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**LACORDAIRE'S UNDERSTANDING OF
"RESTORATION" IN RELATION TO HIS
REFOUNDING OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER
IN 19TH CENTURY FRANCE**

by

© Peter M. Batts, O.P.

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SUMMARY

Henri-Dominique Lacordaire (1802-61) was one of the most important figures in the restoration of Catholicism in France after the Revolution. His most enduring contribution to French Catholicism was his re-establishment of the Dominican Order. In this dissertation, I attempt to demonstrate that among those who founded and refounded religious communities in France during the nineteenth century, Lacordaire's understanding of religious life was unique; this uniqueness was particularly evident in his understanding of "restoration" of religious life. Lacordaire, like almost all nineteenth century French Catholics, had been deeply influenced by the Romantic Movement. The overwhelming majority of them, including the founders and refounders of religious orders and congregations, looked nostalgically to the past in order to find models for the restoration of the church and its various institutions in their own century. Lacordaire's Romantic perspective was significantly different than theirs: rather than looking to some imagined past era of greatness as is often characteristic of Romantics, he identified with secular Romantics of his time who emphasized love of one's own time, of one's own country, of one's own century. Like the secular and unlike the Catholic Romantics of nineteenth century France, Lacordaire loved liberty and the world that had emerged from the French Revolution. His Romantic perspective had a profound impact on his understanding of what it would mean to "restore" a religious order.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discuss briefly the situation in which the Catholic Church in France found itself in the early nineteenth century aftermath of the Revolution which had sought to destroy it. The role of Romanticism in the remarkable recovery of the church during that

period is emphasized: it was the key to that remarkable recovery as well as its intellectual and emotional support. Figures like Rousseau, Chateaubriand, and Lamennais helped to make Catholicism a respectable option for the intellectual and cultural elites. The religion of ordinary French Catholics was also Romantic to the core.

The second chapter is devoted to the presentation of the importance of the restoration of religious life in France to the overall restoration of the church in that country. I emphasize the complicated situation that existed for religious communities in the early nineteenth century. The ill-defined legal status of religious communities in general and of particular ones made restoration difficult and precarious. Nevertheless, new congregations were founded and old orders were restored. I cite de Mazenod's Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Guéranger's Solesmes Benedictines as examples. I also argue that both men, unlike Lacordaire, looked more to the past than to their own time for models for religious life.; this was typical of nineteenth century French Catholics.

In the third chapter, I discuss Lacordaire's pre-Dominican life. He was always profoundly influenced by the liberal, Romantic education that he had received as a boy. His lifelong love of liberty and of the principles of the French Revolution originated there. As a young man, he refound the Catholic faith which he had lost in childhood, went to seminary, and was ordained a priest. Lacordaire later became involved with Lamennais in an ill-fated program designed to reconcile "God and liberty," the church and modern, liberal society. After the program's condemnation by Pope Gregory XVI, Lacordaire went on to a brief but brilliant preaching career as a diocesan priest.

The fourth chapter is especially concerned with Lacordaire's restoration of the Dominican Order. In the late 1830's, influenced somewhat by Guéranger, he decided to restore the Order of Preachers in France because he considered it ideally equipped to deal with the task of preaching to

a nation desperately in need of re-evangelization. He believed that its history and charism made it particularly suited to the religious needs of nineteenth century France; he was especially impressed with the democratic structures of the Dominican Order. Lacordaire presented his case for the restoration of the Order, still a technically illegal move, in his 1839 *Mémoire pour le Rétablissement en France de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs*. After novitiate and studies in Italy, Lacordaire and a number of French companions replanted the Order of Preachers on French soil during the 1840's. The Dominican Province of France was officially re-established, with Lacordaire as first provincial, in 1850.

The fifth chapter deals with the difficulties between Lacordaire and his most famous recruit, Alexandre Jandel, who was appointed by Pope Pius IX as head of the Dominican Order in 1850. Lacordaire and Jandel disagreed in their understanding of religious life and of what is meant by "restoration" of a religious order. Lacordaire wanted to adjust the traditional Dominican observances to the needs of his own time and of the actual ministries in which the friars were engaged. Jandel wanted to preserve these observances in what he believed was their full and original vigor. This dispute epitomized the different Romantic perspectives of the two men and clearly illustrated the uniqueness of Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration." Jandel looked nostalgically to the past, namely to the thirteenth century, as his governing model for Dominican life in the nineteenth century; he believed that the Order's strength and effectiveness lay in a return to a strict observance of the Dominican Constitutions as they were originally formulated. Lacordaire believed that the Order would be strongest and most influential when it remained loyal to its original charism of preaching yet adapted itself to the needs of its time, always remaining open to learning from the best that the contemporary age had to offer. Jandel's understanding of "restoration" was typical of

the founders and refounders of nineteenth century French religious communities. Lacordaire's was unique.

The sixth chapter is devoted to evaluating Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration" of religious life. It emphasizes the affinity between his Romantic perspective and that of the secular Romantics of his day. Like them, Lacordaire embraced the revolutionary ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality. Like them, he loved the particular time and place in which he lived. Like them, he had a dynamic, evolutionary understanding of history and tradition. This understanding profoundly affected his concept of "restoration." Consequently, Lacordaire saw the restoration of religious life as a dynamic organic process, as a process of recreation, renewal, and revitalization, as a movement forward rather than backward. This understanding was truly unique among nineteenth century founders and refounders of religious life.

I conclude by proposing Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration" as a model and guide for our time as the church and religious communities continue to grapple with questions of renewal and relevance. I also suggest possibilities for future research by Lacordaire scholars, e.g. the relationship between Lacordaire's understanding of religious life and the teaching of Vatican II on this subject.

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To the memory of my mother,
Loretta Batts Jackson,
who was my first and best teacher
in the ways of faith

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem

"Restoration" is a key term in dealing with the history of Catholicism in France during the nineteenth century. Catholicism, which had been declining in France during the previous century, was devastated by the French Revolution. However, it began to experience a new birth with the coming to power of Napoleon and the Concordat of 1801.

The Romantic movement played a key role in the nineteenth century restoration of French Catholicism. It was especially influential in the early part of that century, beginning with the Bourbon Restoration. Unlike the Enlightenment thinkers who idolized reason and tended to dismiss the Judaeo-Christian tradition as a superstitious anachronism, the Romantics emphasized the affective dimension of life and expressed a renewed interest in religion, particularly natural religion but also revealed religion. Many Romantics were especially fascinated with the Middle Ages. This fascination was an important factor in the decision of a number of Romantics, especially in France, to convert to Catholicism, the religion which was the defining element of medieval civilization in the

West. These converts included such celebrated figures as Chateaubriand and Lamennais. Even apart from the contribution of these converts, the revived Catholicism of nineteenth century France had a decidedly Romantic flavor. The tremendous popular interest in the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and in Marian apparitions witnesses to this.

Henri-Dominique Lacordaire (1802-61), a Romantic convert, was one of the most important figures in the restoration of Catholicism in nineteenth century France. He contributed to this revival through his dynamic preaching at the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris and elsewhere, through his involvement in the liberal Catholic project of reconciling Catholicism with the social and political order which came out of the French Revolution, and through his re-establishment of the Dominican Order in France. Lacordaire believed that the restoration of Catholicism was the key to the renewal of French society as a whole and that the re-establishment of religious orders, suppressed by the Revolution, was necessary for the full restoration of Catholic life in France.

Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration" in regard to Catholicism as a whole and to religious life in particular was very different than that of most of his co-religionists. They tended to interpret "restoration" in conservative, even reactionary terms. They wanted to return Catholicism to the pre-eminent place that it had held in pre-Revolution France.

They longed for the return of monarchical government in which throne and altar would be allied. Most nineteenth century French Catholics were convinced that the revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity were incompatible with Catholicism.

Lacordaire's vision of "restoration" found its source not in a Romanticism focused on a medieval or monarchical past but in a Romanticism that stressed absorption in the present and love of one's own time. For him, restoration involved the renewal and revitalization of the Catholic tradition which had played a central role in French society for so many centuries. Lacordaire fully accepted the revolutionary ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality, arguing that they were "born Catholic". Lacordaire believed that Catholicism could both exist and flourish in a modern liberal state. In fact, a church that is independent of the state would be in a better position to defend Christian values.

In deciding to re-establish the Dominican Order in France, Lacordaire was not interested in bringing back a medieval institution but in renewing an Order whose vision, goal, tradition, and history were especially suited to dealing with the religious needs of nineteenth century France.

In this dissertation, I am concerned with showing the uniqueness of Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration" in relationship to his French Catholic contemporaries and, more

specifically, with showing its uniqueness in regard to his re-establishment of the Dominican Order in his country.

Statement of the question

Lacordaire has been the subject of a lot of literary activity from the second half of the nineteenth century to our own time. During his life, he edited and wrote for *L'Avenir*, published his famous *Essay on the Re-Establishment in France of the Order of Preachers*(1839) as well as a *Life of St. Dominic*(1840), approved the publication of his famous Conferences at Notre Dame de Paris and elsewhere, and dictated his *Testament* on his deathbed in 1861.

The leading Dominican Lacordaire specialist, André Duval, has said that it is only possible to know Lacordaire through his correspondence. He was an inveterate letter writer who discussed many of the most important issues of his time as well as his personal plans and ideas in his correspondence with some of the most influential figures in France as well as with more ordinary people. His letters shed much light on his growth and development during the various stages of his very active life. The task of editing and publishing Lacordaire's massive correspondence began in the late

nineteenth century and continues today.¹ French Dominican historian Guy Bedouelle is currently involved in a monumental project of compiling an index in order to make Lacordaire's correspondence more accessible.²

The two most definitive biographies of Lacordaire were published not long after his death by his friends Foisset and Père Chocarne.³ Many other biographies have followed. Books over the years have dealt with the influence of Romanticism on Lacordaire,⁴ with his political involvement,⁵ and with his Dominicanism.⁶ One of the most recent works on Lacordaire is concerned with his rocky relationship with Jandel, the

¹Louis LEGUILLOU, ed., *Lacordaire-Montalembert Correspondance Inédite: 1830-1861*, Textes réunis, classés et annotés par Louis LeGuillou; révision du texte et des notes par André Duval (Paris: Cerf, 1989).

²Guy BEDOUELLE, "Lacordaire d'après sa correspondance: I. 1816-1832," *Mémoire Dominicaine* (No.1) (Automne 1992).

³Bernard CHOCARNE, O.P., *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, translated by Augusta Drane (New York: P. O'Shea, 1879); M. FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, Vols. I and II (Paris: Librairie Jaccques Lecoffre, 1870).

⁴Jean PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire ou le baptême du romantisme* (Paris: Wesmael-Charlier, 1966).

⁵José CABANIS, *Lacordaire et quelques autres: politique et religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

⁶Henri-Dominique NOBLE, O.P., *La vocation dominicaine du P. Lacordaire* (Paris: Librairie P. Lethielleux, 1914).

disciple who became his major superior.⁷ Numerous articles on various topics related to Lacordaire's life and accomplishments have been written.

Although much has been written specifically about Lacordaire's restoration of the Dominican Order in France, there appears to have been no serious extended treatment of his understanding of "restoration" in comparison and contrast to other founders/refounders of religious communities during the first half of the nineteenth century. Many writers have commented on the influential role that Lacordaire's Romantic views played in his approach to religious life yet the uniqueness of his particular understanding of Romanticism relative to other founders/refounders and the impact of that understanding upon his conception of the Dominican Order and religious life in general have not been sufficiently investigated.

As an anglophone, I cannot help but take note of the fact that despite the considerable interest in Lacordaire in the English-speaking world during the late nineteenth century (many of the works by and about him which had been published were translated into English during this period), there has been relatively little interest in him among twentieth century

⁷Bernard BONVIN, O.P., *Lacordaire-Jandel, la restauration de l'Ordre Dominicain en France après la Revolution* (Paris: Cerf, 1989).

English speakers. Sheppard's popular biography, published in 1964, appears to be the most recent extended English treatment of Lacordaire.⁸ Considering his importance in the restoration and renewal of Catholicism in general in the nineteenth century and of religious life, especially Dominicanism, in particular, I believe that it is important that contemporary English-speaking Catholics, grappling with our own questions of "restoration", should become familiar with Lacordaire's considerable achievements.

I think that the time has come for a serious re-evaluation of Lacordaire's accomplishments, especially his restoration of the Dominicans, from a post-Vatican II theological perspective. Lacordaire was in no sense a systematic thinker yet his understanding of religious life has definite theological implications. Through his essays, his books, his sermons, his letters, and his nurturing of a restored French Dominicanism from Romantic idea to full realization, he developed and articulated an authentic, even if not systematically expressed, theology of religious life. Lacordaire's theology of religious life, unique for its time and misunderstood by his fellow Dominicans like Jandel, deserves serious study by those concerned with the history of the development of the church's theology of religious life.

⁸Lancelot SHEPPARD, *Lacordaire: A Biographical Essay* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964).

Research hypothesis

This dissertation will attempt to show that Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration" of religious life was unique among the founders/refounders of religious communities in France during the first half of the nineteenth century and that it represents an original contribution to the development of the theology of religious life. Like his fellow founders/refounders, Lacordaire was very much influenced by the Romantic Movement. Unlike so many others, his Romanticism involved a profound love of the present rather than a nostalgic longing for the past. He fully immersed himself in the society in which he lived and enthusiastically accepted the Principles of '89: liberty, equality, and fraternity. Père Duval tells us that Lacordaire emphasized the need to "aimer son temps": the Second Vatican Council would later express this as "openness to the signs of the times".

Lacordaire's interpretation of "restoration" was very much influenced by a type of Romanticism which emphasized a dynamic and organic understanding of history and tradition as well as an optimistic attitude toward the age in which one lives. Lacordaire saw restoration not as a return to the past or a retrieval of institutions from a bygone age but as renewal, re-creation, re-invigoration. In restoring the

Dominican Order, he believed that he was re-creating for nineteenth century France a movement which had grown and developed over six centuries, always renewing itself in order to more effectively preach the gospel in terms relevant to the particular age and culture (Romanticism emphasized the particular). This dissertation intends to demonstrate that Lacordaire's understanding of religious life, as represented in his project of restoring the Order of Preachers, constitutes a virtual theology of religious life which is especially suited to the world which emerged from the French Revolution.

Methodology

There are several components involved in the methodology that will be employed in this dissertation. A comparative approach will be especially important because one can only show the uniqueness of Lacordaire's understanding of restoration of religious life by comparing and contrasting it with the views of his contemporary founders/refounders. The historical critical approach is essential in order to arrive at the deepest appreciation of the various documents that are involved in the process of identifying and analyzing the ideas of Lacordaire and his contemporaries on the meaning and significance of religious life in the nineteenth century. It

is also crucial that one discover as much as possible the sources of these ideas.

A close and critical reading of the primary sources, which is appreciative of the historical and cultural milieu in which they originated, is necessary for an adequate understanding of Lacordaire's concept of restoration. The texts that are particularly important include his correspondence, his *Conférences*, his *Mémoire* (1839) and *Testament* (1861), his *L'Avenir* articles, and other documents.

CHAPTER ONE

*CATHOLICISM IN FRANCE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLUTION AND
THE RESTORATION*

Catholicism in nineteenth century France was defined to a significant degree by two key moments in that nation's history: the French Revolution and the Bourbon Restoration. The first, the French Revolution, has had an enduring impact on every aspect of French life. Its effect on the Catholic Church in France was enormous. Throughout the nineteenth century, French Catholics chose sides which reflected their acceptance or rejection of the liberal society that had been ushered in by the Revolution. Although it cannot be denied that the Revolution became one of the most anti-Catholic events in world history, vowing in its worst moments to destroy the church, its initial principles, liberty, equality, and fraternity, had been supported by many Catholics in 1789 and shortly afterwards. A minority of nineteenth century French Catholics, like Henri Lacordaire, affirmed the revolutionary principles as Christian in origin and fought for the reconciliation of Catholicism and post-revolutionary liberal French society.

1. *Impact of Revolution and Restoration on French Catholicism*

The French Revolution received much Catholic support in its beginning, especially among the lower clergy who sided with the Third Estate in crushing absolute monarchy and breaking the power of the nobility. Most of the members of the National Assembly which resulted from this union were devoted Catholics who were committed to reforming, not destroying, the church. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy (July, 1790), with its resulting oath, represented a significant turn in what had been a mostly positive relation between Catholics and the Revolution. The Civil Constitution rearranged the boundaries of the French dioceses so that they would be coterminous with the newly created civil departments. It also deprived the pope of any real authority over the Gallican Church, leaving him only a primacy of honor. The Civil Constitution and its oath divided the church between those loyal to Rome and those loyal to the new state church. It ushered in a phase of the Revolution characterized by the Reign of Terror, the campaign of dechristianization, and even the attempt to destroy the new Constitutional Church.⁹

For many Catholics in France and elsewhere, this phase

⁹Alec R. VIDLER, *The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789 to the Present Day* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books LTD., 1985), pp. 14-17.

would forever sum up the French Revolution. Napoleon's ascendancy to the control of the French government in 1799 definitively ended the persecution of the Catholic Church and set the stage for its revival in the nineteenth century. Although not a religious person, Napoleon saw religion as useful in unifying a society and in controlling the masses. He realized that Catholicism was the historic religion of France and remained the religion of most French people. Consequently, he began negotiations with the Vatican for a new concordat to regulate the relationship between church and state in France. Pope Pius VII knew that Napoleon wanted to exploit the church for his own political power but acceded to his wishes in order to restore the church in France. The resulting agreement, the Concordat of 1801, did not restore Catholicism as the state religion of France but simply stated that the Catholic religion is the religion of the great majority of the French people. It also created a new hierarchy in France through the forced resignation of both Roman and constitutional bishops. Bishops and priests were to be paid by the state, thus becoming civil servants.¹⁰

Although Napoleon had initiated the post-revolutionary revival of French Catholicism, his Bourbon successors, who

¹⁰VIDLER, *The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789 to the Present Day*, pp. 18-20; Gérard CHOLVY, *La religion en France de la fin du XVIIIe à nos jours* (Paris: Hachette, 1991), p. 18.

ruled from 1815 to 1830, were destined to play central roles in that revival. The Bourbon Restoration witnessed a revitalization of the church in France that would have been unimaginable a few short years previously. Louis XVII and his successor Charles X desired a union of throne and altar reminiscent of the pre-revolutionary period. The Bourbons and their supporters saw the church as necessary to the legitimacy of their restored monarchy. From the beginning, King Louis XVIII wanted to restore Catholicism as the French state religion and to annul the Concordat of 1801; he was not successful in this. He wanted to put the state at the service of the church. The French Church was only too willing to give its wholehearted support to the monarchy in order to regain its privileged role and to prosper again.¹¹

The revival of French Catholicism proceeded rapidly during the Restoration. The new bishops, completely committed to the monarchy, were generally very pastoral men of impeccable morals. The church, aided by better salaries, was very successful in recruiting new priests who have often been characterized as pious and committed but poorly educated. Growth in religious fervor among the lower classes, as

¹¹Guillaume de BERTIER de SAUVIGNY, *The Bourbon Restoration*, trans. Lynn M. CASE (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), pp. 77, 301-2; François FURET, *Revolutionary France, 1770-1880*, trans. Antonia NEVILL (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 296.

represented by a steady increase in Mass attendance and fulfillment of the Easter duty, was significant to a large extent because of the missions which were very popular, especially in rural areas. Religious life for women flourished as new congregations were established even though their legality was dubious. Despite the Revolution's ban on religious orders which had never been definitively lifted, active women's communities were generally tolerated because they performed such socially useful functions as teaching and nursing. Restoration of male communities, except the tolerated Sulpicians and Christian Brothers, was more difficult and proceeded at a much slower pace. The revival of the church during this period was also characterized by the involvement of lay people, often well-educated and from the upper classes, in church activities and outreach to the poor. The church also regained much of its control of education, especially for the common people, during this period.¹²

Despite the tremendous Revival of Catholicism during the Restoration years, the union of throne and altar became increasingly problematic during the later 1820's. After 1821, a number of Bourbon supporters believed that it was their duty to impose their Catholic faith on the nation as a whole. They did not take into account that a significant portion of the

¹²BERTIER de Sauvigny, *The Bourbon Restoration*, pp. 306-321; FURET, *Revolutionary France: 1770-1880*, p. 306.

French people were neither believers in Catholicism nor legitimate monarchy and would resist any attempt to restore the church-state relationship of the Old Regime. Anti-clerical forces became more strident in their resistance to the religious policies of the Bourbons. In the July Revolution of 1830, they successfully overthrew the Bourbon restorationist monarchy, thereby once again depriving the Catholic Church of its privileged status in France. The relationship between church and state would have several very difficult moments during the rest of the nineteenth century.¹³

2. Romantic influence on revival of French Catholicism: key to revival and its intellectual basis

Apart from the alliance between throne and altar during the years of the Bourbon Restoration, an important but often insufficiently appreciated factor in the significant revival of Catholicism in the first half of the nineteenth century was the Romantic Movement. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, a number of French intellectuals and aristocrats converted to Catholicism, vocations to the priesthood and religious life dramatically increased, new religious congregations for both men and women were founded

¹³BERTIER de SAUVIGNY, *The Bourbon Restoration*, p. 323; FURET, *Revolutionary France, 1770-1880*, pp. 296, 334.

and old ones were revived, and Catholic education made its impact on French society in spite of periodic repression. As the nineteenth century advanced, French missionaries carried the faith all over the world. The revival of Catholicism was especially apparent in the area of spirituality: devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Blessed Virgin Mary flourished, a number of Marian apparitions were believed to have occurred which brought thousands on pilgrimage to the sites of these alleged visions, and many saints were nurtured by the spirituality of the era. All of these aforementioned aspects of the revival of Catholicism in nineteenth century France were influenced by Romanticism to a significant degree.

In order to truly grasp the important connection between Romanticism and the growth of Catholicism in France during the nineteenth century, as well as Lacordaire's contribution to that growth, one needs a basic understanding of the Romantic movement and of its principal characteristics. One should especially know something about the relationship between Romanticism and religion in general. One also needs an appreciation of the tremendous influence that such figures as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and François René Chateaubriand had upon Romanticism as a whole and upon religion in particular. Chateaubriand was particularly important for his seminal influence on the revival of French Catholicism. Other Romantics such as Félicité Lamennais were important for the

significant contributions that they made to the revival of Catholicism in nineteenth century France.

The Romantic movement, never a "movement" in any organized sense, cannot be dated in an exact manner. However, historians are generally agreed that it roughly spanned the period from 1770 to the middle of the nineteenth century. Although the entire century had a distinctly Romantic flavor, the first forty years of the nineteenth century constituted a kind of "Golden Age" of the movement. The intellectual and cultural achievements of that period generally are characterized by a recognizable identity rooted in a common outlook, aspiration, and style.¹⁴ Romanticism was essentially a Western European phenomenon although its influence extended even to America where it expressed itself as Transcendentalism, numbering among its disciples names like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

Romanticism was a reaction to the so-called "Age of Reason", to Rationalism which so deeply characterized eighteenth century intellectual life. The Romantics attacked that era's overemphasis on reason and its capacity to satisfy the deepest human aspirations and to bring about human progress. They believed that Rationalism exalted one aspect of the human person while grossly neglecting other essential

¹⁴Bernard M.G. REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 2.

aspects. Rousseau (1712-78), the Father of Romantics, anticipated the Romantic critique of Rationalism in his rejection of the notion that a mere increase of knowledge will lead necessarily to greater human happiness.¹⁵ Rousseau expressed his rejection of the detached objectivity of the Rationalists in quotes like "cold reason has never done anything illustrious", "in the long run reason takes the line that the heart dictates", and "for us, to exist is to feel; and our sensibility is incontestably prior to our reason".¹⁶

Although Romanticism permeated the literature, music, visual arts, religion, historiography, social thought and general outlook on life of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to precisely define the term.¹⁷ Negatively, the movement was characterized by its rejection of the hegemony of reason. The above mentioned quotes from Rousseau indicate some key terms for Romanticism. Like Rousseau, the Romantics greatly stressed the "heart": this was their key symbolic term. The heart represented feeling, imagination, warmth, emotions, passion. For the Romantics, imagination was far

¹⁵A. VIATTE, *Les interprétations du Catholicisme chez les Romantiques* (Paris: E. DeBoccard, Éditeur, 1922), p. 100.

¹⁶H.G. SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics: an Essay in Cultural History* (London: Constable, 1966), pp. 4,6,7,9,249.

¹⁷SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. xxi.

superior to reason. They believed that the way to truth was not through reason but through the imagination that had been stimulated by emotion.¹⁸ They also emphasized the importance of intuition. The stress on intuition, so characteristic a quality of youth, helps to explain why Romanticism was so popular with and so closely identified with the young.¹⁹

The Romantics preferred the subjective to the objective. They accentuated the individual and his or her uniqueness. They were preoccupied with the individual imagination which they saw as characteristically rebellious and changeable; it longs for solitude in order to cultivate its "private emotions." In contrast to the Rationalists, the Romantics celebrated the emotions, feelings, and passions. They also believed that it was highly desirable to express them.²⁰ Because the Romantics so freely expressed their constantly changing feelings and moods, a certain restlessness often resulted. In fact, restlessness was one of the most salient qualities of the Romantic mind. The Romantics were always somewhat dissatisfied with what was happening at any given moment, i.e. with the present. Consequently, they were always searching for new adventures: this explains their

¹⁸REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 9.

¹⁹SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. 5-6.

²⁰REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, pp. 3,8-9.

preoccupation with travel and voyages to exotic locations. Using their emotions and themselves as models, the Romantics tended to see the world and all reality as somewhat restless and in motion.²¹

Romanticism projected its concern for the individual person and his or her singularity beyond the single human being to the individual or specific community, nation or nationality. Particularity was important at every level of reality. The Romantics saw every people or nationality as having a peculiar and unique character which expressed itself through its particular "Volksgeist" or folk-spirit. This somewhat elusive concept accounted for the patriotism that was often associated with Romanticism.²² Romantic nationalism emphasized the affection and devotion that bind a particular people to their own particular country.²³ A commitment to liberty was associated with their exaltation of the national spirit. The French Revolution was a quintessential Romantic event insofar as it stressed liberty as one of its basic principles despite its blatant inconsistency in its

²¹SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. xxii,20; Henri PEYRE, *What is Romanticism?*, trans. Roda ROBERTS (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1978), p.1.

²²SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 15.

²³Thomas KSELMAN, *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Brunswick, New Jersey; Rutgers University Press, 1983), p.83.

application of this revolutionary ideal.²⁴ The Romantics loved their respective countries yet tended to support other peoples in their struggles for liberation from various forms of oppression, e.g. the Poles, the Irish, and the Belgians. This is clearly reflected in the English Romantic poets as well as in the Frenchmen Lamennais and Lacordaire.

One of the qualities most commonly associated with Romanticism was a love of the past, a nostalgia for a period that no longer exists. In the course of reading this thesis, it will become apparent that this characteristic was not universal among the Romantics. Nevertheless, the Romantic mind, which tended to be marked by contradictions, dissonance, and inner conflict, often dreamed of a future utopia while simultaneously yearning for some bygone age. Many Romantics, e.g. Lacordaire, were especially gifted with intuitive insight that provided them with an astonishing ability to predict the shape of the future world. However, a longing for the past, as represented by A.V. Jandel and so many nineteenth century French Catholics, was a more characteristic quality of Romanticism than was a preoccupation with the future.²⁵

The Romantic mind was also characterized by a sense of history and an emphasis on organic wholeness and development.

²⁴SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 10.

²⁵SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. xxiii,30,33.

