⁴⁷ Calla, 6 June 1896, cited in *La Jeunesse Royaliste de Lyon et du Sud-Ouest*, 15 June 1896.

that the Revolution had sought to deny. Yet, despite the potential embarrassment occasioned by La Tour du Pin's actions, it was clear that Langénieux had succeeded in his wish to marginalise the royalists, out of step with the Church in their uncompromising rejection of the *ralliement*.⁴⁸ It proved possible to decouple ultramontane Catholicism from royalism; by 1896 faith in the Christian vocation of France did not require for most any faith in Christian monarchy.⁴⁹ Noted Legitimist clerics such as Freppel and cardinal Louis-Édouard Pie of Poitiers were no longer alive, while Mgr. François de Rovérié de Cabrières of Montpellier, though invited to speak, managed to avoid giving vent to his well-known royalist opinions.⁵⁰ *La Jeunesse Royaliste de Lyon et du Sud-Ouest* complained, 'les manifestations imposantes dont Reims fut le théâtre avaient un caractère uniquement religieux et par conséquent contraire à la vérité historique...Il était...impossible si on prétendait conserver la vérité historique que les fêtes de Reims ne fussent pas des fêtes royalistes.'⁵¹ Jules Cornély in *Le Gaulois* attempted to shrug off the official stance, as reiterated by the *Congrès ecclésiastique*, arguing that the attitude of the clergy was a matter of indifference: 'la monarchie étant nécessaire se fera en dépit de ceux qui la combattent.'⁵²

Corporatist ideas were much in evidence at Reims, but as Langénieux's leadership demonstrated and ensured, royalist faith was for most not a corollary. La Tour du Pin's undeniable influence stopped well short of imparting a royalist tint to the proceedings. Lenervien of *Le Monde*, for instance, writing in *L'Avenir*, also looked to pilgrimages organised in terms of professional groups: 'La manifestation de la France chrétienne ne sera plus alors un concours d'individualités isolées dans des foules, mais le symbole animé du système corporatif et professionnel, approprié aux exigences modernes.' His theme was, however, renovation: 'la jeune démocratie venue à sa propre tour pour son baptême'.⁵³ The *abbé démocrate* Lemire, prime mover of the *Congrès ecclésiastique*, argued precisely in terms of the clergy understood as an element of the social body. Clarifying his ideas to Langénieux's *vicaire-général* Pierre-Louis Péchenard, he implied that the influential lay figures La Tour du Pin, Harmel and Henri Lorin had in fact entrusted him with this role.⁵⁴ Lemire too identified the advent of the democratic age, arguing, 'du baptistère de Reims il faut rapprocher le baptistère de la démocratie.'⁵⁵ By the close of 1896 the royalist *Réunion* was moved to denounce, 'l'illusion de croire que le baptistère de Reims pouvait servir à baptiser la Révolution.'⁵⁶ The substantial number who saw in the centenary the baptism of a new democratic France seemed to signal exactly that. At the *Congrès de la Jeunesse Catholique* Charles Jacquier declared, 'C'est la démocratie qu'il faut régénérer et que nous jeunes, soldats de demain, nous devons retremper dans le baptistère de Saint Remi.'⁵⁷ *Rallié* Étienne Lamy went even

⁴⁸ Comte Eugène de Lur-Saluces praised the *comité royaliste de Bordeaux* for their 'respectueux mais inébranable non possumus.' *La Jeunesse Royaliste de Lyon et du Sud-Ouest*, 15 June 1896.

⁴⁹ On this point see Grondeux, 'Le thème du baptême de Clovis'.

⁵⁰ Julien de Narfon, *Le Figaro*, 13 September 1896, 6 October 1896. De Narfon was convinced that Langénieux had demanded that Cabrières take an apolitical line. A summary report on the French episcopate had placed Cabrières alongside Freppel among the 'violents' or 'chevau-légers', the latter epithet a reference to the most intransigent faction of the legitimists. *Rapport d'ensemble*, n.d. (1881). A later report (n.d., context 1894) not only put Cabrières firmly in the camp of the 31 'mauvais' (along with cardinals Richard, Adolphe Perraud and Langénieux) but noted that he had had his salary withdrawn. AN F¹⁹ 5610.

⁵¹ *La Jeunesse Royaliste de Lyon et du Sud-Ouest*, 15 January 1897.

⁵² *Le Gaulois*, 2 September 1896.

⁵³ Ch.-A. Lenervien in *L'Avenir*, 19 February 1896.

⁵⁴ Rémond, *Les deux congrès*, pp. 6-9. Rémond concludes that the idea was in fact Lemire's own. Péchenard, who presided over the *congrès ecclésiastique*, played an important role in the running of the diocese, given that the cardinal's involvement in clerical politics made for frequent absences. Langénieux's poor health in 1896 gave him a prominent role in the fêtes. Official reports judged him 'ardent, intolérant, ultramontaine, plein de fougue...pour qui la loi civile et quantité négligeable quand il ne le considère pas comme lettre morte.' *Préfet to garde de sceaux, ministre de la justice et des cultes*, 20 September 1888, AN F¹⁹ 5610.

⁵⁵ Cited in *Le Figaro*, 16 August 1896.

⁵⁶ *Réunion royaliste*, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Cited in *L'Univers*, 15 May 1896.

further in his contribution to the volume published under the patronage of Langénieux to coincide with the bicentenary, *La France chrétienne dans l'histoire*.⁵⁸ Lamy, who might be seen as the semi-official spokesman of the *ralliement* at the time, following a personal meeting with Leo XIII in 1896, contributed the closing chapter.⁵⁹ He concluded – in line with the social Catholics of 1848 whom Pius IX had effectively anathematised for their pains – that the slogan ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’ was in fact derived from the gospels. The logic that flowed from this observation was momentous:

Il n’y a pas à détruire, il faut baptiser la Révolution française. Par le baptême d’un roi la France est devenue l’initiatrice de la civilisation sous la forme de la monarchie chrétienne. Par le baptême du peuple la France doit continuer et accroître cette civilisation sous la forme de la démocratie chrétienne....la papauté nous y convie, notre intérêt nous y oblige et Dieu nous attend.⁶⁰

II

On 1 October Cardinal Adolphe Perraud of Autun opened the *neuvaine* of Saint Remi with a sermon entitled, ‘La France, Peuple Choisi’. Perraud developed the classic concept of France’s election: as ‘this cohort of the vanguard’, the French enjoyed the divine favour once granted to Israel. He saluted, ‘le merveilleuse enchainement de prévenances et d’assistance divines qui composent la trame de nos annales nationales.’ The victories that followed the conversion of Clovis were victories of the Catholic Church and the start of a clear line of continuity – Clovis overcame the Arians; Charles Martel and Pépin overcame the followers of Muhammad; Charlemagne overcame the Saxon idol-worshippers; Godfrey de Bouillon and Saint Louis overcame the profaners and oppressors of the Holy Sepulchre. The present, however, was less consoling: ‘La vérité, la douloureuse vérité est que dans les mêmes limites géographiques nous sommes deux Frances....la question est de savoir laquelle des deux restera victorieuse.’ Nonetheless, the fact that France had overcome the threat of Islam, the threat of Protestantism and that the churches reopened in 1801 suggested that the ‘renegades of the national baptism’ could be opposed with optimism. There was a France, ‘qui garde pieusement, courageusement le trésor de nos vraies traditions; par le fond es ses entrailles elle tient à Jésus Christ et l’église catholique dont elle entend plus que jamais, rester la fille.’ Yet this was, Perraud emphatically indicated, a France of the *ralliement*:

cette France intelligente et libérale, qui, docile aux conseils et direction du Vicaire de Jésus Christ, sait ne pas confondre les formes politiques de gouvernements....avec les principes immuables de la civilisation chrétienne et ne refuse ni son obéissance ni son loyal concours aux institutions démocratiques.⁶¹

This reading of national history was very much in line with Langénieux’s thinking, as summed up in his foreword to the official publication of the centenary, *La France chrétienne dans l'histoire*. The historical credentials of the volume were stressed, with contributors including Godfrey Kurth, author of a parallel work on Clovis written under the inspiration of the ‘scientific’ and critical German historical tradition. Langénieux boasted that the contributors represented the *Institut de France*, the state and Catholic universities and all the *grandes écoles*. Yet such scholarly standards were to a certain extent subverted by, or at the very least existed in tension with Langénieux’s determinedly providentialist introduction. Langénieux, having praised the volume as ‘a work of science and patriotism’, proceeded to dilate on the providential nature of national history: ‘L’histoire n’est pas le récit quelconque des événements....c’est l’évolution providentielle de l’humanité autour de Jésus-Christ, véritable centre de

⁵⁸ R.P. Alfred Baudrillart (ed.), *La France chrétienne dans l'histoire. Ouvrage publié à l'occasion du XIV^e centenaire du baptême de Clovis* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1896).

