

Commemorating Loigny: Catholic Memory in France, 1870-1914

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The Franco-Prussian war was greeted with a surge of bellicose enthusiasm in France. In Émile Zola's *Nana* as the eponymous courtesan dies in the Grand Hôtel, rotted by smallpox, crowds outside gather to shout 'À Berlin! À Berlin! À Berlin!' Six weeks later the Second Empire, rotted by moral corruption - in the perspective of many besides Zola - collapsed in ignominy in the wake of a string of defeats culminating in the disastrous battle of Sedan, where the Emperor Napoleon III himself and the entire 83,000 strong Army of Châlons passed into Prussian captivity. Adolphe Perraud, future bishop of Autun and chaplain in the Army of Châlons, described Sedan as 'an unspeakable disaster, worse than Crécy, Poitiers, Agincourt'.¹ It did not, however, mark the final defeat of France. The surrender of Napoleon III was not the surrender of the French nation. The republican Government of National Defence, proclaimed within twenty-four hours of news of Sedan reaching Paris, drawing on myths of *l'an deux* (1793-4) looked to a new *levée en masse* to raise a citizen army that would repulse the invader.²

Despite the resonance of this myth, the fresh armies were ultimately to prove no match for the German invaders. In 1872 Perraud was preaching to a defeated nation, contrasting the victories and glories of Joan of Arc with the disasters of *l'année terrible* 1870-71. Notwithstanding his unequivocal judgement that France's embrace of scepticism, rationalism and materialism had cut her off from the divine assistance that underpinned the triumphs of Clovis, Charles Martel and Joan, Perraud identified some moments of glory. Speaking in Dieppe in August 1871 he drew attention to the heroic cavalry charges at Reichshoffen, while in 1872 he argued that the defence of Orléans on 11 October 1870 had 'saved the honour of the French flag'.³ There was a sustained effort to construct compensating narratives of glorious resistance around the war, submerging the reality of defeat in a sense of moral victory. Focusing on resistance against German barbarism might go some way to healing injured national pride. Episodes such as the sacrificial cavalry charges led by general Alexandre Gallifet at Floing had myths woven around them as a tonic to national spirits. Alphonse de Neuville's 1873 painting that immortalised the *maison de la dernière cartouche* at Bazeilles, a desperate resistance by a handful of French marines, fighting literally to the last bullet, was hailed in this light.⁴ Patriotic myths that delivered lessons of French moral superiority offered a narrative around which the humiliated nation could unite. This paper examines one particular myth constructed in the context of *l'année terrible*, the battle of Loigny, fought on 2 December 1870. The commemoration of Loigny demonstrates the concern to extract heroic lessons from defeat, but also indicates that compensating myths of defeat were not necessarily consensual. The dominant narrative of Loigny was constructed by and resonated with a particular political constituency.

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¹ Adolphe Perraud, 'Premier panégyrique de Jeanne d'Arc', 8 May 1872, in *Discours Militaires* (Paris: P. Tequi, 1896), p. 198.

² On the myth of *l'an deux* see Daniel Moran and Arthur Waldron (eds.), *The People in Arms* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003); Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven: Yale, 1994), pp. 134-53.

³ Adolphe Perraud, 'Les Faux Dieux. Discours prononcé dans l'église de Saint Rémy de Dieppe, le 6 août 1871,' in *La France et les Faux Dieux* (Paris: H. Gautier, 1891), 4-13; 'Premier panégyrique', p. 199.

⁴ Karine Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat. The War of 1870-1871 in French Memory* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 85-93, 152-74.

One reason for the potentially divisive nature of war narratives lies in the fact that the Franco-Prussian War involved two successive French regimes - and two successive militaries. Just as the Government of National Defence succeeded the Second Empire, so did its improvised armies succeed the defeated and captive imperial armies. In September 1870 the imperial armies were effectively finished. Marshal Patrice MacMahon's Army of Châlons, so spectacularly defeated at Sedan, had been charged with the relief of Marshal François-Achille Bazaine's Army of the Rhine which had become encircled at Metz in August. On 27 October Bazaine capitulated without a fight, surrendering 137,000 men. Nonetheless, there was no shortage of manpower; the chaos of French mobilisation meant that the imperial armies had been incomplete at the hour of their defeat. Over a million men were either serving, training or liable to serve even before, in a conscious echo of 1793, the Government of National Defence decreed the mobilisation of the entire male population between the ages of twenty-one and forty on 2 November.⁵ Fresh armies were raised in the provinces as the Prussians began to besiege Paris on 19 September. 635,000 men were recruited and armed and a further 250,000 men were in training camps by the close of January 1871. This second mobilisation of September 1870-January 1871 typically mobilised between 10 and 15 per cent of men aged between twenty and forty in the brigades of the *Garde Nationale mobilisée* supplied by each *département*.⁶ In addition, volunteer *franc-tireur* companies sprang up; by official calculations over 300 existed, with 57,200 men serving.⁷ Given that the regular army, reserves and the *garde mobile* had already been pressed into service (though given the slow mobilisation, much of the *garde mobile* proved to be available for the republican war effort), these figures are impressive.

Yet, this abundance of potential soldiers was matched by neither an adequate supply of competent officers nor of equipment. Moreover, neither the *garde mobile* nor the *mobilisés* had anything more than a cursory training; the *garde mobile* were the better trained, at a rate of an annual fifteen non-consecutive days. Most troops were therefore raw and inexperienced, even if they found themselves lucky enough to be ably commanded and adequately equipped (functioning rifles supplied with the right ammunition could not be expected, given the eighteen types of imported rifles in service, each with a different calibre). Michael Howard argues that the presence of three independent French forces in the provinces might have made the German position untenable, 'given a high enough standard of professional competence'. Yet this they conspicuously lacked, and as French strategy was predicated on the relief of Paris, they lacked the time to receive the necessary training.⁸ With Paris facing starvation and the republican armies no match for the German forces, an armistice was signed on 28 January. In February a punitive peace was exacted in the shape of a 5 billion franc war indemnity and the loss of Alsace and much of Lorraine, including Metz and Strasbourg. The agony of France was not over, however: in March 1871 the city of Paris rose in revolt against the conservative National Assembly, accused of being monarchist defeatists intent on the overthrow of the Republic. At the end of May 1871 the Army of Versailles invested Paris and at the cost of 20-25,000 lives brought the Paris Commune and *l'année terrible* to a bloody close. France was left to reflect on the devastation.

The ultimate failure of the efforts of the Government of National Defence and reality of national defeat led to bitter polemics and recriminations as to where ultimate responsibility lay. While Bazaine would be court-martialled, the imperial armies and MacMahon who had led the Army of Châlons would be exonerated and

⁵ Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 244.

⁶ Bertrand Taithe, *Citizenship and Wars. France in Turmoil, 1870-1871* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 10, 24-6; table in appendix II, pp. 182-4.

⁷ Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, p. 252.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

much of the blame attributed to meddling politicians, Charles de Freycinet and Léon Gambetta.⁹ As Howard observes, '[t]he failures of amateurs in the second half of the war did much to atone for the failure of the professionals in the first.'¹⁰ The manifestly partisan official enquiry into the actions of the Government of National Defence commissioned by the monarchist-dominated National Assembly in 1871 concluded that the republican government had acted with no regard for public opinion and lacked overall authority. Under this regime demagogic and revolutionary ideas had undermined both the public mood and military discipline.¹¹ Discourses on the causes of the defeat, whether seeking to condemn the Second Empire or the fledgling Republic, were bound up with debates over regeneration of the French nation. In the context of an uncertain political future – with sections of the National Assembly favouring a restoration – arguments over regeneration were linked to questions of regime. Would monarchy or Republic deliver French renewal? Though it has been argued that the memories of what was dubbed *l'année terrible* were largely suppressed in a 'collective amnesia', the political stakes meant that the defeat was omnipresent in political culture.¹² The imposing basilica of the Sacré-Cœur in Montmartre would likewise serve to sustain memories of both the defeat and the Commune. This is not to deny the existence of what might be termed strategies of denial. As we have seen, a selective reading of 1870-71 could identify uplifting narratives of heroic defeat. There were, however, other rather different logics at play in some celebrations of heroism. Heroic conduct might be contrasted with wider failings, feeding into the debates over national regeneration. The values which made some men patriotic, self-sacrificing heroes and others cowards informed ideas of national regeneration. Commemoration could therefore be employed to construct patriotic lessons with a clear political edge. Were, for instance, as Gambetta forcefully argued, Catholic values conducive to a passive acceptance of defeat?¹³ This paper seeks to explore one such episode, the politically-charged commemoration of the battle of Loigny, fought on 2 December 1870.

I

The engagement referred to as Loigny was fought on the bitterly cold 2 December 1870. The wider context was an offensive designed to punch through the German lines, a northward push by the Army of the Loire to link up with a southward breakout by troops trapped in the siege of Paris. If successful, this manoeuvre would lift the siege of Paris and transform the war. On 1 December a dispatch from Paris informed Gambetta that Parisian forces had made a sortie and captured Epinay. Gambetta took this to denote Epinay-sur-Orge, 12 miles south of Paris in the direction of Orléans, recently liberated by the Army of the Loire. This would have marked a significant victory, but the prosaic reality was that the Epinay in question was a small village north of Paris near Saint-Denis, Epinay-sur-Seine. There had been no dramatic breakthrough, no more than a minor exploratory sortie. Gambetta, however, believed that the strategy which he and Freycinet had urged was about to be crowned with success: the Army of the Loire had only to continue its advance from Orléans to deliver the capital. Yet, not only had Louis Trochu, president of the

⁹ See e.g. A.G., *La Blocus de Paris et la première armée de la Loire*, 3 vols. (Paris: L. Baudoin, 1889-94) for an argument that the failures of Gambetta's Delegation of Tours led to a defeat that was in no way determined by the disasters of September 1870.

¹⁰ Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, p. 242.

¹¹ Varley, *Under the Shadow*, pp. 32-4.

¹² On the problems of confronting the reality of defeat: Gildea, *Past in French History*, pp. 118-22. Varley argues forcefully that the defeat was widely invoked across the political spectrum.

¹³ On this debate see Henri de Cathelineau, *Le vrai patriotisme développé par l'enseignement religieux* (Lille: Imprimerie de Lefebvre-Ducrocq, 1879).

Government of National Defence and commander-in-chief of the Army of Paris, failed to break the German lines - and abandoned any attempt to do so - but the victories of Coulmiers and Villepion had not driven the Prussian and Bavarian forces back in disarray. They had retreated in good order and were in fact intending to counter-attack. The French assault of 2 December duly met fierce resistance and ultimately faltered. By 3 December the northern push had decisively failed and general Louis Aurelle de Paladines, commander of the Army of the Loire, informed Gambetta and Freycinet that not only was the army in retreat, but Orléans would have to be abandoned.