Because all time is interconnected, it is important to appreciate the past if one is to understand the present and the future. The Romantic saw the "real" as always in process. It is never completely achieved.²⁶ One can only begin to encompass all knowledge when the various aspects of life, including different historical periods, are seen not in a disintegrated manner but as an organic whole.²⁷ Every historical period has its own intrinsic significance and perfection. Civilization, similar to life itself, is an organic and continuous process which includes all ages. An emphasis on tradition highlights this continuity. The meaning of the historical process can only be grasped in the whole rather than in its parts.²⁸

The Romantic movement had a special love for the Middle Ages, a period which became the central focus of its nostalgia for the past. This sharply contrasted with the Enlightenment which detested the Middle Ages, viewing this era as one of irrationality, superstition, and religious intolerance. The Enlightenment ushered in a period of scepticism toward religion in general and toward revealed religions in particular. In such an atmosphere, the Romantics tended to

²⁶REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 6.

²⁷SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. 20, 27.

²⁸REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p.11.

look back longingly to the medieval "Age of Faith" in a rather uncritical manner. Their interest in this era was not exclusively religious. They were also fascinated with the Middle Ages for political and cultural reasons. Consistent with their tendency toward nationalism, the Romantics believed that nations should look back to their political and cultural highpoints. They believed that, for Europeans, these achievements happened during the medieval period. They were convinced that the medieval guilds and corporations respected the dignity and freedom of the individual better than the overcentralization and absolutism of later periods. Faced with the political instability of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Romantics looked back to the Middle Ages as a moment of relative political stability.²⁹

Aestheticism was a hallmark of the Romantic movement. This was particularly expressed through a fascination with medieval art and architecture. The Romantics especially loved medieval Gothic cathedrals and consequently, were instrumental in restoring some of the great ones in Europe. Their own re-creation of Gothic architecture was dubbed the "neo-Gothic" style. Through their interest in things medieval, in the religion, political structures, art, and architecture of medieval Europe, the Romantics demonstrated their conviction

²⁹SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. 34-38.

that times past can be made intelligible and accessible to people of later generations.³⁰ A profound appreciation for history was a defining characteristic of Romanticism: this provided a great impetus for the development of historical studies in the nineteenth century. The Romantic recovery and re-interpretation of history constitutes one of this movement's enduring achievements.³¹ The Romantic stress on the concrete rather than the abstract, on the particular rather than the general, represented a significant contribution to historical study.³² The science of historiography developed in the nineteenth century as a result of the Romantic movement's historical consciousness.³³

The Romantics were also characterized by their contradictions: they looked toward the future yet they often idolized the past; they yearned for religious faith yet often wallowed in nihilism; they were very creative yet often could show an extremely destructive, even demonic side. They loved life yet too often manifested a delight in suffering and a longing for death which was expressed in the most reckless

³⁰SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. 34-38;
REARDON, pp. 7,10.

³¹SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. 42-43.

³²REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 21.

³³REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 11.

behavior, even to the point of suicide in many cases. Their world weariness was often connected with a deep religious frustration, with a desire to believe while finding it difficult or impossible to do so.³⁴ The Romantics, unlike many of the Rationalists, were open toward religious belief. They did not view finite reality as self-explanatory but thought that paradoxically, it contained the infinite within itself yet also reflected the infinite which was beyond it. The infinite was seen as both immanent and transcendent; there is a sense of coincidence between the finite and the infinite.³⁵ Their openness to the infinite and to the transcendent dimension of reality led a number of Romantics to religious faith in general and to Christianity in particular, especially to Catholicism. However, in typical Romantic fashion, their faith was often of a very fragile sort which contained as much darkness as it did light. As we shall see later, Chateaubriand and Lamennais exemplified this kind of faith.

³⁴SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. xxiii, 64-65; PEYRE, *What is Romanticism?*, p. 1; REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 14.

³⁵REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 3.

3. *Key Romantic figures: Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Lamennais*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was largely responsible for Romanticism's positive attitude toward a religious interpretation of reality as well as for many other Romantic characteristics. Although he was not really part of the Romantic movement, he is called the Father of Romanticism. Rousseau's influence on Romanticism was enormous although he died just as it was coming into being. He was a man of the eighteenth century, of the Enlightenment yet he did not share his peers' unquestioning belief in the all-sufficiency of reason to solve every human problem nor did he think that progress was inevitable. In contrast to the Rationalists, Rousseau stressed feelings, sensibilities, emotions. As previously mentioned, he gave the "heart" the central role in human life. He did not reject God as did some Enlightenment figures nor did he accept the theory of God as cosmic watchmaker, as totally uninvolved with his creation, that was held by other eighteenth Rationalists. For Rousseau, God was very much involved with our hearts, with our deepest feelings. Although he could scarcely be called orthodox in his religious beliefs which involve the rejection of revealed religion, his understanding of God and of the relationship between God and humanity was much closer to traditional Christian views than one generally found among Enlightenment thinkers. Rousseau's

writings not only inspired Romantics to adopt his "natural" religion but also influenced others to become Christians, even Catholics. Catholic Romantics such as Chateaubriand, Lamennais, and Lacordaire were profoundly affected by his religious thought. Some Catholic Romantics even wanted to renew Catholicism in accordance with the tolerant and sentimental approach found in Rousseau's writings.³⁶

Rousseau's clearest expression of the religious ideas that influenced Romantic attitudes about religion were found in a section of his book, *Émile*, published in 1762. The relevant chapter is titled "Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard". The wise, virtuous and humble vicar is a literary character who functions as a mouthpiece for Rousseau's own religious opinions. He encounters a troubled man who has nearly lost all religious faith. By sharing his simple faith, by professing it to the man, the vicar provides the opportunity for him to rediscover the faith in God and the love of goodness which are in the man's heart. Rousseau wished to do the same for the reader. At the beginning of the chapter, he warned the man as well as us to be distrustful of philosophers and their various theories. They pretend to have immense knowledge yet in reality, know no more than anyone else.

³⁶VIIATTE, *Les interprétations du Catholicisme chez les Romantiques*, p. 8.

Each thinks that he is wise because his views differ from those of another philosopher, because they are "original." Rousseau wanted his readers to look not to the savants of this world for truth but to look to our hearts. He wanted his readers to consult the inner light within each of us if we would know the truth. He believed that we should try to know only what is humanly possible and not worry about those things that we cannot know and which have no practical significance for us anyway.³⁷

For Rousseau, "to exist is to feel." He believed that our feelings and sensibilities are prior to our intelligence: we have sentiments before we have ideas. Rousseau said that even the existence of God is known because I "feel" that the world is governed by a powerful and wise will. God is the being who can accomplish what he wills and who, through his own actions, rules the universe and orders all things. God is intelligent. He is necessarily good. I can know with certainty that God's existence is self-sufficient and that my own existence is subordinated to his. I perceive God's universal presence in his works. I feel God in myself and all around me yet I cannot know any particular place where he is found. However, I am not able to know who or what God is in himself. I can never know his nature or substance. For

³⁷J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Émile*, Extraits, Tome II, Livres IV et V (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1972), pp. 10, 44-46, 51.

Rousseau, the wise person accepts the inherent limitations concerning his or her understanding of God and does not engage in useless speculation nor claim knowledge beyond human capacities.³⁸

Rousseau continued his exposition with a discussion of morality. Reflecting Enlightenment ideas, he rejected the Christian notion of original sin. This rejection was also consistent with his rather exalted ideas about humanity in the state of nature which deeply influenced the Romantic attitude toward the natural world. Rousseau attributed much of the control that Christianity has exercised over its adherents to the doctrine of original sin and to the Christian belief that this primeval crime has done enormous damage to humanity that can only be healed by grace and the church's ministry. Rousseau found no such original perversity in the human heart. In the "Profession," he says, through the vicar, that God has created humanity in his own image, that he has made humans free, good, and happy. Free will is integral to the human person. Through freedom, one should always choose the good yet because of human nature, one can in freedom choose evil. One who freely chooses the good merits the self contentment, the supreme joy, for which humans are placed on the earth and endowed with freedom. When evil is chosen, when people abuse

³⁸J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Émile*, pp. 46, 48, 52.

their faculties, unhappiness and misery result. Evil does not come from God, the devil, or nature but from humans and their choices. Natural events, even catastrophic ones, are not evil in themselves but are only evil when they are perceived as such by humans. Typically, Rousseau idealized primitive humanity, contending that it accepted life as it is, even to the point of seeing death not as evil but as the natural end of life. Human suffering is not evil in itself; it is not seen as such in nature. Only one's attitude toward suffering can make it evil. Real evil in the world can only come from humans, from their free decision to choose it.³⁹

In discussing the role of conscience in moral life, Rousseau calls conscience the voice of the soul. It consists of moral maxims written indelibly by nature on the depths of each human heart. Through the conscience, one learns that "all that I feel to be good is good and all that I feel to be evil is evil."⁴⁰ Conscience, unlike reason, will never deceive us. It is our true guide. Conscience is to the soul as instinct is to the body. It is a divine instinct, an immortal and heavenly voice. It is an infallible judge. It makes us like God. However, conscience does not remove us from the natural world but perfects our nature and makes our

³⁹J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Émile*, pp. 11, 49-50.

⁴⁰J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Émile*, p.50.

actions morally excellent. When we follow our conscience, i.e. when we follow not judgements or ideas but sentiments, we are being obedient to our nature and thus, can never be led astray. Rousseau's very subjective interpretation of conscience thus becomes an infallible guide for moral decision-making.⁴¹

It is clear from the preceding paragraphs on Rousseau's religious thought that he would have been critical of revealed religion. Like many Enlightenment thinkers, he preferred natural religion, i.e. religion based on our human nature, to revealed religion, i.e. religion based on manifestations from "outside" ourselves. In "Profession", Rousseau tells the reader that the loftiest religious ideas come to us solely through reason. He viewed "revelation" as coming not from God but from humans who presume to speak for the deity. Such human revelation strips God of transcendence by attributing human passions to him. Rousseau contended that revealed religion teaches absurd contradictions and leads humanity into cruelty, crime, and misery. He said that we should look to nature rather than human revelation if we wish to encounter God who is the author of the book called "Nature" and who speaks to us in a language accessible to all people rather than only to a chosen few. The unchangeable natural order

⁴¹J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Émile*, pp. 50-53.

provides a much clearer indication of the divine wisdom than so-called miracles. As for worship, God is not interested in the rituals and ceremonies of revealed religions but only asks for the praise that comes from the sincere heart.⁴²

Rousseau echoed a common Enlightenment complaint against revealed religions when he criticized the intolerance that they have often displayed toward other revealed religions as well as other religions. He had little regard for missionaries who travel to foreign lands and threaten native populations with eternal damnation if they do not accept the doctrines and rituals of the foreigners' particular religion. Rousseau did not believe that there are adequate grounds for religious exclusivity, for claiming that one religion possesses ultimate truth to the exclusion of all others. For him, such claims are nothing more than human opinion.⁴³

Near the end of "Profession," Rousseau seemed to take a more conciliatory stance toward revealed religion, especially Christianity. He said that he knew that his judgement on the matter was not infallible. There are arguments for and against the veracity of revelation. Given this situation, one cannot be forced to commit oneself to either side of the issue. Concerning Christianity specifically, Rousseau wrote

⁴²J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Émile*, pp. 54-55, 58, 63.

⁴³J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Émile*, p. 63.

that he stood in awe of the majesty of the Scriptures. The holiness of the gospels spoke to his heart. This was a strong statement given the key role of the heart in Rousseau's thought. He saw Jesus as superior to all the philosophers and considered the life and death of Jesus to be that of not simply a wise man like Socrates but of a God. It was not likely that the gospel stories could have been invented; they were actually better attested to than the stories about Socrates. Rousseau dealt with the contradictions in the gospels by saying that one can only respect in silence that which one neither knows, rejects, nor comprehends, humiliating oneself before the Supreme Being who alone knows all truth. In the end, Rousseau was left with what he called involuntary scepticism regarding revelation. However, he was not at all sceptical in his conviction that the human person must serve God in the simplicity of his or her heart and lead a good and moral life based on the knowledge that is found in that heart. God demands no more of us than that.⁴⁴

In a very real sense, Rousseau's openness to religion, especially to its affective aspects,, played a key role in the Romantic rediscovery of the importance and relevance of the religious dimension in human life. The Enlightenment Rationalists considered religion to be a superstitious relic

⁴⁴J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Émile*, pp. 64-66.

of the past no longer needed in an age that viewed reason as all-sufficient. The Romantics made religion respectable again for the intellectual and cultural elites. Although many Romantics shared Rousseau's discomfort with revealed religion, preferring natural religion or some form of nature mysticism, a number of others went beyond his sympathetic attitude toward Jesus and the gospels and fully embraced Christianity, especially Catholicism. Romanticism aided in bringing about a widespread revival of Christianity, particularly in the nineteenth century.⁴⁵

There were several elements in the Romantic movement that made Catholic Christianity a lively option. The Romantic emphasis on organic growth and on history as its exemplification was very compatible with the Catholic understanding of how the church develops through the ages while retaining its unique identity. The emphasis on concreteness, on the importance of real events, conditioned the Romantics to take seriously the historicity of Christ and the possibility of revelation in history at a concrete time and place. Nature as well as history functioned as icons of the divine. Although Catholicism is rooted in historical revelation, it also stresses God's omnipresence in nature, his creation. The Romantic movement valued mystical intuition;

⁴⁵SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 81.

there is also a strong Catholic tradition of mysticism. The clear affinity between Romanticism and Catholicism, coupled with the idealization of the Catholic Middle Ages, led to a wave of Romantic converts to the church. They came out of appreciation for the mystical, liturgical, heroic, and sacramental aspects of Catholicism. Their aesthetic sensibilities were nourished by the rituals, art, and architecture of the church. It is ironic, in light of Rousseau's distaste for human authority in religion, that a number of Romantics were also attracted to Catholicism because of its emphasis on authority.⁴⁶

The Romantic interest in religion, particularly Christianity, reached its zenith in the early nineteenth century. An intellectual revitalization of Christianity, unparalleled since the High Middle Ages, took place during this period. Christianity came to be viewed as a bulwark of stability in a world of instability and disorder. Converts came to Christianity, specifically Catholicism, in search of tradition, authoritative teaching, and hierarchical structure. John Henry Newman was an outstanding example of this. They tended to view religion as a conservative rather than a

⁴⁶Thomas O'MEARA, O.P., *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), pp. 9,14,188,197; SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. 93-95; REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, pp. 12,176.

revolutionary force.⁴⁷ The Romantic turn to Catholicism was particularly evident in France where a number of significant literary figures, e.g. Victor Hugo, developed a highly sentimental, poetical, and idealized image of the church, its history, and its relation to society.⁴⁸ Many French Romantics, along with others, looked to a rejuvenated Catholicism as the cornerstone for the creation of a just and stable social order.⁴⁹ Napoleon, who was something of a Romantic but not especially interested in religious questions, was clearly aware of the positive role that the church could play in unifying the people, in anchoring moral values necessary for societal survival, and in generally strengthening the ties that bound France together. He concretized this by his concordat with the Vatican.⁵⁰

One name among the intellectual and cultural elites of nineteenth century France looms larger than any other in the revival of Catholicism in that country: Chateaubriand. Viscount François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) was born in Brittany but traveled throughout Europe, the eastern United

⁴⁷REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 26.

⁴⁸Adrien DANSETTE, *Religious History of Modern France*, Vol. I (New York; Herder and Herder, 1961), p. 226.

⁴⁹REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 177.

⁵⁰Bernard M. REARDON, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 2.

States, and the Near East during a long and full life. He was a renowned literary figure, diplomat, and apologist for Catholicism. He was also a Romantic to the core of his being, a fact clearly illustrated in this famous quote concerning his conversion: "Je suis devenu chrétien, je n'ai pas cédé, j'en conviens, à de grandes lumières surnaturelles; ma conviction est sortie du coeur: j'ai pleuré, et j'ai cru."⁵¹ Chateaubriand was very much influenced by Rousseau, from whom he derived his understanding of religious faith as primarily concerned with feelings, emotions, the "heart."⁵²

Chateaubriand's great and famous contribution to the nineteenth century Catholic Revival was his 1802 book, *Génie du Christianisme*, an enormously influential work of apologetics. The Romantic temperament permeated this book whose stated aim was "to summon all the powers of imagination and all the interests of the heart in support of that religion against which they had been armed."⁵³ Chateaubriand wanted to create a mood among the educated classes of his country, a mood of sensitivity to mystery, to those realities beyond the powers

⁵¹VISCOUNT De CHATEAUBRIAND, *Génie du Christianisme (Extraits)* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, n.d.), p. 17.

⁵²VIATTE, *Les interprétations du Catholicisme chez les Romantiques*, p. 46.

⁵³VISCOUNT De CHATEAUBRIAND, *The Genius of Christianity; or the Spirit and Beauty of the Christian Religion* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1884), pp. 48-49.

of the rational mind to comprehend. The book was very successful in its purpose. Chateaubriand's work bore the lion's share of responsibility for winning French public opinion to the religious cause in the early nineteenth century. In true Romantic fashion, it stirred the imagination of the French people. Because of this book, it was not only intellectually acceptable to be a Catholic but even intellectually fashionable. It was practically the "Bible" of French Catholic intellectuals in the first half of the nineteenth century. *Génie du Christianisme*, which helped to undermine anti-religious prejudices, was called a "brilliant sign of reconciliation and alliance between religion and French society."⁵⁴ Napoleon, in true Romantic style, supposedly wept when he read the book.⁵⁵ Discussing it, he said that Chateaubriand did not have the "style of Racine, but of a prophet; that nature had given him the sacred flame, and it breathed in all his works."⁵⁶ Aside from its religious, social, and political significance, *Génie du Christianisme* was also a literary masterpiece of its

⁵⁴REARDON, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. vii, 4-7; SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 128.

⁵⁵H. DANIEL-ROPS, *The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789-1870* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., [1965]), p. 91.

⁵⁶CHATEAUBRIAND, *The Genius of Christianity*, p. 8.

day, indeed the great literary event of the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁵⁷

Chateaubriand fought on the side of the king during the French Revolution and eventually took refuge in London. The death of his mother while he was still in exile had a profound effect on him and led to his conversion from a Romantic mélange of nihilism and religious heterodoxy to Catholicism.⁵⁸ Returning to France in 1800, Chateaubriand devoted himself to *Génie du Christianisme*. He spent many years in various government and diplomatic posts before retiring after the Revolution of 1830 because of his disapproval of the new monarchy. During the remainder of his life, Chateaubriand preoccupied himself with literary endeavors.⁵⁹ True to Romantic style, he was always a man of contradictions. He liked to read Voltaire, the personification of Enlightenment Rationalism, despite being an incorrigible Romantic and disciple of Rousseau; he wrote his masterpiece of Christian apologetics, extolling Christian morality, while living with a woman other than the one to whom he was married; he remained a believing Catholic to the end of his life yet periodically

⁵⁷DANSETTE, *Religious History of Modern France*, p. 145.

⁵⁸SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 126.

⁵⁹L. CHAIGNE, "Chateaubriand", *Catholicisme*, II, (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1947-).

struggled with intense religious doubts.⁶⁰

Chateaubriand conceived *Génie du Christianisme* as a Romantic apologetic, i.e. it "must ascend from effect to cause, not prove that the Christian religion is excellent because it comes from God, but that it comes from God because it is excellent". Reflective of Romanticism, Chateaubriand concentrated on Western civilization as an organic whole which developed and continues to thrive only because the Christian religion is its animating principle. *Génie du Christianisme*, divided into four parts, reviews the principal mysteries of Christianity, makes comparisons between Christian and pagan literature, shows the advantages that the arts have gained from Christianity in accordance with nature and the sentiments of the heart, describes the accomplishments of missionaries and monastic orders, and concludes with a general survey of the enormous blessings that Christianity has brought to humanity.⁶¹

In his famous book, Chateaubriand intended to show that Christianity is the most humane of the world's religions and is the one most favorable to liberty as well as to the arts

⁶⁰PEYRE, *What is Romanticism?*, p. 109; SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. 128-129.

⁶¹Joseph FITZER, ed., *Romance and the Rock: Nineteenth-Century Catholics on Faith and Reason* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 25-26; CHATEAUBRIAND, *The Genius of Christianity*, pp. 7-8.

and sciences. The modern world owes every improvement in human life to it. Chateaubriand wanted to demonstrate the beauty of the Christian faith. His argument for Christianity was an aesthetic one. In discussing the role of mysteries in human life and in religion specifically, Chateaubriand said that the Christian mysteries are the highest because they speak directly to the heart. The teachings of the gospels are rooted in the heart rather than the head and thus are more conducive to showing one how to lead a virtuous life. Chateaubriand's treatment of Christ reflected his aesthetic approach: Christ, the only being without blemish, is the most brilliant copy of the supreme beauty of God whose existence is demonstrated by the wonders and beauty of the universe. Christian worship of God is beautiful and satisfies the heart and the imagination more deeply than does any other kind of worship. For Chateaubriand, the beauty of Christian mysteries, teachings, morality, and worship were unparalleled. The benefits that Christianity have brought to the world are astounding. Only God could have revealed such a religion. As *Génie du Christianisme* clearly demonstrates, Chateaubriand was not a theologian. His arguments did not reveal any intellectual profundity yet his work produced much fruit because he understood the spirit of the age in which he lived, an age deeply appreciative of Pascal's insight that the "heart

has reasons of which reason does not know".⁶²

Chateaubriand's most famous and influential disciple was Félicité Robert de Lamennais (1782-1854). He incarnated the Romantic ideal, representing the best and the worst in the movement.⁶³ Lamennais has been called one of the two greatest visionaries of the nineteenth century; the other one was Karl Marx.⁶⁴ The former's impact on the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century was enormous yet in the contradictory style so typical of the Romantics, his last years were spent in alienation from the Catholic faith that he had so vigorously promoted in his younger years. Lamennais' entire life represented a struggle between belief and unbelief.⁶⁵ A Breton like Chateaubriand, he was given a liberal education by his free-thinking uncle that was based on Rousseau's *Émile*. The young Lamennais became a Deist. In 1804, under the influence of his brother, he rediscovered the Catholic faith of his early youth. Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* had a profound impact on him. Through it, Lamennais encountered Blaise Pascal whose writings would also

⁶²CHATEAUBRIAND, *The Genius of Christianity*, pp. 48-49, 51-54, 64-65, 529, 664, 667, 684-685.

⁶³VIIATTE, *Les interprétations du Catholicisme chez les Romantiques*, p. 127.

⁶⁴DANSETTE, *Religious History of Modern France*, p. 211.

⁶⁵SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 81.

significantly influence him. His high regard for Chateaubriand, whom he called a "man of genius," never wavered throughout his life.⁶⁶ The dark side of the Romantic temperament seemed to have been disproportionately represented in Lamennais' life. He had an introspective and moody personality which led to lifelong unhappiness. To a degree, he enjoyed this unhappiness. He stressed his suffering: "My soul was born with a wound."⁶⁷ His Catholic faith brought no real consolation or optimism to his life as is evident in these words: "Human life has but one springtime, and I still do not know what it is; I have learned of it only by hearsay."⁶⁸ He never seemed to have experienced that springtime.

Lamennais was ordained to the priesthood, without any enthusiasm, in 1816. Soon after, he began to write. His first of many books was the *Essai sur l'Indifférence en Matière de Religion* (1817). He took up the cause of ultramontaniam, believing that the rights of the church could better be protected by a strong papacy than by any secular

⁶⁶P. BARON, O.P., "La Mennais," *Catholicisme*, VI, (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1947-); REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 177; DANSETTE, *Religious History of Modern France*, p. 212; SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 82; VIATTE, *Les interprétations du Catholicisme chez les Romantiques*, p. 102.

⁶⁷PEYRE, *What is Romanticism?*, p. 115.

⁶⁸REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 177.

government, liberal or conservative. He came to believe that the church would flourish best in a situation in which it was totally separate from the state. Returning to his family estate, "La Chenaie," he eventually gathered around him a group of young men committed to serious study of philosophy, theology, history, and other disciplines. Among them was Lacordaire.⁶⁹

Lamennais founded the journal *L'Avenir* in 1830 with Lacordaire and several others in order to promote the cause of separation of church and state as well as that of religious liberty. It soon became clear that the paper's future was jeopardized by the opposition of both the French hierarchy and the civil authorities. Lamennais thought that the pope, mindful of the former's ultramontanist views, would take his side against the bishops. Consequently, he went to Rome with Lacordaire and their colleague, the Count de Montalembert, to plead *L'Avenir's* case. Lamennais was gravely mistaken: Gregory XVI condemned the liberal views of the journal in the encyclical *Mirari vos* in August of 1832. Lamennais was crushed. Views expressed in his book, *Paroles d'un Croyant* (1834), led to the encyclical *Singulari nos* (1834) which condemned the book by name as well as Lamennais' philosophical opinions. By 1836, his break with the church was complete.

⁶⁹BARON, "La Mennais".

As the years went on, he became increasingly solitary. Lamennais' religious views drifted further away from Christian orthodoxy. At his death, the body of the priest who had looked to the papacy as the guardian of Western civilization, was buried without Catholic funeral rites in accordance with his request.⁷⁰ In death, Lamennais' transformation into the tragic hero of the Romantic movement was complete. His self-destructiveness, the dark side of his personality, coincided with the dark side of Romanticism, clearly illustrating the movement's weaknesses.

4. *Romanticism and popular religion*

The Romantic revival of Catholicism in France was not simply experienced by the intellectual and cultural elites: popular religion was also significantly transformed by it. This was consistent with the Romantic movement which, unlike Enlightenment rationalism, did not disdain common people nor popular culture. In fact, one of the principal characteristics of Romanticism was its rediscovery of the importance of the culture of ordinary people, of those who were not part of society's elite groups. This was especially true in the area of popular religion. Chateaubriand was very impressed with popular religious practices which he called

⁷⁰BARON, "La Mennais".

"harmonies of religion and nature".⁷¹ On the other hand, popular religious belief and practices were also profoundly influenced by the Romantic revival of religion. Christianity in the nineteenth century, especially French Catholicism, was affected at every social level, by the Romantic movement.⁷²

Nineteenth century popular religion very much reflected an emphasis on feelings, emotions, and passions characteristic of the Romantic temperament. Affectivity and emotional intimacy were central elements of popular devotions. These sentimental religious practices even received official church sanction. Stress was placed on the importance of being in intimate relationship with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the perfect and "holy family". Devotional literature also was marked by sentimentality and a nostalgia for the simple piety of country folk. One finds this same type of idealization of the rural in Romantic writings.⁷³ The devotionalism of the nineteenth century was characterized by a rediscovery of medieval religious customs, e.g. heightened devotion to Mary and the saints, veneration of relics, processions, pilgrimages and other manifestations of faith. This very much reflected the

⁷¹Ralph GIBSON, *A Social History of French Catholicism 1789-1914* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 141.

⁷²KSELMAN, *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 10.

⁷³KSELMAN, *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 95-102, 198.

Romantic infatuation with the medieval era as the "Age of Faith" and a reaction to the eighteenth century and its characteristic religious minimalism.⁷⁴

The Romantic influence on popular religion was apparent in the images of Christ that were prevalent. The great Romantic symbol, the heart, was emphasized in the picture of the compassionate Christ pointing to his heart which represents his love of all people. The suffering rather than the glorified, risen Christ was the subject of popular devotion. This was consistent with the preoccupation with suffering characteristic of many Romantics, e.g. Lamennais. It was also appropriate for a church which had suffered so much during the Revolution and continued to experience serious trials throughout the nineteenth century. Devotion to the suffering Christ through the symbol of the Sacred Heart brought the faithful into an intimate relationship with the divine. It gave them an opportunity to unite their suffering to that of Christ and to make reparation for the sins committed against God and humanity in the modern world. The cult of the Sacred Heart developed rapidly at all levels of society throughout the nineteenth century. Many pious associations and religious congregations were named in honor

⁷⁴Hubert JEDIN, ed., *History of the Church*, Vol. VIII, *The Church in the Age of Liberalism*, by Roger Aubert, Johannes Beckmann, Patrick J. Corish, and Rudolph Lill, trans. Peter BECKER (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 219-220.

of the Sacred Heart.⁷⁵

A hallmark of nineteenth century French Catholicism was its Marian piety which was so reminiscent of the medieval period in which great cathedrals and works of art were dedicated to Our Lady. The Romantic influence on popular religion was clearly evident in the rapid rise of the cult of Mary. Inspired by the apparitions at the Rue du Bac, La Salette, and Lourdes, devotion to the Mother of God spread rapidly among the Catholic people. Thousands came in pilgrimage to shrines built at the apparition sites. Numerous congregations of religious men and women were founded in honor of Mary. The highpoint of nineteenth century Marian devotion was Pius IX's solemn definition of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, an act attributable in no small measure to the popular acclaim for the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁷⁶ No one in the last decade of the eighteenth century could have predicted the astounding revival of the Catholic Church in post-revolutionary France. Although there were a variety of factors involved in this revival, one of the most important was the Romantic movement and its recovery of the value of religion and its relationship to the "heart", to the affective dimension of human life. Romanticism created an

⁷⁵AUBERT, *The Church in the Age of Liberalism*, pp. 222-223, n.9.

