

The Catholic Press in France on the Eve of the Dreyfus Affair, 1895-1897

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Abstract

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A thesis presented to the Comparative History Department
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The Assumptionist Order, founded in 1845-46 by Emmanuel d'Alzon, and its publishing house La Maison de la Bonne Presse, effectively spread an idiosyncratic gospel of traditionalism in the first decades of the French Third Republic. This was accomplished primarily through its national daily newspaper *La Croix*, which became a leading voice in the anti-Dreyfusard campaign during the Dreyfus Affair. This investigation raises questions about the nature of French Catholicism as a whole at the end of the nineteenth century and its relationship to antisemitism. A number of excellent studies have looked at the Catholic press's role at the height of the Affair. Few have looked closely at the "lull" period between Dreyfus's public degradation and the trials of Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy and Émile Zola. The central focus of my research has been on the nature of the Catholic press during these years of relative silence. This paper will show that while events and predispositions fed off of each other, the ground had already been prepared at La Bonne Presse for a rancorous assertion of Catholic nationalism and antisemitism before 1898. Insofar as possible, this study will use the press as one perspective on French popular Catholicism. Too many histories of the Dreyfus Affair track only the political or legal-procedural course of events. Even those that do look at social and cultural aspects of the Dreyfus Affair tend to treat French Catholics as a fairly homogenous and static group. However, this paper will examine the gradations and range of opinions within this group.

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Introduction

The multiplicity of events collectively known as the Dreyfus Affair mark one of the critical epochs in modern French history and perhaps the defining moment of the Third Republic. While there is some historiographical debate as to how influential the events themselves actually were, there can be little doubt that in the roughly twelve years from Dreyfus's conviction to his reinstatement into the military, France went through a dramatic political and social transformation. On the eve of the Dreyfus Affair various potential dictators and royal pretenders were waiting in the wings for an opportune moment. Discontent caused by a number of financial and political scandals, a stagnant economy, a sense of national weakness, and encroachment of the modern world had plagued the Third Republic from its founding. In addition, a new cohort of radical thinkers and activists, most of which defy easy categorization, were willing to employ the means of new media and mass politics to create a revolutionary spirit against the status quo (even if they were essentially republican).

One of the most energizing elements of these movements, particularly among those who wished to sweep away the republic, was a vaguely defined identification fusing French and Catholic into a singularity which could untie disparate groups against a constructed common enemy. Among the ranks of these quasi and anti-republicans were those avowed Catholics who saw the republic as a mistake, if not an abomination, perpetrated by the forces and agents of modernity unleashed by the French Revolution a century earlier. The indigenous and initially obscure Assumptionist Order, founded in 1845-46 by Emmanuel d'Alzon, was the embodiment of such sentiments.¹ Through their publishing house La Maison de la Bonne Presse, the Assumptionists effectively spread an idiosyncratic gospel of traditionalism. This was

¹ Pierre Sorlin, *La Croix et les Juifs (1880-1899)* (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1967), 17-18.

accomplished primarily through its national daily newspaper *La Croix*, which became a leading voice in the anti-Dreyfusard campaign.

This investigation will raise questions about the nature of French Catholicism as a whole at the end of the nineteenth century and its relationship to anti-Semitism. To what degree was *La Croix* expressing traditional prejudice and to what degree did it represent a new kind of anti-Semitism? Was the Assumptionist *La Croix* (and similar regional newspapers) representative of the Catholic clergy and laity? At the broadest level, I will consider how the Dreyfus Affair, and the Catholic press coverage of it, fits into competing worldviews, “les deux France,” of the Third Republic where the interpretations of particular events were subject, a priori, to combative ideologies such as anti-clericalism, anti-capitalism, and antisemitism.² While the Dreyfusards, mostly Republicans and leftists of various stripes “won” the short-term political battles in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair (particularly the complete separation of church and state), some of the groups that emerged from the anti-Dreyfusard tradition, such as the *Action Française*, would be the leading voices for “French fascism” and eventually the Vichy regime.

A number of excellent studies have looked at the Catholic press’s role at the height of the Affair. Few have looked closely at the “lull” period between Dreyfus’s public degradation and the trials of Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy and Émile Zola. The central focus of my research has been on the nature of the Catholic press during these years of relative silence. This paper will show that while events and predispositions fed off of each other, the ground had already been prepared at *La Bonne Presse* for a rancorous assertion of Catholic nationalism and antisemitism before 1898.

² Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeline Reberioux, trans. J.R. Foster, *The Third Republic from its Origins to the Great War, 1871-1914* (Cambridge: Maison des Sciences de l’Homme and Cambridge University Press, 1984), 192-198. and Maurice Larkin, *Religion, Politics, and Preferment in France since 1890: La Belle Epoque and its Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

Insofar as possible, this study will use the press as one perspective on French popular Catholicism. Too many histories of the Dreyfus Affair track only the political or legal-procedural course of events. Even those that do look at social and cultural aspects of the Dreyfus Affair tend to treat French Catholics as a fairly homogenous and static group. However, borrowing from some of the recent historiography, this paper will examine the gradations and range of opinions within this group. Much of this paper will be an attempt to “bring into dialogue” two bodies of Third Republic historiography: one the one hand, the studies on the press coverage of the Dreyfus Affair, and on the other, the cultural/religious histories of the period. Therefore, the thesis primarily presents a social and cultural/religious history based on a close reading of the Catholic press. It will seek to determine when the Dreyfus Affair became a near-obsession of *La Croix*. Finally, I will examine the terms and images used by the Assumptionists and how their religious worldview permeated their discourse during the years 1895-1897.

Politics

It has become a tired cliché of French historiography to say that all of French history has in some way been a reaction to the French Revolution. Yet, there is considerable evidence for this interpretation, especially in the period before the fall of Vichy. Despite restorative attempts, the Revolution permanently destroyed the privilege and wealth enjoyed by the monarchy, the nobles, and the Church during the Ancien Régime. The political history of nineteenth century France was therefore largely an attempt to come to terms with the both the ideals and the violence of the Revolution. Rene Rémond famously defined the Right in France as emanating from three traditions born during the Revolutionary period: Ultra monarchist/Legitimist, Orléanist (liberal monarchist), and Bonapartist. According to Rémond, these groups were defined

as much by the issues of the day as they were by their affiliation to former regimes. The boundaries between them were flexible but, according to Rémond, they remained distinct.³

While this model and its possible left-wing corollaries are useful as political shorthand, it would be a mistake to portray the nineteenth century as a long battle between a trenchant Left and Right.

The Third Republic witnessed the redefinition of confused and fluctuating boundaries along lines that reflected a new political and social landscape. From its very inception, it was plagued by political uncertainty. Soon after Napoleon III's defeat and capture at Sedan, an insurrection in Paris on September 4, 1870 proclaimed the Second Empire dead and declared a new republic. Despite the aspiration to resist Prussia, little could be done at this point to change the tide of the war. Prussian troops were soon occupying a vast span of French territory and besieging Paris. In February 1871, a chaotic war-time legislative election held in the wake of the capitulation of Paris after a months-long siege resulted in a substantial majority for the monarchists who favored peace over the republicans who wanted to continue the fight against Prussia.⁴ Following the Bloody Week suppression of the Paris Commune by French troops, the law and order regime led by Adolphe Thiers (provisional head of the executive) gradually reestablished something of a working government. One of the first tasks for new government of Third Republic was to remove Prussian troops occupying French territory by paying war indemnities (a process which took a several years to complete).⁵ While the war left all political parties embittered, the noteworthy pacifism of conservatives which would persist throughout this

³ René Rémond, trans. James M. Laux, *The Right Wing in France: From 1815 to de Gaulle* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 30. Rémond's account, while flawed, is more nuanced than this tripartite division would suggest.

⁴ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 7-8.

⁵ Michel Winock, trans. Jane Marie Todd, *Nationalism, Anti-semitism, and Fascism in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 8-9.

era was heavily influenced by the events of 1870-1871. They envisaged a similar disaster scenario whereby socialists and anarchists would triumph in the midst of wartime instability, launching an unprecedented social revolution.⁶ Yet, for the time being, the “moral order” government felt confident in warding off social discontent.

Initially, it was not clear that the Third Republic would fare much better than the first two. That the Republic survived this period without the reestablishment of the monarchy was due to infighting between monarchists of various stripes as it was testament to faith in republican institutions. In November 1873, Thiers was replaced by Marshal Partrice de MachMahon, an unabashed monarchist who was tasked with stabilizing the government until the monarchists could agree on a contender for the throne.⁷ In 1875, a series of laws were narrowly passed by a partnership of republicans and moderate monarchists, establishing a constitution which guaranteed a strong bicameral legislature.⁸ The 1876 legislative elections brought a republican majority to the Chamber of Deputies (lower house of the legislature, below the Sénat), and a reduction in the number of seats held by monarchists in both houses. This was followed by the May 16 Crisis, whereby abrasive measures by MacMahon against the republicans alienated voters and resulted in a decisive turn away from monarchism and the old social order in the October 1877 elections. MacMahon retained the presidency until January 1879, when Jules Grévy became the first pro-republic president of the republic (per the 1875 constitutional laws,

⁶ William D. Irvine, *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 33.

⁷ Robert F. Byrnes, *Antisemitism in Modern France: Vol. 1 The Prologue to the Dreyfus Affair* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1950), 25.

⁸ The imperative Walloon Amendment passed the Chamber of Deputies by a single vote; Herman Lebovics, *The Alliance of Iron and Wheat in the French Republic, 1860-1914* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 19.

the president was elected by the National Assembly).⁹ The entrenchment of the Third Republic which followed over the next few years finally finished the business started a century earlier.¹⁰

The moderate republicans known as Opportunists who lead the new republican majority disagreed with the pace of social reforms demanded by radical republicans, who wanted to abolish the Sénat and presidency and institute a progressive income tax.¹¹ Nonetheless, an impressive amount of legislation was passed in these years which distinguished the principles of the republic, lasting at least until the eve of World War II. For example, the principle of freedom of the press, enshrined in Article 11 of the Declarations of the Rights of Man and Citizen but virtually ignored since then, was confirmed by law in 1881. A Ministry of Agriculture was set up in 1881 and the right to establish a trade union was instituted in 1884.¹² Paradoxically, while power was decentralized on some fronts (for example, the election of local officials by municipal councils) it was centralized further on others.¹³

Most of these reforms were aimed at erasing the old order. Bonapartist functionaries from the days of the Second Empire, along with known monarchists, were purged from the judicial and administrative arms of the state.¹⁴ This included lifting the lifetime tenure of magistrates to expel supporters of clerical privilege before reinstating lifetime tenure, ensuring a thoroughly republican judicial system.¹⁵ Above all else, the relationship of the state to religion, and the Catholic Church in particular, was revamped during this period. The association of the Church and the religious orders with monarchism and the Ancien Régime made this a personal crusade for many republicans, who saw themselves as inheritors of the Revolution's anticlericalism. Jules

⁹ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 79.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 37.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 73.

¹² Christophe Charle, trans. Miriam Kochan, *A Social History of France in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 109.

¹³ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 82.

¹⁴ Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 30.

¹⁵ Lebovics, *Alliance of Iron and Wheat*, 20.

Ferry, who served as Minister of Education and as Prime Minister twice during the 1880s, was central to this campaign. He promoted training colleges for schoolteachers in the provinces and the creation of *lycées* and *collèges* for girls.¹⁶ The principle of lay education was introduced gradually and methodically. Public education was first made free (1881), then compulsory, and finally completely secular (1882).¹⁷

Education was but one piece in the *laïcité* puzzle. The Jesuits were disbanded in 1880 and other “subversive” religious orders were supposed to attain authorization from the state. These measures, intended to substitute the religious enculturation of French youth with a civic, positivist one, angered devout Catholics and the Church, but were seen as necessary to ensure the future existence of the republic. However, according to John McManners, they were only a “flanking attack” before the frontal assault on the role of the Church in public life could be launched.¹⁸ In 1884, divorce was returned to the Civil Code (it had been legalized during the Revolution, but was removed in 1816), lay funerals were encouraged by the state, crucifixes and prayer were forbidden in schools, the posts of army and hospital chaplains were abolished, mayors were given control of religious processions and access to church bell towers, and prayers which opened parliamentary sessions were done away with.¹⁹

Still, moderate republicans were willing to allow religious missions throughout the empire to maintain autonomy because of their centrality in the colonizing enterprise (by the end of the nineteenth century two-thirds of all missionaries in the world were French).²⁰ A resumption of imperialism, stalled since the Franco-Prussian War, was primarily a means of

¹⁶ Ferry was primarily concerned with the quality of education. He was in fact less stringently anticlerical than many of his fellow republicans.

¹⁷ Though the laicization of teaching staff was not fully imposed until an 1886 law was passed; Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 89

¹⁸ John McManners, *Church and State in France, 1870-1914* (Harper & Row Publishers: New York, 1972), 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 59.

²⁰ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 89.

boosting national pride without confronting the *Kaiserreich*.²¹ Arguments that empire enriched the economy of France only came later, and failed to strike a chord with voters or even its supposed beneficiaries in industry. In fact, the entire imperial mission had few supporters. Colonial societies failed to attract many members. Both conservatives and republicans saw empire as a distraction from more pressing concerns closer to home and radical republicans considered the endeavor inhumane.²² Despite adding Tunisia, Madagascar, Tonkin, and Annam to the empire, the public saw little gain from all the effort. The vacillating fortunes of French forces in the Sino-French War brought down the Opportunist government in 1885 and essentially ended Ferry's political career.²³

Meanwhile, political expediency and the lack of an ideal leader led monarchists and Bonapartists to work together more closely than before, forming a "conservative union" (*Union des droites*). The attacks on the church and privilege by the moderate republicans had scared them enough, but they were truly terrified by the prospect of a popular, radically republican party, even more so by the increasing influence of socialist and anarchist ideology. Internal divisions among the republicans and the unpopularity of Ferry's government meant that the 1885 elections bode well for conservatives, who did very well in first round of voting. Sensing a disaster, the republicans united and rallied in the second round of voting to maintain their majority.²⁴ However, the divisions between radicals, whose opposition to Ferry had increased their share of the National Assembly, and the now greatly minimized moderate republican camp made governing difficult. Along with a widespread sense that the constitution needed to be amended,

²¹ Sandford Elwitt, *The Making of the Third Republic: Class and Politics in France, 1868-1884* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 17.

²² Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 94-95.

²³ *Ibid*, 99.

