

CRITICS OF THE
ENLIGHTENMENT

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ENLIGHTENMENT

**READINGS IN THE FRENCH
COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION**

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
CHRISTOPHER OLAF BLUM

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FOREWORD

PHILIPPE BÉNÉTON

The texts that Christopher O. Blum has chosen and elegantly translated will doubtless appear very strange or foreign to the American reader. The American nation was born modern; the French counter-revolutionary tradition was born anti-modern, in reaction against that singular, formidable, and extraordinary event that was the French Revolution. This tradition has fought a rear-guard action, and its light has dimmed with the triumph of modern ideas. Its history is, in the end, that of a failure, and a failure that, to some, gives the lie to its doctrine. Counter-revolutionary thought appealed to history and its wisdom against the revolutionary break from it, and, therefore, falls under its own condemnation because the course of history has not vindicated it.

Must we therefore read the texts of Maistre, Bonald, Le Play, and the others as the expression of a bygone era in the intellectual and political history of France? To a large extent, yes, certainly. Yet the interest of Christopher O. Blum's work does not end there. The texts that he has made available, most for the first time to an English audience, and that he has presented with care (texts generally forgotten, and sometimes even difficult to find in the French), are historically significant; some of

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them are also significant as literature. Thus Chateaubriand, who stands somewhat apart from the others and is difficult to classify, has strongly marked our literary history, while Maistre wrote with vigor and, at times, brilliance. Yet they are more than merely stylish. As the editor points out in his preface, these texts also raise questions of political and social philosophy that remain unanswered. More particularly, the counter-revolutionaries' critique of modern society is far from having lost all its relevance. On the contrary, the more the principle of the sovereignty of the individual is immoderately affirmed, the more their critique gains in importance. Put otherwise, if these texts are strongly dated, they are also, in certain respects and subject to qualifications, very much living ones. There is a good use for counter-revolutionary thought. What follow are my reflections upon what that use might be.

THE WEAKNESSES OF FRENCH COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT

In essence, the weakness would seem to be the following: counter-revolutionary thought cannot be upheld in the full extent of its traditionalism and consequent rejection of universalism. Its critique of theoretical reason and political voluntarism is too extreme. The counter-revolutionaries are too obdurately opposed to all of modernity taken as a unitary phenomenon; that is, they fail to make distinctions.

First, as to their traditionalism, the counter-revolutionaries, or European conservatives, praised tradition as being opposed to the *philosophes'* pretentious and unrealistic use of reason. Yet they only ever defended some traditions, those of old Europe. For a time, it is true, this traditionalism was their strength, for against those who had gone astray, they could point to the example of a long history. But as soon as history had taken a new path, and had stayed on it, they ran into an insurmountable difficulty. How does one set one

history against another? How does one appeal to tradition while rejecting those which are forming and developing within modern regimes? In France, notably, the more time went by, the greater seemed the contradiction between an appeal to the continuity of history and the desire to restore the *Ancien Régime*. The counter-revolutionaries were thus led to mutilate history and to ossify tradition. The need to sort things out and to take stock of things piecemeal, therefore, condemns their own criterion.

Now counter-revolutionary thought might well respond by saying that we must distinguish between true tradition, which was forged by the experience of the ages, and the false or corrupt traditions born from a violent uprising of theoretical reason. This does not, however, by itself remove the difficulty. Traditionalism, even limited in this way, leads logically to a cultural relativism difficult to reconcile with what the counter-revolutionaries otherwise held. Must we, in the name of tradition, place barbarous practices on the same level as civilized ones? Were the ancient Romans who opposed Christianity in the name of tradition right after all? To Maistre and his disciples, traditionalism took a radical form thanks to their opposition to the abstract universalism of the *philosophes*. Counter-revolutionary thought, therefore, lodged itself too much in the particular to the detriment of the universal. It manifestly went too far: tradition only ever has conditional virtues. A substantial politics can never be founded without reference to nature.

Second, their anti-rationalism. Theory, said the counter-revolutionaries, wasn't worth the trouble. Men can rule themselves in the details, that is to say, in precise and concrete matters, but they are powerless to think of the political and social order as a whole. The realities are too complicated and too variable for human reason to be able to reduce them to general formulae. Those who wish to reform everything by reference to abstract principles are fools.

This counter-revolutionary critique of the capacities of reason, opposed as it was directly to the confidence of the *philosophes*, is, clearly, too radical. The right rule, it seems, is this: we must make

distinctions. One might indeed argue that Condorcet was a fool, but one ought not treat Montesquieu or Madison in the same manner. Modern political experience speaks of a variety of things. It speaks of the deadly consequences of an ideological use of reason that takes itself for Providence and misunderstands the nature and condition of man. It also speaks of the success, at least considered with respect to its own objectives, of the moderate version of liberal modernity. The founding fathers of liberalism promised civil peace, liberty, and comfort for all. In the main, these promises have been kept. Political and social reason is not as powerless as the counter-revolutionaries claimed. It has, for instance, produced these fruits. Political power has been domesticated. In the West, politics continues to divide men but their disputes are kept peaceful and no one risks his life or his liberty should he displease the reigning power. Conventions that artificially separate men have been destroyed or attenuated: the aristocratic conventions of the *Ancien Régime*, prejudices founded upon race, nationality, religion. Man's recognition of his common humanity has progressed. The Christian Gospel has always acted towards this end, but not always historic Christianity. Consequently, and in certain respects (to which we might add the favorable effects of scientific and economic rationality), our world has become more human. The will to use reason can be beneficial. After a long period of resistance, the Catholic Church has taken note of this progress: "It is certainly true, that a more heightened sense of the dignity and unique character of the human person as well as the respect due to the workings of the individual conscience constitutes a real gain of modern culture" (John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*). The counter-revolutionary dichotomy between past and present in which the past is idealized and the present rejected en bloc misunderstands great swaths of reality.

There is, however, more to be said. Liberal modernity is not a simple unity. If in some respects it is more in conformity with nature, in others it has left her far behind. In the face of this development, a part of the counter-revolutionary critique can be vindicated.

**ON THE HERITAGE OF
COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT**

Our liberal modernity has departed from nature by emptying its own principles—equality, democracy, and the rights of man—of all their substance. Why the rights of man? Not because of some common nature, but because individual wills are sovereign. Why equality? Not because the fact of being human carries with it some meaning, but because the humanity of man is reduced to his indeterminate liberty. Individuals are autonomous; they are sovereign. The principle has become almost official since the moral revolution of the 1960s, and it is unfolding logically before us. Against this principle and its consequences, counter-revolutionary thought offers some antidotes.

To the myth of autonomy, it responds that the man of the radical version of modernity, the perfectly autonomous man, is a fiction. The French counter-revolutionaries, after Aristotle, Saint Thomas, and Burke, ceaselessly insisted, with arguments difficult to refute, upon the social dimension of human existence. Man does not make himself by himself; he receives from others (his relatives, his contemporaries, past generations) much more than he gives. Man does not live alone; he has a deep, fundamental need for others because he is a being constituted by relations. He who would exercise autonomous judgment in fact relies upon a thousand things he takes on the authority of others: that the earth is round, that Napoleon existed, that his parents are his parents, and so on. He who would attempt to live in an individualistic manner leaves behind him ties that matter, particularly those of the heart. Full and complete autonomy is a dream and a pernicious one at that. The consequence of the dream has been that in the midst of modern society, strong ties among men have been discarded in favor of weak ones. Modern individualism loosens true social ties, which are ties of attachment, in favor of contractual and utilitarian relations. Solid attachments are those which are created in the midst of communities, whether they be familial, religious, local, political, or profes-

sional communities. A good society cannot be reduced to a collection of individuals.

More fundamentally, a radical autonomy founded upon an indeterminate liberty is at once unrealistic and dangerous. It is unrealistic because every man is supported by things that do not depend upon himself alone. Each of us is in some sense free to think that two and two make five, that he will never die, that the past did not exist, and that hatred is the most beautiful thing in the world, but what would such a liberty signify other than the liberty to free oneself from the human race? An indeterminate liberty is also dangerous because the political world cannot be given order simply by appealing to the human will. The counter-revolutionary critique frequently underscored the truth that power cannot be regulated unless it submits to principles that are anterior to it and come from religion or nature. In a world in which indeterminate liberty reigns, political power will oscillate between the extremes of libertarianism and despotism, or will combine features of both.

Counter-revolutionary thought also offers a response to radical modernity's myth that it constitutes a providential system. Men, this myth holds, are innocent, whatever their conduct may be, and a technique will suffice to solve their problems. This system—a political organization, a social mechanism, or a pedagogical technique—will dispense agents of any substantial obligation. Against this form of utopianism, counter-revolutionary thought recalls simple and essential truths: that if the system is perverse, it can in no way be providential; that we cannot obtain the Good without asking agents to behave well; that morals count, and that it takes time to create good morals. Politics cannot be reduced to a mechanism.

From this perspective, the counter-revolutionary thinker who best shed light on the limited nature of any political solution is Edmund Burke. Politics, he said, is always a random collection. It achieves equilibrium when competing social ends agree to accept limits. Thus Burke's critique of the Rights of Man has lost little of its force: the language of modern rights only poorly takes the measure of reality because it is too categorical (it speaks of all or

nothing), while social life, except in extreme cases, must be thought of in incremental terms (in terms of the more and the less).