⁷⁶AUBERT, *The Church in the Age of Liberalism*, pp. 224-225.

environment, after the devastating effects of both the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution, in which religious faith could once again be taken seriously by the intellectual and cultural elites. It also revitalized the spiritual life of Catholics of all social classes through popular devotions, especially to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Our Lady. Not insignificantly, the Romantic movement also produced such influential figures in the revival of Catholicism in nineteenth century France as Lacordaire as well as Chateaubriand and Lamennais.

CHAPTER TWO

*THE RESTORATION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN FRANCE AS A KEY MOMENT IN
THE RESTORATION OF FRENCH CATHOLICISM IN GENERAL*

The reappearance and growth of religious life in nineteenth century France was one of the most remarkable aspects of the astounding revival of Catholicism in that country after the devastation of the French Revolution. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, in spite of incredible obstacles, religious communities of both men and women once again became a part of the religious landscape of France. Many of these communities were new foundations, born into a post-Revolution society in which religious life had never known any privileges. Other communities were restorations of old orders and congregations that had been privileged institutions in a country in which throne and altar were united. Religious life in the nineteenth century, both in its new and restored forms, was profoundly affected by the Romantic environment that had given new life to Catholicism and that had made the "old religion" a living and vital option for the intellectual and cultural elites as well as for ordinary people. Romanticism in its Catholic expression

profoundly influenced all nineteenth century religious institutes in France, from the missionary-oriented Oblates of Mary Immaculate to the contemplative Benedictines of the Abbey of Solesmes.

1. *Destructive impact of French Revolution on religious life*

It is impossible to study nineteenth century church history, especially in France, without identifying the revival of religious life as one of its focal points.⁷⁷ In order to better appreciate the reappearance of religious communities during that period or indeed the coming back to life of Catholicism as a whole at that time, it is essential to look back at the French Revolution. The Revolution was the pivotal moment in the history of modern France. No aspect of that nation's life in the last two centuries can be studied without reference to it.

The years just prior to the Revolution of 1789 were not one of the high points of religious life in France. Although teaching and nursing institutes had considerable respect because of their social usefulness, contemplative orders were not highly regarded during this period. Monks and nuns were

⁷⁷Hubert JEDIN, ed., *History of the Church* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, [1981]), vol.vii, *The Church between Revolution and Restoration*, by Roger Aubert, Johannes Beckmann, Patrick J. Corish and Rudolf Lill, p. 206.

widely regarded as useless to society. The Age of Enlightenment, which affected even some Catholic thinkers, emphasized scientific progress and self-reliance over prayer and contemplation.⁷⁸ It must also be admitted that the contemplative aspect of monastic life left much to be desired in a number of French monasteries and other religious houses. By the time of the Revolution, The Catholic Church, including the monasteries, had become the greatest landowner in France. Many wealthy monasteries had become decadent; their riches had corrupted them.⁷⁹ They were increasingly seen as a drain on the country, hoarding economic resources that could be better used for the good of the entire society.

In the early days of what would come to be known as the French Revolution, the National Assembly, which included a number of lower Catholic clergy, decided to tackle France's enormous economic crisis by nationalizing church property. As previously mentioned, much of this property belonged to monasteries. The National Assembly appointed a committee to deal with various religious questions, the "Comité ecclésiastique de l'Assemblée nationale." Upon the committee's recommendation, the National Assembly, on Oct. 28, 1789, suspended the taking of monastic vows by both men and

⁷⁸Gérard CHOLVY, "Le renouveau monastique en France au XIXe siècle: le contexte," *Esprit et Vie* 1 (2 Janvier): 9-10.

⁷⁹DANSETTE, *Religious History of Modern France*, pp. 8,19.

women.⁸⁰

At the time of the suppression of monastic vows, the National Assembly had not yet consciously embarked upon an anti-Catholic course. Catholics in general, including secular priests who were not part of the hierarchy and had little love for religious life, thought that restrictions on French monastic life were necessary for the good of the country. By 1790, however, it was becoming rather apparent that the Catholic Church and its institutions in themselves were the targets of the burgeoning revolution. It was no longer simply a question of a more equitable distribution of wealth. On February 13 of that year, a member of the National Assembly, Garat-l'Ainé, said that religious orders were the most scandalous violation of human rights. He said that they allowed an adolescent to renounce all of his freedom at an age when he could not legally relinquish even his most modest possessions. For Garat-l'Ainé, religious vows constituted "civil suicide."⁸¹ On that same day in February, the National Assembly passed a bill which stipulated that religious vows no longer had any legal status, thereby

⁸⁰Bernard BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel, la restauration de l'Ordre dominicain en France après la Révolution* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), pp. 42-3; DANSETTE, *Religious History of Modern France*, p. 48.

⁸¹Terrye NEWKIRK, OCDS, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Martyrs of Compiègne As Prophets of the Modern Age* (Washington, D.C., ICS Publications, 1995), p. 26.

freeing men and women who had made them to leave their monasteries. One could leave simply by declaring his or her intent to do so to the local municipality. Having lost its legal status, religious life would continue to exist only as an obligation of conscience. Religious congregations with hospital or teaching ministries, unlike the monastics and the mendicants, escaped suppression at that time. The mendicant Order of Preachers, which Lacordaire was to later restore, was devastated by the decree of suppression.⁸²

As the French Revolution orientated itself more toward an outright destruction of the Catholic Church, persecution of members of religious communities grew more intense. On August 18, 1792, the decisive blow for all religious life came: a decree was issued which abolished all religious congregations, both men's and women's. Teaching and nursing communities were not exempt from this legislation. Those who wished to remain in the religious life were forced into exile or secrecy.⁸³ This was a very dark moment not only for religious life but for the entire church in France. There would be no real glimmers of light for French Catholicism

⁸²BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 43; DANSETTE, *Religious History of Modern France*, p. 49; François FURET, *Revolutionary France, 1770-1880*, p. 82; P. PIERRARD, *L'Église et la Révolution, 1789-1889* (Paris: Éditions Nouvelle Cité, [1988], p. 48.

⁸³BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 44.

until the coming to power of Napoleon. Ever the pragmatist, Napoleon recognized the social usefulness of religion, especially for the maintenance of common moral standards as well as the special role that the Catholic Church had played in the history of France.

2. Slow movement towards restoration of religious life at beginning of the 19th Century

The Concordat of 1801 restored freedom of religion in France. Although far less than ideal from the Catholic Church's perspective, the concordat allowed it to exist openly, to function more normally, and to begin the task of rebuilding itself after surviving a revolution whose avowed purpose was to destroy it. The church's new freedom, however, did not seem to extend to religious life. The concordat itself was strangely silent on the question of the revival of religious communities. The significance of this was not made clear.⁸⁴ However, the concordat's silence appeared to function as a "no" to the reappearance of religious life. Consistent with his emphasis on the social utility of religion, Napoleon tolerated and even protected female congregations that were considered useful because of

⁸⁴BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 44.

their teaching and nursing apostolates.⁸⁵ Opposition to religious life in general continued under Napoleonic rule as witnessed by decrees such as that of June 22, 1804 which clearly continued the ban on religious congregations. A community called the Pères de Foi was dissolved along with all other associations formed "sous prétexte de religion."⁸⁶ The government was not alone in its uneasiness about a possible restoration of religious life. The French episcopacy had little love for religious communities, especially male ones. The exempt status of religious made it difficult for their local bishops to control them, a fact which was especially irritating to Ordinaries when dealing with religious priests. The bishops preferred to concentrate on recruiting for the diocesan priesthood.⁸⁷

In spite of the often unenthusiastic attitude of government and ecclesiastical leaders, many religious communities were founded and refounded in France during the nineteenth century. The historian Migne commented in 1859 on the incredible growth of these communities: "Personne n'ignore que, depuis soixante ans, il a été fondé dans l'Église catholique, et en France surtout, plus de congrégations

⁸⁵BERTIER de SAUVIGNY, *The Bourbon Restoration*, p. 312.

⁸⁶BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 44.

⁸⁷CHOLVY, *Le renouveau monastique*, pp. 10-11.

religieuses que n'avaient produit les dix-huit siècles antérieurs du christianisme."⁸⁸ Although there were a number of new religious congregations during this period, there were virtually no new models of religious life. The models utilized were all at least one hundred years old. During the nineteenth century, the prevalent attitude even in new communities was one of "restoration." The founders tended to look back to some "glorious past", sometimes in the Middle Ages, sometimes later, as a still valid and appealing model for their own century. In fact, renewal tended to be very much attached to the past even though the founders were concerned with ministering to people in their contemporary situations. Even the types of communities that experienced the greatest growth in nineteenth century France looked back to recent centuries for their inspiration, to founders such as Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, and Jean-Baptist de la Salle.⁸⁹

In nineteenth century France, there were no great founders who incarnated dynamic new concepts of consecrated

⁸⁸Claude LANGLOIS, "La vie religieuse vers 1840: un nouveau modèle," in *Lacordaire, son pays, ses amis et la liberté des ordres religieux*, ed. Guy Bedouelle (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991), p. 39.

⁸⁹LANGLOIS, "La vie religieuse vers 1840," pp. 39, 41-2; Raymond HOSTIE, *The Life and Death of Religious Orders: A Psycho-Sociological Approach* (Washington: CARA, 1983), pp. 203-7; AUBERT, *The Church between Revolution and Restoration*, p. 213.

living; the period produced no Francis, Dominic, Ignatius, Clare, or Jane de Chantal. This is not to deny that many of the founders of religious congregations were markedly holy men and women, so impressive in their sanctity that they were later canonized. Nevertheless, there was a certain popularization of the charism of founding a religious community. There were virtually no great, visionary founders but there were a number of dedicated, saintly founders.⁹⁰ For the most part, neither founders nor members of their communities were rooted in the traditions of the Fathers of the Church nor in the early monastic rules. Pious customs and devotions substituted for solid biblically and patristically based theologies of religious life. There was a serious lack of true historical rootedness in nineteenth century religious life in spite of the fervor and generosity of both those who founded new communities and those who joined them. Lacking creativity, founders often borrowed rules of life and spiritual exercises from the Jesuits or the Redemptorists and based formation programs on the Sulpician seminary model.⁹¹

⁹⁰LANGLOIS, "La vie religieuse vers 1840," p. 40.

⁹¹BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 39.

3. *Political conservatism of French religious*

French religious, like French Catholics in general, tended to be politically conservative throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. As they looked back in matters religious to the time before the French Revolution, often as far back as the Middle Ages, Catholics tended to look back in matters political to the Ancien Régime when church and state were united. Religious were no exception. They were adamantly opposed to the principles of the Revolution and to liberalism and socialism which they believed were its bitter fruit. A world which increasingly saw all reality as evolving and in flux was not one that the majority of French Catholic laity and religious were able to accept. Religious, who had every reason to defend their vocations by wrapping themselves in the revolutionary principle of liberty, instead accommodated themselves to the ambiguous political situation in which they found themselves for much of the nineteenth century. They feared and avoided association with such concepts as religious liberty or freedom of association lest they encourage liberals who could never be trusted not to turn on the church.⁹² Lacordaire, of course, stood as a living contradiction to the conservatism of his fellow French Catholics, lay and religious.

⁹²BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 40.

4. *Role of Ultramontanism*

The role of the papacy cannot be underestimated in the revival of religious life in nineteenth century France and elsewhere. With the passing of the Ancien Régime, a number of Catholics, especially intellectuals, looked to Rome for leadership in a world without "legitimate" secular rulers. Religious especially looked to Rome to defend their communities against governments who were at best tolerant of those that were considered "socially useful" and who at worst saw religious institutes as intrinsically reactionary. The popes supported religious life throughout the nineteenth century and played an important role in its restoration. Pius VII, reigning at the beginning of the century, reconstituted the Society of Jesus and promised to aid in reforming the mendicant orders. He encouraged both new and re-established communities. In response, ultramontanism established a firm footing among religious who increasingly saw the pope as their protector. French bishops, many of whom were still deeply imbued with Gallicanism and also somewhat suspicious of religious because of their autonomy, could not be counted upon as unswerving allies of the religious congregations. As the century wore on, ultramontanist religious played an increasingly important role in the centralization of the Catholic Church. The tendency to

establish residences for all superiors general in Rome was tangible evidence of this and of the special relationship that religious were seen to have with the papacy.⁹³

5. *Continuing problems concerning legal status of religious communities*

The years of the Bourbon Restoration were very fruitful in regard to the restoration of religious life in France. During this period, Catholics rallied to the cause of a monarchy which they saw as the legitimate successor of the pre-Revolution Bourbons. They eagerly anticipated a renewed alliance between Throne and Altar. However, they soon discovered that the Catholic Church's position was never to be the same privileged one that it had been before 1789. This was to be especially evident in the case of religious communities. The Bourbon Restoration created a more open atmosphere for the re-establishment of religious life in France but could hardly be said to have been unambiguously supportive. The Charter of 1815, a Restoration document, continued the silence about the lawfulness of religious communities that had characterized official statements during the Napoleonic Era: it said nothing about such communities nor

⁹³BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 38.

about a relevant topic, freedom of association.⁹⁴ Although it might be expected that the Bourbons's commitment to Catholic restoration would result in more favorable policies toward religious communities, the persistence of the parliamentary and Gallican traditions as well as rationalist prejudices did not permit the establishment of a definitive juridical basis for religious life. Mistrust of religious, even among Catholics, continued during the Restoration because many still could not appreciate the relevance of religious, especially monastic, life and also were opposed to the accumulation of property in *mortmain*. In spite of these attitudes, monastic communities such as the Trappists and Carthusians were re-established in France from 1815-20 although they remained technically illegal.⁹⁵

The lack of clarity about the legality of religious institutes during the Restoration is evident in legislation like that of January 2, 1817 which said that only legally authorized religious associations could acquire property; this was an indirect way of saying that some unauthorized associations could exist but would receive little toleration. In 1824, the government proposed a bill which tended to give

⁹⁴BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 45.

⁹⁵BERTIER de SAUVIGNY, *The Bourbon Restoration*, p. 312; CHOLVY, *Le renouveau monastique*, p. 11; DANSETTE, *Religious History of Modern France*, pp. 187-8.

it the right to authorize new religious congregations by a simple royal ordinance; it was turned down by the Chamber of Peers which then consisted of numerous liberal and Voltairean factions as well as devout Gallican Catholics who were terrified of a possible Jesuit restoration. An 1825 law gave the government the right to authorize new women's communities, which experienced enormous growth throughout the nineteenth century, by a simple administrative decision. There was less opposition to this law, probably because it only affected women religious who were generally considered more useful than men religious; this law allowed the sisters to receive gifts and legacies.⁹⁶

From a legal perspective, male religious communities had a more difficult time than those of women even during the Restoration. The only three legally authorized congregations, all missionary-oriented, were the Lazarists, the Foreign Missions, and the Mission of the Holy Spirit. Seven societies of male teaching religious were recognized as "associations of public utility." The Sulpicians and Christian Brothers, although legally unauthorized, were able to function because of toleration by public officials. This

⁹⁶BERTIER de SAUVIGNY, *The Bourbon Restoration*, p. 312; Gérard CHOLVY and Yves-Marie HILAIRE, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine: 1800/1880* ([Toulouse]: Bibliothèque historique Privat, [1985]), 40-1.

same tolerance allowed the founding of the Marists, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Fathers of the Sacred Heart, and Marianists.⁹⁷ Tolerance without true legal status had its difficulties for these religious, e.g. they could only acquire real estate or government bonds through a third party because they were not corporations. They also could not receive gifts or bequests. An 1817 law allowed these religious to acquire property only if authorized by a legislative act which was a slow and paralyzing process.⁹⁸

Despite incredible legal and other obstacles, religious communities continued to be founded and refounded in France throughout the nineteenth century. The 1830's, through a combination of religious renaissance, medievalist revival, and the progress of democratic ideas, witnessed the reappearance of such ancient great orders as the Carmelites and the Benedictines as well as the beginning of the re-establishment of the Dominicans. Hostile laws made the refounding of these orders particularly difficult. There was a tremendous rise in the number of religious priests throughout much of the century, beginning in the late 1830's; this was facilitated by governments that were generally favorable. These religious priests were usually engaged in teaching in the numerous free

⁹⁷BERTIER de SAUVIGNY, *The Bourbon Restoration*, p. 313.

⁹⁸BERTIER de SAUVIGNY, *The Bourbon Restoration*, p. 374.

colleges that had been opened under the July Monarchy and the Second Empire or in preaching missions that were geared toward deepening the faith of the participants. The Congregation of the Holy Cross, founded in 1840 and which later established the University of Notre Dame in the United States, was an example of this type of community committed to teaching and preaching. Religious brothers taught in the primary schools.⁹⁹

The question of the legal status of religious communities continued as an important issue in France during the 1830's, especially because of the efforts of those like Lacordaire who wanted to insure the right of French men and women to voluntarily form religious associations based on vows. They called upon the government, now the July Monarchy, to take seriously article 5 of the Charter of 1830: "chacun professe sa religion avec une égale liberté et obtient pour son culte la même protection." The issue of the right of association was considered a complex one in a society founded on the Social Contract, in a society concerned with the need to juxtapose individual rights with the good of the whole, with the maintenance of public order. The conflict clearly was

⁹⁹CHOLVY and HILAIRE, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine: 1800/1880*, pp. 40, 221-2; Jean-Michel LENIAUD, "Le statut juridique des congrégations religieuses vers 1840," in *Lacordaire, son pays, ses amis et la liberté des ordres religieux*, ed. Guy Bedouelle (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991), p. 22.

between the two principles of religious liberty and the preservation of public order: Lacordaire and other liberal Catholics were on one side, the government was on the other. The latter exercised a constant surveillance over religious communities because of its concern about vows, the freedom of association, and the disposal of property. International religious congregations were especially suspect because the state believed that they threatened the principle of national sovereignty that had come from the Revolution. Sometimes government surveillance was rather relaxed; sometimes it was quite strict.¹⁰⁰

The French state had been uncomfortable with monks and friars since the eighteenth century because they were considered pariahs on society; it was also uneasy about teaching communities because of their tremendous influence on the minds of youth. Nevertheless, religious associations of male teachers had some governmental recognition as establishments of "social utility" whose character as charitable associations was emphasized over that of religious congregation. By the 1830's, even religious communities that had no governmental recognition were generally admitted to have a certain right to exist and were in fact licit, given article 5 of the Charter of 1830. Unauthorized congregations

¹⁰⁰LENIAUD, "Le statut juridique des congrégations religieuses vers 1840," pp. 22-3, 27-8, 35.

had no right to exist as groups because in the France of the Social Contract, the right to exist truly belonged only to individuals and to the state. Groups were considered to be unable to constitute "moral persons" distinct from the individuals who were part of them. However, French jurisprudence admitted that such groups were licit societies "in fact," thus validating acts made by the individual members, in their own names or between them to an individual title. This allowed religious to acquire property during the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹

6. Some representative examples of new/restored religious communities

Two of the key figures in the revival of religious life in nineteenth century France were Saint Eugène de Mazenod, founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and Dom Prosper Guéranger, restorer of the Order of St. Benedict in France. The first was associated with one of the most dynamic new communities of the century; the other was associated with one of the most influential monasteries of the pre-Vatican II period. Although a generation apart in age, the two men were very representative of French Catholics of the nineteenth

¹⁰¹LENIAUD, "Le statut juridique des congrégations religieuses vers 1840," pp. 31-35.

century. They were both Romantic to the core. Although very much concerned for the present, they looked to the past for models for their religious communities. Reflecting the astounding growth of ultramontanist sentiment among Catholics of their time, they looked to the pope as protector of their religious communities. They both staunchly believed that the revitalization of Catholicism in France was the key to the renewal of their nation.

7. *Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Eugène de Mazenod)*

Eugène de Mazenod was born of noble parentage at Aix in Provence on August 1, 1782. His family enjoyed the benefits of upperclass society. The youngster had an impulsive and explosive personality yet was also uncommonly generous for his age. The coming of the Revolution while he was still a child was particularly unsettling for Eugène and his family, forcing them into exile in several Italian cities. The strain of constant separation eventually resulted in the divorce of his parents. The thought of priesthood first occurred to him during these difficult years. Plans to regain his aristocratic rank deflected notions of becoming a priest for a while.¹⁰²

¹⁰²Jean LEFLON, *De Mazenod: 1782-1864, Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate*, trans. Francis D. Flanagan ([Washington]: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, [1994]), pp. 6,

In a meditation from his 1814 retreat, de Mazenod wrote about a profound and unforgettable conversion experience that he had undergone years earlier during a Good Friday liturgy. In true Romantic style, he described it this way: " Puis-je oublier ces larmes amères que la vue de la Croix fit couler de mes yeux un Vendredi Saint. Ah! elles partaient du coeur, rien ne put en arrêter le cours, elles étaient trop abondantes pour qu'il ne fut possible de les cacher à ceux qui comme moi assistaient à cette touchante cérémonie".¹⁰³ This young Romantic, who wrote in 1808 that "it is almost inconceivable how sensitive my heart is," entered the national Seminary of St. Sulpice that year against his mother's opposition. His five years there were ones of great spiritual growth. De Mazenod was ordained priest on Dec. 21, 1811.¹⁰⁴

De Mazenod returned to his home diocese of Aix in 1812. Although still a loyal son of the Ancien Régime and an opponent of Napoleon, he was greatly committed to the need to evangelize the poor. He preached his first sermon to humble people in the patois of the region. He soon felt called to devote his entire life to such preaching among the poor of

18-19, 20-7, 30,32,46,50.

¹⁰³LEFLON, *De Mazenod*, p. 53; Bx Eugène DE MAZENOD, *Ecrits Spirituels (1812-1856)*, Collection *Ecrits Oblats 1,15* (Rome, Postulation générale O.M.I., 1991), pp. 99-100.

¹⁰⁴LEFLON, *De Mazenod*, pp. 55-7,62, 82.

southern France. In order to effectively carry out this ministry, he came to the realization that he needed others to assist him in this anticipated preaching ministry. Deciding to form a missionary society, he initially found it difficult to attract recruits. Nevertheless, de Mazenod and two others were able to begin their life in community on Jan. 25, 1816. Initial plans were that the society would remain a diocesan institute under the Bishop of Aix. This community of diocesan priests was called the Missionaries of Provence.¹⁰⁵

De Mazenod first tried to get governmental approval for his community a few months after its founding. He tried again in 1817 but was told that it would require an act of Parliament. Nevertheless, he was unofficially told to continue the work that he and his companions had begun.¹⁰⁶ By 1818, de Mazenod was convinced that his community should become an explicitly religious congregation bound by vows and not confined to one diocese. Like other founders of his time, he looked to an earlier institute, the Redemptorists, as the model for his own. His congregation would devote itself to the evangelization of country parishes and the personal sanctification of its members. Initial opposition to vows among his community members soon disappeared. The community

¹⁰⁵LEFLON, *De Mazenod*, pp. 84, 86-9, 95-9.

¹⁰⁶LEFLON, *De Mazenod*, pp. 105-6.

grew slowly. Its missionary preaching in rural areas became a powerful model for evangelization in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷

Like other nineteenth century founders and refounders of religious communities, de Mazenod viewed "restoration" of religious life to a significant extent as a "return to the past." It has already been mentioned that he looked to the Redemptorists as the model for his congregation. He very much lamented the loss of the religious orders at the end of the eighteenth century to the point of writing that "the end of this association [his missionary congregation] is to make up for, insofar as possible, the marvelous institutions that have disappeared since the French Revolution..." He went on to write that the "missionaries will try to bring back in their own lives the piety and fervor of these holy religious orders destroyed in France by the Revolution."¹⁰⁸ Early in his priesthood, de Mazenod showed a love for the monastic life, going so far as to adhere to a quasi-monastic horarium. Regarding a possible monastic vocation, he wrote: "Je ne répugnerais pas à passer ainsi le reste de mes jours,"; he also wrote that he thought about "m'enterrer dans quelque

¹⁰⁷LEFLON, *De Mazenod*, pp. 112, 121-6.

¹⁰⁸Eugène DE MAZENOD, *La Règle de saint Eugène de Mazenod-The Rule of Saint Eugene de Mazenod*, translated and edited by Maurice Lesage, O.M.I. (Ottawa: St. Paul University), p. 19.

communauté bien régulière d'un Ordre que j'ai toujours aimé."¹⁰⁹

De Mazenod's love of the regular life and its horaria, of discipline, and of strict observance would manifest itself in the structure which he established for his missionary congregation. Like the Dominican Jandel who will be discussed in chapter five, he believed that strict observance of a rule leads to sanctity. Although he was not seeking to restore or to found a religious order, he truly believed that a regular life was the necessary basis for a fruitful and effective preaching ministry for his missionaries. His congregation, through its regular life of prayer and discipline, would "suppléer aux ordres détruits sous la Révolution française."¹¹⁰ He reaffirmed his desire to have the Oblates "make up" for the loss of the orders at the hands of the revolutionaries at an 1843 chapter when he said that he had been especially affected by the disappearance of the communal Divine Office and thus, obliged his missionaries, including the novices, to continue this practice. In his vision for the Oblates, de Mazenod saw them as restoring the piety, fervor, and virtues that he, in

¹⁰⁹Fabio CIARDI, ed., *Dictionnaire des valeurs oblates; ouvrage collectif des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée sous la direction de Fabio Ciardi, omi* (Rome: Association d'Études et de Recherches Oblates, 1996), pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁰CIARDI, *Dictionnaire des valeurs oblates*, pp. 7-8.

the Romantic style of so many nineteenth century religious, attributed to the orders of the pre-Revolution period.¹¹¹

De Mazenod had been initially hesitant about seeking papal approval of his congregation because he felt unworthy to be a founder but began the frustrating process toward it in 1825. It was given on February 17, 1826. Deeply devoted to Mary as were so many founders of nineteenth century communities, he asked that the official name of the institute reflect his desire to place it under Our Lady's protection. The new religious community became canonically known as the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.¹¹² De Mazenod remained superior general of the congregation but went on to become Bishop of Marseilles, renowned for his compassion and holiness. Today, he is a canonized saint of the church. His congregation went on to become one of the truly outstanding missionary communities in the church during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹¹³

8. *Benedictines (Prosper Guéranger)*

The revival of the Benedictines in France came later than that of most pre-Revolution religious communities.

¹¹¹CIARDI, *Dictionnaire des valeurs oblates*, pp. 376-77.

¹¹²LEFLON, *De Mazenod*, pp. 132-8.

¹¹³LEFLON, *De Mazenod*, p. 201.

Unsuccessful efforts toward that end had been made since 1814.¹¹⁴ Success was finally achieved through the efforts of Prosper Guéranger who was born in Sablé on April 4, 1805. His father was a pious schoolmaster who early on imparted a keen liturgical sense to his son who dreamed of a clerical vocation from his very early years. A born Romantic, he read Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme* when he was only eight or nine. It appealed to his emotions rather than his intellect, presenting Christianity as beautiful and desirable. Prosper also developed a great love for the Middle Ages.¹¹⁵ He entered minor seminary in 1822 where he became acquainted with the works of Lamennais who would be a significant influence on him. His interest in monastic life developed during major seminary. During this period of his life, he read avidly in the Fathers of the church and in ancient church history in general.¹¹⁶

Guéranger was ordained to the priesthood on Oct. 7, 1827 in Tours. Already secretary to the bishop, he soon became a canon of the cathedral. Both his ultramontanism and his

¹¹⁴Paul Delatte, *Dom Guéranger, Abbé de Solesmes*, tome premier, huitième édition (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, [1909]), pp. 77-8.

