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Ceding to the Circumstances:
State Institutions, Civil Society, and Running the Schools in
Maine-et-Loire, 1815-1875

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By

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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In the nineteenth century, public schools transformed how French citizens understood the relationship between the individual, local authorities, and the nation-state—but not just through classroom lessons. Through an analysis of primary education development in the western department of Maine-et-Loire between the Bourbon Restoration (1815) and the solidification of the Third Republic (1875), this dissertation argues that debates over funding, operating and monitoring primary schools became a field to negotiate and delineate local and national values and responsibilities, ultimately structuring attitudes and policies towards public institutions and collective ideals of citizenship. Rather than the still-influential state-centric model of development in the 1870s exemplified by Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen*, functional school systems were developed locally by municipal authorities and an active education-oriented civil society starting in 1816. This educational civil society comprised a range of non-state actors, from individuals leaving endowments to subscription-based organizations promoting specific pedagogies to parish councils (*fabriques*). Although state interest increased following the Guizot Law of 1833, educational civil society continued to work closely with communes to expand primary education. By the 1850s, however, the relationship between the communes, educational civil society (especially Catholic organizations), and an increasingly powerful state education bureaucracy had resulted in open competition between the providers of primary education. This competition forced new debates on the roles and responsibilities of communes, local civil society, and the state. The culmination was a political culture that privileged a direct relationship between the local community and a national body—either the state or the Catholic Church—that provided vital resources and direction. The institutional result was the emergence of a preference for centralized national systems by the mid-1870s. The trade-off was that local civil society became merely a pressure group to support education policy determined elsewhere—a retreat from local praxis in favor of national politics.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADML	Archives départementales de Maine-et-Loire
A.Dio.Angers	Archives diocésianes d'Angers
AL	Archives Lasalliennes (the Frères), Lyon
AM Angers	Archives municipales d'Angers
AM Beaufort	Archives municipales de Beaufort-en-Vallée
AM Cholet	Archives municipales de Cholet
AM Saumur	Archives municipales de Saumur
AM Segré	Archives municipales de Segré
AN	Archives nationales (CARAN)
AP St. Pierre de Saumur	Archives paroissiales de St. Pierre de Saumur
Archives Delanoue	Archives of the Servantes des Pauvres de Jeanne Delanoue
Association	Association religieuse et royale
BM Angers	Bibliothèque municipale d'Angers
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
Frères	Frères des Écoles chrétiennes
Society	Société pour l'encouragement d'enseignement mutuel
Société civile	Société civile de la Cité

INTRODUCTION

The École élémentaire André Moine stands on the bluff of the right bank of the Maine River in Angers, overlooking the quartier known as La Doutre. Named for a local youth executed by the Nazis and bearing an address (15 bis boulevard Clémenceau) on a street honoring a hero of an earlier world war, the school is far older than either of these historical events. Completed in 1834, the building—despite numerous re-modeling projects over the years—bears the hallmarks of French primary education architecture of the nineteenth century: separate wings (with isolated entrances) for girls and boys; the central part of the structure that served as combination school office and living quarters for the teachers; the high windows necessary for lighting and ventilation in a pre-industrial world (see Figure 1). If the architecture was commonplace, the history of the building is slightly less so. Originally built as an *école mutuelle*—a school following a distinctive pedagogy highly promoted during the Bourbon Restoration—the building was the work of a private organization, the Société pour l’encouragement d’enseignement mutuel, founded in Angers in 1816.¹ While public funds in the form of municipal subsidies and grants from Paris paid for part of the cost of construction, the school was ran by the Society for the next thirty years. The Society chose the teachers, helped determined the curriculum, visited the classrooms on official inspection tours, dealt with

¹ The Société pour l’encouragement d’enseignement mutuel d’Angers will be referred to as the Society for the sake of brevity.



Figure 1: The École élémentaire André Moine, February 2005. The wing to the left of the central structure (closest to the viewer) is the former *école mutuelle de filles*; the *école mutuelle de garçons* is to the right. (photograph by the author)

disciplinary problems, helped former students obtain scholarships and jobs, negotiated with public authorities on expansions. The Society, in effect, operated what anyone in the United States of the twenty-first century would recognize as a charter school—with the distinct difference that the Society schools were operated as a charity, and did not charge tuition. The school was literally sold to the municipality of Angers in 1866, the first time that Angers had a true “public” school in the nineteenth century.

The history of the *École André Moine*, however, is not unique. The first of the *écoles mutuelles* in Maine-et-Loire, the older sister of what became the *École André Moine*, was located on the left bank of the Maine, in the former Cordeliers monastery in the center of Angers. The Society purchased the building from one of its members in 1821. Likewise sold to Angers in 1866, the property is today the *École élémentaire Joseph Cussonneau*. A rival Catholic organization, the *Association religieuse et royale d'Angers*, likewise operated schools whose teachers were provided by the *Frères des Écoles chrétiennes* (known commonly as just the *Frères*). The largest of these, located in a complex donated by long-term member the Comte de Boissard, exists today as a private college ran by the *Frères*; the former meeting rooms of the Association serve as the residence of the community. In Beaufort-en-Vallée, a former sailcloth manufactory turned over to the local community of *Frères* continued as private school from the Law of Separation of Church and State in 1905 until the mid-1990s; the vandalized remains mark one of the few examples where such property no longer fulfills a public education function.

The existence of these various private organizations and their schools fall into a curious lacuna in contemporary understandings of French primary education and, by

extension, French political development. Since the Revolution, France has been considered an exemplar of state-directed development in the western world. Universal primary education, especially the ambitious projects undertaken by the Third Republic (1870-1940) at the end of the nineteenth century, stood as one of the greatest achievements of centralization. In contrast to the locally-oriented British educational system—which had no real national education policy until the Foster Act of 1870—and the federalism of the United States where unified education policy remains elusive even to the present, the French experience valorized a model of political leadership from Paris creating a public institution. Such centralized direction was necessitated by both state interest in promoting education and the lack of interest among communes and parents.

Yet the existence of the École André Moine and numerous similar schools are evidence of a period when the state relied on other societal actors to build and to run the schools. The founders of these schools were a dedicated component of civil society whose ideas and practices represented a crucial bridge between older forms of public institution building and modern national institutions. Operating in the communes that comprised post-Revolutionary France and dominated by communal and regional notables, this educational civil society worked closely with a state apparatus that had bigger plans for primary education than it had the resources to fulfill those plans. Partnering with local leaders who could marshal support and who were familiar with the available resources on the ground appeared an ideal means of solving the problem. Only later, when state and local opinions of education began to diverge, did this arrangement become strained. As the state moved to assert its dominance over primary education, it helped to destroy the same civil society on which it had depended so heavily. Much of

the historiography of French primary education and French political culture views the struggle between the state and the local as the starting point. This dissertation tackles another story: that of a public institution that increasingly taken from a section of the public that had originally helped build it.

The Historiography of French Primary Education

French primary education has long been a popular topic for historians. The basic trajectory holds primary education as one of the bequests of the French Revolution, and the project of the nineteenth century was to make this dream a reality. Traditionally, the historiography has focused on the great education laws—those associated with François Guizot (1833-36), the Comte de Falloux (1850), and Jules Ferry (1881-1882)—as a convenient chronological model. Following the major political regimes of the century, this schema considered not only education policies, but also made explicit statements about the regimes behind them. Thus, Guizot and the July Monarchy are praised for starting the construction of primary schools, while Napoleon III's Second Empire is condemned for side-tracking primary instruction by allowing the Catholic Church greater control under the Falloux law. The Third Republic's laws have long been offered as a model of state-guided progress, the *conditio sine qua non* of the modern French polity through the assurance of a secular, French-speaking, democratic population.²

The state-dominated model of the development of French primary education is more than just a stereotype. Politicians of the Third Republic—and their supporters in

² Antoine Prost's *L'Enseignement en France, 1800-1967* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1968) remains the best general survey of the development of the French education system, although his conclusions appear increasingly dated. For other works expressing this general approach, see Felix Ponteil, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France—Les grandes étapes 1789-1964* (Paris: Sirey, 1966) and R. D. Anderson, *Education in France 1848-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

both the press and the education community—made primary education a key component of their political program. Scholars reviewing the situation decades later accepted the arguments made by the republicans—complete with the pessimistic appraisal of primary schooling as lacking in large areas of France before the advent of the Third Republic. This viewpoint, best expressed by Theodore Zeldin’s oft-quoted “education was offered to the people from above, and then enforced upon them,” has cemented an heroic image of the Third Republic bringing education to the masses.³ This belief would find its most sophisticated expression in Eugen Weber’s modernization theory-inspired *Peasants into Frenchmen*. While admitting that a fairly extensive system of schools existed by the time of the Third Republic, Weber presented these as backwards, barely competent institutions unappreciated by the population and largely at the margins of French social life.⁴ Only with the advent of the Third Republic’s efforts to integrate the French nation, Weber concluded, did primary education of use to the French population and thereby successful. This literature, however, did not view the Third Republic’s interest in education as a philanthropic endeavor: good, distinctively French citizens were made, and the schools were where they were formed.

The regional study has become a standard component of this state-celebratory historiography. Long providing a rich field of inquiry for local historians, the regional study occasionally attracted broader attention; Roger Thabault’s 1945 sociological examination of his Vendéen hometown of Mazières-en-Gâtine was well-received on both

³ Theodore Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, vol. 1, *Ambition, Love, and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 147.

⁴ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 303-338.

sides of the Atlantic.⁵ The genre emerged into its own with Raymond Oberlé's 1961 study of the schools of Mulhouse providing a model, and a long series of similar works emerged as French historians moved to update the work done under the Third Republic.⁶ This generation of regional studies was bound to the concurrent debates on the modernization thesis. Many of the French studies saw in the regional examples the power of the state to replace ramshackle, poorly funded and operated schools (most often under the dominance of the Catholic Church) with modern, efficient primary schools, hence "creating" a national public education system. For Maine-et-Loire, Jean-Philippe David, a retired school teacher from Angers, completed a survey of nineteenth century primary education in 1967 that emphasized these points.⁷ While Robert Gildea's 1983 three-department study offered a partial corrective by pointing out the ability of local authorities to oppose Parisian directives, his story is still that of state imposition of development and control.⁸

While regional studies presented case-study after case-study valorizing the effort of the Third Republic, the state celebratory approach was itself brought under critical examination starting in the mid-1960s. The sociological studies of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron documented how the two-track system of universal primary

⁵ Roger Thabault, *Mon village 1848-1914: l'ascension d'un peuple* (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1945). Thabault was a student of André Siegfried, who virtually created the academic regional study with his *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1913). It was Thabault's work that was ultimately the inspiration for Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Weber, ix).

⁶ Raymond Oberlé, *L'enseignement à Mulhouse de 1798 à 1870* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961). For the role of Oberlé's work as a model of the genre, see R. D. Anderson's comment in *Education in France*, 254.

⁷ Jean-Philippe David, "L'établissement de l'enseignement primaire au XIXe siècle dans le département de Maine-et-Loire 1816-1879." Thèse de lettres, Université de Rennes, 1967.

⁸ Robert Gildea, *Education in Provincial France 1800-1914: A Study of Three Departments*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). The three departments studied were Ille-et-Vilaine (the subject of Gildea's dissertation), the Nord, and the Gard.

education and elite secondary schools reproduced the social stratification of French society, and scholars encouraged by the discursive theories of Michel Foucault began unraveling the nationalist and gender ideologies embedded within republican textbooks.⁹ More significantly, a new approach emerged among both French and American scholars in the last thirty years challenging the leading role of the state. The magisterial study of Jacques Ozouf and François Furet highlighting rising literacy rates even in the absence of formal school structures alerted scholars to the significant role played by local authorities, education societies, and the Catholic Church.¹⁰ Raymond Grew and Patrick J. Harrigan applied statistical analyses to show that the great education laws of the nineteenth century occurred in the middle of periods of rapid expansion of schooling rather than being the instigator of such activity, indicating that state interest was driven as much by desires to regulate movements as creating educational momentum.¹¹

This critical scholarship of the older heroic Third Republic model has not displaced the privileged position of the state totally. Political debates in the early 1990s challenged both the historical role of the “mythe Ferryste” and the utility of a proposed

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Les Héritiers: les étudiants et la culture* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1964) and *La Reproduction: éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1970). André Chervel, *... et il faut apprendre à écrire à tous les petits français: Histoire de la grammaire scolaire* (Paris: Payot, 1977); Dominique Mainganeau, *Les livres d'école de la République, 1870-1914—discours et idéologie* (Paris: Éditions le Sycomore, 1979); Linda L. Clark, *Schooling the Daughters of Marianne: Textbooks and the Socialization of Girls in Modern French Primary Schools* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); Jean-François Chanet, *L'École républicaine et les petites patries* (Paris: Aubier, 1996). See also Joseph N. Moody, *French Education since Napoleon* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1978).

¹⁰ François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Lire et écrire: l'alphabétisation des Français de Calvin à Jules Ferry*, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977). See also Mary Jo Maynes, *Schooling for the People: Comparative Local Studies of Schooling History in France and Germany, 1750-1850* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985); Pierre Zind's older *L'Enseignement religieux dans l'instruction primaire publique en France de 1850 à 1873* (Lyon: Centre d'Histoire du Catholicisme Français de l'Université de Lyon, 1969) can also be read profitably in this regard.

¹¹ Raymond Grew and Patrick J. Harrigan, *School, State, and Society: The Growth of Elementary Schooling in Nineteenth-Century France—A Quantitative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991).

revision of the Third Republic model for contemporary French society, but did not attempt to deny the importance of the state.¹² Christian Nique, a former *académie* inspector, presidential advisor, and a chief participant in these debates, has pioneered an approach to push the decisive moment of state intervention further back, to the efforts of the astoundingly ignored Restoration and the July Monarchy. In this case, the state is credited less with building schools than with creating an environment that encouraged and oversaw them. The contributions of local groups, primarily the communes themselves but including private associations, are fully recognized. Yet in themselves these efforts were incomplete; the action of the state—mainly in the arena of administrative oversight—was still necessary to make these individual efforts into a unified public institution. Marking the moment when “the school became an affair of the State,” in Nique’s phrase, has become a goal of the recent historiography.¹³ Thus, while the Ferry laws are no longer celebrated as “creating” French education, the state in the guise of the omniscient regulator continues to be the significant actor.

Other scholars, however, are revisiting the conceptualization of the commune and civil society as the subjects of national policies, increasingly seeing an alternative where the local is an active partner, if not the principle architect, of development. The local study has emerged as a tool to track the relationship between local activism and state centralization. Exemplified by the works of Marc Suteau on Nantes and Sarah A. Curtis

¹² Christian Nique and Claude Lelièvre, *La République n'éduquera plus: la fin du mythe Ferry* (Paris: Plon, 1993).

¹³ Christian Nique, *Comment l'École devint une affaire d'État* (Paris: Nathan, 1990) and “Les Trois étapes du refus français d’appliquer le libéralisme à l’éducation (1816-1828-1833),” *Administration et éducation* 85 (2000): 15-28. For examples of Nique’s model used in recent historiography, see René Grevet, *L’Avènement de l’école contemporaine en France (1789-1835): laïcisation et professionnalisation de la culture scolaire* (Villeneuve-d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2001) and Frère Henri Bédel, *Initiation à l’histoire de l’Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes: XIXe siècle, 1805-1875*, *Études Lasalliennes* 9 (Rome: Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes, 2001).

on the diocese of Lyon, municipal notables, private associations, and Catholic charities have emerged as significant instigators of education.¹⁴ Likewise, studies of private organizations by François Jacquet-Francillon and Jean-Noël Luc demonstrate a growing interest in the non-state activism.¹⁵ The most important of these actors, the Catholic teaching congregations, sporadically have been the focus of historians; Georges Rigault's *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes* and Pierre Zind's *Les Nouvelles congrégations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830* on the *petits frères* remain the best and the most comprehensive of these studies, but the field remains ripe for new studies focusing on the smaller, regional congregations.¹⁶

It is the ability to focus on local actors, within a clearly defined context, that makes the local study a useful tool for getting at the non-state side of education development. In order to do so, scholars must jettison not only models of state-only initiative but also models of the local based on some trans-historical continuity. The structures and parameters of the autonomous actors, be they local commune notables, state officials, or private organizations, must be brought into the story of the introduction of primary education to France. Fortunately, a model for such a study already exists in the literature on civil society.

¹⁴ Marc Suteau, *Une ville et ses écoles: Nantes, 1830-1940* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999); Sarah A. Curtis, *Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

¹⁵ François Jacquet-Francillon, *Naissances de l'école du peuple, 1815-1870* (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier, 1995); Jean-Noël Luc, *L'invention du jeune enfant au XIXe siècle: De la salle d'asile à l'école maternelle* (Paris: Belin, 1997).

¹⁶ Georges Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes* (9 volumes. Paris: Plon, 1937-1953); Pierre Zind, *Les Nouvelles congrégations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830* (Lyon: Centre d'Histoire du Catholicisme Français de l'Université de Lyon, 1969). See also Pierre Branchereau, "Les Congrégations religieuses en Anjou sous l'Épiscopat de Mgr. Angebault 1842-1869" (These, docteur en Droit Canonique, Angers: Faculté de théologie, Université Catholique, 1976) for an example of how the regional and institutional study can be combined.

Educational civil society: Between Sociabilité and Democracy

Civil society, as an analytical concept, has enjoyed increasing cachet over the previous two decades.¹⁷ The very active role of groups such as Solidarity, Catholic organizations, and literary circles in the collapse of east European communism helped make civil society the toast of those frustrated with or hostile to statist government models. Disillusionment with development models based on modernization theory or their market-oriented successors of the 1980s led to a valorization of non-governmental organizations as a means of development tied more to societal interests than governments or corporations.¹⁸ The assumption behind both of these conceptualizations was that as people began to work together to address issues of concern to all, they would develop the fundamentals of democratic life. Almost as rapidly as it arose, however, the decline of civil society in those very countries where it played the key role in breaking from communism appeared to undermine the validity of the concept for the long-term stability of democracy. More troubling was the violence associated with groups claiming to be part of civil society—most particularly those associated with the anti-globalization movement. The events following 11 September 2001 raised new questions, sparking a

¹⁷ For key arguments within the vast literature on civil society, see Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1992); Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994); John Keane, *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Nancy Bermeo and Philip Nord, eds., *Civil Society before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); Joseph Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 2 (October 2002): 1094-1123; Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Jonah D. Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge: State, Society, and Economy in Contemporary France* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999); Simone Chambers and Will Kymlicka, eds., *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).

growing field of research into what has been dubbed “uncivil society,” and its relation to the promise of civil society as a field for democratic politics.¹⁹

Many contemporary civil society theorists draw ultimately from Alexis de Tocqueville, whose *Democracy in America* presented a social and a cultural justification for an active society that did not rely on politics or economics to accomplish collective tasks.²⁰ In the broadest sense, civil society encompasses those forms of social activity outside of individual relationships, governmental institutions, and organized economic units that are, in the words of Philip Nord, “ordered, nonclandestine, and collective.”²¹ The individualism of classical liberalism and Marxist class interests are transcended in these institutions in favor of the negotiation of ideals and norms among groups that are self-constituted and motivated. Civil society becomes a means not only of resisting state or market, but also encompassing issues of identity, relationships, and trust—what Robert Putnam terms “social capital.”²² Some authors argue this model justifies seeing the Habermasian public sphere and political culture as aspects of civil society rather than independent approaches to similar questions.²³ The development of this communicative

¹⁹ For a recent work on “uncivil society,” see Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, “Democracy and Associations in the Long Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Modern History* 75 (2003): 269-299, especially 293-299; Richard Boyd, *Uncivil Society: The Perils of Pluralism and the Making of Modern Liberalism* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004); and Peter Fritzsche, *Germans Into Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1998). For a critique of the “uncivil” nature of religion, see David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (2 vols.; New York: Vintage Classics, 1990).

²¹ Nord, “Introduction,” in *Civil Society before Democracy*, xiv. There is some debate about the exact boundaries of civil society; the family in particular has a questionable place—Nord excludes it, while Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato emphatically include it (Ibid., xiv; Cohen and Arato, ix).

²² Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 163-180. Critical theorists such as Simone Chambers have advanced similar arguments about the identity-formation function of civil society; “A Critical Theory of Civil Society,” in *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society*, 90-112.

²³ Cohen and Arato, 21; Ronald P. Formisano, “The Concept of Political Culture,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31 (Winter 2001): 393-426; Edwards, 72-92.

network of symbols, spaces, and interests—a “strong civil society”—becomes a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for a democratic and pluralistic government beholden to neither state nor market.

The effort to apply these theories to nineteenth-century France have been both fruitful and frustrating. One significant problem was the absence of an unfettered right to association in France until the Waldeck-Rousseau Law on Associations in 1901; the civil society of the nineteenth century occupied public arenas under special-case authorizations that could and often were used by paranoid governments to suppress “revolutionary” or just critical activity.²⁴ Yet explicit legal protections are not necessarily a pre-condition for civil society. Alfred C. Stepan has highlighted that toleration—both from and for the state and other organizations—is sufficient for an active civil society.²⁵ It is in this light that the historiography has traced a trajectory for French civil society, starting with the traditional practices of *sociabilité* or the culture of artisanal guilds under the parliamentary monarchies and the Second Republic.²⁶ These practices were then adopted by “non-political” organizations such as student groups, literary societies and chambers

²⁴ Paul Bastid, *Les institutions politiques de la monarchie parlementaire française* (Paris: Éditions du Recueil Sirey, 1954), 385-386. The irony of the 1901 law was the specific exception of religious congregations, which could only exist if authorized by the government—indicating that Bastid’s points are valid for the twentieth century as well. See also the recent comments of Christine Adams in “In the Public Interest: Charitable Association, the State, and the Status of *utilité publique* in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Law and History Review* 25 (Summer 2007): 283-321, especially 291-293.

²⁵ Alfred C. Stepan, “Religion, Democracy, and the ‘Twin Tolerations,’” *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (2000): 37-57. See also Nancy Bermeo, “Civil Society after Democracy: Some Conclusions,” in *Civil Society Before Democracy*, 243.

²⁶ Maurice Agulhon, *The Republic in the Village: The People of the Var from the French Revolution to the Second Empire* (Second Edition. Trans. Janet Lloyd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and *Le cercle dans la France bourgeoise 1810-1848: étude d’une mutation de sociabilité* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1977) ; William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); William Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture: The Textile Trade and French Society, 1750-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’homme, 1984).

of commerce tolerated under the Second Empire. When Napoleon III's regime collapsed, the members of these groups stepped into the political vacuum, insuring the installation of a republican democratic regime in the Third Republic that would eventually recognize the civil society that had given it birth.²⁷ The republicans' main competitors, the bonapartists and legitimists, failed to learn these same lessons and were never able to convert the local support they enjoyed into political organizations capable of competing with republicans on the national level.²⁸

Central to the above model is the chronology: only with the Third Republic does a modern civil society emerge, one defined by playing a supporting role to political movements. This is a teleological story, where the Third Republic serves as the goal for the evolution of French political practice and thereby grants legitimacy on those practices that it embraced. What is missing from this story, however, is an earlier civil society, one that has been glossed over in the historiography. This civil society had all the features of the one treasured by scholars: *sociabilité* and democratic practices, active participation in a public sphere, and devotion to special projects, mostly of a charitable or philanthropic character. In two ways, however, these groups differed. First, most disappeared during the last decade of the Second Empire, exactly when modern civil society was emerging. Not having participated in the democratic Third Republic, they were treated as historical dead-ends, a model of public life that lost. Second, many of these organizations did not

²⁷ Raymond Huard, *La Préhistoire des parties: le mouvement républicain en Bas-Languedoc, 1848-1881* (Paris: Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1982); Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1995); Sudhir Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

²⁸ John Rothney, *Bonapartism after Sedan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), 295; Steven D. Kale, "French Legitimists and the Politics of Absention, 1830-1870," *French Historical Studies* 20 (Autumn 1997): 665-701; 667.

engage directly in political activism. Rather this civil society was involved in direct public development projects; they were, in effect, more similar to modern NGOs than modern political civil society. And primary education was one of their major areas of concern.