Counter-revolutionary thought, finally, responds also to the danger of abstraction present in modern thought. The counter-revolutionary thinkers tell us that modern thought tends to lose sight of the real man, the man of flesh and blood and bones. On the one hand, it tends to cut up the human subject into his social roles—as consumer, as subject to law, as aged or infirm—and thus tends towards ignoring man as a whole. The pure economist has a blind spot similar to that of the doctor who thinks of his patient as merely a collection of organs, or the jurist who cleaves to his own technique. On the other hand, modern abstraction tends to level everything in the name of its sacrosanct principle of equality. Vital differences are wiped away; merit loses its rights. The counter-revolutionaries doubtless went too far and misunderstood the political and social importance of equality for all men, but they usefully recall how much great example and great works mean to us, and how admiration helps us to live and to govern ourselves. The difficulty consists in holding together equality with inequalities. Here again, we must carefully proceed to look for a point of equilibrium.

Let us recapitulate. Counter-revolutionary thought had for its chief error the complete rejection of the modern world. The symmetrical error would be to reject all of counter-revolutionary thought. We must make distinctions. We must, as much as possible, sort out what is good in modernity and what is good in counter-revolutionary thinking. What we need to do, therefore, is to combine the following:

- The rejection of unconditional traditionalism but also radical constructivism. In other words, time is not necessarily right, but there are things that time alone can achieve. Political and social reason is not providence, but neither is it incapable of any good.

- The adherence to modern equality, inasmuch as it is the recognition of the honor of being human that belongs to all men, but the rejection of modern equality insofar as it is founded upon indeterminate liberty. There is a dignity, in part mysterious, proper to the human being as such, but it does not follow from this that all kinds of conduct are valid.
- The rejection of the sovereignty of the individual with the affirmation of the rights of conscience. Man is not and cannot be fully autonomous. It does not follow, however, that human communities have the right to be oppressive.

Put otherwise, the correct formula, or the least bad formula, is perhaps that of a conservative liberalism. In any event, it can only be a mixed formula, one that takes account of historical particularities. Burke and Tocqueville knew this. The French counter-revolutionaries insisted upon the weight of historical singularities, but, paradoxically, they were too attached to pure formulae.

INTRODUCTION

“The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.”¹ Edmund Burke’s righteous indignation was elicited by the insults dealt to Marie Antoinette in October of 1789, but his words were universal in intent, and they aptly summarize the changes brought to Europe by the Enlightenment. The French Revolution (1789–1815) was the Enlightenment in action, bringing a new order with Napoleon’s conquering armies. Gone was the age of chivalry, with its centuries-old aristocracy, its monarchies dating to the Middle Ages, and its religion and common culture inherited from the Roman Empire. The Revolution was the birth pang of an egalitarian, secular, and commercial society, and this was neither a mistake nor an impersonal evolution. The principal actors in the drama were well aware that they were enacting the Enlightenment’s plans for a new order. When Napoleon described his France as “thirty million people united by enlightenment, property, and

¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790], with an introduction by Russell Kirk (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1955), 111.

² Napoleon speaking in 1802 to his Council of State, quoted in François Furet, “Napoleon Bonaparte,” in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. François

commerce,”² he declared a program, not a statement of fact. His France was but tenuously united, and Europe has ever since been divided by the legacy of the Enlightenment and Revolution. Yet the changes wrought by the French Revolution and Napoleon were decisive. Like Burke, the far-seeing Joseph de Maistre knew he was living at the end of an age: “I die with Europe; I am in good company.”³

What died with the French Revolution was not merely a political order, it was an entire way of life. Georges Bernanos was surely right to say that “the drama of Europe is a spiritual drama.”⁴ European history is not driven by a change in the tools of production, it is driven by men, and men are moved by their convictions. “Political developments,” as Newman said, are “really the growth of ideas.”⁵ Knowing these truths, Maistre and his fellow critics of the Enlightenment sought something much more important than merely preserving or restoring the Old Regime. They knew as well as any that it had been rife with abuses. What they sought was to revivify Europe by returning to the traditions that had civilized her in the first place. Their writings were meant to vindicate principles they took to have timeless significance: monarchy, the union of throne and altar, and traditional culture based upon family, agriculture, and the customs, morals, and beliefs inherited from the Christian past. They sought nothing less than to preserve the spiritual inheritance of Europe.

It must, however, be said that this spiritual inheritance was not a disembodied spirit. The French conservatives of the early nineteenth century sought to vindicate the principles of the Old Regime

Furet and Mona Ozouf, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 279.

³ Joseph de Maistre to the count de Marcellus, 9 August 1819, quoted in Richard A. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 253.

⁴ Bernanos, *La Liberté pour quoi faire?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), 192.

⁵ John Henry Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, sixth edition (1878; reprinted Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 43.

not for their own sake, as if it were an antiquarian matter, but because they were convinced that these same principles could, if followed, again give birth to the kind of noble and truly human civilization that Europe had been at its best. This is precisely the spirit in which these authors are presented in this volume. There is no question today of restoring thrones. Yet to go forward we must have some conception of our goal, the goal of a life well lived. The texts presented here can help us by raising issues that are rarely discussed by Anglo-American conservatives, and thus by challenging us to look deeper into some of the fundamental aspects of human society.

Although the French conservatives like Maistre were often inspired by Burke, they went further in their critique of the new institutions, beliefs, and customs and in their reasoned examination of the old ones. The Revolution never crossed the English Channel, although it threatened to do so, and without the profound transformation that Napoleon's armies brought, English society remained imbued with many of the manners and morals of the Old Regime for much of the nineteenth century. In France, however, the Revolution of 1789 to 1815 was only the first of a series of revolutions and political crises over the next century. France in the nineteenth century was like Germany and Russia in the twentieth: the workshop of history, the place where rival ideas most openly fought for dominance.⁶ As a result, French political writing on both sides of the spectrum is much more radical than is Anglo-American thought during this period. The Left was not merely democratic or liberal, it was anticlerical and sometimes violently egalitarian. The Right was not cautiously conservative; it was robustly so. Such a polarization does not always bring wisdom to the fore, but it does bring into sharp relief the contrasting convictions of the opposing sides.

This volume contains selections from six of the leading representatives of the French counter-revolutionary tradition. The first three

⁶ For a recent history that supports this view, see François Furet, *Revolutionary France, 1770–1880*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

are the celebrated “prophets of the past.”⁷ Chateaubriand ranks with Hugo and Lamartine as one of the leading French Romantics. Maistre and Bonald are familiar to Anglo-American conservatives as Burke’s French interpreters.⁸ The last three writers are little known in the English-speaking world. Heirs to Chateaubriand, Bonald, and Maistre, these men were the leading members of the conservative school of social thought in the second half of the nineteenth century. Émile Keller was a prominent defender of Catholic interests in the French parliament and the author of an influential commentary on Pope Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors*. Frédéric Le Play was one of the founders of sociology in France. Finally, René de La Tour du Pin, one of the architects of *Rerum Novarum*, was the last great expositor of the French counter-revolutionary tradition before the transformation of French political life caused by the Dreyfus Affair and the rise of *Action Française*.

FRANÇOIS-RENÉ DE CHATEAUBRIAND

Chateaubriand strode onto Europe’s stage “with the *Genius of Christianity* in hand.”⁹ His timing was impeccable. The eloquent essay was put on sale in Paris on Good Friday, 1802. Two days later, on Easter Sunday, the Eldest Daughter of the Church was resurrected when Napoleon’s concordat with Pius VII was announced with a *Te Deum* and solemn high mass at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. For the first time in more than a decade, it was fashionable to be a Christian in France. Chateaubriand’s fortune rose with the tide of emotion that followed the concordat. Soon his was a house-

⁷ Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly, *Les Prophètes du passé*, 2nd edition (1851; Paris: Victor Palmé, 1880).

⁸ See Yves Chiron, “The Influence of Burke’s Writings in Post-Revolutionary France,” in Ian Crowe, ed., *The Enduring Edmund Burke* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1997), 85–93.

⁹ Barbey-d’Aurevilly, *Les Prophètes du passé*, 128.

hold name, synonymous with the grandeur of the First Consul's rule.

Yet Chateaubriand's relationship with Napoleon was destined to sour, for he remained loyal all his life to the illustrious house his ancestors had served. His was an ancient family of Breton nobility, and one of his ancestors died on Crusade with St. Louis. By the eighteenth century, his family was impoverished. His father, after making a fortune as a privateer and slave trader, retired to the Breton countryside and bought a miserable landed property that he ruled from a gloomy medieval keep. François-René (1768–1848) inherited his father's wanderlust and romantic attachment to the family history, but not his money. As the younger of two brothers, he was required to make his own way in the world. His chosen career was the military, which he entered in the waning days of the Old Regime. In Paris, in July of 1789, he saw the mob parade the heads of the governor of Paris and his assistant around the city on the ends of pikes. When they approached the house in which he was staying, he lashed out at them: "You Brigands, is this what you mean by liberty?"¹⁰ Thus began a stormy counter-revolutionary career.

Having left the army, Chateaubriand sailed for the New World, intent on discovering the Northwest Passage. This he had neither the resources nor the expertise really to attempt. Yet he did see much of the American back-country and gleaned many experiences with which to color the tale of Indian life that would first win him notoriety, *Atala: The Love of Two Natives in the Wilderness* (1801). While in rural Virginia, he chanced to see a newspaper detailing Louis XVI's flight to Varennes in the summer of 1791 and realized that his duty lay in France. By the next summer, he had joined the emigré army on the banks of the Rhine. With them he endured the insult of marching in the baggage-train of the Austrians into France, and then fleeing with them to the Low Countries when the invasion failed. He spent the next eight years in London, frequenting the

¹⁰ Ghislain de Diesbach, *Chateaubriand* (Paris: Perrin, 1995), 59.

homes of sympathetic English and supporting himself by pasting together a rambling and intemperate *Essay on Revolutions* (1797), in which Voltaire and St. Augustine both served as authorities.