Initially, the brunt of the fighting on 2 December was borne by general Antoine Chanzy's 16th Corps. Three successive French attacks failed to take the château of Goury. The 3rd division's advance was halted at the village of Lumeau.¹⁴ The 33rd regiment, the *mobiles* of Sarthe, were driven back to their original position at Villepion.¹⁵ The left wing of Aurelle de Paladines 15th corps attacked the German flank at Poupry but met the determined resistance of the Prussian 22nd division and proved unable to break the German lines.¹⁶ As the day wore on, Bavarian and Prussian troops recovered to retake the positions from which they had been driven back and by the afternoon the village of Loigny had been invested by Bavarians, though two battalions of the 37th regiment held out in the cemetery. As Chanzy's forces fell back the 17th Corps was called upon. In a much-discussed action, general Gaston de Sonis decided to turn the tide of battle by retaking Loigny, though the dispersal of the 17th Corps meant that he had relatively few troops at his disposal. Sonis later maintained that his intention was not to lead a charge of several hundred men, but by this example to galvanise the reluctant 51st regiment. He also expected to find his action seconded by the nearby third division, commanded by Pierre Deflandre.¹⁷ In the event, however, the assault comprised of barely 800 troops: the first battalion of the irregular *Volontaires de l'Ouest* under Athanase de Charette, the irregular *franc-tireur* battalions of Tours and Blidah and the *garde mobile* of the Côtes-du-Nord.¹⁸ In the absence of any support, the attack fizzled out and the handful of troops who reached Loigny were soon forced to retreat. Of the 300 *Volontaires* who charged to the shouts of 'Vive la France! Vive Pie IX!' 198 fell. Of fourteen officers only four survived.¹⁹ Charette was injured and taken prisoner. Sonis was left on the battlefield with a shattered knee. The desperate resistance of the battalions of the 37th continued for another two hours at least before they were overwhelmed and taken prisoner - with the exception of a hundred who made a daring escape.²⁰

Although in the stream of memoirs that followed *l'année terrible*, the actions at Lumeau, Villepion and Goury were not ignored, emphasis was laid on the struggle

¹⁴ For an influential early account of Loigny, deeply hostile to the 'dictatorship of Tours': Auguste Boucher, *Bataille de Loigny avec les combats de Villepion et Poupry* (Orléans: H. Herluison, 1872).

¹⁵ Denis Énard, *Souvenirs d'un mobile de la Sarthe (33e régiment), armée de la Loire, 16e corps: Coulmiers, Villepion, Loigny, Villorceau, Changé, Le Mans, Saint-Jean-sur-Erve*, 2nd ed. (Le Mans: Monnoyer, 1909).

¹⁶ Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, pp. 311-12.

¹⁷ The apparent failure of Deflandre to come to Sonis' aid was the subject of debate – inexplicable for abbé Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille de 1870 à 1912* (Lille: V. Ducoulombier, 1912), p. 77. A vigorous defence of Deflandre – and a parallel criticism of Sonis – was mounted by Amédée Delorme, *Deflandre et Sonis* (Paris: Edmond Dubois, 1893).

¹⁸ Patrick Nouaille-Degorce revises the figure downwards to just over 700. 'Les Volontaires de l'Ouest: Histoire et souvenir de la guerre de 1870-71 à nos jours', unpub. thesis, 2 vols. (Université de Nantes, 2005), I, 290.

¹⁹ Laurent Bart-Loi, *Au service du pape et de la France. Catherin 1861-1870* (Paris and Lille: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie., 1901) in a detailed appendix provided figures of 66 dead, 131 wounded and 21 unaccounted for, pp. 292-9. Sauveur Jacquemont, *La Campagne des Zouaves Pontificaux en France, sous les ordres du général baron de Charette, 1870-1871* (Paris: Henri Plon, 1871) gave a figure of 207 zouaves and 11 officers. He put other losses at 60 *franc-tireurs* and 150 *mobiles*, p. 111.

²⁰ Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, 90-3; *Monument du 37e régiment de marche – Loigny le 2 décembre 1870* (Paris: R. Chapelot et Cie., 1911).

for Loigny itself. As one memoir observed, there was the sense of a series of separate isolated combats rather than one overall battle. Lumeau, Villepion and Goury were apparently battles in their own right; Ladislas-Xavier Gorecki complained that these names adorned the tombs of the fallen.²¹ The overall effect was to telescope Loigny into the events of the latter part of the day, namely the charge led by Sonis and the stand of the 37th regiment. The myth of Loigny was centred on these events. There was a certain logic to this: taken altogether, the elements of the last hours of 2 December offered ample scope for myth-making. There was the desperate resistance of the two battalions of the 37th in the cemetery, whose spirit was encapsulated in an exchange between the Prussian general Hugo von Kottwitz and colonel de Fouchier. Kottwitz demanded that the French forces should recognise the hopelessness of their position and surrender, to which he received the reply, 'Monsieur, ce n'est pas mon affaire d'arrêter le feu de mes soldats, c'est la vôtre.'²² The doomed charge of volunteer forces to their aid was an act of sacrifice every bit as heroic as the repeated cavalry charges of Gallifet. The very different forces of the *garde mobile* of the Côtes du Nord, the first battalion of the *Volontaires de l'Ouest* and the *franc-tireurs* of Tours and Blidah (from the French colony of Algeria) found their unity in battle, recognizing their duty as Frenchmen.

The narrative was, however, not entirely unproblematic. Both contemporary critics and later historians have judged Sonis' actions ill-judged and futile, a needless sacrifice.²³ His charge neither seriously threatened the Prussian and Bavarian forces in Loigny, nor saved the battalions of the 37th, nor succeeded in staving off the collapse of the 51st regiment. The charge only made sense in terms of expiatory self-sacrifice, it was suggested; the general's Christian convictions and identification with the *Volontaires de l'Ouest* ('papal zouaves') had overtaken his military judgement. 'M. de Sonis était en proie d'une noble exaltation religieuse et patriotique que partageaient les zouaves pontificaux, mais qui n'avait pas atteint le 51^e', commented Gorecki.²⁴ Amédée Delorme, a harsher critic, wrote,

Après les malheurs de la patrie, qui apparaissaient comme irréparables à bien des gens, s'immoler à elle, au milieu des zouaves pontificaux, cette pensée, ce rêve d'un Français chrétien, s'était emparé irrésistiblement du général de Sonis et sembla l'avoir frappé de vertige.²⁵

There was also the question of the wisdom of the general in command of the 17th corps choosing to lead a charge in person; abbé Provost, keen to defend his hero, argued that if Gambetta judged this action rash, he clearly overlooked how Caesar and Bonaparte rallied their troops.²⁶ Gorecki, less impressed, noted the impact of the loss of Sonis and argued that a few stretcher-bearers might have made all the difference; had the injured Sonis been carried to Villepion rather than left on the battlefield crucial fresh orders might have been issued.²⁷

²¹ Ladislas-Xavier Gorecki, *La Bataille de Loigny-Poupry au point de vue du service du santé* (Paris: R. Chapelot et Cie, 1901), p. 8. Gorecki was in part informed by his experiences as doctor to the 92nd infantry regiment of the Second Army of the Loire.

²² Cited in abbé Theuré, *Souvenir du 2 décembre: Loigny, son église, ses monuments* (Chartres: l'abbé C. Métais, 1896), p. 4.

²³ For nineteenth-century criticism: Amédée Delorme, *Journal d'un sous-officier, 1870* (Paris: Hachette, 1891); idem., *Deflandre et Sonis*; H. Kunz, *Die Schlacht von Loigny-Poupry* (Berlin: Mittler, 1893) trans. Michèle Bailly, as reproduced in Nouaille-Degorce, 'Les Volontaires', II, pp. 225-38. Nouaille-Degorce suggests that Kunz took his cue from Delorme. For twentieth-century criticism: Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, p. 311; Stéphane Andoin-Rouzeau, *1870: La France dans la guerre* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1989), p. 237.

²⁴ Gorecki, *La Bataille*, p. 16.

²⁵ Amédée Delorme, *Journal d'un sous-officier, 1870*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Hachette 1901), p. 126.

²⁶ Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, p. 84; Delorme, *Deflandre et Sonis*, pp. 136-8.

²⁷ Gorecki, *La Bataille*, pp. 19-22.

According to Sonis' own report – much cited by his defenders – in the context of the collapse of the 51st regiment and the baffling failure of Deflandre's third division to appear, he found himself at the head of a charge that he knew was doomed to failure. Retreat was not an option, carrying the risk of the complete collapse and rout of the French forces. Sonis duly proceeded in the spirit of sacrifice:

Je ne voulus point me déshonorer en abandonnant ces trois cent zouaves qui marchaient derrière moi....Je me sentais fort pour le sacrifice que j'allais accomplir, du consentement de ces braves.... il me parut bon de mourir sous le drapeau qui les abritait.²⁸

Yet, it was no vain sacrifice even in this desperate situation - Sonis argued that at the very least by delaying the victory of their adversaries they covered the retreat of the army. The retreat did not become a general rout pursued and harried by the victorious Germans and the French artillery was not lost to the enemy.²⁹ Writing in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1894 under the pseudonym Arthur Roë, Patrice Mahon endorsed Sonis' claim, concluding,

les zouaves pontificaux avaient échoué. Mais quant au résultat de la bataille totale et suivant le jugement que la génération présente peut prononcer, ils avaient réussi. Car la demi-heure précieuse qu'il fallait gagner était conquise et payée de leur sang; les Bavares s'arrêtaient à Loigny; le 16e corps couchait sur ses positions.³⁰

For Sonis, however, the issue was not so much what he had actually achieved, but what might have been achieved. In a letter sent to Freycinet in late 1871 - cited by his hagiographical biographer, Mgr. Louis Baunard - Sonis developed this argument:

Dans cette marche en avant, j'ai peut-être mérité le reproche d'impétuosité ... Mais il fallait à tout prix sauver ce qui était derrière moi, et j'avais le droit d'espérer que la division Deflandre, qui n'était pas loin, et que j'avais envoyé chercher coûte que coûte....appuierait mon mouvement....je suis encore convaincu que si chacun avait fait son devoir; si la 3e division m'avait suivi ou s'était portée en avant, même après ma blessure nous nous serions rendus maîtres de Loigny.³¹

Insofar as the charge failed, the reasons lay in the actions - or rather the failure to act - of the 51st regiment and the third division. (Initially the accusation was also levelled against the 48th regiment, as it was mistakenly believed that they had been ranged alongside the 51st and had crumbled like the latter. They were in fact left without orders at Terminiers.)³²

As Sonis' account remained unpublished (or at least not in a form destined to reach a popular audience - his testimony did of course appear in the official enquiry), it was for his defenders and champions to disseminate these arguments. A notable champion was Mgr. Baunard, rector of the Catholic University of Lille, whose biography of Sonis rested on his unpublished papers.³³ Also, drawing on these papers was an account of the 17th Corps produced by Sonis' son Henri.³⁴ Yet, well

²⁸ Sonis, cited in Bart-Loi, *Au service*, p. 277.

²⁹ Sonis, cited in Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, p. 84. Curiously this point is missed by Jonas who writes, 'Any sign of a conventional understanding of war disappeared from Sonis' rhetoric.' Raymond Jonas, 'Anxiety, Identity and the Displacement of Violence during the *Année Terrible*: The Sacred Heart and the diocese of Nantes, 1870-1871', *French Historical Studies*, 21 (1998), pp. 55-75, at 70.

³⁰ Arthur Roë (pseud. of Patrice Mahon), 'L'Assaut de Loigny,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 126 (Nov./Dec. 1894), pp. 605-48 at 637.

³¹ Sonis, cited in Delorme, *Deflandre et Sonis*, p. 17.

³² In addition to his desire to indict the irresponsible actions of Sonis – and what he saw as Sonis' effort to shift the blame onto the dead Deflandre – Delorme emphasised the need to set the record straight regarding the 48th. *Deflandre et Sonis*, appendix, pp. 131-45.

³³ Mgr. Baunard, *Le général de Sonis d'après ses papiers et sa correspondance* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1890).