²⁴ Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 28.

this combined to create a palpable sense of political crisis.²⁵ A clear indication that the existence of the republic was felt to be in danger was the passage of a law in June 1866 which exiled all pretenders to the throne. To make matters worse, the Opportunist President, Jules Grévy, was forced to resign in the face of a scandal in late 1887.

Into this maelstrom stepped the popular and well-positioned War Minister, General Georges Boulanger. Boulanger had risen rapidly in the years of Opportunist republican dominance because of his charisma and apparently pro-republic credentials, a rarity in the higher ranks of the military. He was appointed War Minister in 1886, having been sponsored by the powerful radical republican Georges Clemenceau.²⁶ Boulanger was popular in the military for his soldier-friendly reforms such as reducing a term of service from three to five years and instituting a levée en masse which abolished exemptions, even for seminary students! He became a favorite of republicans for purging the officer corps of members of the former royal dynasties (and for publically insulting the Duc d'Aumale). Boulanger also oversaw the peaceful suppression of a large miners' strike in Decazeville, allowing his soldiers to bring food to and consort with the strikers.²⁷ Boulanger's rhetoric had a certain proletarian ring to it. While horrifying conservatives, this made him sensationally popular among members of the lower-middle and working classes who had lost faith in the republican parliament's ability to address social ills.²⁸ His belligerence towards Bismarck's Reich both before and after the Schnaebelé incident also increased his star. Boulanger had been disparagingly dubbed Général Revanche by Bismarck, but in France this name gained him a following.²⁹ At this point, moderate republicans

²⁵ Mayeur and Reberiou, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 124.

²⁶ Irvine, *Boulanger Affair*, 34.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 35-36.

²⁸ Mayeur and Reberiou, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 126.

²⁹ Peter M. Rutkoff, *Revanche & Revision: The Ligue des Patriotes and the Origins of the Radical Right in France, 1882-1900* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 43.

decided that the general's antagonism was more of a burden than an asset, and colluded with conservatives to form a government with a Boulanger-free cabinet.

The departure of Boulanger from the cabinet in May 1887 only made his supporters more ardent. The eclectic crowd which drew around Boulanger included radical republicans (though Clemenceau began to fear the general's clout), leftists (non-Marxists socialists such as the Blanquists and Henri de Rochefort), nationalists of various sorts, and increasingly, conservatives who saw Boulanger's capitalization on the discontent towards the republic as an opportunity.³⁰ What united all these disparate groups was romantic nationalism, Revanchism (a desire for a military rematch with Germany to retrieve territory lost in 1871), dissatisfaction with the bourgeois opportunist regime, and a commitment to Jacobin-like popular sovereignty through plebiscitary democracy. It is important to keep in mind that Louis-Napoleon had been essentially an elected dictator (by two such referenda votes in 1851 and 1852), making both republicans and Legitimists fearful of the prospect of "democratic dictatorship." Despite the poor decisions Louis-Napoleon made in the waning days of the Empire, he remained popular across the class spectrum.³¹ Revanchism had in fact been strongest on the left since the founding of the Third Republic.³² Nationalist Paul Déroulède, who would become a key figure at the height of the Dreyfus Affair, helped found the Ligue des Patriotes to fill in the patriotic "Jacobin" void left by Léon Gambetta's death in 1882.³³ Still, the Ligue des Patriotes had remained fairly aloof from day-to-day politics until the arrival of Boulanger on the political scene. Boulanger's ambiguous agenda matched perfectly with the Ligue's multifarious nationalism.³⁴

³⁰ Mayeur and Reberieux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 130.

³¹ Lebovics, *Alliance of Iron and Wheat*, 15.

³² Irvine, *Boulanger Affair*, 31.

³³ Rutkoff, *Revanche & Revision*, 12.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 36-37.

The Boulangists organized themselves into the vaguely-defined, yet tactically modern “Parti Nationale” in late 1887, staging street demonstrations and utilizing the full power of the press, including Rochefort’s *L’Intransigeant*. Boulanger himself was dispatched to the provinces in an attempt to diffuse his popularity. During this time, he was courted heavily (though secretly) by leading conservatives and monarchists. In the meantime, his supporters had placed his name on a by-election list in the Département du Nord for an election scheduled for April 1888. Since he was still a member of the military, he was not eligible to run for office. But in March 1888, the nervous parliamentary regime “retired” Boulanger from the military, thus making him an eligible candidate. He won the election and, as a demonstration of his popularity, resigned the post so that he could run again in Département du Nord in August. Winning this campaign, Boulanger aimed higher, seeking to be elected to the Chamber of Deputies from a Parisian constituency. Winning this campaign on January 27, 1889 (with the help of his “praetorian guard” of 20,000-25,000 members of Ligue des Patriotes in Paris), he was urged to march on the L’Elysée Palace and stage a coup.³⁵ Boulanger refused, hoping to take power legally through the legislative elections scheduled for September 22 1889.

During the interim, however, opposition to him coalesced. Monarchist and Bonapartist provided financial assistance to Boulangist candidates and their leaders had urged their supporters to vote for Boulangists in a run-off situation with Republicans, alienating republican supporters of the general. In fact, as early as November 1887, Boulanger had informally “promised” representatives of the Comte de Paris (grandson of Louis-Philippe) that he would help restore the monarchy if he could be guaranteed the position of War Minister.³⁶ Boulanger seemed to present a different face depending on his audience. While rumors about Boulanger’s

³⁵ Irvine, *Boulanger Affair*, 119.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 75.

secret affinity for a monarchist restoration, he publically denounced conservative politicians.³⁷ Suspicion from all sides began to severely undermine the Boulangists. Clemenceau, the general's old advocate, helped found Society for the Rights of Man and Citizen to defend republic from "Caesarian dictatorship." Republicans seized initiative, sensing that enthusiasm for the general was wavering. Boulanger, Arthur Dillon (Boulangist financier and campaign organizer), and Rochefort were impeached from their seats in the National Assembly for "endangering the safety of the state." All three fled the country to avoid prosecution and on August 14 Boulanger was deported in absentia, making him ineligible as a candidate. In the 1889 elections, Boulangists managed to do well in cities, but had lost support among the key constituencies they drew from. The movement gradually died out and Boulanger committed suicide in September, 1891.

Boulanger has been portrayed as a precursor to Anti-Dreyfusards, though the tortuous complexities of the movement, which changed shape and composition over time, make final judgment difficult. The brevity and quick collapse of Boulangism do not seem to coincide with its "re-emergence" (*sans* Boulanger) during the Dreyfus Affair.³⁸ Rémond is generally dismissive of Boulangism, seeing it merely as the period when the right-wing adopted nationalism as a credo. William Irvine emphasizes Boulangism's relationship to the royalists and Bonapartists, noting that their support was crucial in the movement's successful electoral campaigns. Déroulède, whom many conservatives detested, had been one the first to run under the Boulangist banner in June 1888, finishing third in the voting behind a Bonapartist and a republican.³⁹ In the aftermath of Boulanger's fall, his supporters were ostracized and the Ligue

³⁷ Ibid, 111.

³⁸ Rémond, trans. Laux, *Right Wing in France*, 208-209.

³⁹ Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 9-10, 96.

des Patriotes was disbanded. Partially due to guilt by association, Boulangism “coincided with the definitive eclipse of royalism in France.”⁴⁰

While the stability of the republic was assured in 1899, several noteworthy trends provided for an undercurrent of restlessness. The first trend, a discourse on the corruptibility of politicians and financiers, was given its fullest expression in the fallout from the Panama Scandal in 1892. The roots of the scandal, really a series of scandals, go back to 1888 when members of parliament were bribed into supporting a loan for the failing Panama Canal Company, which had made little progress towards a canal in nearly a decade. Regardless, the company went bankrupt in January 1889. An investigation 1891 implicated some leading members of parliament, including Clemenceau, who nonetheless were acquitted from bribery charges from a lack of evidence.⁴¹ It was also shown that banks and members of the press were aware of the company’s financial difficulties, but were similarly paid to keep silent. The image that took shape was one of systematic corruption.

In the end, whereas punishment was light for the few who were prosecuted, thousands upon thousands of private investors from all strata of society were ruined. A number of groups, led by the growing antisemitic movement, sought to capitalize off the widespread disgust (several prominent Jews were associated with the scandal, though never implicated). Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, sees the Panama Scandal as the event which most set the stage for the antisemitic outbursts during the Dreyfus Affair.⁴² The abstention of nearly thirty percent of the electorate in the 1893 elections was an indication of displeasure with the country’s political and financial leadership.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid, 180.

⁴¹ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 157.

⁴² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1973), 95.

⁴³ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 159.

The second trend challenging the republic at this time was the specter of a powerful socialist movement. The working-class support for Boulangism had shown that poverty and discontent among the masses was potentially dangerous to the republic. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, a number of unions and political parties vied for influence among the working population (at this time, socialism was basically synonymous trade unionism).⁴⁴ Among them were the followers of Louis Blanqui, the powerful and revolutionary French Workers' Party, followers of Jules Guesde, and a number of smaller reformist and independent groups, as well as deputies such as Jean Jaurès and Alexandre Millerand who identified as socialist.⁴⁵ In general, aside from leadership, these groups had more in common with each other than these divisions would suggest.⁴⁶ Just as important was the development of the local bourses du travail, which served multiple roles as cultural centers and loci for organization. The attempt to federate the unions resulted in the founding of the CGT (Confédération Général du Travail) in September 1895.⁴⁷ In 1902, the bourses joined the CGT, though even this accomplishment only brought about a third of French workers under a single banner.⁴⁸ Still, the increased ability of workers to organize effectively made demonstrations and strikes a regular feature of the landscape.

Anarchists, a much smaller but equally important group, also amplified their activities in the early 1890s. In 1891, a particularly eventful May Day saw the death of ten workers at a demonstration in Fourmies and an exchange of gunfire between anarchists and police in Clichy.⁴⁹ François Koenigstein (known by his *nomme de guerre* Ravachol) responded with a number of violent attacks until he was apprehended and executed after blowing up the houses of

⁴⁴ Ibid, 142.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 138-140.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 141.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 145.

⁴⁸ Byrnes, *Antisemitism*, 66.

⁴⁹ Louis Patsouras, *Jean Grave and the Anarchist Tradition in France* (Middletown: The Caslon Company, 1995), 30-31.

a judge and prosecutor of those apprehended at Clichy. On December 9, 1893 Auguste Vaillant threw a bomb into the Chamber of Deputies injuring several, but killing none. Vaillant was executed in February 1892.⁵⁰ The most dramatic and brazen act though was the assassination of President Sadi Carnot by Santo Caserio in June 1894. While these individuals were unaffiliated with public anarchist intellectuals such as Jean Greve and Bernad Lazare, their “propaganda by deed” resulted in severe clampdown, rationalized by new anti-terrorism legislation (the *lois scélérates*) which rendered even an apology for terrorism an act of treason.⁵¹ These laws were employed against a number of prominent anarchists including Grave (known as the Trial of the Thirty), most of whom were acquitted when evidence of a conspiracy was found wanting.⁵² The hysteria whipped up by these events receded, as did assassination attempts and bombing, but they left an indelible impression, particularly on nationalists, who associated these movements with internationalism and conspiracy.

Ralliement

After the fall of Boulanger, conservatives searching for a new direction were left with three broad options. One was an obstinate disavowal of the republic à la Paul de Cassagnac, a devoted Bonapartist who refused to compromise with the “Jacobin minority.”⁵³ A second option was to remain publically committed to the republic, but privately hoping for a monarchist revival. The third possibility, not entirely unprecedented but certainly fortified by Boulanger’s failure, was expressed by *Ralliés* like Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun who concluded that the

⁵⁰ Ibid, 32.

⁵¹ Ibid, 35.

⁵² Ibid, 36.

⁵³ Karen Offen, *Paul de Cassagnac and the Authoritarian Tradition in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1991) , 200.

republic was a permanent fixture worth reconciling with.⁵⁴ Joining them in the emergent “constitutional right” or “conservative republican” group was an opportunist bloc, known as Progressists, who had been battling the radical republicans for years.⁵⁵

While Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) had always been considered more moderate than his paleoconservative predecessor Pius IX, the *Ralliement* stemmed from practical concerns more than liberal sensibilities. This program fit into his wider ambition to solve the problems of the modern world *through* Catholicism rather than retreat into nostalgic traditionalism. With regards to France, three primary motives drove the policy of rapprochement. First, the Vatican had been diplomatically isolated and dispossessed of Papal territories since the Italian *Risorgimento*. Faced with a hostile unified Italy, France offered the best hope for a powerful ally, as it had under Napoleon III. Secondly, Leo XIII was concerned with the decline in spiritual authority of the church throughout Europe. In his political outlook, form of government mattered less than adherence to the law of God. Finally, if the French Church was to lead the fight for Catholicism, it had to resolve ancient internal divisions between Gallicans and Ultramontanes.⁵⁶ A clear agenda of reconciliation could overcome these fissures in the pursuit of a common aim. Given these objectives, the *Ralliement* makes sense. It also was an opportune moment for such a compromise. Recovering from a political crisis which brought the country to the precipice of dictatorship or a renewed monarchy, facing an escalating crisis from the radical left, and looking for a means of ameliorating economic hardship, many were in the mood for reconciliation.

Capitalizing on this mood, and looking to remove the blemish of anti-republicanism, the Vatican openly attempted to reconcile the French conservatives with the republic. Leo XII had

⁵⁴ Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1898* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965) 32-33.

⁵⁵ Rémond, trans. Laux, *Right Wing in France*, 218-219.

⁵⁶ Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, 4-5.

actually been angling at this policy for some time. In 1879, he sent representatives to France's monarchist pretenders asking them to abandon attempts at the resurrection of monarchy.⁵⁷ In 1885, the encyclical *Immortale Dei* had already expressed the notion that form of government mattered less than substance (immediacy to God). Now, in the early 1890s, the political mood was ripe for Ralliement. Two Papal Encyclicals were circulated which delineated the new policy. The *Rerum Novarum* (1891) was an unambiguous recognition of the plight of the working classes, which should be alleviated by charity and government intervention if necessary.⁵⁸ *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes* (1892) exhorted "not only Catholics but all honest and sensible Frenchmen to rid themselves of the germ of political dissension..."⁵⁹ The same year, in a letter to the French cardinals, Leo XIII expressed his wish for a union of all Frenchmen. Of course, he hoped this would be a Catholic and conservative union to fend off socialism, freemasonry, and materialism, but the gesture was significant, nonetheless.⁶⁰

In the 1893 elections, thirty two Ralliés and conservative republicans were elected, though several of the leading figures of the movement had been defeated. The old conservative union had lost half its seats, and any threat to the government was now expected to come from the burgeoning socialist movement, not the discredited monarchists. A good portion of the Opportunist leadership was wiped out in the aftermath of the Panama Scandals. To put it succinctly: "The men who had dominated political life since the advent of the republic disappeared."⁶¹

The years leading up to the Dreyfus Affair were characterized by short-lived and mostly rather conservative republican governments whose agendas sought to head off the radicals and

⁵⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 65.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Ibid, 51.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 53.