Educational civil society in the *Ancien Régime* and the Revolution

The concept of an educational civil society founded on private philanthropy had a long history in France. Although the practice of giving money to charitable establishments was known since antiquity, the majority of such giving was done by local rulers, and the reasons related more to politics than philanthropy. The Reformation's splitting of the Catholic *oikoumene*, coupled with the increased wealth of European merchant and ruling classes, created the possibility of collective charity in pursuit of a goal—a form of proto-civil society. Protestants and post-Tridentine Catholics made education a natural field of competition, and by the seventeenth century numerous groups were devoted to primary education.²⁹

Chief among these were the teaching congregations, lay religious orders devoted to teaching. The most important, the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes, was founded in 1679 at Rheims by Jean-Baptiste De La Salle. Guided by De La Salle's pedagogy laid out in the *Conduite des Écoles* (1720), the Frères would provide a model followed into the

²⁹ Furet and Ozouf, *Lire et écrire*, I: 69-81; Antoinette Ashworth, "L'École, l'État et la société civile en France depuis le XVIe siècle," 2 vols. (Thèse pour le Doctorat d'État, Université de Paris II, 1989), especially I: 217-220; Bernard Gasperrin, *Les petites écoles sous l'Ancien Régime* (Rennes: Ouest France, 1984), 15-16; W. J. Battersby, *De La Salle: A Pioneer of Modern Education* (London, New York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), 3-4. For a discussion of this conflict in German lands and its impact on later education development, see James Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4-6.

twentieth century. But the teaching congregations were themselves only one, albeit indispensable, component. Behind the congregations were a range of individuals and groups, from the curé requesting a school be established in his parish to the widow leaving money to educate poorer children to private societies holding buildings and administering other property. De La Salle himself founded such an association in 1700 to give his nascent order independence from the Church hierarchy; a similar private committee was organized in Laon in 1718 when the municipal council annexed the *école des Frères* to the *collège municipal*. Nor were Catholics the only ones to organize in such a manner. When the abbé Chollet wanted to establish an *école des Frères* in Angers in the 1740s, he acquired the building (the Maison de Sabot) from a lay organization that originally had the intent of opening a school for vagabond children.³⁰ By the middle of the eighteenth century, the teaching congregations and their support infrastructure of organizations had spread across France.

This largely Catholic civil society was challenged by the Enlightenment. Education came under special comment in attacks on Catholicism (and organized religion generally) because of its role in forming a population obedient to the Church. The *Encyclopedie* entry on “Fondations,” written by Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, mocked the idea of organizing a beneficent work *en perpétuité*—the conception behind much religious charitable giving—in the opening definition:

A fund or sum of money, to be employed in perpetuity to fulfill the object that the founder proposed, whether this object concern religious or public utility, whether

³⁰ Rigault, *Histoire générale*, I: 255-56; *Annales de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, 2 vols. (Paris and Tours: Poussielgue and Alfred Mame et fils, 1883), I: 129, 223-4. For Laon, see *Annales de l'Institut*, I: 414-6; for Angers, II: 112-6.

it is limited to satisfying the vanity of the founder, often only the true motive, even though the other two serve as a veil.³¹

The egotism dominating such giving leads to an inefficient, if not wasteful, use of resources as private desires overrode public concerns. Turgot's solution was private associations operating through individual subscriptions that then could be placed under public control, an alternative that still allowed for charity but prevented abuses by allowing greater coordination of public efforts.³² While a form of civil society undeniably modern in appearance, Turgot's model presents a much more constrained role for associations; they exist to provide the state resources, not as independent actors. In a very broad sense, the shift in civil society that occurred in the nineteenth century was between the poles of the older model of Christian charity and the more modern version of Turgot.

Maine-et-Loire as a Case Study

Nowhere were the tensions between the traditional and the modern greater than in the departments of western France. During the Revolution, the West became the center of counter-revolutionary activity, as Vendéen and Chouan rebels marched against republican armies. The nineteenth century would reinforce the perception of the West as somehow different: the region became a bastion of conservative notables and a revived Catholic Church, an example of all that was un-republican, un-laïque, un-progressive, un-educated and, well, un-French. Early in the twentieth century, noted sociologist André Siegfried identified the "thin blue line" of increased Catholic practice running through the

³¹ Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, "Fondations," *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 7: 72-75; 72. Accessed through the ARTFL *Encyclopédie* project at <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/projects/encyc/>.

³² Jean-Luc Marais, *Histoire du don en France de 1800 à 1939: Dons et legs charitables, pieux et philanthropiques* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999), 21-22.

departments of the West as one of the great dividing lines in modern France.³³ Although celebrated for its folklore customs in the twentieth century, sociologists were studying the West as an example of “old ways” well into the 1960s. There remains something different about the West in the French social imaginary³⁴, and the department of Maine-et-Loire is an exemplar of this conservatism at odds with the rest of the nation.

Yet in numerous ways Maine-et-Loire contained striking differences with the general model of the West. Maine-et-Loire is, fundamentally, a liminal department. The area is less a periphery than a frontier zone. Issues of linguistic identity and cultural distinctiveness were a secondary issue, while most of the internal dissention in the department appears to stem from post-Revolutionary debates in the broader French society. Angers, Saumur and the eastern sections were well-integrated into national (and even international) markets and politics by the time the department was formed, as opposed to the relative isolation shared by the other departments of the West. By focusing on an area already “French” rather than “peasant”—to paraphrase Eugen Weber—I hope to illustrate the conflicts in the establishment of the French nation drew on a far broader series of issues than linguistic, cultural, or economic integration.

The distinctiveness of the department was particularly evident in the field of education. The department became involved very early in the effort to develop primary education, and schooling in the department was around the national median for most of the nineteenth century. The Ministry of Public Instruction’s 1878 *Statistique de*

³³ André Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l’ouest sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1913; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975).

³⁴ In using the term “social imaginary,” I draw on Sarah Maza’s definition of “understandings of, and polemics and fantasies about, the social world.” (*The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary 1750-1850* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 10-11).

l'enseignement primaire, the first serious effort to prepare national comparative statistics albeit by a government with every interest in downplaying the achievements of earlier regimes, showed male literacy rates improving from 20-30% in 1829 to between 80-90% by 1876; female literacy rates had also grown to the 70-80% range.³⁵ To put this another way, a traditional, conservative region of France had managed by the beginning of the Third Republic to produce an educational system operating at the average national level. Understanding how this came to be requires a closer look at the department.

Physical and Human Geography

As can be gleaned from the name, the defining feature of the department is the Loire River (see Figure 2). The majestic flow cuts across the department in a broad curve running roughly from the confluence of the Vienne and Loire at the southeast corner to the center of the department, where it merges with the Maine just southwest of Angers, then to the west where it exits into the Nantais for its final run to the Atlantic. Such a natural barrier as the Loire would appear to mark a particularly stable interior boundary, for example being used in the nineteenth century to mark military conscription districts.³⁶ Yet in terms of interior divisions of the department the Loire is only part of the story. The main demarcation is that between the eastern and western halves. Underlying schist formations separate the undulating and broken western half of the department from the

³⁵ *Statistique de l'enseignement primaire, t.2: Statistique comparée de l'enseignement primaire (1829-1877)* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1878), Tableaux 81, 81bis, and 86. This has been matched by the secondary literature; see especially the chapter "L'alphabetisation sans retour" in Furet and Ozouf, I: 13-68.

³⁶ Gabriel Desert, "Alphabetisation et scolarisation dans la Grand-Ouest au 19e siècle," in Donald N. Baker and Patrick J. Harrigan, eds., *The Making of Frenchmen: Current Directions in the History of Education in France, 1679-1979* (Waterloo, Ont.: Historical Reflections Press, 1980), 143-205.

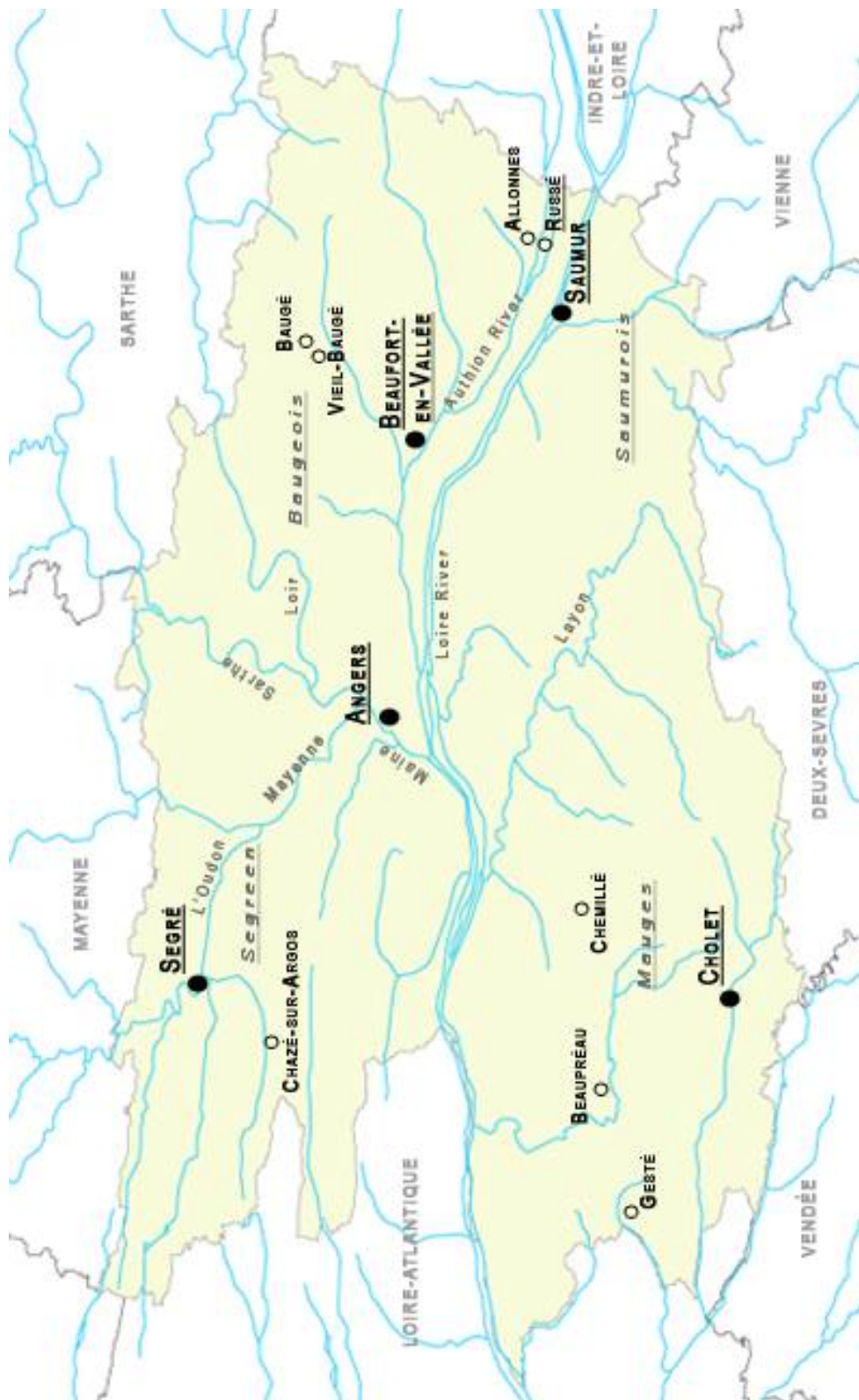


Figure 2: The department of Maine-et-Loire, with features and communes discussed in the text (geographical map data provided by ArcGIS 9.3.1—ArcWorld software, by ESRI, Inc. Additional text by author)

more gentle alluvial deposits of the eastern half. The dividing line roughly follows the course of the Layon in the south of the department, then turns north following the Mayenne, the Loir, and the Sarthe valleys which merge to form the Maine just northeast of Angers.

Traditionally, Maine-et-Loire is divided into four major geophysical regions. The Baugeois consists of the rich alluvial plains north and east of the Loire in the broad, fertile Authion River basin, known simply as “la Vallée.”³⁷ The Saumurois straddles the Loire, stretching south of the Lathan and running to the Layon, whose course marks the beginning of the broken *bocage* country. These two regions, agriculturally bountiful and looking towards the markets of Tours and central France, have long been among the richest in Anjou. The Segréen borders on the north bank of the Loire, west of the confluence with the Maine; its more nebulous eastern boundry lies at the edge of the Maine/Sarthe valley. The Mauges occupies the southwest corner, south of the Loire and west of the Layon. Although part of the historic Anjou, geography has often forced these two regions to look elsewhere for their trade and support. Cholet has always traded more with Nantes than Angers, while the population of the Segréen turned to towns to its north—Château-Gontier and Rennes—rather than its neighbors in the Loire valley.

The physical geology of the region has resulted in sociological differences, most importantly related to land use patterns. The open plains of the Baugeois and the Saumurois encouraged compact holdings geared towards commercial agriculture passing through large market towns like Saumur, Baugé, and Beaufort-en-Vallée. By the nineteenth century, the majority of the land belonged to individual owners. The west was

³⁷ René Musset, “The Geographical Characteristics of Western France,” *Geographical Review* 12, no. 1 (January 1922): 84-99; 97.

bocage country, dotted with small towns, hamlets and scattered fields separated by the thickets of trees that provide the name. Subsistence agriculture dominated, coupled with the increasing use of livestock (*élevage*) in the Segréen. Most importantly, the land in this region was largely held by a relatively small number of *propriétaires*, and leased out. For Siegfried and others, this system of *grande propriété* (as opposed to the freehold *petite propriété* of the eastern sections) left the inhabitants of the Segréen or the Mauges locked in dependence to their landlords—who more likely than not would use this influence to prevent any innovation that would threaten their property.³⁸ Combined with a “natural” distrust of outsiders that came from inhabiting isolated hamlets separated by the mini-forests of the *bocage*, a picture of a backward, tradition-bound against the modern, market- and democratic-oriented population formed.

History of Maine-et-Loire

The small Roman city of Juliomagus, built on a granite outcropping on the south bank of the Maine River, was the foundation of Angers and the Anjou. By the twelfth century, the natural wealth of the region had made Anjou a significant player in the feudal dynamics of medieval Europe. Over the following centuries, the rulers insinuated themselves into the thrones of various European states—forming the nucleus of the Plantagenêt dynasty in England, giving birth to French monarchs of the House of Valois, the Angevin kings of Sicily, counts of Provence, and even marrying into the Hungro-Polish royal family. The death of “Le Bon Roi” René in 1480 ended this participation on

³⁸ Siegfried, 38.

the international stage. Louis XI inherited Anjou, which became a *pays-d'élection* under the control of the French crown.

The Wars of Religion brought brutal fighting in the 1560s, which lasted sporadically until the ascension of Henri IV. During his reign, Saumur became a bastion of Protestantism in western France under the governorship of Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549-1623). Angers would take a prominent role in the Fronde, standing for three years against royal troops until the fortress at Ponts-de-Cé fell in March 1652. Characterized by François Dornic as “the last burst of provincial particularism,”³⁹ the end of the Fronde would mark the end of any real push towards Angevin autonomy. Only the occasional religious dispute, such as the destruction of the Protestant community at Saumur with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and the reign of the Jansenist-influenced bishop Henri Arnault (1649-1692), marked the decades until the Revolution. The late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would see the Anjou continue as a center of textile production (flax and hemp mostly, with some silk weaving at Angers and Château-Gontier), an international alcohol trade in the white wines and *eaux-de-vie* of the Saumurois, the refining of Caribbean sugar shipped inland via Nantes, and the quarrying of *ardoise* (at Trélazé and Segré) and the famed white *Pierre tuffeau* (in the Saumurois) so beloved by architects of the chateaux of the Loire Valley.

The events of 1789 broke this tranquility, and fundamentally altered the national perception of Anjou. The modern “Anjou”—the department of Maine-et-Loire—was the product of the Revolution. While Revolutionary geographers set out to create “natural” political divisions based on topographical features to replace the “artificial” feudal ones,

³⁹ François Dornic, *Histoire d'Anjou* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France ‘Que sais-je’, 1961), 73.

pre-existing structures such as economic markets and dioceses as well as an overriding need for governable bodies were more important.⁴⁰ For the Anjou, the diocese of Angers was the basis for the new department created on 19 January 1790, although a significant swath of the diocese of La Rochelle—including the town of Cholet and much of the Mauges (already administratively part of the Anjou)—was added and towns like Château-Gontier and La Flèche transferred to even out the new administrative landscape.⁴¹ Although the new department initially took the name of Anjou, the more politically and historically neutral “Mayenne-et-Loire”—soon commuted to Maine-et-Loire—was chosen on 4 March 1790.⁴² While a “natural” unity, an “angevine” identity and a measure of “historical” continuity appeared to be present in the new department, all were possible only because the seams and divisions were not visible from Paris.

The Vendée War soon would expose these seams. Considerable enthusiasm for the events of 1789 existed in Maine-et-Loire, particularly among the eastern towns of the department. Yet as early as September 1790, when the *perroyeurs* of the ardoise quarries marched on Angers demanding cheaper bread and the disarmament of the National Guard, severe divisions between the urban populations and the rest of the region were apparent. The increasingly brutal repressions of Catholicism—refractory priests were

⁴⁰ Isser Woloch, *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789-1820s* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 27-30.

⁴¹ Pierre Flatrès, "Historical Geography of Western France," in *Themes in the Historical Geography of France*, ed. Hugh D. Clout (London, New York and San Francisco: Academic Press, 1977), 306; Serge Chassagne, "L'Église abolie? (1789-1802)," in *Histoire du diocèse d'Angers*, ed. François Lebrun (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), 149-172. Château-Gontier became part of the department of Mayenne, La Flèche of the Sarthe.

⁴² Lebrun, *Paroisses*, 9.

imprisoned, among other places, in the former *école des Frères* in Angers—and the execution of Louis XVI soured popular sentiment further.

The introduction of military conscription marked a breaking point, and outright revolt broke out in the Mauges within days of the departmental *tirage* of 10 March 1793. An *ad hoc* army, christening itself the *Grande Armée Catholique et Royale*, took Saumur on 9 June 1793. Angevin native Jacques Cathelineau (1759-1793; born in Pin-en-Mauges, north of Cholet) was elected general at Saumur, and made the faithful decision to march on Angers (which fell on 17 June) and Nantes rather than Paris. This strategy allowed a republican force time to assemble and counterattack, eventually killing Cathelineau and destroying the Angevin positions of the *Grande Armée*. Cholet was sacked on 17 October 1793, gutting its buildings and local industries, and reducing the population to a quarter of its pre-Revolution size.⁴³ The battlelines turned to the northeast, where the *Grande Armée* was broken attacking Le Mans before being decisively defeated at Savenay two days before Christmas, 1793. A brutal military and political repression, exemplified by the *colonnes infernales* of General Louis Marie Turreau (1756-1816), attempted to destroy the remnants of the counterrevolutionaries. Thermidor and the installation of the Directory brought efforts to end the violence through a series of treaties recognizing the right of religion, but the rest of the century saw a continued guerrilla war. Napoléon, in his position as First Consul, finally negotiated a lasting peace in early 1800.

The seven years of conflict comprising the Vendée episode indelibly marked the status of Maine-et-Loire in the French political imaginery as a bastion of

⁴³ Dornic, 101; Célestin Port, *La Vendée angevin* (2 vols. Paris: Hachette, 1888. Reprint, Marseilles: Laffitte Reprints, 1982).

counterrevolution. Contemporaries clearly recognized the significance. The Hundred Days brought another brief round of violence that quickly dissipated. The Duchess de Berry believed in the conservative credentials of the department enough to attempt using it as a starting point for her failed insurrection in 1832.⁴⁴ While this latter event sparked a series of political trials, and episodes of “chouannerie” happened from time to time in the department, Maine-et-Loire saw no return of the open conflict between royalists and the sitting government. The largest uprising of the century, the Marianne revolt of 1855, hardly involved the royalists, nor even aimed at the young Second Empire. Sparked by a local secret society, La Marianne, operating amongst the *ardoise* workers of Trelazé, the movement had more in common with the burgeoning strikes of urban laborers than either a royalist or a peasant movement.⁴⁵ Marching on Angers, the group engaged in a series of gunbattles before being put down by troops already stationed in Angers.

Economically and socially, the east-west division continued to divide the department. The rich agricultural lands of the Baugeois and the Saumurois were readily integrated into the national commercial markets as the railroads expanded in mid-century. Although some traditional market towns lost their status as they were bypassed by rail lines (Beaufort-en-Vallée being the primary example), the independent propriétaires of east of the Loire benefited from the developments of the century. By the 1880s, this area of the department was strongly republican. The Mauges and the Segréen remained more isolated and traditional, and tended towards political legitimatism dominated by the large Catholic landowners. As late as the 1950s and 1960s scholars studied the area in an

⁴⁴ Anne Rolland-Boulestreau, *Les notables des Mauges: Communautés rurales et Révolution, 1750-1830* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004); Dornic, 101.

⁴⁵ Ted W. Margadant, *French Peasants in Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

attempt to recover “traditional” French agricultural life; the focus on the angevin town of Chanzeaux by a plethora of Laurence Wylie’s students is the most noted example in the Anglophone scholarship.⁴⁶

Industrialization was only sporadic in the department. Textiles continued to be important, but large mills never became the norm in the region. Angers and Saumur had large commercial distilleries by the 1870s; Cointreau and guignolet both originated in Angers. Overwhelmingly, however, Maine-et-Loire was an agricultural department. The main exception was Cholet, whose *mouchoir* industry was internationally renown. Although Tessie Liu has recently argued the industry was actually proto-industrial, remaining rooted in traditional family manufacturing that pushed itself to the breaking-point to fulfill increasing demand for non-mass-produced goods, Cholet had an unique reputation as an industrial, republican town within the agricultural, conservative department.⁴⁷ The distinction became more profound as Angers became increasingly conservative during the century. Sociologist Guy Minguet tied this difference to the prominence of Catholic notables in Angers and republican technocratic leaders at Cholet.⁴⁸

Despite its relatively quiet political history, Maine-et-Loire would produce a range of polarizing figures for the national political stage. The most renown of these, perhaps, was Alfred, the Comte de Falloux (1811-1885). The mid-century representative

⁴⁶ Laurence Wylie, *Chanzeaux, a Village in Anjou* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966).

⁴⁷ Tessie P. Liu, *The Weaver’s Knot: The Contradictions of Class Struggle and Family Solidarity in Western France, 1750-1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). For the uniqueness of Cholet in department politics, see Tilly, *The Vendée*, and Port, *La Vendée angevin*, 23.

⁴⁸ Guy Minguet, *Naissance de l’Anjou industriel: entreprise et société locale à Angers et dans le Choletais* (Paris: Éditions L’Harmattan, 1985).

of liberal Catholicism, Falloux's political activities—including being a primary mover on the education bill that bears his name—represented a quixotic effort to bridge the primary political division of the century. Other Angevins ably represented the more radical right. Théodore Quatrebarbes (1803-1871), the royalist officer who famously broke his sword in Algeria upon hearing of the installation of the July Monarchy, served as a député and played an active role in the bitter Catholic press debates of the 1840s on the side of the ultramontanes. The Church was well represented, particularly the bishops of Angers. The actions of Mgr. Émile Freppel (r. 1870-1891) in the first two decades of the Third Republic made him a poster-child of republican fears' about the Church, and he remains a polarizing figure to this day. His predecessor Mgr. Guillaume Angebault (r. 1841-1869) also was active national affairs, and was a significant supporter of the spread of Catholic education in the department and beyond. Also in this category is René-François Régnier (1794-1881). A native Angevin, Régnier was the star pupil in the effort of Charles Montault to re-vitalize diocese education under the early Restoration. Regnier became, successively, vicaire-general of the diocese of Angers (1830), bishop of Angoulême (1842), and finally the archbishop of Cambrai (1850). Throughout his career, Régnier was a strong supporter of the congregations and Catholic education generally. Furthermore, he built a network of Catholic cercles in northern France in the 1870s to stem the waning Catholicism of urban populations—an approach he perhaps learned when serving as the spiritual director of the Association in the mid-1820s in Angers.

Maine-et-Loire produced much fewer national figures on the political left; most of them were artists rather than politicians. David d'Angers, sculpteur of some of the friezes on the Pantheon and devoted republican, was the most notable artist coming out of

Anjou. Departmental archivist Célestin Port (1828-1901) compiled a multi-volume *Dictionnaire historique, géographique et biographique de Maine-et-Loire et de l'ancienne province d'Anjou* (1874-1878) based on the sources under his care, albeit filtered through his republican sensibilities. The work was awarded the *prix Gobert* upon completion and helped spark the compilation of similar dictionaries in other departments. The *Dictionnaire* has been regularly updated by subsequent archivists, and is still in publication.⁴⁹ Interestingly, both David d'Angers and Célestin Port admired Quatrebarbes' numerous writings on Angevin history, an indication of the importance of the new local history for both sides of the political spectrum in the nineteenth century. These figures—members of the old and Catholic nobility on one side, and a small number of artists on the political left, did little to diminish Maine-et-Loire's new reputation as a stronghold of conservatism in the eyes of the nation.