Like many of his generation, Chateaubriand had fallen under the influence of Rousseau, Voltaire, and the other “lights” of the eighteenth century. Yet some sort of change came over him during his last years in London and brought him back to the religion of his youth. By his account, the death of his mother in 1797, following upon the execution of his brother under the Terror in 1794, caused his conversion. But his attachment to the Christian religion was never particularly deep, and many have wondered whether the word conversion is the appropriate one to describe his change of heart. Indeed, while he penned the *Genius of Christianity*'s rhapsodies to conjugal fidelity and the virtue of chastity, he was hidden in Normandy in a lover's tryst, his lawful wife miles away. To his contemporaries, he was as famous, or infamous, a lover as he was a writer.¹¹

For all its author's blemishes, the *Genius of Christianity* was an epoch-making book. It may not be an exaggeration to say that, so far as France was concerned, it was the pivot between the classicism of the eighteenth century and the romanticism of the nineteenth. The Enlightenment in France had championed both secular reason and secular taste: Christian art and customs were ridiculed as the childhood of art and life.¹² Soufflot's Pantheon was the architectural emblem of an age that saw Gothic churches stripped of their medieval decorations and the affective side of devotion downplayed. In opposition to the derision and disdain of Voltaire and his companions, Chateaubriand expressed a vibrant love for France's Christian past: her monuments, her customs, her beliefs. The cathe-

¹¹ This is the principal theme of André Maurois, *Chateaubriand: Poet, Statesman, Lover*, trans. Vera Fraser (1938; reprinted New York: Greenwood Press, 1969).

¹² See, for instance, Jean d'Alembert's comments on art in his *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot* [1751], trans. R. N. Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 61–62.

drals of Paris and Reims showed that “no monument is venerable lest its long history is, as it were, impressed upon its vaults, blackened by the ages.” We cannot enter these Gothic churches, he wrote, “without a shiver and a vague sensation of the divine.”¹³ Like Burke, Chateaubriand had “discovered the value of culture in the experience of its loss.”¹⁴ He wrote of parish processions and church bells, Gregorian chant, and the superiority of the Bible to Homer. Thus he led the way for the continental Gothic revival, the rise of Christian romanticism in literature, and the rebirth of Gregorian chant at Solesmes. Yet his tastes were not purely medieval. In fact, one of the central themes of the *Genius of Christianity* was the excellence of the seventeenth century and its superiority to the eighteenth. The incredulity of the *philosophes*, he argued, had brought “abstract definitions, a scientific style, and neologisms: all fatal to taste and eloquence.”¹⁵ The century of Louis XIV was the century of true giants: La Fontaine and Pascal, Molière and Corneille, Racine and Bossuet.

The second edition of the *Genius of Christianity* followed close upon the heels of the first and bore a fulsome dedication to the first consul. Like many aristocrats and Catholics, Chateaubriand succumbed to the temptation to look upon Napoleon as the savior of France and the Church. He campaigned for a diplomatic appointment and was sent to Rome as the secretary to the ambassador, Napoleon’s uncle, the cardinal of Lyon. He proved to be a poor subordinate and soon returned to Paris. While there, he learned of the murder of the duc d’Enghien. This was Napoleon’s fiercest reprisal for the royalist agitations that had troubled his rule. Chateaubriand was later to see d’Enghien’s murder as a chief cause of the usurper’s fall, writing of it in his inimitable style: “the hair cut by Delilah was

¹³ Chateaubriand, *Génie du Christianisme* [1802], ed. Pierre Reboul, 2 volumes (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1966), I: 400.

¹⁴ Mark C. Henrie, “Edmund Burke and Contemporary American Conservatism,” in Crowe, ed., *The Enduring Edmund Burke*, 198–212, at 206.

¹⁵ *Génie du Christianisme*, ed. Reboul, II: 25.

nothing other than the loss of virtue.”¹⁶ Few interpreted d’Enghien’s murder in such a colorful light, but then few followed his principled example of leaving Napoleon’s service because of it. Chateaubriand exercised an understated opposition, the only kind possible for one who would remain free. During the waning months of the emperor’s reign, however, he began to prepare for the crisis, and secretly wrote a manuscript that would denounce Napoleon as a Corsican usurper and call for the restoration of the House of France.

On Buonaparte and the Bourbons appeared on April 6, 1814. The Russians were already in Paris, and the Emperor had abdicated and attempted suicide at Fontainebleau. The pamphlet, then, did not precipitate the fall of Buonaparte (Chateaubriand employed the original, Italian spelling of the name as part of his campaign to brand the emperor as a foreigner). Yet it did sell ten thousand copies in a matter of days, and its popularity may have helped to convince Czar Alexander that a Bourbon restoration was feasible. Chateaubriand later claimed that Louis XVIII had said that the pamphlet had been “worth more to him than an army of a hundred thousand men.”¹⁷ This was an example of the hyperbole to which he was particularly prone when writing of his own achievements. Nonetheless, the pamphlet is one of the monuments of counter-revolutionary literature. Perfectly timed, sonorous, and righteously indignant, *On Buonaparte and the Bourbons* helped France to realize that she wanted an end to the Revolution.

The pamphlet is by no means uniformly critical of the Revolution. Chateaubriand retained a fondness for the men of 1789 and their liberties, particularly the liberty of the press.¹⁸ Nevertheless,

¹⁶ Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe* [posthumous, 1849–50], ed. Pierre Moreau, 6 volumes (Paris: Garnier, 1947), II: 327.

¹⁷ *Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe*, ed. Moreau, III: 285. It is unlikely that the king ever made such a statement. See Diesbach, *Chateaubriand*, 265–71.

¹⁸ See Jean-Paul Clément, “Chateaubriand et la contre-révolution, ou la liberté sur le pavois,” in Jean Tulard, ed., *La Contre-Révolution* (Paris: Perrin, 1990), 325–47.

On Buonaparte and the Bourbons deserves its prominent place in the literature of the counter-revolution for its one point, forcefully made: on balance, the French were better off under their old kings than under the Revolution. The scorn of the Enlightenment for the ancient House of France had given rise to a revolutionary rhetoric that equated kingship with tyranny. After the tumult of the 1790s and the decade and more of Napoleon's rule, it was plain to any dispassionate observer that the Bourbons had not been tyrants. And Chateaubriand was no dispassionate observer. Like Burke, he was angry that "all the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle and obedience liberal" had been stripped away.¹⁹ He reminded his generation of their ancient patriotism, and that the rule of the kings of the House of France was a "paternal power . . . regulated by institutions, tempered by customs, softened and made excellent by time, like a generous wine born of the soil of the Fatherland and ripened by the French sun."²⁰ This monarchical patriotism waxed strong in France during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²¹ As late as 1873, thousands of French would march in procession to Paray-le-Monial to pray to the Sacred Heart of Jesus to restore the Bourbons to their throne. It was also a reflective and at times self-critical patriotism. Chateaubriand and the legitimists who followed his example were often harsh critics of the abuses of the Old Regime and enlightened proponents of social reform.²²

More important, however, than political restoration was the cultural restoration called for by Chateaubriand. At the height of the influence of the *philosophes* it had become unacceptable to praise Europe's Christian past. By the 1780s in France, d'Alembert's sneers, Voltaire's jibes, and Rousseau's sensuality had won the day.

¹⁹ Burke, *Reflections*, 112.

²⁰ *On Buonaparte and the Bourbons*, below at page 28.

²¹ See Jean-François Chiappe, *La France et le roi, de la Restauration à nos jours* (Paris: Perrin, 1994).

²² See Steven D. Kale, *Legitimism and the Reconstruction of French Society, 1852–1883* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

The *Genius of Christianity* made cultural conservatism socially acceptable. With *On Buonaparte and the Bourbons*, Chateaubriand showed that this conservative outlook could take the offensive and defend the restoration of tradition by an appeal to both sentiment and fact.

LOUIS DE BONALD

If Chateaubriand was the troubadour of the counter-revolution, then Bonald was its strategist. Neither his career nor his writings match the Breton poet's for panache. Where Chateaubriand dashed nimbly, Bonald strode ponderously. Yet both greatly influenced their own times and the century that followed. Together they were the leading minds of the Restoration and, for a time, they were among its leading politicians. Chateaubriand's great achievement was the Spanish expedition of 1823, when the "Hundred Thousand Sons of Saint Louis" crossed the Pyrenees and marched all the way to Cadiz to liberate Fernando VII from a liberal revolution. As foreign minister, Chateaubriand orchestrated the invasion with consummate flair, making it both a diplomatic advance and a public relations coup.²³ Bonald's achievement was less famous but more lasting: the repeal of legal divorce. He constantly taught that the family was the basis of society, and with the repeal of divorce, which kept divorce illegal in France until 1884, Bonald joined Chateaubriand in the ranks of those few theorists who have been able to put their ideas into political practice.²⁴

²³ The classic account of the war in Spain is Chateaubriand's own: *Le Congrès de Vérone* [1838], ed. Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979). For commentary, see Bertier de Sauvigny, *La Restauration* (Paris: Flammarion, 1955), 178–92; and Michel Bernard Cartron, *Louis XIX: roi sans couronne* (Paris: Communication de Tradition, 1996), 155–92.