⁵⁹ On Lamy’s role in the *ralliement* see Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, pp. 89-117. Sedgwick claims that Lamy absented himself from the centenary due to its reactionary orientation.

⁶⁰ Étienne Lamy, ‘Conclusion: Le Saint-Siège et la France – Pie IX et Léon XIII’, in *La France chrétienne dans l'histoire*, pp. 649-93, at 692-3.

⁶¹ Adolphe Perraud, *La France, Peuple Choisi* (Reims: Imprimerie de l’Archevêché, 1896).

l'histoire et du monde.' For Langénieux the book was to stand as an up-dated version of *Gesta Dei per Francos*, providing readers with, 'the memorial of its antique glories, the superb vision...of its apostolic mission, the forgotten image of Christian France in its great days.' The coronation ritual was identified as, 'the palpable and living witness to the indissoluble union of the religious principle and the political principle, the basis, law and strength of our national constitution.' Within this logic Langénieux inveighed against 'the politics of irreligion', and its malign impact: 'throwing the country out of its path and paralysing...its national energy'. The revolution was a tragedy and the counter-revolutionary schema of the expiatory scourging of a fallen nation was fully in evidence.⁶² These conclusions sat oddly with the closing essay provided by Lamy, in which he attempted a defence of the *Syllabus*, and pointed to the errors of the revolutionary faith in human reason alone, but above all praised Leo XIII, 'the Pope of *possumus*' and looked to bridge the damaging divorce between Church and Revolution.⁶³

Republican responses to this narrative were not slow in coming. While Gabriel Monod in *Revue Historique* judged *La France chrétienne dans l'histoire* severely as presenting 'a false and mutilated history', polemicists attacked the myth of Clovis.⁶⁴ The Frankish king's character was debated in an exchange between Eugène Courmeaux writing in the radical socialist newspaper *Le Franc Parleur* and *L'Avenir*. Courmeaux described the festivals as 'an immoral festival of the Church', drawing on Henri Martin's history to argue that Clovis was 'an abominable scoundrel', who had recourse to political murder. For Courmeaux it was of piece with the Church's ready approval of persecution as embodied in the Inquisition, the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres, the *dragonnades* and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.⁶⁵ *L'Avenir* appealed to Kurth's recent version which raised doubts over the issue of murder and claimed that the fêtes were not just Christian but a means of testifying to Europe - and particularly to Germany - France's 'titles of nobility', a nation at a time when other states were no more than barbarians.⁶⁶ Before Courmeaux's piece *Le Franc Parleur* had already published Henri Rochefort's considered opinions of the fêtes, arguing that the Pope as a foreigner had no business in commenting on French history. Rochefort saw no convincing lessons to be had: Sedan had succeeded Tolbiac; the crusades had ended in defeat; the Pope had lost his empire; and the marshals of the empire, officially returned to the Catholic faith had lost the conquests made by the *libre-penseur* generals of 1794.⁶⁷ Louis Dubreuilh also mocked the fêtes, ridiculing the foolish comparisons drawn between fifth-century Gaul and democratic and proletarian France. Dubreuilh diagnosed 'the l'irrémissible caducité du vieil Évangile'.⁶⁸

Yet, these dismissals of the commemoration of Clovis laid the republicans open to a familiar charge: anti-patriotism. In an open letter to Léon Gambetta in 1878, Freppel had attacked the former's statement, 'Nous ne devons pas laissez dans nos écoles blasphémer notre histoire':

Quoi, c'est vous et le parti violent dont vous êtes le chef qui constituerez le gardien et défenseur de notre histoire nationale! Vous qui datez cette histoire de [17]89 ou de [17]93 et ne voyez au-delà qu'une série d'horreurs et d'infamies! Vous qui n'êtes occupés qu'à bafouer nos grandeurs et nos gloires séculaires, à insulter nos rois, à rabaisser nos grands hommes, à dénigrer nos vieilles institutions.

This theme proved enduring, though ironically the republican concept of national history actually stretched beyond Clovis, with a cult of the Gaulish leader

⁶² Mgr. Langénieux foreword, *La France chrétienne dans l'histoire*, pp. vi, x, xiv.

⁶³ Lamy, 'Conclusion'.

⁶⁴ Boulanger, 'La mémoire au service du présent', p. 742.

⁶⁵ *Le Franc Parleur*, 9 February 1896 (or, in the Revolutionary calendar which the *Franc Parleur* also employed, 21 Plùviose, an 104); *L'Avenir*, 26 February 1896.

⁶⁶ *L'Avenir*, 12 February, 13 February, 26 February, 1896.

⁶⁷ Henri Rochefort, *Le Franc Parleur*, 4 February 1896.

⁶⁸ Louis Dubreuilh in *La Petite République*, reprinted in *Le Franc Parleur*, 5 February 1896.

Vercingétorix.⁶⁹ (For this reason the *Journal de Rouen* dismissed Clovis, leader of German tribe who substituted a scarcely less oppressive rule for Roman rule as not enjoying 'front-rank popularity' nor qualifying as a national hero: 'Brennus and Vercingétorix occupy a far more important place in our national patriotic calendar.')⁷⁰ On the reception of cardinal Perraud to the *Académie française* in 1888, Camille Doucet, as director, cited and endorsed the cardinal's words: 'Nous payons à un passé glorieux le tribut d'une sincère admiration et nous ne comprenons guère un amour intelligent de la patrie qui biffe quatorze siècles de son histoire.'⁷¹ Abbé J.-B. Klein developed these reflections in his book on the centenary, intended to expose the insufficiently well-known character and achievement of Clovis: it was a riposte to the 'profanateurs du passé...les fils de la Révolution [qui] proclament à haute voix que la France date à peine d'un siècle, que l'histoire de ses grandeurs, de sa gloire, de sa liberté commence avec la prise de la Bastille...une monstrueuse audace, une démente inouïe, un crime.'⁷²

In March the préfet of the Marne, Chrysostome Fosse, reported that the republican press were divided over the forthcoming fêtes: while some read them as political demonstrations that should be banned, others interpreted them as 'purely religious demonstrations without significance'.⁷³ The *Journal de Rouen* had concluded that the government should simply ignore the events, which it doubted would be received with much enthusiasm. Nonetheless, considerable attention was paid to what was said at Reims, and the combative language that some chose to employ did not go unchallenged. Perraud's *neuvaine* address provoked an interpellation in the *Chamber of Deputies*: on 12 November Léon Bourgeois asked the *Ministre de la Justice et des Cultes* how a cardinal could dare to state that France had betrayed her mission. The cardinal replied that he had not used the attributed phrase; that he was entirely ready to repeat his statement that 'if the baneful influence of positivism and freemasonry succeed in tearing us away from our faith...we will no longer be the France that came out of the baptistery of Reims and was placed by Providence at the vanguard of Christian civilization'; and concluded that he had spoken 'as a bishop and Frenchmen, as eager as anyone for France's national grandeur and prosperity.'⁷⁴