³⁴ Henri de Sonis, *Le XVIIe Corps à Loigny d'après des documents inédits et les récits des combattants* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1909).

before these accounts appeared the basic arguments were articulated. In 1871 Sauveur Jacquemont, for instance, argued that the retaking of Loigny would have turned the tide of the battle. Had the third division arrived as Sonis had ordered - or had the 51st regiment simply done their duty - then the élan of the charge would have not resulted in patriotic martyrs, but an important strategic gain.³⁵ Henry Morel concurred in his detailed account of Loigny, rejecting any comparison with the futile heroism of the 'desperate charges at Reichshoffen and Sedan.'³⁶ Morel blamed Gambetta's dispatch issued on the following day that described Sonis as 'carried away by his élan'; for Auguste Boucher the dispatch amounted to an insult, a lie and even a crime.³⁷ The military logic was sound, but the troops in question were unsound. The second division of the 51st regiment failed to do their duty. Loigny, in short, according to those who celebrated Sonis' actions, was (either implicitly or explicitly) a story of heroism betrayed by the cowardice of a section of the French army.³⁸ A key question was posed: what made some men heroes and others - to use Sonis' words addressed to the recalcitrant 51st - 'wretches, unworthy of the name of Frenchmen'?³⁹

II

The development of the myth of Loigny was not merely complicated by divided opinion as to whether Sonis' actions could be justified in military terms and whether Loigny was to be framed in terms of true Frenchmen and unworthy Frenchmen. The unique nature of one of the forces involved was key to the construction of the legend of Loigny. As Sonis' own words (and words of contemporary admirers and detractors) make clear, Charette's *Volontaires de l'Ouest* were commonly known by another name: the papal zouaves. The *Volontaires* were the successors to the French contingent of the papal zouaves, the multi-national volunteer force who had fought for the cause of the temporal sovereignty of the papacy during the decade 1860-70.⁴⁰ Understood as zouaves, the *Volontaires* were inextricably entwined with the powerful zouave legend which had developed over the course of the previous decade. This legend comprised of a range of concepts, emphasising expiatory sacrifice, martyrdom, the Catholic identity of France, a Manichean struggle against the forces of the revolution and an intense personal devotion to the Pope. In its emotional dimension and its focus on pain and expiation the legend reflects the mid-century rise of what has been termed a 'dolourist Catholicism', as displayed in the Marian devotions.⁴¹ The legend also played upon the heritage of the Vendéen counter-revolution, France's role in the crusades and the traditions of the French

³⁵ Jacquemont, *La Campagne*, p. 103.

³⁶ Henry Morel, *La Bataille de Loigny, 2 Décembre 1870* (Lille: Bergès, s.d), p. 42.

³⁷ Boucher, *Bataille de Loigny*. Sonis rejected this reading of his actions when testifying before the National Assembly commission of enquiry into the actions of the Government of National Defence on 10 August 1871: 'J'étais là parce qu'il fallait aller là, il fallait marcher quand même et mourir s'il le fallait, pour éviter un plus grand désastre.' Cited in Baunard, *Le général*, 40th ed. (Paris: Poussielgue, 1893), p. 600 - an appendix added specifically to refute the accusations made by Delorme in *Journal d'un sous-officier*.

³⁸ Gorecki argued that demoralisation of the 51st was understandable - inexperienced men who had already marched through the night and endured over an hour and a half of artillery bombardment could scarcely be compared to the well-trained *zouaves* - concluding, 'Ajoutons encore que cette régiment trop calomnié perdit dans la journée du 2 décembre 30 officiers tués, 8 blessés, 4 disparus, 51 hommes tués, 201 blessés et 380 disparus.' *La Bataille*, p. 18.

³⁹ Sonis, cited in Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, p. 77.

⁴⁰ Jean Guenel, *La dernière guerre du pape. Les zouaves pontificaux au secours du Saint-Siège, 1860-1870* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998).

⁴¹ On this 'dolourist' tradition: Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, 1999); Richard D. E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1870* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2004).

nobility.⁴² Importantly, heroic defeat loomed large in the zouave narrative, starting with the unequal and doomed battle of Castelfidardo where the papal armies were decisively defeated by Piedmont in September 1860.⁴³ To celebrate the zouaves was to celebrate an alternative version of France - a 'true France', largely rural, respectful of established hierarchies and faithful to its traditions of Catholicism and monarchism.⁴⁴ In the person of their leader Athanase de Charette de la Contrie, great-nephew of the Vendéen counter-revolutionary François-Athanase de Charette, and relative of the legitimist Pretender, the Comte de Chambord, the royalist and counter-revolutionary associations of the *Volontaires* were fully apparent.

This is not to say that the *Volontaires* were simply the French papal zouaves under another name. Patrick Nouaille-Degorce persuasively argues that the *Volontaires de l'Ouest* were a very different force, recruited under different circumstances and need to be understood as a separate phenomenon.⁴⁵ For one thing, the *Volontaires* vastly outnumbered the French contingent of zouaves who were repatriated in September 1870 in the wake of the final fall of Rome. By the signing of the armistice there were 2,700 *Volontaires* - even allowing for re-enlistment of those who had previously served in the zouaves, actual zouaves were no more than a significant minority. (During the protracted negotiations between Charette and the Delegation of Tours over the formation of a zouave *franc-tireur* force, 178 of the 657 repatriated zouaves joined other army units. Former zouaves the duc Charles d'Albert de Luynes and his brother-in-law the duc Emmanuel de Sabran-Pontevès both fought at Loigny, but as members of the 33rd regiment, the *mobiles* of Sarthe).⁴⁶ Secondly, self-evidently, in 1870-71 the *Volontaires* were not at odds with official France as in 1860-70, but were under the authority of the republican Government of National Defence. Nonetheless, all 113 officers were zouaves and it was apparent that Charette considered the two forces to be congruent. In his perspective the *Volontaires* were above all the servants of the Pope: the dissolution of the regiment in August 1871 sprang from his insistence that the regiment could not simply be integrated into the regular French army. As he explained to the assembled *Volontaires*, 'This uniform is the property of the whole Catholic world whose belief we represent; it is the livery of Rome, it is not ours to be disposed of at will and linked to the fortunes of an unstable government.'⁴⁷ Conversely, there were also *volontaires* who chose to see themselves as zouaves: on enlisting in 1870 Joseph Perraud wrote, 'Je donnerai avec joie la moitié de mon sang pour la France; mais je voudrais garder toute la reste pour le Pape.'⁴⁸

Loigny was therefore interpreted by Charette and many *volontaires* as another episode in the zouave epic that stretched back to Castelfidardo. Charette's memoirs are tellingly entitled *Souvenir du régiment des zouaves pontificaux: Rome 1860-70, France 1870-1871* and no distinction is made between those who fell in 1860-70 and the dead of 1870-71, not least as the brief notices and accompanying photographs in

⁴² Martin Simpson, 'Serving France in Rome: The *Zouaves Pontificaux* and the French Nation', *French History*, 27 (2013), pp. 69-90.

⁴³ See e.g. Anatole de Ségur, *Les Martyrs de Castelfidardo* (Paris: Ambroise Bray, 1861).

⁴⁴ Guenel, *Dernière guerre*; Simpson, 'Serving France'. In the same way an alternative vision of France was celebrated in the pilgrimages to Lourdes or Rome: Harris, *Lourdes*; Brian Brennan, 'Visiting 'Peter in Chains': French Pilgrimage to Rome, 1873-93', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 51 (2000), pp. 741-65.

⁴⁵ Nouaille-Degorce, *Les Volontaires*. Nouaille-Degorce also demonstrates that recruitment patterns differed markedly between the zouaves and *Volontaires*: *ibid.*, I, pp. 50-102.

⁴⁶ Athanase de Charette, *Souvenir du régiment des zouaves pontificaux: Rome, 1860-70, France 1870-1871. Notes et récits, réunis par le baron de Charette*, 2 vols., (Tours: Mame, 1875-77). Theuré, *Souvenir*.

⁴⁷ Charette cited in Theodore Wibaux letter, 9 July 1871, in C. du Coëtlosquet SJ (trans. R. F. Clarke), *Theodore Wibaux, Pontifical Zouave and Jesuit* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1887), pp. 288-9.

⁴⁸ Joseph Perraud, letter n.d., in Joseph Perraud, *Lettres de guerre d'un zouave pontifical, octobre-novembre 1870*, ed. Pascal Beyls (Montbonnot: P. Beyls, 2000), p. 24. Joseph did not realise his ambition, dying at Loigny.

the second volume do not respect chronological order.⁴⁹ Loigny was fully celebrated in the 'silver anniversary celebrations' Charette organised at his château of Basse-Motte in 1885.⁵⁰ Loigny was assimilated to the zouave legend and the discourse on Loigny is only fully intelligible in light of this legend. A zouave reading of Loigny quickly took shape. With the injured Charette taken prisoner and his natural successor Fernand de Troussures dead, Augustin d'Albiousse, who had fought at Mentana in 1867, took command of the regiment and issued an unequivocal communiqué:

La guerre que nous subissons est une guerre d'expiation, et Dieu a déjà choisi parmi nous les victimes les plus nobles et les plus pures....retrempons notre courage dans nos convictions religieuses et plaçons notre espoir dans la divine Sagesse, dont les secrets sont impénétrables, mais qui nous fait une loi de l'espérance....C'est par un acte de foi que la France est née sur le champ de bataille de Tolbiac; c'est par un acte de foi qu'elle sera sauvée et tant qu'il y aura dans notre beau pays un Christ et une épée, nous avons droit d'espérer. Quoi qu'il arrive, avec l'aide de Dieu et pour la patrie, restons ici ce que nous étions à Rome, les dignes fils de la fille aînée de l'Église.⁵¹

The familiar concepts of expiation and the providential action of God as the determinant of history are clearly apparent, as was the assertion of France's Catholic tradition in the reference to Tolbiac. (Tolbiac marked the inception of Catholic and monarchical France - a providential victory of the Franks over the invading Alamans, followed by the baptism of Clovis as first Christian king of France). Just as in 1860-70, the innocent blood of the *Volontaires* served to expiate the sins of a fallen France, a France who had betrayed her Christian mission.

Heroic defeat and expiation fitted perfectly together. Indeed, arguably defeat had brought the zouaves more fully into the Christian enterprise. In 1865 Mgr. Louis Deschamps of Namur declared that general Christophe Léon de Lamoricière, the original leader of the papal armies, had died defeated: 'Vaincu, oui; mais comme on l'est sur le Calvaire, comme on l'est sur la Croix.'⁵² The zouaves/*Volontaires* were distinctive precisely because they were aligned with the true Christian traditions of France. The logic of this position was apparent: the defeat of France represented the divine scourging of an apostate nation. Her unworthy soldiers were representatives of an unworthy nation. Sonis insisted on this point, writing to Freycinet, 'si les Français d'aujourd'hui eussent été dignes du glorieux passé de leur pères, le pays eût pu....repousser l'invasion....la France n'a pas été digne d'elle-même.'⁵³ Behind this concept of a France that had lost her way lay a counter-revolutionary perspective. Mgr. Charles Émile Freppel, bishop of Angers, consecrating a monument to Lamoricière in 1879 argued that in 1789 France had fatefully departed from her 'historic and traditional way.'⁵⁴ Nicolas Wagner, the father of a zouave who had disappeared at Loigny, wrote in May 1871, 'Pauvre France! À quelles tristes destinées t'ont réduite 80 ans d'enseignement irrégulier....le fondateur de l'Église a attendu une réforme, une conversion de la France; mais notre folle patrie gangrenée ne s'est point repentie et Dieu s'est lassé.'⁵⁵

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⁴⁹ Charette, *Souvenir*.

⁵⁰ Athanase de Charette, *Noces d'argent du régiment des zouaves pontificaux, 1860-1885. Basse-Motte, 28 juillet 1885 – Anvers 30 août 1885* (Rennes: Oberthur, 1886).

⁵¹ Appendix to Jacquemont, *La Campagne*, pp. 195-6.

⁵² Mgr Deschamps at Frascati, 11 October 1865, cited in *Le Monde*, 21 October 1865.

⁵³ Sonis, cited in Delorme, *Deflandre et Sonis*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Freppel, *Discours prononcé à l'inauguration du monument érigé en l'honneur du général de La Moricière dans la cathédrale de Nantes le 29 octobre 1879* (Angers: Germain et Grassin, 1879), p. 8.

⁵⁵ Nicolas Wagner, *Une visite au champ de bataille de Loigny, 22 avril 1871*, 4th ed., (Nancy: Imprimerie Wagner, 1878), pp. 8-9.