²⁴ On Bonald's role in the repeal of legal divorce, see J.-J. Oechslin, *Le Mouvement Ultra-Royaliste sous la Restauration: son idéologie et son action politique* (1814–1830) (Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, R. Pichon et R. Durand-Auzais, 1960), 174–76.

Louis-Gabriel-Amboise de Bonald (1754–1840) was born and died in Millau, the chief town of the Rouergue. Just west of the rugged upland of the Cévennes at the southern end of the Massif Central in southern France, the Rouergue in Bonald's day was home to poor shepherds, vintners, and farmers. The people of his region remained deeply divided by the legacy of the Reformation. What the Catholics called the “religion prétendue réformée” (the so-called reformed religion) had made great inroads there in the sixteenth century and for a time had succeeded in displacing the Catholic religion altogether. The Church returned with a vengeance, and religious strife smoldered throughout the reign of Louis XIV, eventually culminating in the Camisard rebellion of 1702, when Protestants in the Cévennes fought the crown with the help of English arms. When Robert Louis Stevenson took his *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* late in the nineteenth century, he found a stark land whose inhabitants had long memories and fierce convictions. This background of religious division and political upheaval strongly marked Bonald's consciousness.

Bonald enjoyed a rare privilege among the provincial nobility: an education at one of France's leading schools. He was fifteen when he matriculated at the Collège de Juilly, which was directed by the Oratorians. There he found a mentor in Père Mandar, who had been a follower of Rousseau. It may have been Père Mandar's influence that led Bonald to welcome the French Revolution in its initial stages. At Juilly, Bonald's education was primarily in mathematics and philosophy. Unlike the Jesuits, who had retained their emphasis on classical education, the Oratorians had embraced the new learning, particularly Cartesian philosophy and the new empirical sciences. Indeed, Bonald's turgid prose style betrays the influence of his education. After Juilly, he entered the military, but he soon returned to his native country to take up the duties of the only son of one of the region's more important families.

Having established himself as a leading citizen, Bonald was elected to Millau's city council in 1782. Then, in 1785, he was

named mayor by the province's royal governor. His tenure in the post was successful and popular, and he led his fellow citizens in several public celebrations of the early actions of the National Assembly in 1789. Among such actions was the change to election, rather than appointment, of certain local officials throughout France. This posed no obstacle to Bonald, who was retained as mayor by the citizens of Millau in an election held in February 1790 and then, later that year, was elected as a deputy to the departmental assembly. Throughout his municipal service, he showed himself to be a partisan of the increased independence of the nobility, and the locale they represented, from the government in Paris. He welcomed the French Revolution not for its liberal and anticlerical tendencies, but for its promise to restore what the nobility had lost to the central government over the past century. Accordingly, when the Revolution showed its true colors in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, Bonald resigned his office in the departmental assembly. Fearing reprisals for his opposition to the Revolution, he emigrated to the Rhineland with his two eldest sons in October 1791.²⁵

Like Chateaubriand, Bonald joined the army of emigrés. In the autumn of 1792 he marched with the duc de Bourbon as part of the Austrian reserves and was within earshot of the cannons when the French defeated the Austrians at Jemappes on November 6, 1792. But Bonald was destined to wield a pen, not a sword, and he soon devoted his life to intellectual combat. His exile from his family in Millau would last, in all, for more than a decade. While in the empire and Switzerland from 1791 to 1797 he wrote his *Theory of Political and Religious Power* (1797), an immense, rambling statement of his principles. Most of the copies of the book were sent to a bookseller in Paris and then seized and destroyed by the Directory.

²⁵ On Bonald's upbringing and early career, see David Klinck, *The French Counterrevolutionary Theorist Louis de Bonald (1754–1840)* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 13–46; and Henri Moulinié, *De Bonald: la vie, la carrière politique, la doctrine* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1916; reprinted New York: Arno Press, 1979), 1–22.

The few who read the tome found Bonald's Latinate prose to be impenetrable.²⁶ After a brief reunion with his wife in 1797, he spent five years in a kind of internal exile in Paris, where, he reckoned, it was easier both to hide and to influence politics than in the countryside. While in Paris, he wrote three works that extended and refined his doctrine: *An Analytical Essay on the Natural Laws of the Social Order* (1800), *On Divorce* (1801),²⁷ and *Primitive Legislation* (1802). Napoleon seems to have admired the stern monarchism of Bonald's works and probably for that reason removed him from the list of proscribed emigrés in 1802. This allowed Bonald to return to Millau, from which he sent a steady stream of political journalism to the leading Paris reviews. In 1810, after having refused many offers of preferment from the emperor, he accepted a post on the Great Council of the University.²⁸

Bonald returned to active political life under the Bourbon Restoration. From Louis XVIII he received numerous favors. The king retained him on the Royal Council for Public Instruction, made him one of the forty immortals of the *Académie Française*, and finally, in 1823, raised him to the peerage as hereditary viscount. In 1827, Charles X put Bonald, a convinced opponent of the freedom of the press, in charge of censorship. More important than these posts, however, was his role as a member of the Chamber of Deputies from 1815 to 1823. There he helped to lead the Ultra-Royalist Party and enjoyed his greatest success with the repeal of legal divorce in December 1815. He was also the guiding spirit behind other Ultra-Royalist policies, such as the attempt to restore trade guilds and the practice of primogeniture and entail for landed

²⁶ It seems that everyone who has read Bonald has found his style to be a stumbling block.

See Michel Toda, *Louis de Bonald: théoricien de la contre-révolution* (Étampes: Clovis, 1997), 5–10.

²⁷ This is the only work of Bonald's to receive a complete English translation. See *On Divorce*, trans. Nicholas Davidson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1992).

²⁸ For a descriptions of this period in Bonald's life and of each of the works mentioned, see Klink, *French Counterrevolutionary Theorist*, 47–169.

property. With the Revolution of 1830, Bonald left political life. He spent his last decade looking after the family property, much of which he had managed to restore from the ravages and neglect caused by the Revolution.

The four selections from Bonald included here all date from the Restoration. He was at his best as a publicist. In his shorter pieces his considerable practical wisdom emerges, and his shortcomings as an overly systematic theorist recede to the background. The first essay is a long review of a biography of Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, the famous orator. Little known today, Bossuet (1627–1704) was effectively the spokesman for the Church in France under Louis XIV and thus became a chief target of the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century. Indeed, it is not much of an exaggeration to say that the Enlightenment in France was an extended argument against Bossuet.²⁹ Bonald accordingly took up the cudgels against the Enlightenment by championing Bossuet and the earnestness of the century of Louis XIV.

Similar in tone are many of Bonald's *Thoughts on Various Subjects* (1817). This volume includes some three dozen *pensées* from a total of several hundred. They are particularly valuable for illuminating Bonald's personality. A staunchly conservative, small-town nobleman, Bonald despised the new Parisian manners of the Revolutionary era. He agreed with Burke that "manners are of more importance than laws."³⁰ When he wrote that "lofty sentiments, lively affections, and simple tastes make a man," he was not merely mouthing platitudes. Instead, he was decrying a world dominated by fads and fascinations.³¹ Bonald took a principled stand in defense

²⁹ Thus Peter Gay wrote that Bossuet's *Universal History* lay "across the philosophes' path, an obstacle, a problem." *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 volumes (New York: Knopf, 1966), I: 75. For Jonathan Israel, the poles of the eighteenth-century debates were set out in the seventeenth century by Spinoza and Bossuet. See *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³⁰ Burke, *First Letter on a Regicidal Peace* [1796], in *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, 3 volumes (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), III: 126.

³¹ On Parisian culture in the last decades of the eighteenth century, see Simon Schama,

of traditional, country manners and agreed with another counter-revolutionary, Jane Austen, that “we do not look in great cities for our best morality.”³²

The posthumous publication of Madame de Staël’s *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* provoked Bonald to write as elegant a statement of his principles as can be found. His *Observations . . .* (1818) present his central critique of the French Revolution. Both a crime and a mistake, the Revolution rejected France’s natural institutions of monarchy, Church, and nobility in favor of a constitution that could only work in England. And, lest one be tempted to prefer a poor imitation of England, Bonald argued at length for the superiority of France’s native institutions. Here we find the concise statements of his views on the political role of the nobility, his most original contribution to the theory of the counter-revolution. Burke defended prejudice, but Bonald gave a reasoned argument for the role of privilege. Nobility ought not to be reduced to wealth: it must confer rights because it is charged with duties. By making this argument, he was a reformer, for the French nobility had shown itself willing to jettison its duties in favor of the kind of freedom that would enable them, the wealthy, to dominate more effectively and without the hindrance of traditional strictures.

The final selection is Bonald’s celebrated essay on the agricultural family. Here are to be found all of his most attractive ideas: the dangers of industrialization, the priority of the family within society, and the necessity for institutions to protect, rather than to destroy, traditional modes of existence.³³ The Revolution had struck mighty

Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution (New York: Knopf, 1989) and the many works of Robert Darnton, especially *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London: Harper Collins, 1996).

³² Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* [1814], ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 83.