III

For Bonapartist Paul de Cassagnac little could be expected from the *Congrès National Catholique*, under the presidency of Thellier de Poncheville, 'fine fleur de la ralliement plat', assisted by Péchenard, a believer in the artificial *Œuvre des cercles ouvrières*. The mediocrity of the episcopate ensured that 'the government of freemasons and Jews can sleep easy...[the congress] will be a pleasant little chitchat'. The issue of the tactics needed to combat the de-Christianising policies would not be raised.⁷⁵ Others were less sure. *Le Temps* judged some contributions intemperate and ill-advised: 'les fanatiques font le jeu des monarchistes et des radicaux...une restauration monarchique et

⁶⁹ Eugen Weber, 'Gauls versus Franks: conflict and nationalism', in Robert Tombs (ed.), *Nationhood and Nationalism in France* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 8-21; Christian Amalvi, *De l'art et la manière d'accommoder les héros de l'histoire de France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1988), pp. 51-88; Krzysztof Pomain, 'Francs et Gaulois', in *Lieux de Mémoire*, II, pp. 2245-2300. It was in this light that *Le Courrier* (6 February 1896) judged 496 a triumph for the Church and a tragedy for Gaul: 'la mainmise définitive et brutale du cléricisme...sur la liberté de conscience, de l'autorité sur l'indépendance, de l'exploiteur sur l'exploité.' Mona Ozouf argues that republicans such as Jules Ferry were in fact keen to reclaim the national past as a whole. M. Ozouf, 'L'idée républicaine et l'interprétation du passé national', *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 53 (1998), pp. 1075-87.

⁷⁰ *Journal de Rouen* article cited in *L'Indépendant remois*, 9 March 1896.

⁷¹ Cited in abbé J.-B. Klein, *Gesta Dei Per Francos – Clovis Fondateur de la Monarchie Française, quatorzième centenaire du baptême à Reims, 25 décembre 1896* (Lyon: E. Vitte, 1896), p. vii.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. viii.

⁷³ Préfet Marne to direction des cultes, premier bureau, 24 March 1896.

⁷⁴ Perraud to Bourgeois, 17 November 1896, cited in *L'Univers* 22 November 1896. This open letter first appeared in the diocesan *Semaine religieuse*.

⁷⁵ Paul de Cassagnac, *L'Autorité*, 25 October 1896.

théocratique est une chimère puérile; mais un réveil de l'anti-cléricalisme violent est toujours possible.⁷⁶

The fall of the Bourgeois government had however brought a moderate *ministre de cultes*, Alfred Rambaud. For Rochefort this 'government Méline-[Louis]Barthou-[Baron Armand]de Mackau,' were good friends of the 'calotins,' who wished to defigure the national flag with image of the Sacred Heart.⁷⁷ Yet Rambaud, like Combes, had concerns over the fêtes and in particular Langénieux's ambition to assemble the French episcopate for the *neuvaine*. He wrote to Langénieux in September pointing out that he seemed to flout the *Concordat*: his first circulars announcing the papal jubilee and inviting the attendance of whole French episcopate went against the spirit of the laws, as did a further circular and communications to the Belgian and Dutch episcopate.⁷⁸ For *L'Éclair* this was no surprise:

Demander à l'Église de cesser d'être un parti politique, c'est lui demander de n'être plus l'Église....[l'Église est] un parti politique si intraitable qu'il n'a pas même voulu accepter les libertés politiques si restreintes de la Restauration...l'Église représente avant tout un principe de gouvernement, le principe théocratique. À moins de se suicider elle ne peut pas y renoncer.

As such the Church would never abide by the Concordat nor accept the principles of 1789.⁷⁹

The uncompromising arguments of the Jesuit Bernard Gaudeau (which prompted the comments of *Le Temps*) at the *Congrès National* seemed to prove *L'Éclair* right. Gaudeau required the government to publically profess the Catholic faith and pressed for a reconstituted France:

la constitution doit être pénétrée du droit chrétien...il faut que parmi les organes principes de la vie politique et sociale il y ait des éléments religieux pondérateurs, immuables et sacrés qui puissent, au moment voulu, prévenir ou corriger, au profit de la vérité de la loi chrétienne, les caprices brutaux d'un maître ou les erreurs dangereuses de la multitude maîtresse.

For Gaudeau the logical consequence of granting the Church the plenitude of its spiritual liberty was to recognise its superior rights in matters that fell under both the temporal power of the state and the spiritual power, notably education. Furthermore, the defence of true religion overrode any concepts of the right to publish freely. The Church, argued Gaudeau, was necessarily intolerant: 'L'Église est une mère et il n'y a rien au monde plus légitimement intolérant que l'amour d'une mère.'⁸⁰ Though Gaudeau claimed these arguments were in line with Leo XIII's ideas, it was scarcely the language of conciliation.

The *Bulletin religieuse du diocèse de Reims* was overly optimistic in claiming that, 'les catholiques ont fait...usage de leurs libertés, mais avec une grande modération et une grande sagesse.'⁸¹ *La Lanterne* disagreed: 'le congrès, qui suivant la promesse de Mgr Langénieux devait se cantonner exclusivement sur le terrain religieux n'a été d'un bout à l'autre qu'une longue manifeste politique contre la République et les principes qui en sont la base.'⁸² Even the conservative *Le Figaro* judged that, though perfectly legal, the *Congrès* was contrary to 'the most French politics of the Pope', giving voice to Jesuit-inspired arguments which the papacy had abandoned. This perhaps betrayed Langénieux's true position: 'À voir Reims devenir ainsi la capitale de la réaction il est

⁷⁶ *Le Temps*, 23 October 1896.

⁷⁷ Rochefort, *L'Intransigeant*, 25 October 1896. Rochefort showed his scorn by associating the government with the royalist baron de Mackau. Abbé Alazard and abbé Brettes both called for the Sacré-Cœur to adorn the national flag, though the *Congrès* limited itself to endorsing the project of the consecration of France to the Sacred-Heart. *Congrès National Catholique*, pp. 29-35; *L'Univers*, 27 October 1896. By contrast at the 1900 Bourges *congrès ecclésiastique* abbé Lemire vigorously rejected this proposal as counter-productive, emphasising his attachment to the tricolour. Rémond, *Les deux congrès*, pp. 186-91.

⁷⁸ *La Libre Parole*, 28 September 1896.

⁷⁹ *L'Éclair*, 19 September 1896.

⁸⁰ Speech of 21 October 1896, cited in *L'Univers*, 30 October 1896.

⁸¹ Cited in *L'Univers*, 1 November 1896.

⁸² *La Lanterne*, 24 October 1896.

impossible de ne pas souvenir que le cardinal Langénieux a....signé le fameux manifeste de trois cardinaux [sic] qui protestaient contre les actes de légitimation de la République émanés spontanément du Saint-Siège.⁸³

If not necessarily the capital of reaction, nor an anti-republican political manifesto, the *Congrès national* certainly concerned itself with political questions. While some speakers prescribed prayer, pilgrimage and expiatory devotions as the indispensable remedies for the *relèvement* of a chastised France, others identified the need for co-ordinated political action. This was presaged by the address of the Dominican Jacques Monsabré on 'Modern France at the baptistery of Reims' at the high point of the *neuvaine*, shortly before Langénieux's solemn act of renewal. Monsabré noted to need to add 'works of combat' to the existing works of prayer and love:

Nous commençons à comprendre que la patience et l'attente résignée aux interventions divines ne font qu'enhardir les ennemis de notre foi; qu'il nous faut aider des manifestations publiques de la pensée et créer une presse loyale, désintéressée, active, qui défende notre honneur, nos intérêts et nos libertés; que nous devons nous grouper, nous consulter, nous encourager et nous soutenir dans la lutte par des associations et des congrès; qu'il est temps de démasquer la puissance occulte qui travaille dans l'ombre à la déchristianisation du monde, d'éclairer l'opinion et de marcher résolument à la conquête de nos saintes libertés.⁸⁴