⁶¹ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 161.

socialists.⁶² For example, an attempt to institute a progressive income tax narrowly failed in the Sénat and brought down Léon Bourgeois's government.⁶³ Jules Méline, the only Prime Minister to last more than a year in the 1890s, stepped into the fray, building a centrist majority on protectionist economic policies, colonial expansion (seen as an instrument for national reconciliation), and social pacification through Social Catholicism.⁶⁴ Méline had been the architect of the popular 1892 Tariff and, as Minister of Agriculture, the cooperative *Crédit agricole et populaire*, both extremely popular measures which significantly assuaged the poor economic conditions of the early 1890s and went a long way towards finally ending the Great Depression.⁶⁵ The moderate republicanism of Méline and his allies can be seen as a union between the old elites and the bourgeoisie which aimed to fend off social discord by "buying off" the peasants and working-classes. In the skewed political spectrum which emerged from the Dreyfus Affair, the groundwork laid by this coalition would form a noticeable, though generally unsuccessful, republican right.⁶⁶

Thus on the eve of the Dreyfus Affair, the political organization of the Third Republic was already undergoing a major realignment. The Affair would catalyze this shift dramatically, rallying socialists *en masse* to defend the republic and participate in parliamentary government. The Antidreyfusard movement would summon the former Boulangists who still desired a vitalizing, energetic nationalism, the remnants of monarchism, and Catholics embittered by *laïcité*. This zealous participation of hard-line Catholics killed off the Ralliement and

⁶² Maurice Agulhon, trans. Antonia Nevill, *The French Republic: 1879-1992* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 51. The political semantics of this period were mind-boggling. Agulhon proposes using the terminology of contemporary Maxists who saw the moderate republicans as "bourgeois," that is, accepting the bourgeois economic order in principle. Zeldin uses the term Solidarists to emphasize the desire for centrism.

⁶³ Lebovics, *Alliance of Iron and Wheat*, 138.

⁶⁴ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 165.

⁶⁵ Lebovics, *Alliance of Iron and Wheat*, 166.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 189.

emboldened the radical governments which emerged from the Affair to assail what place Catholicism still had in public life.

The confused political tides of the early Third Republic can largely be explained as a manifestation of struggles over a whole range of political and cultural issues. Aside from political parties, these clashes were fought under the auspices of corporate bodies whose level of influence and organization were prone to embellishment by opponents. The conspiratorial mindset of the Dreyfus Affair was only an amplification of extant concerns about secret societies and backroom schemes. For radical (and many moderate) republicans and socialists, the church and “notables” (what Theodore Zeldin called the gerontocracy) were the primary cause for concern.⁶⁷ Even the Ralliement was viewed suspiciously (and correctly) as an attempt to unify the French church behind the Papacy and gain a reliable ally in the struggle with Italy.⁶⁸ To a lesser degree, the military, despite its plebian composition, was seen as a sanctuary for nobles and reactionaries in its higher ranks. Socialists also disliked the army’s function as suppressor of strikes.⁶⁹ An insular military culture also added to suspicion of the officer class, despite their aversion to involvement in politics.⁷⁰ As a result of the Dreyfus Affair and the scheming of the General Staff, the prestige of the army was severely damaged and its fortunes fell along with the church and the notables.⁷¹

On the other hand, monarchists and conservative republicans invested a tremendous amount of pride in the army as the defender of France from enemies, both internal and external. They were alarmed at the size of the workers’ movement in France. The seemingly relentless

⁶⁷ Theodore Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Politics and Anger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), xiii.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 283.

⁶⁹ Charle, trans. Kochan, *Social History*, 165.

⁷⁰ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 188.

⁷¹ William Fortescue, *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940: Conflicts and Continuities* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 50.

anticlericalism of radicals was greeted with opinions ranging from confusion to abhorrence. “For the first time since the French Revolution [French Catholics] found themselves under lasting subjection to a hostile state...”⁷²

Economy

The social and political turmoil that arose periodically in the Third Republic cannot be separated from the abysmal economy which characterized the period. Precisely how bad the French economy was during the nineteenth century is a matter of great historiographical debate.⁷³ All agree that France’s economy remained more agricultural and less industrial than Britain and the German Empire. But the work of a revisionist school has challenged the view that France’s economy was essentially “backwards.” France did partially industrialize, but in an entirely unique fashion, focusing on high-quality goods, textiles, power production from water, aluminum production, and eventually automobiles.⁷⁴ Still, it seems that due to radical regional and temporal variations, a conclusive picture is hard to draw. For example, while France’s GDP per capita achieved virtual parity with its neighbors, this was largely a result of slower demographic growth (which was very low throughout the nineteenth century and virtually zero after 1870).⁷⁵

Overall, despite reparations for the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian Wars, an incomplete industrial revolution, and bureaucratic involvement in the economy, France was able to develop

⁷² Agulhon, trans. Nevill, *The French Republic*, 56.

⁷³ François Crouzet, “The historiography of French economic growth in the nineteenth century,” *Economic History Review* vol. 56, no. 2 (2003): 224. is an excellent article on this back and forth dispute. Crouzet found that since World War II, the dominant historiographical picture of the nineteenth century French economy has changed in accordance with the state of the twentieth century French economy.

⁷⁴ François Caron, trans. Barbara Bray, *An Economic History of Modern France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 237.

decent entrepreneurial, industrial, and financial systems.⁷⁶ One area of consensus is that France suffered immensely from a “Great Depression” lasting roughly from 1873-1896/1897. This was a continental crisis which hit France particularly hard because it was primarily an agricultural crisis (industrial growth throughout the depression period maintained at 1.5-2 percent).⁷⁷ A drop in prices combined with natural disasters such as phylloxera, mildew, and silk-worm disease which wiped out crops, leaving many unable to pay back lenders.⁷⁸ The years 1890-1896 were particularly terrible years which hurt all strata of society. Prices of domestic produced agricultural and industrial goods dropped to their lowest point in two already bad decades.⁷⁹ For instance, agricultural prices in 1895 were 27 percent below the 1871-75 level. As mentioned above, protectionism probably helped to reverse the stagnation of the French economy. Historians agree that the economy rebounded in 1895, though this proved to be temporary. The years 1901-1905 resulted in a reversion to stagnation, before a definitive economic recovery in the years leading up to World War I.⁸⁰

Culture and Society

The groups that would comprise the most zealous wing of the Antidreyfusards had already taken shape by the early 1890s. A unifying element among these groups, though it was not solely their dominion, was that “Modernity” was neither gratifying nor fulfilling. What were the constituent parts of this concept which they inveighed against? Certainly one key element was the collapse of space. Increasing lines of travel and communication were impinging on the villages and self-contained regions of rural France. Since the beginning in the Second Empire,

⁷⁶ Ibid, 234-237.

⁷⁷ Roger Price, *An Economic History of Modern France, 1730-1914* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 226, 232.

⁷⁸ Charle, trans. Kochan, *Social History*, 122.

⁷⁹ Lebovics, *Alliance of Iron and Wheat*, 24.

⁸⁰ Caron, trans. Bray, *Economic History*, 29.

the number of roads, canals, railroads, and telegraph lines greatly increased, bringing “the isolated patches of the countryside out of their autarky- cultural as well as economic- into the market economy and the modern world.”⁸¹ This process can most appropriately be compared to the colonization of a foreign country.⁸² The Freycinet Plan in the late 1880s sent funds and administrators streaming out from the metropole into the provinces in an attempt to modernize and enculturate the “backwards” regions of France and improve the lagging economy.⁸³ This amounted to an increase in competition and commerce, squeezing small-town artisans and landless agricultural laborers into the cities.⁸⁴ However, this process of urbanization in the second half of the nineteenth century was gradual and uneven. On the whole, 100,000-150,000 people left villages each year between 1881 and 1911. They were more likely to move to a nearby regional hub (given that a railroad ran through it) than to Paris, and often only temporarily.⁸⁵ Yet, by the end of World War I, a quarter of the population lived outside the *département* where they had been born.⁸⁶ The effect of conscription cannot be overlooked either. Service in the military opened up opportunities to the children of peasants for a career in public service, drawing huge numbers of them away from their native village or town.⁸⁷ But migration and urbanization did not revolutionize society as dramatically as it might have. Even in 1911, agriculture remained largest source of employment (42 percent) and more than half the population still lived in communes with less than 2,000 people (55.8 percent).⁸⁸ The stubborn persistence of patios (distinct regional dialects) throughout France lasted well into the Third

⁸¹ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 206.

⁸² *Ibid*, 489 and *passim*.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 209.

⁸⁴ Price, *Economic History*, 36-37, 84.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 212-215.

⁸⁶ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 290.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 302.

⁸⁸ Charle, trans. Kochan, *Social History*, 110.

Republic.⁸⁹ That the usage of dialect was strenuously discouraged in the recently free (mandatory) schools of the Third Republic is telling.⁹⁰

Aside from language, schools became a catalyst for enculturation through patriotism and literacy.⁹¹ But how effective the schools were at increasing literacy is debatable. Persistently low literacy rates in some areas indicate an “outright cultural rejection” of efforts emanating from the metropole.⁹² In fact, literacy had been increasing exponentially since the Ancien Régime, aided by locally-run schools which probably had their origin in the drive for religious education in the Counter Reformation (however, it should be noted that determining the level of literacy within these populations is nearly impossible). Furet and Ozouf calculated the literacy rate to be over 85 percent *before* Ferry’s reforms.⁹³ They also concluded that the sometimes stark differences between regions lined up with economic disparities in the nineteenth century, implying that literacy had become a necessary condition of modernization.⁹⁴

Being able to read is one thing. Participating in a reading culture is quite another. Aside from attempts by clergy and philanthropists to educate the lower classes, the first “popular libraries” were established in the 1860s. Until 1880s all evidence points to print culture (novels, newspapers, etc.) as “an urban art par excellence...formulated by urban minds.”⁹⁵ The clearest manifestation of print culture was the explosion of newspaper production and readership in the early Third Republic. The sudden increase in newspapers following a modification in the

⁸⁹ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 89.

⁹⁰ Mayeur and Reberieux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 117.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 89. Part of the impetus for free public education was a sense that Prussian soldiers had been better educated than their French counterparts in the Franco-Prussian War.

⁹² François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (Cambridge: Maison des Sciences de l’Homme and Cambridge University Press, 1982), 298-299.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 253.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 303-304.

⁹⁵ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 452.

ensorship laws very late in the Second Empire (1868) had preempted this trend somewhat.⁹⁶ The number of newspapers in small towns tripled in the 1870s alone, initially being read by artisans, shopkeepers, notables/large landowners, and administrative/ bureaucratic types, but then diffusing throughout the population.⁹⁷ The “penny press,” which increased newspaper readership throughout society, went from almost half the papers printed in 1870 to three-quarters in 1880, largely due to technological innovations which reduced production costs and improved logistics. The illustrations and serial literature which characterized the penny press were added to many papers to make them accessible and entertaining. Overall, weeklies and biweeklies reporting on local news were more popular in rural areas; dailies reporting on regional and national news were more popular in towns and cities.⁹⁸ Newspapers opened up a new outlet for political dialogue, allowing the owner-editor, and his writers to promulgate their agenda. Influential entrepreneur-journalists such as Edouard Drumont (*La Libre Parole*), Arthur Meyer (*Le Gaulois*), Henri de Rochefort (*L’Intransigeant*), Clemenceau (*L’Aurore*), and many other prominent political figures used print to open a new front in the struggle for the soul of the Third Republic. Unsurprisingly, the 1880s and 1890s are considered the period when the intellectual was “born” in France, a process which preceded the Dreyfus Affair, but which was greatly accelerated by it. As Eugen Weber concluded:

Literacy, together with access to books, newspapers, and other sources of information, forged a new attitude towards politics, and this in turn cast up new leaders...none of this was entirely new, not even in isolated areas at mid-century. But only improved communications turned a tiny trickle into a mainstream.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Zeldin, *Politics and Anger*, 175.

⁹⁷ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 468.

⁹⁸ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 116.

⁹⁹ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 291.

Antisemitism in France

Antisemitism in France on the eve of the Dreyfus Affair was multifaceted. It drew on three broad types of imagery which, though distinct, often overlapped. The first of these was “traditional Catholic” antisemitism, perhaps more appropriately called anti-Judaism, which had at its disposal several ageless tropes such as deicide, blood libel rumors (increasing in the late nineteenth century), and Talmud trials. The second form of antisemitism was socio-economic. The association of Jews with bourgeois cosmopolitanism and finance capitalism was continually read into and gleaned from contemporary events. Even before the very tangential “involvement” of prominent Jewish politician Joseph Reinach in the Panama Scandal, the collapse of the Catholic-minded *Union Générale* Bank in 1882 was seen as a Jewish plot to destroy a less usurious Catholic competitor.¹⁰⁰ Even as the economy recovered in the mid-1890s, *La Croix* (and others) continued to invoke the *Union Générale* collapse as revelatory of a Jewish conspiracy to dominate world markets. The fortunes of prominent Jewish bankers and entrepreneurs such as the Rothschild family and Maurice de Hirsch were continually cited as definitive proof of such a *complot*. As an international organization, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, founded to protect what rights Jews had attained, was suspect. In 1893, the Pope admitted that there was a Jewish problem, economic in nature, whose solution was to pray for their conversion.¹⁰¹

Jews were also associated with radical republicanism and, increasingly as the twentieth century approached, socialism. Again, specific instances were said to be indicative of the

¹⁰⁰ The collapse was indeed a scandal, but was the result of political maneuvering by the dominant political factions at the time. It would be a stretch to call it an anticlerical plot, but to associate the crash primarily with the Jews reflected the perception of Jews as crooked financiers. Jeannine Verdes-Leroux, *Scandale financier et antisémitisme catholique: le krach de l'union générale* (Paris: Éditions du Centurion, 1969), 9 and passim.