³³ On these themes in Bonald, see Robert A. Nisbet, “De Bonald and the Concept of the Social Group,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 5 (1944): 315–31; and D. K. Cohen, “The Vicomte de Bonald’s Critique of Industrialism,” *Journal of Modern History* 41 (1969): 475–84.

blows at the family by secularizing marriage, legalizing divorce, and making obligatory the division of a family's property into equal shares at the death of the parents.³⁴ The Ultra-Royalists of the Restoration failed in their attempt to abolish civil marriage, but they did repeal legal divorce. They also sought to bring back the possibility of keeping a family's landed property intact through entail and primogeniture. The proposal was brought before the Chamber of Peers in 1826 but failed by a wide margin: the egalitarianism of the day was simply too strong. Nonetheless, Bonald's essay and political leadership helped to ensure that the counter-revolutionary movement would retain a strong agrarian element throughout the nineteenth century.³⁵

JOSEPH DE MAISTRE

While Chateaubriand traveled the world in search of adventure, and Bonald tilled the soil in the provinces, Joseph de Maistre represented the king of Piedmont in the court of the czar in St. Petersburg.³⁶ The writings of each man matched his life. Where Chateaubriand was wild and romantic, and Bonald stodgy, Maistre was urbane. A native of Chambéry, which lies south of Geneva in the province of Savoy, then a part of the kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, Maistre (1753–1821) was sent to Turin to study law and then followed his father in the career of a regional advocate and jurist. He lived in Chambéry until the French Revolution annexed Savoy in 1792. He spent the next decade moving around southern Europe with his family and serving the king of Piedmont in various capacities. Then in 1803 he was sent to St. Petersburg as the repre-

³⁴ See Marcel Garaud, *La Révolution Française et la famille* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978).

³⁵ See Kale, *Legitimism*, 210–60.

³⁶ For the details of Maistre's life, one should consult Lebrun's *Joseph de Maistre*, cited above in note 3.

sentative of the House of Piedmont, which was living in exile because of Napoleon's conquest of northern Italy. Maistre remained in St. Petersburg until 1817, shining in court circles as a brilliant conversationalist but spending a great part of his time reading and writing. The most important works that resulted from his prolonged sojourn in Russia were his *On the Pope* (1819), to be discussed below, and his posthumous *Soirées de St.-Petersbourg* (1821). The *Soirées*, a dense and difficult philosophical dialogue, defies easy summary.³⁷ It was an uncompromising assault upon the deism of Voltaire and the Enlightenment. Both the *Soirées* and *On the Pope* enjoyed wide influence throughout Europe and were republished several dozen times over the next fifty years.

Maistre gained fame long before the two great works published at the end of his life. In 1797, while the Directory ruled in Paris, his *Considerations on France* appeared. In relatively short compass, he set out what would remain the central themes of his thought: the governance of human affairs by Divine Providence, the radical evil of the French Revolution, the centrality of the Christian faith to European society, the insufficiency of written constitutions, and the need to return to Europe's inherited institutions. He called for the return of the Bourbons, but he did so in a surprising way. The Terror, he explained, had been a providential means of purifying France from her errors and crimes, including her greatest crime, that of killing Louis XVI. Now that God had purified France, the rightful king could return with mercy rather than vengeance. He would need only to restore the proper order:

³⁷ Maistre described the work in this way (quoted in Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 254): "It does a turn, so to say, around all the great questions of rational philosophy, and can shock no one, except the ideologues and the Lockists. The work is designed to achieve the solemn wedding of philosophy and the Gospel." On the *Soirées*, see Stéphane Rials, "Lecture de Joseph de Maistre," in *Révolution et contre-révolution au dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris: Diffusion Université Culture, 1987), 22–40.

The return to order will not be painful, because it will be natural and because it will be favoured by a secret force whose action is wholly creative. We will see precisely the opposite of what we have seen. Instead of these violent commotions, painful divisions, and perpetual and desperate oscillations, a certain stability, an indefinable peace, a universal well-being will announce the presence of sovereignty. . . . [T]his is the great truth with which the French cannot be too greatly impressed: the restoration of the monarchy, what they call the Counter-revolution, will be not a contrary revolution, but the contrary of revolution.³⁸

Like Burke, Maistre thought that the customs and institutions of the Old Regime were, in large part, fitting and natural. Also like Burke, Maistre venerated the political compromise that emerged from England's Revolution of 1688. For France, a different political solution, in keeping with the needs of the age, would doubtless be required. Yet the essential character of such a solution would be its continuity with the institutions that had grown up in France over the centuries under the guiding hand of Divine Providence. The ideas of Rousseau and Robespierre were, therefore, the worst imaginable because they substituted abstract systems for providential design.

The first selection from Maistre in this volume is his little-known "Reflections on Protestantism in its Relations with Sovereignty." It was written in 1798, but only published in 1870 in a collection of his manuscripts.³⁹ The theme of the essay, that Protestantism necessarily leads to political revolution, had been a favorite of Bossuet and would be common coin among French traditionalists in the

³⁸ Maistre, *Considerations on France*, trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1974), 169.

³⁹ Lebrun briefly mentions the circumstances of its composition in *Joseph de Maistre*, 160.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁰ In a thesis that has been recently revived in historical scholarship, Maistre linked Protestantism with the origins of the French Revolution.⁴¹ The essay shows that Maistre was at times an intemperate writer, but it also displays his supple and strong style. The French, perhaps more than any other European people, are strongly moved by prose style, and while Maistre cannot be said to have supplanted Voltaire in the popular mind in the nineteenth century, it is true that his style won him followers. Many Catholics in nineteenth-century Europe learned from Maistre to see the Enlightenment and the French Revolution as upstart and foreign things, to be rejected with righteous indignation.

The other selections are from Maistre's most enduring work, *On the Pope*. As a contribution towards the declaration of papal infallibility at the first Vatican Council in 1870, *On the Pope* enjoyed an unparalleled influence on Catholic intellectual life in Europe for almost a century. Yet Maistre's book was not merely an argument for the infallibility of the pope; it also presented a papal view of European history. For Maistre, the papacy was Europe's most important cultural institution. The popes had been the chief defenders of marriage, priestly morals (the safeguard of society's morals), and true liberty. This thesis went directly against the grain of the Enlightenment. For the *philosophes*, nothing could more menace human flourishing than authority in religious matters.⁴² For Maistre, this very authority was the wellspring of civilization because it guaranteed the existence and continuity of the Christian religion. From this argument was born a fertile tradition of Catholic

⁴⁰ Thus, for instance, Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (1929; New York: Crowell, 1970).

⁴¹ See Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996). Van Kley, it should be noted, dismisses Maistre as a precursor to his own views, citing him as one of the proponents of the "rightist ideology's plot theory."

⁴² The classic statement of this view may be found in Immanuel Kant's *What Is Enlightenment?*

historiography, including works such as the Spaniard Jaime Balme's *Protestantism and Catholicity Compared in Their Effects on the Civilization of Europe* (1846) and, later, Christopher Dawson's *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (1950).

Maistre is, of course, the best known of the French traditionalist writers.⁴³ In recent decades, commentary on his thought has been sharply negative; it has even included the argument that his influence can be perceived in the origins of fascism.⁴⁴ One of the grounds for such an argument is the claim of Charles Maurras, the leading figure in *Action Française*, that Maistre was one of his "masters."⁴⁵ It may be debated whether *Action Française* is best described as fascist. It is true, however, that Maurras and his followers were, like the fascists, willing to resort to violent revolutionary activity in pursuit of their political ends. It has been argued that Maistre's discussions of the role of violence in human affairs, read out of context, provide some justification for this sort of activity. This is dubious, and, more importantly, such a reading would be strongly at variance with Maistre's contention that the counter-revolution must be the contrary of revolution, that is, a natural rather than a violent movement. More accurate was the reading given to the whole corpus of Maistre's work by his true heirs, the French Catholic traditionalists. They read him not as a prophet of violence, but as a champion of

⁴³ A well-known collection of excerpts from his works is Jack Lively, ed. and trans., *The Works of Joseph de Maistre* (New York: Macmillan, 1965). Since Lively's collection, Richard A. Lebrun has been steadily at work producing excellent translations of Maistre's works.

⁴⁴ See Isaiah Berlin, "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism," in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: John Murray, 1990), 91–174, and Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13–36. For a response to Berlin's arguments, see Owen Bradley, *A Modern Maistre: The Social and Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), especially pages xv–xix.

⁴⁵ On *Action Française*, see Eugen Weber, *Action Française* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1962). On this point, see John C. Murray, S.J., "The Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre," *Review of Politics* 11 (1949): 63–86, at 86.

the Catholic faith and European traditions.⁴⁶ Thus Barbey-d'Aurevilly's 1851 popularization of Maistre claimed that his genius was the result of his excellent vantage point, that of "the historical revelation, the tradition."⁴⁷ At the head of the counter-revolutionary movement, the comte de Chambord consistently refused the use of violence in support of a restoration of the monarchy.⁴⁸ Moreover, leading Catholic figures in nineteenth-century France received inspiration from Maistre to devote themselves to the service of the Church.⁴⁹ Finally, Maistre, with Bonald, exercised an important influence on the restoration of the study of St. Thomas Aquinas in France.⁵⁰

FRÉDÉRIC LE PLAY

With the July Revolution of 1830, the Bourbon Restoration ended, and with it the best hope of the counter-revolutionaries for

⁴⁶ See Stéphane Rials, "Fausses droites, centres morts et vrais modérés dans la vie politique française contemporaine," in *Révolution et contre-révolution*, 41–52, and Rials, *Le légitimisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983).

⁴⁷ Barbey d'Aurevilly, *Prophètes du passé*, 63.

⁴⁸ See Marvin L. Brown Jr., *The Comte de Chambord: The Third Republic's Uncompromising King* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1967).

⁴⁹ For instance, the Alfred de Falloux, sponsor of the 1850 law that won for Catholics freedom for religious instruction in secondary schools. See C. B. Pitman, trans., *Memoirs of the Count de Falloux*, 2 volumes (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), I: 84: "I was in full tide of enthusiasm for the *Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*." The Oratorian Father Gratry was inspired by Maistre to attempt to reconcile modern science with Catholic theology. See Louis Foucher, *La philosophie catholique en France au dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955), 199.