¹¹⁵Cuthbert JOHNSON, *Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875), A Liturgical Theologian: An Introduction to his Liturgical Writings and Work* (Roma: [Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo], 1984), pp. 16-17, 55; DELATTE, *Dom Guéranger*, pp. 13, 15.

¹¹⁶DELATTE, *Dom Guéranger*, pp. 18-20, 22-4.

liturgical sense were stimulated when he was given permission by his bishop to use the Roman texts for Mass and Office. He first became acquainted with the Roman missal early in his priesthood when he became substitute chaplain for a community of Religious of the Sacred Heart which used it for the celebration of Mass. Guéranger described this experience which had such profound consequences for himself and the liturgical life of the church in these words:

"je me sentis bientôt pénétré par la grandeur et la majesté du style employé dans ce missel. L'emploi de l'Écriture sainte, si grave, si plein d'autorité, le parfum d'antiquité qui émane de ce livre, tout m'entraîna à comprendre que je venais de découvrir dans ce missel l'oeuvre vivante de cette antiquité pour laquelle je m'étais passionné. Le ton des missels modernes me parut alors dépourvu d'autorité et d'onction, sentant l'oeuvre d'un siècle et d'un pays, en même temps que le travail personnel."¹¹⁷

These words reflect both his Romantic love of the past and his understanding of restoration as a "return to the past" which encompassed the Patristic Era, the Middle Ages, and the Council of Trent.

In his spare time, Guéranger assiduously devoted himself to study. Before long, he was dreaming about restoring the Benedictines in France. He saw monastic life as a center of prayer, a lever of action for the church, and a place offering the opportunity for the leisure of study. After preaching in

¹¹⁷DELATTE, *Dom Guéranger*, pp. 30-33.

his hometown in 1831, he decided to buy the nearby priory at Solesmes in order to renovate it for use by a future Benedictine community. He was not innovative: he simply wanted to take up again the Benedictine life which had formerly been lived there. Guéranger recruited several other clerics for his project. After some difficulties, the local bishop gave his approval.¹¹⁸

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that Guéranger's attraction to monasticism went back to his major seminary days. This first attraction to monastic life, as specifically lived in the Benedictine Order, was destined to have a profound impact on the later plans which he developed for the Solesmes community. Like de Mazenod and most founders and refounders of religious communities in the nineteenth century, Guéranger looked to the past for models on which to base his restoration project. He looked back, of course, to St. Benedict and his Rule; he looked especially to the early monasteries which revived Western civilization during the Dark Ages. Guéranger hoped that a contemporary Benedictine monasticism would perform a similar feat in nineteenth century France.¹¹⁹

The proximate model for Guéranger's project of

¹¹⁸DELATTE, *Dom Guéranger*, pp. 81, 83, 98-9.

¹¹⁹R. W. FRANKLIN, *Nineteenth Century Churches* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), p.397.

restoration was not Benedictine life as lived in the fifth century or the "Dark Ages" but Benedictine life as lived in the seventeenth century in France by the Congregation of St. Maur. In spite of his deep love for the Age of the Fathers, for the Middle Ages, and even for the Roman centralization in liturgy and other matters that emerged from the sixteenth century Council of Trent, Guéranger was most profoundly influenced by the seventeenth century Maurists in his ideas concerning a restored Benedictine monasticism in France. This influence went back to the beginning of his attraction to monastic life in 1824. Even as a seminarian, he was already familiar with the historical work of these scholarly sons of St. Benedict. He wrote: "Ma première atteinte de vocation pour l'ordre de Saint Benoît me vint cette année, au plus tard la suivante." He went on to say that "je sentais un besoin ardent d'étudier la science ecclésiastique dans les sources, les beaux in-folios publiés par les Pères de la Congrégation de saint Maur me faisaient venir l'eau à la bouche."¹²⁰ Who were these Maurists?

The Maurists, members of the Congregation of St. Maur, were a reform movement in the Benedictine Order which originated in France in the early seventeenth century. Reflecting the French Catholic religious revival of that

¹²⁰JOHNSON, *Prosper Guéranger*, p. 69, n.80.

period, they emphasized a strict observance of the Rule of St. Benedict and of the religious vows. They were deeply committed to implementing the reforms of the Council of Trent. Early in their history (1631), they made the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés in Paris their headquarters for study and administration as well as their spiritual and political center. The Congregation of St. Maur, established under royal patronage, grew rapidly in its early years; eventually, it included 180 Benedictine monasteries in France. St. Germain remained a kind of "motherhouse" for the Congregation and a model of regular observance and study. The Maurist community there edited secular and religious texts, many of a high quality. They also wrote history which reflected their support of the established order. Their greatest period of scholarly achievement was the late seventeenth century; Jean Mabillon was the greatest of this period's Maurist scholars. St. Germain continued to be an outstanding center of intellectual life until the French Revolution and its suppression of all religious life, including the Congregation of St. Maur.¹²¹

Inspired by the example of the Congregation of St. Maur, Guéranger envisioned Solesmes as the answer to "the necessity

¹²¹Maarten ULTEE, *The Abbey of St. Germain des Prés in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 3, 8, 20, 59, 156, 163, 188, illustrations, n.6.

of the regeneration of the study of Catholic traditions." Like the earlier congregation, Solesmes was to exist for "the sanctification of souls and the development of the ecclesiastical sciences." Like the monks of St. Maur, the monks of Solesmes were to see their primary work not as manual labor but as serious study and scholarship.¹²²

Despite Guéranger's emphasis on study, he saw the Divine Office as central to the life of Solesmes. Along with study, prayer and religious observance were very much emphasized in the new monastic community. At first, the brethren were only allowed to make annual vows. The regulations for the community were approved by the bishop in December, 1832. Guéranger was finally able to purchase the Solesmes priory at the same time. He did not seek state authorization for his community because he saw that as humiliating the church; he had little concern for the political repercussions. On July 11, 1833, monastic life began again at Solesmes, a former Maurist priory. Papal approval was given to the monastery on July 14, 1837. The Constitutions were approved, Solesmes became a Benedictine congregation with the right to other houses, and Guéranger became its first abbot. In 1836, the French minister of education reinforced the link between the Maurists and Solesmes when he awarded the latter a contract to

¹²²FRANKLIN, *Nineteenth Century Churches*, p. 400; JOHNSON, *Prosper Guéranger*, p. 131, n.72.

continue the *Gallia christiana*, an important project begun by the Congregation of St. Maur to edit and publish the earliest historical documents of the French dioceses. Dom Guéranger, friend and supporter of Lacordaire and his Dominican project, went on, in spite of difficulties to become one of the most influential leaders of the church in nineteenth century France, especially in matters liturgical. Solesmes became a model for Benedictine life and a center for liturgical renewal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹²³

Despite obstacles of every kind, religious communities grew and flourished in nineteenth century France. Revival of religious life was realized to a degree that could not have been imagined at the beginning of the century. This could not have been possible without the vision, courage, and sacrifice of those like de Mazenod, Guéranger, and Lacordaire who founded and refounded religious institutes during that turbulent century.

¹²³DELATTE, *Dom Guéranger*, pp. 100-3, 105, 111, 115, 175, 201, 205; FRANKLIN, *Nineteenth Century Churches*, p. 403; Prosper GUÉRANGER, *Le sens chrétien de l'histoire* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1945), p. 6.

CHAPTER THREE

LACORDAIRE, CHILD OF HIS AGE, MAN OF HIS TIME

Lacordaire was born on May 12, 1802 at Recey in the Burgundy region of France.¹²⁴ In that year, the new concordat made it possible throughout the country to worship again in churches that had been closed by the Revolution. That was also the year in which Chateaubriand ignited the Romantic revival of Catholicism in France with the publication of his *Génie du Christianisme*. Lacordaire's family included bourgeois professionals on both sides: physicians on his father's side and lawyers on his mother's side. His father, a deeply committed country doctor, died when young Henri was four, leaving Mme. Lacordaire with four young sons. She moved to the vicinity of Dijon in order to be closer to her relatives and to provide better educational opportunities for her children. Henri was a very religious child who, during play time, liked to pretend that he was saying Mass. Even then, his extraordinary ability as a preacher was present in latent form. When he was about seven, he began classical studies at school. This was also about the time that he had

¹²⁴FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 29.

a profound religious experience which he never forgot. It took place when he made his first confession to a kindly old priest at the church of St. Michel in Dijon. The gentle holiness of the priest and the sacred atmosphere of the church stirred up emotions in him that had no parallel for the rest of his life.¹²⁵

Lacordaire began a difficult period of his young life when, at age ten, he entered the lycée at Dijon. He was badly teased by the other students and consequently, developed the habit of going off to a hiding place where in true Romantic fashion, he shed "religious tears before God." In the suffering which he endured because of these schoolboy bullies, he identified with the suffering of Christ on the cross. The manner in which the young Lacordaire embraced suffering was very consistent with the Romantic temperament. Reflecting on this period years later, he wrote this: "brought up by a strong and courageous Christian mother, the sentiment of religion had passed from her bosom into mine like a sweet and virgin milk. Suffering transformed that precious liquor into the manly blood which made me still a child, a kind of martyr." For the rest of his life, he always believed that he first had to undergo suffering in one form or another before he could experience the joy of being lifted up by God. This

¹²⁵CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 3-9.

was a key theme in his life.¹²⁶

1. *Liberal Romantic education*

Lacordaire made his first communion at age twelve. He described this as his last religious joy. A period of religious darkness soon took hold of the youth. He came under the influence of a very bright young teacher at the lycée named Ferdinand Delahaye who took a special interest in the diligent and good student's education. To the end of his life, Lacordaire looked back with gratitude upon this kind and caring teacher who gave him a love of literature and of personal honor. Delahaye was naturally virtuous. However, he had no interest in religion and communicated this disinterest to Henri. Before long, the youth had lost his religious faith. Henri became "furiously impious" although this found expression more in attitude than in a loss of moral practices. Looking back at this early education, Lacordaire complained that it concentrated too much on the pagan world of antiquity rather than on the modern world created by Christianity. It ignored Christian civilization and the great figures, many of them saints, which it had produced. He believed that French history had not been dealt with adequately and as a consequence, "we were Frenchmen by birth without being so at

¹²⁶CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 9-10.

heart." Lacordaire's views reflected the Romantic emphasis upon history and upon a passionate love of one's nation.¹²⁷

Lacordaire wrote in the newspaper *L'Avenir* (January 31, 1831) that when he left the lycée at seventeen, " Dieu avait péri dans mon âme, et la liberté ne régnait pas dans ma patrie (a reference to the Bourbon restoration)."¹²⁸ He entered law school at Dijon and became avidly involved in his studies and in discussions about the great questions of the day concerning politics, literature, philosophy and religion. He proved to be an eloquent student in both his oral and written presentations.¹²⁹ Given his extraordinary abilities in matters legal, especially in public speaking, breaking his paternal tradition of medicine for his maternal one seemed a natural choice. His views on liberty were also an important factor in steering him toward a legal career. He was instinctively committed to liberty. The liberalism of this young Romantic was based more on sentiment than reason yet the latter certainly had its influence. Not being an anarchist, Lacordaire knew that liberty has its limits. Those who were

¹²⁷Pierre BARON, O.P., *La jeunesse de Lacordaire* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1961), 47-48; Chocarne, *The inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 10-17.

¹²⁸Jean PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire ou le baptême du romantisme* (Paris: Wesmael-Charlier, 1966), p. 17.

¹²⁹CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 12-17.

familiar with the then recent history of France were well aware that liberty degenerates into license if not tempered by authority.¹³⁰

In his early law school career, Henri was very much influenced by Rousseau. The latter's "Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard" became his guide in matters religious; the *Contrat Social* became his guide in matters political. Like Rousseau, Lacordaire held to a deistic understanding of God and viewed religion, especially Christianity, as socially useful. Irreligion threatened the good of society. He read and admired Chateaubriand who was also influenced by Rousseau's view of religion as socially beneficial. Lamennais, shared this prevalent view about the symbiotic relationship between religion, especially Catholicism, and society.¹³¹ Lacordaire began to deviate from Rousseau's ideas on government as a result of his involvement with a conservative and monarchist group of students called the Société d'Études de Dijon. This society had been founded in 1821 by some young men who strongly supported the Restoration. They studied topics in philosophy, history, civil law, and literature; they wrote about these and regularly held conferences in which they shared their views with the group.

¹³⁰BARON, *La jeunesse de Lacordaire*, pp. 48-50,73.

¹³¹BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 55-57.

Although tolerant of various opinions, most of the group's members were both royalist and Catholic. Unlike many of their young contemporaries, they did not look to the eighteenth century Enlightenment as their definitive authority. They were much more likely to defend the opinions of de Bonald, de Maistre, and Lamennais than those of the Encyclopédistes which they believed had been ruinous to society. Members of the Société d'Études were very much a part of their times yet were unafraid to espouse unpopular positions. They loved their own age yet they felt that much could be learned by studying the philosophies, literature, history, and politics of the past. In 1822, influenced by the Société d'Études, the twenty-two year old Lacordaire publicly renounced the views in the *Contrat Social*. Like most of the group's members who were monarchists but favored the charter of 1814 rather than a return to the Ancien Régime, he committed himself to government based on a constitutional monarchy because it alone seemed capable of maintaining a balance between authority and liberty.¹³² Lacordaire became increasingly more open to Catholicism through his association with the largely Catholic Société d'Études although he did not

¹³²BARON, *La jeunesse de Lacordaire*, p. 73; BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 55-56; P. Baron, O.P., "Lacordaire," *Catholicisme*, VI, (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1947-); FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 41-49.

convert at this point in his life. He began to spend more of his time seriously wrestling with questions of religious faith.¹³³

After finishing law school at Dijon , Lacordaire, at his ambitious mother's prompting, went to Paris in 1822 in order to serve a kind of apprenticeship in preparation for admission to the bar. His two years there were very difficult yet very crucial ones in his life. Although they were promising and successful years in terms of his legal career, Lacordaire experienced deep personal anguish during this period. He wrote that "they are predicting for me a beautiful future and yet I am often very tired of life...each day I feel more and more that all is vanity. I cannot leave my heart in this heap of mud."¹³⁴ His temperament during this period was stereotypically Romantic. Like all Romantics, Lacordaire had a certain love of melancholy.¹³⁵ He suffered from the "sickness of his century", from the Romantic need for religious belief coupled with the frustration that arose from the inability to believe. The malaise which resulted was rampant among young people during this time. Lacordaire sought avidly for a reason to live yet despaired of ever

¹³³FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 49-50.

¹³⁴CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, p. 37.

¹³⁵CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, p. 36.

finding one. He dreamed of friendship yet found that he shared neither the religious nor the political opinions of those whom he was interested in befriending. Unable to believe in a God with whom he could have a personal relationship yet deprived of human friendship, he saw his solitary life as a vast and barren desert. He wrote that: "mon grand tourment était de ne pas trouver en moi la raison de mon existence et de ne pas la reconnaître en Dieu."¹³⁶

During this moment of crisis, Lacordaire visited churches in search of God. Remembering the religious faith of his law school friends, he longed to believe. He wrote that: "j'ai l'âme extrêmement religieuse...l'esprit très-incrédule; mais comme il est dans la nature de l'esprit de se laisser subjugué par l'âme, il est probable qu'un jour je serai chrétien."¹³⁷ Meanwhile, Lacordaire continued to be torn by two realities that were always at war within him, that periodically created great unhappiness in him: a "cold" reason in opposition to an ardent imagination. By early 1824, it seemed apparent that his Romantic imagination, his religious soul, was winning the victory over his cold reason, his

¹³⁶Henri LACORDAIRE, O.P., *Le Testament du P. Lacordaire*, pp. 39-41; Baron, "Lacordaire;" CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 23-24; PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire*, pp. 13, 19, 27.

¹³⁷PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire*, pp. 25,30; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 55.

unbelieving mind. He wrote to a friend at this time: "Would you believe it, I am every day growing more and more a Christian."¹³⁸

2. Conversion

Lacordaire's conversion to Catholic Christianity was completed by the end of February or the beginning of March, 1824. He gave no precise date for his conversion, saying that it was not sudden but was the end of a long and painful journey.¹³⁹ Like his childhood experience of God during the time of his persecution by bullies, God's revelation to Lacordaire through his conversion came by way of suffering.¹⁴⁰ The process lasted about eighteen months.¹⁴¹ He never lost the sublime memory of his conversion: on his deathbed, he said that: "il m'est impossible de dire à quel jour, à quelle heure et comment ma foi perdue dix années reparut dans mon coeur comme un flambeau qui n'était pas éteint."¹⁴² Lacordaire attributed his conversion neither to reading books nor to any

¹³⁸CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 25,37.

¹³⁹PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire*, pp. 32-33; LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 41-43.

¹⁴⁰LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 40-41; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, p. 24.

¹⁴¹FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 60.

¹⁴²LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, p. 41.

person but said that he had found his faith in his soul; that this faith was more a memory than a new gift, and that it was a consequence of principles that he had acquired earlier. In a famous quote reminiscent of Chateaubriand's description of his own conversion, Lacordaire wrote: "je me rappelle avoir lu un soir l'évangile de saint Matthieu et d'avoir pleuré: quand on pleure, on croit bientôt."¹⁴³ His was a true Romantic conversion, a conversion that penetrated him directly to the heart and allowed him to love God with all that heart.¹⁴⁴ He allowed his heart to guide him rather than to rely solely on reason; he simply knew that: "je suis bien changé, et je t'assure que je ne sais pas comment cela s'est fait."¹⁴⁵

Echoing Chateaubriand, Lacordaire said that the only logical causes of his conversion were the historical and social evidence of Christianity. He wrote: "I have reached Catholic belief through social belief". Christianity is the means by which society will be brought to its true perfection. He believed that society could only recover its balance, its true laws, its progress, and its perfection through the Catholic Church. For Lacordaire, to be committed to the renovation of the social order is to be committed to

¹⁴³FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 60-61.

¹⁴⁴PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire*, p. 36.

¹⁴⁵FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 61.

Catholicism.¹⁴⁶

Lacordaire's friends were stunned by what appeared to them to be the suddenness of his conversion. Some thought that he had been influenced by the clergy or even that he was trying to achieve some social gain. They were not fully aware of his Romantic restlessness, of his prolonged search for religious faith. This is not surprising considering that Lacordaire, even in the most public stages of his life, remained an incredibly private man who would make major decisions without consulting even his best friends. His entire life was characterized by his love of his independence. That which his friends and associates saw as the "suddenness" of Lacordaire's decisions seems to reveal more an inability to share his process of questioning with others than impulsiveness.¹⁴⁷ His decisions were arrived at through a process of long maturation of his ideas accompanied by private reflection, followed by sudden "flashes of light"; he then quickly executed that which he had concluded to be appropriate. Lacordaire followed this pattern in making the truly momentous decisions of his life.¹⁴⁸

Lacordaire further startled his family, including his

¹⁴⁶CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁴⁷BARON, *La jeunesse*, p. 93; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁸BARON, *La jeunesse*, p. 143.

devout mother, and his friends, by announcing, almost immediately after his conversion, that he had decided to abandon the legal profession and to study for the priesthood.¹⁴⁹ From the moment in which he realized that he had been converted, Lacordaire believed that he was already a priest at heart.¹⁵⁰ He believed that the priesthood represented the summit of Christianity. For him, the priesthood also had tremendous social and political significance and importance because of the crucial, even central role, that the Catholic Church was destined to play in the renewal of society. Lacordaire also was deeply attracted to the solitude which, along with service of God and society, he saw as integral to the priesthood.¹⁵¹

3. *Liberal and Catholic*

On May 12, 1824, Lacordaire entered the Sulpician seminary at Issy near Paris. He was twenty-three years old. He finally felt happy. In true Romantic fashion, Lacordaire delighted in the rural setting, in the beauty of nature, in the vernal awakening of the trees and forests which harmonized

¹⁴⁹LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 43-45.

¹⁵⁰CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, p. 24.

¹⁵¹BARON, *La jeunesse*, pp. 120-121.

with his own spiritual awakening.¹⁵² However, this honeymoon was destined to be short-lived. It quickly became evident that the Sulpicians did not understand Lacordaire. He was not typical of nineteenth century French Catholic seminarians or clergy who tended to be pious men who were satisfied with the routine duties of their office, were relatively ignorant concerning the great questions of the day, and were poorly educated in theoretical matters. The Sulpicians resented his singularity as well as his liberal opinions.¹⁵³ In regard to his liberal political views, Lacordaire emphasized that he had not tried to conceal the fact that he remained a liberal in spite of becoming a Catholic even though this political stance separated him from almost all of his contemporary French Catholic clergy and laity.¹⁵⁴ He was adamantly convinced that political liberalism was totally compatible with Catholic faith. As he did before his religious conversion, Lacordaire continued to believe in the principles of 1789: liberty, equality, fraternity. He believed that the roots of liberty

¹⁵²LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, p. 45; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 40, 50-51.

¹⁵³LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, 46-47; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, p. 60.

¹⁵⁴LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 47-48; REARDON, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 107.

are found in the gospel.¹⁵⁵ As a Catholic, Lacordaire was staunchly committed to the reconciliation of his religious faith and political liberalism. After his conversion, his liberal views affected his understanding of both church and state, i.e. it was as necessary for the church to be free of external control as it was for the state to be thus. The church became an integral part of his liberalism, a necessary aspect of the truly free society.¹⁵⁶

Lacordaire's interest in religious life was first manifested during his seminary years. He became fascinated with the ideal of religious poverty lived in community and seriously considered joining the Jesuits, the only order that had been restored in post-Revolution France at that time. Lacordaire also had aspirations for the missions.¹⁵⁷ Chateaubriand, an earlier Catholic Romantic, had explored the wilderness of North America. Lacordaire also wanted to venture into that wilderness in order to bring souls to Christ. He was also interested in going to the United States because he was impressed with the spirit of that young nation's Constitution which was so profoundly marked by love

¹⁵⁵PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire*, pp. 41,44.

¹⁵⁶BARON, *La jeunesse*, pp. 118-120.

¹⁵⁷CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, p. 62.

of liberty.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the Sulpicians' uncomfortableness with Lacordaire resulted in his not being advanced for ordination as quickly as would have been expected. Permission for his ordination was finally given only after Archbishop de Quélen of Paris had become aware of Lacordaire's interest in joining the Jesuits. The archbishop ordained him to the priesthood on Sept. 22, 1827. Three days later, Lacordaire wrote: "ce que je voulais faire est fait." Shortly after ordination, he was offered an important position in Rome that almost certainly would have led to the episcopacy but he declined it, indicating that he wanted to be a simple priest and to join a religious community.¹⁵⁹

Lacordaire's desire for a humble first priestly assignment was granted: he was appointed chaplain to a convent of Visitation nuns. His duties involved giving religious instruction to the convent schoolgirls and hearing their confessions. He used the ample free time that this chaplaincy allowed to study theology and to develop his ideas for an apology for the Catholic faith that he planned to write.

¹⁵⁸LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 51,53; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 97-104; PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire*, p. 61.

¹⁵⁹BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 61-62; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 66-67; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 83, 566-567.

Lacordaire believed that it was his mission to write such a book; it should be the focus on which all his abilities would converge. In 1828, he was also appointed assistant chaplain to the Collège Henri-Quatre, a position that was better suited to his capacities. He continued the life of study and solitude that he had pursued in his previous assignment. The need for a period of contemplation was an integral aspect of Lacordaire's personality. Although much of his life would be spent in intense activity, he would always find it necessary to retreat for a time into silence, prayer, and study.¹⁶⁰

As the 1820's drew to a close, Lacordaire began increasingly to experience what might be called "Romantic restlessness". Feeling rather isolated, he was ready to move from solitude to engagement in the world. He wanted to pursue his previously mentioned dream of becoming a missionary in the United States. His Romantic nature resonated to the heroic and courageous idea of sacrificing his beloved France in order to go off into the "wilds" of North America. Lacordaire also wanted to see how the Catholic Church functioned in an environment in which it was totally separated from the state, in which it was a free entity in a free country. It became highly probable that Lacordaire's dream of going to the New World would be realized when Bishop Dubois of New York, a

¹⁶⁰CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 69-74.

Frenchman as were many of the Catholic clergy in the United States who had fled the turmoil of revolutionary France, offered him the posts of vicar general of his diocese and rector of the diocesan seminary in New York.¹⁶¹

4. *Involvement with Lamennais*

In the spring of 1830, Lacordaire visited Lamennais, the outstanding Catholic Romantic and liberal, for the first time at LaChesnaie, the latter's family home in Brittany. For five years, he had resisted Lamennais' efforts to involve him in his plans for the renewal of church and state in France. Although Lacordaire regarded him as "the only great man of the French Church", he had reservations about involving himself in Lamennais' little community of young Catholic intellectuals at LaChesnaie because of questions about Lamennais' philosophy, political absolutism, and theological orthodoxy. In a letter to a friend, Prosper Lorain, written on June 7, 1825, Lacordaire said that he disliked both the "false" philosophical system of Lamennais and his "exaggerated" political opinions as well as his rather authoritarian control over his disciples at LaChesnaie and that he wanted no

¹⁶¹LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 51, 53; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 74-78; BARON, *La jeunesse de Lacordaire*, p. 233; Romanus CESSARIO, O.P., "Lacordaire et les États-Unis," in *Lacordaire, son pays, ses amis et la liberté des ordres religieux en France*, ed. Guy Bedouelle (Paris: Cerf, 1991), p. 337.

association with him.¹⁶² Lamennais was an ultramontanist because he believed that the rights of the church could be protected best by a strong papacy rather than by any secular government whether liberal or conservative. He also believed that Catholicism under the pope's leadership was the central factor in Europe's existence. He expressed this clearly in these words: "without the pope, there can be no church, without the church no Christianity, and without Christianity, no religion and no society, which implies that the life of the European nations is solely dependent on the power of the papacy." Lacordaire eventually concluded that the church could flourish best in a situation in which it was totally separate from the state, totally free from outside interference. Despite reservations about Lamennais, Lacordaire joined his community at LaChesnaie and later became deeply involved with him in the struggle for liberty.¹⁶³

5. *"Dieu et Liberté": attempt to reconcile church and modern*

¹⁶²BARON, *La jeunesse de Lacordaire*, p. 198; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 74-75; A.-M. CARRÉ, "Lamennais et Lacordaire," *Revue des deux mondes* 8 (20) (Aout 1982): 288-289.