Loigny was, however, a potent myth in its own right. Moreover, it impacted on the zouave legend, introducing important new ingredients to the existing myth. Loigny marked the moment when the zouaves became inextricably linked to the cult of the Sacred Heart, a penitential devotion that flourished spectacularly during *l'année terrible*. Alexandre Legentil, who led the *Vœu National* movement to build a church of the Sacred Heart in Paris to symbolise the repentance of the French nation, was in part inspired by Loigny.⁵⁶ Henry Dérely, a zouave capitain, wrote, 'Loigny, n'a pas été une victoire pour l'armée de la 'Défense Nationale' qui n'avait pas appelé le Dieu de Clothilde à la rescousse; mais Loigny était une victoire du Christ aussi bien que Tolbiac. Le Sacré-Cœur, ce jour-là, s'est emparé de l'âme de France.'⁵⁷ At the fiftieth anniversary of the regiment, celebrated in the great basilica of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre, Legentil's ultimate achievement, Albiousse argued that the zouaves had served the Church in France, 'inaugurating on the battlefield the military cult of the Sacred Heart'.⁵⁸ From the perspective of the zouaves/*Volontaires*, Loigny was not merely about courage, military glory and expiatory sacrifice, but about sacrifice and heroism under the flag of the Sacred Heart. Loigny recast the zouaves as the soliders of the Sacred Heart, reinforcing their unique status.

The classic zouave/*Volontaire* account of Loigny is consequently centred on the banner of the Sacred Heart. Laurent Bart-Loi's account begins with what he termed, 'the mystic prelude', a conversation between Sonis, Charette, comte Fernand de Bouillé, Édouard de Cazenove de Pradines, Fernand de Troussures and the Dominican chaplain Antonin Doussot on religious matters. For Sonis as for Charette the salvation of France could only be found in the re-Christianisation of France. A few days previously he had written to Charette, 'Dans ces tristes temps c'est une consolation de mourir au milieu de braves gens comme vous et de pouvoir se dire que Dieu n'abandonne pas la France, puisqu'elle a encore des enfants fidèles.'⁵⁹ Sonis' convictions were portrayed on his chosen flag of a white cross on a blue background, but for Charette this was not enough. He had, he informed Sonis, what was required, namely a banner of the Sacred Heart embroidered by the Visitationist nuns of Paray-le-Monial. (The banner was originally intended for Trochu to hang on the walls of Paris - owing to the siege of Paris it went instead to Charette as 'commandant of the forces of the West').⁶⁰ Sonis accepted the flag, but, on the advice of one of his officers, decided that it should only be displayed in battle - on the grounds that when the canon sounded the irreligious elements of his 17th Corps would not feel inclined to laugh. Charette offered the honour of carrying the flag to his friend Bouillé, but the latter declined, given that he was, as he put it, 'a last-minute worker', having not previously served in the zouaves. Instead Henri de Verthamon, who had twice asked Charette to dedicate the regiment to the Sacred Heart, was to carry the flag into battle - Bouillé would pick it up when Verthamon fell. In a lethal relay the flag passed from Henri de Verthamon to Fernand de Bouillé to his son Jacques (who succeeded in carrying the banner into Loigny), to Jules de

⁵⁶ Raymond Jonas 'Monument as Ex-Voto, Monument as Historiography: the Basilica of Sacré- Cœur', *French Historical Studies*, 18 (1993), pp. 482-502.

⁵⁷ Henri Derély, *Le général de Sonis, les Volontaires de l'Ouest et le drapeau du Sacré-Cœur* (Paris and Lille: Desclée de Brouwer, 1892), p. 52.

⁵⁸ Cited in *L'Avant-Garde*, 1 July 1910. Albiousse added that the zouaves' presence at Rome had allowed the First Vatican Council of 1870 to take place, where the doctrine of infallibility gave the beleaguered Pope new strength.

⁵⁹ Cited in Jacquemont, *La Campagne*, p. 90.

⁶⁰ Doussot's recollection, cited in Bart-Loi, *Au service*, p. 266. On the banner see *Bulletin de l'œuvre du vœu national au Sacré Cœur de Jésus*, cited in Charette, *Souvenir*, pp. 93-6. Charette took the chance in Tours to touch it to the relics of Saint Martin, the warrior patron saint of France, invoked on the reverse of the banner. Arguably Cathelineau, who headed a Vendéen volunteer force, had an equally valid claim - perhaps better, given that he had appealed for volunteers in the name of the Holy Virgin. See Henri de Cathelineau, *Le Corps Cathelineau pendant la guerre de 1870-1871* (Paris: Amyet, 1871).

Traversay to Ferdinand Le Parmentier.⁶¹ It was the chaplain Doussot who finally brought it back from the battlefield.⁶² Of the flag-bearers only Le Parmentier and Traversay survived. The blood-stained banner itself became the premier zouave relic and a centrepiece of commemorative ceremonies. In July 1871 the regiment was formally dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

Assimilating the zouaves/*Volontaires* to the cult of the Sacred Heart was no stretch. The devotion of the Sacred Heart was peculiarly suited to the zouave legend - for although there were certain protective maternal qualities ('the sanctuary of those who suffer') to the cult, the ideas of divine punishment and expiation were strong. The Revolution and *l'année terrible* represented God's scourging of a France who had repudiated her allotted role as *la fille aînée de l'Église*.⁶³ Moreover, the Sacred Heart was the symbol of the counter-revolution, the emblem worn by the Vendéens of 1793. Charette himself owned the relic of the emblem of the Sacred Heart worn by his great-uncle François-Athanase at his execution in Nantes.⁶⁴ Supposedly Louis XVI had vowed to dedicate his kingdom to the Sacred Heart in accordance with the divine wishes transmitted by the visionary Marguerite-Marie Alacoque before going to the scaffold. A force widely identified with royalism and counter-revolution - and not without good reason - became closely aligned with a counter-revolutionary devotion. Certain church figures did not hesitate to bring out the full counter-revolutionary implications of the cult. In 1873 abbé Émile Bougaud, *vicaire-général* of Orléans (in effect the deputy-bishop) saluted the *Volontaires* as, 'a relic of the past, seeds of the future, last remnant of the heroes who made France so great, avant-garde of those who will save her', but insisted on the necessity of an official dedication of the nation to the Sacred Heart. This would bring about the resurrection of France and renew the pact made with Christ at Reims (i.e. the baptism of Clovis in 496) that had been so fatally abandoned. In a deliberate paraphrase of the counter-revolutionary Louis de Bonald, Bougaud envisioned the substitution the rights of God for the rights of Man.⁶⁵

The cult of the Sacred Heart was inextricably bound up in a counter-revolutionary context. The involvement of prominent zouaves in the *Vœu National* movement only underlined this counter-revolutionary orientation. As Raymond Jonas argues, the leading sponsors of the movement, notably the archbishop of Paris, Mgr., later Cardinal, Joseph Hippolyte Guibert, had no interest in extracting the cult from this counter-revolutionary context. Charette, notorious for his legitimism and counter-revolutionary ancestry was invited to serve on the organising committee of the *Vœu National* to advise Guibert on the construction of the basilica. So too was Sonis, equally well-known for legitimist opinions, though he refused on health grounds. Legitimist Cazenove de Pradines ('le mutilé de Loigny'), who chose to sit in the National Assembly in zouave uniform with his arm in a sling, enthusiastically sponsored the movement and pushed for the entire Assembly to formally attend the ceremony of the laying of the first stone of the basilica.⁶⁶ The *Vœu National* was merely the first step: the true goal was the official consecration of France to the

⁶¹ Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 85-9. Contemporary accounts differ - only Verthamon and two de Bouillés appear in all versions. See e.g. Jacquemont, *La campagne*, pp. 106-7; Bart-Loi, *Au service*, p. 280. Cazenove de Pradines, mentioned by both Jacquemont and Bart-Loi, later wrote that his inclusion was erroneous, though he had been wounded defending the flag. See Nouaille-Degorce, 'Les Volontaires', I, pp. 293-4.

⁶² A claim made in the bi-monthly zouave publication, *L'Avant-Garde*, 15 Dec. 1895.

⁶³ Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart. An epic tale for Modern Times*. (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

⁶⁴ Léon Aubineau in *L'Univers*, 23 July 1885, cited in Charette, *Noces*, p. 9.

⁶⁵ Abbé Bougaud, *Les Expiations de la France. Paroles prononcées à Orléans au service solennel pour les victimes de la guerre et au moment du départ des pèlerins pour Paray-le-Monial* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1873), pp. 28, 23-9.

⁶⁶ Jonas, *France and the Cult*, pp. 224-43.

Sacred Heart, to be symbolised by imprinting the image of the Sacred Heart on the national flag. For Charette this necessary regeneration of France would be accomplished by the monarchy.⁶⁷ In 1873 at Paray-le-Monial Legitimist Gabriel de Belcastel consecrated France to the Sacred Heart in the name of 150 National Assembly deputies who subscribed to his views.

The *zouaves/Volontaires* enjoyed a privileged position within this devotion, as heroes who marked the path that others should follow. In the ceremonies that accompanied the 30,000 strong 1873 pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial, site of the apparitions, the *zouaves* had pride of place (tellingly the reports refer not the *Volontaires* but to the *zouaves*). The banner of Loigny hung at the feet of the reliquary of Marguerite-Marie. In a gesture imitated by many pilgrims, Charette and all the *zouaves* in turn kissed 'the oriflamme of Patay' (another not uncommon but telling inaccurate appellation, wilfully conflating Loigny with the nearby Patay, battlefield of Joan of Arc) in the wake of a mass held in the chapel of the Visitation on 12 June.⁶⁸ In the ceremonial procession that followed the *zouaves* acted as the guard of honour of the banner of the National Vow – the anonymous author of a detailed account of the proceedings commenting, 'Quel étendard plus digne de les abriter? Ne sont-ils pas les précurseurs de ce mouvement vers le Sacré-Cœur qui nous vaudra bientôt une église à Montmartre?' The following day the ten-year old son of Henri de Verthamon read out the original act of consecration of the regiment to the Sacred Heart in the chapel.⁶⁹ At the high point of the ceremonies, the *fête du Sacré-Cœur* itself of 20 June, the Jesuit R.P. Félix dilated on the achievement of the *zouaves*. In their heroism he saw the surest signal of that 'national movement towards the Sacred Heart' that he believed would culminate in the public and official dedication of the French nation, 'the elect of the Sacred Heart', to the Sacred Heart. He identified the flag of Loigny as the 'flag of salvation', stained with the 'holy relics' of the *zouaves*' blood. Addressing the attendant *zouaves* and *Sonis* directly, he concluded, 'Votre rôle n'est pas fini. Votre drapeau vous a conduits au martyre; il reste de vous conduire à la victoire. Ah! ce drapeau décoré par votre sang, gardez-le bien, gardez-le pour nos heures décisives....Un jour vous sauverez la France sous le drapeau du Sacré-Cœur!'⁷⁰ *Sonis*, in the words of Baunard, 'one of the apostles, one of the confessors and almost the martyr [of the cult of the Sacred Heart]', received almost overwhelming popular acclaim.⁷¹

Just as Sacré-Cœur de Montmartre was explicitly conceived as an expiatory monument, Loigny was constructed as a great moment of expiatory sacrifice. As we have seen, the *zouaves* were quick to read their action in this light. So too did *Sonis*, however keen to argue for a wider military logic. Subsequent *zouave/Volontaire* memoirs emphasised this idea. Jacquemont wrote,

le fleur de nos rangs fut moissonnée dans ce terrible combat....[mais] puisqu'ils se sont donnés à [la France] sans regarder en arrière, puisqu'il a fallu, pour expier tant d'erreurs, des victimes si pures et si belles, attendons le jour où Dieu se souviendra de nos sacrifices, et ne désespérons pas.⁷²

⁶⁷ See Gabriel de Belcastel, *L'Œuvre du Vœu National* (Versailles: Cerf et fils, 1878); idem., *Le Drapeau de Dieu* (Toulouse: Douladoure-Privat, 1881). Both pamphlets originated as speeches delivered at the annual *Assemblée Générale des Catholiques*.