⁵⁰ See Foucher, *La philosophie catholique*, 265–66. Their influence in this direction was indirect. In philosophy, Bonald was strongly Cartesian, Maistre an eclectic mixture of ancient and modern. Yet their powerful arguments about the need for tradition and authority in philosophy led some of their followers back to St. Thomas.

repairing the social order ravaged by the Revolution. The remainder of the nineteenth century in France saw a variety of different regimes, but all were in some way beholden to the Revolution and the “Principles of 1789.” Under the July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe d’Orléans (1830–48), political and economic liberalism was the order of the day. A property qualification kept the electorate small. Those who complained that they were not represented were told to “make themselves rich” so that they might qualify to vote. The overthrow of this crass regime in 1848 was welcomed both by conservative Catholics and by the new urban radicals, the socialists. Yet within three years, the Second Republic had gone the way of the first, and Napoleon III had declared himself emperor of the French. His authoritarian regime was initially friendly to the church, but it became anticlerical over time. During his reign (1852–70) many conservatives joined the Legitimist movement that supported the claim of the comte de Chambord, the grandson of the last Bourbon to reign, Charles X. To Chambord and many other conservatives, the sufferings of workers loomed large. The July Monarchy had brought France into the industrial age. With the factories came all the pathologies of the industrial order: urban poverty, unemployment, child labor, and socialist revolutionary movements. A remarkable generation of (broadly speaking) conservative thinkers grew up during the July Monarchy and rose to prominence under Napoleon III. Men such as Tocqueville, Montalembert, and Ozanam described themselves as liberals, but they sought to repair traditional European civilization. One member of this generation, however, was sufficiently counter-revolutionary in his teaching to earn the epithet “a rejuvenated Bonald”: Frédéric Le Play.⁵¹

Le Play (1806–82) was born to a modest Norman family and trained in Paris to enter a career in mining.⁵² He interested himself

⁵¹ The phrase is from the literary critic Sainte-Beuve, as quoted in Robert A. Nisbet, *The Social Group in French Thought* (1940; reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1980), 197.

⁵² For Le Play’s life, see Michael Z. Brooke, *Le Play, Engineer and Social Scientist: The Life and Work of Frédéric Le Play* (Harlow, United Kingdom: Longmans, 1970).

in social questions even as a youth. For a time, he lived with an uncle in Paris who was a confirmed royalist. Then, at the School of Mines, he befriended Jean Reynaud, a follower of the positivist Saint-Simon, and in the late 1820s took an immense walking tour in Germany with Reynaud to investigate mines. The Revolution of 1830 broke out in Paris while Le Play was recovering from a serious laboratory accident that left his hands damaged for life. Hearing of the tumult in the streets, and remembering his many conversations with Reynaud, Le Play determined that he would dedicate his life to the study of society in an attempt to heal its divisions and ills. Yet he would do so neither as a Saint-Simonian nor as a Catholic. He remained an independent and eclectic thinker and returned to the practice of the Catholic faith only at the end of his life, in 1879. What marked Le Play's thinking from his early years was a desire to observe and to describe human society.

Le Play spent the 1830s traveling Europe as a mining expert. In 1840, he returned to the School of Mines as professor, keeping this position until 1856. Also in the 1840s, he entered into the management of a large mining concern in the Ural Mountains of Russia. During these two-and-a-half decades, he spent much of each year walking the back roads of Europe. He spoke five languages and understood three others, and wherever he went he was keen to interview working families. He was particularly interested in the eastern European countries, where society was reminiscent of western Europe's Old Regime. From his extensive travels and studies he compiled a monograph, *The European Workers* (1855). This empirical study of fifty-seven mining families throughout Europe was his lasting contribution to what Robert Nisbet has called "the sociological tradition."⁵³ One of the keynotes of the volume was his discussion of the importance of family structure for human well-

⁵³ See Robert A. Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 61–70. See also the introduction by Catherine Bodard Silver to her edition of selections from Le Play's writings: *Frédéric Le Play on Family, Work, and Social Change*, ed. Silver (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 3–134.

being. His sociological studies were animated by his desire to discover a means of improving French society, and during the 1840s he met regularly to discuss social issues with some of the leading men of the day, including Dupanloup, Lamartine, Montalembert, Thiers, and Tocqueville.

Le Play had met Napoleon III in Russia during his travels in the 1840s, and from the early years of the emperor's reign he was active in political life. In 1855, he was brought in to save the Paris Exhibition, which was foundering because of poor management. The following year, Napoleon III asked him to join the Council of State, the Second Empire's principal legislative body. Over the next fifteen years, Le Play's official duties included numerous investigations of different industries as well as the management of the Paris Exhibition of 1867, a mammoth task that extended over a five-year period.⁵⁴ At the emperor's request, he published a statement of his prescriptions for society: *Social Reform in France* (1864). After the fall of the empire in 1870, Le Play spent most of his efforts founding and directing the Unions of Social Peace, an organization dedicated to healing France's political and social divisions through local study circles of leading men. He also remained the secretary-general of the International Society for Practical Studies of Social Economy, which he had founded in 1856. Through these organizations, his influence did reach some professional economists and sociologists; nevertheless, it was in conservative and Catholic circles that his ideas were most popular.

Two generous selections from *Social Reform in France* are included in this volume. The most complete statement of his reforming ideas, this work enjoyed modest success during Le Play's lifetime.⁵⁵ Émile Keller, the comte de Chambord, Albert de Mun,

⁵⁴ Fifteen million visitors came to the exhibition. For a description of it, see Alistair Horne, *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune, 1870–71* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), 21–33.

⁵⁵ It was printed eight times during his life. For a summary and discussion of the volume, see Nisbet, *Social Group in French Thought*, 197–221.

and René de La Tour du Pin all drew upon it for inspiration. Indeed, through its influence on La Tour du Pin, it can be said to have exercised an important contribution to the origins of Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. What Catholics and other conservatives found congenial in Le Play's argument was his unflinching opposition to the "principles of 1789," and his recognition of the positive roles played by religion, private property, and a strong family in social reform.

Having ties neither to the Church nor the Bourbon family, Le Play was pragmatic in his political activity, even welcoming the Revolution of 1848. Nevertheless, his principles were strongly counter-revolutionary. Indeed, the introduction to *Social Reform in France* constitutes one of the more penetrating critiques of the social thought of the Enlightenment to be found in the nineteenth century. He rejected, in turn, belief in man's natural goodness, the inevitability of moral progress, the need for new moral doctrines, and theories of political and racial determinism. His central contention was that societies, just as the individuals that constitute them, are truly free. If a society exerts its moral capacities to overcome the human propensity towards evil, it will progress; if not, it will decline. For guidance as to how to carry this out, he recommended looking to the past and following the example of those societies that had functioned reasonably well. For this reason, he fought against the uncritical rejection of the past that the revolutionary school required. He did not envision returning to Old Regime privileges, and to that extent he was more progressive than Bonald. Yet like Bonald, in the end, it was a return to tradition that he recommended: "We should seek the true conditions of reform in the best practices of our fathers."⁵⁶

That mothers too were important, and perhaps more important than fathers, is the chief burden of the selection from the third chapter of *Social Reform in France*, "On the Family." The selection makes two main points, both dear to Le Play. The first is that sup-

⁵⁶ *Social Reform in France*, below at page 222

port for ownership and inheritance of a family home is the chief means of social progress. Like Bonald, Le Play pointed to Europe's agrarian past as the model for strong families. To that end, he too campaigned for the repeal of the law forcing an equal division of inheritance among all the children of a family. The second point of the selection is that women are the chief agents of social progress. Here we find a theme well known to contemporary conservatives. What is noteworthy in Le Play's treatment is the way in which he develops this theme in relation to broader legal, political, and cultural matters. His proximate concerns, sadly, are no longer ours, for family life has so greatly declined since the mid-nineteenth century that what is at stake now is less its well-being than its very existence.

ÉMILE KELLER

Le Play and his generation were shaped by the failure of the Bourbon Restoration. They sought to restore the social and political stability of France within the framework of the liberal institutions brought by the July Monarchy. The fall of the July Monarchy and the ensuing June Days considerably diminished liberalism's prospects. For three days in June 1848, the streets of Paris were blocked with barricades as the Second Republic fought for its life against a revolt of the Paris workers. Some fifteen hundred died in the fighting, and three thousand rebels were subsequently executed by the victorious Republic. The ensuing regime would be a conservative one, and in 1851, when Prince-President Louis-Napoleon declared himself emperor, so great was the perceived threat of socialist revolution that even some liberals accepted his coup as necessary and good. For conservatives, the June Days and the events of 1848 throughout Europe demonstrated the need for a strong regime to withstand the danger of socialist revolution.⁵⁷ For some, however, there was an additional lesson: that

⁵⁷ See, for instance, the 1849 speech on dictatorship by the Spanish conservative Juan Donoso Cortes, in Béla Menczer, ed., *Tensions of Order and Freedom* (1952; reprinted, New

those who would preserve European liberties must address the plight of the industrial laborer, and must do so honestly and effectively.