Even when treating questions apparently unrelated to politics, political considerations could intrude. A member of the Franciscan Third Order extended his treatment of the homage to the Sacred Heart to appeal for the recognition of Jesus Christ as 'the political leader of France'. He envisaged the creation of, 'a Christian city within the city of indifference....a state within the State, a Christian France....at the centre of the faithless France.' Civic and political rights were the key to the consecration of France to the Sacred Heart, commune by commune and department by department. Electoral candidates would be mandated to make the act of consecration.⁸⁵

At the close of the *Congrès* Mgr. Charles-François Turinaz of Nancy, after treating the question of the Church's relations with the people, concluded with a call for union, a programme of reform and the necessary 'practical struggle in the electoral field so that, while respecting the constitution of the country, [we can] overthrow this bastille of anti-Christian laws, which, God be thanked, do not form one body [with the Republic].'⁸⁶ A practical framework was advanced by Michel de Bellomayre, who argued that alongside standard *comités d'œuvres* departmental electoral committees were required. Bellomayre reflected, 'il y a mille quatre cent ans l'Église a baptisé la puissance publique....aujourd'hui....le souverain n'a pas les sentiments qu'animaient Clovis....il faut tomber sur lui l'eau régénératrice; elle jaillira de l'urne électorale.' He cautioned, however, 'Absentez-vous des contestations anti-constitutionnelles; elles sont vaines, elles divisent....elles compromettent.'⁸⁷ This understanding of the *ralliement* chimed with that of Albert de Mun. In 1892, addressing the *Ligue de propagande catholique et social*, de Mun stated, 'il faut que vous soyez dégagés de tout préoccupation politique, et qu'en acceptant les formes, les habitudes de langage et les institutions de la démocratie, vous n'ayez plus qu'une idée: la rendre chrétienne.'⁸⁸

The dominant understanding of the *ralliement* expressed at the *Congrès* was therefore not that of a conservative alliance with moderate republicans, but a determinedly Catholic politics that sought to free the Republic from the secularising legislation of the 1880s. This was a political line that Langénieux was to pursue. In 1897 the cardinal wrote a letter of support to the priests of Châlons-sur-Marne who were campaigning to raise funds for free Christian schools, published in the clerical

⁸³ *Le Figaro*, 23 October 1896.

⁸⁴ Monsabré, 6 October 1896, cited in *L'Univers*, 6 October 1896.

⁸⁵ *Congrès national catholique compte rendu*, pp. 158-60.

⁸⁶ Turinaz, 25 October, cited in *L'Univers*, 27 October 1896.

⁸⁷ *Congrès national catholique compte-rendu*, pp. 588, 593.

⁸⁸ Albert de Mun, *Discours de M. le comte Albert de Mun, président de la Ligue, prononcé à la réunion des Ligueurs de St. Etienne, le 18 décembre 1892* (Paris: F. Levé, 1892), p. 12.

newspaper *L'Avenir*. He defined the *loi scolaire* as 'a sectarian and party law that is in no way....a necessary emanation of the republican principle', urging Catholics to fight against, 'the harmful effects of this discriminatory legislation which has divided the country in two and which a liberal and truly republican politics would be the first to condemn.'⁸⁹

Yet, despite this desire to transform the Republic - indeed, arguably to dismantle what many republicans saw as the fundamental laws of the Republic, the adherents of the *Congrès* emphasised not merely their acceptance of the republican forms, but also their patriotic credentials. As the *Congrès de la jeunesse* had done, they paid tribute to the martyred abbé Eugène Miroy, executed by the Prussians in 1871. Thellier de Pocheville declared,

C'est devant la France avant tout que nous découvrons la tête. À Saint-Remi nous rendons hommage à la France naissante; au pied de la statue de Jeanne d'Arc....nous acclamons la France victorieuse; ici en présence de ce tombeau c'est devant la France vaincue que nous nous inclinons avec un respect plus profond, plus dévoué, plus aimant que jamais.⁹⁰

At the close of the *Congrès* a wreath was placed before the state of Joan.⁹¹ Langénieux, who consistently emphasised his patriotism, reached out to the regime by arranging for a *Te Deum* in recognition of the success of the parallel fêtes that the Republic was caught up in, the celebration of the visit of Tsar Nicholas II.⁹²

IV

Celebrations in Reims in 1896 were not confined to the cathedral. On 15 July 1896, the anniversary of her triumphal entry to the city, Félix Faure, president of the Republic, inaugurated a statue of Joan of Arc. Though the republican Joseph Fabre's project for a national festival in Joan's honour had come to nothing, the Republic was willing to sponsor the cult.⁹³ Yves-Marie Hilaire argues that this official ceremony was a riposte to the celebrations of Clovis from which the French state kept aloof: 'la République oppose la fille du peuple, Jeanne, au roi Clovis.'⁹⁴ Yet, despite Faure's involvement, there was nothing to signal a specifically republican Joan. The composition of the commission appointed by the *Académie de Reims* implied a genuinely national project: cardinal Langénieux acted as the honorary president, assisted by the préfet of the Marne, the mayor of Reims and the general in command of the 12th division garrisoned at Reims.⁹⁵ This deliberate conjunction of state, municipal, ecclesiastical and military authorities demonstrated, at least ostensibly, a strong consensus on the need to honour Joan. It was perhaps no surprise that the general secretary of the *Académie* identified her as 'the admirable ideal of reconciliation and concord.'⁹⁶

The patriotic logic was expressed in a report of 1886 on behalf of the *Académie*. The statue was presented as, '[une] œuvre de réparation qui n'a pas seulement le caractère d'une œuvre locale, mais bien aussi et surtout le caractère d'une œuvre nationale; c'est la glorification du patriotisme par la représentation de cette vierge

⁸⁹ Cited in préfet de la Marne to ministre de la justice et des cultes, 20 November 1897, AN F¹⁹ 2566.

⁹⁰ Cited in *L'Univers*, 25 October 1896.

⁹¹ *L'Univers*, 27 October 1896.

⁹² *L'Univers*, 11 October 1896.

⁹³ Fabre proposed a national festival in Joan's honour as a deputy in 1884 and as a senator in 1894. See Rosemonde Sanson, 'La fête de Jeanne d'Arc en 1894 : Controverse et célébration', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 20 (1973), pp. 444-63. For a hostile response see Paul de Cassagnac, *L'Autorité*, 1 May 1894, 23 May 1894, 11 June 1894 collected in idem., *Pour Dieu, Pour la France: Tome VI* (Paris: L'Autorité, 1905), pp. 277-9, 280-3, 284-7.

⁹⁴ Hilaire, 'Les célébrations du XIV^e centenaire', p. 686.

⁹⁵ Alphonse Gosset, *L'Inauguration de la statue de Jeanne d'Arc à Reims* (Reims: Imprimerie de l'Académie, 1896). See also Henri Jadot, *Les statues de Reims en 1888* (Reims: F. Michaud, 1888).

⁹⁶ Henri Jadot, *Jeanne d'Arc à Reims* (Reims: F. Michaud, 1887), p. 2.

vallante qui en fut le type le plus pur et le plus achevé.⁹⁷ Langénieux, who spoke in the cathedral of Orléans in 1885 to celebrate the 456th anniversary of the deliverance of the city, was keen to honour Joan, the saint and martyr who died for the causes of God and the Patrie.⁹⁸ In 1894, in the wake of Leo XIII placing the question of the beatification of Joan before the court of Rome, he reminded the faithful of his diocese that, though Joan was primarily remembered in terms of Orléans and Rouen, Reims had a claim to her memory: 'le triomphe fut à Reims...elle entra dans notre basilique comme une radieuse apparition de la Victoire, comme une angélique incarnation de la Patrie, de la Religion et de la Paix.'⁹⁹ While Christian arguments might be made for both Clovis and Joan, so too could national arguments: Auguste Leseur, author of the report for the *Académie*, looked beyond the immediate project, arguing for a monument to national origins. In his vision, a statue of Clovis would be a worthy pendant to that of Joan.¹⁰⁰