Structure of the Study

Sources

Students of French education history suffer little from a lack of source material, at least from the official government perspective. The French public archive system, starting with the Archives Nationales in Paris and extending through the network of departmental and municipal archives, comprise one of the great bodies of historical material in the world. The official correspondence between departmental authorities and the national bureaucracy in Paris are largely contained in the extensive F¹⁷ series, with

⁴⁹ The current edition comprises four volumes released from 1965-1996 under the direction of Jacques Levron and Pierre D'Herbécourt (Angers: H. Siraudeau et Cie., 1965-1996), with a two-volume *Supplément au dictionnaire historique, géographique et biographique de Maine-et-Loire de Célestin Port* by former Angers municipal archivist André Sarazin (Mayenne: Éditions régionales de l'Ouest, 2004).

some supplemental information concerning the teaching congregations in F¹⁹ series of the Ministry of Cults. At the departmental level, education materials are classified in series T and series V for the congregations, with supplemental information on the school buildings and their financing in series O. Municipal archives classify educational matters in series R; municipal funding records are in series L and details on school buildings in series M. These records contain the official reports, statistics, and correspondence passed between the various levels of government.

Certainly, there are some regrettable lacuna even in this system. The lack of consistent reports from local officials was a chronic problem for national authorities, and successive regimes struggled to overcome the difficulty. Such poor reporting was particularly acute under the Restoration and the first years of the July Monarchy, when statistical and reporting practices were still being developed. For local archives, historical circumstances and practices have also taken their toll. The major floods of the Loire—that of 1851 was especially severe—occasionally reached official buildings, and a number of the existing records show evidence of severe water damage. Fighting during the Second World War also impacted the archival records, particularly when Segré was torched by retreating German forces in 1944. One potentially rich public source, the municipal council debates on the opening and the financial support of schools, is often compromised by the tendency of nineteenth-century secretaries not to identify the speakers in debates. In many cases, objections to policies might be recorded in detail, but only attributed to “one member” with no further identification. Despite these tribulations, the archival record for Maine-et-Loire is in large measure intact.

While the public archives of France contain a wealth of information on official policy, the records on the private associations that figured so prominently in the development of primary education are more elusive. Some of the records of the mutuelliste societies are rather extensive, spread between municipal, departmental, and national archives. Most of this information consists of official correspondance and reports, giving better insight into their public stances than internal organization. Such documents, however, provide important insight into the relationships between the private organizations and various authorities with which they had to work. The public advertising of these organizations, which includes the pamphlets supporting particular pedagogies as part of the “pamphlet war” of the Restoration and printed appeals for subscribers, remains likewise scattered among public archives and libraries.

The internal records—meetings, policy debates among members, lists of contributors and subscribers—are more difficult to locate. The Society of Angers, the longest lasting of the mutuelliste organizations, transferred their records to the municipality with the sale of their schools in 1866; the Society of Cholet did the same forty-five years early. In contrast, the mutuelliste “society” which petitioned the municipal council of Saumur to replace the *école des Frères* has left no trace of its internal documents, and may indeed have existed as no more than an *ad hoc* organization amongst the liberal notables of the commune. Many other organizations have left no trace beyond a reference to a “group of subscribers” who donated money to purchase a building or to pay the initial cost of equipping a school.

One important set of sources for educational civil society is the holdings of the various institutions associated with the Catholic church. Diocese archives have long been

used by historians, although remarkable finds remain. The records of the Association, for instance, include five bound registers and a carton of loose papers spanning almost sixty years. Although consulted in studies of the re-establishment of Catholicism during the Restoration, very little attention has been given to the organization from the July Monarchy forwards—the point at which it became solely devoted to education.⁵⁰ The records of parish church councils (*fabriques*) also contain information related to private associations. These holdings tend to be divided; many parishes sent their records to the diocese archives, while richer parishes—the Paroisse de Saint-Pierre-de-Saumur being a prime example—maintain their own separate archives. Like the diocese archives, these are likely to contain more of the interior records—especially meeting minutes and subscription lists—than the public archives. Finally, the records of Catholic teaching congregations provide some information on the organizations which initially invited them into communes. In the case of Catholic groups in small communes, a passing reference in a municipal council meeting or the approval of a congregation directing council may be the only evidence of existence.

The focus of the dissertation is the *écoles communales*. Originally, as defined under Restoration law and that of 28 June 1833 (the famous *loi Guizot*), the *école communale* was that school designated by communal authorities to receive indigent children on the official public list for free. While many of the earliest schools (including those of the Society and the Frères) accepted all students free of charge, the designation as an *école communale* was important for two reasons. First, such designation was key to

⁵⁰ Henri Gazeau, “L’Evolution religieuse des pays angevins de 1814 à 1870” (Thèse pour le Doctorat ès Lettres, Université de Rennes, 1960), especially I: 36-41.

securing public funding; even private organizations like the Society and the Association depended increasingly on public subsidies to support their projects. Second, the designation gave the schools—and by extension those who supported them—status within the community. While the communes were the lowest level of the post-Napoleonic administrative hierarchy, the combination of practicality and lingering uncertainty about the centralization project of the Revolution left considerable room for municipal governments to make their own policies towards primary education. The communes effectively operated independently in the first half of the century. That is why it was not unusual, at least for larger towns, to have multiple *écoles communales* representing different educational practices.

The first part of the dissertation examines the primary players in the early construction of primary schools, the organs of the state and the private associations which comprised French civil society. The opening chapter provides an overview of education development across the nineteenth century. Chapter Two looks at the municipalities' frequent partner, the private individuals and associations promoting primary education. These organizations formed an active educational civil society that played a vital role in the spread of primary education, one which was eventually eclipsed as society came to view primary education as something that could only be handled by large, centralized institutions. The efforts of these organizations to work together in a variety of municipal environments is the concern of Chapter Three. The towns of Cholet, Beaufort-en-Vallée, and Russé—representing a larger *chef-lieux*, mid-sized market towns, and small rural communes respectively—are the focus as disputes between various actors influenced how primary education developed.

The second part approaches the means by which these two groups attempted to exercise control of schools, the direct ownership of property and financing and the control of *liberalités*. The distribution of charity in the form of philanthropic donations and legacies had long underlain French education policy, and with such control came a sense of ownership. This ownership of schools was legally embodied in the February 1816 ordinance that marked the first post-Revolutionary attempt at organizing a national education system, and created the source for innumerable problems over the century. As the state attempted to exert control over education—putting forth what one may call a “metaphorical” ownership of schools—it had to compete with the very real ownership exercised by communes and private associations, groups that also claimed a “metaphorical” ownership of education. Yet until the Third Republic, the state was dependent on the resources of communes and private organizations to keep schools open, which lay at the center of most of the conflict over the century.

The final two chapters look at the reasons for the collapse in the late 1860s and 1870s of the public arena that had built and supported primary schools since Napoleon. The question of the pedagogical development within French primary education is examined, tracing the trajectory from the overriding concern with order that dominated post-Revolutionary thinking to the dawning conception of shaping loyal and productive individual citizens that would become the centerpiece of republican education policy. Behind this objective shift, however, another change was occurring: the ability to judge—in the sense of inspecting and overseeing—education policy was being curtailed. While it was somewhat obvious to most people what “orderly” children might look like, assessing the individual achievement and potential required much greater contact with the child and

training. In the effort to implement these new pedagogical goals, the direct influence of the old civil society counted for less and less, as the final chapter examines. The resources they could muster locally were no longer adequate, and their considered opinions no longer deemed applicable. The one area they could help, however, was to provide pressure to compel those institutions capable of influencing education policy—the state and to a lesser extent the Catholic Church—to adopt certain policies as outlined by the new education professionals. It was this shift that caused the collapse of the old civil society, creating a new “modern” civil society where politics became a proxy for praxis.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOLING
IN MAINE-ET-LOIRE

“The 380 communes of the department today all have the means for the instruction of their children,” wrote Léon de Lens (1809-1882), inspector of the department of Maine-et-Loire for the Académie de Rennes, in his yearly report on education in 1870. There follows the statistical categories familiar to anyone working in French education of the period: the increase in the number of schools, the decrease in the number of *écoles mixtes* serving both sexes in favor of single-sex schools, the number of students in the department (holding steady at one-ninth of the total population, de Lens proudly reports), the numbers of *écoles libres* (private schools) compared to public, and so on. Of course, education requires more than just buildings and students. De Lens did not forget the teachers in his comments: “the zeal of the teachers,” he continues, “has not diminished” in their effort to educate their charges. Yet de Lens left no doubt about who truly was responsible for all these successes. He concludes his report with praise for the *inspecteurs primaires* under his jurisdiction: “the department owes to their perseverance and energetic efforts the prosperity of its schools.”¹ Where would the communal school be without the state to guide it?

¹ Léon de Lens, “Rapport sur l’état de l’Instruction primaire en 1870,” 15 June 1871, AN F¹⁷ 9220.

Self-congratulatory hyperbole such as de Lens' was all too common for bureaucrats of the period; much of the dismal perception of nineteenth-century education comes from similar reports that bolstered the author's own standing by exaggerating the difficulties and the successes in the field.² Note the key item in the report: every commune in Maine-et-Loire, historic heart of the Vendée War and part of the Catholic West, had access to a school by 1870. When de Lens became the department inspector in 1854 only ten communes were without schools.³ Twenty years earlier, when the post of department inspector was first established, the number was around 80.⁴ The *inspecteurs primaires* that de Lens praised so highly might have contributed to the prosperity of the schools, but those schools had been built and supported by someone other than the academic bureaucracy.

Despite being located behind Louis Maggiolo's Geneva-Saint Malo line in the educationally undeveloped area of western and southern France, schooling in the department was around the national median for most of the nineteenth century, and high levels of basic literacy were achieved. The Ministry of Public Instruction's 1880 *Statistique comparée de l'enseignement primaire*, the first serious effort to prepare historical comparative statistics albeit by a government with every interest in downplaying earlier achievements, showed male literacy rates improving from 20-30% in 1829 to between 80-90% by 1876; female literacy rates likewise had grown to the 70-

² Grew and Harrigan, 14.

³ Exposé sur l'instruction primaire, 1855, ADML 51 T 5.

⁴ État de l'instruction publique 1834, ADML 51 T 1; État de l'instruction publique 1838-1839, ADML 51 T 2.

80% range.⁵ More importantly given that education was a developing project over the century, maintaining this median required significant investment in schooling at the local level; literacy rates were only one measure of this. Departmental spending per primary school pupil was in the upper third of all departments, even if communal spending lacked behind national averages.⁶ By the beginning of the Third Republic, a traditional, conservative region of France had managed to produce an educational system operating at the average national level.

Significant credit for this success lies in the local actors, the communes and the private associations who worked to create a network of schools capable of competing to national standards. These actors worked extensively with all levels of the French state—the subprefects and prefects, the rectors and inspectors of the *académies*, and the national government—in this process. Such relationships were not always easy, particularly as the political tides of the nineteenth century ebbed and flowed—tides would overwhelm these local institutions in a wave of centralization in the 1870s. For the majority of the century, however, education policy in Paris depended on the willingness and the resourcefulness of local notables at the communal level for success. This chapter will present a brief overview of the impact of these political twists and turns on education policy in France. The purpose is to provide a brief chronological basis within which to place the origin, operation, and decline of these private actors as a model of state domination came to the forefront of French political thought by the last quarter of the century.

⁵ Ministère de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts, *Statistique de l'enseignement primaire, tome 2: Statistique comparée de l'enseignement primaire (1829-1877)* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1880), tables 81, 81bis, and 86.

⁶ *Ibid.*, tables 25 and 29.

The Early History of Primary Education in Maine-et-Loire

The development of primary education in Maine-et-Loire followed a number of distinct stages, overlapping but not necessarily following political regimes. Since education development was believed even in the nineteenth century to have been a result of the Revolution, widespread opinion held that little in the way of education existed before in Anjou. Louis Maggiolo's study of pre-Revolutionary literacy, incorporated as part of the 1880 *Statistique comparée*, helped cement this impression.⁷ Maggiolo divided France into two sections, divided by a line roughly drawn between Geneva and Saint Malo. North and east of this line, literacy was growing during the *ancien régime*; literacy and, therefore education, was static south and west of the line. Combined with perceptions of the backwardness of the West, an easy correlation between illiteracy, Catholicism, and social, economic and political backwardness was made.

Local evidence, however, is more ambiguous. Saumur, for instance, long maintained a reputation for education; the famous *Académie Protestante* established by Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549-1623) in 1599 sparked Catholics to establish the *collège des Oratoriens*. This latter institution closed in 1785, but not before educating a number of young Catholics—including the first post-Concordat Bishop of Angers, Charles Montault. In the 1890s, Charles Urseau, an episcopal secretary, argued for a fairly well developed system of schools in what became Maine-et-Loire before the Revolution. Citing both parish records and government documents—including the list of school buildings seized as *biens nationaux*—Urseau concluded that many of the parishes

⁷ 1880 *Statistique comparée*, clxvi-clxxiii. For an analysis of Maggiolo's work, see Michel Fleury and Pierre Valmary, "Les progrès de l'instruction élémentaire de Louis XIV à Napoléon III, d'après l'enquête de Louis Maggiolo (1877-1879)," *Population* (France) 12, no. 1 (January-March, 1957): 71-92.

included in the new department had schools under the *ancien régime*. Urseau's contention raised a heated controversy, the challenge being taken up by B. Bois through a series of articles in *Anjou historique* before the First World War.⁸ More recent research on education in early modern France has supported Urseau's conclusions, emphasizing the frequency of *petites écoles* both for boys and for girls in many French communes during the eighteenth century.⁹

The difficulty in settling the debate lay with the destruction of records during the Revolution. As various revolutionary governments attempted to assess education needs for their own projects, the actual history became more and more confused. When chemist Jean-Antoine Chaptal (1756-1832) began compiling an official survey on education in Year 9, the consensus for Maine-et-Loire was rather negative: primary education was practically non-existent. The source reports, however, demonstrate a rather more complicated truth. The Conseil d'arrondissement de Saumur, for instance, indicated that when the city of Saumur attempted to establish primary schools during the Revolution many of the potential buildings and other resources were requisitioned for military uses in the Vendée War; state actions had forestalled any local effort to build schools.¹⁰ Likewise, the subprefect of Segré reported that one reason for the lack of schools in his arrondissement was that many parents had sent their children to neighboring towns which were placed outside the department in 1790, and therefore not "counted" as schools in

⁸ Charles Urseau, *L'instruction primaire avant 1789 dans les paroisses du Diocèse actuel d'Angers* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1895); B. Bois, "Recherches historiques sur l'enseignement primaire en Anjou des origines jusqu'à nos jours," *Anjou historique*, various volumes.

⁹ Bernard Groperrin, *Les petites écoles sous l'Ancien Régime* (Rennes: Ouest France, 1984); Karen E. Carter, "'Les garçons et les filles sont pêle-mêle dans l'école': Gender and Primary Education in Early Modern France." *French Historical Studies* 31 (Summer 2008): 417-444.

¹⁰ Quoted in Urseau, 76-77.

Maine-et-Loire.¹¹ While the new department was undoubtedly under equipped with schools by 1800, the reason had more to do with recent historical events than long-standing prejudice against education amongst the population.

Education under the Restoration

The Consulate and Empire saw a flurry of municipal colleges re-established in the department following the law of 11 *floréal* Year 10 (1 May 1802). The same law transferred control of primary schools to the communes, and set the provision that spaces in communal schools should be set aside to educate poorer children at public expense—an education policy that lasted until 1881.¹² By the Restoration, a number of primary school teachers had re-established themselves in the department, either independently or attached to the college. A number, such as the Filles de la Sagesse in Cholet and the *maître d'écriture* attached to the college in Beaufort, received municipal subsidies to educate the poorer children of their communes.¹³

This new interest in education was shared by the restored Bourbons. The royal ordinance of 29 February 1816 made primary instruction a national concern. The February ordinance, which neither mandated the establishment of schools nor provided funding or even extensive state intervention, was until recently considered a minor footnote in the legislative story. Its basic provisions, however, set large components of education policy that would remain constant until the Third Republic. Schools were to be

¹¹ Rapport du Sous-Préfet de Segré au Préfet, 22 *prairial* Year 9 (11 June 1801), ADML 53 T 2.

¹² David, “L'établissement de l'enseignement primaire,” 20; extrait of the law of 11 *floréal* Year 10 reprinted in Gréard, I: 42-44. The re-established colleges were at Cholet, Saumur, Beaufort-en-Vallée, Baugé, Doué, and Beaupréau.

¹³ Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 15 May 1821, AM Cholet 1 D 3; Conseil municipal de Beaufort-en-Vallée, séances of 25 July 1816 and 7 May 1818, AM Beaufort 1 D 4.

established on the communal level, with the provision that the poorer children—determined by a list prepared by the municipal council, or more often the maire and the curé—be educated at public expense. Realizing the limits of the government’s ability to support such a massive undertaking, a series of rights concerning the selection of teachers were granted to private individuals and associations who desired to found schools, as well as to the communes themselves. Finally, schools were brought under public oversight: *comités cantonnaux* were to inspect schools on a regular basis, while the national government set broad curriculum goals and qualifications for the new mandatory teaching certificates through the agency of a commission of public instruction and the rectors of the *académies*. Although originally applying only to boys’ schools, a later *circulaire* (3 June 1819) extended the provisions to *écoles de filles*.¹⁴

Practical considerations played a major role in the form of the ordinance. The Revolution had demonstrated how daunting the construction of a primary education infrastructure could be. Confronted with a weak economy and saddled with huge war indemnities, the Bourbon government was hardly in a position to finance a national education system. Appealing to other actors presented the most viable option. Yet the unusual provisions of the February ordinance provide insight into the political culture of the Restoration. While deciding to keep the Napoleonic prefectural apparatus intact, the Bourbons were well aware of calls among their political base for more decentralization, if not an outright return to the provincial system of the old regime.¹⁵ Recognizing a form of corporate rights of the commune—in the decision of which schools and teachers to

¹⁴ Reprinted in Gréard, I: 119-122.

¹⁵ For an outstanding study of these debates, see Rudolf von Thadden, *La Centralisation contestée*, trans. Hélène Cusa and Patrick Charbonneau (Arles: Actes Sud, 1989).

employ, and local surveillance under the guidance of national policies—the Bourbon government may have been attempting to split the difference between partisans of the old “decentralized” France and the Napoleonic administrative legacy.

Before the state could do anything, however, it was necessary to develop a new education administrative regime. Since 1808, the Université had served as Napoleon’s administrative organ for education at both the secondary and the primary levels. In theory both a government institution and the corporate body of educators, the Université was granted a monopoly on education, and even the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes were placed under them.¹⁶ Like much of the Napoleonic apparatus, the Restoration attempted first to dismantle the Université by replacing the semi-independent Grand-Maître with a council directly under the king and turning operational control over to provincial bodies which took the name *universités*. After the Hundred Days, the Université was re-instated in name under the control of a Conseil de l’Instruction within the Ministry of the Interior, with seventeen regional *académies*.¹⁷ Angers became the center of an *académie* which united Maine-et-Loire, the Mayenne, and the Sarthe—effectively comprising the former provinces of Anjou and the Maine.

Yet it would not be the state that provided the initiative for early school development, but the private associations to which the February ordinance had appealed. These private providers were varied. The largest group envisioned by the ordinance

¹⁶ Décret impérial of 17 March 1808, reprinted in Martine Allaire and Marie-Thérèse Frank, eds., *Les Politiques de l’éducation en France de la maternelle au baccalauréat* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1995), 52-65. Article 109 of this décret specifically recognized the Frères as a component of the Université—a ruling which was to cause conflict for the rest of the century. The monopoly status of the Université was verified by a second décret of 15 November 1811 (quoted in Allaire and Frank, 65-69; Prost, 26).

¹⁷ Ordonnances royales of 17 February 1815 and of 15 August 1815, both extracted in Gréard, I: 79-83.

consisted of persons leaving *liberalités*—donations or legacies—for the establishment of schools. Although a traditional source of funding for French schools, such giving was rare under the Restoration for a number of reasons. First, the significant legal changes during the Revolution, especially laws guaranteeing a share of any estate to all inheritors and the very real uncertainty about the future of religious endowments, created an environment discouraging *liberalités*. The economic upheavals of the previous quarter century were a second factor. Rampant inflation and effects of prolonged warfare, as well as the confused status of the property of émigrés, made collecting capital for philanthropic enterprises difficult. Demographic realities provided a third and final factor limiting *liberalités* under the Restoration. Many *liberalités* were the result of wills, and such *liberalités* made in the 1820s might wait years before they were paid out, in effect “delaying” the gift. Although promising for the future, the provisions of the February ordinance were rather inadequate to solving the immediate need for funding for education.

But donations and legacies were not the only private means of supporting schools foreseen by the February ordinance. Private associations were flourishing that sought to provide the finances and the staffing for primary schools, and the government welcomed this assistance. Like the rest of French society, these associations were broken into two rough camps of royalist/Catholic and liberal. The Catholic teaching congregations were the most important component of Catholic civil society. After having re-integrated themselves in the good graces of Napoleon’s government, communities of the *Frères des Écoles chrétiennes* and female orders such as the Ursulines were once again sights in many French towns. By the late 1820s, they were being joined by others, as

congregations hospitalières began to open schools within their hospitals and new *congregations enseignantes* such as the *Frères de l'Instruction chrétienne de Ploërmel* were established.¹⁸ The congregations' primary role was to provide Catholic teachers, most trained in the pedagogical practice known as *enseignement simultané* developed by Frères founder Jean-Baptiste de la Salle. Under the Restoration, the congregations played little role in founding schools themselves, having been financially destroyed during the Revolution and leery of any future government moves. They therefore depended, like the government, on other groups to step forward to support their efforts, whether it be communes themselves, bishops and local clergy, or a range of Catholic private associations.

The chief competition for these Catholic groups were associations promoting a new pedagogy called *enseignement mutuel*. Although in some ways a development of de la Salle's techniques, *enseignement mutuel* drew heavily on the success of schools opened in England by Joseph Lancaster. The technique divided students into classes—usually eight—based on mastery of subject matter. All the classes met in a single room, and were taught in succession by a single teacher assisted by student assistants known as monitors (*moniteurs*) who tutored their classmates as the teacher moved from class to class. Proponents emphasized both the rapidity of system—eighteen months, as opposed to the four years assumed in *enseignement simultané*—and the ability to teach large number of students utilizing relatively few teachers, a not insignificant selling point.

¹⁸ Curtis, 21-31; Zind, 12. According to Zind, no less than five separate male teaching congregations who took the name “Frères de l'Instruction chrétienne” during the nineteenth century, and it is not uncommon to find contemporary sources (and not a few modern researchers) carelessly using this name to refer to any male Catholic teaching congregation, including the *Frères des Écoles chrétiennes* which served as the model of almost all of these groups. Collectively, these newer male teaching congregations were referred to as the “petits frères.”

Serious interest in the system emerged during the Hundred Days, when the *Société pour l'instruction élémentaire* formed in Paris to promote the technique through a central locus for the dissemination of information, the encouragement of subscriptions or *liberalités* for the establishment of *écoles mutuelles*, and to work with government authorities to spread the method.¹⁹

In the Maine-et-Loire, despite (or perhaps because of) the recent Vendéen conflict, an active education civil society was ready as early as 1816. Originally organized as part of the Mission de France, the *Association religieuse et royale d'Angers* brought together Catholic nobles and notables to revitalize public Catholicism. Almost from their first meeting, however, the Association began considering plans to improve primary education by funding the re-establishment of the Frères in Angers.²⁰ Likewise, a loosely-organized subscription drive was held among Catholics in Saumur to support the establishment of an *école de Frères*.²¹ On the liberal side, a number of sister associations of the *Société élémentaire* established themselves in Angers, Cholet and Baugé to promote *enseignement mutuel*. The largest of these, the *Société pour l'encouragement d'enseignement mutuel élémentaire*, was organized in Angers in November 1816 and would remain active until the late 1860s.²² The organization in Cholet gained national

¹⁹ Raymond Tronchot, "L'enseignement mutuel en France de 1815 à 1833: Les luttes politiques et religieuses autour de la question scolaire," 3 vols (thèse d'état, Université de Paris I, 1972), I: 120-125; Jacquet-Francillon, 50-58. The *Société* was regularly referred to by a number of different names; for the sake of clarity, it will be referred to as the *Société élémentaire* here.

²⁰ *Annales de l'Association religieuse et royale*, registre I, séances of 28 February 1816 and 7 March 1816, A. Dio. Angers 5 K 21. The *Annales* consists of five bound registres containing the handwritten meeting minutes for the Association for the almost sixty years of its existence; subsequent references will refer to the registre number and the date.

²¹ Conseil municipal de Saumur, séances of 23 September 1822 and 18 March 1825, AM Saumur 1 D 12 and 1 D 13.