¹⁶³LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 51-54; Baron, "La Mennais;" Paul JOHNSON, *A History of Christianity* (New York, Atheneum, 1976), pp. 385-386; Alec R. VIDLER, *Prophecy and Papacy: A Study of Lamennais, the Church and the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, [1954]), p. 112.

society

In the Revolution of 1830, the Bourbon dynasty was once again removed from power. A constitutional monarchy, which Lacordaire had advocated from his law school days, was established in France. Unfortunately, a significant degree of anti-clericalism accompanied the "July Revolution" because of the French Catholic Church's support for the fallen Restoration government. However, Catholic liberals, though few in numbers, sought alliance with their secular liberal counterparts in the cause of "liberty" which became the great Romantic rallying cry in 1830. During this time of political and cultural upheaval, a number of Romantic artists and intellectuals who previously had been Catholic and royalist, particularly because of the conservative Chateaubriand's influence, believed that it was impossible to reconcile their political liberalism with a church which they now viewed as hopelessly reactionary. Lacordaire, totally convinced that Catholicism and political liberalism were reconcilable, gave up his plans for going to America and, along with Lamennais and the Count Charles de Montalembert, decided to fight for the cause of "God and Liberty" through a nationally distributed daily Catholic journal called *L'Avenir*. It was published from October, 1830 to November, 1831. The paper would make a significant contribution to the weakening of

anti-Catholic sentiment in France.¹⁶⁴

From its inception, *L'Avenir* attempted to claim all the privileges of liberty for the Catholic Church in France while rejecting none of the burdens of liberty. In the inaugural issue (October 16, 1830), Lamennais sought an alliance of both Catholic and secular liberals, indeed of all his compatriots who were committed to liberty. He asked for the support of all those who believed in freedom of religion, freedom of education which he saw as an essential component of religious liberty, freedom of the press, and those civil and political liberties compatible with the maintenance of an ordered society. *L'Avenir* was not anti-government: it advocated respect for the French constitution and for laws that were just yet wanted both church and state to be free from mutual interference. Lamennais, in his column of October 18, 1830, told his fellow Catholics that freedom from the state was necessary in order to save the church, that the state must have no say in choosing bishops or in matters regarding worship, Catholic education, or church discipline. For Catholics, the pope alone was to be regarded as the ultimate authority in all spiritual or religious matters. Lamennais went on to argue that the Catholic clergy must refuse the

¹⁶⁴BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 65-66; Linda KELLY, *The Young Romantics: Paris 1827-37* (London, The Bodley Head, [1976]), pp. 9-10.

annual salary that the state gave to them in compensation for the loss of church property during the Revolution because such money served as a means of civil control over the religious realm. Lacordaire, in the journal's columns, was especially vehement in his opposition to the Budget of Public Worship. He believed that priests should exert their independence from any government control by refusing any state salaries. As one might expect, the paper received much clerical opposition for this opinion yet it inspired other clerics to fight for their rights. The demand for freedom of association was especially concerned with the question of religious communities which were forbidden because of fear of any secret societies. *L'Avenir* also opposed arbitrary power and privilege, the monopoly of the university, and the revival of laws against monastic orders. In spite of *L'Avenir's* political liberalism and very strong rhetoric, the editors always expressed perfect submission to the authority of the pope and a willingness to abide by his decisions. Related to this, they consistently took a strong stance against Gallicanism.¹⁶⁵

L'Avenir reflected the Romantic absorption in the cause of liberty. Through the columns of the young Count

¹⁶⁵Félicité Robert de LAMENNAIS, *Oeuvres Complètes de La Mennais*, Tome X (Paris: Paul Daubrée et Cailleux, Éditeurs, 1836-1837), pp. 131-139, 154-159; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 80-86; REARDON, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 184.

Montalembert, it extended its concern for liberty to include oppressed peoples all over Europe. This was very typical of Romanticism. Montalembert had hastened from a stay in Ireland, where he supported the liberation struggle of the Catholics there, in order to support the cause of liberty in his own country. He also supported the Poles, Belgians and Italians in their various attempts at liberation.¹⁶⁶ Montalembert and Lacordaire became life-long close friends although the latter was never quite comfortable with Lamennais. Lacordaire did not care for Lamennais' inability to see any of his ideas as something other than absolute truth. Lamennais was temperamentally unable to veer from a course on which he had set out, no matter what the price. Unlike him, Lacordaire was not only open to reason but even more, he was always open to the promptings of the heart as expressed well by his words: "do not let us chain our hearts to our ideas."¹⁶⁷

The *Agence générale pour la défense de la liberté religieuse* was founded in December of 1830 in order to bolster

¹⁶⁶CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 89-90; H. ROLLET, "Montalembert," *Catholicisme*, IX, (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1947-); Louis Le GUILLOU, *Lacordaire-Montalembert Correspondance Inédite: 1830-1861*, Textes réunis, classés et annotés par Louis Le Guillou; révision du texte et des notes par André Duval (Paris: Cerf, 1989), pp. 58-59, 63.

¹⁶⁷CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 94-95; LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 52-53.

L'Avenir's liberal program. Lamennais was the organization's president; Lacordaire and Montalembert were on its governing council. The *Agence* was committed to the protection of religious freedom. It opposed any government acts which interfered with the church's freedom to exercise its ministry. It supported the enforcement of the right guaranteed by law to the French people to unite for prayer, for study, or for the purpose of obtaining any legitimate end that was equally advantageous to "religion, to the poor, and to civilization." It also supported the right to establish a common meeting place for all local associations that had been founded in order to provide a mutual assurance against attacks on religious freedom. The *Agence* fought against government policies which restricted freedom of education and supported the right to establish non-government sponsored schools at the primary, secondary, and higher levels. Lacordaire had a special interest in education which he pursued throughout his life. Concern about education was common among Romantics, reflecting the influence of the author of *Émile*, Rousseau, who was greatly interested in the proper instruction of the young. In July, 1830, Lacordaire had co-signed a letter that had been written by school chaplains to support freedom of teaching and education. He soon went a step further: in May of the next year, along with Montalembert and a colleague, de Coux he

opened a school in defiance of the law protecting the government's monopoly on education. They were arrested for disobeying this law. However, Lacordaire and Montalembert, even though they lost the case, had a tremendous influence on swaying the public to their side through their eloquent courtroom presentations.¹⁶⁸

6. *Papal condemnation of "Dieu et Liberté" program*

L'Avenir found itself under constant attacks from all sides. Other journals of every type criticized it. Secular liberals distrusted it as did the generally conservative Catholic population. The government opposed *L'Avenir* as did most of the episcopacy. The French bishops especially disliked the paper because of its opposition to the Budget of Worship. Priests, theology professors, and seminarians who supported *L'Avenir* and its cause of "Dieu et liberté" were often penalized by their bishops. Under this episcopal assault, *L'Avenir* began to experience a drastic loss of subscriptions. Faced with dwindling economic resources and widespread criticism, Lacordaire concluded that the best way for *L'Avenir* to vindicate its name and to demonstrate its loyalty to the church was through a direct appeal to the pope.

¹⁶⁸PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire*, p. 72; Louis LE GUILLOU, *Lacordaire-Montalembert Correspondance Inédite: 1830-1861*, pp. 48f., 61f.; BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 63.

Accordingly, Lacordaire, Lamennais, and Montalembert journeyed to Rome as "pilgrims of liberty", arriving in late December of 1831. They were received coldly at the Vatican. Lacordaire, realizing that the cause was doomed, returned to France with the resolve to continue the defense of the cause of liberty for the rest of his life albeit in a spirit of total loyalty to Rome.¹⁶⁹ Pope Gregory XVI finally responded to the "pilgrims of liberty" through his encyclical of August 15, 1832, *Mirari vos*. In the covering letter to the copy of the encyclical that had been sent to Lamennais, Cardinal Pacca, dean of the Sacred College, referred to the pope's distress over the liberal opinions that had been expressed in *L'Avenir*, especially those concerning freedom of worship and of the press. In the encyclical itself, Gregory XVI condemned freedom of conscience as arising from the "shameful font of indifferentism"; he also condemned freedom of publication because of the erroneous opinions which it permits to be disseminated. The pope also rejected the notion of separation of church and state proposed by the "shameless lovers of liberty." *Mirari vos*, while neither condemning *L'Avenir* nor its editors by name, constituted a clear and decisive blow to the journal and to Catholic liberalism and its attempt at

¹⁶⁹CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 100-107;
FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 185-186;
BARON, "Lacordaire."

reconciling "Dieu et la liberté." The editors of *L'Avenir* promptly submitted to the papal condemnation. The journal ceased publication permanently. Lamennais and his colleagues also dissolved the *Agence générale pour la défense de la liberté religieuse*. He suspected that the pope had yielded to strong pressure on the part of certain governments. Actually, Czar Nicholas I and Prince Metternich had influenced the process insofar as they had urged Gregory XVI to strongly condemn *L'Avenir* and its liberal program.¹⁷⁰

Lacordaire accepted the papal condemnation without bitterness. Consistent with his established pattern of alternating between periods of engagement in the world and solitude, he disengaged himself from activism after the *L'Avenir* affair and went back to his Visitation convent chaplaincy. In Romantic fashion typical of Rousseau and Chateaubriand, Lacordaire found immense joy in returning to a life of relative solitude. His soul, heart, and indeed his entire being were revitalized in the atmosphere of silence and peace that characterized his asylum. He was able to experience God, his friends, and the world through a new and refreshing perspective. Lacordaire resumed the theological

¹⁷⁰VIDLER, *Prophecy and Papacy*, pp. 198, 212-215; Claudia CARLEN, I.H.M., *The Papal Encyclicals: 1740-1878* ([]: McGrath Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 238-239; BARON, "La Mennais."; SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 119.

reading that he had pursued in the years immediately prior to his involvement with Lamennais. Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas became his favorite authors during this period; he so admired the latter that he called the former the "St. Thomas of primitive times". During this time of solitude, Lacordaire first came into contact with someone who would have a considerable influence on the rest of his life. His old friend Montalembert suggested to him in January of 1833 that he meet Mme. Swetchine. Like Lacordaire and Montalembert, she was interested in the liberal Catholic reconciliation of "God and liberty". She was destined to provide Lacordaire with the mixture of friendship and authority which seemed so important for him.¹⁷¹

Sophie Soymonov Swetchine was a Russian-born convert to Catholicism from Orthodoxy. She was pious as well as cultivated and intelligent. An extremely well-read woman who commanded a number of languages, both modern and classical, she functioned easily in the worlds of aristocracy, diplomacy, and the "grande bourgeoisie." Her open and inviting personality attracted many aristocrats and intellectuals, especially of the Catholic faith, to her famous salon in

¹⁷¹CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 121-129; LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 73-75; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 237.

Paris. Archbishop de Quelen of Paris, the future Bishop of Orléans Dupanloup, the Jesuits de Ravignan and Gagarine, and Guéranger were among the clerical regulars at Swetchine's influential salon. Lay visitors included Montalembert, Augustin Cochin, Armand de Melun, L. Bautain, Swetchine's future editor and biographer Count A. de Falloux, as well as Alexis de Tocqueville, A. de Broglie and Lamartine. From the beginning, the attraction between Swetchine and Lacordaire was mutual. Their relationship was modeled on that of a mother and son. Lacordaire often sought her counsel in order to make important decisions. On her advice, he distanced himself from Lamennais: she urged him to publicly condemn Lamennais' views in *Considérations sur le système philosophique de M. de Lamennais*. Swetchine was always concerned that Lacordaire put himself in the most advantageous situation in which to serve the Catholic Church which was the great love of her life. The friendship between Lacordaire and Swetchine was a very noble one; it was also a very spiritual one. It encouraged the development of the talents that enabled Lacordaire to continue to make remarkable contributions to the life of the church throughout his life. Her deeply spiritual relationship with Lacordaire was a significant part of the reason that Swetchine has been called "l'une des femmes qui

ont le plus influé sur la vie chrétienne française."¹⁷²

7. *Beginning of brilliant preaching career*

In late 1833, Frédéric Ozanam, an important figure in the history of liberal Catholicism in nineteenth century France, suggested to Lacordaire that the latter give a series of religious lectures or conferences to the pupils of the Collège Stanislas in Paris. Ozanam was concerned about rescuing the young students from the spiritual desert in which so many of them found themselves. The idea excited Lacordaire who had a special love of young people and a deep concern for their spiritual welfare. When Abbé Buquet, prefect of studies for the Collège Stanislas, made the offer to him, Lacordaire enthusiastically accepted it. He gave the first of these conferences on January 19, 1834 to an audience comprised almost exclusively of young students. By the time of the last conference on April 13th of the same year, the students had been almost entirely displaced by their elders. The conferences proved to be enormously successful and confirmed

¹⁷²LEDOS, *Lacordaire*, pp. 99-107; LACORDAIRE, *La liberté de la parole évangélique*, p. 527; LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 73-75; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 237-240, 261-262, 270-272; le Comte de FALLOUX, ed., *Correspondance du R.P. Lacordaire et de Mme. Swetchine*, publiée par le Cte. de Falloux de l'Académie Française, cinquième édition (Paris: Didier et Cie, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1868), 1-7; Georges MATHON, "Swetchine," *Catholicisme*, XIV, (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1947-).

Lacordaire's immense preaching prowess. As word of the talks spread, the audience came to include such Romantic giants as Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Hugo along with numerous lesser known people. The conferences were the result of years of solitary study during which Lacordaire sketched out the plan of an apology demonstrating the divine origin of Catholicism by its salutary effects on society. In his talks, Lacordaire departed from the customary French style of preaching based on seventeenth century rules. He presented brilliant discourses on religious themes which profoundly moved his listeners because of his eloquence, enthusiasm, and obvious faith. He impressed them as not merely a priest but also as poet, philosopher, compatriot, and contemporary man speaking to people of his own time in a dynamic manner about a religion that they had thought of as moribund. Lacordaire's listeners initially admired his oratorical talents; in the end, they also respected his religious doctrines.¹⁷³

Despite the popular success of the conferences at the Collège Stanislas, Lacordaire had his critics. These were mostly conservative clergymen who resented his departure from the traditional preaching style as well as his "suspect" themes, e.g. the centrality of liberty which he presented as

¹⁷³BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 71-73; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 134-136; LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 77-78.

a tree planted by God himself in the Garden of Eden. These churchmen, who refused to accept any alliance between Catholicism and the liberal governments of their day, condemned Lacordaire as a fanatical republican who was likely to lead his young and impressionable listeners astray. They denounced him to the archbishop of Paris as a preacher of novelties rather than of Christian orthodoxy. They won their case: Lacordaire's conferences were suspended.¹⁷⁴

8. *Conférences de Notre Dame*

Lacordaire's enemies did not realize that they were actually setting the stage for a bigger and even more successful performance by the gifted orator. M. Affre, a canon of Notre Dame Cathedral, pleaded with Archbishop de Quélen to reverse his suspension of Lacordaire's conferences. The archbishop eventually agreed with Affre and went so far as to ask Lacordaire to resume his talks not at the collège but at Notre Dame. About a year before this development, Catholic students had met with the archbishop and asked him to allow Lacordaire to give a series of lectures concerned with some of the issues preoccupying young Catholics such as the relationship between church and society. De Quélen refused to accept their choice of speaker. However, he later reversed

¹⁷⁴CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, p. 136.

himself and asked Lacordaire to "take possession" of the cathedral pulpit on March 8, 1835. Lacordaire's enemies were hoping that such a formidable task would expose his inadequacies, thus destroying his preaching career. He agreed to accept the Notre Dame challenge after prayer and consultation with Mme. Swetchine. The first of the Notre Dame conferences, destined to become one of the most important religious events of the nineteenth century, was given at the beginning of Lent in 1835 to a packed cathedral. His listeners were captivated by this child of the age which he, like them, loved so vigorously. In this aspect, he was so untypical of the French Catholic clerics of his time. The congregation knew that he understood the unbelief that gripped so many of them because he himself had grappled with it in his youth. Sharing their Romanticism, he spoke to them about such Romantic topics as poetry, self-sacrifice, honor, patriotism, and of course, liberty. Lacordaire's preaching was characterized by its concern with the social problems of the age and its presentation of Christianity as the only adequate solution to these problems. So effectively did Lacordaire present the case for Christian faith that the archbishop of Paris called him "the new prophet."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, pp. 136-153; LE GUILLOU, *Lacordaire-Montalembert Correspondance Inédite*, pp. 294-296; LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 81-83.

Lacordaire presented thirteen conferences at Notre Dame from 1835-1836. The first seven treated the church in a general way while the last six were more specifically concerned with the teachings of the church. For Lacordaire, the "unique object" of his conferences was to prepare his compatriots for the reception of religious faith which had been weakened in France during the previous sixty years. He believed that a religious revival in his country would occur if the faith were presented in affective language, i.e. in language which appealed to the heart, in language that was gentle, compassionate, healing, intelligent and relevant to its listeners. This was the kind of language that appealed to the Romantic early nineteenth century. It is important to speak to people about faith in language that is specific to them because everyone naturally bears the imprint of a particular race and time. This is true even though, through the church, the believer transcends all time and truly belongs only to eternity.¹⁷⁶

Lacordaire viewed the universality of the church, its "Catholic" character, as evidence of its truth. Such a universal church is necessary for instruction of peoples in all times and places. There is no salvation in time and in

¹⁷⁶Henri LACORDAIRE, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris. Tome Premier, Années 1835-1836-1843* (Paris: Librairie Ch. Poussielgue, 1893), pp. 5-6, 18, 19.

eternity outside of this church. Lacordaire believed that the church is the highest authority in a society. Only the church possesses reason and love in their fullness and thus can function as an immovable edifice for humanity; the goodness of the human person requires a salvation that comes only from the highest reason and the strongest love. The Catholic Church alone can teach the entire human race with moral certitude, i.e. infallibly. The papacy is integral to this and clearly illustrates the "divinity" of the church. Despite the church's exalted and even foundational role in society, it respects and supports the rights of all in the society, both sovereigns and peoples. In turn, Lacordaire wanted the church in a modern society like France to have its own rights and its liberty to persuade people of its truth respected and supported.¹⁷⁷

Lacordaire's Notre Dame conferences of 1836 were devoted to Christian doctrine in terms of substance and forms in which doctrine is expressed. He identified the sources of doctrine as tradition, Scripture, reason, and nature. Lacordaire defined tradition as continuity of the past in the future. Without tradition, life would lack unity. It ties together past, present and future. Lacordaire considered tradition to be a more reliable anchor than individual reason. Tradition

¹⁷⁷LACORDAIRE, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, pp. 13, 24, 28, 39, 45, 67-70, 117, 138.

enables us to reach our ultimate good. Tradition makes religion possible. The sacred scriptures found in various world religions emerge from tradition. In fact, these sacred texts are tradition themselves. Lacordaire said that societies which do not interpret their futures in the form of tradition found in sacred scriptures are destined to disappear. Among these sacred texts, he mentioned the Koran, the Vedas, and the Bible. He believed that the Bible developed tradition to a greater extent than did other sacred writings. Lacordaire argued that the society created by the Christian scriptures is superior to those created by other sacred texts. This superiority is not only expressed in religion but in culture in general. Thus, Lacordaire, believed that Western Christian civilization is superior to all others because of its foundation in that highest form of tradition known as the Bible. He saw the Bible as a prophetic book which linked the Jewish past with the church.¹⁷⁸

Consistent with his Romanticism, Lacordaire did not see the relationship between human reason and Christian doctrine as a wholly positive one. At its best, i.e. in its mature state, reason is in agreement with revelation and leads us to recognize and worship God; it functions as a source of doctrine. However, in its immature and undeveloped state,

¹⁷⁸LACORDAIRE, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, pp. 142, 162-163, 177, 184-185, 188-192.

revelation has no more powerful adversary than reason which seeks to deny God. Lacordaire said that only the Christian possesses reason in its mature state. Only the Christian has full use of reason because the church alone provides the context for its total development.¹⁷⁹

In discussing faith as a source of the church's teachings, Lacordaire was wholly positive in contrast to his ambivalent assessment of reason. He believed that faith alone can penetrate the substance of things; faith alone can lead one beyond what is merely phenomenal and superficial. The powerfulness of religion derives from the fact that its mission, through faith, is to lead us to the substance of reality itself, God. Lacordaire told an age which was becomingly increasingly fascinated by science that it is possible to go beyond the merely phenomenal only through faith. He emphasized faith as gift, as grace. He called it an act of intelligence and of will which is acquired through love and through prayer. Lacordaire told an audience which included many sceptics that doubt was not an insurmountable obstacle to faith but was indeed the beginning of faith.¹⁸⁰

As he ended his Notre Dame conferences, Lacordaire said that he hoped that he had inspired his congregation to at

¹⁷⁹LACORDAIRE, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, p. 214.

¹⁸⁰LACORDAIRE, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, p. 234-250.

least think about turning to God in prayer and renewing their relationship with him not simply in mind but also in heart. Ever the Romantic, Lacordaire believed that true conversion could never be simply an intellectual affair but required the movement of the heart toward God.¹⁸¹

Lacordaire's conferences had been so successful with listeners who had been deeply affected by Romanticism because, in his own life, he had taken so seriously the contemporary Romantic maxim: "one must be of one's time."¹⁸² His Notre Dame talks had been a kind of baptism of Romanticism. In them, he sought to reunite church and society insofar as each would realize its interdependence with the other. Through these talks, he was successful in recapturing the attention of a generation that was obsessed with the question of liberty. Lacordaire opened up the possibility of a marriage between the church and liberty.¹⁸³

9. *Retreat to Rome*

At the completion of his 1836 conferences, Lacordaire resigned from his Notre Dame preaching position. As had happened several times earlier in his life, he withdrew from

¹⁸¹LACORDAIRE, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, p. 252.

¹⁸²PEYRE, *What is Romanticism?*, p. 88.

¹⁸³PEYRADE, *La conversion de Lacordaire*, pp.111-113.

a very active life in order to encounter God and himself in the solitude that he loved so well.¹⁸⁴ His monumental decision to restore the Dominican Order to France, his greatest and most enduring contribution to the French church, was made during this moment of retreat.

¹⁸⁴LACORDAIRE, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, p. 252;
LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, p. 86.

CHAPTER FOUR

LACORDAIRE'S RESTORATION OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER IN FRANCE

Lacordaire received the habit of the Order of Preachers on April 9, 1839, an act which marked the beginning of his novitiate and of his life as a Dominican friar.¹⁸⁵ This event also signaled the beginning of the restoration of the Dominican Order in post-revolutionary France. What had occurred in the three years since Lacordaire's resignation of his preaching position at Notre Dame Cathedral in 1836 to account for his momentous decision which was destined to have such a profound effect on the life of the Dominican Order, on religious life in general, and on the Catholic Church in France and throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

Lacordaire's decision to become a Dominican friar was consistent with the great passion of his life as he expressed it shortly before his death in 1861, i.e. his desire to devote himself " servir[le monde] sous l'oeil de Dieu avec l'évangile

¹⁸⁵FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 474-479.

et la croix de son fils."¹⁸⁶ In a letter to his close friend, Mme. Swetchine, Lacordaire wrote that his involvement with the Order of Preachers was his way of responding to " un besoin d'une époque où la jeunesse n'apprend nulle part sa religion et a néanmoins un désir immense de la connaître."¹⁸⁷ He was a deeply committed apostle who took seriously Christ's command to evangelize all peoples. He was also a profound Romantic who truly loved and understood the age in which he lived: "j'ose dire que j'ai reçu de Dieu la grâce d'entendre ce siècle que j'ai tant aimé."¹⁸⁸ Lacordaire once wrote that "the supreme art is to know the force of the time in which one lives."¹⁸⁹ He knew well that "force", one that was Romantic to the core. He believed that the gospel had to be presented in a manner that would appeal to the Romantic heart of nineteenth century France: it had to be portrayed as integral to the full realization of the human person and of society. Lacordaire first attempted to do this in his Conferences at Notre Dame.

¹⁸⁶Henri LACORDAIRE, *Essay on the Re-Establishment in France of the Order of Preachers*, ed. Simon Tugwell, O.P. (Chicago: Parable (USA), 1983), p. vii; LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, p. 43.

¹⁸⁷Le Comte de FALLOUX, *Correspondance du R.P. Lacordaire et de Mme. Swetchine*, publiée par le Cte. de Falloux de l'Académie Française, cinquième édition (Paris: Didier et Cie, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1868), p. 152; LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. vii.

¹⁸⁸Le Comte de FALLOUX, *Correspondance*, p. 102.

¹⁸⁹LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. ix.

He later became convinced that this awesome task could most effectively be done through his personal affiliation with the Order of Preachers and through his re-establishment of the Dominican Order in his beloved France.

1. *Late 1830's context*

After resigning his preaching chair at Notre Dame in 1836, Lacordaire retreated to Rome. He sought a respite from his active life as a preacher in France in order to make an intensive study of theology. He had come to believe that the kind of attacks that his enemies had made against him would be less likely to recur if he acquired solid theological credentials in Rome, the center of Catholic orthodoxy. He intended to write a theological work that would present Catholic doctrine in a manner that was simultaneously relevant to the age yet indisputably orthodox. Lacordaire believed that he would need to spend several years in Rome in order to complete this task before returning to France.¹⁹⁰ From the beginning of his stay in Rome, he was hospitably received by the Jesuits who were very impressed with him. The feeling seemed mutual; he even chose a Jesuit confessor.¹⁹¹ His close relationship with the Society of Jesus led to rumors that he

¹⁹⁰FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 368.

¹⁹¹FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 370-1.

was going to join it. Such rumors had no apparent foundation. At that time (1836), Lacordaire had shown no serious interest in religious life. In fact, he wrote to Montalembert on August 15, 1836: "je n'ai pas la vocation religieuse."¹⁹² However, the warm welcome given Lacordaire by the Roman Jesuits, who were his first real contact with religious life although he had considered joining the Society while a seminarian, could only have helped to make him more favorably disposed toward religious life.¹⁹³

The Jesuits were not the only ones in Rome who were impressed with Lacordaire. The highly respected ultramontanist French cleric was enthusiastically received by powerful church officials, including Pope Gregory XVI. The pope was greatly appreciative of Lacordaire's endeavors in defense of the Catholic faith. Lamennais, having exchanged his ultramontanism for hatred of the papacy, was preparing to publish *Affaires de Rome*, a work attacking the Holy See. Lacordaire was encouraged by Roman authorities, including Pope Gregory XVI, to respond to his former collaborator's new book. As he so often did on important matters, he consulted with Mme. Swetchine about his plan to write "Lettre sur le Saint-

¹⁹²LE GUILLOU, *Lacordaire-Montalembert Correspondance Inédite*, p. 322.

¹⁹³Henri-Dominique NOBLE, *La vocation dominicaine du P. Lacordaire* (Paris: Librairie P. Lethielleux, 1914), p. 21.

Siège" in which he would defend the Holy See without directly mentioning Lamennais. His original plan was to address it to the young, to the type of audience that had so enthusiastically followed his conferences at Notre Dame. The letter, which in its final version was addressed to a friend rather than to the young, was completed in late 1836.¹⁹⁴

Archbishop de Quélen was opposed to the publication of Lacordaire's "Lettre sur le Saint-Siège." The two clerics wrote a number of letters back and forth to each other about the matter but made no progress in overcoming the impasse. Lacordaire's sympathies were ultramontanist while de Quélen's were Gallican. As a result, the two men seemed incapable of appreciating the perspective of each other on various political and ecclesiastical issues. Lacordaire, weary of the quarrel with his archbishop, decided that it would be best for him to stay in Rome for a long time.¹⁹⁵

Lacordaire expressed an unabashed ultramontanist position in "Lettre sur le Saint-Siège". Reflecting a Romantic understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, he contended that in the modern war between faith and reason, between Catholic power and rationalist power, the pope stands tall as the faithful personification of justice. The pope

¹⁹⁴FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 371-80.

¹⁹⁵FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 380-99.

cannot side with a particular monarch or people even though they be Catholic but must be concerned with the wider context of the struggle between Catholicism and rationalism. Specifically, Lacordaire was defending Gregory XVI against Lamennais' criticism of the pope for his brief to the Polish bishops exhorting them to resign themselves to accepting the Russian takeover of Warsaw as an expression of God's will.¹⁹⁶ Archbishop de Quélen saw Lacordaire's argument as an unacceptable defense of the aggressive actions of a non-Catholic nation against a Catholic one; it was an unacceptable concession to the Russian government. Consequently, the archbishop was opposed to the publication of Lacordaire's "Lettre" in Paris even though the pope himself supported such. Nevertheless, Lacordaire eventually decided to publish it. Upon its publication on January 1, 1838, it was very well received.¹⁹⁷

Ever the Romantic, Lacordaire's melancholia and loneliness returned despite his popularity in ecclesiastical circles. He rejected an offer to serve as chaplain at the French church in Rome; his thoughts turned increasingly to France where he felt that his real mission lay. Nevertheless,

¹⁹⁶Henri-Dominique LACORDAIRE, *Mélanges*, tome ix, *Oeuvres du R.P. Henri-Dominique Lacordaire de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs*, (Paris: Librairie Poussielgue Frères, 1886), pp. 7-56.