⁶⁸ On the conflation of Loigny and Patay see abbé Sainsot, *Loigny ou Patay, 2 décembre 1870* (Orléans: Georges Michau et Cie., 1889); Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 496-500.

⁶⁹ *Paray-le-Monial: le pèlerinage du Sacré-Cœur en 1873. Histoire et Documents* (Moulins: Desrosiers, 1873), pp. 149-64, 289-93.

⁷⁰ R.P. Félix, *La France devant le Sacré-Cœur. Discours prononcé à Paray-le-Monial le 20 juin 1873, fête du Sacré-Cœur*. (Paris: A. Jouby et Roger, 1873), pp. 43-50.

⁷¹ Baunard, *Le général*, pp. 450-2.

⁷² Jacquemont, *La campagne*, pp. 122-3.

At Paray-le-Monial Félix echoed this argument: 'Au lieu de la victoire, Dieu leur avait prédestiné le martyr dans la défaite; mais cette défaite valait mieux pour la France que la victoire elle-même....ce sang versé, le meilleur et le plus pur sang de la France, c'était une rançon de la Patrie.'⁷³ Within this logic, another zouave and prolific author of accounts of zouave heroism, Jules Delmas, argued that it was only through the actions of the zouaves/*Volontaires* that France had survived at all: 'Aux zouaves [la France] doit d'être encore une nation: Dieu a tenu compte du sang versé pour sa cause et a éloigné le châtement dont il frappe les peuples qui l'ont renié.'⁷⁴

As with the original zouaves, the emphasis laid on expiatory sacrifice translated into a fascination with physical pain and bodily suffering.⁷⁵ Henri de Verthamon died not on 2 December but five days later, wasted by suffering, displaying to the full the acceptance of pain and the abnegation expected of the idealised zouave: 'combien je regrette de n'être pas mort à Rome pour la religion, pour le Saint Père....Mais il ne faut que vouloir ce que Dieu veut. Je m'abandonne entièrement à lui.'⁷⁶ The death of *volontaire* Victor Charruau, 'one of these pure and holy sacrificial victims who follow the passion of Jesus Christ and expiate the faults of the world', had a redemptive quality: abbé Pergeline, vicar general of Nantes, reported that he had prayed to suffer longer to redeem the soul of a friend.⁷⁷ Yet, the greatest fascination was reserved for the broken and suffering body of Sonis. Sonis exemplified the dolourist Christian tradition, as powerfully expressed in the words of his prayer: 'J'aime à être brisé, consommé, détruit par vous....Détruisez et travaillez-moi....Ô Jésus! Que votre main est bonne, même au plus fort de l'épreuve. Que je sois crucifié, mais crucifié par vous.'⁷⁸ The general, 'a glorious image of the mutilated Patrie', remarkably survived the amputation of his left leg to return to serve in the army despite frequently being in agony.⁷⁹ Mgr. Maurice d'Hulst, rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris, argued that at Loigny, 'Sonis entered fully into his vocation as a martyr.'⁸⁰ In his funeral service Mgr. Charles-Émile Freppel of Angers, summing up his life after Loigny, described a seventeen year-long struggle between 'a soul made great by suffering and the remains of body that had become incapable of serving it....martyrdom renewed twenty-fold'.⁸¹

Sonis did not merely undergo the loss of his leg with Christian fortitude. Accounts of Loigny also drew attention to the bitter night the general spent on the battlefield, while the zouave Fernand de Ferron expired with his head on his

⁷³ Félix, *La France devant le Sacré-Cœur*, pp. 47-8.

⁷⁴ Jules Delmas, *La neuvième croisade*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Blériot frères, 1881), p. vii. See also idem., *Les zouaves pontificaux en France* (Limoges: Eugène Ardent et Cie., 1877); idem., *Les martyrs de la France, 1870-871* (Limoges: Eugène Ardent et Cie., 1878).

⁷⁵ Carol Harrison, 'Zouave Stories: Gender, Catholic Spirituality and French Responses to the Roman Question', *Journal of Modern History*, 79 (2007), pp. 274-305; Simpson, 'Serving'.

⁷⁶ Marquis de Saint-Aulaire, *Henri de Verthamon, zouave pontifical, volontaire de l'Ouest, blessé mortellement au combat de Loigny, le 2 décembre 1870* (Perigueux: J.Bonnet, 1873), p. 118.

⁷⁷ Abbé Pergeline, *Victor Charruau. Allocution prononcée le 27 mars 1872, adresse aux anciens élèves de l'Externat des Enfants Nantais* (Nantes: V. Forest et É. Grimaud, 1872), p. 14. Pergeline referred not to Loigny but Patay.

⁷⁸ Musée de Loigny-la-Bataille, Association des Amis de Sonis-Loigny website, <<http://musee-de-loigny.over-blog.org>>, as accessed 19 July 2013.

⁷⁹ Charles-Émile Freppel, *Éloge funèbre du général de Sonis* (Angers: Germain et Grassin, 1887), p. 2. Mgr. Louis-Édouard Pie of Poitiers arguably had Sonis in mind when he declared, 'la patrie, tristement amputée en elle-même, s'intéresse au sort de ces glorieux mutilés dans lesquels elle reconnaît l'image de son propre démembrement.' Pie, *Éloge funèbre des soldats français glorieusement morts pour la patrie le 2 décembre 1870, prononcé à la suite du premier anniversaire célébré en l'église de Loigny*, reproduced in Charette, *Souvenir*, pp. 141-6 at 145.

⁸⁰ Maurice le Sage d'Hauteroche d'Hulst, 'Discours prononcé à la consécration de l'église de Loigny, le 18 septembre 1893', in Mgr. d'Hulst, *Nouveaux mélanges oratoires, tome III* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1900), p. 358.

⁸¹ Freppel, cited in Derély, *Le général de Sonis*, p. 56.

shoulder.⁸² For Mgr., later Cardinal, Louis-Édouard Pie of Poitiers, such sufferings represented, 'a victory which cannot be taken from of us and of which Heaven alone knows the price'.⁸³ Sonis recounted that he had been sustained by a vision of Notre-Dame de Lourdes. Accordingly, d'Hulst eulogised, 'a sublime dialogue between the abandoned soldier and the Queen of Heaven'.⁸⁴ Charette recounted that when he saw Sonis on the next day, 'sa belle et noble figure était resplendissante: il était encore sous le coup de la vision qu'il avait eue dans la nuit couché et enseveli dans la neige comme dans un linceul'.⁸⁵ This episode, combined with Sonis' unwavering piety (abbé Flavien Theuré admiringly recounted that Sonis praised God when his leg was amputated at the thigh) and the ideas of martyrdom which permeated the discourse on the Loigny and the zouaves, came together in the proposition that Sonis was an actual saint. In 1890, shortly after his death, Baunard produced a hagiographical biography, which ended with the fervent hope that the French army would one day have its own saint. At Sonis' funeral at Loigny Mgr. Freppel had proved willing to consider the possibility:

[Loigny] sera le pèlerinage du dévouement et la vertu militaire. Je ne sais pas si, à la prière de la foi, Dieu daignera faire germer le miracle dans ces lieux à jamais bénis ; je ne sais pas si l'Église, toujours désireuse de glorifier l'élite de ses fils, ne voudra pas quelque jour faire resplendir d'un plus vif éclat une vie où les vertus chrétiennes se sont élevées jusqu'à l'héroïsme.⁸⁶

Pilgrims to Loigny took to praying at the tomb of Sonis; in 1890 abbé Roger from Niort made his way to Loigny to seek Sonis' intercession to cure an illness.⁸⁷ In 1928 the bishop of Chartres, Raoul Harscouët, would actively take up the case for his beatification.⁸⁸

IV

The original zouave legend had relied for its propagation on martyrologies, press reports (including the diocesan *Semaines religieuses* and Veuillot's *L'Univers*), memoirs and even romantic fiction. Yet the first and in many ways most notable statements of the legend came from funeral sermons preached by churchmen who championed the zouave cause. The ultramontanes Pie and Mgr. Félix Dupanloup of Orléans could fairly claim to have played a major role in shaping the zouave legend.⁸⁹ Pie, a legitimist and enthusiastic advocate of the Sacred Heart who persuaded Legentil to extend his horizons from a Parisian monument to a national monument,

⁸² See e.g. Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 148-65.

⁸³ Pie, *Éloge funèbre*, p. 144.

⁸⁴ D'Hulst, 'Discours', p. 358. A painting depicting the vision of Sonis was later to hang in the church of Loigny, executed by the artist and *Volontaire* Lionel Royer, who had fought at Loigny aged 18. See *L'Avant-Garde*, 15 December 1910.

⁸⁵ Charette, 30 May 1892, cited in *Collège de Juilly. Inauguration des bustes de Mgr de Mérode et du général de Sonis, anciens élèves* (Paris: F. Pichon, 1892), p. 11.

⁸⁶ Freppel, cited in Baunard, *Le général*, p. 568. Baunard, though the most successful proselytiser for Sonis, was not the first: abbé Arthur Bonnot, *Le Général de Sonis, héros chrétien et français* (Paris: Propagande Catholique, 1887).

⁸⁷ See e.g. *L'Institution Notre-Dame de Chartres à Loigny, 18 juin 1891* (Chateaudun: J. Pigelet, 1891). On Roger: Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, p. 447.

⁸⁸ See Raoul Harscouët, *Lettre de Mgr l'Évêque de Chartres en vue de la cause de la béatification du général Gaston de Sonis* (Chartres: Imprimerie Moderne, 1928). There was also an organisation dedicated to the memory of Sonis, *Société des Amis de Sonis*, whose honorary president in 1955 was general Maxim Weygand, former ally of Marshal Philippe Pétain and Vichy's proconsul in North Africa, 1940-41. See Rémi Thévet, *Miles Christi: Sonis-Loigny* (Chartres: Imprimerie commerciale, 1955).

⁸⁹ Louis-Édouard Pie, *Éloge funèbre des volontaires catholiques*, 11 October 1860 (Paris: V. Palmé, 1860); Félix Dupanloup, *Oraison funèbre des volontaires catholiques de l'armée pontificale, morts pour la défense du Saint-Siège, le 2 octobre 1860* (Paris: Jacques Lecoffre, 1860).

was to play a similar role with regard to Loigny.⁹⁰ On the first anniversary of Loigny, at the request of Charette, Pie officiated at a service in the memory of the dead in the still-damaged church, in so doing inaugurating a tradition. These annual commemorative services offered an ideal opportunity to fix the legend of Loigny.

After affirming that the disasters of 1870-71 represented the punishment of a nation that had failed in her allotted role and betrayed the papacy, Pie turned to Loigny, 'a token of hope....a ray of light in the shades of night'. Loigny was about heroism inspired by faith. Just as with the dead of Castelfidardo, the divine reward of the sacrificial victims of Loigny was not in doubt: 'to have fallen under the folds of the banner of the Heart of Jesus is to have acquired the privilege of the beloved disciple.' As with the original zouaves, parallels with the Maccabees were drawn. Yet it was not just those who fell under the banner of the Sacred Heart who were celebrated. Pie consciously aimed to be inclusive, carefully mentioning the engagements of the morning, including Lumeau, and saluted the 37th, the *mobiles* of the Côtes-du-Nord and the *francs-tireurs* of Tours and Blidah. God's indulgence and the prospect of salvation were afforded to all the fallen – 'special pardons, sudden repentance, spontaneous moments of faith and love' could be expected - while letters and emblems bore testament to the fact that most had died trusting in God. Pie also looked ahead to the regeneration of France, a regeneration that could only be accomplished through the re-Christianisation of the Patrie: 'Soyons les hommes du Christ, les combattants, les militants du Christ. À cette condition nous serons les hommes de notre temps, les réparateurs du passé, les reconstruteurs de l'avenir.'⁹¹

Subsequent perorations followed many of themes Pie had set out. The deserved chastising of an apostate France was consistently evoked. In 1899 Albert Augereau, canon of Blois, reminded the faithful of Pie's 'irrefutable' analysis of the defeat, citing the second book of Maccabees to the effect that God would punish but not abandon his chosen people.⁹² There were, however, significant differences. The emphasis placed on the zouaves varied. Though the sermons overall gave a more balanced coverage of Loigny than the pro-zouave accounts, the relative space afforded to the zouaves could obscure the contribution of other forces. In 1884 abbé Beauchet drew attention to the uniqueness of the zouaves, exalting their example and their tradition:

[le régiment] remplit de sa gloire la rude journée de Loigny. Il égale en éclat les exploits des chevaliers et des chrétiens de l'âge héroïque. C'étaient d'ailleurs, pour la plupart, les fils des croisés qui étaient là, confondant, comme eux, dans un même amour, l'Église et la France.⁹³

By way of contrast, in 1889 abbé Gustave-Victor Vié drew attention not only to the zouaves and the 37th regiment, but also to the heroic 39th regiment whose losses amounted to 2,500, and concluded, 'on the second of December the entirety of France was here.'⁹⁴ Likewise the space afforded to the flag of the Sacred Heart varied. In 1909 Jesuit Alfred van den Brule, emphasised the full significance of the banner, recalling:

⁹⁰ Jonas, *France and the Cult*, pp. 154-7.