²² Letter from the Society to the Prefect, 27 November 1816, ADML 77 T 5; the attendees at the first meeting was recalled in "Procès verbal de la séance du 24 janvier 1817," AN F¹⁷ 11757.

notoriety when the Duc d'Angoulême took out six subscriptions during his tour of western France in November 1817.²³

The earliest activity of these organizations was to convince communes to install schools that followed their particular pedagogy. Campaigns were conducted both by local supporters sitting on municipal councils and through a prolific—and at times vitriolic—pamphleteering campaign that spread across France. While there was some level of national coordination—the *mutuellistes* had the early support of Interior Minister Joseph Lainé (1768-1835)—local activism was really the key. The groundwork for the establishment of an *école de Frères* in Angers was laid by the Association well before the Frères themselves had available teachers to assign, while the Society published its own lengthy pamphlet on primary education penned by member and Académie d'Angers secretary Pierre-Louis Le Bas.²⁴ Once the decision had been made by authorities to open a school, these organizations stepped in to raise funds, institute searches for appropriate buildings and in many cases negotiated contracts for teachers and buildings.

These activities brought the associations into extensive relationships with various authorities. While most of the initiative lay with civil society, the February ordinance did provide an impetus for authorities to promote education. A number of communes—and not only the larger ones—were assisting in opening schools. Pouillet de Lisle, the rector of the Académie d'Angers, had the chief responsibility for supporting this development, but had no resources except for his own personality to do so. The prefect, Baron de Wismes

²³ Letter from the Interior Minister to the Prefect, 13 December 1817 and response letter from the Prefect to the Minister, 28 January 1818, both in AN F¹⁷ 11757.

²⁴ As early as the fall of 1816, the Association had a three-member commission examining locations to house the *école de Frères* (*Annales de l'Association* I, séance of 3 October 1816). A draft of Le Bas' *Coup-d'oeil sur la méthode de l'enseignement mutuel* (Angers: Auguste Mame, 1817) was read at the Society's meeting on 20 December 1816, which may indicate he had started on the work before the Society was formed.

(1778-1831), despite having his hands full trying to restore order in the wake of war and Prussian occupation, devoted considerable energy to early education projects. Lainé placed considerable pressure on de Wismes to encourage and support efforts to open *écoles mutuelles*. The prefect authorized the associations (at times against the objections of his subprefects), put pressure on authorities to open primary schools for boys, handled funding transfers, acquired buildings and even served as a delivery service for books sent via Lainé from the *Société élémentaire* in Paris to the daughter associations.

De Wismes' actions sparked the departmental council to begin its own education project, setting the stage for an early conflict between centralized and provincial control. When de Wismes attempted to inscribe a new round of funds for *écoles mutuelles* in the 1819 departmental budget, the Conseil général refused, demanding instead 9,000 francs for the Frères. The prefect initially balked at the plan, then turned the affair over to national authorities. By 1820, the Conseil général had added another 5,000 francs for the *école de Frères*. When the government hesitated on approving this large amount on the basis that Angers' municipal council had not asked for the school, maire (and Association member) Brillet de Villemorge quickly rallied the municipal council behind the decision.²⁵ While departmental (and higher level) authorities occupied themselves with political snipping, communes and private associations concentrated on the establishment of schools on the ground.

By the early 1820s, these efforts paid off, and primary education proceeded apace in Maine-et-Loire. While not approaching the scale of later projects—rather unfairly the

²⁵ Conseil général de Maine-et-Loire, séance of 14 August 1819, “Budget des dépenses extraordinaires d'utilité départementale. Exercice 1819,” ADML 9 N 2; Report by the Maire to the Conseil municipal d'Angers, séance of 6 June 1820, AM Angers 64 M 1.

benchmark by which many have judged the failure of the Restoration education policy—the efforts laid a foundation, a nucleus of schools and an education-oriented political culture upon which more could be built. Certainly these efforts were limited mostly to the urban communes. By 1822, Angers had two free *écoles de garçons*, one *mutuelle* and the other held by the Frères, as well an *école mutuelle de filles* and the *école des Ursulines*. The public was responsive; the relatively copious records of school attendance during the early 1820s in Angers—the result of the ongoing public debate between the *mutuellistes* and supporters of the Frères—show both schools well attended, welcoming between them around 700 or 800 boys. Records for the *école mutuelle de filles* in Angers also provide some interesting data. The school regularly carried the maximum the classroom could hold, with a waiting list of roughly the same size.²⁶

If the foundation was laid, the education edifice was still rickety. The *comités cantonnaux* rarely were able to provide local oversight; the primary cause was the difficulty of getting members to meet regularly. While foot-dragging on the part of curés to derail non-Church school projects was a significant reason, a lackadaisical attitude amongst notables appointed to a non-paid administrative position also contributed. The private associations, furthermore, ran into the problem of declining revenue streams as the initial interest in school projects waned. The problem was a frequent topic of conversation at meetings of both the Association and the Society; the latter eventually turned to the set of *actions*—certificates or bonds with the promise of repayment—in order to secure sufficient income to pay for their first school. Citing the inability to raise

²⁶ Trimesterial reports for 1822 for the *école mutuelle de garçons* and the *école de Frères* in Angers, AN, F¹⁷ 11757; more detailed information for the Society spanning from 1818 until the early 1830s is included in the numerous meeting reports in AM Angers 1 R 51; for the *école mutuelle de filles*, “Assemblée générale de la Société d’Angers,” séances of 15 February 1822, 23 August 1823, and 16 January 1824, all in AN F¹⁷ 11757.

funds, the Society of Cholet asked the commune to take over their schools directly in 1821, eclipsing their earlier success.

For the *mutuellistes*, however, funding soon became a secondary concern. The coarsening of the political environment eventually penetrated the education debates. By 1824, *enseignement mutuel* was denounced frequently in the conservative press and in clerical sermons, and the number of such schools was quarter of what it had been in 1820.²⁷ With the appointment of Mgr. Denis Freyssinous, the Bishop of Hermopolis, as *Grand-Maître de l'Université* (re-established in June 1822) and then Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Instruction in August 1824, the *écoles mutuelles* faced serious hostility at the highest levels. The ordinance of 4 April 1824 placed the *comités cantonnaux* under the direct jurisdiction of the bishops. The Bishop of Angers, Montault, used his new authority to order the *école mutuelle* closed in late 1824. With the support of Freyssinous, he then moved to transfer the school building to the Frères, on the grounds that a government grant had provided the largest portion of the purchase price and therefore the effective ownership of the school belonged to the state. A legal action launched by the Society sparked a standoff that kept the school closed until early 1828, when the political winds shifted and the school re-opened under the Society.²⁸ The final result was that a school attended by 300 children was closed for over three years.

As the Restoration moved towards its final crises, a new spate of primary school building began. The fundamental legislation remained the February ordinance and its extensions and clarifications. The commune remained the primary level of action,

²⁷ Tronchot, "L'enseignement mutuel en France," II: 547; 551. Tronchot counts 1000 *écoles mutuelles* in 1820, compared with 260 just four years later.

²⁸ Ordonnance royale of 4 April 1824, quoted in Gréard, I: 149-151.

encouraged (though not required) to hold schools, especially for their indigent children. Backing up the communes were the departmental councils; their role was primarily financial. The private associations carried out most of the work on the ground, activities which continued to be encouraged and protected by law. Two real problems existed under the system. The first was the limitation of schools to larger urban areas. Although partially a natural progression, this also reflected the necessity of forming a large enough public core willing to support schools financially. The second issue, of vital concern to the state, was how to regulate the schools established by the communes with the aid of private associations. The concept of local surveillance under broad guidance from the *académie* or Paris ran consistently into the lack of local participation coupled with no real enforcement mechanism. The suppression of the *école mutuelle d'Angers* amply illustrated the complexity of these problems. Sparked by a shift in national politics, local actors attempted to significantly change education policy. Although supported by national authorities *ex post facto*, neither the *académie* nor the prefecture could offer much help until the legal question of who owned the school was settled. And that question was bound up with the provisions that were granted the Society under the February ordinance. Another sixty years would pass before the issues at the heart of the matter would be resolved.

The Explosion of Schooling and the Guizot Reaction

The election of November 1827 weakened the ultraroyalist hold on government. In the aftermath, the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs was divorced from that of Public Instruction, and the latter office was transferred to Antoine de Vatimesnil. Vatimesnil

soon reversed Freyssidious' policies, and the ordinance of 21 April 1828 decreased the authority of the bishops over the *comités cantonnaux*.²⁹ Within a month, the *mutuelliste* societies, such as the one in Angers, were back up and running and some of the more grandiose projects for the Frères in the department were scaled back or totally abandoned.

Yet school building expanded rapidly in the late 1820s and the early 1830s. The Society finalized plans for a second *école mutuelle* on the right bank of the Maine in Angers in 1832, and Beaufort began the enlargement of their school at the *collège municipal*. In Saumur, a private association increased lobbying to open an *école mutuelle*. Furthermore, school building expanded to second-tier communes with smaller populations. Segré, a subprefectural seat with just over a thousand inhabitants, began supporting two schools (one each for boys and girls) with municipal funds in 1829. The Society saw members resign in order to transfer their subscriptions to help build schools in towns such as La Cornuaille and Marcé-près-Seiches.³⁰ Most of these developments were well under way before the July Revolution, let alone the Guizot Law, indicating growing local interest in providing schools.

Once the July Monarchy was fully established, the new government wasted little time in moving to implement new policies. The controversies over the previous decade made primary education a natural focal point. Spearheaded through the legislature by Guizot's strength of will, the law of 28 June 1833 marked a strengthening the role of the state in primary education, at least for boys. The *école primaire publique* was defined for

²⁹ Reprinted in Gréard, I: 165-170.

³⁰ Ordonnance royale du 3 juillet 1832, authorizing the Society to purchase the Boulevard du Laval property for a second *école mutuelle*, AM Angers 1 R 49; Conseil municipal de Segré, séance of 15 May 1829, AM Segré 1 D 2; Conseil municipal de Saumur, séance of 18 June 1832, AM Saumur 1 D 14; *Registre du Bureau d'administrion de la Société*, tome I, séances of 19 December 1829 and 26 April 1830, AM Angers 1 R 43.

the first time (article 8): “Public primary schools are those which are held by, in whole or in part, the communes, the departments, or the State,” with the recognition that the teachers could belong to one of the recognized religions.³¹ All communes, whether individually or through voluntary unions with neighbors, were required to have an *école de garçons*. Instituteurs in such schools were to be provided with housing and a minimum salary (200 francs) plus the *retribution scolaire*. Furthermore, each department was to establish an *école normale* to train teachers, providing competition to one of the primary services provided by the Société élémentaire and the noviciates of the teaching congregations.

These provisions, however, did not obligate the state to provide such schools; the strongest step in this regard was granting communes the ability to impose special taxes for this purpose “in default of foundations, donations or legacies” (article 12). Only after the failure of such private providers were communes authorized to take extraordinary financial measures. The departmental councils were the next resource in line, expected to provide a stockpile of funds. The state would only give out grants as a last resort. In so far as the *loi* Guizot announced the government’s seriousness about education, it certainly did not mean a change in the perception of who should be providing for education; that responsibility belonged squarely with the local government and local civil society. The ordinance of 23 June 1836 would confirm this position. The provisions of the *loi* Guizot were made applicable to the *écoles de filles*, with the substantial exception that communes were not required to maintain such schools. With the absence of a statutory requirement, communes were thrown on their own resources to build such schools.

³¹ Quoted in Allaire and Frank, 80.

The Guizot Law helped maintain the momentum of the school building that had begun in earnest by 1830, yet it reflected certain new realities. The most important of these was what Grew and Harrigan termed “fulfillment”: education development was not a simple linear process, but the completion of goals achieved at different areas at different times.³² The Guizot law aimed, first and foremost, to insure male primary education across France; other educational considerations were secondary. For urban areas such as Angers that had built schools under the Restoration, that meant being thrown back on communal resources as departments and Paris diverted resources elsewhere. That elsewhere was the rural communes, whose promotion to the top of the government’s priority list represented one of the chief developments of the nineteenth century.³³ The results for Maine-et-Loire were more than impressive; by 1842, less than 30 out of 377 communes were lacking an *école de garçons* or an *école mixte* serving both sexes.³⁴ A good bit of this success was due to communes themselves, as departmental and state funds were rather parsimonious.

The first fifteen years of the loi Guizot were, in many ways, the apogee of educational civil society in Maine-et-Loire. In Angers, both the Association and the Society were able to maintain healthy membership rolls and expand; the Association in particular undertook an extensive school-building program in the 1840s. Both maintained a public presence through the annual *distribution des prix* ceremonies and associated displays of student works (largely unwelcome by the teachers themselves), and municipal

³² Grew and Harrigan, 40ff.

³³ Françoise Mayeur, *Histoire générale de l’enseignement et de l’éducation en France, tome III: De la Révolution à l’École républicaine (1789-1930)* (Paris: Perrin, 2004), 8.

³⁴ “Rapport au Conseil Général sur l’état de l’Instruction publique, année 1842,” 27 August 1842, ADML 51 T 3.

reports of the period praise the competition between the two. Before a too-varnished picture of the role of civil society is presented, however, both groups did have some problems. The shift of government patronage from urban areas to rural communes caught the organizations off-guard, and at times in the mid-1830s both engaged in door-to-door fundraising drives to support their activities.

The era also saw a real strengthening of the Catholic civil society devoted to education. The political shift after the July Revolution which resulted in a number of municipal councils taking on a distinctly liberal slant resulted in a replay of the 1824 situation in Angers. Plans for new Catholic schools were forgotten (Cholet), funding for such schools reduced (Angers), or, in the clearest parallel, the *école des Frères* in Saumur was closed and the building used for the new *école mutuelle*.³⁵ Smaller towns seeking government subsidies for new schools were quick to proclaim them *écoles mutuelles*—although the specific pedagogy was quickly disappearing as unworkable.³⁶ In the political discourse, education was now a matter of state *écoles mutuelles* versus Catholic schools. The end result is that Catholic schools were forced to turn to associational life to support their projects. In Saumur, a group of subscribers calling themselves the *Commission des écoles chrétiennes* was established to support the newly displaced Frères, while a similar society was able to invite the Frères to set up a community in Cholet in 1843.³⁷

The real innovation for Catholic civil society in this period was the exploitation of *liberalités* to support schools. Although anticipated by the February ordinance and

³⁵ *Comptes administratifs et budgets de la ville d'Angers de 1831 à 1840*, AM Angers série L; Conseil municipal de Saumur, séance of 18 August 1833, AM Saumur 1 D 14.

³⁶ Tronchet, "L'enseignement mutuel en France," III: 584-586.

³⁷ Commission des écoles chrétiennes, séance of 10 May 1833, *Commission des écoles chrétiennes—Registre des délibérations 1833 à 1844*, A. Par. St. Pierre de Saumur, boîte K; Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 31 May 1843, AM Cholet 1 D 4.

written into the loi Guizot, the use of liberalités was not limited to Catholics. Following the lead of the *Société élémentaire*, the Society in Angers was granted status as an *établissement d'utilité publique* in December 1831, allowing it to legally accept donations and legacies.³⁸ However, the vast majority of liberalités would support Catholic schools. Heavily encouraged as a type of distinctive Catholic charity, such resources provided Catholic schools with an alternative funding source with which to compete with the state in the rural communes. Liberalités were also central in Catholic efforts to expand education to areas often underappreciated by state officials: the working class districts of larger towns and schools for girls.

Catholic civil society, however, was remarkably decentralized. Unlike the decaying but still active *mutuelliste* network, there was nothing like the Société élémentaire providing a central clearinghouse for information and policy. Pedagogically, Catholic schools depended on the teaching congregations that staffed them; although many followed the principles of the Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes, these were often modified by the congregations themselves from experience or by their ecclesiastical directors.³⁹ For liberalités, bishops and curés were often named the executors, giving them the right to present teachers and thereby exercise a large level of control over the curriculum of the school. Despite the appearance of hierarchical control, however, the Church as an institution was only one component in Catholic education. This was the result of the post-Revolution property laws that discouraged direct ownership of property

³⁸ Ordonnance royale of 3 December 1831, AM Angers 1 R 42.

³⁹ To take one example, Mgr. Guillaume Angebault penned a popular guide for young women entering the teaching congregations based on his experience as the ecclesiastical director of the Soeurs de Saint Gildas des Bois in the 1830s (*Lettres sur la vie religieuse à l'usage des soeurs vouées à l'enseignement des jeunes filles*, 3rd edition. Paris: Adrien Le Clere, 1875).

by the Church. The kinds of *liberalités* necessary to found schools could not be left to the Church itself, nor to private associations largely absent in rural areas, nor to municipalities that could then easily apply the funds to secular schools at the next change of the political winds. The solution was the *fabriques*, the parish church councils. Explicitly constituted by Napoleon to manage the physical property of parishes independently of the Church hierarchy and representative of the local community through elections, the *fabriques* provided an ideal institution through which to handle *liberalités* with a minimum of state interference.

Falloux's Experiment: Liberté de l'enseignement and the Decline of Civil Society

While this first stage of school building was tailing off in the early 1840s, the political environment in France grew more tense. A series of debates split not only anti-clericals and Catholics, but also split Catholics between those favoring traditional Gallican policies and the growing number of *ultramontanes* suspicious of both the French state and Church hierarchy willing to work with it. A central issue of contention was the *liberté d'enseignement* in secondary education, where the Napoleonic state monopoly had been strengthened through the suppression of the *petits séminaires* in 1827 and greater controls on *pensionnats* (boarding schools) under the July Monarchy. Through sermons, pamphlets, books, and the pages of papers such as Louis Veillot's *L'Univers* and rival *L'Ami de la religion*, Catholics accused each other of undermining the status of the Church in France, dangerously dividing Catholics over the next decades.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Joseph N. Moody, "The French Catholic Press in the Education Conflict in the 1840s," *French Historical Studies* 7 (Spring 1972): 394-415. Moody's final appraisal was that the actual education issues tended to get lost in these debates between Catholics.

Despite the participants growing increasingly suspicious of each other, the Catholic civil society supporting primary education remained united. Since secondary schools were less dependent on the kinds of organizations that supported Catholic primary schools, there was little bleedover of the issues. Another factor was the substantially greater question of Catholic versus secular primary education. While legally pluralism was endorsed, the state was increasingly hostile to Catholic schools. When the Association applied in the mid-1840s to become recognized as an *établissement d'utilité publique*, the request was denied after harsh reports from the prefect and the rector questioned its political goals.⁴¹ Such policies created an incentive for a unified stance on primary education, at least.

A final factor was the growing familiarity of the new generation of leaders with education operations and practices. While not exactly “professionalization” (which was occurring amongst the congregations, the teachers coming out of the *écoles normales*, and the academic bureaucracy), greater experience with the day-to-day operations—as well as Mgr. Guillaume Angebault had spent the 1830s as the ecclesiastical director of a teaching congregation and remained very active in education debates over his reign. Theodore de Quatrebarbes, the acerbic *ultramontane* noble and frequent participant in the press debates, served as the president of the Association a number of times in the 1830s and 1840s. Working with the teaching congregations, conducting regular inspections of schools, and handling the myriad of tasks of acquiring buildings, paying for supplies and dealing with the public about their schools gave these men, like their counterparts in the Society, experiences not much different than the *inspecteurs primaires* employed by the

⁴¹ Letter from Prefect to the Minister, 21 September 1844, and Letter from Recteur to Minister, 8 November 1844, both in AN F¹⁷ 10300.

state. These experiences tended to unite Catholics, convinced now more than ever of the necessity of maintaining a separate education for Catholic children. Many—notably Mgr. Angebault—became increasingly convinced that the continuation of Catholicity depended on both primary and secondary schools built on the principles of the faith. The education debates of the 1840s, then, reflected not just the question of *liberté d'enseignement*, but the increasing question of the ability of Catholics to exist independently within a secular French state.

Such was the Catholic education environment when the 1848 Revolution hit. The immediate aftermath appeared to favor a more radical government than France had yet seen, but the turn towards conservatism with the spring legislative elections, the June Days, and the presidential election in December demonstrated a fatigue with experiments. The first set of ministers appointed by new president Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte reflected this conservatism: reform, yes, but not revolution. Serving in this cabinet as the Minister of Public Instruction was the Comte de Falloux. A native Angevin from a family ennobled at the end of Charles X's reign, Falloux was intimately familiar with the various educational institutions in Maine-et-Loire, and the environment that supported them. He was educated at the *Collège royal d'Angers* (later known as the *Lycée David d'Angers*), but like the rest of the family supported Catholic education. One of the family compounds in Angers was sold to the Association as a school, and Falloux himself joined the organization, eventually being elected vice-president in 1844. Although his participation waned once he was elected deputy from Segré in 1846, being involved with Catholic civil society during one of its most prolific periods of expansion influenced Falloux's perceptions of what a Catholic education system could look like.

The Second Republic's policies for education reform were to be handled by two extraparliamentary committees, primary and secondary, but the members voted to combine the two at the first meeting on 6 January 1849. Over the next four and a half months, the committee debated the relationships between the state, Catholic schools, the communes, and all the associated issues that had driven public debate on education over the previous years. Recognizing the seriousness of the issue, the committee voted in favor of a proposition by Adolphe Theirs to suppress the *procès-verbaux*; it was only the foresight of committee secretary François Housset—himself a major player in Catholic education circles—that the record survives at all.⁴² The committee expected their proposals—which amounted to strengthening educational pluralism—to be met harshly. Radical Catholics such as Louis Veullot were incensed, seeing the remaining state oversight provisions as failing to guarantee a separate education system; radical secularists were convinced the proposal would basically re-asserted the primacy of the Church in education.⁴³ The contemporary political environment made maintaining social order preferable to more radical experiments, and the main propositions of the extraparliamentary commission were retained when the loi Falloux was passed on 15 March 1851.

In a number of fundamental ways, the loi Falloux altered little in French primary education. Local investment, including private charity, was still considered the first resource for schools. The arrondissement committees were re-arranged slightly, with more balance between state, Catholic, and non-Catholic representatives. One major

⁴² Housset's notes only came to light in the 1930s; see Georges Chenesseau, ed., *La Commission extraparlementaire de 1849: Texte intégral inédit des Procès-Verbaux* (Paris: J. de Gigord, 1937), viii-x.

⁴³ John K. Huckaby, "Roman Catholic Reaction to the Falloux Law," *French Historical Studies* 4 (Autumn 1965): 203-213.

change, the substitution of departmental *académies* for the old provincial ones, would be practically stillborn; it was repealed by the law of 14 June 1854.⁴⁴ This law marked the death of the Académie d'Angers, as Maine-et-Loire was placed under the academic control of the rector in Rennes, joining the departments of Brittany (and adding more “proof” that Maine-et-Loire was part of western France).

But two other components of the law, both related to teachers, would have serious repercussions on future education debates. First, members of Catholic teaching congregations were exempted from having to qualify for the brevet except for directors of *écoles communales de garçons*; the *lettres d'obédience* from the superiors of their orders were considered sufficient. Second, the ability to fire teachers was now conferred to the prefects, opening the door to the possibility of political manipulation of education policy. Rather than creating a clear separation between Catholic and secular schools, the loi Falloux created a mixture of private privilege and state intervention that would dramatically alter the French education environment a generation later.

For opponents, the immediate effects of the loi Falloux were to greatly strengthen Catholic schools. In Maine-et-Loire, a number of municipal colleges were transferred to religious personnel (most prominently those of Beaufort, Cholet and Saumur) and new *pensionnats* ran by congregations opened, providing more options for Catholic education. For primary schools, a trend for preferring teaching congregations for communal schools (often *écoles mixtes*, for both young boys and girls) continued. Fabriques received *liberalités* for the holding of schools in increasing numbers. Most dramatically, the Frères were able to open schools in communes that had formerly rejected them. Both Beaufort

⁴⁴ Quoted in Prost, 504.

and Segré invited the Frères to take over their *écoles de garçons* after long-serving secular teachers had resigned on account of ill health.⁴⁵ An observer could easily conclude that primary education drifting back to the Church's orbit.

These successes, however, masked changes in the legal environment with dire long-term consequences for Catholic schools. The Association's solution to being denied recognition as an *établissement d'utilité publique* was to form a private holding company, the *Société civile de la Cité*, in March 1849.⁴⁶ Although this arrangement placed the physical property of many of the Association's schools outside state interference, it did nothing to allow the Association to participate in the *liberalité* market. Liberalités left to curés or fabriques for schools came under greater scrutiny by state authorities. The expansion of pensionnats meant the congregations were now owners of larger amounts of property than at anytime since the Revolution—laying the foundation for later charges of “excess wealth.” The largest problem would prove to be the exemption of the teaching congregations from the requirements of the brevet. Initially made as a gesture to reduce the influence of the state, the measure was partially justified by the better quality of *congréganiste* training in the 1840s. By the 1880s, however, it became clear that the congregations had fallen behind the training offered in the *écoles normales* ran by the state.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Conseil municipal de Beaufort-en-Vallée, séances of 31 May and 12 June 1851, AM Beaufort 1 D 8; Conseil municipal de Segré, séance of 16 August 1850, AM Segré 1 D 5.