Summing up the decade-long process that it had taken to secure Reims' statue of Joan, Henri Paris told the *Académie* that the presence of Faure conclusively proved the national character and importance of the project.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, Faure's decision to inaugurate the statue did draw significant hostile comment. Henri Rochefort argued in *L'Intransigeant* that Faure would find that what was claimed to be a patriotic ceremony would in fact be wholly and exclusively clerical. The celebration was an 'historical fraud', an attempt to 'appropriate the heroine, for want of the possibility of burning her again.'¹⁰² On the other side of the political spectrum, Calla of the *Jeunesse royaliste* told a royalist rally in Saint Omer, '[le] gouvernement va saluer Jeanne d'Arc à Reims et n'ose pas entrer dans l'Église où la sainte s'agenouilla aux côtés du roi.'¹⁰³ Faure's decision in fact echoed that of his predecessor, Sadi Carnot, who in 1891 attended the festivities in Orléans, but absented himself from the religious ceremony.¹⁰⁴ At the inauguration Faure and Langénieux exchanged courtesies. Langénieux, who had compared Joan to Saint Clothilde, stressing that under her influence France had renewed her baptismal promises and returned to her traditions, explained to Faure that like Joan his patriotism sprang from his religious convictions. In reply Faure expressed his admiration for Langénieux's teachings that connected the interests of France, the Republic and Religion, teachings that were worthy of the respect of every Frenchman.¹⁰⁵ The *Bulletin des fêtes* was moved to comment, 'ce jour doit compter comme une date historique, comme le sacré de la République française, grande est forte, ainsi que tous ses enfants, dans le respect des lois et l'amour de la patrie.'¹⁰⁶

Others, however, pressed for a less conciliatory reading of Joan. As the commentaries on Faure's actions reveal, Joan was as much a source of division as consensus, a contested heroine. In 1887 Perraud had attacked the republican version, insisting, 'Let us not secularize Joan: that would be to destroy her.' He concluded ironically that if the school texts on civic morals wished to uphold Joan as a model of courage and self-sacrifice, 'Elle rendra d'ailleurs à nos contemporains le service de leur rappeler que toute grandeur et toute gloire ne datent pas pour nous de la prise de la

⁹⁷ Auguste Leseur, *La Statue de Jeanne d'Arc à Reims: Rapport de l'Académie de Reims* (Reims: F. Michaud, 1886), p. 4.

⁹⁸ Mgr. Langénieux, *La Cause de Jeanne d'Arc. Panégyrique prononcé dans la cathédrale d'Orléans, le vendredi 8 mai 1885, pour le 456^e anniversaire de la délivrance d'Orléans* (Orléans: Herluison, 1885).

⁹⁹ Mgr. Langénieux, *Lettre pastorale numéro 172* (Reims: Imprimerie de l'archevêché, 1894).

¹⁰⁰ Leseur, *La statue*.

¹⁰¹ *Jeanne d'Arc - Erection de sa statue à Reims* (Reims: E. Bugg, 1896).

¹⁰² Henri Rochefort, *L'Intransigeant*, 25 June 1896.

¹⁰³ Calla, 25 July 1896, cited in *La Jeunesse Royaliste de Lyon et du Sud-Ouest*, 15 September 1896.

¹⁰⁴ *L'Esafette* reported at the time, 'en dehors de l'action religieuse [Carnot va] représenter à Orléans la patrie qui se souvient de Jeanne.' 25 March 1891. *L'Estafette* advanced the patriotic republican interpretation of Joan, noting 'une certain audace pour chercher à confisquer au profit des partisans du trône et de l'autel la pauvre fille qui fut abandonnée par le roi et martyrisée par l'Église.' 19 March 1890.

¹⁰⁵ *La France à Reims en 1896*, 1 August 1896.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 August 1896. Admittedly, it was regretted that Faure did not realise the dream of 'nos cœurs français et catholiques...un acte de foi en la souveraineté de Dieu, le chef de l'État donnant l'exemple.'

Bastille et la *Déclaration des droits de l'homme*.¹⁰⁷ At the congress of the Franciscan Third Order Marie-Clément d'Oloron presented a report entitled, 'Jeanne d'Arc et les catholiques militantes'. He reminded the 'lukewarm' that, 'la lutte ferme, courageuse, constant jusqu'à la victoire est absolument nécessaire; lutte sans trêve ni merci contre des adversaires qui....ne songent qu'à empiéter....à tout envahir.' For Oloron, Joan was an inspirational model for the Third Order, who recognised the need to restore the 'holy kingdom' of Christ, combated freemasonry ('the people and the army of the devil') and rejected liberalism, 'a pious illusion....the dream of an impossible conciliation between Christian society and anti-Christian society, between Christ and Belial, or, if you prefer, between the Church and the Revolution.'¹⁰⁸ At the *Congrès national* canon Léon Dehon, closely involved with the Third Order and *démocratie chrétienne*, invoked the spirit of Joan, who remade France in bringing the dauphin to Reims, just as Sainte Clothilde had brought Clovis. The Joan-inspired task of 1896 was, '[de] bouter dehors l'ennemi nouveau, l'athéisme sociale'.¹⁰⁹

V

The overall success of 1896 in Reims demonstrated that there was a wide constituency ready to celebrate a Catholic vision of the French nation. The contributors to *La France chrétienne dans l'histoire* give some indication of the diversity of views of those ready to celebrate this Catholic narrative. There was little common ground between Georges Goyau, a key figure within the Christian democratic movement, Mgr. Maurice le Sage d'Hauteroche d'Hulst, the reactionary and monarchist rector of the *Institut catholique de Paris* and Catholic republicans Étienne Lamy and Henri Wallon.¹¹⁰ Yet Langénieux, in excluding royalist associations, had set out a minimum requirement: a readiness to at least remain silent over the question of the Republic. Those whose understanding of Catholic France was framed in terms of the forty kings who made France were not part of the official festivals. This is not, of course, to deny that royalists attended the fêtes in an individual capacity: royalist luminaries baron Armand de Mackau, Charles Chesnelong and André Buffet participated in the Paris pilgrimage.¹¹¹ Reims took place within the broad context of the *ralliement*, notwithstanding the fact that attendees included vehement enemies of the Republic. While for some Joan taught the message of the need to combat the Republic - or at the very least those who governed it - others saw in Joan grounds for patriotic reconciliation. Faure and Langénieux apparently found common ground in honouring Joan. This effort to disentangle the Church from royalist and anti-Republican politics was by no means unique to Reims. The *abbés démocrates* symbolised a rejection of the tutelage of the nobility in Catholic regions. Royalists could find themselves under attack for their refusal to abide by Leo XIII's directives. At the Moulins *Congrès des œuvres catholiques* of September 1896 monarchists walked out in protest after Barrière, canon of Clermont-Ferrand, denounced the intransigent royalist press for compromising the cause of the Church.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Perraud, 'Jeanne, Message de Dieu. Deuxième panégyrique à Jeanne d'Arc, 8 mai 1887', in Adolphe Perraud, *Discours militaires* (Paris: P. Téqui, 1896), pp. 238-86, at 281.

¹⁰⁸ Marie-Clément d'Oloron, *Jeanne d'Arc et les catholiques militantes* (Ligugé: Imprimerie St. Martin, 1897), iii, p. 18. On the Third Order: Mayeur, 'Tiers ordre franciscain'.

¹⁰⁹ *Congrès national catholique compte-rendu*, pp. 742-62.

¹¹⁰ Though a republican, it might be argued that Wallon's appreciation of French history leaned in a decidedly conservative direction. In 1890 and 1891 he attacked proposals to honour Georges Danton - his argument that Danton was responsible for the September massacres (1792) was denounced by senators on the left as offering a reading of history echoing the infamous history manual of Loriguet. See Henri Wallon, 'Interpellation adressée au ministre de l'intérieur sur quelques arrêtés du préfet de la Seine relatifs à la dénomination des rues de Paris,' *Journal Officiel*, 25 July 1890; idem., 'Interpellation adressé au ministre de l'intérieur sur l'inauguration à Paris de la statue de Danton pour le quatorze juillet,' *Journal Officiel*, 8 July 1891.

¹¹¹ *La France à Reims*, 1 July 1896.