¹⁰¹ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 107.

character of an entire people. Alfred Naquet, seen to be the architect of the (re)legalization of divorce in 1884, was a prime target for Catholics horrified by the Third Republic's anticlericalism.¹⁰² By the mid-1890s, when fears of renewed anticlerical legislation reached a frenzied state in *La Croix*, Jews were commonly associated with Freemasonry, anticlericalism, and socialism. If Jews had typically been portrayed as *décadent* urbane businessmen and financiers, the association with socialism seems paradoxical. In a show of impressive logical flexibility, antisemites figured that socialism must be a clever fabrication by the Jews to undermine Christian society, while appearing to challenge capitalism. They hunted for any trace of Jewry among leading politicians and public figures. A figure such as Joseph Reinach or Bernard Lazare, one of the first Dreyfusards and a leading leftist-anarchist intellectual in France, assured the antisemites of their distorted reasoning.¹⁰³ On this score, an extremely important work, *the* manifesto for French antisemitism, was Edouard Drumont's *La France Juive* (1886). Drumont cleverly wove extensive research on public figures in modern French history in an attempt to connect all that was detrimental to France to Jews and their descendents.

Intellectuals such as Drumont and Maurice Barrès represented this final form of antisemitism, to which the phrase can most appropriately be applied (quite literally, both men briefly sat in the Chamber of Deputies during the 1890s).¹⁰⁴ They were exclusivist nationalists and made appeals to Catholic identity and French Catholic mythology, even though Barrès himself was not religious. They were also distinguished by their radicalism, incorporating elements of the emergent discourse of biological and racial antisemitism.

¹⁰² Byrnes, *Antisemitism*, 100. Naquet had also been a staunch supporter of Boulanger from the very start, though he supposedly advised the general to flee Paris once the political tide had turned against him.

¹⁰³ Fortescue, *The Third Republic*, 59. Lazare published *L'Antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes* in 1894.

¹⁰⁴ Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in Modern France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (London: Associated University Presses, 1982), 213. Barrès was elected in 1889 as a Boulangist candidate from Nancy, but lost in the 1893 and subsequent elections. Drumont was elected as an antisemitic candidate from Algiers in 1898, also failing to be re-elected.

Religion

A major reason why the Ralliement failed was the lack of enthusiasm from lower level clergy, whose traditional role as local representatives of moral authority had been devastated by laïc laws. Parish priests were more fanatical than middle and high-level ecclesiastics because they were on the front lines of the war with anticlericalism.¹⁰⁵ They quarreled with schoolmasters, prefects, and subprefects who were often ardently anticlerical.¹⁰⁶ The struggle between Catholicism and anticlericalism was a perennial cause of contention in the Third Republic. While clearly being tied up in a larger battle of the very nature of France's government, the May 16 Crisis was directly caused by monarchist and conservative fears of republican anticlericalism.¹⁰⁷ On a more democratic level, one less commonly noticed aspect of the 1889 elections was the active participation of ardent Catholics disillusioned with the republic's reforms.¹⁰⁸

A couple new pieces of legislation in the mid-1890s, while miniscule compared to the reforms enacted under Ferry, distressed both Ralliés and the Intransigents. Republicans were internally divided on reciprocating the Ralliement, but the radicals and socialists held enough seats to influence policy. In 1893, a law was enacted to supervise church property. The *loi d'abonnement* (April 1895) was a modification of the *droit d'accroissement* which dictated in two laws (1880 and 1884) how taxes would be collected from monastic orders. The monastic orders obviously opposed this legislation in principle, especially since secular associations such as Freemason Lodges did not have to pay such a tax. The government found the convoluted collection method outlined in the 1880 and 1884 laws vexing. Therefore, the Ribot Ministry

¹⁰⁵ Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Zeldin, *Politics and Anger*, 284.

¹⁰⁷ Elwitt, *Making of the Third Republic*, 136.

¹⁰⁸ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 148.

decided to collect an annual sum from the orders.¹⁰⁹ The new law taxed the monastic orders on 0.3 percent of the annual value of their possession after charitable donations and missionary obligations were factored out. On the eve of the Dreyfus Affair, the fear of further increases in taxes, the threat of more anticlerical legislation, and the modesty of the Ralliement's accomplishments distressed French Catholics.¹¹⁰

Popular Religion

Who were “French Catholics”? Nearly all French people who were not Protestant or Jewish were Catholic by birth (as a matter of national identity) and baptism.¹¹¹ All social historians of the period admit that they face tremendous difficulties when trying to address the question of religious belief. However, recent accounts also agree that the “secularization thesis” of the late nineteenth century needs qualification, if not outright revision. It is true that from the beginning of the Third Republic, and even beginning in the late Second Empire, the rates of Catholic sacraments decreased precipitously as secular alternatives were offered.¹¹² Also, though the evidence is piecemeal, there remains little doubt that in some areas, church attendance plunged in the same period, even on religious holidays. It must be kept in mind that there were significant regional variations in both the degree of church attendance, and the rate in rise or decline of attendance over time. Catholicism was more widely practiced in the southwest (Rhône Valley), east (Vosges), and northwest (Loire valley and Normandy), and these regions

¹⁰⁹ Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, 77.

¹¹⁰ McManners, *Church and State*, 77.

¹¹¹ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 339. Weber cites an early Third Republic census that listed over 35 million people as Catholic out of a population of roughly 38 million.

¹¹² Mayeur and Reberieux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 148. Ralph Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism 1789-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 164.

maintained or even increased religious observance.¹¹³ Complicating matters even further is the fact that changes over time, even where records exist, can be unreliable since church attendance under the Ancien Régime was compulsory, but spottily enforced.¹¹⁴ At the same time, considerable evidence has been uncovered by historians in recent decades of a Catholic revival simultaneous with secularization in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This revival was largely characterized by revitalizing “medieval traditions” such as devotions to saints and pilgrimages. While many pilgrims ventured to the Holy Land, a tremendous number travelled within France, to sites such as Pontmain, Salette, and above all, Lourdes.¹¹⁵ These sites were linked to apparitions and an emerging cult of the Virgin Mary, part of a broader regeneration of popular Catholicism along feminized and humanitarian lines.¹¹⁶ Women composed roughly two-thirds of church-goers and the number of women seeking to join convents increased.¹¹⁷ Given that women could not vote, religion offered a unique opportunity for rewarding participation outside the home.¹¹⁸

Therefore, the Catholic revival in France cannot be understood monolithically. While it was essentially a conservative, even reactionary, social and cultural force, it also contained democratic and egalitarian strands. Politically, this would manifest in the ultimately

¹¹³ Mayeur and Rebérioux, trans. Foster, *Third Republic*, 106.

¹¹⁴ Theodore Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Intellect, Taste, and Anxiety* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 984.

¹¹⁵ Thomas Kselman, *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 201-203.

¹¹⁶ Joseph F. Byrnes, *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 87-88.

¹¹⁷ Zeldin, *Intellect, Taste, and Anxiety*, 983-984.

¹¹⁸ Charle, trans. Kochan, *Social History*, 25.

unsuccessful, yet noteworthy Social Catholicism movement attempted to form a national mutual aid society and union of Catholic workers.¹¹⁹

The Assumptionists (*Assomptionnistes*)

Another key element of the Catholic revival of the mid-nineteenth century was the foundation of new religious orders. One such order was the Augustinians of the Assumption (*Augustins de l'Assomption*), founded by Père Emmanuel d'Alzon in 1845-46 in Nîmes where he had established a seminary in 1843 (Collège de l'Assomption). D'Alzon was very active throughout the 1850-1870s, setting up the infrastructure for his religious order by establishing seminaries, going on pilgrimages, and advocating for papal influence in France.¹²⁰ With the new freedoms and technological possibilities afforded to aspirant newspapers, he founded Maison de la Bonne Presse publishing house on Rue François in the first arrondissement of Paris.¹²¹ Early on in its history d'Alzon enlisted the help of two of his former students, the tireless Pères Vincent de Paul Bailly and François Picard (d'Alzon's eventual successor as head of the Assumptionists), who would become the two principal directors of Bonne Presse's message. Following d'Alzon's lead, Bailly in particular involved himself in all aspects of the Assumptionists outreach efforts by writing editorials, supervising book publications, organizing pilgrimages, and attending meetings and congresses.¹²²

¹¹⁹ On this matter, see: Stephen Wilson, "Catholic Populism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair: the Union Nationale," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Oct., 1975), pp. 667-705

¹²⁰ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 15.

¹²¹ The definitive history of the structure and publications of Bonne Presse from its founding to the post-war period is: Jacqueline Godfrin, *Une centrale de presse catholiques: la maison de la bonne presse et ses publications* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965)

¹²² Sorlin, *La Croix*, 36.

In 1876, *Le Pèlerin* (The Pilgrim) was founded, providing simple articles and distinctive color illustrations on the week's events and articles pertinent to religious interests.¹²³ Originally, politics were meant to be secondary for *Le Pèlerin*, but in the period after the Boulanger Affair, and especially during the Dreyfus Affair (when its readership peaked at about 140,000), *Le Pèlerin* was covering the political events of the day from an intransigent Catholic position.¹²⁴ Still, the focus of *Le Pèlerin* remained the religious-cultural revitalization of French Catholicism.¹²⁵ Only with the founding of *La Croix* in April 1880 did the Assumptionists have an outlet for combatively affirming the place of God in modern society.¹²⁶

The Assumptionists may have been a small group of reactionary diehards, but they had an astonishing appreciation for cutting-edge means of communication. Their skill at producing a cheap, easy to read outlet for their views made them a leading voice among the faithful in France. Their views were clear and consistent. The arrangement of the paper left room for news, culture, serial literature, advertizing, even weather, and infused opinion into every article – a comprehensive daily for the devout. Predictably, the Assumptionists were directly plugged into the popular Catholicism of the late nineteenth century. In fact, they played a leading role in the attempts to beatify and canonize Jeanne d'Arc, and helped make the grotto of Lourdes *the* Catholic pilgrimage site in France.

An example of their organizational aptitude was the proposal by Bailly, early on in the history of *Bonne Presse*, to coordinate “committees of diffusion,” that is, leagues of Catholic press vendors who would cooperate instead of compete.¹²⁷ The height of Assumptionist

¹²³ Ibid, 26.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 28.

¹²⁵ In 1903 however, it became aggressively anti-government in the face of further anticlerical legislation and the attempted dissolution of the Assumptionists. Godfrin, *Une centrale*, 47.

¹²⁶ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 30.

¹²⁷ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 42.

organization, the sort which quickly ran afoul of the government (and the Ralliement-minded Papacy), were the *Comités Justice-Égalité* – local election committees founded in 1896 to organize campaigns for select Catholic candidates and causes.¹²⁸ It is odd then that *La Croix* never fully advocated a political position, only opposed anticlericalism, modernity, and the “enemies of France.” Sorlin points out that the paper was originally monarchist, but abandoned the position after the death of the Legitimist pretender, comte de Chambord.¹²⁹ The Assumptionists’ ambivalence was revealed during the Boulanger Affair, which it largely stayed aloof from. In the early 1890s, they more or less fell into line with the Ralliement.¹³⁰ But by becoming centrally involved in the long, bitter fight over new anticlerical legislation in the mid 1890s, the Assumptionists were (willingly) absorbed into the quarrel as a political force. The Dreyfus Affair only exacerbated this trend, to the point that the Assumptionists were declared an enemy of the Republic in 1900.¹³¹

By 1898, there were ninety-five provincial versions of *La Croix*, which took their cue from Rue François, but which operated independently. These papers offered a local focus for readers and a local platform for the Assumptionist message.¹³² Some of these were more successful than others, often depending on the religious zeal in the particular locality. For example, the successful *La Croix du Nord* had a readership of over 20,000 in 1892, only three years after being founded.¹³³

¹²⁸ Ruth Harris, "The Assumptionists and the Dreyfus Affair;" *Past & Present*, 2007 (194): 183; Sedgwick, *Ralliement*, 104.

¹²⁹ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 55.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 57-58. Of course, as Ultramontanists, they continued to think that they were carrying out the Pope’s will. Public praise for *La Croix* from Leo XIII and the Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano*, enthusiastically reprinted by *La Croix*, only emboldened this sentiment.

¹³¹ Harris, "The Assumptionists and the Dreyfus Affair;" 175.

¹³² Agnès Rochefort-Turquin, “Les «Croix» locales de 1888 à nos jours” in *Cent and d’histoire de «La Croix»* ed. René Rémond and Émile Poulat (Paris: Éditions du Centurion, 1988) 53.

¹³³ Danielle Delmaire, *Antisémitisme & Catholiques dans la nord pendant L’affaire Dreyfus* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1991), 23.

The national *La Croix* was initially read, unsurprisingly, by priests, but also by laymen who supported the Assumptionists' aggressive advocacy.¹³⁴ Its readership expanded rapidly, passing 100,000 in 1889 and peaking around 170,000 in the mid-1890s (See: Appendix B).¹³⁵ Readership in large cities – Paris, Lyons, Bordeaux, Marseille, Toulouse – was never high relative to the city's population as a whole. *La Croix* fared much better in mid-sized cities such as Amiens, Tours, Reims, and Cherbourg.¹³⁶ Its readers, aside from priests and the parishioners they won over to the paper, were primarily petit bourgeoisie and landholding peasants, though an effort was made to appeal to poorer peasants and workers.¹³⁷

The paper was published six days a week (there was no Monday edition, as devout Catholics the Assumptionists spent their Sundays praying and recuperating). A supplement was also published on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Both the primary issue and the supplement were four pages long (two pages front-and-back). Aside from the features mentioned above, *La Croix* regularly printed historical articles on France and the Church, pilgrimage diaries, announcement of national or Holy Land pilgrimages, Saint's lives, Biblical exegeses, commercial bulletins, and summaries of the minutes from meetings of ecclesiastical and political organizations.

The participatory encouragement of the paper was remarkable. Aside from effectively aiding the organization of pilgrimages and meetings, *La Croix* often published correspondence from both clerical and lay readers, either in the form of a letter to the editor or as a guest submission (these were commonly anonymous or under a nom de plume). The editors asked readers for their prayers for the *Patrie* and against the forces of anticlericalism:

¹³⁴ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 40.

¹³⁵ Annexe D, *Cent and d'histoire de «La Croix»* ed. René Rémond and Émile Poulat (Paris: Éditions du Centurion, 1988) 449.; Godfrin, *Une centrale*, 177.; Sorlin, *La Croix*, 47.

¹³⁶ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 53.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 48.