⁴⁶ *Annales de l'Association* IV, séance of 20 March 1849, A. Dio. Angers 5 K 21.

⁴⁷ Curtis, 59-62.

The (re)Development of Primary Education

If the 1850s marked the turn towards Catholic education, the following decade saw a sharp reversal. French policy surrounding Italian unification created divisions between Catholics and Napoleon III's regime at the same time that growing dissatisfaction with that same regime became targeted at the Catholics viewed as its principal supporters. As contracts made in the early 1850s expired, Cholet, Saumur and Beaufort retook the administration of their *collèges*. By the end of the decade, the same process was happening to primary schools. Segré introduced a second *école communale de garçons* under a lay teacher in 1866; by the end of the decade, it was receiving more than twice as much municipal funding as the *école de Frères*.⁴⁸ Smaller communes who began replacing their *écoles mixtes* with separate sex schools likewise turned to secular *instituteurs* for boys schools, although the female teaching congregations continued to be preferred for girls.⁴⁹ One striking point about these transfers is that they occurred in conjunction with new school construction, usually in adding a second school to a commune—indicating that Catholic schools had lost their privileged place in communal thinking once a certain level of schooling was fulfilled. The collapse of the Second Empire following the disaster at Sedan sparked another round of transfers of schools away from congregations in the early 1870s, a continuation of the trends begun in the 1860s rather than a sporadic development from the Franco-Prussian War.

⁴⁸ Conseil municipal de Segré, séances of 6 May 1866 and 30 May 1869, AM Segré, 1 D 7.

⁴⁹ For example, the commune of Saint Hilaire-Saint Florent opened an *école de garçons* in 1868 under an *instituteur laïque*, and kept the former *école mixte* held by the *Soeurs de la Providence* as an *école de filles* (Conseil municipal de Saint Hilaire-Saint Florent, séances of 18 October 1868 and 14 February 1869, AM Saumur 255 W 3).

Two further changes significantly impacted the education environment during this period. The first concerned the question of *liberalités*. For a generation the focal point of Catholic civil society, the state began questioning the freedom of donations and legacies in the 1850s. The problem was the provisions embedded in the February ordinance about the control of schools by “fondateurs et entreteneurs.” By the 1860s, a legal argument had been constructed that held that *liberalités* left for public use must be administered jointly by both the executor of *liberalité* and the appropriate public authority. For schools, this often meant the local municipal council—putting Catholic schools back under the direct jurisdictional control of the state. Recognizing the danger, Catholics put up spirited legal fights to protect their schools. One of the first, and eventually most influential, of these lawsuits originated with the *fabrique* of Vieil-Baugé in Maine-et-Loire after an 1861 legacy was placed under joint control with the commune. The *fabrique* engaged the legal services of Catholic activist François Housset (the same one who had preserved the records of the 1849 *commission extraparlamentaire*) and the support of Mgr. Angebault to assert the independence of the *fabrique*. The state’s position—that as the legal representative of the poor, which included the students admitted free to *écoles communales*, it had the authority to exercise control of *liberalités*—was eventually upheld by an imperial decree of 8 July 1870. This decision would be cited by Ministry officials in the 1870s as one of the cornerstones of the state’s policies towards *liberalités*.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ For example, see letter from the Minister to the President of the Conseil d’État, 25 April 1873, reprinted in Gréard, II: 765-766. The major documents for the Vieil-Baugé debates are the correspondance in AN F¹⁹ 4153; François Housset, *Mémoire ampliatif pour la fabrique de Vieil-Baugé contre la Commune de ce nom* (Paris: Renou et Maulde, 1869); Mgr. Guillaume Angebault, *Sur la nouvelle jurisprudence du Conseil d’État en matière de libéralités faites aux établissements religieux légalement reconnus* (Angers: E. Barassé, 1869); and Décret impérial, 8 July 1870, AN F¹⁷ 9495.

A second major development of the 1860s was a change in the nature of French civil society. Recent scholarship, led by Philip Nord and Sudhir Hazareesingh, has come to view the final decade of the Second Empire as the pivotal moment in the formation of a “modern” civil society that would become a foundational element of a democratic Third Republic.⁵¹ Cut off from full political participation, young bourgeoisie began working through more focused organizations to funnel their economic power through an alternative set of institutions. Jean Macé’s *La Ligue de l’enseignement* was an expression of this movement in the field of education. Trained as a schoolteacher, Macé promoted a national secular education tied closely to radical republicanism as a means to revolutized French politics.⁵² On the Catholic side, the growing collection of *cercles* in the 1870s devoted to range of social issues represented a similar development.

This shift in civil society, ironically, proved fatal to the older private organizations that had help build the private schools in Maine-et-Loire. Both the Society and the Association entered the 1860s faced with large yearly expenses and declining memberships, and neither survived the Second Empire by long. Furthermore, both were operating on a model of civic involvement in education that was fading; groups of notables overseeing teachers and schools was being supplanted by a professional inspectorate, while municipal councils were more familiar with education matters than they had been a half-century earlier. Finally, both institutions were largely autonomous, rarely explicitly entangled with larger political movements. This last feature accounted for more of their problems than even they were aware. Younger men who would have

⁵¹ Nord, *The Republican Moment*; Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen*.

⁵² Katherine Auspitz, *The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l’enseignement and the Origins of the Third Republic 1866-1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

been the natural recruiting base for the organizations a generation earlier were more likely to join organizations that strove for a place in the political sphere; bishops and officials were more likely to support organizations attached to their own hierarchies; and historians are more likely to focus on groups that were directly connected to political events. The older organizations, having outlived their usefulness, dissolved. In 1866, Society president René Montrieux—who also happened to be the maire of Angers—convinced the members to disband. The schools were to be transferred directly to the commune, which paid off the remainder of the *actions* and the legal costs of the transfer.⁵³ Just over five years later, new Bishop of Angers Mgr. Charles Émile Freppel made a similar suggestion to the Association. Citing the benefits of centrally organizing Catholic education policy and uniting Catholics socially, Mgr. Freppel recommended to Falloux, returned to the presidency of the Association, that the organization be dissolved.⁵⁴

By the mid-1870s, education civil society looked different than it had at mid-century. Catholic philanthropists, *fabriques* and a small number of organizations such as the *Société civile de la Cité* holding property continued to participate in Catholic education, but they were coordinated through Freppel's new *Oeuvre des Écoles chrétiennes*, dominated by the local curés. On the liberal side, educational civil society followed the model of the *Ligue de l'enseignement* or the *amicales* of former students of particular schools. This version of civil society (Catholic and liberal alike) was certainly modern: members were elected, books were kept, and the organizations participated

⁵³ Extrait du registre des délibérations de la Société d'Angers, 25 August 1866; Conseil municipal d'Angers, séance of 14 September 1866, both in AM Angers 1 R 53.

⁵⁴ Letter from Mgr. Freppel to Falloux, 6 July 1872, A. Dio. Angers 5 K 21.

vigorously in public debates for or against education policies. Yet, unlike their predecessors in the Association or the Society, they did not engage in the regular inspection of schools, they did not deal with the hiring of teachers or the settlement of disciplinary problems, they rarely dealt with the day-to-day issues of running a school. All of these became the domain of professional (inspectors and teachers) or political (bishops and ministers) officers, to which the organizations comprising civil society were indebted for coordination and, often, their basic information. In place of the active, participatory, autonomous education civil society that had built many of the schools in Maine-et-Loire, the 1870s saw the birth of a truly hierarchical and perhaps centralized system.

Or, more accurately, two such systems. Despite the rhetoric of two competing systems of education throughout the nineteenth century, it was only with the marshalling of resources under the control of a central direction—the state in the case of liberal groups, the bishops operating at the diocese level for Catholics—that one can speak of a true *guerre scolaire*. Catholics finally, with the loi Laboulaye (12 July 1875) granting the freedom to establish post-secondary establishments such as Freppel's *Université Catholique de l'Ouest*, had the means to insure an education system largely separate from state control. Secular republicans found the possibility of supplanting Catholic schools through the swaying of public opinion and a civil society squarely in their political camp. Given such an environment, the education debates of the Third Republic were guaranteed to generate significant controversy and ill-will.

Throughout these battles, the lessons of over sixty years of school building were applied. The law creating a national fund for school construction (1 June 1878) reflected

not only a recognition that initial establishment was the largest stumbling block for communes to build schools, but was also a counter to the *liberalités* that Catholics used in rural areas. The basic components of Ferry's reforms, the laws of 16 June 1881 providing for free primary education and of 28 March 1882 making primary education compulsory, were acceptable to both sides. Yet these provisions were not as radical as they appeared. Sixty departments had *de facto* universal primary school attendance by 1876 and free education, long the standard at the schools of the Frères and in the original *écoles mutuelles*, had become an increasingly popular choice for municipalities since the 1850s.⁵⁵

But republican policies increasingly aimed at reducing the influence of Catholic schools. Yet the compulsory education law of 28 March 1882 emphasized that such education was to be secular. The privileges granted to Catholic teachers were repealed by the law of 16 June 1881 requiring all teachers, religious and lay alike, to hold the *brevet de capacité*. The same law also made the *écoles normales primaires* free, allowing the creation of a trained teaching corps that could eventually challenge the teaching congregations' noviciates in professional training, a factor helped considerably by the earlier creation of *écoles normales* for female teachers (law of 9 August 1879). The loi Laboulaye was reverse in March 1880, effectively restoring the state monopoly on post-secondary education. The final stage of this process began with the loi Goblet (30 October 1886), which set in motion a five-year process of removing religious congregations from their positions in *écoles communales*. Catholic instruction, so important to the construction of a French public school system, was now alienated from

⁵⁵ Grew and Harrigan, 78 and table E.14.

“official” public primary education—a point sharply emphasized by the law of 19 July 1889 making primary school teachers state employees. Education was now almost fully an affair of the state.

Conclusion

The policies adopted by the Third Republic, rather than creating anew a system of primary education, were a reaction to sixty years of legislation, experience, and re-legislation that had provided France with workable but chaotic networks of schools. The praise for this first stage of accomplishment, however, did not lie solely with national authorities. More often, it was the local notables in the thousands of communes across France who bore the responsibility of turning education policies designed in Paris into workable schools. It was the local notables who had to find the funds, secure adequate buildings, recruit teachers, and convince the local population of both the necessity and the benefits of primary education.

To facilitate these activities, French education policy for most of the century embraced a series of key themes. The commune remained the foundational unit for policy. Although higher levels of the administrative structure—the cantons, the arrondissements, and the departments themselves—played an important role in funding and surveillance of education, primary schools were essentially communal affairs. Deriving from the emphasis on communes were the extensive leeway granted to local notables to organize and oversee schools. Maires and curés sat in judgement on the moral qualities of teachers, municipal councils decided which pedagogical approaches to support, and benefactors deployed private largess in lieu of non-existent state funding.

More importantly, a conviction existed that local actors could exercise these privileges because they were more-or-less equally competent to assess and judge educational policy for themselves. With this competence came the final theme running through the education laws of the century: the treatment of schools as a form of property which could be deployed as the owner saw fit. It was ultimately the property issue that created the greatest problem for state officials—not only with communes, but also with their frequent partners, educational civil society.

CHAPTER TWO:
NOT-SO-SILENT PARTNERS:
EDUCATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

In December 1890, the Directeur de l'assistance et de l'hygiène publique at the Ministry of the Interior wrote to Jules Ligier, the prefect of Maine-et-Loire, seeking information on a "Société pour l'encouragement de l'enseignement mutuel élémentaire d'Angers" listed as active in a 1887 report. The Director admitted to having "certain doubts on the character of this charity," and requested a copy of the royal ordinance which authorized the Society and any subsequent modifications approved for its rules and operations.¹ Responding to the request less than a week later, the prefect stated that the Society operated two schools in Angers from 1830 to 1860, when it dissolved and the schools transferred to the city for utilization as public schools. The inclusion of the Society in the list of active *établissements d'utilité publique*, concluded Ligier, "appears to me to have been the result of an error."²

The inclusion of the Society as active was not the only error that Ligier made on this subject. The Société pour l'encouragement de l'enseignement mutuel élémentaire d'Angers was originally founded in late 1816, and existed until 1866. Schools established and partially funded by the Society educated thousands of Angevin boys and girls from

¹ Letter from the Directeur to the Prefect, 1 December 1890, ADML 40 M 3bis.

² Draft response of the Prefect, 4 December 1890, ADML 40 M 3bis.

1817 to the end of the Society's existence, except for a brief period from 1824 to 1828 when the *écoles mutuelles* were suppressed. The Society, however, was not the only such organization providing education services. In Angers, the Society was locked in struggle during the whole period of its existence with a Catholic group, the Association religieuse et royale, which supported the efforts of the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes until voluntarily dissolving itself in 1873. By the time of its dissolution, the Association was supporting five *écoles de Frères* in Angers, including three schools in densely-populated industrial areas that had sprung up over the course of the century.

Across Maine-et-Loire the development of a primary education system was indebted to the existence of similar private associations working in conjunction with a range of partners. Running the gamut from individuals leaving legacies to establish a congregational *école de filles* to the parish church councils (*fabriques*) managing those legacies, these organizations played vital roles in building schools. Members did everything from advancing funds to purchase buildings and to hire teachers to inspecting classes and dealing with disciplinary matters. Together, they formed the components of a civil society devoted to education throughout most of the nineteenth century. Bound intimately with the communities in which they operated, this educational civil society provided a structure through which local notables, municipal governments, and state officials worked to build and run schools. Yet by the 1870s this educational civil society was disappearing, replaced by a "modern" civil society inextricably bound with national political movements. Within twenty years, state officials had forgotten their existence, let alone their contributions.

This chapter will explore this educational civil society as it existed in the department of Maine-et-Loire, concentrating on the various participants and how they organized themselves. The educational civil society that operated from the Restoration until the establishment of the Third Republic can be divided into four broad components, although there was considerable overlap and interaction between them. The first are the Catholic teaching congregations, the lay bodies revived by Napoleon and the first (and for decades only) professional teaching corps in France. Primarily serving as the providers of teachers—very few communal schools were established and owned by the congregations themselves—they would provide the face of Catholic educational civil society. The remaining three components were more concerned with the material provisioning of schools. Individuals leaving donations and legacies for the establishment of primary schools provided one of the major revenue streams for small towns or the expansion of primary education beyond young urban males—*écoles de filles* being a primary example. The need to manage funds and property from such private largesse resulted in the entrance of a third component into educational civil society, the parish church councils known as *fabriques*. Private organizations like the Society and the Association devoted to the promotion of a specific pedagogical approach formed the final aspect of this educational civil society, and bore similarities with modern non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the center of many current civil society debates.

Educational civil society under French Law

The revolutionaries followed the general Enlightenment argument against traditional philanthropy, voting to abolish almost all legal sanction supporting it and

reconstitute charity as a state concern along the lines envisioned by Turgot and other philosophes. In addition to the Church property seized in 1790, other charity resources were nationalized as well. While education (and hospital) supports were initially exempted from immediate sale in the hope of providing a bridge until new funding could be found, the law of March 1793 authorized the immediate sale of education property except for school buildings themselves. The majority of schools in France were “disendowed,” losing their financial support and effectively ending their existence.³ At the same time, measures to suppress Catholic monastic life enveloped the teaching congregations; article 190 of the law of 18 August 1792 specifically required their dissolution. Although the former members were encouraged to continue in their teaching posts until suitable replacements could be found, personal animus, social backlash, and poverty resulted in many members abandoning their careers.⁴ Such policies effectively eviscerated French secondary and primary education, and none of the Revolutionary projects came close to replacing what schools had existed under the *ancien régime*.

Lack of resources weighed most heavily among the reasons, a fact that Napoleon recognized during the Empire. When Napoleon turned his attention to education, his chief concern was the *lycées*, secondary schools intended to provide the nucleus for a new state bureaucracy under the centralized control of the *Université*. In contrast, little interest or no innovation was shown in the matter of primary schools. While the state resources were made available for the *lycée* network, almost none were devoted to primary schools. To compensate, restrictions on private charity for primary schools were slowly repealed

³ R. R. Palmer, “How Five Centuries of Educational Philanthropy Disappeared in the French Revolution,” *History of Education Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1986): 181-197.

⁴ Zind, I: 19-21.

under the Empire. The teaching congregations were allowed to re-establish themselves, with the Frères being specifically called to aid as a component of the *Université*. The law of 11 Floréal Year X (1 May 1802), which set the tone for later Napoleonic legislation on primary education, specifically allowed donations to schools as a means of private investment in education, but the direct influence of benefactors on school policy was limited by later legislation.⁵ The lingering suspicion of the power of private providers in the nominally state-run realm of education dominated Napoleonic thinking of the subject.

When the Bourbons returned to power in 1814, they found a ripe set of conditions for the re-establishment of an educational civil society. The reason for such an action was simple: the French state had no other means of establishing a public primary education system that the Revolution had made essential for any future government to undertake. The ordinance of 29 February 1816 created the framework for the private education associations, and granted expansive freedom of action in establishing and running schools. By localizing primary school development at the communal level, the February ordinance opened the door to private participation; most communes simply did not have the requisite funds to open schools. Private charity was recognized as the center piece of the legislation, with a wide variety of rights and privileges granted to those individuals or associations which decided to establish and maintain schools.⁶ Such rich benefits—including the right to select teachers and set large components of the internal curriculum and discipline—were necessary to gain private participation on a large enough level. Against this backdrop, the early Restoration saw a veritable explosion of education-oriented groups develop.

⁵ Marais, *Histoire du don*, 25-6.

⁶ *Ordonnance royale du 29 février 1816*, reprinted in Gréard, I: 87-88.

With the decline of the ultraroyalist control over education in the late 1820s, local enthusiasm for opening schools revived as communes hesitant to or unable to open schools in the chaotic environment of the early Restoration began fulfilling the provisions of the February ordinance. The July Revolution resulted in a number of municipal councils re-constituted along distinctly more liberal lines interested in propelling this process further—and with more active state interest in primary education. The loi Guizot was written in the midst of this period of increased school-building activity; its provisions acknowledge an ongoing process as much as creating an impetus for a new one.⁷ One result was that the practices of the Restoration, under which much of the contemporary school construction was conducted, were continued. Article 13 of the loi Guizot, granting the right of communes to impose special school taxes, begins “In default of foundations, donations or legacies which would assure a locale and a salary, in accordance with the preceding article, the municipal council will deliberate on the means to provide them”—with state funding among the last options.⁸ Guizot was a realist; while in theory the state should provide the funds to build schools, such an expense was beyond its ability. Private philanthropy remained an important means of acquiring schools.

The basic dynamic of state desire to expand primary education coupled with the lack of sufficient resources resulted in a continuation of the reliance on private funds. Article 40 of the loi Falloux, covering the ability of communes to raise special taxes for primary schools, begins with an almost verbatim reprint of article 13 of the 1833 law emphasizing the importance of private charity, no significant recanting of state oversight

⁷ Grew and Harrigan, *School, State and Society*, 79.

⁸ Reprinted in Allaire and Frank, 81.

was included.⁹ As late as 1886, the *loi Goblet* mentions the importance of private philanthropy in supporting schools, even as it made the additional taxes originally intended for when such aid failed mandatory.¹⁰ Only in the last decade of the century, as the Church-State separation debate came to dominate French politics, would such private charity actively be discouraged. The end result of this process was ample space for an educational civil society to develop and operate.

Providing for Education: Congregations and Liberalités

In the process of opening a primary school, two items were indispensable: a teacher and the funding necessary to equip and pay for the school. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the French state was unable to provide either of these in quantities sufficient to furnish the number of schools called for by education laws and public demand. It fell to educational civil society to make up the deficits. The first two components of educational civil society concerned themselves with the provisioning of schools, either of teachers in the case of the teaching congregations or with funds and material in the case of individuals leaving *liberalités*—donations and legacies—to help fund schools.

Providing Education as Vocation: The Teaching Congregations

The Concordat of 1801 had provided the opportunity to invite the teaching congregations back into France, albeit while keeping a close eye on their activities through requiring official registration. Those first to re-established themselves were the

⁹ Reprinted in Gréard, II: 120-146.

¹⁰ Reprinted in Allaire and Frank, 102-112.

older congregations. The Frères had ridden out the Revolutionary turmoils as the guests of popes Pius VI and Pius VII, where they gained the support of Joseph Fesch, Napoleon's uncle. Fesch provided the Frères with a powerful ally, and helped the congregation re-establish itself in Lyon where he assumed the archbishopric in 1802. Female teaching congregations such as the Ursulines and the Soeurs de St-Charles also quickly re-established themselves, and the female *congrégations hospitaliers* often attached schools for girls to their hospitals, as at Cholet (the Filles de la Sagesse) and Baugé (the Soeurs de St-Joseph). Indeed, the female congregations benefited the most from Napoleon's decision; while the Frères were the only male congregation to receive official recognition under the Empire, over fifty female orders were authorized. The congregations that would dominate the public education of young girls in Maine-et-Loire—the Ursulines, the Soeurs de St-Gildas-du-Bois, the Filles de la Sagesse, the Soeurs de St-Joseph, and the Soeurs de Ste-Anne de Saumur—all were authorized by Napoleon personally.

Napoleon's warm welcome of the returning congregations is often cited as an example of his essentially conservative bent and reflective of his disinterest in primary education. Certainly the decision was not popular among his inner circle. The provision specifically naming the Frères as members of the Université in the decree of 17 March 1808 was heavily criticized on the grounds it would make the Frères difficult to displace in the future. Napoleon, however, held his ground, seeing the Frères as a safer alternative to guarantee morality and order than the hodge-podge of individual teachers that currently existed.¹¹ The congregations appeared to offer another advantage in a trained

¹¹ Dansette, I: 147-148; Zind, *Les nouvelles congrégations*, I: 49. This prediction was fairly accurate. The specific authorization of the 17 March 1808 decree was often cited against government

teaching corps that, once re-established, would provide a nucleus for a national education system. Almost twenty years of persecution and advanced age, however, had decimated the ranks. A flurry of requests to prefects and bishops sought information on such members who might be recalled to service, but the results were less than hopeful. Frère Henri Bédel recently estimated less than 1 in 5 Frères in 1791 returned to teach once the congregation was re-authorized.¹² Whereas fifty Frères had been employed at the École de la Rossignolerie in Angers on the eve of the Revolution, by 1808 Mgr. Montault could only report discouragingly that “there are only seven or eight [former Frères] in the department, all married, and little capable of the functions of public education.”¹³

While the Frères unquestionably benefited from the support of the Napoleonic regime, the difficulty in recruiting and training new members slowed their expansion into the Restoration—despite the increasing tempo of calls from communes for their services. Money to open schools was limited, let alone funds to establish noviciates to train teachers. The return of the Bourbons did little to mitigate these circumstances; Mgr. Montault and the Association waited almost four years before the Frères were able to dispatch a trained community to open a school in Angers.¹⁴ The result of this increased demand was the formation of new, independent male congregations, modeling

policies antithetical to the Frères, and was the basis of Frère Irlide’s legal arguments to protect the congregation in the 1880s. Cf. Frère Irlide, *Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes—2e note sur son existence légale et sa personnalité civile* (Paris: F. Levé, 1882).

¹² Henri Bédel, *Initiation à l’histoire de l’Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes: XIXe siècle, 1805-1875, Études Lasalliennes* 9 (Rome: Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes, 2001), 58.

¹³ Letter from Mgr. Montault to the Minister of Cults, 16 August 1808, AN F¹⁹ 6286. The prefect Hély d’Oissel (1809-1814) would echo the same sentiment when queried on the matter three years later (letter to the Minister of Cults, 27 May 1811, AN F¹⁹ 6286). For the École de la Rossignolerie, see “Angers—Historique de la Maison,” pg. 2, AL carton 49 “Angers, St Maurice—Historiques Documents généraux”.