⁹¹ Pie, *Éloge funèbre*, 1871, pp. 143-4, 146.

⁹² Abbé Albert Augereau, *29^e anniversaire de la bataille de Loigny. Discours prononcé le 2 décembre 1899 en l'église de Loigny par l'abbé A. Augereau, chanoine de Blois* (Blois: C. Migault et Cie., 1899).

⁹³ Abbé Beauchet, *Quatorzième anniversaire de la bataille de Loigny, 2 décembre 1884* (Nancy: Imprimerie catholique de R. Vagner, 1884), pp. 13-14.

⁹⁴ Abbé Gustave-Victor Vié, *Éloge funèbre des soldats françaises morts à la bataille de Loigny, prononcé dans l'église de Loigny, le 2 décembre 1889* (Orléans: H. Herluisson, 1889), p. 18.

Je fus saisi d'une si indicible émotion que la portant instinctivement à mes lèvres je la baisai comme j'eusse baisé la robe ensanglantée de la France vaincue, que dis-je? Comme j'eusse baisé la robe humiliée et triomphale à la fois de mon saviour Jésus Christ.⁹⁵

The classic themes of martyrdom and expiation, surprisingly not a pronounced feature of Pie's address, loomed large in most of the sermons. The zouaves were fully conscious of what they had achieved. As the dying Verthamon put it, 'It was sublime.... We all knew that we were going to our deaths....to me it was as though I was ascending to heaven.'⁹⁶ Loigny was, in this sense, a site of redemption and hope. Lecturing 130 pupils of the *Institution de Notre-Dame de Chartres* in a service in June 1891, abbé Tissier explained Loigny in terms of glory, expiation and hope. Tissier was not alone in drawing attention to the fact that the zouaves were volunteers. This elevated their sacrifice: 'c'est là un sacrifice capable d'immortaliser un peuple, une semence de résurrection....La voix du sang de ces soldats martyrs crie....comme la voix du sang divin, vers le ciel, miséricorde et pardon.'⁹⁷ His fellow teacher, abbé Sylvain Verret, preaching on the actual anniversary of Loigny in the same year, presented the image of 'Marie, Reine de la France souriant au sacrifice et acceptant au nom de Dieu cette rédemption, et promettant à son peuple régénéré la résurrection et la vie.' Following this logic through he concluded, 'Le sang des héros chrétiens peut être aussi un baptistère....vous croyez que c'est un sépulcre; non, non, c'est un berceau!'⁹⁸ For Augereau salvation was found in the blood of the martyrs of Loigny, blood which appealed to God and the Sacred Heart on behalf of all. ⁹⁹ In a service specifically devoted to the zouaves, marking the consecration of a monument to the Sacred Heart in the *bois des zouaves*, Mgr. d'Hulst explained the expiatory logic that animated them:

Pour la France ils ont rêvé la régénération d'abord, et plus tard la délivrance; ils ont espéré que leur sang ne serait pas stérile....qu'en imitant leur vertu d'autres français se rendraient dignes d'être choisis pour compléter, quand Dieu voudra, la rédemption de leur patrie.¹⁰⁰

There was, however, one theme that drowned out all others. Pie and all those who followed him were concerned to impart the crucial lesson that patriotism and religion were inextricably linked. There were two aspects to this argument. The first aspect applied specifically to the zouaves, in terms of the concordance between their actions in 1860-70 and 1870-71. The zouaves, as Pie and Dupanloup had explained in 1860, had upheld the cause of France in Rome. Conversely, the argument went, in fighting for France they had not ceased to be soldiers of the Pope, fighting for the cause of the Church.¹⁰¹ Léon Aubineau stated in *L'Univers*, '[le régiment] ne s'est pas transformé en prenant et élevant son étendard contre nos ennemies. Sans changer de consigne et en restant ce qu'il était, il s'est trouvé français.'¹⁰² Referring to their sacrifice at Loigny, Mgr. François Rovérié de Cabrières of Montpellier declared at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, 'What a monument you raised to Pius IX!'¹⁰³ In 1871 Pie insisted that the cause of France could not be separated from the cause of

⁹⁵ Alfred van den Brule, 2 December 1909, cited in *L'Avant-Garde*, 1 January 1910.

⁹⁶ Verthamon cited in Charette, *Souvenir*. His words were paraphrased by Sylvain Verret, *Éloge funèbre des soldats français morts à la bataille de Loigny, le 2 décembre 1870, prononcé dans l'église de Loigny le 2 décembre 1891* (Châteaudun: J. Pigelet, 1891), p. 21.

⁹⁷ *L'Institution Notre-Dame de Chartres à Loigny*, p. 23.

⁹⁸ Abbé Verret, *Éloge*, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁹ Augereau, *29^e anniversaire*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁰ Maurice le Sage d'Hauteroche d'Hulst, *Allocution prononcée dans l'église de Loigny, le 2 décembre 1876, à l'occasion du sixième anniversaire de la bataille de Loigny et de la bénédiction d'un monument au Sacré-Cœur élevé dans le bois des zouaves* (Paris-Auteil: Imprimerie des Apprentis-Catholiques, 1876), pp. 8-9.

¹⁰¹ Simpson, 'Serving'.

¹⁰² Aubineau in *L'Univers*, 23 July 1885, in Charette, *Noces d'argent*, p. 6.

¹⁰³ Cited in *L'Avant-Garde*, 1 July 1910.

God: 'Derrière notre patrie humaine, il y a la patrie spirituelle, il y a l'Église, il y a Rome, il y a tous les intérêts catholiques.'¹⁰⁴ Yet demonstrating the continuity in the zouaves' actions was not essential; it was the second aspect of the argument that was key, namely that true patriotism depended upon religion. Abbé Beauchet found in the *Volontaires* proof that, 'the most solid, if not the only basis of patriotism is still, has always been, the Christian faith.'¹⁰⁵ Vié, comparing the *Volontaires* to Joan of Arc at Tournelles and Patay, concluded rhetorically, 'Qui donc avait osé dire que la piété diminuait la bravoure et qu'une jeunesse formée par des prêtres serait moins vaillant? Zouaves de Loigny, vous nous avez bien vengés.'¹⁰⁶

This central theme led to a certain tension within these commemorative addresses. On the one hand, lessons of patriotic unity were consistently drawn. In consecrating the rebuilt church of Loigny, for example, Mgr. d'Hulst presented Sonis and Charette as symbolising, 'the alliance of the national flag with the white banner [of the Sacred Heart]'. The appealing lesson of fraternity was easily made. In 1891 d'Hulst, speaking at a school prize-giving, explained that different forms of education did not divide France:

Aux jours de nos désastres cette fraternité c'est révélée. On n'a pas demandé aux zouaves de Loigny s'ils avaient le droit de déployer la bannière du Sacré-Cœur. Et ceux-là....n'ont pas demandé à ceux qui combattaient à leurs côtés d'autre certificat que celui de la vaillance et du dévouement.¹⁰⁷

On the other hand, it was argued that only religion could inculcate true patriotic values. Verret, for example, arguing that heroism sprang from faith and devotion, presented the true French youth: 'upright, firm, armed like the very Angel of the Patrie....proud like Roland, pure like Joan of Arc, dedicated like our zouaves....in his heart he does not separate the love of the Church from the love of France.'¹⁰⁸ Vié could praise the unity found at Loigny - reflecting that his audience of representatives of the army, state officials, priests and a bishop displayed a similar diversity - yet turn to argue that not only were the loves of God and Patrie compatible, but that, 'always, as at Loigny, the most Christian are the most brave.'¹⁰⁹ Implicitly or explicitly Henri de Cathelineau's argument was endorsed: 'Si dans ces jours d'épreuve, il s'était trouvé plus de soldats chrétiens, nous n'avions pas à pleurer sur le sort de nos frères de l'Alsace de la Lorraine.'¹¹⁰

Although the sermons broadly followed the same lines, and sought to draw common lessons from Loigny, the context in which they were delivered underwent a dramatic shift. Pie's original address was delivered in the context of a monarchist-dominated National Assembly, many of whom were sympathetic to the *Vœu National* movement and the associated aim of dedicating the French nation to the Sacred Heart. Pie's unequivocal statement that a regenerated France could only be a re-Christianised France would have resonated with many deputies. If a restoration was uncertain, given the intransigence of the Pretender, the nature of the new regime was far from settled. By 1879 the Third Republic had not only taken constitutional shape, but was dominated by committed republicans. The anti-clerical offensive of the *lois Ferry*, designed to render state education secular, sharpened the need to

¹⁰⁴ Pie, *Éloge*, 1871, p. 143.

¹⁰⁵ Beauchet, *Quatorzième anniversaire*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁶ Vié, *Éloge*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Mgr. d'Hulst, 'Discours prononcé à la distribution des prix à l'école Saint Etienne à Meaux, le 30 juillet 1891', in d'Hulst, *Nouveaux mélanges oratoires, tome IV* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1901), pp. 89-90.