One of the leading members of this new generation of conservatives in France was Émile Keller (1828–1909).⁵⁸ Born in Alsace, Keller was raised and educated in Paris. He spent most of his adult life there as a parliamentarian and leader in a number of Catholic institutions. Indeed, he was one of the most remarkable Catholic laymen of the nineteenth century. He came from a well-to-do Alsatian family and married a woman from the same circle. Of their fourteen children, three became Dominican nuns and a fourth became a Little Sister of the Poor. Keller was one of the leading members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for many years and then, in the 1860s, was one of the founders of Peter's Pence, the Catholic effort in France and other countries to support the papacy, then recently stripped of the greater part of its temporal dominion. Finally, in 1891, he was approached by a representative of Leo XIII and asked to found a Catholic political party in France, an offer he declined.

Keller also was notable as a patriot. Like many of his generation, he greatly admired the first Napoleon. In the wake of 1848, his concern was for the good of France and the good of the Church. He viewed Napoleon III suspiciously and considered him more an agent of revolution than counter-revolution. After Napoleon III's surrender to the Prussians at Sedan in 1870, Keller joined the French effort to keep Alsace and Lorraine from falling under Prussian domination. The effort failed, but only after much trooping around the hills of the Rhineland under artillery bombardment from the Prussians. Keller was made a colonel, a chevalier of the Légion d'honneur, and, in 1871, was elected to represent Alsace and Lorraine at the parliament held in Bordeaux under

Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1994), 160–76; along with the commentary of Robert A. Herrera in *Donoso Cortes: Cassandra of the Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 67–78.

⁵⁸ Details on the life of Keller are taken from Gustave Gautherot, *Un demi-siècle de défense nationale et religieuse: Émile Keller (1828–1909)* (Paris: Plon, 1922).

Prussian occupation. There he read the solemn protest of the Alsace-Lorraine deputation against the dismemberment of France. No fewer than five of his descendants would die during the Great War fighting to reunite Alsace and Lorraine to France.

As a politician, Keller's chief concern was to defend Christian society against the heritage of the French Revolution.⁵⁹ Elected to Parliament in 1859, he gained national attention for his courageous speech of March 13, 1861, criticizing Napoleon III for his role in allowing the Kingdom of Piedmont to conquer the greater part of Italy, including the bulk of the Papal State. For this, the emperor considered Keller his enemy and arranged his defeat in the next election, in 1863. Keller returned to Parliament in 1869 and kept a seat without interruption until 1881. His final term was from 1885 to 1889. During the 1870s and 1880s, he sponsored a number of measures to protect the Church and Christian society. In 1873, for instance, he fought for tougher penalties against factory owners who employed children. In 1879, when radical republicans sought to overturn the 1814 measure that had restored Sunday as a day of rest, he fought back, unsuccessfully, with an attempt to extend Sunday rest to railroads and the post office. Finally, when in 1884 the Republic repealed its prohibition on labor associations, he saw one of his primary goals accomplished.⁶⁰

As a writer and thinker, Keller was strongly influenced by Joseph de Maistre and the other counter-revolutionary writers. His first book was a *History of France* (1858), in which he extolled the thirteenth century for its social harmony. In 1874, he published a biography of General La Moricière, the commander of Pius IX's army during the wars of Italian unification in the 1850s and 1860s. In

⁵⁹ He preferred the term "Christian society" to "counter-revolution." See Philippe Levillain, *Albert de Mun: catholicisme français et catholicisme romain du Syllabus au Ralliement* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1983), 164 and 623.

⁶⁰ On Keller's involvement with Albert de Mun in the social legislation of the Third Republic, see Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 87–112.

1880, at the height of the Third Republic's anticlericalism, he compiled a massive document on the benefits brought to France by her monastic institutions, that is, by the ones then existing. His most important book, and the one from which our selections have been taken, was *The Encyclical of the 8th of December 1864 and the Principles of 1789, or, the Church, the State, and Liberty*.⁶¹

Keller's book needs to be read in light of the widely varied European reactions to Pius IX's encyclical of December 8, 1864, *Quanta Cura*, and the attached *Syllabus of Errors*.⁶² With the encyclical and the *Syllabus*, Pius IX responded to more than a decade of revolutionary and anticlerical activity and legislation throughout Europe, especially in Italy. Thanks to the connivance of Napoleon III, the king of Piedmont had been able to conquer most of Italy between 1859 and 1861, and then, on March 14, 1861, had declared himself to be king of Italy. But King Victor Emmanuel was a Freemason, and his kingdom had openly persecuted the Church for years by confiscating land and closing convents. He was, therefore, promptly excommunicated by Pius IX. The encyclical *Quanta Cura* addressed these and other issues, and for its pronounced defense of Christian society it may be seen as the origin of the Church's many subsequent social encyclicals.⁶³ Most Europeans were so distracted by the pope's condemnation of "progress, liberalism, and modern civilization" in the famous proposition #80 of the *Syllabus* that they were unable to read either document with patience. Subsequent Catholic interpreters, particularly Bishop Félix Dupanloup of Orléans, were at pains to point out that the progress and civilization condemned by the Pope were only those

⁶¹ For commentaries on Keller's *L'Encyclique du 8 décembre*, see Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe from the Onset of Industrialization to the First World War* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 149–52, and Levillain, *Albert de Mun*, 163–74.

⁶² For background on the pontificate of Pius IX and the *Syllabus of Errors*, see E. E. Y. Hales, *Pio Nono: A Study in European Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954).

⁶³ Roger Aubert, *Le pontificat de Pie IX (1846–1878)* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1952), 487.

that declared themselves to be inimical to the Catholic faith, such as the Masonic regime in Italy. For Dupanloup, the crucial distinction was to see that the pope was defending a Christian society as an ideal, and that while Catholics were bound to hold as the ideal or "thesis" the kind of society in which Church and state cooperate for the good of mankind, they could nevertheless tolerate a secular political arrangement.⁶⁴ Keller agreed with this distinction, but, as becomes evident in his preface, he thought that what was most important about *Quanta Cura* and the *Syllabus* was that they called for the wholesale renovation of society in accordance with Christian principles. It was not sufficient merely to say that Christian society was an ideal: the ideal must be sought by earnest practice.

The first of the three selections from Keller's *Encyclical of 8 December* includes both the author's brief preface and the introductory chapter. These admirably set out his response to Dupanloup. He argued that Catholics can welcome any number of aspects of modern society and tolerate many others, but that this flexibility must not become complacency. In this section, the influence of Maistre's *On the Pope* can be seen in Keller's assertion that the papacy is the beacon of European civilization. The second and third selections are from Keller's chapters about the social problem. Most significant here is his championing of workers' associations. The French Revolution had between 1789 and 1791 destroyed the old guild structure of master, journeyman, and apprentice, its campaign culminating in the Le Chapelier law of 1791 that prohibited all associations of workers of any kind.⁶⁵ Laborers would be free to work, but not free to associate. This paradox was at the heart of the social problem in France in the nineteenth century and would only be resolved, and then partially, by the legalization of trade unions in 1884. Bonald and many other counter-revolutionaries had called

⁶⁴ See Marvin R. O'Connell, "Ultramontanism and Dupanloup: The Compromise of 1865," *Church History* 53 (1984): 200–17.

⁶⁵ See William H. Sewell Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

for the return of the guilds because of their beneficent moral role in society. Le Play had opposed them on grounds that the liberty of labor was more important than freedom of association. With Keller's argument for the necessity of labor associations, the position is firmly grounded within the counter-revolutionary tradition. It would be taken up still more forcefully by René de La Tour du Pin, Leo XIII, and Pius XI.

RENÉ DE LA TOUR DU PIN

Keller's *Encyclical of 8 December* was greeted with a "conspiracy of silence" by the Catholic intelligentsia in Paris, his emphasis on the need for social reforms pleasing neither the liberals nor the reactionaries.⁶⁶ Yet the book enjoyed a vast influence through its effect on two young soldiers, Albert de Mun and René de La Tour du Pin. Interned together as prisoners of war in Aix-la-Chapelle in 1871, Mun and La Tour du Pin were given Keller's book by Father Eck, a German Jesuit. Mun later described the experience of reading it: "It was a precise, simple, and energetic exposition of Catholic truth and revolutionary error, of the principles of Christian society and the false dogmas of modern society. Reading it filled us with the most lively emotion. It seemed to us that in the shadows of our sorrow, a light had shined in our minds."⁶⁷ Inspired by Keller's stirring call for the French to devote themselves to furthering the cause of the pope and Christian society, Mun and La Tour du Pin would become the leaders of the counter-revolution in France for the next three decades.

Like Chateaubriand, René de La Tour du Pin (1834–1924) belonged to France's ancient nobility and descended from one who

⁶⁶ La Moricière wrote of the "conspiracy of silence" in a letter congratulating Keller for the book. Gautherot, *Un demi-siècle*, 132.