¹¹² Rapport de commissaire de police, 26 September 1896, forwarded by préfet Allier to ministre des cultes, 28 September 1896, AN F¹⁹ 5626.

Although royalists had argued that Reims was fundamentally a commemoration of Christian monarchy, it is arguable that Clovis was in fact not at the heart of the celebrations. Reims celebrated the narrative of Christian France, 'la fille aînée de l'Église'. Clovis marked the inception of this narrative, but the king himself was no more than the instrument of Providence. It was certainly important to reject republican accounts that suggested Clovis was responsible for the murders of rivals and even family relatives; Klein devoted considerable space to critiquing the accounts of Augustin Thierry, François Guizot and Henri Martin and explaining the inaccuracies of Gregory of Tours.¹¹³ Yet arguably St Remi received more attention. Emphasis was laid upon the founder saints of the French nation and the churchmen who had guided the monarchy. During the *neuvaine* celebrations cardinal Victor Lecot of Bordeaux cited Joseph de Maistre to the effect that the bishops had made France 'as bees make a beehive'.¹¹⁴ Mgr., later cardinal, Stanislas Touchet of Orléans drew attention to Ste Clothilde, Christian wife of Clovis, Ste Geneviève, who saved Paris from Clovis and Joan of Arc, 'the incarnation of the Patrie'.¹¹⁵ St Remi was hailed as the 'father of the Patrie...the purest and most striking personification of this episcopate that created France'.¹¹⁶ In addition to the translation of the relics of St Remi, the diocese organised a procession where the relics of St Remi were accompanied by those Ste Clothilde, St Vaast (religious instructor of Clovis), St Principe (brother of St Remi and bishop of Soissons), Ste Balsamie (nurse of St Remi), Ste Céline (mother of St Remi), St Génebaud (nephew of St Remi and bishop of Laon) and St Montan (who had announced the birth of St Remi).¹¹⁷ Nothing, argued *L'Univers*, spoke more of the essentially French aspect to the centenary than the willingness of other dioceses to lend their relics to Reims.¹¹⁸

Langénieux presented Reims as an apolitical celebration of the French nation. Yet in the first place this was a challenge to the republican conception of national history. Among those who supported the centenary were outspoken opponents of the Republic, quite ready to argue that the republicans were not truly French. In *La Vérité* Arthur Loth claimed that to be French was to 'be attached by the soul to this noble Patrie...to love this whole past, this glorious historic bloc', and asserted, 'they believe themselves to be French, but they are only republicans. Their France is not true France, the France celebrated and glorified by the Catholics in the person of Clovis, her illustrious founder...but the false France of the Revolution'.¹¹⁹ If those involved in the official fêtes did not go to these lengths, forthright opposition to the Revolution was a commonplace. Bourgeois raised the question of Perraud's reading of contemporary French history in the Chamber of Deputies. In the second place, clashes between Church and state were not entirely avoided: on 24 June the Paris pilgrimage gave rise to a direct confrontation between the pilgrims and the police occasioned by the reported desire of the pilgrims to ceremonially process to the cathedral with their banners in defiance of official regulations.¹²⁰ In the third place, despite Langénieux's statement, 'Catholics will not prove to be a party', political questions pervaded the atmosphere of Reims.¹²¹ The

¹¹³ Klein, *Gesta dei per francos*. Others saw more of the barbarian in Clovis: Mgr. Louis Baunard, rector of the Catholic University of Lille, referred to the influence of the Gospels transforming the cult of violence found in Clovis into the principle of respect for the weak found in St Louis. Baunard, 'Discours prononcé dans la basilique de St-Remi au pèlerinage de la jeunesse catholique à Reims, 11 mai 1896,' in idem., *Nouveaux mélanges oratoires, tome III* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1900), pp. 373-88.

¹¹⁴ Speech 5 October 1896, cited in *L'Univers* 7 October 1896.

¹¹⁵ Cited by marquis d'Auray, *La Vérité*, 2 November 1896.

¹¹⁶ Klein, *Gesta Dei Per Francos*, p. 318.

¹¹⁷ *La Vérité*, 7 October 1896.

¹¹⁸ *L'Univers*, 19 April 1896. The vexed question of processions was raised during 1896 - legislation prohibited 'exterior displays of the Catholic cult.' The municipality reportedly acted to prevent a procession of the relics of Saint-Remi from the basilica to the cathedral in October. *La Vérité*, 17 October 1896. On this issue see Martin Simpson, 'Republicanizing the City: Radical Republicans in Toulouse, 1880-1890', *European History Quarterly*, 34 (2004), pp. 157-90. For the legislative aspect see AN F⁷ 12390.

¹¹⁹ *La Vérité*, 2 December 1896.

¹²⁰ Telegrams préfet Marne to ministre de l'intérieure (Surêté), 24 June 1896, 25 June 1896, AN F¹⁹ 5627.

¹²¹ Langénieux, cited in *L'Univers*, 2 March 1896.

congresses were not designed to meditate on the meaning of 496, but to debate the challenges that faced the Church. As the cardinals' manifesto had made plain, for many within the Church the government was identified with freemasonry and seen as intent on persecuting the Church. The sense of a Manichean struggle against the descendants of the Revolution informed many of the participants. The *Congrès national* predictably adopted a resolution against freemasonry.¹²² As Dehon urged, there was an increasing sense of the need to organise for concerted political action.

The participants at the congresses of Reims sought to grapple with two profound questions: first, the social question and second, the political question. Turinaz confronted the issue of popular indifference, declaring, 'We must go to the people to bring them back to the Church.' There was, however, a vigorous engagement with the issues raised by Leo XIII's 1891 *Rerum Novarum* and a wide range of *œuvres catholiques* had been developed since the defeat. In May the *Congrès Ouvrier Chrétien* drew an attendance of 600, including 213 delegates from Catholic associations from every city in France. Thellier de Poncheville stated their intention to challenge socialists and engaged with the vexed issue of trade associations and the question of how the common interests of trades might be represented.¹²³ The *Congrès National Catholique* demonstrated a concern for social issues and drew up a social programme based on the principles elaborated at Rome by Harmel and Camille Féron-Vrau with the blessing of Leo XIII in 1895. Their willingness to countenance not only *syndicats mixtes* but also worker-only *syndicats* demonstrated a readiness to move beyond the paternalistic Social Catholicism embodied in de Mun's *Œuvre des cercles ouvrières*.¹²⁴ The Reims congresses indicate the multiple and innovative ways in which Catholics engaged with the social question under the inspiration of *Rerum Novarum*. Harmel, de Mun, La Tour du Pin, Lemire and others readily addressed the social question and offered ways forward. The political question was altogether harder. Was it possible to define a Catholic politics? This effort to think through an effective electoral approach and attempt to organise was by no means unique. The congress of *La Croix* in September was dominated by issues of propaganda and electoral action; an official report assessed it as aiming at 'a religious crusade against republican institutions and personnel'.¹²⁵

Reims revealed that there was no simple answer to the question of political action, beyond the basic principle of unity and organisation. Congresses pointed the way ahead: Bellomayre's resolutions envisaged departmental committees, regional congresses and an annual *Congrès national catholique*. At Paris in 1897 Bellomayre, vice-president of the second *Congrès national catholique*, had the satisfaction of gaining the almost unanimous acceptance of an electoral federation pact, presented as the work of a delegation from the Reims *congrès*.¹²⁶ If Reims was understood as disappointingly reticent with regard to the *ralliement*, the fact the 1897 *Congrès* was willing to endorse the *Fédération électorale* might be seen to reflect a certain political evolution. The *Fédération* sprang from Leo XIII's decision to entrust Catholic republican Étienne Lamy

¹²² *L'Univers*, 23 October 1896.

¹²³ *La France à Reims en 1896*, 1 June 1896.