¹⁴ *Annales de l’Association* I, séances of 6 March 1817, 17 April 1817, and 8 May 1817, A.Dio.Angers 5 K 21.

themselves on the Frères and following their pedagogical practices. A number took the name Frères de l'Instruction chrétienne, but became known commonly as the *petit frères* to distinguish them from the older Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. In Maine-et-Loire and most of western France, the two most prominent of these new congregations were the Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne de Ploërmel (also known as the Frères de la Mennais) founded by Gabriel Deshayes in 1816 and its off-shoot the Frères du Saint-Esprit (later the Frères de Saint-Gabriel). Female congregations also continued to expand in this period. Overall, however, the Restoration saw relatively few new congregations; only eleven were authorized, the majority by Louis XVIII. The need for recruiting members and re-establishing training houses (*noviciats*) consumed a considerable amount of attention in the later Restoration. By the mid-1830s, however, the system had recovered and the congregations were able to provide trained teachers at relatively short notice.

Of course, the congregations were not alone in providing teachers. The state had a vested interest in the training of teachers, but the numerous Revolution-era projects to duplicate the novicate system of the congregations fell apart. The earliest post-Napoleonic rivals to the Frères and other congregations, the *mutuellistes*, also attempted to provide a source of teachers for communes desiring to open primary schools. Initially, masters were dispatched from the Société élémentaire in Paris to help train local teachers, as when Jean-Gabriel Adville came to Angers in 1817 to train Jean-Baptiste Gellerat. Within two years, Gellerat's school won designation from rector Pouillet de Lisle as an *école modèle*, whereby he provided training to a number of the *mutuelliste* teachers and the beginning *moniteurs* for *écoles mutuelles* in places such as Cholet and Le Mans in addition to training his own wife, Marie Gasnier-Gellerat, who would direct the girls'

school until mid-century.¹⁵ Such training, however, was dependent on schools being opened first and then the teachers trained. No provision was made for apprenticeship-style training where a student desiring to be a teacher would study and be granted certification before finding a position—a professional model that was the monopoly of the congregations at the time.

With the *loi* Guizot, however, the state took more a direct approach to providing teachers. The 1833 law revived a Revolutionary plan of teacher training colleges—modeled on the noviciates—in each department, the *écoles normales*, and mandating their establishment. Maine-et-Loire’s school actually pre-dated the formal declaration in the law, being established in 1831 under the direction of Pierre-Louis Le Bas, the former academy secretary and long a key member of the Society. Yet the *école normale* was not the extensive break with the tradition that it first appeared. While a small primary school was annexed to the facility in 1833 to allow the student-teachers to practice their craft, many of their practicums continued to be conducted by the teachers of the *école mutuelle*—and the Frères.¹⁶ Only with the Third Republic were such practices actively discouraged and the *école normale* in Angers given the funds to become a self-contained teacher college.

While the teaching colleges did much to improve the quality of the teaching corps in the 1830s and the 1840s, the facility at Angers remained underfunded and the supply of trained teachers limited. The congregations, however, were a generation ahead of

¹⁵ Arrêt académique of 28 February 1817, AN F¹⁷ 10148; Arrêt académique of 25 January 1819, ADML 77 T 3.

¹⁶ Henri Bucher et l’Amicale des ancien élèves de l’École Normale d’Angers, *Une aventure: Installer des écoles pour tous depuis la Révolution à Angers* (Angers: Imprimeries Paquereau Éditions, 1993), 226.

secular teachers. The congregational pedagogies were widely recognized as equal, if not superior, to that of the teachers coming out of the *écoles normales*. The training of new teachers at the noviciates was complimented by later annual retreats held at the *maison-mères*, which provided an opportunity to discuss teaching experiences and techniques while reinforcing a sense of professional (as teachers) and corporate (as Catholic teachers) identity. This was supplemented by a corpus of published textbooks and pedagogy guides for use in congregational schools. The latter, exemplified by Frères founder Jean-Baptiste de la Salle's venerable *Conduite des Écoles* (1720; updated 1811) and more contemporary pieces such as Mgr. Angebault's *Lettres sur la vie religieuse à l'usage des soeurs vouées à l'enseignement des jeunes filles* (first edition circa late 1830s; the second edition appeared in 1861 and a third in 1875), saw numerous editions and wide distribution throughout the century. A growing sense of professional identity among secular teachers was emerging in the 1840s, and number of educational journals began appearing catering to pedagogy and professional concerns. The number of teachers who belonged to such organizations, however, remained small, and it would be the 1860s before professional organizations came to fruition.¹⁷ The potential for an secular professional teaching corps had only been established by mid-century, while the teaching congregations effectively already had one.

The female congregations fared even better in comparison to their male counterparts. They proliferated in far greater numbers than the male congregations, the result of two factors. First, female congregations faced much looser scrutiny when applying for authorization, largely due to the perception that they were less likely to

¹⁷ Prost, 145-147; Day, "The Rustic Man," 47-48.

engage in political activity. Secondly, there were far fewer *écoles normales* for females until the late 1870s. While secular female teachers were increasingly common and the few female *normaliennes* enjoyed preferential treatment from state education bureaucrats¹⁸, there were far more male *normaliens* that were in direct competition with the Frères and other male congregations. The need for girls' schools in the aftermath of the law of 23 June 1836 which extended some of the provisions of the *loi* Guizot also helped to create a market for the female congregations, as did the preference for female teachers for *écoles mixtes* that were popular in many rural communes. The female congregations benefited from the expansion of primary education for most the century.

When the public mood of France drifted back to conservatism during the later years of the Second Republic, the congregations were well-placed to benefit institutionally. Both communes replacing secular teachers installed during the early years of the July Monarchy—now often at the end of their teaching careers—and those smaller communes who were establishing schools for the first time turned to congregations. The expansion of the noviciate system and the establishment of new congregations allowed these requests to be fulfilled promptly, without the excessively long waiting periods of the Restoration. Knowledge that replacement teachers—in case of infirmity or removal by authorities for various reasons—were readily available without the intensive amount of vetting (in the form of background checks from other communes and interviews by the maire and the curé) required for secular teachers likely also made the congregations more

¹⁸ Sharif Gemie, *Women and Schooling in France, 1815-1914* (Keele, Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1995), 87-118, although Phyllis Stock-Morton is undoubtedly correct her critical review that many of the same dynamics that Gemie sees with female congregations and non-*normalienne* teachers applied to male teachers as well (review of “Women and Schooling in France,” *American Historical Review* 102 (June 1997): 829-830).

attractive.¹⁹ Communal leaders by 1850 turned to the congregations by a desire for public (read moral) order; the congregations' alacrity to take advantage of the situation through the effective organization they had built was the basis of the impression—and the reality—that the Catholic Church re-captured education in the wake of the *loi* Falloux.

Individual Provision for Education: Dons et Legs

The provision of trained teachers was only one of the problems in building schools. A larger issue was funding, which included both the costs of initially establishing the school (the *frais de premier établissement*) and for upkeep of the building and paying the teachers. Despite the requirements and the incentives to support primary education, the expenses often proved too high for many communes. Private philanthropy, then, was to prove as important a revenue stream in the nineteenth century as under the *ancien régime*. Although relatively rare under the Restoration due to the fluctuating legal and economic environment, such private giving increased after 1830. Generally, this philanthropy took the form of *liberalités*, donations or legacies (*dons et legs*, in the shorthand of the time) left to pursue particular causes—exactly the kind of foundational establishment that Turgot and other philosophes had decried before the Revolution. For educational civil society, *liberalités* would become a major source of support that for decades allowed competition with the funds that the state could muster.

The schools that benefited the most from such charity were in rural communes and in areas largely ignored by state authorities, namely schools for girls and those in industrialized urban areas that already met minimum requirements for the number of

¹⁹ Grew and Harrigan, *School, State and Society*, 96-97.

schools. This was largely the result of the limited government enforcement. The major education laws before the Third Republic were heavily invested in the education of boys, and even then only in communes where minimum population requirements were met. Meager public funds, be they from the commune, the department, or the state, were reserved for these goals. Anything beyond these requirements necessitated either major local sacrifices or a turn towards private charity. In such circumstances, the donation of a house or a *rente* to pay the teachers sparked the opening of a new school. Laura S. Struminger attributed the relatively common occurrence of girls' schools in the arrondissement (and former diocèse) of Toul by the era of the *loi* Falloux to such liberalités.²⁰ In Angers, Catholic liberalités played a vital role in the expansion of primary education to working class districts. A donation from a Madame de Goyon of 20,000 francs allowed the opening of the École St. Jacques in the city center in 1836, while local architect Joseph Desnoyers, long an active member of the Association, gave a house with an annual rent that became the École Saint-Joseph in that burgeoning working-class parish.²¹ Both of the latter schools were managed by the Association and had teachers provided by the Frères, illustrating how interconnected the elements of civil society became.

The importance of liberalités were readily apparent to the other components of educational civil society. The private associations such as the Society and the Association actively pursued them, taking advantage of a special classification under French fiscal

²⁰ Laura S. Struminger, *What Were Little Girls and Boys Made of? Primary Education in Rural France 1830-1880* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 18.

²¹ *Annales de l'Association* III, séance of 12 May 1835, A. Dio. Angers 5 K 21; "Angers—Historique de la Maison," pg. 10, AL 49 "Angers, St Maurice—Historiques Document généraux"; Testament of Joseph Desnoyers, 28 February 1841, A. Dio. Angers P413; Décret impérial of 24 January 1859, AN F¹⁷ 9494; *L'École Saint-Maurice d'Angers* (Paris: Imp. des Orphelins d'Auteuil, 1961), 10.

law, the *établissement d'utilité publique*, to petition and accept such resources. The mutuelliste societies did much to pioneer this approach. Following the lead of societies in Lyon and the Société élémentaire in Paris, the Society in Angers received its status in December 1831.²² The real beneficiaries, however, ended up being Catholic schools. The apparent “victory” of non-congregational schools with the July Monarchy and the more-or-less secular approach of the *loi* Guizot served to diminish interest in charitable giving (and liberal educational civil society generally) right at the moment that the legal framework to accept liberalités was being laid. Catholics, on the other hand, found municipal funding cut or were even forced out of schools they had founded under the Restoration. The response was a greater reliance on charity, drawing on a venerable Catholic tradition. A significant portion of these charity resources were in the form of liberalités, administered through private executors, the fabriques (see below) or by groups such as the Association who applied for status as *établissements d'utilité publique*.²³ In addition, the provisions of a donation or legacy could set restrictions on the future use of the benefits; for education, this often entailed specifying the teachers which could be employed at a school established by the gift. The February ordinance and later legislation recognized this right until the 1860s. The amount of charitable giving to Catholic schools far outpaced similar gifts to liberal schools, becoming a crucial factor in the ability of Catholic organizations to compete with state school-building programs.

Yet leaving a gift for a Catholic school could also be beneficial to state authorities—provided that the state’s interests were protected. The importance of liberalités to expanding girls’ education in smaller communes was recognized, and by the

²² *Ordonnance royale* of 3 December 1831, AM Angers 1 R 42.

²³ Although the Association’s own application was turned down; see below for details.

1860s the state began playing an active role in protecting its interests vis-à-vis that of the donors. When M. and Mme. Chauvet decided to donate a house worth 4,000 francs and furnishings to establish an *école de filles* in Varraines in 1862, authorities readily accepted—providing a provision that the teachers at such a school be members of female teaching congregations. The Chauvets were asked to change the stipulation from *en perpétuité* to the life of the Chauvets, after which point the selection of the teachers would revert to the commune. A report from the Minister of Public Instruction's staff gives the reasoning for this change:

This [the modified donation] would permit the immediate conversion of the girls' school which exists at Varrains into a communal school, and, therefore, this commune will find itself in the position [*en mesure*] to satisfy at little cost on the obligations which are imposed on it, in reason of the population, by article 51 of the law of 15 March 1850.²⁴

Article 51 of the loi Falloux required communes with a population of 800 or more to open an *école de filles*; Varrains population in the 1861 census was 920.²⁵ The growth of population in communes in the mid-nineteenth century required more resources for schools than communes or the state could provide. Hence the continued importance of private providers even when authorities developed a distaste for the education decisions that they made.

In understanding who gave to such charities, *liberalités* were one area in educational civil society where gender divisions were absent or even reversed. Men were significant contributors to all education projects, but formed almost the sole source of such funds to the Society. Catholic men also donated heavily, especially parish priests having no heirs to which to leave their estates. Catholic women, in particular the widows

²⁴ Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, 1863, AN F¹⁷ 9495.

²⁵ Lebrun, ed., *Paroisses et communes de France: Maine-et-Loire*, 427.

of Catholic notables, were central to educational civil society and most importantly to the expansion of girls' education. The high proportion of Catholic women was not necessarily a product of gendered religious culture; the practice may reflect a demographic reality where men dying before their wives left their fortunes to widows rather than charities. But there are examples of divided giving between man and wife where religious preferences appeared to play a role. When Rosalie-Marie Orye (*née* Gellusseau) died in July 1856, she left 2000 francs to the *école des Frères* in Cholet. Her husband, Etienne Orye, passed away eleven years later, leaving 1000 francs to the *école mutuelle* in Angers, as well as some funds to the *Église Évangélique*.²⁶

Like the congregations, however, *liberalités* could only affect part of the operation of a school. Indeed, the givers of *liberalités* had little say in school affairs once the gift was made. Almost always in the case of donations and of necessity for legacies, an executor or manager was named to oversee the distribution of funds, the hiring of teachers, and all other affairs specified in the *liberalité*. The interest in the private associations in being designated *établissements d'utilité publique* was founded on attracting such power. The main beneficiary—in terms of setting education policy—was the Catholic Church. A traditional executor for *liberalités*, the Church offered in the office of the clergy (priests or bishops) and through the *fabriques* established institutions that could readily handle the demands of the long-term management of donations and legacies. Like the teaching congregations, the givers of *liberalités* depended on other components of educational civil society to turn their contributions into schools.

²⁶ Testament de Madame Orye, 1856, ADML 4 O 174; “Dépot des Testament et Codicilles de M. Orye,” 27 June 1867, ADML 4 O 46.

Owning and Providing Education

Both the congregations and givers of liberalités were vital to the spread of primary education beyond the minimum number of schools established by the state. Individually, however, neither group could fully establish and run a school on their own. Congregations largely avoided the direct ownership of schools until the 1850s, and even then tended to concentrate on secondary schools or pensionnats (both of which could fund themselves) rather than public-oriented primary establishments. Liberalités, by definition, required some administrative structure to handle operations. The parish church councils known as fabriques, already authorized by the government to accept liberalités, became significant players in the provision of local schools. More important were the private organizations that devoted themselves to establishing primary schools.

The Fabriques

The origin of the term *fabrique* lay in fourth-century Christian practice of constructing (*fabrico*) and maintaining churches through lay bodies which secured funds, often through donations and legacies. Since the thirteenth century these *fabrica ecclesiae* had become partners with the priests in managing not only the physical property of the parish but its financial assets as well—a not inconsiderable charge given the wealth that parishes had accumulated over the centuries. These practices were given sanction at the Council of Trent. Under the ancien régime, the fabriques were an integral part of communal life, serving to manage charity works and as a focal point for tax disputes in addition to overseeing the parish property. In most dioceses, the lay members—the *marguilliers*—were elected through popular suffrage at church assemblies. The lay

members were hardly, however, equal partners; both curés and the higher Church hierarchy continued to exercise dominant influence over the selection of candidates for membership and projects to be pursued, and therefore the management of parish affairs.²⁷ As the Revolution moved against both the wealth of the Church and the dominance of the clergy, the fabriques suffered as well.

When the discussions for the Concordat were taking place, Napoleon realized that placing the management of Church property back into the hands of the clergy would both create a dissonance with his own proclamations to be upholding the ideals of the Revolution and form the nucleus of a potential rival for his regime. The solution was to place the wealth of the Church under a more transparent body, one at least nominally public.²⁸ The fabriques were the ideal solution to this dilemma. The basic parameters and organizational structure of the revived fabriques were laid out in article 76 of the law of 18 Germinal Year X (8 April 1802) and fully elucidated in the decree of 30 December 1809.²⁹

The fabriques consisted of two components, the *conseil de fabrique* and the *bureau de marguilliers*. The former consisted of either five or nine members (dependent on the population of the parish), plus the curé and the maire. The members had to be residents of the parish, the larger half nominated by the bishops, the rest by the prefect,

²⁷ Albert Babeau, *La village sous l'ancien régime*, 4th ed. (Paris: Perrin, 1891), 131-143; André Mater, *L'Église catholique: Sa constitution, son administration* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1906), 329-332; Alphonse Van Hove, "Ecclesiastical Buildings," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908).

²⁸ Dansette, I: 136.

²⁹ Reprinted in l'abbé André, *Cours alphabétique et méthodique de droit canon, mis en rapport avec le droit civil ecclésiastique, ancien et moderne*, volume 2 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1862), 39-56. See also Léon Béquet, *De la personnalité civile des diocèses, fabriques et consistoires et de leur capacité à recevoir des dons et legs* (Paris: A. Maresq aîné, 1880)

and were elected by the parish. Council members served six year terms, with a rotating replacement system of half every three years. The entire council met four times a year, with the majority of the business, including the preparation of the yearly budget and the installation of new members, taking place at the April meeting (usually on *Quasimodo*, the first Sunday following Easter). The bureau was composed of the curé and three members elected from among the council. In a far-sighted decision, the decree stipulated that neither fathers and sons nor uncles and nephews could serve as bureau members at the same time—a step in preventing the return of family-dominated parish politics, although simultaneously undermining one of the pillars of nineteenth-century notability. The *bureau de marguilliers* operated as the executive committee of the fabrique. The day-to-day financial affairs of the parish were handled through the office of the treasurer, “the principal agent of the fabrique,” as Mgr. Angebault noted.³⁰ The law also required that communes make up deficits in the budget of the fabrique, although the request of such intervention allowed municipal councils to exercise control of the fabrique’s budget. The Municipal Law of 1884 removed this obligation from the communes.³¹

The fabriques only slowly became involved the education debates. Their earliest interactions involved property transactions. As owners of the former *biens nationaux* that had been returned to the Church, the fabriques administered property—both land and buildings—ideal for the placement of schools. When Segré decided to acquire property for a future communally-owned girls’ school, they found an ideal location on the site of the former St. Sauveur church, which was in effect a vacant lot. The land was valued at

³⁰ Mgr. Angebault, *Lettre circulaire* of 17 March 1843, page 6, A. Dio. Angers 1 E: Angebault, vol. 1842-1849.

³¹ Van Hove, “Ecclesiastical Buildings.”

600 francs, but the municipal council and the fabrique worked out an exchange of properties, with the fabrique gaining usufruct rights to a lot owned by the town close to the new Église de la Madeleine.³²

The education disputes of the July Monarchy propelled the property-owning privileges of the fabriques into prominence. The removal of funding for existing Catholic schools and the reticence of communes to open new Catholic schools necessitated a new organization for Catholic educational civil society. The fabriques, recognized by the government and possessing legal rights to hold property and accept *liberalités*, were ideally suited to play a major role. When the Frères were removed from their school building in Saumur in 1833 by the new liberal municipal council, the curé of St. Pierre de Saumur quickly organized a private organization to allow them to re-open; this Commission des écoles chrétiennes was ran out of the fabrique. The fabrique also became the executor of a donation by a local widow, Louise Barjole (veuve Oudry), of a building in which to open the new school.³³

In areas that were opening schools for the first time, the fabriques were even more important. While funding support was available for schools required by the law, any additional schools were entirely the responsibility of local resources. Since the *loi* Guizot originally only specified boys' schools, or at most an *école mixte* welcoming both sexes, fabriques became important in the provision of additional schools. Schools for girls were the most common example. The town of Gesté, for example, accepted a legacy from

³² Conseil municipal of Segré, séances of 10 August 1838 and of 9 November 1838, AM Segré 1 D 3.

³³ Commission des écoles chrétiennes, séance of 10 May 1833, *Commission des Écoles Chrétiennes—Registre des délibérations 1833 à 1844*, A. Par. St. Pierre de Saumur, boîte K; Donation de Louise Barjole, 9 April 1833, A. Par. St. Pierre de Saumur, boîte A.

former curé Prosper Paul de la Morlaye to the fabrique to open a communal girls' school in the late 1830s.³⁴ Fabriques also became owners of communal school buildings; twenty-five communal *maisons-d'école* were reported owned by fabriques in an 1855 survey.

Private Organizations

While fabriques eventually came to be significant players in supporting primary schools, they were late entrants to the process. The real pioneering effort belonged to the various private organizations set up to promote primary education development. Maine-et-Loire was particularly rich in these bodies, who almost from the beginning represented a chief means through which primary education spread in the department. These organizations were also the forms of a distinctively nineteenth-century civil society, devoted to providing *de facto* public services that the state was unable or unwilling to provide itself. In this way, they are closer to modern NGOs than to many of the traditional components for civil society that exist primarily to influence policy within a more-or-less stable political environment.

The first of the organizations to begin operations, however, was not specifically set up to provide education. The *Association religieuse et royale* was established on 19 February 1816 as part of a larger project of interconnected *cercles* to re-invigorate Catholic civil society in Angers.³⁵ Their original purpose was the public display of a good Catholic lifestyle through personal behavior, regular attendance at mass (including a

³⁴ Letter from the Inspector primaire of Beaupréau [Cretté] to the Rector, 31 July 1843; copy of testament of Prosper Paul de la Morlaye, 26 March 1831, both in ADML 56 T 26.

³⁵ Historian Serge Chassagne reads this original goal as evidence that the Association was intended to form part of the Congrégation movement, although their activities were open and public rather than conspiratorial, and the Association enjoyed the support of local authorities ("La reconstruction d'une chrétienté (1802-1869)," in *Le Diocèse d'Angers (Histoire des diocèses de France)*, ed. François Lebrun, Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), 181-183).

special members-only monthly mass), participation in religious processions, and charitable works funded through a yearly subscription paid by members.³⁶ Henri Gazeau and Serge Chassagne, the only scholars to have seriously studied the Association, both focus primarily on this early missionary activity and largely neglect it after the July Monarchy, when their Catholic missionary activities ceased.³⁷ Yet the Association would exist until 1873, becoming in the mid-1830s an organization devotedly largely to supporting the various *écoles des Frères* established in Angers. The influence of these Catholic notables in Angers would earn them the sobriquet “Têtes de bois” from political rivals such as republican archivist Celestin Port.³⁸

It was as a form of charitable work that the body became involved in the educational dispute. While the establishment of Frères in Angers was a goal from the beginning, the key point in the development of the Association into an education-only body came with the election of Joseph de Boissard as president in 1828. The July Revolution made the Association’s missionary activity less prominent, and Boissard’s arguments in favor of devoting their energies to primary education attracted more support. After a series of heated debates, the members voted to devote all their charitable funds to supporting the Frères. Outside the social activities (billiards and newspaper

³⁶ *Annales de l’Association* I, séances of 19 February 1816 and 28 February 1816.

³⁷ Henri Gazeau, “L’Évolution religieuse des pays angevins de 1814 à 1870,” 3 vols. (Doctorate ès Lettres thèse, Université de Rennes, 1960), I: 55; Serge Chassagne, “La reconstruction,” 181-183.

³⁸ Port, *Dictionnaire historique de Maine-et-Loire*, 1874 edition, s.v. “Angers-cercles.” The use of the phrase as a derogatory epithet appears to have been well understood in Angers in the late nineteenth century; the curé of St. Maurice would cite the work of this body during a dedication ceremony for additions to the École St. Maurice in 1893 by stating “Têtes de bois, mais Coeurs d’or” (*Discours prononcé par M. le Curé de la Cathédrale avant la bénédiction de l’école des frères de Saint-Maurice par Mgr. Mathieu, Évêque d’Angers, le 9 Avril 1893* (Angers: Imp. F. Lecoq, 1893), 5)

reading), the Association spent the rest of its existence as a purely educational civil society.

The Association's chief competition was the growing network of associations devoted to *enseignement mutuel*. The idea of spreading the monitorial system through local associations was proposed by Baron de Gérando to the *Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale* in March 1815. Efforts by Lazare Carnot during the Hundred Days to give Napoleon a primary education *fait accompli* pushed this plan forward, and the *Société élémentaire* was consecrated in Paris on the eve of Waterloo.³⁹ The *Société élémentaire* survived the politics of the early Second Restoration, finding a strong supporter in Interior Minister Joseph Lainé. Since primary education fell under his portfolio at the time, Lainé convinced Louis XVIII to designate *enseignement mutuel* a recognized pedagogy—a move that caught many observers by surprise—and pressured the prefects to aid in any way possible the establishment of *écoles mutuelles*.⁴⁰ The *Société élémentaire* took advantage of this patronage to expand its operations, which included an extensive pamphleteering campaign.

The first Angevin associate of the *Société élémentaire* was established in Angers. At a November 1816 meeting, twenty-four local notables led by the abbé Marie-Joachim Tardy, *proviseur* of the Collège royal d'Angers, founded the *Société pour l'encouragement d'enseignement mutuel élémentaire d'Angers*.⁴¹ A former émigré and

³⁹ Tronchot, "L'enseignement mutuel en France," I: 120-125; Jacquet-Francillon, 29.