¹⁹⁷FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 382-404, 416-17, 423.

Lacordaire was not yet ready to resume his preaching position at the cathedral in Paris. He made plans to begin preaching at Metz during Advent of 1837 but had to postpone them because of a cholera epidemic in Rome. During this period, Lacordaire wrote a conciliatory letter to Archbishop de Quélen but the latter's reply indicated that the rift between them was far from healed.¹⁹⁸

2. *Emergence of Lacordaire's Dominican vocation*

Evidence indicates that Lacordaire began to seriously think about a religious vocation in 1837. In a reply to a letter written by him in early 1837, Mme. Swetchine indicated that she believed that Lacordaire was revealing to her his plan to become a religious. On May 4, 1837, he began a retreat with the Jesuits at Saint Eusebius in Rome.¹⁹⁹ Whenever Lacordaire spoke of the genesis of his Dominican vocation, he always traced it to this 1837 retreat. He reaffirmed this view for the final time in his *Testament* which was written on his deathbed.²⁰⁰ However, Lacordaire's actions

¹⁹⁸FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 411-15.

¹⁹⁹Le Comte de Falloux, *Correspondance du R.P. Lacordaire et de Madame Swetchine*, pp. 116-17; Foisset, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, pp. 441-2.

²⁰⁰LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 88-102; Noble, *La vocation dominicaine du P. Lacordaire*, pp. 57-8, 102.

after his retreat indicate that his mind was not definitively made up about becoming a religious in general or a Dominican in particular. He took no immediate steps towards religious life, choosing instead to make plans for preaching conferences at Metz in 1838. He seemed to have considered becoming involved full-time in preaching conferences in France.²⁰¹ The biographer of Dom Guéranger, who re-established the Benedictine Order in France, wrote that Lacordaire first got the idea of becoming a Dominican and of restoring the Order to France from Guéranger in August, 1837. According to this account, Guéranger discussed with Lacordaire the possibility of restoring the Dominicans. Lacordaire liked the idea and volunteered himself for the task, asking to study the constitutions of the Order.²⁰² Without denying the importance of Guéranger's role in his decision to become a Dominican, Lacordaire's own account of the origins of his Dominican vocation as being laid in the May, 1837, retreat rather than in a later conversation with Guéranger is the more plausible version. It must be admitted that Lacordaire was not acquainted with any Dominicans and knew very little about their Order before he looked at the Dominican constitutions one evening in August, 1837. His delay in making a definitive

²⁰¹LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 97-8; NOBLE, *La vocation dominicaine du P. Lacordaire*, p. 41.

²⁰²DELATTE, *Dom Guéranger*, Tome Premier, pp. 206-7.

decision about entering the Order and in actually joining was understandable considering the immensity of the task of restoration and the general lack of encouragement from his friends for the project: this was the explanation that he offered in his *Testament*.²⁰³

Partly but not wholly because of difficulties with his Ordinary, Archbishop de Quélen, Lacordaire felt alienated from the ecclesiastical establishment. He also was not attracted to parochial ministry even though it was the primary apostolate of the diocesan presbyterate to which he belonged. During his stay in Rome, Lacordaire became convinced that the most important task that he could perform for the church would be to help in reviving religious orders in France. However, he tended to shy away from so formidable a task. On the personal level, Lacordaire, a true child of an age which stressed liberty rather than obedience, was terrified by the thought of submitting himself to the rule of life of a religious community.²⁰⁴

Lacordaire, in his final *Testament*, wrote that his years in Rome in the late 1830's had given him a love and appreciation of religious life. The history and influence of

²⁰³BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 80-1.

²⁰⁴LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 88-95; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, pp. 443-6.

religious life, symbolized by the numerous abbeys and religious houses of every kind, permeated the Holy City as well as Lacordaire's thoughts. He went on retreat in May, 1837 in an effort to sort out his own future in relation to a religious vocation.²⁰⁵ According to his own testimony, Lacordaire decided, at least tentatively, to become a religious, specifically a Dominican, at that time. As previously mentioned, he took no specific steps towards joining the Order for some time after his retreat. He questioned many things about Dominican life such as the relevance of the various material austerities to the practical needs of the preaching and missionary work for which the Order was founded. However, he was very impressed with the Dominican Constitutions, especially with the latitude and flexibility which they permitted. He decided to immerse himself in studying the lives of St. Dominic and other saints of the Order of Preachers. Lacordaire believed that the only way that one could truly appreciate a religious order is through knowledge of its legislation, its spirit, its history, and its grace.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 87-98; NOBLE, *La vocation dominicaine*, pp. 192-9.

²⁰⁶LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, pp. 94-7; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, pp. 448-9.

3. *Importance of preaching and democratic structures in Lacordaire's decision*

During this process of final decision-making, Lacordaire preached conferences in Metz in early 1838 that were very well received.²⁰⁷ He made his final and definitive decision to join the Dominicans at the end of a retreat under Guéranger at the Abbey of Solesmes in June, 1838. He read all the literature, not very extensive, that the abbey possessed on the Order of Preachers. He then left for Rome with the firm intention of joining the Dominicans and re-establishing the Order in France at the appropriate moment which God would designate. Throughout his life, Lacordaire had intensely relied on divine providence when critical decisions had to be made. One of his earliest biographers, Père Chocarne, wrote that "divine providence, amid the thousand accidents of his life, seemed to lead him on as by the hand." Lacordaire himself said that God gives us exactly what we need "by a series of events whose connection is only discovered by lapse of time." He went on to say that "from whatever point of view I look at my past life, I find every portion of it converging towards my present position." He confidently surrendered himself to God whose "ever beneficent hand keeps me more and more in adoration and

²⁰⁷LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, p. 97; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, pp. 422-5.

gratitude." At no point in Lacordaire's life was he more convinced of God's providence than in his decision to embark upon the Dominican project. Consequently, he felt that he had never approached anything with greater calm and maturity than he did this decision. As a gifted preacher, Lacordaire was naturally attracted to the Order of Preachers. He believed that this Order could best revive the ministry of apostolic preaching in France because of its great heritage and because of its freedom from the kinds of internal political and ecclesiastical quarrels occurring among the French bishops which served to hamper the evangelization of the nation. Lacordaire was also attracted to the Order because of his liberalism: he liked the democratic processes governing elections in the Order.²⁰⁸ When he wrote to Montalembert on July 1, 1838, about his decision to become a Dominican and to re-establish the Order in France, Lacordaire referred to this decision as "le dénouement de ma vie, le résultat de tout ce que Dieu a fait antérieurement pour moi, le secret de ses grâces, de mes épreuves et de mes expériences."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, pp. 449-53; NOBLE, *La vocation dominicaine*, pp. 119, 131; CHOCARNE, *The Inner Life of the Père Lacordaire*, p. 347; MONTALEMBERT, *Memoir of the Abbé Lacordaire* (London: Richard Bentley, 1863), p. 192.

²⁰⁹LE GUILLOU, *Lacordaire-Montalembert Correspondance Inédite*, p. 392.

When Lacordaire arrived in Rome after his decisive stay at Solesmes, he found great support from everyone, including Pope Gregory XVI and the Jesuits, for his plan to become a Dominican and restore the Order in France. The aged Père Ancarani, the reform-minded Master General of the Order of Preachers, was especially excited about Lacordaire's intention of re-establishing French Dominicanism. He immediately offered Lacordaire the use of Santa Sabina, general headquarters of the Order and erstwhile residence of St. Dominic, as the site of the first novitiate for the future French Dominicans. Ancarani also proposed that after profession of vows in the Order, the new Dominicans would return to France where Lacordaire would be given carte blanche to establish novitiates, religious houses, and colleges for educating the young. On September 15, 1838, Lacordaire returned to France with a certificate of encouragement for his project from the Master General. It seemed that the restoration of the Order of Preachers in France was off to a good start.²¹⁰

4. *Mémoire pour le rétablissement en France de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs (1839)*

Lacordaire wanted to find five young men who would serve

²¹⁰FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, pp. 456-8.

as the nucleus of the restored Order of Preachers in France. He placed an ad in the French Catholic newspaper, *L'Univers*, in search of these candidates. In general, Lacordaire's Dominican project was favorably received in France although Gallican bishops like de Quélen were somewhat wary of it. Nevertheless, mindful of the power of public opinion, he became convinced that he should present his proposal for Dominican restoration in writing and submit it to the French people as a whole for their approval. For this purpose, he composed his famous and eloquent *Mémoire pour le rétablissement en France des Frères Prêcheurs*. He dedicated it to his beloved country, France.²¹¹ Lacordaire's *Mémoire* was very indicative of his Romanticism for reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter but also because the document's very existence reflected an important characteristic of post-1830 Romanticism: its "idolization of the people" who were believed to exemplify such characteristics as courage, faith, love, and readiness for self-sacrifice.²¹² Lacordaire believed that the French people, who were basically good, fair-minded, and committed to liberty, would support his proposal against any government

²¹¹LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, p. 103; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 460-3.

²¹²SCHENK, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, pp. 198-9.

attempt to restrict freedom of religion and of association. It is important to note that the *Mémoire* marked the first time in post-revolutionary French history that a Catholic priest had situated himself in the midst of his fellow citizens by appealing to them as both a loyal son of Rome and an advocate of the highest principles emanating from the Revolution of 1789.²¹³

The *Mémoire* appeared on March 3, 1839. Of the four thousand copies which were printed, fifteen hundred were distributed gratis. Copies were sent to government ministers, peers of France, deputies, bishops, various other officials, and journalists. The remaining copies sold well. Lacordaire hoped that it would be read widely and quickly. Journalists did not comment on the document, a fact that pleased him. He believed that journalistic silence would allow the people to form their own opinions without undue influence.²¹⁴

In his introduction to the *Mémoire* which he had especially written for "my country," Lacordaire emphasized the theme of liberty, so dear to the French Revolution and to the Romantic movement. He wrote as one who "comes to ask you for his share in the liberties which you have won and for which he

²¹³FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 464.

²¹⁴LACORDAIRE, *Testament*, p. 104; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 465, 488.

himself has paid the price;" he went on to write that he hoped that France would kneel before Jesus Christ whom he called the "liberator of the world."²¹⁵ In the first chapter of the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire, in a most unusual move for a nineteenth century French Catholic priest, called himself a "passionate friend of this century" who was asking for the freedom to follow the light of his faith by living a religious life in common with likeminded people. This freedom of association was extended to any group of unbelievers in France but forbidden to Catholic religious. In this famous essay, Lacordaire was not appealing to Parliament or to any court of justice to clarify or change the ambiguous legal situation regarding religious communities but to what he called the "queen of the world": public opinion.²¹⁶

In spite of their dubious legal status, religious communities such as the Jesuits and the Benedictines did exist in France in 1839. Lacordaire believed that their existence should be ratified by the public opinion of the freedom-loving French people. In the *Mémoire*, he emphasized that joining a religious community in nineteenth France was the result of a free choice. Lacordaire did not deny that there were abuses in religious life during the pre-revolutionary period when

²¹⁵LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 1.

²¹⁶LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 2-3.

religious vows were legally recognized by the state. The purpose of anti-religious community legislation was to eliminate these abuses. These laws were no longer necessary in an era when religious, lacking any civil status for their vocation, were bound together only by conscience. Religious were living the highest expression of liberty: through vows that were free in origin and execution, they made laws for themselves and obeyed them willingly, without any kind of external coercion. Lacordaire saw it as a "mockery" to deprive citizens, in the name of liberty, of their freedom and rights. He questioned how a country which regarded elections and laws as the basis of society could disapprove of religious communities whose lives were governed by broadly-based elections and which provided thorough legal protection. He also questioned how a nation so dominated by the ideal of universal fraternity could disapprove of religious communities whose members consecrated themselves to poverty and chastity because of their boundless love of equality with "ordinary" men and women. In the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire eloquently challenged the French people, in regard to religious communities, to live up to the Romantic and revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity which he and they claimed to believe in so strongly. If they were not willing to do this, then "what is the good of shedding so much blood

over the rights of man?"²¹⁷

Towards the end of the first chapter of the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire referred to the central role that Catholicism had played in French history. Catholicism was the historic religion of France which could never be completely separated from the life of the nation. Lacordaire also believed that France was historically the land of liberty. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church and liberty, both so deeply rooted in French consciousness, had been at odds since the Revolution. In post-revolutionary France, the two were seen as mutually contradictory. Lacordaire did not believe that the Catholics were responsible for this negative attitude about the relationship between Catholicism and liberty. The contrary was true. After all, the lower clergy had played a decisive role in destroying the Old Regime when they aligned themselves with the Third Estate in 1789. In the Concordat of 1801, the Catholic Church had ratified the loss of its privileged position in France. In 1830, Lamennais, called by Lacordaire "the most remarkable priest produced by the French church since Bossuet," led the struggle to reconcile "God and liberty." Lacordaire, as has been seen earlier, also played a leading role in this attempt in 1830 to heal the division between the Catholic religion and the ideal of liberty. His

²¹⁷LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 3-10.

Romanticism is clearly expressed in his concern for a Catholic Church which is integrally linked to liberty.²¹⁸

In the second chapter of the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire turned his attention to presenting the case for the Order of Preachers specifically. He showed the historic connection between France and the development of religious life by pointing out that most founders of great religious orders, even if not French, came to France to lay the foundations of their orders, e.g. Saints Bruno, Norbert, and Ignatius Loyola. St. Dominic himself was an example of this. Lacordaire characterized the Dominican Order not as a monastic order but as an association of friars combining the strength of life in community with the freedom to engage in outside activity, i.e. the apostolate with personal sanctification. The primary objective of the Dominican Order, the salvation of souls, is principally pursued through teaching. He looked to St. Dominic as the origin of the Order's emphasis on teaching. He wrote that the Founder's only weapons in carrying out his mission were "prayer, patience, teaching." Just as Christ told his apostles to "go and teach", Lacordaire wrote that St. Dominic also told his disciples to "go and teach."²¹⁹ This stress on teaching reflected the great importance that

²¹⁸LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 10-11.

²¹⁹LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 15-17.

Lacordaire placed on education which was typical of the Romantic movement which had so deeply influenced him. In conceiving the idea of reviving the Order of Preachers in France, he believed that teaching the young the truths of Christian faith must necessarily be allied with the preaching ministry if the evangelization effort was to be successful. He saw the establishment of colleges by the "new" French Dominicans as integrally linked to the Order's mission in his native land.²²⁰ In the centuries-old debate among Dominicans as to whether teaching can be equated with preaching in the Order of "Preachers," Lacordaire emphasized teaching as a primary expression of the Dominican charism. In our time, Lacordaire would have found significant disagreement with his position.

Continuing his presentation in the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire wrote that Dominicans have excelled in teaching, preaching and missionary activities since the time of the Founder. In dealing with a people imbued with the spirit of democracy, he stressed the democratic character of the Dominican Order with its voting processes and balance of power which have allowed the friars for six hundred years to be the "most free" of men. Dominicans, like other religious, live under a rule that is

²²⁰Gabriel-Georges MONTSERRET, "Enseignant, parce que prêcheur: Henri-Dominique Lacordaire," *Mémoire Dominicaine* 3 (Automne 1993):41.

physically difficult but bestows "great liberty of spirit" to the religious. He said that he had chosen to restore the Dominican Order rather than another because "it is the order which best suits...our nature by its system of government, our mind by its doctrines, and our goals by the means with which it operates, primarily through preaching and theology."²²¹ Lacordaire went on to explain why he had chosen to restore an old order rather than begin a new one in words that have become famous:

You may perhaps ask why we have chosen to re-establish an old order rather than to found a new one. We shall give two answers. First the grace to be the founder of an order is the highest and most exceptional that God gives to his saints, and it has not been given to us. And secondly, if God were to grant us the power to create a new religious order, we are sure that, after much reflection, we should discover nothing newer or more adapted to our time and its needs than the rule of St. Dominic. Nothing about it is old except its history, and we should see no need to torment our mind simply for the pleasure of dating from yesterday.²²²

In the above quote, Lacordaire clearly articulated his absolute conviction that the Dominican Order was the one most suited by its history, charism, and spirit to the immense task of bringing the gospel to mid-nineteenth France.

Lacordaire believed that the Dominican Order, like the church itself, must maintain continuity with its past yet,

²²¹LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 17-20.

²²²LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 21.

because of the progressive nature of life, is always undergoing a process of change which continually renews it. In words reminiscent of John Henry Newman, he wrote that the church of his day was identical to that of the Middle Ages because of its hierarchy, dogmas, rituals, and morals yet it was also very different. This also applies to the Order of Preachers. Lacordaire's use of the analogy of organic development, like Newman's, was an important characteristic of the Romantic temperament which stressed the link between past, present, and future.²²³ It is interesting to note that Lacordaire did not possess a trait often possessed by Romantics, especially Catholic Romantics: excessive love of the Middle Ages. He believed that it was an offense against one's own century to absolutize the medieval centuries or any other. Unlike Lacordaire, some significant later nineteenth century French Dominicans, looking back nostalgically to the Catholic Middle Ages, to the Age of Faith, would try to restore the Order along medieval lines. In contrast, he viewed the Middle Ages as a transitory *epoque*, like all others, which he admired but did not idolize. He exemplified the then contemporary Romantic love for his own time. He also had a special admiration for the Patristic era for reasons that are Romantic: the church was able to appeal more to the

²²³LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 21.

spirits and hearts of unbelievers during the first five centuries than during the twelfth to fifteenth centuries when it too often used such coercive measures as the Inquisition and burning at the stake which he could not see as defensible.²²⁴

Lacordaire, in chapter three of the *Mémoire*, dealt with the achievements of Dominicans as preachers and as missionaries in both the Old and New Worlds. Referring to Dominican preaching through the centuries, he wrote these romantic words: "eloquence is the sound which a passionate soul makes." This "eloquence" originated with St. Dominic who touched "the very heart of his age, " awakening a passion which resulted in the eloquence of the Order's preachers.²²⁵ In addition to "their passionate souls" which are necessary for all orators, Dominican preachers historically have been very astute at recognizing the type of preaching that is most appropriate to their particular time. This has aided them in being effective proclaimers of the Word and missionaries in both Europe and the new lands settled in the last few centuries. Writing to an audience that was very concerned about liberty, Lacordaire mentioned the courageous resistance

²²⁴Henri LACORDAIRE, "L'Eglise de Jésus-Christ", *La Vie Spirituelle* 469 (Fevrier 1961): 126; LE GUILLOU, pp. 313-14.

²²⁵LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 22.

of Dominicans in the New World to the oppression of the native Americans. He especially emphasized Bartolome de las Casas' efforts on behalf of the rights and liberty of the Indian population.²²⁶

In chapter four of the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire turned his attention to the teaching heritage of the Dominican Order. As one would expect, he emphasized the role played by St. Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican teacher par excellence. Lacordaire wrote of him: "without either overthrowing or worshipping the idol of his century, he wove a philosophy which still had in its veins the blood of Aristotle, but purified by his own blood and that of all his great predecessors in Christian teaching."²²⁷ Generations of Dominican thinkers have continued the tradition of Christian scholarship exemplified by St. Thomas Aquinas.²²⁸

In chapter five of the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire wrote about the artists, prelates, and various saints of the Order. He gave special praise to the great medieval Dominican artist Fra Angelico. In a display of his own Romantic sensibilities, Lacordaire referred to the tears which Fra Angelico often shed as bearing "witness both to his sensitivity as an artist and

²²⁶LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 23-29.

²²⁷LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 34.

²²⁸LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 36.

to his piety as a christian."²²⁹ Towards the end of this chapter, he appealed to French patriotism in words consistent with a Romantic's love for his country: "nothing resembles the genius of the French so much as the genius of the Dominicans." He also included the fact that up to 1720, seventeen out of sixty Dominican masters general were French!²³⁰

Chapter six of the *Mémoire* treated what is surely the most controversial period of Dominican history, the Inquisition. Although not a trained historian, Lacordaire in his writings often displayed the sensibilities of an historian as well as the historical consciousness so characteristic of Romanticism of the time. In chapter six, he attempted to "set the record straight" about Dominican involvement in the Inquisition for a society which viewed that church-sanctioned institution as one of the greatest affronts to freedom and dignity in the history of the world; too often, it assumed that St. Dominic was the first Inquisitor, the founder of that tool of torture and oppression. Lacordaire strongly emphasized the fact that St. Dominic neither invented nor participated in the Inquisition. He also argued that Dominicans were neither the real promoters nor the principal instruments of the Inquisition but merely took part in it as

²²⁹LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 37-38.

²³⁰LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 41.

did all involved in the church at that time. In a passage which exemplified Lacordaire's keen awareness of his own time and place and ability to criticize that milieu in light of Christian principles, he compared France of his day to the Inquisition because of the country's restrictions on establishing places of worship and on religious education. He considered rationalistic liberalism which persecuted Christians to be an heir of the Inquisition; he viewed tyrannical persecution of Catholics in Ireland, Prussia, and Poland in the same light. Finally, he pointed out to those who equated Catholicism with the Inquisition and suppression of liberty that the only nation in Europe which had freedom of conscience in 1830 was a Catholic one: Belgium.²³¹ Lacordaire did a truly remarkable job in this chapter of defending the Dominican Order and the Catholic Church as a whole against the charge that they are inherently linked to the Inquisition and its deprivation of human rights and freedom. Through the power of words, Lacordaire called upon a society so critical of the church for its alleged opposition to freedom to be consistent with its own love for freedom by extending it in its fullness to Catholics, including those who sought to live in vowed religious communities.

In chapter seven which concludes the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire

²³¹LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 43-4, 51, 55-6.

expressed his great love of his country and his church as well as his staunch conviction that France could only be most fully itself when it became fully Catholic. For him, the Dominican Order would be the most powerful instrument for bringing about that goal. He expressed this well in these words: "I think, therefore, that I am acting as a good citizen as well as a good Catholic in re-establishing the Friars Preachers in France."²³²

5. *Beginnings of French Dominican restoration*

Pleased with the success of the *Mémoire*, Lacordaire left for Rome on March 7, 1839 to become a Dominican novice. He was accompanied by two recruits: Abbé Boutaud, a diocesan priest and Hippolyte Réquédât, a gifted young man who had been influenced by the "school of Buchez."²³³ J.P. Buchez (1796-1865) was a Christian socialist thinker who sought to transform France based on the ideals found in the gospels. He believed that France's greatness was rooted in its historic link to Christianity. France's revival as a nation depended on its revival of its Christian heritage. Réquédât was one of a group of doctors, artists, philosophers, printers, and clockmakers who rallied around Buchez's ideas for the

²³²LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. 57-8.

²³³FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 468.

transformation of their society. Buchez recognized Lacordaire as a fellow traveler who shared his goal "to make Christianity a political reality". It appears that Lacordaire indeed was influenced by Buchez's ideas. He, like Buchez, equated the "vocation of the French people" with their Catholic heritage. The notion of fraternity was an essential element in Buchez's philosophy. In fact, he viewed fraternity as more than a notion or idea but a reality for which it is always necessary to strive to achieve. Fraternity realizes itself on a societal level through the association. It is in associations of various kinds that fraternity is concretely expressed in the body politic. In language reminiscent of Buchez's associations which included printers, clockmakers and others, Lacordaire wrote in his *Mémoire* of "voluntary associations, based on work and religion" that allow modern society to "seek the remedy for the wound of individualism."²³⁴

For several reasons, including opposition from some church authorities to Lacordaire and his project, the three Frenchmen began their novitiate in April, 1839 at the convent of La Quercia, near Viterbo, rather than in Rome as previously expected. Lacordaire was a model novice in this Dominican convent which was one of the best in Italy as far as

²³⁴LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, pp. xiii-iv; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, pp. 468-71.

observance of the constitutions was concerned. During his novitiate year, he maintained a kind of apostolate to the outside world insofar as he helped to form French Christian artists' associations in Rome and Paris. Other associations of various Christian professionals followed the artists' model and eventually also provided recruits for the restored Dominican Order.²³⁵ Two of the most famous of these early recruits from Christian associations were the architect Piel and the painter Besson, both deeply influenced by Buchez and his ideas about the centrality of Catholicism to France's self-realization and the value of voluntary associations for transforming society. Lacordaire's plan for the re-establishment of Dominicanism in France had an enormous appeal for those who had been captivated by such ideas.²³⁶

Lacordaire wrote his famous *Vie de Saint Dominique* during his novitiate year. He wanted to acquaint France, which he saw as largely ignorant or misinformed about St. Dominic, with the life and work of the founder of the Order of Preachers. Although the author did not intend it to be a scholarly study, he did utilize original thirteenth century sources such as the writings of Jordan of Saxony, Humbert, and Sister Cecile. The

²³⁵FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 474-87.

²³⁶André DUVAL, "Lacordaire et Buchez," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 45 (1961): 423.

book dealt with the important role that providence had played in Dominic's life which Lacordaire also believed had played a crucial role in his own life. Written for a French audience, *Vie de Saint Dominique* understandably emphasized the fact that the Dominican Order was born in France. Lacordaire wrote that God "selected her [France] to be in Dominic's hand, the chief instrument of an Order whose action was destined to be universal."²³⁷ It should be pointed out that Lacordaire's biography of St. Dominic very much reflected the influence of Romanticism on Lacordaire both in its historical consciousness and sentimental style.

Lacordaire requested permission to study in Rome for three years after novitiate in order to get a firm theological grounding in the teachings of St. Thomas. He moved to Santa Sabina in order to pursue this after his profession of vows on April 12, 1840. In May of that year, six young men came to join him for theological studies before entering the Order. Among them was A.V. Jandel, future Dominican master general, with whom Lacordaire would someday strongly disagree about the purpose and direction of the Order. Before long, Lacordaire returned to France, boldly wearing the Dominican habit which had been outlawed by the Revolution and which was still

²³⁷Henri LACORDAIRE, *Life of St. Dominic* (London: Burns and Oates, 1883), pp. viii-ix, 11, 52, 134, 265-72.

technically illegal. On February 14, 1841, he climbed into the pulpit of Notre Dame in Paris, where he had so eloquently preached some years before, dressed in the habit which was so powerful a symbol of the preaching vocation. Gathered for the return of Lacordaire to this famed cathedral was an immense crowd composed of young people but which also included the new Archbishop of Paris, M. Affre who had been sympathetic towards the famous preacher, government ministers, ambassadors, peers and members of the Chamber of Deputies. He spoke on "the religious vocation of the French nation", reminding his audience of the integral connection between Catholicism and France. The sermon was enthusiastically received. The process of restoration of the Dominican Order in France had gotten off to a good start.²³⁸

French vocations to the Order of Preachers grew steadily during the 1840's. The first house of the restored Order in France was established at Nancy in 1843. The novitiate and house of studies were established in Chalais near Grenoble in 1844. In 1849, the Dominicans opened their first house in Paris since the Revolution. The next year, 1850, saw two of the greatest events in the history of French Dominicanism: the Province of France was officially restored with Lacordaire as the first provincial. In 1852, he founded a male teaching

²³⁸FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 491-8, 504-14.

community of Dominican tertiaries. Lacordaire eventually became provincial for a second time before retiring. Lacordaire died on November 21, 1861, having despite difficulties, realized his dream of re-establishing the Dominican Order in France.²³⁹

Lacordaire's most enduring contribution to the church was his restoration of the Dominican Order in France, an event that led to the renewal of the entire Order. His Romantic vision made this restoration possible. As we have seen from looking at his life and from exploring his *Mémoire*, Lacordaire was profoundly influenced by his Romantic temperament, education, and ideals in his decision to restore the Order of Preachers to France. For Lacordaire, the Dominican Order embodied the contemplative spirituality, openness to the times, passionate eloquence, democratic structures, and liberal atmosphere that he considered so important for himself and for his French contemporaries. In a very real sense, Lacordaire, the quintessential modern man, found in a medieval Order that even Cardinal Newman considered to be dead, the perfect vehicle for transforming and renewing modern society through the liberating power of the Christian gospel.