¹²⁴ *L'Univers*, 26 October 1896. Together with his brother-in-law, Philibert Vrau, Camille founded the *Association des patrons chrétiens*. Mayeur argues that the 1895 declaration was in part guided by Leo XIII's wishes to restore harmony to the social Catholic movement: 'Tiers ordre', p. 185. He also notes that the divides between social Catholicism and *démocratie chrétienne* must not be overdrawn: 'Catholicisme intransigeant'; Nord, 'Three views'.

¹²⁵ Report, s.d. [1896] to ministre de l'intérieur et des cultes. The congress was held 14-17 September 1896 in Paris. AN F¹⁹ 5626.

¹²⁶ *L'Univers*, 6 December 1897. The proceedings of the 1897 Paris *Congrès* (30 November-5 December) are usefully summarised in *L'Univers*, 2-7 December 1897. The *Fédération électorale* was also endorsed by the Lyon *Congrès de la Démocratie Chrétienne*, 9-14 December 1897: *L'Univers*, 10-15 December 1897. It chimed with the thinking of *abbés démocrates* such as Lemire and Paul Naudet who attended both congresses - the latter denounced the monarchist-informed ideas of *Union Conservatrice* and argued for a federative model in Paris.

with the organisation of Catholic electoral action in 1898 - though his role was obscured until the close of 1897.¹²⁷

Certainly, Reims did not indicate a Church that had entirely abandoned the language of the counter-revolution, though its professions of having abandoned any alliance with royalism rang true. Reims demonstrated that royalist claims to constitute the natural representatives and defenders of the Church had become untenable, notwithstanding the fact that many royalists had long since shifted from dynastic politics to politics of 'religious and social defence' and ideas of 'exclusively Catholic' politics.¹²⁸ As Bellomayre's role in the *Fédération électorale* makes clear, even in 1896 not all were resolute opponents of any practical co-operation with republican moderates. Well before 1896 some had serious doubts as to the political effectiveness of a single Catholic party. If circumstances were radically different from 1885, when Leo XIII's objections had put a stop to de Mun's proposals, the risk of a single Catholic party being identified with royalist reactionaries remained. It was also seen to make little political sense. At the 1897 *Congrès national catholique* Jules Bonjean argued that despite baptismal statistics, committed Catholics were in fact a minority and needed to build alliances with moderate republicans. The *abbé démocrate* Paul Naudet concurred, arguing that a single Catholic party had virtually no prospect of electoral success.¹²⁹ The *Congrès* revealed little sympathy for the royalists who protested against the *Fédération électorale* on the grounds that its first article stated 'Loyal acceptance of the constitutional field'.¹³⁰ Yet the resolution voted indicated that, though they might appeal to republican principles, the participants' expectations were likely to discourage even moderate 'Opportunist' republicans. The 'alliances fécondes' that Bonjean envisaged were hard to build on the basis of an announced desire to revise republican laws (particularly, it was clear, the *loi scolaire*): 'Réforme, en ce qu'elles ont de contraire au droit commun et à la liberté, des lois dirigées contre les catholiques.'¹³¹ Lamy's insistence that an intransigent stand on the *loi scolaire* should be avoided was hard to square with this pronouncement. The mixed fortunes of the *Fédération*, which struggled to hold its adherents together, reveal that deeper unity was elusive in 1898.¹³²

Yet, over and above the questions as to how a Catholic politics might function, there was a tension between the acceptance of republican institutions and democracy and the desire to fundamentally reshape the regime, even on the part of those who could not be accused of harbouring royalist sympathies. Doubts over the effectiveness of a parliamentary regime were voiced. At the royalist *Congrès de La Tour du Pin* emphasised that only monarchy could deliver a regime that truly represented France. Originally, he had envisioned Reims in terms of a reconstituted *États-Généraux*: delegates of provinces, villages and professional associations would present *cahiers*, while the *Congrès national catholique*, consisting of the representatives of the various *œuvres catholiques* would produce a programme of Christian politics.¹³³ If the

¹²⁷ Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, pp. 89-117; Mayeur, 'Les Congrès', pp. 186-7; Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), pp. 96-8.

¹²⁸ In 1884, following the death of the comte de Chambord, intransigent royalist Eugène de Barrau argued that the only acceptable option was to adopt 'an absolutely Catholic stance', *Revue religieuse du diocèse de Rodez et de Mende*, 13 June 1884. In 1889 *cheval-léger* Gabriel de Belcastel, who had effectively renounced political action but focused on religious issues, was asked to persuade legitimist Émile Keller to stand as 'a purely Catholic candidate' against the anticlerical Boulangist Paul de Susini (thereby opposing the overall political strategy of the Pretender, the comte de Paris). Letter 9 September 1889, ADH-G 1J 1370.

¹²⁹ *L'Univers*, 6 December 1897.

¹³⁰ *L'Univers*, 6 December 1897. Nicoulaud's efforts to revive a *Union Conservatrice* were rebuffed - *L'Univers* followed Bellomayre and Naudet in stressing the potentially disastrous consequences of falling into what was a thinly camouflaged *Union monarchique*. Eugène Vuillot denounced the 'refractory' (or 'oblique') Catholic newspapers (in particular *La Vérité*) that supported this proposal for their deliberate disobedience to papal directives: *L'Univers* 9 December 1897.

¹³¹ Programme of the *Fédération électorale*, in *L'Univers*, 6 December 1897.

¹³² Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, pp. 89-117; Passmore, *The Right in France*, pp. 96-8.

¹³³ *Réunion royalise*; René de La Tour du Pin Chambly, 'La rénovation sociale chrétienne: pèlerinages et congrès sociales', in *L'Avenir*, 13-17 March 1896.

monarchical aspect of this proposal and the language redolent of the *ancien régime* possessed little resonance, in his corporatist ideas de La Tour du Pin was not out of step with the bulk of those at the Reims congresses. For many the issue of representation was far from straightforward. Lemire posed the fundamental question: how effectively did the current institutions function in terms of democratic representation? In the 1897 *Congrès nationale de la démocratie chrétienne*, ideas first raised at the Reims *congrès* were debated: the obligatory vote, referenda, *syndicats professionnels* and the question of whether a representative assembly of delegates from trade bodies was required. As René Rémond observes, despite its embrace of democratic principles and orientation towards the people, '[la démocratie chrétienne] ne postule aucunement l'adhésion aux principes de 1789, mais implique au contraire le corporatisme, la décentralisation, la restauration des corps intermédiaires.'¹³⁴ In this light the reading of a report by de La Tour du Pin at the 1896 Lyon *Congrès de la démocratie chrétienne* is perhaps less surprising than it might seem.

The *abbés démocrates* were also keen to emphasise their patriotism. At the *Congrès ecclésiastique*, under the influence of Lemire, it was argued that seminary students should perform their military service in full and strive to be model soldiers; universal military service offered an opportunity to display their patriotism and gain popular esteem.¹³⁵ Lemire, speaking in the region of Flanders he represented as deputy, used the Tsar's visit to argue that the divide between Church and regime could be overcome. He claimed that Leo XIII had facilitated a visit that testified to the respect enjoyed by the Republic; the Pope had held out his hand and Catholics should imitate him.¹³⁶ At Lyon Lemire presented a vision of Catholics as exemplars of republican civic virtue: 'Comme catholique je veux une démocratie forte, fait de justice, de travail et de sacrifice, dans laquelle les citoyens sont des hommes libres, et dans laquelle les catholiques sont les meilleurs citoyens.'¹³⁷ This did not, however, indicate a deep gulf between forward-thinking *abbés démocrates* and the reactionary episcopate. Langénieux also celebrated the Tsar's visit and employed patriotic language. The issue is rather that the embrace of democratic and patriotic language did not necessarily indicate a whole-hearted acceptance of the Republic.