Against the persecution, we request from the communities: 1) a daily prayer; 2) a daily sacrifice; 3) an offering of bread for Saint Anthony of Padua, in the name of each community.¹³⁸

La Croix regularly reprinted articles from other papers, normally ones which reflected their own opinions. Most commonly, these reprints were from local *La Croix* papers. Otherwise, they were likely to come from other conservative papers ranging from *Le Gaulois* to the antisemitic papers *La Libre Parole* and *L'Intransigeant*.¹³⁹ However, *La Croix* would even rely on the republican press for a story, so long as it was followed by an analysis.

Was there an ideology of *La Croix*? Without a doubt, yes. Events were viewed through a prism which appealed to Catholic theology and French-Catholic history/lore, and which read metaphysical significance into events. For example, the article “Pour La Patrie,” after asking readers to offer “Ave Marias,” states that “the salvation of the *patrie* depends uniquely on the mercy of God.”¹⁴⁰ At the height of their struggle with anticlericalism, the Assumptionists placed themselves in the role of the martyr:

It is the supreme hour to decide if we have more fear of the prison and the scaffold than of disavowing our past and our title as sons of the Church.¹⁴¹

The Assumptionists were aghast at the consequences of Modernity - industrial capitalism, egoism, materialism, social inequality, class conflict, secularism, and state centralization (and therefore power over the Church). They had a palpable nostalgia for the past (the Ancien Régime), and glorified the faithful peasant.¹⁴²

Although the bourgeoisie were originally included in this critique of Modernity, these attacks abated in the early 1890s. As fear of class warfare increased, *La Croix* began to

¹³⁸ *La Croix*, March 29, 1895. [Contre le persecution, on demande aux communautés: 1) Une prière quotidienne; 2) Une sacrifice quotidienne; 3) Une offrande en pain pour Saint Antoine de Padoue, au nom de chaque communauté.]

¹³⁹ Aside from citing *La Libre Parole*, *La Croix* cited Drumont directly forty-three times by 1900 (often reproductions of passages from his books). Sorlin, *La Croix*, 53.

¹⁴⁰ *La Croix*, January 17, 1895. [le salut de la patrie depend uniquement de la misericorde de Dieu.]

¹⁴¹ *La Croix*, November 13, 1896. [C'est l'heure suprême de decider si nous auron plus peur de la prison et de l'échafaud que de renier notre passé et notre title de fils de l'Eglise.]

¹⁴² Sorlin, *La Croix*, 60.

distinguish between legitimate, French capitalism and “international finance.”¹⁴³ The Assumptionists also had a complicated relationship with science. On the one hand it was associated with the failings (*not* failure) of reason, universal suffrage, and parliamentarianism (the revolutionary residue).¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the series of articles “Scientific Chatter” [*Causerie Scientifique*] became a regular feature of the *Supplément* and exhibited a certain fascination with technology such as telephones, metallurgy, and automobiles.

Prior to the Dreyfus Affair, *La Croix* exhibited several types of anti-Jewishness. Initially, while vilifying prominent Jews such as the Rothschilds and Alfred Naquet, the Assumptionists granted the Jews an essential place in their theology and saw the influx of refugees to Palestine as a sign that Christ’s return was nigh.¹⁴⁵ The predictable presence of “traditional Catholic antisemitism” which attached the label of deicide to the Jews did not preclude the willingness of the Assumptionists to allow for the possibility of a “good Jew.”¹⁴⁶

However, two events in 1882 caused the Assumptionists to take a more vituperative turn against the Jews. The first was the Tiszaeszlár blood libel scandal in Hungary. The second, which would influence *La Croix* for years, was the crash of the *Union Générale* bank.¹⁴⁷ Throughout the 1880s, *La Croix* fortified its stereotype of Jews as greedy, materialistic, snooty, republican, capitalist urbanites. Yet, they were only a piece in a larger polemic against Modernity. The political and financial commotion of 1889-1892 shifted the viewpoint of *La Croix* on the Jewish question. From 1889 onwards, *La Croix* picked up the habit of antisemitic papers to “out” supposed Jews. Although the Assumptionists never advocated violence, they

¹⁴³ Ibid, 63.

¹⁴⁴ See: *La Croix*, February 23, 1895. “L’Age d’Or!!!” A particularly impassioned article, even by the standards of *La Croix*

¹⁴⁵ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 74.

¹⁴⁶ The vestiges of this view can still be seen in “Cher Israélites.” *La Croix* March 17, 1895

¹⁴⁷ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 78. Sorlin claims that *Le Pèlerin* was actually more antisemitic than *La Croix*.

proudly described *La Croix* as “the most antisemitic paper in France,” an extraordinary claim given that they were contending with the likes of Drumont and Rochefort.¹⁴⁸ As we shall see below, while Jews continued to be implicated along with other “enemies of the Church,” a particular form of indignation was reserved for them by *La Croix*.

Analysis

Why focus on the relatively inactive years of the Dreyfus Affair (1895-1897)? For one thing, it is a conceivable frame of analysis. Secondly, and more importantly, this period has been overlooked by the authors who have examined *La Croix* in detail. Most historians who have looked at the press in-depth have tended to focus on the period when a scandal became *L’Affaire*, beginning with Esterhazy’s trial in January, 1898.¹⁴⁹ Sorlin’s book is the most exhaustive study of *La Croix* in all its aspects, though its primary focus is antisemitism. However, since Sorlin is concerned with the paper from its founding until the turn of the twentieth century, he coasts through this period rather quickly. Danielle Delmaire’s *Antisémitisme & Catholiques dans la nord pendant L’affaire Dreyfus* is a regional study along the same lines. Godfrin’s study looks at all aspects of Bonne Presse from the 1880s to the 1960s, and therefore is able to spare little room for these years. The more recent series of topical articles edited by Rémond and Poulat similarly spans the entire history of Bonne Presse into the Fifth Republic. Furthermore, because the focus of these studies on Bonne Presse has been primarily on its antisemitism, all the authors above fail to indicate how dominant the fallout from the loi d’abonnement scandal was in the pages of *La Croix* from 1895-1897.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 93-94.

¹⁴⁹ Like all periodizations, this is somewhat arbitrary. As my analysis will show, unsurprisingly, there was a months-long buildup towards Esterhazy’s court-martial.

My analysis generally conforms to the characterizations of this period of *La Croix*'s history as being dominated by the “*trio de la haine*” (Jews, Protestants, and Freemasons) and international politics.¹⁵⁰ Periodic obsessions and the perpetual struggle against trio never fully ceased, but the paper could curiously retreat into reporting on French politics, society, culture, the military, international affairs, and religious news without continual polemics. It is also worth noting that illustrations, which would become the most noticeable and disgraceful legacy of *La Croix* during the Dreyfus Affair, were used increasingly in the years leading up the Affair for a number of purposes (satire, advertising, portraiture).¹⁵¹

January 1895- December 1897

The life and times of Alfred Dreyfus have been fastidiously documented again and again since the moment the man was pardoned (before, in fact).¹⁵² As tragic and historically significant Dreyfus's personal story was, the most important thing to remember about the Dreyfus Affair is that it ultimately had little to do with its namesake. Dreyfus was arrested in October 1894 and convicted before a closed military tribunal in December. Before being shipped to a prison in French Guyana, a highly theatrical public degradation was staged on the morning of January 5, 1895. According to *La Croix*, some 30,000 people were assembled on the Place Fontenoy in Paris. Among the screams of “Traitor,” “Coward,” and “Judas,” “Down with the Jews!”, the slogan of nationalist street demonstrators three years later, stood out conspicuously. *La Croix*

¹⁵⁰ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 117.

¹⁵¹ A note on methodology: The examples cited below are not an exhaustive list. The tenets of *La Croix*'s fairly monotonous ideology were repeated too often to list them all here. For example, from mid-1895 to mid-1897, it is nearly impossible to find an issue which does not mention the Masonic/anticlerical oppression of the Church. The examples cited in the analysis were chosen either because they are succinct and representative, or because they are indicative of subtle, yet noteworthy, shifts in *La Croix*'s ideology.

¹⁵² For a very informative yet romanticized account of daily events surrounding the protagonists of the Dreyfus Affair see: Geroge R. Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

considered Dreyfus's declarations of his innocence as "a final kiss of Judas" from a "cynical character."¹⁵³

Dreyfus's sluggish transport to French Guyana was painstakingly tracked by the press, *La Croix* included. By February 2, he was being held on the Île de Ré near La Rochelle. *La Croix* seemed to derive a certain amount of pleasure in the tribulations of the man whom nearly everyone considered a confirmed traitor: "he finds the menu of the prison incompatible with his appetite."¹⁵⁴ By the end of February, he was on his way to the Île du Diable.

While Dreyfus was largely forgotten by *La Croix* (and the French public) until the last months of 1897, the unfortunate captain was dragged back into the spotlight on September 3, 1896 by a rumor that Dreyfus had escaped on an American schooner!¹⁵⁵ The erroneous story was immediately picked up by *La Libre Parole*, *L'Intransigeant*, and *La Croix*. The inaccuracy was soon cleared up, but bringing it back into public compelled *La Croix* to reiterate charges against Dreyfus and the indubitable nature of his guilt.¹⁵⁶

Tropes

The attitude of *La Croix* during this period was expressed through a number of continually reappearing metaphors or tropes. These each warrant a thorough examination. The high taxes on church assets instituted by the loi d'abonnement left a permanent impression on the Assumptionists, who had already felt victimized by laïcité. Regular, almost daily, articles under the title "Persécution Fiscale" which always on page two, catalogued general pecuniary abuses of

¹⁵³ "Dégradation du Traître." *La Croix*, January 06, 1895. [A bas les Juifs; un dernier baiser de Judas.] One fascinating development covered by *La Croix* in the early period of the Dreyfus Affair was the early efforts to organize students along nationalist and antisemitic lines. *La Croix* February 10, 1895, contained a report about students in Paris's Latin Quarter organizing against freemasons and Jews. As Stephen Wilson has shown, the *lycée* and *université* students of the Latin Quarter formed an indispensable bloc of Paris's *Ligues*.

¹⁵⁴ "Dreyfus A L'Ile de Ré" *La Croix* February 2, 1895. [il trouve le menu de la prison incompatible avec son appétit.]

¹⁵⁵ Whyte, *Dreyfus Affair*, 79.

¹⁵⁶ *La Croix*, September 15, 1896.

the church by the state. Normally, these were local disputes between local bureaucrats and clergy. To give an representative example, *La Croix* of July 19, 1896 contained a story on the Brothers of Saint-François-Régis in Roche-Arnaud (near Puy, Haute-Loire) whose harvest was seized by the government for resale. As angering as this act was for *La Croix*;

...these prosecutions are all the more odious in that they are exercise against a congregation which recruits exclusively among the orphans of the department, and which only subsists in part by the grace of alms and by collections made among the Catholics of the town of Puy and the département of Haute-Loire... We are astounded to observe such a fiscal monstrosity.¹⁵⁷

This was a predictable reaction to the recent laws documenting and taxing the Church. But the events were portrayed not only as an attack upon the institutions and representatives of Catholicism, represented here by indigent and meek penitents, but vicariously upon the entire community who provided for them.

The paper itself tried to cultivate the sense of such an active national Catholic community. Aside from the paper's political preoccupation, it was gravely concerned with the moral state of the individual and family. Yet, even when the Assumptionists demonstrated compassion, it was related back to the grand cultural struggles. For example

Let us work to reestablish the respect, love, and dominant role of the family: that is the price of salvation! Let us defend the family since it is preferably the family which attacks the enemies of all social order.¹⁵⁸

Similarly, alcoholism was considered “a social question of the first order,” bound to questions “not only of wealth and savings, but of the preservation of individuals, of the family, often of religion.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ “Persécution Fiscale.” *La Croix*, July 19, 1896. [ces poursuites sont d’autant plus odieuses qu’elles s’exercent contre une Congrégation qui se recrute exclusivement parmi les orphelins du département, et qui ne subsiste en partie que grâce aux aumônes et aux quêtes faites parmi les catholiques de la ville du Puy et du département du Haute-Loire... On est stupéfait de constater une pareille monstrosité fiscal]

¹⁵⁸ “Famille.” *La Croix*, January 27, 1895. [Travaillons à rétablir le respect, l’amour, le rôle dominant de la famille: le salut est à ce la prix! Défendrons la famille puisque c’est à la famille que s’attaquent de préférence les ennemis de tout ordre social!]

¹⁵⁹ “La Lutte Contre L’Alcoolisme.” *La Croix*, March 2, 1895. [Une question social de premier ordre... nonseulement de la richesse et des economies, mais de la conservation des individus, de la famille, souvent de la religion]

Nationalism and support for the military was also a primary theme of this period, increasingly so as the climactic months of the Dreyfus Affair approached. The promotion of officers, official and rumored movements of troops, and advances in military technology were given abundant attention. Following the lead of *La Libre Parole*, *La Croix* concerned itself with the composition of the higher echelons of the military. In the fallout from Dreyfus's conviction, it feared the infiltration of Jews, Freemasons, and "foreigners" into the military and administration. *La Croix* also reported regularly on the living conditions of soldiers serving throughout the empire. Letters from the staff addressed to the soldier were occasionally published, as were return letters from servicemen. The romanticization of military service could even be expressed in emotional fictional accounts of young men's sacrifice, leaving their hometowns for foreign shores for the sake of the *Patrie*.

France's relations with her neighbors took a surprisingly central role for a paper ostensibly created to maintain the faith within France. The section "Guerre et Marin" was a regular article in this period, delegated to either the third or fourth page. The unscrupulous, materialistic, Protestant financial empire of Britain became a primary antagonist for *La Croix* during this period.¹⁶⁰ Italy too was regularly attacked for its usurpation of the Papal Lands in the *Risorgimento*. However, no foreign government garnered as much attention in *La Croix* as the belligerent and deceptive Germans. It is rather telling that a newspaper produced by clerics was considerably worried that, for example, two battleships of the northern fleet, the *Trehouart* and the *Bouvines*, could not fire at certain angles if the seas became a little rough.¹⁶¹

The Dreyfus Affair period as a whole indicates that if there was not outright Revanchism, there was at least a concern of preparedness for another war with Germany. For example, the

¹⁶⁰ America was sometimes included in diatribes against finance capitalism and materialism.