Lacordaire's understanding of Dominicanism and of the role that it should play in the church and in secular society

²³⁹BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 96.

was not shared by all Dominicans of his day, even those who joined him in the restoration of the Order in France, nor by all Dominicans who have come after him. These different interpretations of Dominican life continue even in our post-Vatican II era. In the next chapter, we will turn our attention to one of the most difficult moments that Lacordaire faced in his attempt to re-establish the Order in France, his struggle with Jandel over the proper understanding of Dominicanism and of its role in church and society. The controversy was made all the more poignant by the fact that the Master General Jandel was one of Lacordaire's early recruits to Dominican life. Although hardly unique in the history of religious life, the dispute between refounder and recruit was a truly tragic moment in the restoration of the Dominican Order in France. Both Romantic, both French, both Catholic yet they were unable to bridge the gap between two very different ways of looking at the Order, the church, and the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

*BROTHERS DIFFER: THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN LACORDAIRE AND JANDEL
CONCERNING DOMINICAN LIFE IN 19TH CENTURY FRANCE*

In earlier chapters, I have emphasized the importance of Romanticism in the revival of Catholicism in nineteenth century France, particularly in the revival of religious life during that period. Lacordaire was Romantic to the core as were other French founders and refounders such as Guéranger and de Mazenod. Despite this common thread of Romanticism in nineteenth century French Catholic thought and practice, Lacordaire's perspective on religious life was unique for his time and place. Its distinctiveness would become very apparent in his famous dispute with one of his fellow Dominicans, Alexandre-Vincent Jandel who was one of Lacordaire's earliest recruits in the project of restoring the Dominican Order in France. This disciple of Lacordaire went on to become his master. A few years after his entry into the Order, Jandel was appointed Vicar General by the pope. He had, in effect, become head of the entire Dominican Order. It soon became clear that the two friars, both operating from a Romantic base and both deeply committed to the Order of

Preachers, had fundamental differences in their understanding of Dominicanism. Their disagreement went to the very "heart of the matter," the role of religious observance in Dominican life. Their controversy was an intramural version of the conflict between Lacordaire's vision of religious life and that of other prominent nineteenth century French religious.

1. *Jandel's early years in the Order*

Jean-Joseph-Alexandre Jandel was born in Gerbéviller, Lorraine (Diocese of Nancy) in 1810, only eight years after Lacordaire's birth. He was of peasant ancestry. His father was an engineer. His devout wife had led him to the practice of the Catholic faith. Through the influence of these pious parents, Alexandre (who was "Alexandre-Vincent" as a Dominican) and his sister learned the importance of being virtuous at an early age. He was an excellent student who possessed a prodigious memory that would serve him well. His earliest education was at a Christian Brothers' school. At eighteen, he told his parents that he felt called to the priesthood. Because his health was quite fragile, he was allowed to commute from his home to seminary classes at the beginning of his clerical studies. During his period of preparation for priesthood, Alexandre gave rigorous attention to seminary rules despite his physical problems. He was sent

to Fribourg, Switzerland to continue his seminary training because of the dangerous political situation which the church faced during the revolutionary year of 1830. After a three year stay in Fribourg, Alexandre returned to France and was ordained to the priesthood in 1834.²⁴⁰

From the very beginning of his priesthood, Jandel's leadership abilities were evident and consequently, rewarded. He founded a fraternity for priests, dedicated to spiritual growth, shortly after ordination. He was soon assigned to teach Scripture at the major seminary in recognition of his intellectual ability. When he was only twenty-six, he was appointed superior of the minor seminary at Pont-à-Mousson. Unlike the young Abbé Lacordaire, the young Abbé Jandel had little interest in political affairs although he tended to be conservative in secular as well as religious matters, growing more anti-liberal and ultramontanist during the course of his life. The recently-ordained Jandel was especially concerned about finding a way of life that would allow him to grow in faithfulness to his priestly duties. Consequently, religious life was becoming increasingly more attractive to him. He accepted the post at the minor seminary only provisionally

²⁴⁰Hyacinthe-Marie CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, 3e éd. (Paris: Librairie Ch. Poussielgue, 1896), pp. 1-11, 16, 22; Bernard BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel, la Restauration de l'Ordre Dominicain en France après la Revolution* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), pp. 107-9.

because he was already experiencing what he believed to be a call to religious life. Jandel planned to devote three more years of service to his diocese before entering a religious community, specifically the Society of Jesus. Continuing to acknowledge his gifts, his bishop made him an honorary canon.²⁴¹

Jandel first met Lacordaire during the winter of 1837-8 while the former was head of the minor seminary. The already famous Lacordaire was preaching a series of conferences at nearby Metz. Jandel went several times to hear him preach. He invited him to visit his seminarians. Jandel was impressed by the power of Lacordaire's words as well as by his candor, modesty, and simplicity in conversation. Impressed in turn, Lacordaire later invited Jandel to become a part of his planned project of re-establishing the Dominican Order in France. The latter hesitated, saying that he and his spiritual director, Père Morin, had already decided that the young priest would become a Jesuit. The future refounder of French Dominicanism told him that he could do more good and evangelize more effectively as a Dominican because popular sentiment leaned more toward the Friars Preachers than the

²⁴¹CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 24-7, 35-6; BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 109-10, 122,136.

Jesuits despite the admirable qualities of the latter Order.²⁴²

Jandel was so moved by this encounter that he consulted with Père Morin. The Jesuit told him that Lacordaire was right, that he could do more for the Church as a Dominican. Morin then authorized him to accept Lacordaire's invitation. Jandel's interest in joining the new project grew when Lacordaire published his *Mémoire pour le rétablissement de l'Ordre des Frères-Prêcheurs en France* in 1839. The young priest felt a mysterious attraction to St. Dominic, wanting to become his disciple. However, he felt that he needed to go on retreat before making any final decisions. Although the additional three years that he had promised to the diocese were completed, Jandel hesitated to leave his family and the security of his native environment. He decided to go to Rome for a time, leaving in October, 1839. He stopped at Viterbo to visit Lacordaire, who was then in his own novitiate year, to discuss with him how best to know the will of God and to learn about the Dominican Order and the plans for restoring it in France. At that point, Jandel knew almost nothing about the Dominicans other than what he had read in Lacordaire's *Mémoire*.²⁴³

²⁴²CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, p. 46; Bonvin, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 110.

²⁴³CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 46-8, 51; André DUVAL, "Les premiers entretiens du Père Lacordaire et de l'Abbé Jandel

Seeking certainty about his vocation decision and needing to convince family and friends of the rightness of choosing the Dominicans over the Jesuits, Jandel made several retreats in succession. After praying to many saints and at many shrines, he decided to seek the advice of the one whom he considered to be God's living oracle, the pope. He obtained a papal audience at which Gregory XVI told him that both Orders were excellent, that both had great saints, and that he could become a "great" saint (pun on Jandel's tall stature) by becoming either a Dominican or a Jesuit. Still lacking a clear answer, Jandel went on retreat again and wrote down some reasons why he should become a Dominican, listing his attraction to teaching the young, the unquestioned orthodoxy of Dominicans, and the opportunity to assist at the birth of a great work. When some people whom he considered to be very competent in matters concerning religious life concurred in favor of the Dominicans, Jandel decided to ask for admission into the Order of Preachers as soon as possible. Lacordaire welcomed him without reservation or hesitation.²⁴⁴

Jandel entered the "French college," composed of candidates for the Dominican Order in the projected French province, at Santa Sabina in Rome on May 15, 1840. They

sur la restauration dominicaine en France (31 octobre 1839)," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* XXXVI (1966): 494-5.

²⁴⁴CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 67-71.

devoted themselves to philosophical and theological studies in preparation for admission into the novitiate. Again being recognized for his leadership abilities as in his home diocese, Jandel was placed in charge of the other candidates during Lacordaire's absences. He and four others received the Dominican habit on May 15, 1841, thus beginning the year of novitiate. When he first became a novice, Jandel had no attraction for the ancient practices of the Order that were to become so important for him, e.g. vigils, abstinence, prostrations. He said that he had to fight his natural repugnance for these austerities in order to accept them and later to even insist upon them as a condition for solemn profession. Upon hearing of this distaste, Lacordaire said: "Oh! quand l'âme est unie à Dieu et le coeur content, tout le reste devient facile."²⁴⁵

2. Early manifestations of differences between Lacordaire and Jandel about Dominican life

Jandel's disagreements with Lacordaire over questions of religious observance go back to this early period of formation. The stage was set for the great conflicts which would fully manifest themselves later. Reflecting on his

²⁴⁵CORMIER, *Vie du Rme. P.A.-Jandel*, pp. 72-6, 87, 99; BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 117, 237.

pre-novitiate program years later, the then Master General Jandel said of Lacordaire:

"ainsi dans sa pensée notre degré d'observance devait être déterminé par les circonstances, et la législation dominicaine lui apparaissait comme un vaste cadre, dans lequel il se réservait la liberté de se mouvoir à son gré; au lieu de prendre pour base et pour point de départ invariable et fixe notre législation telle que nos saints et les siècles l'avaient faite, il se croyait autorisé à la subordonner à ce qu'il jugerait plus favorable au but apostolique qu'il proposait."²⁴⁶

As a novice, Jandel had already begun to doubt Lacordaire's commitment to a rigorous interpretation of the Dominican Constitutions. He thought that the future restorer of French Dominicanism was open to innovation in things which he and his fellow novices believed were irreformable. Concerned about what they saw as Lacordaire's lack of full commitment to the observance of Dominican legislation and of the primitive traditions of the Order, Jandel and his brothers in the novitiate wrote a mémoire to him in which they asked for an assurance about religious observance in the restored French province. They told him that most of the novices would leave without such an assurance. Lacordaire did not grant their request but limited himself to saying that Dominican life in France would be different than the non-observance that they saw in Italy. Nevertheless, Jandel and his novice brothers made solemn profession at the end of

²⁴⁶BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 142, 136.

novitiate on May 15, 1842. He added a vow to the traditional ones which would prove prophetic concerning his Dominican future: he promised never to actively cooperate in any arbitrary modification of the legislation of St. Dominic, a vow which he renewed shortly afterwards at several other places, including the tomb of St. Dominic in Bologna. Jandel later wrote that he believed that several other brothers followed his example in making this additional vow.²⁴⁷

Jandel returned to France as a Dominican friar in 1843. A natural leader, he was soon involved in directing and governing his fellow friars. Lacordaire wrote of him: "Le P. Jandel est admirable; c'est l'homme qu'il nous fallait. Je serai l'homme du dehors et lui du dedans; car bien que je fasse des progrès dans la vie spirituelle, l'homme actif et ardent se fait encore jour." His first assignment was as superior in Nancy of the first community of Dominican friars since the Revolution. A series of brief but important assignments soon followed. In 1844, Lacordaire installed him as prior of the first regular convent of the newly-restored French Dominicans at Chalais where the novices lived. He also taught the students as well as carried out preaching assignments. Jandel was displeased with the rather relaxed

²⁴⁷CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 100-1; BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 119-20, 247-8; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 315-16.

observance imposed by Lacordaire at Chalais but accepted it obediently. In his *Mémoire* written while he was Master General, he remembered his differences with Lacordaire concerning religious observance which went back to these early years. He wrote that Lacordaire believed that nineteenth century temperaments were different than those of the thirteenth century; that many things that were excellent in the earlier century were not possible in the later one; that if St. Dominic had lived in the nineteenth century, he would have been aware of these impossibilities; that the important thing is to maintain the great lines of Dominican life, the essential things; that even the letter of the Constitutions is expressed in terms which allow a certain latitude in application, a maximum and minimum of observance that superiors can determine based on circumstances. In spite of these continuing conflicts of opinion with Lacordaire on crucial issues of Dominican life, Jandel obediently accepted the assignments given him by the refounder of French Dominicanism. In 1846, he returned to Nancy as prior of what had become the first professed house of the post-Revolution Dominican Order in France. Lacordaire charged him with the task of maintaining the spirit of strict observance there in a loving and firm manner. In 1849, Jandel became prior of the convent at Flavigny which became the novitiate house. He was

sent in 1850 to a new Dominican house in Paris that was a residence for the Order's students.²⁴⁸

Jandel's administrative duties in the various French Dominican priories did not dampen his zeal for preaching. From the very beginning of his Dominican life, Jandel had always taken very seriously the "preacher" aspect of the friar-preacher designation. The convent was so important because it was the place where the preacher found the support that he needed to carry out his ministry; it was the place where he found healing. Jandel had a special love for preaching retreats for his fellow priests. This was consistent with his lifelong zeal for the formation of those destined for the priesthood, a task of which he said: "voilà le ministère le plus important que l'on puisse exercer..." Jandel, a former Scripture teacher, believed that biblical study was crucial for his ministry of preaching the truth.²⁴⁹

3. *Jandel placed at head of Dominican Order*

Despite the vitality of the Dominican re-establishment in France, the Dominican Order as a whole was in a very weakened state in the middle of the nineteenth century. Pope Pius IX,

²⁴⁸CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 104-9, 120, 122; BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 120-2, 257; FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, pp. 317-18.

²⁴⁹CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 123, 125-6, 130.

in the first years of his long pontificate, admired the Order and wanted to revitalize it. The term of the aged and infirm Master General, Vincent Ajello, was coming to an end. Taking the weakened and depleted Order under his special patronage, the pope wanted to place a dynamic and devout friar at the head of the Order. Pius IX suppressed the general chapter of the Order which was to have taken place in 1850 and which would have undoubtedly elected an Italian Master General. The pope, impressed with the success of the restoration of the Order of Preachers in France with its emphasis on living the Dominican life in an integral manner, looked to that country for a transitional general superior. Pius IX placed himself at the head of the Dominican Order and decided to appoint a Vicar General who would actually govern until he decided that the Order was capable of electing a new Master General. After a period of consultations, he decided to nominate Jandel for the post. Lacordaire was initially opposed to the nomination of his former disciple for the role of supreme leadership in the Order but later supported it:

"Cette nomination est miraculeuse...un grand honneur pour nous et un grand bonheur pour moi, au-delà de tout ce que j'attendais. Si j'eusse été choisi moi-même, c'était l'abandon de mes travaux de prédication et un fardeau épouvantable, tandis que la nomination du P. Jandel concilie tout. Elle nous laisse tous les avantages sans les inconvénients. Il faut donc bien en remercier

Dieu.²⁵⁰

Lacordaire had himself just been appointed provincial of the newly re-established Province of France (September 15, 1850). On October 1, 1850, Pius IX appointed Jandel as Vicar General of the Dominican Order. He was only forty years old.²⁵¹

From the beginning of his tenure as Vicar General, Jandel's greatest concern was the maintenance and renewal of religious observance in the Dominican Order. He believed that his mission was to reform the Order by returning it to the observance of the letter of the Constitutions. Jandel was convinced that the Order had always reformed itself by returning to the ordinary practices of the Constitutions without establishing new ones, by always maintaining unity with its past history. Looking to the fourteenth century, he adopted Raymond of Capua, twenty-third Master General and confessor and disciple of Catherine of Siena, as his model as head and reformer of the Dominicans. Raymond's reform plan involved grouping friars who were seriously concerned about regular observance in specially designated convents. Brothers would aid their brothers in living according to the Constitutions.

²⁵⁰CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, tome premier, pp. 178-188; R.P. MORTIER, *Histoire des Maîtres généraux de l'ordre des Frères Prêcheurs*, tome septieme (1650-1904) (Paris, Alphonse Picard et Fils, éditeurs, 1914), pp. 488-9.

²⁵¹CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 187, 189-90; MORTIER, *Histoire des Maîtres généraux*, p. 488.

These distinct convents would expand their influence and eventually revitalize the entire Order. Jandel began his own reform program at Santa Sabina which eventually became a house of strict observance.²⁵²

Jandel wrote a letter to the entire Order in December, 1850, in which he spoke of establishing convents of perfect observance in which discipline would be integrally maintained and dispensations would be granted only for reasons of ministry or health. He said that Matins must truly be a night office which was to be recited no later than three in the morning. Perpetual abstinence was to be maintained in the refectory and at all community meals. Fasts, the wearing of woolen habits, and choral office were to be maintained. The chapter of faults also was to be observed. The life of regular observance would even form the foundation for life in the missions. Consequently, only friars who lived in observant communities were to be chosen as missionaries.²⁵³

In a letter specifically intended for the Province of France that was sent shortly after the general letter, Jandel continued to stress the regular life and respect for the Constitutions. He called upon the French friars to observe

²⁵²CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 196-8, 207; MORTIER, *Histoire des Maîtres généraux*, p. 490; BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 122-3.

²⁵³CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 215-17.

all the rules of the Order, without distinction or reservation. He said that if a friar questioned a single article of the law, he had ceased to see it as the expression of God's will, as something imposed by the saints and sanctioned by the Church. Such a friar would have fallen into practical rationalism. Jandel cautioned his countrymen against following the advice of the world and even of some elements in the Church which suggested the mitigation of religious observance for the sake of the ministry. He said that the friars would become saints only by faithfully respecting and observing the rules of the Order.²⁵⁴

4. *Escalation of Jandel-Lacordaire dispute over observances*

The conflict between Lacordaire and Jandel over the essentials of Dominican life escalated sharply in 1852. By September of that year, the situation had deteriorated to the point that the provincial of France could write this to his Vicar General: "Dites-le que vous combattrez jusqu'à la mort pour la lettre absolue et à jamais irréformable: ce sera triste, mais ce sera clair. Nous saurons qu'entre vous et moi la conciliation est impossible et qu'il n'y a qu'à

²⁵⁴CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 217-19.

attendre ce qu'il plaira à Dieu de décider."²⁵⁵ The specific cause of the dispute was the Night Office, Matins. On February 4, Lacordaire, as provincial of France, wrote a circular letter to the province, in which he announced that the hour for Matins in all the houses was to be changed immediately from three to four in the morning. This directive was the beginning of a crisis in which the entire Province of France was soon engaged. On February 11, Lacordaire wrote to Jandel informing him of the change that he had made in the hour for Matins; he said that he had done this after consulting with some of the elder Fathers in order to provide sufficient sleep for the brethren as well as more opportunity for mental prayer. He was seeking the Vicar General's approval of this "fait accompli." On February 25, Jandel sent a letter to all of the priors of the French province informing them that he was revoking Lacordaire's change in the horarium because it was contrary to the Constitutions of the Order.²⁵⁶

The war by correspondence between the two Dominican

²⁵⁵Henri LACORDAIRE, *La liberté de la parole évangélique: écrits, conférences, lettres, textes choisis et présentés par André Duval et Jean-Pierre Jossua* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), p. 737.

²⁵⁶BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 150; Raymond DEVAS, O.P., ed., *Ex Umbris: Letters and Papers hitherto Unpublished of the Fathers Lacordaire, Jandel, Danzas* (Bruges: Desclée, DeBrouwer & Co., n.d.), pp. 121-35.

superiors continued. In a letter to Jandel dated February 27 of 1852, Lacordaire expressed his disappointment with his superior's decision. Claiming that he was not complaining, he mentioned that he had hoped, especially after Jandel became Vicar General, that the years of conflict between them would end and that they could work together for the good of the province that he had restored and of the entire Order of which Jandel was now the head. He now realized that he had hoped in vain. Lacordaire informed Jandel that he planned to appeal the question of the hour for Matins to the next general chapter of the Order. In a March 12 letter to the French provincial, the Vicar General accused him of abuse of power based on his ignorance of Dominican legislation as well as abuse of confidence. He said that he had compromised his authority as provincial of France, resulting in considerable damage to the province. Later in the letter, Jandel admitted that he and Lacordaire had differed on matters of observance from the beginning but says that the mistrust that he and his novitiate companions had about him in terms of his total commitment to full observance of the Constitutions had been shown to be well founded in light of later developments. Jandel concluded by asking Lacordaire, for the good of the French province, to think and pray about his decision to

appeal to a general chapter.²⁵⁷

Lacordaire replied to this letter on March 24, 1852. He lamented the fact that there was a cleavage between himself and his disciples almost from the beginning of the French Dominican restoration project. Jandel, he wrote, had been his judge and critic even in the former's novitiate period. He went on to express his disagreement with Jandel's literal interpretation of the Order's Constitutions, believing it impossible to observe them to the letter. He believed that it was the prerogative of a founder to make necessary changes based on what was right and possible. He accused his superior of undermining his authority as provincial of France. Lacordaire expressed his regret for the events that had contributed to the sad history of their relationship with one another. He then asked Jandel to open his mind to the possibility that any change in the Order's legislation, any mitigation of the Constitutions, does not of necessity lead to lack of respect for all law and a state of total arbitrariness.²⁵⁸ The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars instituted a commission in 1852 for the revision of the Dominican Constitutions, a task normally carried out by a general chapter but deemed inadvisable given the unsettled

²⁵⁷DEVAS, *Ex Umbris*, pp. 136-49.

²⁵⁸DEVAS, *Ex Umbris*, pp. 149-58.

situation in which the Order found itself. For this commission, Lacordaire presented a *Mémoire pour la restauration de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs dans la chrétienté*.²⁵⁹

This *Mémoire* gave Lacordaire a forum to express his views on a proper understanding of religious observance in the Dominican Order. On the issue of dispensations, an aspect of the Constitutions that he greatly admired, he said that St. Dominic gave them not only for reasons of infirmity but also in situations where lack of modifications in observance would result in harm to study, preaching or the care of souls. He went on to say that the founder subordinated the monastic institution to the apostolic institution because means are necessarily subordinated to ends. Dominic provided that each friar could be dispensed from the principal austerities of the Order when necessary. Preachers and lectors could even be dispensed from the office when they were exercising their ministries. Nevertheless, Lacordaire acknowledged that abuses of the power of dispensation had occurred in the history of the Order. In regard to the night office controversy that was so important in mid-nineteenth century French Dominican life, he said that St. Dominic considered it

²⁵⁹BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 152; DEVAS, *Ex Umbris*, pp. 158-60.

important but did not set a time for it nor for night rising even though it was a cardinal point for distribution of the friar's day. In regard to the idea of midnight as the most suitable time for night office, Lacordaire argued that, even if the Fathers of the Church might have celebrated night office at midnight, that would not make imitation of this a precise, absolute, and universal law, particularly in light of the apostolic character of Dominican life. There has been no consensus on the appropriate time for night office in the history of the Order.²⁶⁰

In his *Mémoire*, Lacordaire emphasized that the end or purpose of the Dominican Order is the salvation of souls. Doctrine and preaching are the principal means to this end, monastic exercises are subordinated means. An elective hierarchy exists for the government of the Order. Lacordaire went on to discuss a number of relevant topics in his *Mémoire*. Taking a position diametrically opposed to Jandel's extreme caution concerning any changes, he said that a religious institute is reinvigorated when a reformer introduces changes in nonessential aspects of its observance. He mentioned changes that had been introduced in the French province's religious observance, e.g. permission to eat meat for

²⁶⁰Henri LACORDAIRE, *Mémoire pour la restauration des frères prêcheurs dans la chrétienté* ([Flavigny]:[Province of France], 1852), pp. 9-13, 25-9.

traveling friars or simple recitation of the office so that friars could study or perform other duties. He articulated this principle for the restored French province: "l'observance des Constitutions cum aliqua mitigatione et ampliori dispensatione ad extra, sed salva rerum essentia."²⁶¹

In discussing the explosive topic of the night office in his *Mémoire* for the commission for revision of the Constitutions, Lacordaire expressed his preference for four a.m. as the hour for Matins because this would allow seven consecutive hours of sleep for the brethren. Adequate sleep was especially important because the friars ate lightly due to the perpetual abstinence from meat and fasted very strictly for almost eight months of the year. Lacordaire also pointed out that many friars had trouble getting back to sleep when it was interrupted. Night office recited no later than three a.m. would not be adequate, especially for young friars, in that it would permit only six hours of sleep. It would also not allow adequate time for private prayer. He made it clear that he was determined to change Matins to four a.m. through legislation of the upcoming provincial chapter.²⁶²

A postscript to Lacordaire's *Mémoire*, dated May 21, 1852, informs the reader that the provincial chapter unanimously

²⁶¹LACORDAIRE, *Mémoire*(1852), pp. 39, 44, 47-50.

²⁶²LACORDAIRE, *Mémoire*(1852), pp. 51-4.

adopted the spirit of that document after having heard it read. The capitulars discussed the particular points which concerned the customs and rules of the Province of France. They then ratified these regulations with one exception. On the divisive issue of the hour for the night office, the chapter deferred the matter to the final decision of the pope.²⁶³

Three years later, Pius IX appointed Jandel as Master General of the Dominican Order and seventy-second successor of St. Dominic. The pope greatly admired Jandel for his promotion of strict observance in Dominican houses as well as for what he believed to be his great personal holiness. The appointment, made on December 17 of 1855, marked the beginning of a six year term as Dominican general superior. This was the first time in the history of the Order, which had always been characterized by democratic structures, that a Master General had been selected by the pope rather than by a general chapter. Jandel continued to see his mission in terms of calling the Order to reform through a return to the letter of the Constitutions.²⁶⁴

Jandel officially informed his Dominican brethren of his appointment as Master General in a letter dated December 21,

²⁶³LACORDAIRE, *Mémoire*(1852), p. 60.

²⁶⁴BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 122-3, 135; CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 278-80.

1855. In this letter, he re-emphasized the themes that he had stated in an earlier communication written just after he became Vicar General in 1850. As he had done previously, he stressed the importance of regular observance for effectiveness in the various ministries of the Order of Preachers. Jandel discussed what he believed to be the intimate union between knowledge and piety and the need to emphasize this to the young.²⁶⁵

Jandel was convinced that there is a positive correlation between study and regular observance. He said that the Dominican Constitutions emphasize the necessity of subjecting the body to the soul while maintaining reasonable limits, e.g. providing dispensations for students. Observing the Constitutions simultaneously develops the regular life while restraining the animal aspects of our lives through the various austerities that the legislation prescribed. Study is aided by the silence and spiritual exhortations and readings which are essential aspects of religious observance. Jandel believed that the regular life allows for a slow absorption or infiltration of knowledge. However, the human desire for knowledge must always be subordinated to the human spirit. Truth is found in self-detachment, in the silent encounter with God, in penance, and in humility. For Jandel,

²⁶⁵CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 280-2.

the friar who is faithful to the Order's observance becomes capable of penetrating the supernatural depth of doctrine and of incorporating and conserving it in order to love the truth for God rather than for earthly or temporal reasons. In the tradition of St. Dominic, Jandel believed that, for Dominicans, the end or purpose of all knowledge is to "procurer le salut des âmes."²⁶⁶

After two papal appointments as head of the Order of Preachers, Jandel was elected Master General on June 3, 1862 by a general chapter. He was elected for what had now become a twelve year term. Lacordaire had died on November 21 of the previous year after having been elected for a second time (1858) as provincial of France, a position which he resigned a few months before his death. He had been received into the French Academy in early 1861.²⁶⁷ Jandel himself did not live to complete his term of office. He was sixty-two years old when he died in Rome on December 11, 1872.²⁶⁸

5. *Lacordaire and Jandel: different Romantic perspectives*

Lacordaire and Jandel were both Romantics, deeply

²⁶⁶CORMIER, *Vie du Rme P.A.-V. Jandel*, pp. 285-90.

²⁶⁷BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 122; Henri LACORDAIRE, *Henri Lacordaire, Témoins de la Foi*, Intro. et choix de textes par Jean Laporte & P. Lahache ([Tournai]: Desclée & Cie, n.d.), p. 62.