⁴⁰ *Instruction* of 27 June 1816, reprinted in Gréard, I: 102-105. For examples of Lainé's pressure tactics, see *Circulaire ministérielle* of 31 August 1816 and the letter from the Interior Minister to the Prefect of Maine-et-Loire, 16 July 1816—the latter sent with a catalog of *enseignement mutuel* texts and classroom supplies from the *Société élémentaire*'s chief supplier Librairie L. Colas, in case Wismes missed the hint (both in ADML 77 T 2).

⁴¹ Letter from the Society to the Prefect, 27 November 1816, ADML 77 T 5; the number of attendees was recalled in "Procès verbal de la séance du 24 janvier 1817," AN F¹⁷ 11757.

committed royalist (he published in 1816 a collection of poetry in honor of the restored monarchy, *Couplets sur le retour de Louis XVIII*), Tardy had passed the Revolution in London, composing a dictionary of French pronunciation for English speakers and a guide of London for French visitors.⁴² Although appointed as *proviseur* as part of the Restoration's effort to re-Christianize secondary education, Tardy himself was among a number of churchmen who supported *enseignement mutuel* for primary education. Joining him were a number of liberal notables, including two representatives of the locally powerful Joubert family of manufacturers: Joseph-François Joubert-Bonnaire (a former member of the Council of Five Hundred and maire of Angers from 1801 to 1808) and his son Alexandre (who became the first maire of Angers under the July Monarchy). Local officials were also well represented, from President of the Tribunal and municipal councillor Thomas Desmazières to Pierre-Louis Le Bas, the secretary of the Académie d'Angers who would provide a crucial early link between the Society and academic officials. Le Bas, like Tardy, engaged in Anglophone literary activities (passing the Revolution in Paris translating English works and writing novels) before moving to Maine-et-Loire as a pensionnat teacher in 1804. His greatest service to the Society was drafting a work for local consumption (and printed at the Society's expense) on the pedagogy and benefits of *enseignement mutuel*, entitled *Coup-d'oeil sur la méthode de l'enseignement mutuel*.⁴³

⁴² Port, IV: 460.

⁴³ Pierre-Louis Le Bas, *Coup-d'oeil sur la méthode de l'enseignement mutuel, sur son établissement et ses progrès en France, sur la comparaison que l'on peut en faire avec les méthodes anciennes, suivi de quelques observations en réponse aux objections auxquelles elle a donné lieu* (Angers: Auguste Mame, 1817).

Finding prefect Wismes—pressured by Lainé—and new rector Pouillet de Lisle willing to work with them, the Society moved quickly and was able to open their school in the first months of 1817. Two similar organizations established themselves in Cholet (September 1817) and Baugé (January 1818).⁴⁴ The Society of Cholet soon catapulted to national prominence when the Duc d'Angoulême took out six subscriptions to help establish an *école mutuelle* during his visit to western France in November 1817.⁴⁵ Yet this effort would not last long; the Society of Cholet would be unable to continue to raise funds, and in 1820 turned its school over to the direct municipal control.⁴⁶ The Society of Baugé hardly lasted any longer, dissolving when the *école mutuelle* was closed in 1824 in the wake of the ultraroyalist reaction.⁴⁷ The Society in Angers alone survived the Restoration, only dissolving itself in the last years of the Second Empire.

Saumur had the most problematic experience with these kinds of organizations. Despite its status as the second largest city in the department and a rival to Angers for political and cultural precedence, no educational civil society emerged until the July Monarchy. An effort to gather subscriptions for an *école mutuelle* in 1816 failed because of a lack in interest among inhabitants, and offers of funding grants from the Interior Ministry and a private member of the *Société élémentaire* were refused.⁴⁸ Despite half-

⁴⁴ Letter from the maire of Cholet to the Interior Minister, 12 February 1818 (the maire, Turpault, was also the President of the Society of Cholet); “Charte de la Société de Baugé,” 24 January 1818, both in AN F¹⁷ 11757.

⁴⁵ The incident is described in a letter from the Prefect to the Interior Minister, 28 January 1818, AN F¹⁷ 11757. The gift of the Duc d'Angoulême at Cholet would be cited in other disputes over local resistance to *enseignement mutuel*, such as at Versailles in 1819 (*Journal de Seine-et-Oise*, 17 July 1819, BNF RP-6036).

⁴⁶ Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 15 May 1821, AM Cholet 1 D 3.

⁴⁷ Tronchet, “L'enseignement mutuel en France,” II: 627.

⁴⁸ Letter from Sub-Prefect of Saumur to the Prefect, 8 September 1820, ADML 77 T 12.

hearted efforts by the municipal council—which was more concerned with the status of the municipal college—Saumur would not have an *école communale* until the establishment of the Frères in 1823. Although theoretically supported by a private association, the commune itself was picking up the expenses of the school almost from the beginning.⁴⁹ The July Monarchy ended this arrangement. Although a group claiming to represent the mutuellistes successfully petitioned the municipal council to open an *école mutuelle*, very little trace of this group exists—and they do not appear to have contributed financially to the new school.

The *école mutuelle* in Saumur, however, was created by forcing the Frères out of their school building (the former Récollets facility) owned by the commune and stopping their municipal subvention. The effort to save the *école des Frères* led to the creation of a Catholic organization calling itself the *Commission des Écoles Chrétiennes*.⁵⁰ The Commission, which lasted until the 1870s, represented the first of a wave of new organizations that appeared with the July Monarchy. The new government appeared to favor *enseignement mutuel*, and the mutuelliste societies tried to take advantage. Members left the Society in Angers to use their subscriptions to open schools in smaller communes, and other towns began opening “écoles mutuelles” with the vocal support of their new councils.⁵¹ The real beneficiary of this movement, however, was Catholic civil society. Losing the support of the Bourbon government and facing the hostility of liberals catapulted into prominence on municipal councils, supporters of the Frères and the other

⁴⁹ Conseil municipal de Saumur, séance of 18 March 1825, AM Saumur 1 D 13.

⁵⁰ Commission des Écoles Chrétiennes, séance of 10 May 1833, *Commission des Écoles Chrétiennes—Registre des délibérations 1833 à 1844*, A. Par. St. Pierre de Saumur, boîte K.

⁵¹ *Registre du Bureau d'administration de la Société*, tome I, séances of 19 December 1829 and 26 April 1830, AM Angers 1 R 43.

congrégations were forced to band together. Such an organization was finally able to open an *école des Frères* in Cholet in 1843.⁵² The miniscule Protestant community in Saumur was even able to establish a subscriber society to help attach a school to the local Protestant temple constructed during the July Monarchy.⁵³

Structurally, all of these associations were quite similar, organized around what Robert Morris has described as a closed associational model which served to limit membership along narrow class and social lines.⁵⁴ Rhetorically, membership was open to all; the original Society rules stipulated “the Society will be composed of all persons wanting to associate themselves to its benevolent views and submitting to its rules”—to be quickly followed by “and who have been presented by three members or admitted by the Bureau [of officers].”⁵⁵ The applicants had to be sponsored by an existing member and vetted by the body. For the Association and later Catholic groups, regular participation in the local Catholic community was assumed as a precondition and a condition of membership. Furthermore, membership required a yearly subscription, usually ranging from 10 francs (the Society of Baugé) to 20 francs (the Association and the Society) a year, although some provision was made for biannual or monthly installments. Members were furthermore expected to make extra contributions for the initial establishment of schools or other unusual outlays. The combination of member

⁵² Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 31 May 1843, AM Cholet 1 D 4.

⁵³ Letter from the Subprefect of Saumur to the Maire of Saumur, 3 February 1843; *Bienfaisance mutuelle—Société de l'Église Chrétienne réformé de Saumur: Règlement général*, both in AM Saumur 2 M 15.

⁵⁴ Robert J. Morris, “Civil Society, Subscriber Democracies, and Parliamentary Government in Great Britain,” in Bermeo and Nord, eds., *Civil Society before Democracy*, 118-119.

⁵⁵ Society, “Procès verbal de la séance du 24 janvier 1817,” AN F¹⁷ 11757.

recommendations and subscriptions was an effective gatekeeping mechanism, limiting membership to the upper- and middle-classes.

What did this membership look like? These were societies of notables, uniting the movers and shakers of the commune. Business leaders, municipal council members, lawyers and government officials featured prominently on membership lists.

Unsurprisingly, the tendency was for members to gravitate towards the organizations that followed their political or religious preferences. Thus, the Association's insistence on devote public Catholicism made it the domain of Catholic notables. Included among its members were Théodore de Quatrebarbes, the outspoken royalist author, and the Comte de Falloux. The Society, for its part, united the liberals of Angers society. Yet the potential for these groups to unite notables was also evident. The founder of the Society, abbé Marie-Joachim Tardy, was castigated by later republicans for his unabashed support for the Bourbons, while the founding members of the Society of Cholet included thirteen members of the municipal council and every maire from the Hundred Days (Charles Cesbron-Lavau) through 1838 (Cyprien-Marie Tessier-Tharreau). Early on, even prefects and rectors were offered honorary memberships, often a means of securing patronage; Wismes served as the honorary president of the Society when founded, while rectors Pouillet de Lisle and the abbé Pierre Morice became members of the Society and the Association, respectively. Also in keeping with Morris' model, the private associations saw remarkable intergenerational continuity. Sons regularly followed fathers into the ranks of these organizations. Indeed, the Association's by-laws included a provision for sons to be enrolled provisionally at an earlier age than other aspirants. Nor was the

practice limited to Catholic organizations. The various branches of the Joubert family of Angers were well represented amongst Society membership.

Another membership characteristic was the low participation of women within the organizations. Women played vital roles in many of the major charity works of the period, and were often the chief actors of the *salles d'asile* movement for young children starting in the 1830s⁵⁶, so this was no mere repetition of larger societal trends. The Association's origin as a masculine aristocratic *cercle* accounts for the official lack of female members, but even with the turn towards becoming only an education association in the 1830s its sister organization, the *Dames de l'Association religieuse*, was kept at arm's length.⁵⁷ Among the various *mutuelliste* societies and the later Catholic organizations, women were included occasionally as members, but only in small numbers and not as officers. The Society of Cholet, for example, listed five women—all widows—on its founders' list, and the Society attempted to attract female subscribers in the early 1820s by specifically listing female members in promotional literature, although a number of these were spouses of male members.⁵⁸ In comparison, in 1856 the *Comité de patronage des salles d'asile de Saumur* counted seven women amongst the eleven *directing* members.⁵⁹ Of course, women were able to participate in one aspect of the

⁵⁶ Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoisies of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Elinor A. Accampo, *Industrialization, Family Life, and Class Relations: Saint Chamond, 1815-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Jean-Noël Luc, *L'invention du jeune enfant*.

⁵⁷ *Annales de l'Association* III, séance of 14 April 1835; IV, séance of 14 April 1846.

⁵⁸ Letter from the maire of Cholet to the Minister of the Interior, 12 February 1818, AN F¹⁷ 11757; Solicitation letter from the Société d'encouragement pour l'enseignement mutuel élémentaire, 18 March 1822, BM Angers C19545.

⁵⁹ Arrêt préfectorale, 24 August 1855, AM Saumur 1 R 9. The four male members were the maire of Saumur and the curés of the three parishes of Saumur.

associational life: the donation of money and legacies to the cause. Gender was rarely an issue in these cases.

Two factors are responsible for the absence of women in primary education associations given their prominence is the similar *salle-d'asile* movement, both possibly related to the shifting gender roles of the nineteenth century. The first is the origin of educational civil society in the old regime, under an older model of male participation in such projects. In many ways, the *mutuelliste* societies bore closer affinity to the groups that helped Jean-Baptiste de la Salle than to the *salle-d'asile* organizations later in the nineteenth century. As an extension of community charity, these older organizations were dominated by men, and the practice continued across the Revolutionary divide. It was only with the July Monarchy that charity work began to involve large numbers of women directly in the day-to-day operations; the *salle-d'asile* movement with its special emphasis on the education of young children represented the vanguard of the gender shift. The second reason is closely related to the first: the importance of primary education as a political act. The Revolution had solidified the importance of education within the political culture, and this significance was reflected in the willingness of local male notables to participate. It may also explain the reluctance of these groups to admit women even into the 1860s; the political content coded these organizations as masculine.

The Operation of the Private Organizations

Despite the restrictions on membership, internally these organizations fit a classic pattern of civil society organizations. Executive power was vested in a series of officers—normally a president, a vice-president, a treasurer and a secretary—assisted by

a *bureau d'administration* of fairly large size (seven to eleven members was the average). These positions were elected yearly, at an *assemblée générale* of the entire body. The bureaus were given wide powers to deal with the day-to-day affairs—consisting mostly of handling routine payments (heating and light, school supplies, and taxes), inspections of schools, and a small number of cases of student disciplinary measures (usually those involving expulsion of students from the schools). Issues on which the bureaus could not reach a decision could be brought up before the *assemblée générale*, which furthermore handled larger concerns such as when to open a new school or the setting of the teacher's annual salary.

Although subscription fees were nominally the primary source of revenue for these organizations, they were far from stable. On a yearly basis, membership was susceptible to fluctuations for a number of reasons. The most common was the movement or death of members, the former particularly problematic on two levels. First, those most likely to move were members who were in governmental positions and were moving as part of their official duties, thus depriving the organization not only of active members, but likely crucial conduits to the government establishment. Second, moving members were likely to ask for a refund of their subscription, thereby complicating the abilities of organizations even once the budget for a year was set. Both the Society and the Association found themselves passing rules setting *pro rata* levels for such circumstances to insure some level of consistency.⁶⁰ The political environment could also influence

⁶⁰ Article 4 of the Society's original rules specified the collection of dues in 10 franc installments twice a year, which provided some level of *pro rata* measure. The new *règlements* devised in 1829 (Article 10) kept the subscription rate at 20 francs, but now collected once a year with the provision that anyone who left the organization was still responsible for the current year's fee (*Règlement arrêté en Assemblée générale le 4 mai 1829 par la Société fondatrice de l'école d'enseignement mutuel, à Angers* (Angers: Ernest Le Sourd, 1829), ADML 77 T 7). *Annales de l'Association* II, séance of 11 January 1827 (refunds based on trimester).

membership levels, although the only significant example of this problem occurred during the closing of the *écoles mutuelles* in Angers from 1824 through 1828. In this case, lack of purpose (with the schools being closed) may have been more important than fear; the Society itself was never threatened and the *bureau d'administration* was able to maintain a legal action throughout the period. The rapid expansion of the Society after 1828 indicates that interest remained strong among the Angers bourgeoisie.

Outside of the membership issue, a final factor in the stability of subscriptions was the efficient collection of membership dues. Almost from the start, reminders for delinquent members to pay their dues became standard pronouncements made at meetings.⁶¹ Realistically, however, the organizations could do little to enforce this requirement; there were no legal means to force delinquent members to pay, and too aggressive policies would serve to alienate current and potential members. In the end, both the Society and the Association adopted fairly liberal policies towards payment of subscriptions, limiting actions largely to visits by delegations to delinquent members to remind them of their promises.

The Question of Toleration: Civil Society without a Right of Association

Relationships between Components of Civil Society

A key component of Alfred Stepan's argument on the twin tolerations for civil society holds that members of civil society have to respect each other. In the complicated world of educational civil society, plenty of opportunities existed for the various groups to come into conflict. Finding their *raison-d'être* in the education struggle, the private

⁶¹ For example, see *Annales de l'Association* I, séance of 6 February 1816; Bureau d'administration of the Society, séances of 22 November 1817 and 13 December 1817, AM Angers 1 R 42.

organizations in particular had a vested stake in promoting their position. Although founded as a part of the Mission de France, the members of the Association quickly realized how they could support the education effort. In a meeting on 7 March 1816—eight months before the Society would be founded—Association members decided that a significant part of their effort to provide role-models for a revived French Catholicism lay in supporting Catholic education. They targeted the growing *mutuelliste* movement, the “veritable schools of the philosophes” in which “the first law is to never speak of Religion to the students.”⁶² It was decided to ask members for additional donations to support the re-establishment of the Frères in Angers.

In choosing to enter the education debates, the Association believed it was acting to strengthen both Catholicism and the Bourbon dynasty. Like many ultraroyalists, many in the membership believed that Louis XVIII intended to reverse many of the policies of the Revolutionary and the Napoleonic periods and restore France to something like the *status quo ante*. In June 1816, however, an instruction issued from the Commission d’instruction publique (a forerunner to the later education ministries) recognized *enseignement mutuel* as an approved pedagogy and gave royal writ to its practice.⁶³ The decision took the members of the Association by surprise, and a marginalia note was quickly added to the original meeting minutes reflecting the new situation:

At this time [7 March 1816] the government of the king had not yet given any protection to these schools [*écoles mutuelles*]. As soon as his will had manifested itself, the cares of the association has limited itself to the calling of the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes, following the ample latitude in this regard left by the laws of the state.⁶⁴

⁶² *Annales de l’Association* I, séance of 7 March 1816, A.Dio.Angers 5 K 21.

⁶³ *Instruction* of 27 June 1816, reprinted in Gréard, I: 102-105.

⁶⁴ *Annales de l’Association* I, séance of 7 March 1816, A.Dio.Angers 5 K 21.

The decision had an interesting repercussion on the Association's actions: it largely absented itself from future direct action against the *mutuellistes*. While the Association did discuss the successes and the tribulations of the Society and debated how to improve the Frères vis-à-vis the *mutuellistes*, they remained largely silent as an institution on the existence of the Society. And the Society returned the favor; no actions were taken on its behalf directly against the Association.

While the Association refrained from any confrontation with the Society, other components of educational civil society were not so restrained. During the early days of the Restoration, many fabriques harassed the *mutuellistes* during the mandatory attendance at church services. Regulations at the time required that the teachers escort their students to church services on Sundays. The fabriques had a monopoly on the rental of chairs or benches to worshippers at services; by denying the *mutuellistes* chairs, the fabriques could create difficulties with authorities in addition to pointing to the absence of the *mutuel* students at services as evidence that religion was not important in *enseignement mutuel*. The curé of Baugé engineered the total denial of seats in 1819 in protest of the opening of the *école mutuelle* in 1819.⁶⁵ In Angers, Mgr. Montault conspired with the fabrique of St. Maurice to force Gellerat to escort the children to a smaller church rather than the cathedral—and to charge the Society 50 francs a year for the rental of chairs during the church service.⁶⁶ When a re-vitalized Society attempted to renegotiate the terms in 1829, the fabrique raised the price to 100 francs, which they

⁶⁵ Letter from the Prefect to the Minister of the Interior, 18 November 1819, AN F¹⁷ 11757.

⁶⁶ Letter from the Society to the Prefect, 17 September 1817, ADML 77 T 10; Society séance of 14 February 1818, AM Angers 1 R 42.

refused to lower.⁶⁷ While such pettiness was not confined to western France—Adrien Garnier relates a similar episode at Grenoble in 1818⁶⁸—the practice was hardly destructive to mutuellistes.

The earliest and most pronounced of the direct conflicts between the various elements of educational civil society was the education pamphlet war waged under the early Restoration. Local members contributed to the pamphlet war, which often savagely criticized the opposing pedagogy. After a brief revival under the July Monarchy, the pamphleteering ceased. By the 1840s, both the Association and the Society had adopted a *modus vivendi* based on friendly competition. The two groups loosely followed the enrollment of each others schools, gauging their own successes by the running totals of students. A more public demonstration of the contest was the displays of student work that accompanied the annual *distributions des prix* for the schools. The prize ceremonies had become a part of the rhythm of civic life, and both organizations invested heavily in gaining the attendance of public officials. By the 1840s, student works—most often drawings and detailed models of local buildings—were part of the festivities. The teachers at both the *écoles mutuelles* and the *écoles des Frères* found the displays a distraction, the Vicaire-Général of the local community of Frères noted he “could see there [in the displays] some advantage, but perhaps more the inconveniences.”⁶⁹ Such practices served to keep the education issue—and the organizations that supported it—in the public eye.

⁶⁷ Letter from the Marguilliers of the Fabrique of St. Maurice to the Society, 17 May 1829, AM Angers 1 R 42.

⁶⁸ Adrien Garnier, *Frayssinous: Son rôle dans l'Université sous la Restauration (1822-1828)* (Paris and Rodez: Auguste Picard and Carrère, 1925), 463, note 1.

⁶⁹ “Angers—Historique de la Maison,” 20.

Taken as a whole, the relationships between opposing sides in educational civil society were peaceful during much of the nineteenth century. Yet such peaceful need not imply a willingness to “live and let live.” The notables that dominated educational civil society were also heavily involved in local governance. A high proportion of members of both the Society and the Association, for instance, served on municipal councils, on the departmental council, or as maires in communes across the department. A number—Augustin Giraud (1797-1875), president of the Society in the early 1830s, and Association member and one-time vice-president the Comte de Falloux being the most notable examples—became députés. Given the possible influence wielded by members in government positions, the private organizations could be tolerant to each other. But could the government?

Relationships with Authorities

One striking aspect of educational civil society was the almost complete absence of these organizations from the police monitoring reports so prevalent over the course of the nineteenth century. Decades of experience with potential conspiratorial organizations had made French authorities suspicious of any body that met regularly. Article 910 of the 1810 Penal Code specified that

No association of more than twenty persons desiring to meet daily or on certain days to pursue religious, literary, political or other interests can only form with the agreement of the government and under the conditions that the public authority may see fit to impose on the society.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Quoted in Bastid, 386.

The policy was draconically extended with the law of 10 April 1834, which required permissions for groups smaller than twenty.⁷¹ The impact of these laws on educational civil society, however, were almost non-existent. The teaching congregations, unsurprisingly, received the most attention from authorities, but the expansion of such groups over the century hardly indicates an oppressive environment. The *fabriques* were subject to the *tutelle administratif* concerning their budgets, especially if they were forced to rely on municipal funds to cover deficits. In Maine-et-Loire, however, such oversight hardly appeared to hamper their functioning. The private organizations such as the Association and the Society had the most to fear from the provisions of the penal code, and they were aware of the possibility. Yet the monitoring reports for the various *cercles* and societies over the nineteenth century have no entries for the members of educational civil society, and the organizations were not harassed by authorities.

This only appeared to change in the 1870s, when the activities of the *Cercle Baugeois* in Baugé and the *Cercle angevin* in Angers of Jean Macé's *Ligue de l'Enseignement* attracted significance attention from departmental and academic authorities, the Rector noting of the Cercle Baugeois that "the composition of this executive committee (*bureau*) is completely radical."⁷² Another associational innovation of the same period, alumni associations (*associations des anciens élèves*), also began

⁷¹ Bastid, *Les institutions politiques*, 387. The primary target of the law of 10 April 1834 appeared to be "conspiratorial" organizations like the Société des droits de l'homme which operated on a small-cell principle. It also, however, strengthened enforcement provisions by making all members of the association liable to persecution (as opposed to just the leaders, as formerly), as well as increasing fines and making persecution easier.

⁷² Rapport of the Rector of the Academié de Rennes to the Minister of Public Instruction, 29 January 1874, AN F¹⁷ 12525; see also the letter from the Prefect to the Minister of Public Instruction, 6 January 1874, AN F¹⁷ 12524 and "Rapport au le Cercle angevin de la Ligue de l'Enseignement," 7 July 1877, ADML 40 M 3bis. See Katherine Auspitz, *The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'enseignement and the Origins of the Third Republic 1866-1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) for one interpretation of the interest in authorities in watching Macé's organization.

appearing in police reports.⁷³ Despite the common perception of heavy police surveillance of civil society during the nineteenth century, the Third Republic pioneered the direct policing of educational civil society.

While educational civil society might not have shown up in police reports, authorities were well informed as to their activities. The prevalence of former Bonapartist officials in the Society of Baugé in 1818, led by the President du Tribunal the Marquis de L'Auberdrière (Louis Dupont d'Aubevoye, 1759-1837) and former Hundred Days subprefect of Baugé Jacques Lofficial (1777-1855), was enough to alarm even the accomodating prefect Wismes; he found it “difficult to think that calculations of the public good had been their first motivation.”⁷⁴ Still, with no conclusive evidence of malfeasance, Wismes reluctantly acquiesced to Lainé insistence to approve the Society of Baugé’s charter. Yet Baugé represented a special case from Wismes’ point of view. When the reactionary subprefect of Beaupréau Amédé Paul François de Béjarry (1815-1821) suspected the Society of Cholet of trying to establish “a new teaching corps, a new *académie*” outside of royal control, Wismes brusquely dismissed the subprefect’s claims and approved the charter of the organization.⁷⁵

Almost thirty years later, the Association would find itself in the opposite situation when it attempted to be declared an *établissement d'utilité publique*. Despite

⁷³ For example, see the information for the Association des anciens élèves de l'Institution Chevrollier in ADML 40 M 3. Some of this information appears to have been submitted to departmental authorities voluntarily, which may indicate a real concern on the part of the organization’s members. Auguste Chevrollier (d. 1891) had been the teacher at the école mutuelle des Cordeliers after the death of Gellerat before founding his own technical school, which was merged with Angers’ École Primaire Supérieure under Chevrollier’s direction in 1845 (Port, I: 744).