¹⁶¹ "Guerre et Marin." *La Croix*, February 28, 1897. [...deux cuirasses de l'escadre du Nord, le Trehouart et le Bouvins, ne peuvent pas tirer sous de certains angles, dès que la mer devient un peu houleuse.]

advances made by the Germans in developing artillery (lighter and more mobile than French artillery) with smokeless gunpowder were seen as:

the condemnation of parliamentarianism as the practice of a chamber indebted to radicalism and international socialism. France will be powerless to respond...as long as it counts in its assemblies the friends of Liebknecht.¹⁶²

Similarly, *La Croix* reprinted an article from the conservative paper *Le Gaulois* which questioned the motives of Kaiser Wilhelm II's questions posed to the French ambassador over a dinner in Berlin. They found reason for suspicion in the Kaiser's statement: "You have, in your country, a very fine army; I was able to appreciate when I was in France."¹⁶³

The most surprising revelation from this period is to what extent *La Croix* was concerned with international news, though it was normally related back to France.¹⁶⁴ Reports about the empire were ordinary, though this mostly focused on Madagascar, Indochine, and above all, Algeria. The Assumptionists were routinely concerned about the creeping influence of "Protestants" (the British) in Africa.

However, the bulk of the Assumptionists' ire was reserved for France's internal enemies. The spectral, ambiguous *trio de la haine* was the primary target of their attacks. This truly was a curious concept. While all three constituents of the trio – Freemasons, Protestants, and Jews – were regularly condemned, they were also portrayed as working in concert, particularly when it came to oppressing their supposed common enemy, the Catholic Church and faith. Put simply:

¹⁶² "Les armements de l'Allemagne." *La Croix Supplément*, January 3, 1897. [...la condamnation du parlementarisme tel que le pratique une Chambre inféodée au radicalisme et au socialisme international. La France sera impuissante à répondre aux formidables armements qui s'exécutent en silence de l'autre côté des Vosges tant qu'elle comptera dans ses assemblées des amis de Liebknecht.]

¹⁶³ "Guillaume II et L'Armée Française." *La Croix Supplément*, June 30, 1897. [Vous avez, dans votre pays, une très belle armée; j'ai pu apprécier, lorsque je suis allé en France.]

¹⁶⁴ An example when it was *not* was the extensive coverage of the Greco-Turkish conflict in 1897.

“Protestants, Jews, and Freemasons divide amongst themselves the exploitation of France.”¹⁶⁵ A fascinating and revealing entry, “L’Ami de déicides,” deserves to be quoted at length:

We seem sometimes to have, in this journal, hatred of Jews, and yet we only have hatred for the crime which they perpetuate *across the centuries*: Deicide. When they want to renounce this crime, we embrace them with love [referring to converts]...The deicides are everywhere allied with freemasons, who place their origin under the porticos of the temple of Jerusalem; also the freemasons are everywhere united with Jews.¹⁶⁶

Even when ostensibly dealing with international affairs, the theme easily and deliberately slipped back into domestic concerns. For example, the article “Protestants à Madagascar” quickly becomes article on French Protestants. The author did not doubt the patriotism of most Protestants;

But...their religious fanaticism blinds them and they have become the dangerous instruments of English and German interest in our country.¹⁶⁷

Socialism, another extranational/international movement, was also included as an ally of the trio:

The international of bourgeois freemasonry shook Europe for a hundred years; it has prepared the way for the worker’s International. *The International of Jewry* governs with money the governments themselves; it asserts itself on the whole world, under the title of *Alliance universelle israélite*.¹⁶⁸

In one particularly bizarre article, *La Croix* reasoned that since Karl Marx was a Jew, and Jules Guisde was related by marriage to Jews, and since both were (by their count) millionaires, there must be some connection between socialism and Jewry.

¹⁶⁵ “Protestants.” *La Croix*, May 25, 1895. [Protestants, juifs, franc-maçons se partagent l’exploitation de la France.] The same issue had articles on Army officers distributing anticlerical propaganda to soldiers, a schoolmaster in Lyon using public schools to convert students to Protestantism, and the threat posed by Italian bandits and spies in southeast France.

¹⁶⁶ “L’Ami des Déicides.” *La Croix*, October 28, 1897. My italics. [Nous semblons parfois avoir en ce journal la haine des juifs, et cependant nous n’avons de haine que pour le crime qu’ils perpétuent à travers les siècles: le Déicide. Quand ils veulent renoncer à ce crime, nous les embrasons avec amour...Les déicides sont partout alliés avec les franc-maçons qui placent leur origine sous les portiques du temple de Jérusalem; aussi les franc-maçons sont-ils partout unis aux juifs.] This was followed by “Nous le constatons une fois de plus aujourd’hui chez M. de Rochefort.”

¹⁶⁷ “Protestants à Madagascar.” *La Croix*, July 10, 1896. [Mais, j’ai le regret de le leur dire, leur fanatisme religieux les aveugle et ils se font les dangereux instruments de l’intérêt anglais et allemand dans notre pays]

¹⁶⁸ “Internationale.” *La Croix* May 18, 1895. [*L’Internationale de la Franc-Maçonnerie bourgeoise* agite l’Europe depuis cent ans; c’est elle qui a préparé la voie à l’Internationale ouvrière. *L’Internationale de la juiverie* gouverne par l’argent les gouvernements eux-mêmes; elle s’affirme à la face du monde, sous le titre d’*Alliance universelle israélite*.]

Socialism is an absurdity, maintained and directed by the Jews, in the goal of promoting a social upheaval which will only benefit the Jews...¹⁶⁹

This is a rather different treatment of than was given in October 1894 when *La Croix* advised its readers to “greet the socialist with a bitter smile” and try to introduce them to Social Catholicism instead.¹⁷⁰

Freemasons were the target more regularly than any other group in this period, even if the denunciation of Jews callous, for reasons which will be specified below. The criticism was unremitting, practically becoming the paper’s *raison d’être* after the passage of the *Loi d’abonnement*. Freemasonry represented all the problems with the Modern world because from the Revolution onwards it attacked the ontological center of the pre-modern (or more appropriately, non-modern) world, God. *La Croix* unsurprisingly favorably reported on local and national meetings of *Ligues* and *Unions Anti-Maçonnique*. Who were these archenemies of Catholicism? They were certainly bourgeois, perhaps Jewish or Protestant, and if not, certainly allied with Jews and Protestants. Beyond this, few specifics are mentioned. *La Croix* clearly had a group of known anticlerical legislators in mind, but at the same time saw freemasonry as a broader association. Their mystery was heightened by their secretive lodge culture. All that needed to be known was that they were the source of anticlericalism. An article which attempted to enumerate Freemasonry in France made this point clearly. While, on paper, they were equal to 20,000-25,000, “in reality, they are some hundreds who overrun the high places and the profitable sinecures.”¹⁷¹ In fact, the number of freemasons had generally increased as the

¹⁶⁹ “Le Socialisme, C’est de la Juiverie.” *La Croix* December 22, 1896. [Le Socialisme est une absurdité, entretenue et dirigée par les juifs, dans le but de favoriser un bouleversement social qui ne profiterait qu’aux juifs, ces sans-patrie par excellence et par principes.]

¹⁷⁰ “Le Combat des Trois.” *La Croix Supplément*, October 16, 1894. [reprit le socialiste avec un sourire amer]

¹⁷¹ “Voilà l’ennemi.” *La Croix*, September 4, 1896. [en réalité, ils sont quelques centaines qui envahissent les grosses places et les riches sinecures.]

republicans came to dominate the politics of the Third Republic, but *decreased* in the early and mid-1890s, only to increase again as the radicals gained the initiative after the Dreyfus Affair.¹⁷²

At the height of the loi d'abonnement debate, entire issues of *La Croix* were virtually devoted to the matter. *La Croix* exhibited little confidence in the National Assembly:

But these men [the Chamber of Deputies] are freemasons; they are at the mercy of Lodges...Freemasonry is no longer a secret society; especially in the last few months, it reveals itself among us with a brazen cynicism.¹⁷³

It was the Jews however who received the most vitriolic treatment from *La Croix*. They were the ultimate foreigner in the schema which equated French and Catholic. Freemasons and bourgeois cosmopolitans might be godless and *décadent* but at least they were still French. The same goes for Protestants, even if their allegiances were dubious. Even socialism was comprehensible, given the legitimate grievances of workers. Aside from the religious imagery of “traditional Catholic antisemitism,” the anti-Jewishness of *La Croix* was primarily socio-economic. However, instead of conflicting, these two forms often complemented each other.

A period of intense antisemitism followed Dreyfus's conviction which lasted several months.¹⁷⁴ From the middle of 1895 and for the next two years, antisemitism played a central role in a broader polemic against the various enemies of the Church contributing to the degeneration of French society, morality, and prestige.¹⁷⁵ Antisemitism was both a theme incorporated into the discussion of key political events and, at the same time, a recurring topic to return to during periods of relative calm.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Jean Estèbe “Un theater politique renouvelé,” in *La France de L’Affaire Dreyfus*, ed. Pierre Birnbaum (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994), 34.

¹⁷³ “La Loi D’Abonnement: l’échéance de mars et les Congrégations religieuses.” *La Croix Supplément*, March 26, 1896. [Mais ces hommes sont franc-maçons; ils sont à la merci des Loges...La Franc-Maçonnerie n’est plus une société secrète; surtout depuis quelques mois, elle s’affiche parmi nous avec un cynisme éhonné.]

¹⁷⁴ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 110-111.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 114.

¹⁷⁶ Delmaire, *Antisémitisme*, 224.

In the wake of Dreyfus's degradation, the ex-captain was incorporated as an exemplar in an already existing scheme. For example, Dreyfus is included with the Rothschilds as exhibit of a dangerous cosmopolitan sentiment.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, Dreyfus's conviction only served to reinforce and broaden the Assumptionists' prejudices against Jews. The February 3, 1895 *Supplément*, aside from excerpting from *La Libre Parole* an article entitled "Les Juifs en France," contains an article "Jews in the spotlight" which discusses at-length the proposal introduced to the Chamber of Deputies by M. Michelin to ban foreigners and their descendants to the fourth generation from the civil and military service.¹⁷⁸ *La Croix* entirely shared this anxiety over the presence and influence of Jews in the institutions of state. The editors praised those "good people who, without bias, are compelled to see in the Jewish question a question which concerns, to the very highest degree, the material and moral wealth of France."¹⁷⁹

As this quotation suggests, the focus of antisemitism *La Croix* in this period was often the supposed financial clout of the Jews¹⁸⁰ For example; "The foreign invasion and the Jewish invasion march abreast, hand in hand, thanks to the practice of economic liberalism and Masonic propaganda."¹⁸¹ This view was given its fullest expression in a lengthy article "Le Système Juif" in the January 29, 1896 *Supplément*. The article, at first only a review of the bulletin *Le Propriétaire Chrétien*, gradually escalates in its claims of Jewish duplicity:¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ "Danger Nationale." *La Croix Supplément*, January 27, 1895.

¹⁷⁸ "Les juifs sur la sellette." *La Croix Supplément*, February 3, 1895.

¹⁷⁹ "La Droite et la question juive." *La Croix Supplément*, May 25, 1895 [brave gens qui, sans parti pris, sont obligés de voir dans la question juive un question qui intéresse, au plus haut degré, la fortune matérielle et morale de la France.]

¹⁸⁰ Sorlin *La Croix*, 108. Sorlin claims that in the mid-1890s *La Croix* began to differentiate "L'or Juif" from legitimate French capitalism. For him, the surrender of an anti-bourgeois line was connected both to the Assumptionists' fear of socialism and their desire to expand bourgeois readership.

¹⁸¹ "Les étrangers maîtres chez nous." *La Croix Supplément*, August 21, 1895. [L'invasion étrangère et l'invasion juive marchent de front, la main dans la main, grâce à la mise en pratique du liberalism économique et la propaganda maçonnique.] "Étranger" was often a synonym for Jew, but in this case is a distinct reference to foreign bankers and financiers.

¹⁸² The creative use of book reviews, fictional accounts, and religious polemics as a means of expressing antisemitism are further testament to both the ideology and journalistic talents of the Assumptionists. A few articles

Their great preoccupation is to develop this international trade which tends to render them masters of the world... They have managed to establish in each country a monetary system which favors their speculations... The might of these men is immense, for they have acquired an occult power over governments little different from that which the Antichrist will soon exercise on the entire world.¹⁸³

Throughout this period, reporting on Algeria offered an outlet for the most virulent antisemitism. Here Jews were rendered as “vile Yids” and “lepers” “who take all, who invade all.”¹⁸⁴ A severe economic crisis in Algeria in the early 1890s helped engender a powerful and spiteful antisemitic movement which would elect a whole ticket of antisemites to local and national offices in the late 1890s. As was mentioned above, the French were wary of British presence in Northern Africa (such suspicions on both sides set the context for the Fashoda Incident in 1898). *La Croix* questioned the patriotism and loyalty of Jews in Algeria and even accused them of conspiring with their British counterparts to separate Algeria from France.¹⁸⁵

The influx of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe to the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires was also disconcerting for the Assumptionists. They were alarmed that Jews had come to compose 13 percent of Vienna’s population and were convinced that appointments by the Austrian monarchy were being directed by a Jewish conspiracy (the Austrian Consul General was a Jew).¹⁸⁶

in particular stand out. The fictional accounts “Judas” (May 2, 1897) and “Juifs au pied de «La Croix»” (April 17, 1897 *Supplément*) were fanciful accounts of the anti-Jewish struggle on a local level. The latter is a discussion between two powerful provincial Jews who are considering several plots to halt the distribution of *La Croix* in their town, but ultimately decide that the town’s devout Catholics are too cohesive to attempt to subjugate. One more article is too fascinating to not mention. It is a fulsome review of *L’Indicateur Israélite* from the June 29, 1897 *Supplément*. This book, written by J.F.A. Gutton (secrétaire de l’alliance Antisémetique, section du Rhône), meticulously attempted to catalogue the name, address, and occupation of every Jew in France. Brandeis actually has a copy of *L’Indicateur Israélite* at Goldfarb Library.

¹⁸³ “Le Système Juif.” *La Croix Supplément*, January 29, 1896. [Leur grande preoccupation est de developper ce commerce international qui tend à les rendre maîtres du monde... ils sont parvenus à établir dans chaque pays une système monétaire qui favorise leurs speculations... La puissance de ces homes est immense, car ils ont acquis sur les governments un pouvoir occulte peu different de celui que L’Antechrist exerca bientôt sur le monde entier.]

¹⁸⁴ “L’Arabe et le Juif en Algérie.” *La Croix Supplément* January 13, 1895. [qui tache tout, qui envahit tout.] This article is remarkable for, despite its condescending treatment of Arabs, it portrays them in a surprisingly favorable and sympathetic light as the victims of Jewish usurers.

¹⁸⁵ “Complot Juif en Algérie.” *La Croix*, January 27, 1895.

¹⁸⁶ “Juifs Partout.” *La Croix*, March 30, 1895.