As has been shown, acceptance of papal directives might be framed in terms not of building a broad conservative party in alliance with moderate republicans, but of engaging effectively in electoral politics to gain the necessary majority to overturn the secularising legislation of the 1880s. This was very much the stance of Langénieux, for all his emollient language. Eugène Vuillot, who attacked liberal Catholicism as rooted in disobedience to papal instructions, viewed the *ralliement* and democratic principles not in terms of conciliation, but as an effective 'moyen de combat'.¹³⁸ Jean-Marie Mayeur argues that a significant number of the adherents of *la démocratie chrétienne* originated as legitimists and intransigent Catholics, and in their unwavering opposition to liberalism, anti-individualism, anti-capitalism and organicism they remained in many ways true to the principles of intransigent Catholicism.¹³⁹ Addressing the *Congrès de la Jeunesse Catholique* Albert de Mun stressed the necessity of fighting for Christian France, regardless of the prospect of victory:

Jeanne a péri martyrisée, délaissée par ceux qu'elle avait conduits à la victoire; Clovis est mort presque ignoré et Paris sait à peine qu'il garde son tombeau. Mais tous deux, immortels, ont traversé l'histoire, parce que tous deux, dociles à la voix surnaturelle, ont accompli, à l'heure dite, les gestes héroïques de Dieu parmi les Francs!¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Rémond, *Les deux congrès*, p. 75.

¹³⁵ *Journal des débats*, 29 August 1896.

¹³⁶ Lemire, speaking at Hazebrouck, 18 October 1896, cited in *L'Univers*, 21 October 1896.

¹³⁷ Lemire, cited in *L'Univers*, 3 August 1896. *L'Univers* was citing excerpts from Lemire's speech at Lyons, as published in *La France Libre*, 24-26 July, as edited and corrected by Lemire himself.

¹³⁸ Mayeur, 'Catholicisme intransigeant', p. 493. Vuillot on liberal Catholicism, *L'Univers*, 21 July 1896.

¹³⁹ Mayeur, 'Catholicisme intransigeant', p. 492.

¹⁴⁰ Albert de Mun, speech 14 May, reproduced in *L'Univers*, 15 May 1896.

It is therefore tempting to read Reims in terms of the limits of the *ralliement*, or at the very least as indicative of the difficulty of reaching any agreement as to what acceptance of the republican form might mean in terms of political behaviour. Certainly, it is apparent that many Catholics who considered themselves loyal *ralliés* did not look to build bridges to conservative republicans. Others demanded more than even conservative republicans might reasonably be expected to concede. Doubts over the very institutions of the parliamentary Republic were widespread - even among those who did identify themselves as republicans. The tendency to focus on the *Congrès national catholique* encourages this idea of Reims as at best a qualified rejection of the *ralliement*. Alexander Sedgwick, and more recently, Kevin Passmore, read the *Congrès* as an expression of antipathy towards the *ralliement*; for Sedgwick this explains the absence of Étienne Lamy from the proceedings, while Passmore sees the *Congrès* in terms of 'intransigent Liberal Catholicism' as summed up in the pronouncements of Gaudeau.¹⁴¹ Mayeur argues that papal benediction for the 1896 Lyon *Congrès de la démocratie chrétienne* was secured by the offices of Lamy on the understanding that it was to represent, 'la revanche de Reims.'¹⁴² Such a reading, while in accordance with much of the language of the *Congrès*, overlooks the presence of more forward-thinking figures such as Bellomayre and fails to consider Reims more broadly. An alternative perspective is to turn attention away from the vexed and divided issue of the *ralliement* to argue that an emergent consensus can be identified, a consensus that did not translate in any simple terms into political action: Reims overall can be read in terms of Catholic nationalism.

The insistent usage of the language of patriotism was central to this assertion of a Catholic nationalism. In this logic the confrontation occasioned by the Paris pilgrimage became an issue of patriotism in the pages of *L'Univers*. The police had torn the banner of Notre-Dames-des-Victoires and insulted the national flag, seizing the tricolour. The scuffles that ensued were the instinctive response of ardent patriots who had come to Reims to affirm both their Catholic and their patriotic faith. That the tricolour in question had carried the image of the Sacred Heart prompted the rhetorical question of whether the dead of Loigny (Catholic volunteers who had mounted a suicidal charge under the banner of Sacred Heart in the Franco-Prussian War) could not be deemed patriots.¹⁴³ Although not all were in favour of adorning the tricolour with the Sacred Heart - the counter-revolutionary aspects of the devotion did not recommend themselves to some - the desire to appropriate the language of nation for Catholics was widely shared.¹⁴⁴

This concept of an oppositional nationalism, of constructing the nation in opposition to the Republic, would be at the heart of the politics of the new right that would explode so dramatically in the Dreyfus affair. While the ways in which elements of the church laid the ground in terms of anti-Semitism has been examined, too little attention has been paid to the Church's insistent usage of the language of nation.¹⁴⁵ This did not mean that either Maurice Barrès or Charles Maurras were necessarily informed by the Church - nor that the Church would agree with their understandings of nation. It is notable that Maurras's reading of history diverged significantly from the ideas of Reims - for instance, Maurras applauded Clovis for having engaged in political murder.¹⁴⁶ What is evident at Reims, is not the secular nationalism of a Barrès or Maurras, nor solely the familiar idea that the history of France could be read in providential terms, nor that the continuity of French history was embodied in Catholic heroes. The latter ideas were by no means novel; indeed, they were articulated with reference to the papal zouaves in the 1860s, the faithful defenders of the temporal sovereignty of the pope against the

¹⁴¹ Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, pp. 98-9; Passmore, pp. 82-3.

¹⁴² Mayeur, 'Les Congrès', pp. 178-9.

¹⁴³ *L'Univers*, 29 July 1896.

¹⁴⁴ Note, for instance, notorious royalist Gabriel de Belcastel's advocacy of the Sacred Heart as the flag of France: *Le Drapeau de Dieu* (Toulouse: Douladoure-Privat, 1881). As noted above Lemire was opposed.

¹⁴⁵ On the anti-Semitic dimension see esp. Caron, 'Catholic Political Mobilisation'.

¹⁴⁶ *Action Française* historian Jacques Bainville's *Histoire de France* presents Clovis in this light. See Olivier Dumoulin, 'Le partage des eaux: le baptême de Clovis au regard de l'Action française', in Rouche (ed.), *Clovis*, I, pp. 709-27.

revolutionary and subversive Italian nationalists.¹⁴⁷ In an era which saw the extinction of the temporal sovereignty of the papacy, nationalist principles were hard to square with Catholicism. The papal zouaves were in effect the papacy's counter to the nationalist agenda.¹⁴⁸

Reims reflected the pontificate of Leo XIII not only in its more or less grudging embrace of the *ralliement*, but also in its shift away from the determinedly reactionary ideas embodied in Pius IX's 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*, which effectively anathematised the Revolution and the nineteenth century in its entirety. In this changed context it was possible to adopt the language of nationalism, notwithstanding the transnational aspects of Catholicism visible in the 'Romanisation' of the Church that developed after the mid nineteenth century and the increased emphasis on the person and authority of the Pope. Catholics in the 1890s mobilised not against nationalism as in the 1860s, but in favour of a determinedly Catholic nationalism that directly challenged the Republic's official nationalism. The appeal to the Christian traditions of France found at Reims was part of a wider rethinking that imparted a strong nationalist charge to French Catholicism. Catholics played a key role in constructing an alternative vision of the nation that could be appealed to as an alternative pole of loyalty to the Republic. In this sense Reims was about counter-revolution. Yet, paradoxical though this might seem, this is not to claim that Reims represented at heart a rejection of the possibility of any workable accommodation with the Republic. The point is rather that accepting the legitimacy of the Republic and embracing constitutional action offered the hope to make the Republic and its institutions Christian, reconciling Catholic 'true France' and the Republic. France freed from the 'masonic sect', the rights and liberties of the Church recognised - the announced ultimate goal of *ralliés* from de Mun to Lamy - would see, to paraphrase François Furet, the reunion of the Catholic country with its tradition.

¹⁴⁷ See Martin Simpson, 'Serving France in Rome: The *Zouaves Pontificaux* and the French Nation', *French History*, 27 (2013), pp. 69-90.

¹⁴⁸ On this see Lucy Riall, 'Martyr Cults in Nineteenth Century Italy', *Journal of Modern History*, 82 (2010), pp. 225-87.