¹⁰⁸ Verret, *Éloge*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁹ Vié, *Éloge*, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Cathelineau, *Le vrai patriotisme*. Cathelineau was speaking in the context of the threatened closure of schools run by non-authorised religious orders, in particular Jesuit establishments. He insisted on the vendéen/breton identity of the heroes of Loigny, arguing that their religious and patriotic devotion made them the heirs of 1793.

prove the virtues of Catholic principles. There was a shift from a debate over the nature of the new regime and the means to regenerate France to a debate over education and patriotism. In the 1880s and 1890s Loigny was used to demonstrate the virtues of Catholic education. In 1893 d'Hulst argued for the rights of Catholic education: 'À Loigny, la France et la religion ne font qu'une: entre le patriotisme et la foi, l'alliance est indissoluble....ne séparez pas ce que le sang des héros a cimenté.'¹¹¹

V

Pie's first commemorative efforts were not universally appreciated. Gustave Aubineau, brother in arms of the fallen Joseph Perraud complained:

[Je] m'attendais à quelque chose de plus exclusive. J'aurais voulu....que les zouaves pontificaux ne soient pas mis....au même niveau que les autres troupes....Les zouaves pontificaux étaient les soldats du Sacré-Cœur et personne d'autre....combattait sous cet emblème sacré: il me semble donc juste qu'un monument exclusivement voué au Cœur de Jésus s'élève à l'occasion du fait sanglant accompli par les volontaires du Cœur divin....qu'on fasse quelque chose pour les zouaves seuls....Qu'on conserve le « bois des zouaves » mais aussi qu'on bâtit une chapelle à l'angle du bois....là où sont tombés MM de Sonis, de Troussures et d'autres.¹¹²

Aubineau was by no means alone in his ambition to elevate the zouaves and to mark the battlefield with monuments to the singularity of their exploits, even if he was to be disappointed in his hope for a specific chapel. By the end of the century the exploits of the zouaves were inscribed into the landscape. Monuments marked the mass grave at Villours, where the zouave de Ferron and 133 others who fell in the charge were buried; the *bois des zouaves* where so many zouaves fell; the spot where de Troussures fell; and the spot where Sonis spent the night of 2 December.¹¹³

In the first volume of his mammoth series on France, Victor-Eugène Ardouin-Dumazet complained:

Pas un monument digne des héroïques morts. Rien pour les fantassins courageux qui se firent décimer en défendant la ferme de Villepion. Par contre, les tombes des zouaves pontificaux sont l'objet d'un soin pieux. L'église de Loigny, un cimetière, une colonne consacrée aux compagnons de Charette font oublier que d'autre héros tombent sur cette plaine de Patay.¹¹⁴

It was not until 1911 that a monument to the heroic 37th regiment was inaugurated. Yet matters were less clear-cut than might appear. Sonis' charge was not the only episode commemorated. Amongst the first commemorative monuments a cross at Nonneville was raised in honour of the former zouave the duc de Luynes, who died rallying the 33rd *mobiles*, hit by a shell seconds after telling his men, 'Ça ne fait pas mal!' In 1873 a granite pyramid was erected to mark the heroics of the 71st regiment at Lumeau.¹¹⁵ In the *Journal de Chartres* Maurice Lasnier disputed Ardouin-Dumazet's interpretation of the commemorative landscape, claiming that just as the bones of all the fallen were intermingled in the ossuary at Loigny, all were afforded

¹¹¹ Maurice le Sage d'Hauteroche d'Hulst, "Discours prononcé à la consécration de l'église de Loigny, le 18 septembre 1893", in idem., *Nouveaux mélanges oratoires*, volume III (Paris, 1900), pp. 358-60.

¹¹² Gustave Aubineau letter, 13 Dec. 1871 to father of Joseph Perraud in Perraud, *Lettres de guerre*, pp. 51-4. Aubineau was a fellow *Volontaire*.

¹¹³ On the Villours cross, raised by Ferron's widow and the Sacré-Cœur monument in the *bois des zouaves*, raised by widows the two comtesses de Bouillé and Mme de Verthamon (who had together bought the wood) see *Rapport de l'agent-voyer cantonal*, 7 Oct. 1878, Archives Nationales, Paris [AN], F⁹ 1373. See also d'Hulst's inaugural speech for the Sacré-Cœur monument, *Allocution*, and Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 394-6, 411-12. Mgr. Baunard raised the cross to Sonis.

¹¹⁴ Victor-Eugène Ardouin-Dumazet, *Voyage en France*, 66 vols. (Paris and Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1893-1921), I, p. 170.

¹¹⁵ Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 404-5. Tellingly, this monument referred not to Loigny but the 'combat de Lumeau'. The remains of around 300 were buried at this site.

an equal homage. That the names of all the dead were recorded on the marble tablets within the rebuilt church demonstrated that it was truly a monument to all. Even the monument in the *bois des zouaves* was less exclusive than might be thought, given that it also honoured the *mobiles* and other *franc-tireur* units involved in the charge.¹¹⁶ Nor did the zouaves ignore the 37th regiment. Both Charette and Sonis' son Henri served on the committee for the monument to the 37th, while former *Volontaires* proved noted subscribers. Among the attendance at the inauguration were Verthamon's daughter, Sonis' sons Henri and Alain and a deputation of *Volontaires* led by Olivier Le Gonidec de Traissan (standing in for Charette), including Traversay.¹¹⁷

While he had not sufficiently emphasised the zouaves' exploits to Aubineau's taste, Pie had at least set out the commemorative agenda, closing his speech with an appeal for the church of Loigny to be rebuilt and consecrated to the Sacred Heart. Just as he had reshaped Legentil's original vow, so in this instance did Pie develop and transform the intention of Nicolas Vagner, father of a fallen zouave, to raise funds to restore the damaged church. The rebuilt church was not merely dedicated to the Sacred Heart, but formed a lasting monument to Loigny. In addition to a commemorative chapel where the names of the fallen were recorded, an ossuary housed their bones. The ossuary in the crypt was constructed to allow a view of the remains of 1,200 soldiers, while a separate section was later to house the tomb of Sonis, with the simple inscription, 'Miles Christi'. At his request Charette was to join him when he finally died in 1911. A visitor in 1890 wrote of the powerful impact of the sight of, 'this mass of whitened bones....the shattered mouths whose last cry was for France'.¹¹⁸ The sense of the presence of the bones of martyrs informed the sermons preached. In 1909 Alfred van den Brule had addressed a prayer to the fallen:

Soldats de Christ, Martyrs de la France, hosties sacrées et saignantes des deux plus grandes causesvous dont les cendres furent déposées là comme pour être unies au corps de l'Auguste Victime et dont le sang fut répandu là comme pour être mêlé à son précieux sang....nous vous prions comme l'on prie les reliques des saintes.¹¹⁹

It also made the church a potential place of pilgrimage. In 1891 the *Institution de Notre-Dame de Chartres* made 'a truly patriotic pilgrimage' to Loigny, bearing with them a replica of the original banner. As did others, they prayed at Sonis' tomb.¹²⁰

Yet, this supreme monument to Loigny was not easy to achieve. In the first place, despite the initial success of the committee presided over by Charette, which enabled the first stone of the new church to be laid on the second anniversary of Loigny, funds ran short. To Charette's chagrin, an appeal had to be made to the state to make up a shortfall of 20,000 francs.¹²¹ The full cost of over 200,000 francs was

¹¹⁶ Lasnier cited in *L'Avant-Garde* 1 February 1911. The quotation from Ardouin-Dumazet Lasnier provides is slightly different from that given above, though the meaning is unchanged.

¹¹⁷ *Monument du 37e régiment*.

¹¹⁸ Philippe de Grandlieu (pseud. of Léon Lavedan), *L'Ossuaire de Loigny* (Paris: Perrin et Cie., 1890), p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Van den Brule, 2 December 1909.

¹²⁰ *L'Institution Notre-Dame de Chartres à Loigny*. The pilgrimage included 'a pious walk' around the battlefield, taking in the monuments, notably that to the Sacré-Cœur in the *bois des zouaves*, 'le Calvaire....le Thabor'.

¹²¹ See mayor of Loigny to prefect Eure-et-Loire, 19 March 1877; bishop of Chartres to prefect Eure-et-Loire, 20 March 1877; request of *Conseil Municipal de Loigny*, 5 April 1877; prefect's letter of support, stressing the 'caractère patriotique' of the project, 24 April 1877; *Directeur de l'administration départementale et communale* to prefect, 7 May 1877. AN F⁹ 1373.

not paid off until 1878, four years after the completion of the building.¹²² Charette's two volumes of memoirs were published in part to pay off the debts of 1874, while in 1890 Léon Lavedan's reflections on the ossuary of Loigny were published to kick-start the subscription campaign to fund the church tower.¹²³ In Charette's eyes the church was not truly finished until 1893, when the tower was finally added. Secondly, the ossuary itself proved more problematic than the committee had expected. That the battle of Loigny had extended well beyond the commune of Loigny itself was self-evident. What was far less clear - certainly to both Charette's committee and the large public whose offerings ensured the realisation of the new church - was the fact that even the land on which the celebrated charge of the *Volontaires* took place mostly lay outside the commune. The 'bois des zouaves' lay in the commune of Terminiers. This geographical quirk would lead to an acrimonious dispute.

The quarrel erupted in 1876, in the context of the French state's efforts to arrange for the disinterment and transfer of the war dead to communal cemeteries. In Loigny questions arose as to the number of dead in question and the associated funds. The issue was complicated by the question of whether Charette's committee should pay for the disinterment and transfer of the commune's dead to the ossuary.¹²⁴ The major dispute, however, involved the neighbouring communes of Terminiers and Lumeau. Charette's committee took a proprietorial attitude towards the dead and requested 317 and 202 dead from Terminiers and Lumeau respectively - a number far in excess of those who fell in Sonis' charge. All those buried within a three kilometre radius of Loigny were considered to belong by right in the new ossuary.

This proposal to honour these dead by including them in Loigny's commemorative project was not well received. The municipal council of Lumeau argued that most of the dead claimed were in fact *mobiles* from the Charente-Inférieure and Haut-Vienne whose families wished them to share the cemetery of Lumeau with their former comrades. The commune had the right to deal with the dead buried on their soil as they wished.¹²⁵ The municipal council of Terminiers was of the same mind, and unanimously rejected the request. They argued in the first case that 107 of their dead had fallen at Villepion on 1 December and in the second case that it was impossible to distinguish between the soldiers from the various regiments. While some families who had contributed to the Loigny monument might have requested that their dead should reside there, 'a crowd of others' with equal rights had made no such request. Nor could the role played by Terminiers be set aside - at least 300 injured soldiers had been cared for in the commune.¹²⁶ Both Lumeau and Terminiers rejected revised requests made a month later. Terminiers council stated that the memory of the dead was no less dear to them than to the committee; that it was the unanimous wish of the commune's population to honour the soldiers in their own cemetery; and that their monument in its simplicity was equally effective in evoking the memory of glorious deeds.¹²⁷

¹²² Charette's committee raised 178,950 of the 201,000 francs spent. Prefect to *directeur de l'administration départementale et communale*, 24 April 1877. See also Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 337-44, 386-420; Theuré, *Souvenir*.

¹²³ Grandlieu, *L'Ossuaire*. This account originally appeared in *Le Figaro* which duly opened a subscription. Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 445-74.

¹²⁴ Mayor of Loigny to Châteaudun sub-prefect, 23 March 1876, citing Charette letter 23 Feb. 1876; mayor Loigny to prefect 28 Dec. 1876; prefect to *directeur de l'administration départementale et communale*, 5 Jan. 1877; *directeur* to prefect, 15 Jan. 1877. AN F⁹ 1373.

¹²⁵ Lumeau municipal council session 29 Oct. 1876, AN F⁹ 1373.

¹²⁶ Terminiers municipal council session 30 Oct. 1876, AN F⁹ 1373.

¹²⁷ Terminiers municipal council session 12 Nov. 1876; Lumeau municipal council session 15 Nov. 1876; prefect to *directeur de l'administration départementale et communale*, 22 Nov. 1876.

In December the local deputy, republican Pierre-Honoré Dreux-Linget, became involved, expressing amazement at the presumption of Charette's committee and the commune of Loigny. He cited the formally expressed wishes of families from the Haute-Vienne and Charente-Inférieure and argued that the battle spread over 10 communes could as readily be referred to as the battle of Lumeau as the battle of Loigny. Dreux-Linget concluded, 'Ces communes....tiennent grandement à honneur de conserver pieusement comme un souvenir sacré les restes de ceux qui sont tombés sur le champ d'honneur en défendant le sol de la Patrie sur leur territoire.'¹²⁸ Yet ultimately, this was to no avail. After wavering on the issue the *directeur de l'administration départementale et communale* finally informed the prefect that he was reversing his initial decision out of respect for the families who wished to have their fallen children transferred to the crypt of Loigny.¹²⁹ Although Charette had written to the minister of the interior in these terms, making an 'appeal to your heart', Provost argued that the decisive appeal was that of Jacques de Bouillé's widow to the president.¹³⁰ The comtesse pleaded that her husband should not be separated from his brothers in arms at Loigny.¹³¹ The president, conservative monarchist MacMahon, intervened to ensure that Charette's committee prevailed. Ironically, the one mass grave that was not emptied did unquestionably contain soldiers who had fallen in Sonis' charge: Mme de Ferron made it clear that Villours was not to be touched.¹³²

The actions of Charette's committee - and their ultimate success - reflect the wider success of their particular construction of Loigny. The zouave reading of Loigny achieved a hegemonic status. Yet, while the heroism of the zouaves was contrasted with the wider failing of the French armies, Loigny was about a shared heroism. The other forces involved were also distinguished from the failed soldiers of the defeat, mired in materialism, individualism, egoism and other corrosive doctrines of the revolution. These forces were in fact assimilated to the zouave narrative: the language applied to the zouaves applied to them. In his original speech Pie had effectively indicated as much, implying that all soldiers involved had shared a common religious inspiration and that all were entitled to the divine rewards of martyrs. While the committee did not go so far as to lay a claim to those who died in the engagements at Goury, Lumeau or Villepion, they successfully appropriated both the physical remains and the memory of all those who fell in the vicinity of Loigny. Though fewer than 800 men had been involved in the charge that saw the banner of the Sacred Heart unfurled, the remains of well over a thousand were to lie in the ossuary under the chapel of the Sacred Heart.¹³³ All the dead in a three kilometre radius of Loigny were claimed to belong within this great monument of religiously-inspired patriotic sacrifice. There were perhaps twelve hundred martyrs of the Sacred Heart.