Occasionally though, *La Croix* felt the need to qualify their stance. With regard to the Jews, the May 19, 1896 article “Microbes” not only repudiates biological and racial antisemitism (calls such views an absurdity), it also provides excellent insight into how the Assumptionists justified their own antisemitism. It began by affirming that: “The blood of Abraham, of Jacob, and of David was the most pure blood of humanity; that is why the Savior was chosen among them.” Invoking the *Union Générale* collapse, the writer claims that Jews have become tyrants and governments were their servants – an inversion of ancient, Biblical roles. Diligent Christian resistance must oppose the Jewish dominance over France: “When a microbe seizes your lung to devour it, you try to expel it without any consideration for the convenience of the microbe.” The author admired the good sense of the Russians for their “resistance to the invasion of a conqueror.”¹⁸⁷

More generally, *La Croix* occasionally would assure its readers that it was not anti-republican: “Our goal is not to create difficulties for the government...we have accepted and we do accept loyally, and without bitter thoughts, the republican form...The church has never allowed the right to revolt.”¹⁸⁸ They claimed only to be trying to serve the will and desires of the Pope.

Dreyfus Reenters the Picture

From October-December 1897 a rapid series of events, the result of months of behind-the-scenes maneuvering, brought the fate of Captain Dreyfus back into the public eye. *La Croix*

¹⁸⁷ “Microbes.” *La Croix* May 19, 1896. [Le sang d’Abraham, de Jacob, et de David était le sang le plus pur de l’humanité; c’est pourquoi le Sauveur l’a choisi entre tous... Quand la microbe s’empare de votre poumon pour le dévorer, vous essayez de la cracher sans aucun égard pour les convenances du microbe... résistance à l’invasion d’un conquérant.]

¹⁸⁸ *La Croix*, October 9, 1895. [Notre but n’est pas de créer des difficultés au gouvernement... nous avons accepté et nous acceptons loyalement, et sans amère pensée, la forme républicaine... L’Eglise n’a jamais admis la droit à la révolte.]

followed these events closely, but remained doubtful of the possibility that Dreyfus could possibly be innocent. Instead of the military leadership using Dreyfus as a “sacrificial lamb” for the sake of their reputation and national unity, *La Croix* saw Esterhazy as the victim of a plot by the Dreyfus Syndicat. Just as the Dreyfusard press covered all matters in the lives of Dreyfus’s family and associated, *La Croix* mirrored this effort, printing, for example, a lengthy interview with Esterhazy’s wife.¹⁸⁹ They insisted that “Count Walsin-Esterhazy...has always had the most Christian and the most edifying conduct.”¹⁹⁰ The stage was gradually set for what would become a hysteria both in the press and in the streets of Paris in January and February of 1898. *La Croix* reported in November on the large turnouts at antisemitic meetings in Paris which sought to combat the “Judeo-Protestant syndicate.”¹⁹¹ *La Croix* was also settling into the mode it would adopt throughout 1898. Whereas antisemitic cartoons had appeared before, even semi-regularly, they now became a daily exercise. Initially, in the pages of *La Croix*, the Dreyfus Affair was not unlike previous sustained obsessions (especially loi d’abonnement). As with other events, anything which seemed to confirm the paper’s suspicions was aggressively scrutinized and incorporated into existing narratives. In the last two months of 1897, the Dreyfus Affair often took up a full half of the paper, if not more. The tendency of *La Croix* to commentate on articles printed in other newspapers makes it an excellent source for any student of the Dreyfus Affair.

How representative was *La Croix*? Its general Antidreyfusard stance was far from exceptional (See: Appendix A). As Janine Ponty has shown, the vast majority of widely-read newspapers remained against a revision of the Dreyfus process to a remarkably late date.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ *La Croix*, November 17, 1897.

¹⁹⁰ *La Croix*, November 21, 1897. [Le Comte Walsin-Esterhazy, ancien préfet, a toujours eu la conduite la plus chrétienne et la plus édifiante.]

¹⁹¹ “Meeting Antisémite.” *La Croix*, November 23, 1897.

¹⁹² Ponty, Janine; “La Presse Quotidienne et L’Affaire Dreyfus en 1898-1899. Essai de Typologie;” *Revue d’Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 1974, (2): 200. For an extensive study of public opinion during the Dreyfus

Among the Catholic community, they were conservative, but not extremely so. Their prejudices could be found among member of the Social Catholicism movement as well. For example, the *abbés démocrates* were only hesitantly committed to the Ralliment and were not immune to anti-semitism. Their major goal was to divert the impetus for socialism towards Christian democracy.¹⁹³ But Catholic opinion was not monolithic, even among its clergy. Dreyfusards did exist among the Catholic clergy were a minority voice, especially in 1898-1899. Those that did exist formed the *Comité catholique pour la défense du droit*, a 118 member group which advocated for a retrial for Dreyfus and publically supported the republic.¹⁹⁴

Comparison

In order to gain a better understanding of *La Croix*, it would be worthwhile to examine the relationship between Catholicism, the Catholic press, and antisemitism in the time leading up to the other European countries. The Austrian region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is particularly appropriate for a comparison in this period. Like France, its population was overwhelmingly Catholic. It too witnessed a religious revival in the late nineteenth century although it occurred later, beginning in the 1880s.¹⁹⁵ Also, its anticlerical period in the mid-nineteenth century had subsided considerably by the 1890s. This can be largely explained by the emergence of the Christian Social movement and its political wing, the Christian Social Party

Affair, see: Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*. He concluded that most active nationalists and antisemites were petit bourgeoisie, students, and clergy from small and mid-sized cities However, they had financial backing from notables and important pockets of working-class support.

¹⁹³ Robert David Anderson, *France 1870-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1984), 109. Roger Magraw and Douglas Johnson ed., *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeois Century* (London: Fontana, 1983), 272

¹⁹⁴ Delmaire, *Antisémitisme*, 10. See: Léon Chaine, *Les Catholiques français et leurs difficultés actuelles* (1904) for an account by a member of the Comité of its formation and activities.

¹⁹⁵ John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement 1848-1897* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 119.

(*Christlichsoziale Partei*) which put a progressive face on Catholicism.¹⁹⁶ The Christian Social Party was similar to France's Social Catholicism in terms of its conservative social principles, antisocialism, and antisemitism. On the other hand, it was primarily geared towards the bourgeoisie rather than peasants and industrial workers. It had started out as Viennese artisan movement, eventually picking up clergy, civil servants (*Beamten*), and property owners. Under the skillful leadership of Karl Lueger, the Christian Social Party became a key player in Viennese politics in the 1890s and into the new century with Lueger gradually maneuvering his way into the mayorship of Vienna throughout 1895-97.¹⁹⁷

A number of Catholic newspapers, most of which supported Luger's party, flourished in fin-de-siècle. Most Catholic papers were directly funded and operated by clergymen. In fact, the *Reichspost* was the only major Catholic newspaper in Austria not under that patronage of a major episcopate (it had a circulation of about 65,000 in 1900).¹⁹⁸ The major Catholic daily which was most opposed to Lueger was *Vaterland*, a Viennese monarchist paper (circulation about 7,000 in 1900).¹⁹⁹ While all these papers were antisemitism to a degree, the *Correspondenzblatt für den katholischen Clerus Österreichs* was extremely so, even employing racist antisemitism at times.²⁰⁰ Even *Vaterland* was prone to the non-racial, Catholic anti-Semitism whereby Jews represented advance guard of capitalist ideology.

German Catholicism was distinct from Austrian Catholicism primarily in that it was the minority religion of the new German Empire, and had been targeted very soon after unification in Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*. The need for common defense against this effort was the primary

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 132.

¹⁹⁷ This long and complicated process is fully documented in Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement 1848-1897*. Lueger greatly admired Edouard Drumont and *La Libre Parole*.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 339.

¹⁹⁹ Daniel M. Vyleta, *Crime, Jews, and News: Vienna 1895-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007) 74.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 156.

impetus behind the Center Party (*Deutsche Zentrumspartei*). Attempting to capitalize on a growing movement, “the mood of the Center Party was to beat Bismarckian Liberalism with the anti-semitic stick.”²⁰¹ However, the antisemitism of German Catholics should not be regarded solely as a political ploy; there was genuine support in the party for Adolf Stöcker’s antisemitism (Protestant) Christian Social Party.

The *Kulturkampf* enlivened Catholic political activity. The number of Catholic newspapers more than doubled and their combined total of subscribers was over 600,000 in this period.²⁰² Two papers dominated the German Catholic Press. The first, *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, was a liberal and progressive paper.²⁰³ The other, *Germania*, was a conservative and antisemitic paper (it had originally been the paper for the Center Party, but its vociferousness ran afoul of the party’s leaders).²⁰⁴ The publishing house which produced *Germania*, *Germania-Verlag*, was remarkably similar to Bonne Presse, producing political and religious pamphlets as well as regional and local variants of itself.²⁰⁵

These comparisons show that the Assumptionists were not the only Catholic clerics in Europe who advocated a potent mix of antisemitism and conservatism. The participation of clergymen and devout Catholics in German and Austrian politics and newspaper production also correlate with the Assumptionists. *Germania-Verlag* in particular shows that they were also not unique in the means they employed to get their message across.

However, the context in which these groups operated dictated the level and form of their influence. Some key differences between these countries should be kept in mind. First of all,

²⁰¹ Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany & Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 266.

²⁰² Barnet Hartston, *Sensationalizing the Jewish Question: Anti-Semitic Trials and the Press in the Early German Empire* (London: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), 20.

²⁰³ James F. Brennan, *The Reflection of the Dreyfus Affair in the European Press, 1897-1899* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998) 125-126.

²⁰⁴ Pulzer, *Rise of Political Anti-Semitism*, 267. Hartston, *Sensationalizing*, 289-290.

²⁰⁵ Hartston, *Sensationalizing*, 20.

France's Jewish population was proportionally much smaller than Austria or even the *Kaiserreich*. Furthermore, whereas Catholic parties were ascendant in Austria and the Kulturkampf was relatively short-lived in Germany, the sustained commitment to anticlericalism among the radical republicans meant that the Assumptionists legitimately felt more threatened than their German and Austrian counterparts.

Conclusion

What does *La Croix* teach us about the early Third Republic? Simply that the period should not be portrayed as a gradual triumph of parliamentary democracy and reasoned secularism over the scheming forces of conservatism. Instead, this was a period of economic, social, and political crises occasioned by Modernity and its particular conditions in France. The Dreyfus Affair was only the most acute moment in a long process. The Assumptionists themselves embodied an attempt to both oppose and take advantage of these forces. Beginning in February 1899, after months of vicious antisemitism, the paper began to moderate its tone after an intercession from the Pope.²⁰⁶ The ascension of Waldeck-Rousseau's government in 1898 marked the beginning of a definitive victory for anticlericalism and republicanism in France. Over the next decade, laws would be passed to complete the separation of church and state (most importantly, in 1905, the state stopped subsidizing or paying the salaries of the clergy). New laws of association, directed at congregations, were passed on July 1 and August 16, 1901, resulting in the emigration of thousands of clergymen and nuns.²⁰⁷ By that point, however, the Assumptionists had already been effectively outlawed. Twelve of their leading members, including Père Bailly, were tried in Paris for conspiring against the republic and breaking the

²⁰⁶ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 68-69.

²⁰⁷ Theodore Zeldin, *Politics and Anger*, 313.

existing laws on associations. That there were twelve defendants was taken as a heavenly sign, they took to calling themselves “the apostles.”²⁰⁸

If one is to understand the Assumptionists, one has to constantly remind oneself that they saw the world with such a mindset. Events revealed divine intervention as much as human intention. Victories against the *trio de la haine* were a sign of God’s approval just as setbacks were the work demonic/deicidal forces and/or a sign of God’s punishment for laxity. Even the quotidian and trivial were magnified to cosmic proportions. As Sorlin concluded, the Assumptionists “were not living entirely in their epoch.”²⁰⁹ Every event found its equivalent in the Bible. The Assumptionists saw themselves as soldiers of God, inheritors of a tradition which included medieval chivaliers. The fact that Assumptionists were small, cohesive, devout group helped their self-perception as David fighting the Goliath of Modernity.

Does this matter? If the historian’s task is to quantify, analyze, and evaluate from an ontological and temporal distance, then the answer is unequivocally no. But if the historian’s goal is to understand the past and its actors on their own terms, hopelessly striving to “get inside their heads,” then religious and ideological beliefs *do* matter. It has been my aim in this paper to apply this angle, as well as a social scientific/empirical one, to the study of Catholicism’s role in the lead-up to the Dreyfus Affair. But how can a modern historian hope to do this? How can a paper which accessed its primary source through the internet hope to understand a world where the telephone was a novelty. How can a deliberately non-religious, non-ideological approach understand people whose *Weltanschauung* was dominated not by political negotiation and urbane cosmopolitanism, but by a struggle between Christ and Antichrist with all their angels and demons? It may be possible, if one takes the position that the Dreyfus Affair was essentially

²⁰⁸ Harris, "The Assumptionists and the Dreyfus Affair;", 175.

²⁰⁹ Sorlin, *La Croix*, 214.

a religious struggle over Modernity. That is, a battle between several belief systems. One embraced the machinery (political, cultural, and industrial) of Modernity wholeheartedly and saw their advocacy as fulfilling the promise of the *Revolutionary religion*. One was nationalistic (and antisemitic), but had no particular allegiance to Modernity, democracy, or capitalism. This was the *religion of the Patrie* embodied by men like Drumont and Barrès. One was anti-modern, yet at the same time not entirely antiquated. Surely the prayers and procedures (catechism, the mass, religious holidays and festivals, the sacraments) had changed little since the days of Counter-Reformation. Yet, at the same time, it would be a mistake to view this group as provincial yokels, as so many contemporaries did, as have historians since. Just as the Counter-Reformation movement utilized its adversary's tactics to broaden its own appeal, so did the anti-Modern movement become something more than simply a reactionary movement.