⁶⁷ Albert de Mun, *Ma vocation sociale: souvenirs de la fondation de l'Oeuvre des cercles catholiques d'ouvriers (1871–1875)* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1908), 13.

had fought on Crusade with St. Louis. He too had lost ancestors to the guillotine and was implacably opposed to the heritage of the Revolution. La Tour du Pin was raised on the ancestral property at Arrancy, near Laon, in the Champagne region northeast of Paris. His father instilled in him the belief that his aristocratic birth had conferred a calling upon him, instructing him to “remember that you are but the administrator of this land for its inhabitants.” This sense of paternal responsibility for the villagers of the hamlet of Arrancy would for La Tour du Pin grow into a mission to serve France as a whole. Initially, his service would be in the army. After lengthy studies at several schools in the Paris region, he proceeded to active duty in the Crimean War, in the war against Austria in the Piedmont in 1859, in Algeria, and finally, on the Rhine frontier during the Franco-Prussian war. Then came the fateful internment in Aix-la-Chapelle and his friendship with Albert de Mun, like him a dutiful soldier from the conservative aristocracy. After their imprisonment, both Mun and La Tour du Pin returned to Paris, where they saw firsthand the horrors of the Commune of 1871. This quickened their resolve to work for the regeneration of the working class.⁶⁸

Over the next twelve months, Mun and La Tour du Pin collaborated in founding the *Oeuvre des Cercles Catholiques des Ouvriers*, that is, the “Work of the Catholic Working-Men’s Circles.” For the next thirty years the *Oeuvre des Cercles*, or simply the *Oeuvre*, was the leading voice for the counter-revolution in France. It consisted of a central committee and a national movement of local circles. At the high-tide of its influence in 1881, the *Oeuvre* had some 550 local circles with a total membership of fifty thousand. Each of these circles brought together wealthy patrons with members of the working class in an organization that sought to improve the spiritual and material lives of the workers and to protect them from the propaganda of revolutionary socialism. One would not want to

⁶⁸ Biographical details are taken from Elizabeth Bossan de Garagnol, *Le Colonel de La Tour du Pin d’après lui-même* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1934).

overestimate the influence of a movement of fifty thousand in a nation with over thirty million inhabitants. Nonetheless, through Albert de Mun's fiery parliamentary oratory, the *Oeuvre* was known and even somewhat feared by left-leaning politicians.⁶⁹

La Tour du Pin was the *Oeuvre des Cercles's* theoretician. For many years he directed a group of leading members of the *Oeuvre* in the study of social theory and particularly economics. The group was remarkable for its breadth of vision. Not content only to read Bonald, its members took up St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* for guidance on the theory of the just wage. Beginning in 1876, their findings were presented to the public when the *Oeuvre* founded its own journal, *Association Catholique*. The title was indicative of La Tour du Pin's central conviction: that the most damaging heritage of the Revolution was its individualism, and that this must be combated by a new spirit of association or solidarity. He was inspired to this conviction by the leaders of the Catholic social movement in Germany and Austria, with whom he became familiar during his service as military attaché to the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1877 to 1881. In 1884, he joined a group of leading Catholics for a series of seven annual congresses at Fribourg, Switzerland. The proceedings of these meetings were one of the sources for Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891. La Tour du Pin's central conviction was there upheld by the pope: that the plight of the worker was a question of justice, and not merely one of charity.⁷⁰

In his later years, La Tour du Pin remained a firm partisan of the counter-revolution, even refusing Leo XIII's call to "rally to the

⁶⁹ On the *Oeuvre des cercles*, see John McManners, *Church and State in France, 1870–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 81–93. On Mun, see Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1978). For the context of the *Oeuvre*, see Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe*.

⁷⁰ See Robert Talmy, *Aux sources du catholicisme social: l'école de La Tour du Pin* (Tournai: Desclée, 1963). For a more brief account of La Tour du Pin's thought, see Charlotte Touzalin Muret, *French Royalist Doctrines since the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 200–16.

Republic.” As a convinced monarchist and opponent of the rising socialist faction in French politics, La Tour du Pin could not fail to be attracted to Charles Maurras’s *Action Française*. He joined the movement in 1905 and in 1907 allowed his articles to be collected by a member of *Action Française* and published under the title *Towards a Christian Social Order*. After the Great War, however, he left the *Action Française* movement.⁷¹ His deepest principles were little in accord with those of Maurras. Maurras was a confirmed positivist who saw only the functional value of religion in society, while La Tour du Pin remained a pious Catholic whose admiration for the Christian Middle Ages was primarily spiritual.⁷²

This sincere admiration for the Middle Ages is the keynote to La Tour du Pin’s 1883 essay “On the Corporate Regime.” In 1880, he had called for “a return not to the form, but to the spirit of the institutions of the Middle Ages.”⁷³ That spirit was one of fraternal association. Like Bonald, La Tour du Pin championed intermediate associations, and following Keller, he called for a revival of the guilds, or corporations, of the Old Regime. Like the English Distributists of the early twentieth century, he sought to restore the ownership of productive property to as many people as possible.⁷⁴ In an industrial setting, this could take place through some form of profit sharing. Yet the restoration of the corporations was for a higher purpose than the merely material. He had harsh words for the credit union movement led by Schultze-Delitsch, who had insisted that the worker’s plight was primarily an economic one and could therefore be solved

⁷¹ Weber, *Action Française*, 76.

⁷² On the contrast between Maurras and the Catholic counter-revolutionaries, see Jean-Christian Petitfils, “Postérité de la contre-révolution,” in Tulard, ed., *La contre-révolution*, 387–99.

⁷³ La Tour du Pin to Joseph de La Bouillerie, 6 July 1880, quoted in Levillain, *Albert de Mun*, 671.

⁷⁴ See Dermot Quinn, “Distributism as Movement and Ideal,” *Chesterton Review* XIX (1993): 157–73.

financially.⁷⁵ What society needed was thorough moral renovation, and this could only be accomplished through the restoration of the Christian family, the solidarity of workers and owners in a common corporate bond, and authentic national unity based on Christian principles. This renewed Christian society was to be a corporate regime.⁷⁶ The Enlightenment had given birth to liberalism and its contrary, socialism. Both had denied the social standing of the family and the intermediate association. La Tour du Pin's proposed corporate regime would restore these to primacy, and thus accomplish both the decentralization of power and the binding together of atomized and alienated individuals.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

The Enlightenment had sought to liberate man from the dead hand of tradition. His faculties once set free, Voltaire and his followers believed, man would soar to new heights of felicity. The French Revolution incarnated this desire and tore apart much of the social fabric of Europe. When the Church was despoiled, countless charitable and educational institutions across Europe were either suppressed or deprived of their financial basis. The end of noble privilege brought with it the centralization of politics and justice. With the destruction of the craft guilds and trade associations, the patrimony of the artisans was confiscated and working men were left unprotected from the ravages of unlimited competition. Nor did the Revolution spare the family: through the legalization of divorce and the enforcement of equal inheritance, the strong family struc-

⁷⁵ This was true of Schultze-Delitsch, but not of the credit union movement generally. See J. Carroll Moody and Gilbert C. Fite, *The Credit Union Movement: Origins and Development, 1850–1980*, 2nd edition (Dubuque: Kendall-Hunt, 1984), 1–18.

⁷⁶ On which see Matthew H. Elbow, *French Corporative Theory, 1789–1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953).

⁷⁷ For commentary, see Robert Nisbet, *Social Group in French Thought*, 159–71.

ture of the Old Regime was replaced by an impoverished individualism. On top of all this, the vast cultural inheritance of Christendom was forcefully stripped away as the Revolution and then Napoleon's armies brought rampant iconoclasm, melting down church bells to make cannons, confiscating works of art and documents, secularizing the universities, and promulgating the culture of the Enlightenment. The French critics of the Enlightenment stood athwart all this progress and called for a return to the salutary traditions of European civilization. They were champions of piety towards family and local customs, fidelity towards kings, solidarity towards fellow men, and loyalty towards the Church.

The heritage of the French counter-revolutionary tradition in the twentieth century was a divided one. The French Right was hijacked by Charles Maurras and his *Action Française* movement in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair.⁷⁸ Maurras espoused a number of authentically counter-revolutionary measures, including the restoration of the monarchy and administrative decentralization. But his politics were riven with anti-conservative and altogether modern suppositions and practices. In addition to his positivist convictions, which led him to see the Church as a mere instrument of the state, Maurras employed a number of typically revolutionary political strategies, such as the manipulation of opinion through journalism and mass demonstrations, and even the use of organized violence. These tactics cannot be said to conform to Maistre's dictum that the counter-revolution is the contrary of revolution. Many of the professed counter-revolutionary political movements in Europe in the twentieth century were strongly influenced by Maurras and, like him, adopted revolutionary tactics in the service of conservative ends. From this combination stems the tragic aspect of conservative politics in Europe for much of the twentieth century. The Franco and Salazar regimes, for instance, both suffered from this problem,

⁷⁸ On this point, see Philippe Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain: une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920–1930)* (Paris: Cerf, 1999).

and what good was present in their ideals was compromised by their many moral defects.⁷⁹

The authentic interpreters of the French critics of the Enlightenment in the twentieth century have generally been cultural figures. In France, the Catholic literary revival was much indebted to the writings of Chateaubriand, Maistre, Bonald, and their heirs.⁸⁰ Novelists and poets such as Claudel, Péguy, and Bernanos took up many of the theses of the counter-revolution and made them their own. Elsewhere, literary figures such as Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton, and scholars such as Christopher Dawson and Robert Nisbet, provided expositions of conservative thought that bear the imprint of the French tradition.⁸¹ Today, for us, the term counter-revolution is problematic. With the end of the Cold War, it is not clear that there is a vibrant revolutionary tradition that needs to be opposed. Indeed, the liberalism of the French Revolution has itself been transformed into a kind of tradition.⁸² Yet the French counter-revolutionaries spoke of general principles and not merely of the French political situation in the nineteenth century. For this reason, they have much to say to us. Moreover, the twenty-first century still faces the same task that the nineteenth failed to accomplish: the maintenance and rebuilding of the salutary cultural traditions of European civilization. By defending and articulating these traditions, the French critics of the Enlightenment contribute valuable resources for our endeavors.

⁷⁹ For an overview of the subject, see Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway, *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁸⁰ See Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature, 1870–1914* (New York: Ungar, 1965).

⁸¹ See, for instance, Nisbet's *Conservatism: Dream and Reality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), which includes numerous references to Maistre, Bonald, and Le Play.

⁸² On which see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).