²⁶⁸BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 136.

affected by the Romantic revival of Catholicism in France in the nineteenth century. Both men were profoundly committed to the re-evangelization of France. Both men believed that the Dominican Order could and should play a key role in that process. Both men were ultramontanists, looking to the pope in Rome as the ultimate authority in matters religious. Lacordaire and Jandel had so much in common yet were so fundamentally different. Indeed, both were Romantics yet even their Romantic perspectives were very different. Lacordaire's Romanticism was unique among Catholics of his era: his heart was Catholic to the core yet like secular Romantics of his time, he affirmed the highest ideals of the French Revolution, liberty, equality and fraternity along with the new world that came out of that seminal event. One of the great projects of his life was the reconciliation of the church and modern society, of "Dieu et liberté." Jandel, like most Catholics of his day, particularly those involved in the revival of religious life, was leery of this project, sensing a lack of comfort between Catholicism with its absolute claims and a world which exalted various freedoms and democracy. Four years after Lacordaire's death, Jandel said: "...je n'aime pas cette expression réconcilier l'Eglise avec la société, car je tiens que c'est la société qu'il faut réconcilier avec l'Eglise." Like so many of his Catholic compatriots, he found himself ill at ease in the modern

secular society. Like some of them but unlike others, Jandel looked back nostalgically not to the Old Regime but to the Middle Ages.²⁶⁹

Lacordaire was a man passionately concerned about freedom. This passion united him with secular Romantics of his day. He was especially attracted to the Dominican Order and saw it as especially suited to post-Revolution France because its government represented "une liberté admirable" and was thoroughly democratic.²⁷⁰ He saw Dominicans as the "most free of men." In his famous *Mémoire* published just before he entered the novitiate, Lacordaire said that Dominican superiors have the permanent right to grant the brothers dispensations from the Order's legislation in situations where the "yoke" of common life would interfere with the freedom for doing good. In a famous letter to F. Ozanam, Lacordaire spoke of dispensations: "...cette mortification n'étant que le moyen d'atteindre un but, le supérieur en dispense au besoin." Unlike Lacordaire, Jandel took a very cautious approach to dispensations. He stressed not freedom but law, Constitutions, legislation, observance, obedience, authority,

²⁶⁹BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, pp. 210-15.

²⁷⁰LACORDAIRE, *Lettres*, p. 114.

tradition.²⁷¹

6. *Jandel: typical of 19th century religious superiors;
Lacordaire: untypical*

Jandel, like so many others involved in the founding or refounding of religious communities in nineteenth century France, looked to the past for models. Although they were very much committed to evangelizing their contemporaries, they patterned their orders and congregations on those of earlier, pre-Revolution times, e.g the seventeenth century. Jandel looked back to the thirteenth century, absolutizing the primitive Dominican Order in an historically questionable manner. Lacordaire, in contrast, chose an Order founded in the Middle Ages only because it fit the needs of his time and of his century, a century which he loved so well. Quoting Schiller, he said: "celui qui a été de son temps a été de tous les temps."²⁷² Lacordaire's uniqueness among French religious of the nineteenth century among those who re-established religious life as well as the uniqueness of his understanding of religious life in nineteenth century France, is integrally related to his absorption in his own century and in its loves,

²⁷¹LACORDAIRE, *Mémoire*(1839), p. 17; BONVIN, *Lacordaire-Jandel*, p. 215; LACORDAIRE, *Lettres*, p. 113.

²⁷²LACORDAIRE, *Lettres*, p. 112.

chief among them being freedom.

CHAPTER SIX
EVALUATION OF LACORDAIRE'S UNDERSTANDING OF "RESTORATION"
OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

You may perhaps ask why we have chosen to re-establish an old order rather than to found a new one. We shall give two answers. First, the grace to be the founder of an order is the highest and most exceptional that God gives to his saints, and it has not been given to us. And secondly, if God were to grant us the power to create a new religious order, we are sure that, after much reflection, we should discover nothing newer or more adapted to our time and its needs than the rule of St. Dominic. Nothing about it is old except its history, and we should see no need to torment our mind simply for the pleasure of dating from yesterday.²⁷³

In these famous words, Henri Lacordaire succinctly expressed why he had chosen to restore the Dominican Order to France in the nineteenth century. This quote introduces the reader to the understanding of what "restoration" of the Order meant to him and to the uniqueness of that understanding in the context of other projects of founding and refounding religious communities in France during that period. The words above appear in Lacordaire's *Mémoire pour le Rétablissement en France de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs* as an answer to a

²⁷³LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 21.

hypothetical question posed by the French public as to why one would re-establish an old, even medieval, order for the purpose of re-evangelizing the nation rather than establish a new order that would be seemingly more suited to address the actual needs of a modern, post-Revolution society because it would better understand the milieu that it was addressing. The quote was also an actual response to a question posed to Lacordaire by Buchez, the Christian socialist thinker who had deeply influenced several of the earliest recruits to the French Dominican restoration project. Buchez believed that modern civilization, the principles of the French Revolution and visionary plans for the future of European societies all found their roots in Christianity. Lacordaire was in agreement with him on much of this but obviously disagreed with his assessment that the Dominican Order was ill-suited to contribute to the task of reconciling Christianity with the modern world because it was too tied to its ancient history and continued to arouse considerable antipathy against itself because of its origins and past, e.g. relationship to the Inquisition. Buchez thought that it would be better to found a new order. Lacordaire answered Buchez and other critics of his Dominican restoration project in the celebrated quote which begins this dissertation's final chapter.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴André DUVAL, "Lacordaire et Buchez: idéalisme révolutionnaire et réveil religieux en 1839," *Revue des sciences philosophiques*

1. *State of Catholic Church in 19th Century France*

As we have seen in this dissertation, the nineteenth century was a paradoxical period for the Catholic Church in France, a time of great losses yet also of significant gains and accomplishments. The church never completely recovered from the losses suffered during the Revolution. The relationship between church and state continued to be tenuous until their legal separation in the early twentieth century. Throughout the nineteenth century, a significant portion of French Catholics refused to accept the legitimacy of the post-Ancien Régime governments and chose not to participate in them. During the last two-thirds of the century, after the initial excitement of the Romantic revival of religion in France, the Catholic Church became increasingly marginalized from the nation's cultural and intellectual life as the elites continued to reject Catholicism as irrelevant. A pious and committed but ill-educated clergy lacked the competence to challenge the positivistic assumptions of the leading scientists and philosophers. Worse yet, the church lost a large number of working people during the last century and was well on the way toward the loss of the masses, a process which was nearly completed in the twentieth century.

On the plus side, the active Catholic minority in nineteenth century France made significant accomplishments in spite of great opposition. Vocations to the clergy, many of a high moral quality, increased during this period. Many religious orders and congregations of men and women were founded or refounded. They devoted themselves to preaching, teaching, nursing and even pure contemplation. Many of these religious went to newly-opened foreign mission territories, especially in Africa and the South Pacific. During the nineteenth century, French religious, including the unprecedented phenomenon of large numbers of women going to the missions, represented a disproportionately high percentage of the world's Catholic missionaries. Many lay Catholics were involved in new organizations like Pauline Jaricot's Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Frédéric Ozanam's Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Others, inspired by increased devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the revival of piety in general, went on pilgrimage to various shrines. Emphasis on devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and on the need for national reparation for attacks on God and the church since the Revolution culminated in the erection of the huge basilica at Montmartre in Paris in the latter part of the century. The greatest accomplishment of the embattled nineteenth century French Catholics, of course, was the restoration of a church that the Revolution had "left for

dead."

2. *"Restoration" as "return to the past"*

"Restoration" was, indeed, the key word for Catholics in nineteenth century France. As has been emphasized in this dissertation, most nineteenth century French Catholics were committed to a "restoration" of the church which involved a Romantic return to the past, a return to the relationship between church and state which existed before the Revolution, a return to an integral Catholic society. Many romanticized the Middle Ages with its devotion to Our Lady and the saints, with its Gothic cathedrals, with its new religious orders and their various customs and observances. The medieval period was seen as the Age of Faith and as the ideal and model for the Christian centuries which followed. Nineteenth century French Catholics were staunchly committed to bringing their compatriots back to the church; this usually involved looking to pre-Revolution times for models of evangelization and rejecting the prevailing values of contemporary French society such as religious liberty. Restoration of Catholicism, for most of them, was integrally related to "reaction" against the modern world and the modern society in which they unwillingly found themselves.

This understanding of restoration was characteristic not

only of French Catholics in general during the nineteenth century but also typified the way in which the various founders and refounders of religious life viewed their projects. They were "restoring" religious communities, i.e. bringing back those which had been outlawed during the Revolution while looking to the past, often the seventeenth century but sometimes as far back as the thirteenth century, for models for new communities. In chapter two of this dissertation, the phenomenal growth of religious communities during the nineteenth century was noted as well as the fact that those who founded or refounded these congregations were very much concerned about ministering to people in their contemporary situations yet almost always looked to styles of religious life from pre-Revolutionary times as their inspiration. Creative, innovative founders like Dominic, Francis, Ignatius, Jane de Chantal, or Vincent de Paul, with their dynamic new concepts of consecrated life, were conspicuously absent during the last century.

Like the majority of French Catholics of their century, nineteenth century founders and refounders tended to be politically conservative. The modern, democratic state was anathema to them. They opposed the principles of the Revolution, i.e. liberty, equality, fraternity, as well as the liberalism and socialism which they saw as emanating from 1789. Religious liberty was associated with relativism in its

various forms; it was incompatible with the traditional view that "error has no rights." Distrustful of liberal governments in France which at best continued to deprive the Catholic Church of its former privileged status, religious founders and refounders often looked to Rome, to the pope as their protector, as the guardian of religious congregations and of the Catholic Christian heritage that had informed France throughout its history. During the nineteenth century, the support of the papacy played a crucial role in the restoration of religious life in France and elsewhere in Europe.

In this dissertation, the role of Romanticism in the revival of Catholicism and of religious life in France during the nineteenth century has been emphasized constantly. Chapter one discussed the Romantic stress on the heart and on feelings and passion which had a tremendous impact on religion in France during that century and which expressed itself in a revival of pious devotions and practices. Preaching, whether done in conferences at cathedrals or in parish missions, focused on the heart, on feelings, on arousing emotional responses which would lead the listener to a passionate involvement with the Catholic faith. Romantic preachers such as De Mazenod and Lacordaire exemplified this. Religious communities, often dedicated to the Sacred Heart or to Our Lady, emerged in great number in response to the emphasis on

giving one's heart totally to Christ, on serving one's fellows, and on making reparation to the "broken heart" of Jesus for the sinfulness of French society.

3. *Lacordaire and contemporary secular Romanticism*

Like most nineteenth century French Catholics, Lacordaire was thoroughly Romantic. Like others involved in the restoration of religious life in that century, e.g. De Mazenod, Guéranger, Jandel, Lacordaire was indeed a Romantic, a man of the "heart." However, his Romantic perspective differed from that of most of his nineteenth century Catholic contemporaries, whether religious or lay. This difference was responsible for his unique understanding of "restoration", whether applied to the church as a whole or to religious life in particular.

Lacordaire's Romanticism was much more typical of that of his secular contemporaries than of his co-religionists. French secular Romantics of the first half of the nineteenth century were true children and heirs of their nation's end of the eighteenth century Revolution: they loved the world that had emerged from it with its ideals of liberty, fraternity, equality. They especially loved liberty in its various expressions. They placed great importance on freedom of religion, of the press, of education, and of association. They

highly valued free, democratic institutions. They loved their own country yet felt a kinship with peoples everywhere who struggled to be liberated from oppressive governments, e.g. the peoples of Ireland and Poland.

Throughout this dissertation, reference has been made to Lacordaire's intense love of liberty which began with his liberal, Romantic education and which lasted to the end of his life. Unlike so many of his fellow Catholics who saw their age's love affair with liberty as incompatible with Christian faith, Lacordaire believed that liberty originated in Christianity. The great project of his life, capsulized in the "L'Avenir period" with its emphasis on freedom of religion and education, was the reconciliation of "Dieu et liberté." When he said in the words which began this chapter that "we should discover nothing newer or more adapted to our time and its needs than the rule of St. Dominic," he had in mind especially the free and democratic structures that had always been characteristic of the Dominican Order. In his 1839 *Essay on the Re-establishment in France of the Order of Preachers* in which he tried to win public approval for bringing the Dominicans back to France, Lacordaire appealed to his compatriots' love of liberty, emphasizing the Order's compatibility with that love. In writing in that document that his choice of the Order of Preachers "suits our nature by

its government," he was speaking not simply for himself but also for his freedom-loving society.²⁷⁵ His absorption in the cause of liberty was a guiding principle for the whole of his Dominican life, reflecting itself especially in his disagreement with Jandel, highlighted in chapter five of this dissertation, which was characterized by Lacordaire's stress on freedom, e.g. the role of dispensations, over Jandel's stress on rigorous observance.

Like the secular Romantics who listened to him so attentively during the first half of the 1830's when he gave his celebrated Stanislas and Notre Dame conferences, Lacordaire had a great love of the period in which he lived. He believed that it was an especially valuable gift for a person to be able to "aimer son temps" (love one's time). In company with the secular Romantics of his day, with writers, philosophers, scientists, Lacordaire loved living in nineteenth century France with its post-Revolution emphasis on liberty, equality, and fraternity and its optimistic attitude about the future. Unlike these others, however, Lacordaire believed that Catholicism was the key to the realization of the highest goals and dreams of French society. Only a re-evangelized France, reconverted to the Catholicism which had so informed its history, would be capable of realizing liberty

²⁷⁵LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 20.

to the fullest. Linked with the need to love one's century, to love one's society, for Lacordaire, was the need to know the time and place in which one finds one's self. He once wrote that: "the supreme art is to know the force of the time in which one lives."²⁷⁶ He knew that the "force" of his century emanated from the French Revolution and its ideals, albeit unfulfilled, of liberty, equality and fraternity. He knew that it would continue to express itself in a drive for free and democratic institutions in France and elsewhere.

Although Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* did not appear until 1859, the theory of evolution was "in the air" throughout the nineteenth century. An evolutionary perspective on the physical world, on society, and on history was gaining increasing acceptance among the educated classes. Secular Romantics were especially fascinated by this new understanding of reality as dynamic, as constantly changing, as organic. In the first chapter of this dissertation, it was said that the "Romantic mind" emphasized organic wholeness and development. Romantics of the nineteenth century interpreted reality as a whole, but also history in particular, from this perspective. Viewing all time as interconnected, they were interested in the past in order to better appreciate the present and the future. For them,

²⁷⁶LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. ix.

history and all reality are always in process, always evolving. There is no point in history that one can point to as the completion of the process of development. History itself must be seen as an organic whole. Particular historical periods have their own intrinsic significance and perfection yet can never be fully grasped in themselves. The "meaning" of history is comprehended only through an appreciation of the entire process which includes past, present and future.

4. *Dynamic understanding of history*

We have seen that Lacordaire was profoundly affected by the society in which he lived. In the nineteenth century, that society increasingly understood itself in evolutionary terms. Lacordaire's understanding of history, especially as expressed in his plan and execution of the refounding of the Dominican Order in France, was very much influenced by the century that he so loved and accepted. He believed that if the Dominican Order was to successfully evangelize "le monde issu de la Révolution," it had to accept the society in which it lived as it actually existed; it had to adapt its mission accordingly.²⁷⁷ Lacordaire's dynamic, developmental,

²⁷⁷Bernard MONTAGNES, "Ouverture ou résistance à la modernité? Le rétablissement de l'ordre dominicain en France au dix-neuvième siècle," *History of European Ideas* 3 (No. 2) (1982): 188.

evolutionary view of history was so different than the static, reactionary way in which most of his French Catholic contemporaries looked upon history. Epitomized by Jandel, they looked to some idealized past period, surely before the Revolution, often as far back as the Middle Ages, as the high point of their Catholic and national history. For them, restoration of the French Catholic Church in general, or of religious orders in particular, was a "restauration archéologique," a fidelity to some idealized past integrally connected to a refusal of modernity.²⁷⁸ Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration" in relation to his refounding of the Dominican Order in France was unique in his time and country because it was rooted in an acceptance of the modern world and in a passion for liberty and democratic institutions. It was unique because it was inspired by a type of Romanticism whose worldview was organic, dynamic, and evolutionary. Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration" was unique because it was inseparable from love of the age in which he lived. He saw the task of the church as evangelizing the society in which it actually found itself rather than returning the faithful to some more "Catholic" period in history. Unlike some others involved in refounding religious communities in nineteenth century France, Lacordaire

²⁷⁸MONTAGNES, "Ouverture ou résistance à la modernité?...", p. 190.

rejected any notion of restoration which saw it as taking refuge in some glorious past or distancing oneself from an unacceptable present.²⁷⁹ Unique among the religious founders and refounders of his time, he not only believed that France was in "un état irrémédiablement nouveau" but accepted, affirmed, and loved this situation.²⁸⁰ He saw restoration of the Dominican Order in the "new" France not as a return to the past or a repudiation of the present but as renewal, recreation, and re-invigoration of a religious order whose long and fruitful history was evidence of its universal adaptability.

In the quote which opened this chapter, Lacordaire aptly expressed his understanding of Dominican restoration in these words: "there is nothing newer or more adapted to our time and its needs than the rule of St. Dominic." For him, this rule was not a static document which defined the Dominican Order once and for all in the early thirteenth century but is a flexible, liberal, democratic instrument which enables the Order to renew itself continually. For him, adherence to the rule of St. Dominic was not a question of getting back to the way in which the rule and Primitive Constitutions were originally understood and observed but of adapting them to the

²⁷⁹MONTAGNES, "Ouverture ou résistance à la modernité?...", p. 185.

²⁸⁰FOISSET, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, tome premier, p. 383.

needs of the church in every time and place. From Lacordaire's Romantic perspective, the Dominican Order is a dynamic and living entity that is always growing, developing, evolving, moving towards a perfection which is never reached in any single period of its history. Capable of adapting to every age and culture, the Order is as much at home in a nineteenth century liberal, democratic society as it is in a thirteenth century feudal one. The Dominican Order is ever new, continually being recreated; "nothing about it is old except its history."

5. *Dynamic understanding of tradition*

Lacordaire had a great respect for tradition both in regard to the church and the Order. Like his famous contemporary, Cardinal John Newman, another Romantic Catholic convert and eminent preacher, he saw tradition as dynamic, living, organic, and developing. For him, fidelity to tradition, whether that of the church as a whole or of the Dominican Order in particular, was not a matter of simply adhering to what was taught and practiced in the past but necessarily involved re-interpreting tradition in ways that are intelligible and meaningful for a particular age and culture. Tradition involves not merely the past but also the present and the future; these three moments form an organic

whole. Change is an integral aspect of tradition. According to Lacordaire, both the church and the Dominican Order, are living organisms which have a constant identity which makes them what they are yet they also are continually renewed by a process of change which is characteristic of life itself. In the *Essay on the Re-Establishment in France of the Order of Preachers*, Lacordaire wrote: "the church today is identically the same as that of the Middle Ages by its hierarchy, its dogmas, its rituals, its morals." He continued: "and yet how different it is." He believed that this was also true of the Order of Preachers and of all orders. Lacordaire's understanding of tradition was an integral aspect of his restoration of the Dominican Order: the Order in nineteenth century France was identical to that of the thirteenth and subsequent centuries in terms of its ends and necessary means yet also distinctly different in terms of its adaptation to the needs of a society that was so far removed from its medieval origins.²⁸¹

In the late twentieth century, in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, the Dominican Order has faced the task of adapting itself to the needs of a world that is far different than even Lacordaire could have imagined in the nineteenth century. It has committed itself, as have all

²⁸¹LACORDAIRE, *Essay*, p. 21.

religious communities, to the ongoing task of renewal as mandated in the various documents of Vatican II, a renewal that is faithful to the best moments of its history yet is always in the process of developing its tradition. The Dominican general chapter of 1968, held in Chicago, committed the Order to the project of revising its Constitutions so that it might be better adapted to the present moment and hence, capable of more effective preaching and ministry to people of the late twentieth century. During the years since that historic meeting, the Order of Preachers has continued to renew, recreate, and revitalize itself, realizing that it can never return to any past "golden age" yet it can also never forget the charism given it by St. Dominic nor the witness of those who have lived that charism over the course of nearly eight hundred years. Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration", which stressed love and commitment for one's own time, once so controversial even for Dominicans, has now become the guiding vision of the Order of which "nothing is old about it except its history."

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that Lacordaire's understanding of religious life was unique among those who founded and refounded religious orders in nineteenth century France. To a significant extent, this uniqueness was rooted in a Romantic perspective which had much more in common with the secular Romantics of the era than with most of Lacordaire's fellow Catholic Romantics. He shared with the secular Romantics of nineteenth century France a love of liberty and of the world which emerged from the French Revolution; he shared with them also a worldview that had been greatly influenced by the actual society in which they lived and by its needs. He knew and appreciated the deepest aspirations of his secular contemporaries. He "baptized" these aspirations by his insistence that they were "at heart" Christian and could only be fulfilled through Christianity. Lacordaire believed that the re-establishment of religious communities, especially the Dominican Order, was an essential element in "baptizing" the secular Romanticism of his century, in helping his compatriots to realize that a truly free France had to acknowledge and affirm its Christian roots and heritage, and in re-evangelizing a people who were not sufficiently aware that liberty, equality, and fraternity are rooted

ultimately, not in the French Revolution, but in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lacordaire's understanding of religious life can and should be called a "virtual" theology of religious life. This is true even though he was neither a professional theologian nor a systematic thinker. He was essentially a man of action, a doer rather than a profound thinker. Although Lacordaire never systematically articulated a theology of religious life, he has indeed given to the church of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries an authentic theology of religious life. This "virtual," because unsystematically presented, theology of religious life was expressed in Lacordaire's writings, sermons, and in his active involvement in the restoration and governance of the Dominican Order in France. It is rooted in the gospels, in the Christian tradition as it has developed through the centuries, in the modern appreciation for the liberty of the individual person, and in a love and concern for the age in which one lives and in its needs.

Lacordaire's theology of religious life was not widely accepted in the century that he loved so much. This held true even in his own Dominican Order as we have seen in our discussion of the relationship between Lacordaire and Jandel. However, the memory of Lacordaire and his ideas about church, liberty, and religious life, so rooted in their time yet so

ahead of it, remained. That memory is very much evident in the writings of the Second Vatican Council. In conciliar documents, the Catholic Church, at the highest level, expressed itself in terms that bring to mind Lacordaire's theology of religious life, his belief that the church must be open to the "signs" of the times in which it finds itself as it continues its pilgrim journey through history, and his conviction that freedom is at the core of the human person and must be respected, even in the choice of religion.

The period since the Second Vatican Council has been very challenging for the entire church, for all of its religious communities, and especially for Lacordaire's beloved Order of Preachers. Nearly all religious communities have experienced great losses as they struggled to renew themselves in accordance with the teachings of Vatican II. The term "restoration" is increasingly employed to describe the attempt to reverse these losses and to make the church and religious life strong and vital forces in the world once more. Unfortunately, some in the church are in danger of making the same mistakes as did so many nineteenth century French Catholics. By looking back too nostalgically and uncritically to the period before Vatican II, by refusing to seriously engage themselves in the age in which they live and to embrace that in it which is good, they risk making Catholic Christianity irrelevant and ineffective in contemporary

society. Lacordaire's dynamic interpretation of "restoration," unique for his own century, can continue to be a powerful guide for the church in the twenty-first century as it teaches us to "aimer son temps" (love one's time) and to open ourselves to the signs of the times.

In this dissertation, I have concentrated on Lacordaire's understanding of religious life and the uniqueness of this significant contribution which he has made to the church. However, considerable work remains to be done on various aspects of the life and thought of a figure who played so dominant a role in his own time and who has so deeply influenced our own. Among the many possibilities for future investigation by scholars of Lacordaire, I think that an exploration of his understanding of the role of providence in the Christian life would be an especially rich, relevant and important undertaking. Lacordaire believed that divine providence was the key element in all of the crucial decisions of his life. Chief among these were the decisions to study for the priesthood, to retire from the pulpit at Notre Dame Cathedral at the height of his popularity, and to refound the Dominican Order in France. A deeper appreciation of the role that Lacordaire believed to have been played by providence in his decision-making would be helpful to all who seek a deeper understanding of this very public yet intensely private man who contributed so much to the religious and political life of

nineteenth France.

I think that another very interesting area of investigation for Lacordaire scholars would be the relationship between his understanding and "virtual" theology of religious life and that expressed in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Lacordaire's understanding of "restoration" in relation to the refounding of the Dominican Order in nineteenth century France was indeed unique for its time. Was it also prophetic? Although Jandel's vision of Dominican life had the dominant influence on the Order's development well into the present century, Lacordaire's remained a kind of "dangerous memory." It appears to have finally found its "moment of triumph" in the Second Vatican Council and its seminal documents. Reminiscent of Lacordaire's argument in his 1839 *Essay, Lumen Gentium*(1964), the Council's great document on the nature of the church, affirmed that the Christian who answers the call to religious consecration fortifies his or her freedom rather than renounces it.²⁸² *Perfectae Caritatis*(1965), the Council's decree on the renewal of religious life, also emphasized the positive relationship between freedom, so important for

²⁸²Austin FLANNERY, general editor, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1975), p. 403.

Lacordaire, and the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.²⁸³

Reminiscent of Lacordaire, *Perfectae Caritatis* said that authentic renewal of religious life requires a constant return to the sources of the whole Christian life and of the particular religious congregation coupled with the adaptation of these sources to the "changed conditions of our time." The document specifically asked orders which combine apostolic life with choral office and monastic observances, e.g. the Order of Preachers, to adapt their way of life to the needs of the proper apostolate. As has been discussed earlier, this was a particular concern of Lacordaire's. Another of his preoccupations, education, was emphasized in *Perfectae Caritatis*: religious, depending on their intellectual capacities and temperament, should be properly instructed "concerning the behavior-patterns, the emotional attitudes, and the thought-processes of modern society."²⁸⁴ More than a century earlier, Lacordaire had anticipated this by stressing the necessity of knowing one's time in order to serve and evangelize it effectively. Like the Old Testament prophets who prepared the people of Israel for the coming of the Messiah, was Lacordaire the nineteenth century prophet who

²⁸³FLANNERY, *Vatican Council II: the Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, p. 611.

²⁸⁴FLANNERY, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, p. 612, 616, 621.

prepared the people of God in France and elsewhere for the Second Vatican Council's renewal of religious life? It is a question worthy of serious investigation.

Foisset's biography of Lacordaire remains the most authoritative of the many that have been written in the nearly century and a half since his death. However, a truly critical and scholarly biography, reflecting the highest standards of modern scholarship, is still needed. The enormous work done by Duval and others in making all of Lacordaire's letters and other writings accessible, the considerable amount of research on topics pertinent to Lacordaire and his times that has been completed up to the present, and contemporary computer technology, make such a biographical project realizable. Writing such a biography would be a formidable but immensely rewarding task for any scholar which would constitute a major contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in the modern world, to the history of the Catholic Church in France, to the history of the Dominican Order, and to the history of the development of religious life. One can only hope that some competent scholar will before long provide us with such a truly authoritative and comprehensive study of Lacordaire.

At the beginning of this dissertation, mention was made of the fact that very little has been written in English about Lacordaire during the twentieth century. Almost none of

Lacordaire's letters or other writings which have been edited in the twentieth century are available in English. Almost none of the many books or articles about Lacordaire and related topics which have been published in this century have been translated into English. It is understandable that the French-speaking world would have the greatest interest in a man who so much identified with his country and its culture yet it also must be acknowledged that Lacordaire's contributions are of universal significance. I think that it is important that competent English translations be made of Lacordaire's writings and of significant studies about his life and thought.

Like that of all great figures in history, the influence of Lacordaire extends well beyond the time in which he lived. His understanding of religious life, his commitment to religious liberty, and his devotion to the preaching mission of the Dominican Order, have enriched the life of the whole church, particularly through the efforts of such illustrious sons of his beloved French province as Marie-Dominique Chenu and Yves Congar. Lacordaire's Romantic ideals, so unique for his own age and so suspect in the eyes of both secular liberals and his fellow Catholics in the nineteenth century, are easily reconcilable with the way in which the church has now come to understand the vocation of religious and the relationship between church and state. The church at the

highest level, especially in the person of Pope John Paul II, now loudly affirms freedom, so valued by Lacordaire, as constitutive of the human person and essential for human dignity. Misunderstood in his own time, Lacordaire can and should, in our time, become a guiding light for the church as it continually seeks to renew and re-invigorate itself.

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