Appendices:

A:

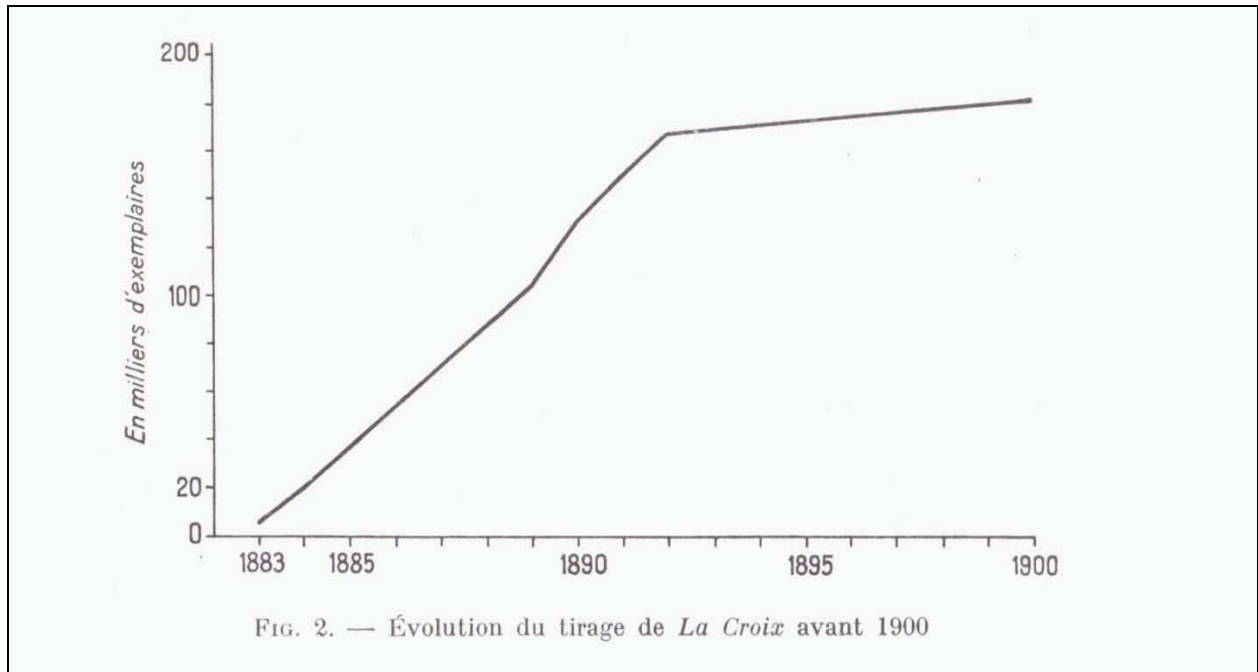
Pourcentages approximatifs des tirages

	A	R	D
Fév. 1898	> 96	< 2	< 2
Sept. 1898	53	39	8
Sept. 1899	58	I 27	15

A1	A2	A3	A4
17	30	45	> 4

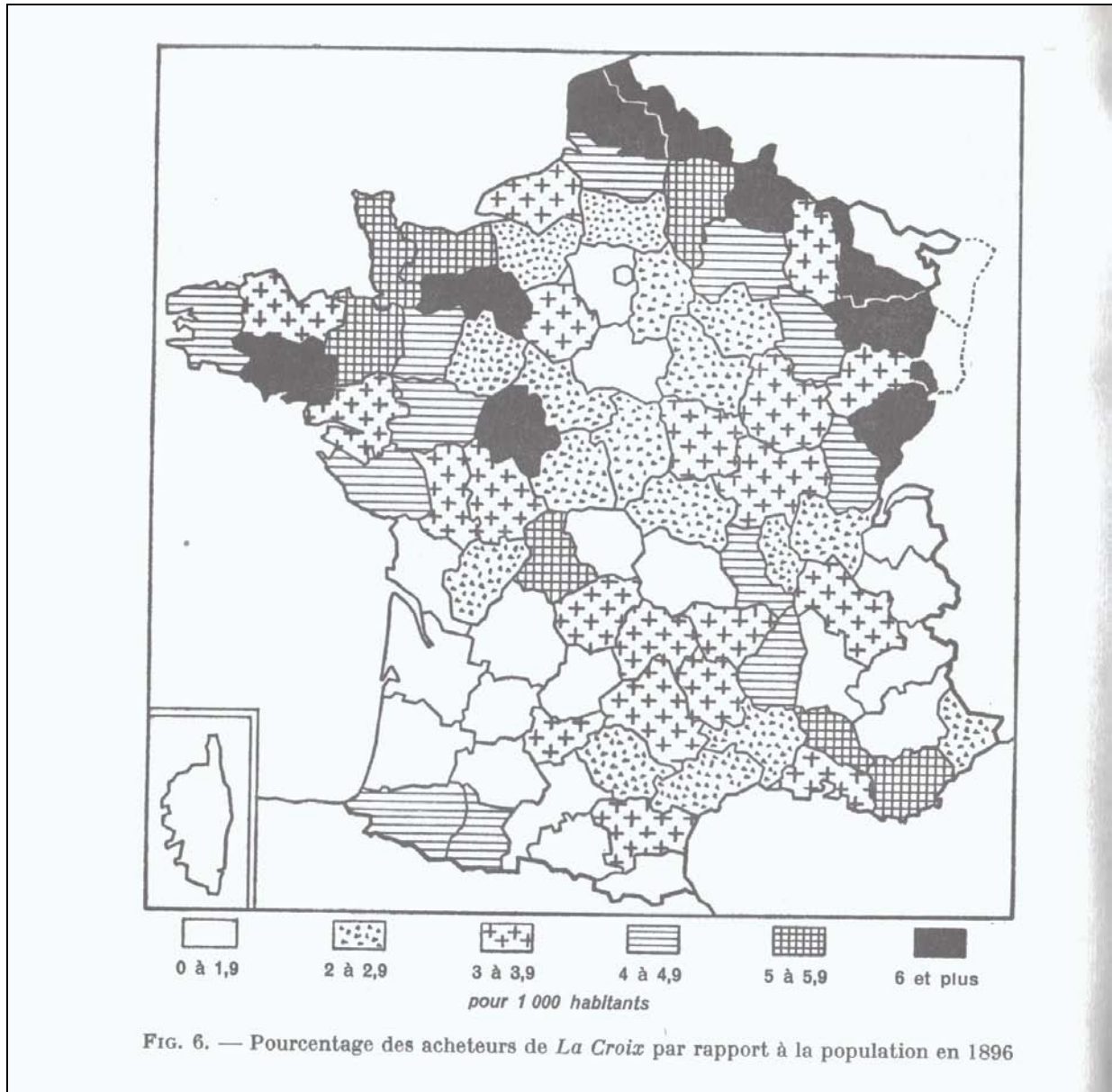
Selection of papers, both national and regional; stance on the Dreyfus Affair expressed in terms of cumulative circulation (approximate). A= Antidreyfusard, R= Revisionist, D= Dreyfusard; A1= Very Antisemitic and Antidreyfusard; A2= Antidreyfusard and somewhat Antisemitic; A3=Antidreyfusard, but not Antisemitic; A4= Socialist (I indicates that *La France Libre* ceased production at the end of January 1899 from a lack of capital). Source: Janine Ponty; "La Presse Quotidienne et L'Affaire Dreyfus en 1898-1899. Essai de Typologie;" *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 1974, 2: 200.

B:



Evolution of the readership of *La Croix* before 1900 by thousands of readers.
Source: Jacqueline Godfrin, *Une centrale de presse catholiques: la maison de la bonne presse et ses publications* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 187.

C:



Percentage of buyers of *La Croix* in relation to the population in 1896, expressed in terms of per 1,000 inhabitants.
Source: Jacqueline Godfrin, *Une centrale de presse catholiques: la maison de la bonne presse et ses publications* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 188.

D:

Fig. 12. — Part de la surface rédactionnelle consacrée à la question juive dans *La Croix*, (1883-1899).

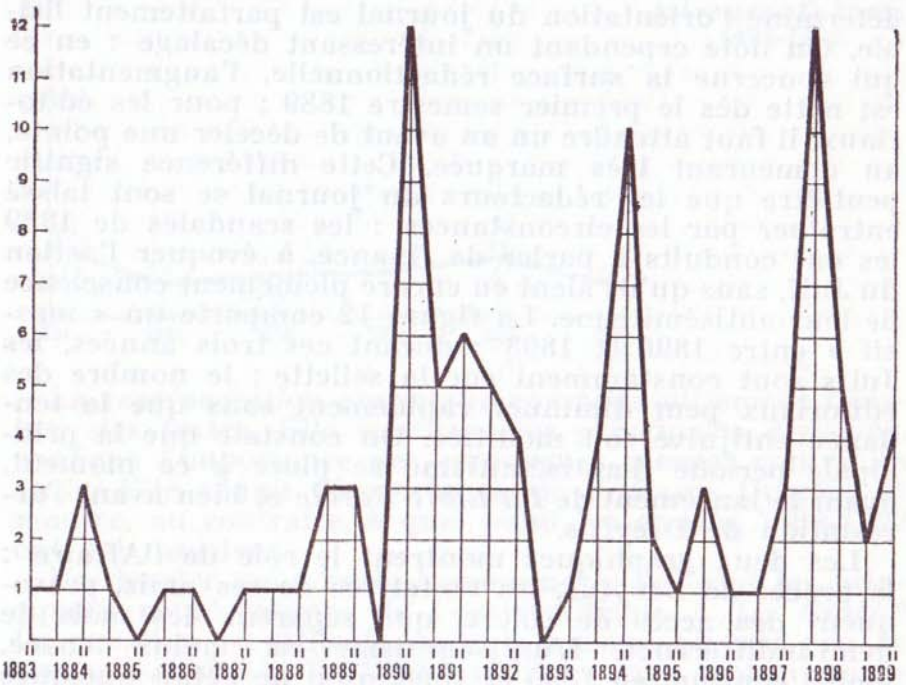
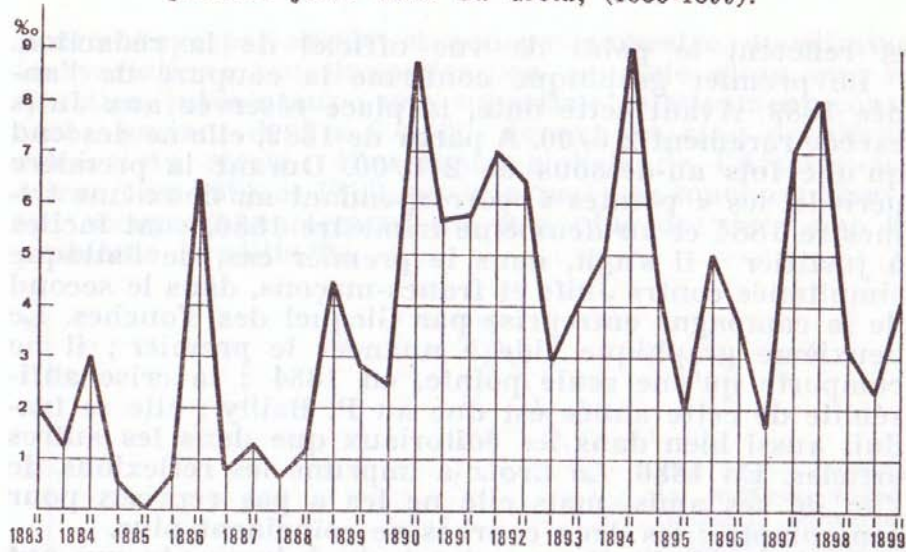
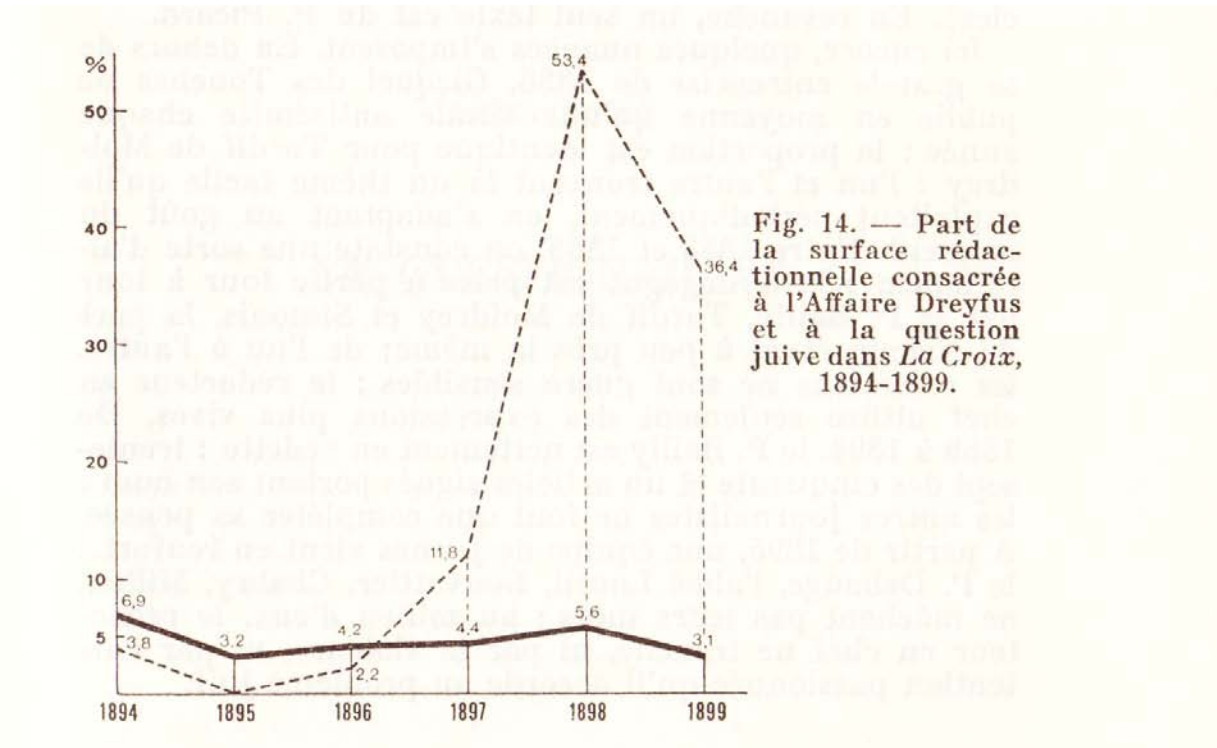


Fig. 13. — Nombre d'éditoriaux de *La Croix* consacrés à la question juive.

Source: Sorlin, *La Croix et les Juifs*, 125. The top chart represents the percentage of editorials in a given year devoted to the Jewish question. The bottom chart represents the number of editorials devoted to the Jewish question in a give year.

E:



Source: Sorlin, *La Croix et les Juifs*, 127. The solid line represents the percentage of editorials devoted to the Jewish Question. The dotted line represents the percentage of editorials devoted to the Dreyfus Affair. It should be noted that both types of articles regularly expressed deep-seated antisemitism.

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