As Dreux-Linget's words serve to demonstrate, quasi-religious language was freely applied to the fallen across the political spectrum. The dominant memory of Loigny, however, with its emphasis on martyrdom and expiation was not consensual, but celebrated by a particular constituency. In 1871 military authorities ruled that

¹²⁸ Dreux-Linget to *chef de bureau*, 11 Dec. 1876, AN F⁹ 1373.

¹²⁹ *Directeur* to prefect, 29 Nov. 1876; *directeur* to prefect 21 Dec. 1876; *directeur* to prefect 30 Dec. 1876. AN F⁹ 1373.

¹³⁰ Charette to minister of the interior, 24 Dec. 1876, AN F⁹ 1373. Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, p. 414.

¹³¹ Jacques de Bouillé's body was never found, despite the best efforts of the sister of his brother-in-law Édouard de Cazenove de Pradines, who had 105 dead exhumed from mass graves in January 1871 in a fruitless search. See her account reproduced in Nouaille-Degorce, 'Les volontaires', II, pp. 154-63.

¹³² Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 413-15.

¹³³ Provost provided a figure of the remains of 1205 transferred to the ossuary in 1877, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, 415. Theuré concurred. Official papers however give a lower figure: the mayor of Loigny referred to '1035 of our dead' when appealing for financial assistance in 1877 (mayor to prefect, 19 March) and to 1056 in an undated note (1877). AN F⁹ 1373.

colonel Fouchier of the heroic 37th regiment should not attend the anniversary ceremonies. A serving soldier should avoid the compromising association with an event that would assemble the noble-dominated zouaves whose leader's political convictions were notorious.¹³⁴ In the event, however, it was noted that Charette acted with exemplary reserve, neither attending in uniform nor displaying the banner of the Sacred Heart. No such restraint, however, was on display in the Loigny monument. It was, Charette declared, 'an homage to the French army'. His rhetorical question, 'Quel autre édifice eût mieux rendu notre pensée chrétienne et nationale en même temps?' was amply answered by the décor of the chapel of the Sacred Heart.¹³⁵ In addition to a stained glass window featuring an angel holding the banner of the Sacred Heart, was one of St. Henri, depicted with features of the Pretender, the comte de Chambord. Paintings in the chapel celebrated the *Volontaires de l'Ouest* at Loigny as the successors to Joan at Patay; the consecration of the regiment to the Sacred Heart; and the death of Troussures.¹³⁶ The convictions of the zouave were unmistakably imprinted on the Loigny monument.

VI

The commemoration of Loigny did reach beyond the ranks of the zouaves/*Volontaires*; Charette wrote to the minister of the interior that Loigny's ossuary was intended for all, expressing the comradeship experienced at Loigny.¹³⁷ The names of all the fallen were given equal prominence on the marble tablets that adorned the chapel of the Sacred Heart. Those who accompanied the *Volontaires* were not forgotten on either the Villours cross or the Sacred Heart monument in the *bois des zouaves*. In 1885 at the 'noces d'argent' celebrations of the zouave regiment Charette saluted the heroism displayed by the *mobiles* of the Côtes-du-Nord.¹³⁸ At the 1895 anniversary Philippon, veteran of the *franc-tireurs de Blidah* was specifically honoured.¹³⁹ Though the 37th regiment had to wait nearly forty years for a monument, the *Volontaires* proved faithful sponsors – and in the commemorative ceremonies the 37th were never overlooked. The commemoration of Loigny was about the construction of a dominant language and the assimilation of all forces involved into that language. It was no surprise that at the inauguration of the monument to the 37th regiment Challan de Belval, a doctor who had tended the wounded of Loigny, returned to the familiar theme of regenerative sacrifice: 'blood shed, let us not forget, must be the seed of the life and regeneration of the nation.'¹⁴⁰ There was also a clear determination that Loigny should rank alongside Bazeille or Floing; in light of this frequently made comparison a small museum was established in the presbytery in 1907, boasting the boot of Sonis and captain Albert de Gastebois' bolero.¹⁴¹

In 1884 abbé Beauchet had expressed the hope that Loigny might become the site of a national pilgrimage.¹⁴² Loigny's prominence within the Sacred Heart devotion, coupled with the lessons of Christian heroism and sacrifice ensured that it would function as a location for pilgrimages. Vagner republished his account of his

¹³⁴ Fouchier cited in Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, p. 383.

¹³⁵ Charette, *Souvenir*, I, pp. v-vi.

¹³⁶ Theuré, *Souvenir*.

¹³⁷ Charette to minister, 29 Dec. 1876, AN F⁹ 1373.

¹³⁸ Charette cited in J. Cornély, *Le Gaulois*, 29 July 1885, in Charette, *Noces*, 27.

¹³⁹ *L'Avant-Garde*, 15 Dec. 1895. This issue also printed a lengthy excerpt from Faivre d'Arcier, *Historique du 37^e régiment de l'infanterie* (Paris: C. Delagrave, 1895).

¹⁴⁰ *Monument du 37^e régiment*, p. 41.

¹⁴¹ Provost, *Loigny-la-Bataille*, pp. 511-14. Similarly general Monard argued that the 37th regiment deserved the same glorification and commemoration as Bazeille and Floing at the inauguration of their monument. *Monument du 37^e régiment*, p. 26.

¹⁴² Abbé Beauchet, *Quatorzième anniversaire*, p. 23.

own personal 'douloureux pèlerinage' to Loigny in search of his son's resting place to coincide with the pilgrimage of *Œuvres ouvrières* movement on the significant date of 14 July 1878. Regional pilgrimages were by no means uncommon; in 1901a 350-strong pilgrimage was organised by the *Union provinciale de la jeunesse catholique de l'Orléannais*.¹⁴³ In 1890 Léon Lavedan appealed for the necessary money to complete, 'un monument national où la France croyante et militaire ira toujours se retremper et se souvenir'. This was a revealing phrase. While Lavedan concluded that at Loigny it was possible 'to rise above party quarrels and think only of France', Loigny was a cult addressed to one section of France.¹⁴⁴ It could only be a national site within a Catholic definition of the national informed by a counter-revolutionary perspective. It was in the spirit of zouave propagandist Jules Delmas's understanding of France. Delmas argued that the republicans had spent the decade 1860-70 allied to the enemies of France and had shown themselves to be no true Frenchmen in 1870-71.¹⁴⁵

Loigny could then become a site of pilgrimage, but not a site of national pilgrimage. The dominant representation of Loigny determined that it would function as a Catholic site of memory, as opposed to a truly national site of memory. D'Hulst envisioned the new church as, 'a Christian pantheon of martyrs', choosing not to acknowledge the divisive nature of this counter to the secular Panthéon of the Republic. The concept of patriotism as a terrain of national reconciliation, and readiness of the orators who delivered the commemorative addresses to point to the unity displayed by the diverse forces involved, could not bridge the divide. The Catholic language of heroism with its emphasis on martyrdom and expiation was a language far removed from republican understandings. In 1893 d'Hulst made a striking parallel to Joan of Arc. Rather than conflate Loigny with Patay, he explained that the true parallel was between Loigny and Rouen. Joan's ultimate triumph lay not in her victories of Patay, Sargeau or Meury, but in her martyrdom:

le témoignage, la fidélité héroïque qu'aucun revers ne déconcerte, qui s'attache à une cause perdue et la sauve en croyante à elle. Jeanne, vaincue, enchaînée, calomniée, condamnée, brûlée a cru à la France et sa foi ne l'a pas trompée. Jeanne est morte et la France lui a dû la vie.¹⁴⁶

This was an understanding of Loigny that republicans, however much they might venerate Joan, could not share. In an article on the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the regiment, celebrated in the Sacré-Coeur basilica, Catholic politician and social reformer Albert de Mun argued that Loigny was unjustly ignored in school primers. It should be held up to children as a second Thermopylae, one of the 'imperishable models of sacrifice offered to the Patrie'.¹⁴⁷ Yet, Loigny, bound up as it was in Catholic understandings of the French nation and Catholic definitions of heroism was a poor fit with the narrative of the French nation delivered by the Republic.

To accept and understand the zouave version of Loigny was to accept not only the need for expiatory sacrifice, but also to see the zouaves as exemplars who pointed to the way to salvation. National regeneration hinged on the re-Christianisation of France; the Sacré-Coeur was the sign of regeneration and the zouaves were its privileged representatives. Loigny was a lesson addressed to the nation. In the aftermath of *l'année terrible* the purpose of celebrating Loigny was essentially two-fold. First, it was important that a certain reading of Loigny should predominate. The rebuilt church with its chapel and ossuary was the physical manifestation of the success of this project. Secondly, to celebrate this reading of

¹⁴³ Report préfet Loiret to ministre de l'intérieur et cultes, 4 July 1901, AN F¹⁹ 5562

¹⁴⁴ Grandlieu, *L'Ossuaire*, pp. 32, 34.

¹⁴⁵ Delmas, *La neuvième croisade*, pp. vi-vii.

¹⁴⁶ D'Hulst, 'Discours, 18 septembre 1893', p. 356.

¹⁴⁷ Cited in *L'Avant-Garde*, 1 July 1910.

Loigny was to engage in debates over the reshaping of France. The formal establishment of the Third Republic in 1875 and its stabilisation under an unequivocally republican leadership in the following years signalled the failure of this project. To celebrate Loigny in the 1880s and 1890s was to advance a Catholic and counter-revolutionary definition of the nation and patriotism, to insist that only religious values could produce patriots. It was to reject the secular republic and the revolutionary principles that were openly proclaimed as the foundation of the Republic.

As Karine Varley's careful scholarship has revealed, it was hard if not impossible, to achieve consensual readings of episodes of *l'année terrible*. The memories of Bazeilles, Mars-le-Tour and Floing were not uncomplicated. Nor were efforts to appropriate the memory of particular engagements lacking; Paul Déroulède's *Ligue de Patriotes* were notably active in this capacity.¹⁴⁸ There was no single memory of Loigny, even setting aside the accounts of those who fought at Goury, Lumeau or Villepion or the memories of the communes of Terminiers and Lumeau as interpreted by their municipal councils. The representatives of the army who spoke at the inauguration of the monument to the 37th regiment did not speak in the same register as those who celebrated Sonis and the *Volontaires*. Nonetheless, what is striking about Loigny is how successfully it came to be defined and understood as a Catholic and counter-revolutionary site of memory, an expression of 'the two Frances'. From their inception in 1860 onwards zouaves had always been invoked not just to teach lessons about the Catholic virtues of expiatory suffering and resignation, but to assert the vitality and distinctiveness of a Catholic 'true France' defined in opposition to the revolutionary tradition. Loigny, the supreme expression of zouave engagement in the war to defend the soil of France, would above all function as a zouave site of memory asserting that true patriotic virtue sprang from France's Catholic identity. Despite the language of patriotic unity, Loigny was about division.

¹⁴⁸ Varley, *Under the Shadow*, pp. 85-93, 120-5, 144-50, 152-74, 181-201.