⁷⁴ Letter from the Prefect to the Minister of the Interior, 13 May 1818, AN F¹⁷ 11757. Lofficial would again serve as the subprefect of Baugé during the first two years of the Second Republic (Marais and Lambert, eds., *Les préfets de Maine-et-Loire*, 103-104).

⁷⁵ Letter from the Subprefect of Beaupréau to the Prefect, 10 October 1817; letter from the Prefect to the Subprefect of Beaupréau, 20 November 1817, both in ADML 77 T 19.

praise from Angers' municipal council for the quality of their schools, both the prefect Guillaume Bellon (1840-1848) and the rector Pierre Henry (1839-1854) argued against the granting of the status. Henry's chief concern was political; he cited books used at the school, which included sympathetic histories of the Vendée and of the Carlist efforts in Spain.⁷⁶ While damning in Henry's eyes, the Association actually had little to do with textbook selection; such pedagogical questions were left to the Frères, a fact that the ministry realized when they followed up on the question directly with the Superior-General of the Frères (discovering that the books, in fact, were not used in the school but distributed as prizes to outstanding students). Bellon's more technical argument, that since the Frères were already authorized to accept liberalités there was no need to also authorize the Association, more closely followed the Ministry of Public Instruction's own thinking, and it was on that basis the Association's application was rejected.⁷⁷ While Bellon may have used the legal argument as cover for political disapproval of the Association, the absence of serious rejection of the Association's next effort, the formation of a private corporation (the Société civile de la Cité) to support the schools, indicates that the problem was not one of toleration.

Much of the intolerance for rival education programs among state authorities came at the level of the commune. It was no accident the pendulum swings between liberal and Catholic schools over the course of the century often coincided with the shifts in the political composition of the municipal councils. The ultraroyalist reaction

⁷⁶ Letter from the Rector to the Minister of Public Instruction, 8 November 1844, AN F¹⁷ 10300. A list of problematic books was given in a later letter from the Rector to the Minister of Public Instruction, dated 8 July 1845, AN F¹⁷ 10300.

⁷⁷ Letter from Prefect to the Minister of Public Instruction, 21 September 1844; decision of the Conseil d'État, 13 December 1844, quoted in the Note pour le Ministre, 4 March 1846, both in AN F¹⁷ 10300.

concurrent with the accession of Charles X saw a systematic effort to suppress the *écoles mutuelles*. The private organizations supporting them, however, remained untouched; the Society was able to mount a three-year legal battle that prevented the Frères from moving into the Cordeliers building.⁷⁸ The next regime change in the wake of the July Revolution resulted in liberals capturing municipal councils. It was the turn of Catholic schools to suffer, as funding was cut and, in Saumur, the Frères were removed from the Récollets building. Yet at no point was the Association threatened with disbandment, and a new private organization established itself in Saumur to provide for the Frères with no harassment from government authorities.

In summarizing the reaction of state authorities to the educational civil society that emerged after the Napoleonic period in France, the most salient feature was the emphasis on regulating the schools that these bodies supported, not the existence of the organizations themselves. At no point did authorities move to prevent the formation or suppress the operation the fabriques or the private organizations such as the Society and the Association. The givers of *liberalités* were never directly subject to public oversight, and even the regulations concerning the disposition of the *liberalités* were rather lightly enforced until the 1860s.⁷⁹ Even the teaching congregations, the most controversial of the components of educational civil society, faced little real harassment from authorities over most of the century, as long as the regulations established for them were followed. In short, educational civil society was tolerated both by authorities and by other members of civil society. It was only the radical phase of the Third Republic, after 1880, that educational civil society would be actively discouraged by state authorities.

⁷⁸ See Chapter Four for a discussion of this struggle.

⁷⁹ See Chapter Five for more details on the debates over *liberalités*.

Conclusion

French legal historian Paul Nourrisson, looking back on the right of association in France after the 1901 *loi* Waldeck-Rousseau, noted that “it is in effect individual liberty and the social necessity of mutual aid between men from which the right of association derives.” He elucidates the connection between the two:

The isolated man [*l'homme isolé*], such as the revolutionary doctrine imbued with the ideas of Rousseau envisioned him... is a chimera. Individualism is bad, because it comes from egotism and leads to isolation; individual initiative, which is a good, can only be exercised efficiently by association.⁸⁰

Shades of Turgot aside, Nourrisson’s point highlights the fundamental parameters of the operation of educational civil society in the nineteenth century. These were individuals drawn together for the common cause of providing primary education, even if groups such as the Association or fabriques also had other concerns.

In very few particulars did the components of this educational civil society differ from the model praised by scholars as leading to the democratic Third Republic. There were internal practices of electing members and resolving policy disputes. Funds were raised and devoted to common projects. But in two particulars did these groups differ from the idealized model celebrated today. The first is the religious dimension; the congregations and the fabriques were Catholic institutions, a fact which decreased their openness. Yet the Catholic groups only formed part of civil society; the Protestant consistoires could also support schools (as at Saumur) and provide teachers. Civil society, furthermore, tends towards self-selection in membership, which is generally viewed as a positive. For example, few would argue that the Ligue de l’enseignement was somehow

⁸⁰ Paul Nourrisson, *Histoire de la liberté d’association en France depuis 1789*, 2 vols. (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1920), I: 2.

less a component of civil society because its membership was drawn predominantly from a radical republican tradition. The second factor is more problematic: Morris' idea of subscriber societies. The gatekeeping mechanisms of the Association and the Society did limit participation, as did the hefty subscription fee. The Cercle angevin of the Ligue de l'enseignement required a much smaller buy-in: fifty centimes, later reduced to ten.⁸¹ But the Ligue's proposed operations were also more limited at the local level; their funds were intended to supplement a national movement, not be the sole support of a local one. The change in operational model may have been the significant factor, not the conceptualization of civil society.

More significantly, this educational civil society was given ample room to develop freely. Despite the heated rhetoric of the education pamphlet war, harassment over the chairs at churches, and the popular perception of outright hostility between proponents of different pedagogies, the actual relationships between the groups were peaceful. There is no record of the Association and the Society, for instance, attempting to block students from attending one another's schools. Likewise, government authorities—whether it be at the communal, departmental, or national level—took few actions directly against congregations, fabriques, or private organizations. Even the Second Empire's policies, which Philip Nord called a “rollback of the public sphere,”⁸² left little mark on educational civil society, which continued as strong as before.

Yet twenty years into the Third Republic, this educational civil society which successfully existed for half a century had been drastically changed. In place of the

⁸¹ Statuts du Cercle Angevin de la Ligue de l'Enseignement, 1872, and letter from the President of Cercle angevin [Guilbault Bellanger] to the Prefect of Maine-et-Loire, 29 October 1872, both in ADML 40 M 3 bis.

⁸² Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 13.

private local organizations like the Association and the Society were new groups like the Ligue de l'enseignement and Mgr. Freppel's Oeuvre pour les écoles chrétiennes that were organized on national or departmental levels—and far less likely to help set up and run local schools. Public officials viewed the congregations, fabriques and givers of liberalités far more suspiciously, a prelude to the final dissolution of such bodies in 1905. More significantly, officials from the Ministry of the Interior in 1890 were almost totally unaware that such a civil society had ever existed. All of these changes stemmed from a fundamental shift in the public milieu in which this civil society had grown—both politically and in terms of the public education to which this civil society was dedicated to promoting. That milieu will be the subject of the next few chapters.

CHAPTER THREE:
BUILDING AND RUNNING SCHOOLS IN MAINE-ET-LOIRE

For all the debates among officials in Paris and in the académies and church conclaves, the most significant choices in building a school lay with the lowest level of French administrative jurisdiction. The question of establishing, funding and maintaining a school ultimately rested with the notables of the roughly 38,000 communes across France. This is perhaps unsurprising given the place of the commune as the locus of French political life. But the scholarly view of the role of communes in educational policy has been distinctly apophatic, understanding municipal policies by their adherence or resistance to state policies rather than as actors in their own right. Even as the centralization model began collapsing in the 1970s, the communes remained viewed as reactionary rather than proactive. Robert Gildea, for instance, wrote "legislation was enforced not unilaterally, but as the result of struggle and compromise, local initiatives being as significant as initiatives in Paris," yet largely discussed local activities only as implementing or resisting legislation designed elsewhere.¹

Gildea's model is colored by his focus on the Second Empire, when the foundation for the Third Republic's education policies was being laid, and an extensive body of legislation had been created through which communes (and education officials)

¹ Robert Gildea, *Education in Provincial France 1800-1914: A Study of Three Departments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 366.

had to wade in the pursuit of policies. Earlier, however, the locus of initiative was rather more obscure. R. D. Anderson saw local activism as the driving motive behind much early school expansion, with France operating more similar to Britain than fellow continental centralizing power Prussia.² The statistical analysis of Grew and Harrigan suggests that the great education laws of the nineteenth century occurred in the middle of periods of school construction rather than at the beginning; the laws were in large part reactions to local projects.³ Marc Suteau's study of Nantes has provided a corrective by emphasizing not only the role of the municipal government in opening schools, but also the early and continuing involvement of private associations.⁴ These findings should hardly be surprising; the history of the re-establishment of the Catholic teaching congregations has long emphasized the importance of local governments in demanding and supporting religious congregations in the period before state education laws.⁵ To put it bluntly, local initiatives often preceded state initiatives.

It may be better to reverse the traditional historiographic question and ask in what ways the state aided or hampered local education development. The answer, in turn, lies in understanding what "education development" meant for both local and state actors. Despite variances in specifics, the great education laws of the nineteenth century foresaw a panoply of institutions starting with primary schools at the local level progressing up through the *grandes écoles* turning out experts for state service. Local authorities,

² Anderson, *Education in France*, 240.

³ Grew and Harrigan, *School, State and Society*, 31.

⁴ Suteau, *Une ville et ses écoles*, 9-12.

⁵ Alexis Chevalier, *Les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes et l'enseignement primaire après la Révolution, 1797-1830* (Paris: Poussielgue Frères, 1887), xvii; Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères*, IV: 9-16; Zind, *Les nouvelles congrégations*, 4; Bédél, 22.

however, saw education institutions as embodiments of local identity. The two views were not necessarily mutually exclusive; indeed, having a “good school” could be a powerful lure for local officials to invest in education. Yet local communes could and did view the completion of their goals as stopping short of those of the state. The early growth of primary education depended on what local authorities saw as a proper set of institutions for their communes.

Three communes have been selected to compare and contrast the experiences of constructing schools among the variety of populations found not only in Maine-et-Loire, but in France more broadly, during the crucial first half of the century. Cholet was one of the largest towns in Maine-et-Loire, and one of the earliest to grapple with industrialization. With a large notable population independent enough to break with the state over education policy and rich enough to support private organizations, Cholet early became a battleground for education disputes. Beaufort-en-Vallée, located on the opposite side of the department from Cholet, was representative of the larger agricultural market towns that had dominated French life until the Revolution, only to be relegated to second-tier status as the new administrative and economic structures of the nineteenth century bypassed it. Finally, Russé represents the smallest rural communes, where the question of opening a school was founded both on practical concerns of paying for such an institution and the relation between schools and municipal identity.

Cholet

No town in Maine-et-Loire represented the tensions between old France and new more than Cholet. By 1816, Cholet—the center of the *Mauges pays*⁶—was still in the process of recovering from the Vendée War. The sacking of the town on 17 October 1793 destroyed a significant portion of the buildings, and the population had shrunk to less than half its pre-Revolution size by 1797.⁷ The war also left a mark on the political dynamics of the city, creating a strong liberal sentiment among the notables. From the Empire onwards, Cholet was kept under close surveillance by the subprefect in Beaupréau⁸ worried about anti-royalist uprisings, and soon acquired a reputation as being a red city in the white country of royalist villages and *bocages* dominating the *Mauges*. Yet Cholet was not without strengths. The textile industry which had been developing since the seventeenth century blossomed in the first half of the nineteenth century, while a protoindustrial sector built on handkerchiefs (*mouchoirs*) established Cholet's national reputation.⁹ Developing and promoting this industry was the chief goal of the municipal leadership, drawn largely from the business class.

Revolutionary events damaged primary education in Cholet as much as elsewhere, gutting what appears to have been a fairly extensive primary system. School

⁶ Although Cholet and the *Mauges* were Angevin administratively, until 1802 the southwest quarter of the *pays*—including Cholet—fell under split episcopal jurisdiction between the dioceses of Angers, La Rochelle (whose jurisdiction included Cholet), Nantes, and ten parishes answering to the Abbey of St-Florent-le-Vieil. For a list of jurisdictions, see François Lebrun, *Paroisses et communes de France, dictionnaire d'histoire administrative et démographique: Maine-et-Loire* (Paris: Laboratoire de Démographie Historique, 1974).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 134; Charles Tilly, *The Vendée* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964); Port, I: 753.

⁸ Beaupréau would serve as the *chef-lieu* of the *arrondissement* until replaced by Cholet in 1857.

⁹ Tessie Liu, *The Weaver's Knot: The Contradictions of Class Struggle and Family Solidarity in Western France, 1750-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Guy Minguet, *Naissance de l'Anjou industriel: entreprise et société locale à Angers et dans le Choletais* (Paris: Éditions l'Harmattan, 1985).

inspector Jules Spal (1819-1897) concluded from the 1789 *cahiers des doléances* that the region contained numerous schools before the Revolution, many inexpensive or even free and likely well maintained; Charles Urseau later associated these schools with the growth of the future arrondissement of Beaupréau as “the center of a real intellectual movement” in the pre-revolutionary period.¹⁰ Revolutionary policies and the Vendée conflict combined to destroy these schools. In opening schools during the Empire, Cholet pursued similar policies to many other large communes. By 1813, a *classe primaire* was opened at the local municipal college, which had been barely functioning in the 1780s but re-established following the Revolution as an assertion of municipal identity.¹¹ The college was charged with accepting a small number of indigent students (selected by the municipal council) in exchange for municipal funding; the curriculum for such students included reading, writing, basic arithmetic, and basic bookkeeping (*la tenue des livres de commerce*). The number of students admitted was miniscule—an 1821 contract between the municipal council and the college set the number at ten children¹²—and the college never became the focal point of primary education. Cholet’s approach to girls’ education was somewhat more developed: a small primary school for girls had been attached to the local hospice ran by the Filles de la Sagesse de Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre in the last years of the Empire.¹³ The institutrices of the school were paid with municipal funds, and the

¹⁰ Jules Spal, “Les écoles dans l’arrondissement de Cholet,” *Bulletin de l’Instruction primaire* 43 (1873); Charles Urseau, *L’instruction primaire avant 1789 dans les paroisses du Diocèse actuel d’Angers* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1895), 72.

¹¹ Arrêt préfectoral of 11 November 1806 and arrêt rectoral of 14 October 1813, both in AM Cholet 1 R 53; Spal, “Les écoles dans l’arrondissement de Cholet.”

¹² “Traité entre la Ville de Cholet et le bureau d’administration du collège de Cholet,” 23 March 1822, AM Cholet 1 R 53.

¹³ Letter from the Maire of Cholet to the Prefect, 29 July 1809, ADML 60 T 76; Elie Chamard, *20 siècles d’histoire de Cholet* (Cholet: Farré et fils, 1970), 173.

school accepted a relatively large number of students for free. The real impetus for the expansion of primary education, however, lay with private organizations for much of the century.

The opening of the *école mutuelle de Cholet*

Cholet's local society promoting *enseignement mutuel* established itself on 27 September 1817, under the patronage of Charles Cesbron-Lavau, a local textile magnate. The plan had the support of a significant portion of the local industrial bourgeois; a list of 102 subscribers submitted to the Ministry of the Interior in February 1818 contains the names of the major *négociants*, *marchants*, and *fabricants* of Cholet.¹⁴ The full support of municipal authorities was reflected in presence of thirteen members of the municipal council and every maire of Cholet from the Hundred Days (Charles Cesbron-Lavau) through 1838 (Cyprien-Marie Tessier-Tharreau). The maire at the time, industrialist François-Joseph Turpault (1815-1821), was elected *président honoraire* at the first meeting. Unlike the situation in Angers, where the municipal notables found themselves divided between the Society and the Association, Cholet's local administration was firmly behind *enseignement mutuel*.

Despite his honorary title, Turpault was not just a figurehead; he actively supported the *école mutuelle* despite his own legitimist leanings. He guided the Society of Cholet through the process of prefectural and ministerial approval and handled most of its correspondence, a vital aid in easing initial tensions with authorities. The primary obstacle was the suspicious subprefect of Beaupréau, Amédé Paul François de Béjarry

¹⁴ Letter from the Maire of Cholet to the Minister of the Interior, 12 February 1818, AN F¹⁷ 11757.

(1815-1821). This native Vendéen had served in the counterrevolutionary Army of the Center, suffering serious wounds during the battle for Le Mans in December 1793.¹⁵ Taking office at the beginning of the Second Restoration while simultaneously serving as a deputy for the Vendée, the subprefect kept a wary eye on political developments at Cholet. Béjarry's initial correspondence with Turpault was hostile, accusing him of illegally assembling the Society of Cholet without prefectural approval. He was no less guarded in his opinions to prefect Baron de Wismes, charging the Society of Cholet with wanting to establish "a new teaching corps, a new *académie*" based on a glorified method of teaching reading.¹⁶ He recommended the Society be placed under the guidance of the *comité cantonal*, all collected subscription funds be turned over to the *receveur municipal* for accountability, and the Society be prohibited from engaging in correspondence until the rector and the departmental authorities had vetted the elected secretary.

In effect, Béjarry saw the Society of Cholet as a potential conspiratorial organization aiming to usurp the government's authority. The subprefect's suspicions, however, found little support in other quarters. Responding to his subordinate's letter, Wismes dismissed the notion that the organization desired "to create a new teaching corps and to cheat the *académie* of its rights as you presume." The *sociétaires*, he continued, were merely following the example of the Society in Angers and had already begun working with the rector and the *comité cantonal* to find a teacher. Giving his

¹⁵ See his biographical entry in Jean-Luc Marais and Celine Lambert, eds., *Les préfets de Maine-et-Loire* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000), 116.

¹⁶ Letter from the Subprefect of Beaupréau to the Maire of Cholet, 25 September 1817, AM Cholet 1 R 24; letter from the Subprefect to the Prefect, 3 October 1817, ADML 77 T 19.

authorization for the project, Wismes asked Béjarry to relay his approval to the Society and to assure Turpault “that nothing impedes this project in its realization.”¹⁷

The prefect’s decision was likely swayed by a second event organized by Turpault. During the first week of November 1817, the Duc d’Angoulême (the eldest son of the future Charles X) visited Cholet as part of his tour of western France. Cholet’s merchants used the opportunity to promote local industry, organizing an exhibition of textiles among other festivities; included was a discussion on how *enseignement mutuel* could contribute. The arguments persuaded Angoulême, and he purchased six subscriptions for the society on 6 November 1817. This provided a financial boost to the new effort and delivered the Society of Cholet a significant publicity coup. It also attracted the attention of another patron, Minister of the Interior Joseph Lainé, who had little information on the actual activities at Cholet to this point.¹⁸ Given Wismes’ previous actions with the Society of Angers, approval of the Cholet effort was likely; the patronage of a member of the royal family and of Lainé made it a certainty.

The school opened at the beginning of March 1818. As elsewhere, locating a teacher and a building were the most daunting tasks. A local teacher, Baranger, was hired and undertook training in *enseignement mutuel* in Angers under Gellerat, following which a student *moniteur*, a “jeune Richard,” was dispatched to help establish the school.¹⁹ The school opened in an unused building of the municipal college; this was in

¹⁷ Letter from the Prefect to the Subprefect of Beaupréau, 20 November 1817, ADML 77 T 19.

¹⁸ Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect, 13 December 1817; response from the Prefect to the Minister, 28 January 1818, both in AN F¹⁷ 11757.

¹⁹ Letter from the Maire of Cholet to the Prefect, 10 January 1818, ADML 77 T 19; “Rapport de M.M. les Inspecteurs de la Société [of Angers] au Bureau d’administration,” 27 March 1818, ADML 77 T 5; Assemblée générale of the Society, 30 December 1819, AN F¹⁷ 11757. The sending of student *moniteurs* “en mission” was one of the odder practices of the Society, with students sent as far away as Le Mans to help establish *écoles mutuelles*. The practice appears to have fallen out of favor by the early 1820s.

addition to the paying *classe primaire* already operating under the college's principal Derrieu which also followed *enseignement mutuel*.²⁰ The arrangement was only temporary, however, and the school had to soon move to a new location. Various proposals for alternative locations were examined before the decision to place the school in a room in the *halle aux marchands* was made.²¹ The room was large enough to contain up to 225 students. Trimesterial inspection reports from the 1820s document regular attendance at between 130 and 150 students.²²

Despite the success of the school in attracting students, funding remained difficult. An early effort to secure a 3000 franc subsidy from the government in Paris to construct a school building failed despite a personal call on Minister Lainé by Turpault during a trip to Paris; Lainé recommended the departmental council as the more appropriate source of funding.²³ The Interior Ministry would provide a grant of 500 francs the following year, which apparently was used to defray the cost of the new schoolroom.²⁴ More significantly, the Society of Cholet suffered from declining subscription rates. Although the Society initially was raising close to 1,600 francs a year—sufficient to support the school—member participation waned, while the Society's stated goal of providing free education prevented the imposition of the *retribution*

²⁰ Letter from the Principal of the College of Cholet [Derrieu] to the Maire of Cholet, 23 September 1817; letter from the Principal of the College of Cholet to the Maire of Cholet, 2 December 1817, both in AM Cholet 1 R 24.

²¹ Chamard, *20 siècles*, 173

²² Trimester reports, April 1819 through October 1824, AM Cholet 1 R 24.

²³ Letter from the Prefect to the Maire of Cholet, 13 May 1818, AM Cholet 1 R 24; letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect, 27 April 1818, ADML 77 T 19.

²⁴ Letter from the Ministry of the Interior to the Prefect, 6 April 1819; "Sumptum d'adjudication entre J. M. Godineau aîné et la ville de Cholet," 18 September 1821, both in ADML 77 T 19.

scolaire common in the period.²⁵ The school began to rely more heavily on municipal subsidies to support itself. By 1822, it was obvious to all that the Society could no longer maintain itself, and the school was transferred directly to the commune.²⁶ Despite its strong beginnings, the *mutuelliste* movement in Cholet ended quickly—but not before giving the town its first public schools.

Arguments Against Education: Opening Catholic Schools in Cholet

While the *école mutuelle* enjoyed the support and the attention of the municipal council during the early Restoration, proponents of Catholic education faced a more difficult task. Gender played a huge role in the debates; as the most politically liberal of Angevin towns, Cholet also adhered the closest to the model of religious female education versus secular male education. The girls' school run by the Filles de la Sagesse was established at the hospital in 1809 at the request of the municipal council; a municipal subsidy was granted from 1813 forwards. Except for a call for adoption of *enseignement mutuel* in 1831, the municipal council remained supportive well into the Third Republic.²⁷ Thirty years would pass, however, before a Catholic boys school would be opened. During that period, the departmental council and local leaders made attempts to open a school, only to be rebuffed by the municipal council before a private organization finally succeeded.

²⁵ *Registre des finances de l'école mutuelle*, AM Cholet 1 R 24.

²⁶ Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 15 May 1821, AM Cholet 1 D 3.

²⁷ Letter from the Maire of Cholet to the Prefect, 29 July 1809, ADML 60 T 76; Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 30 September 1831, AM Cholet 1 D 3. The establishment of a secular *école publique de filles* was undertaken only in 1882 (Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 21 July 1882, AM Cholet 1 R 9).

The discussion about opening a Catholic boys' school originated not in Cholet but with the departmental council. An 1818 report presented by council president General Louis comte d'Andigné (1765-1857), scion of the great local family—his younger brother Charles-François served as the first president of the Association—argued “for public education, nothing can replace the religious corporations” and invoked the suspicion that religious instruction was being ignored by the *mutuellistes*.²⁸ Beginning in 1819, the departmental council annually voted funds for the Frères in an effort to counterbalance Parisian patronage of the new method. The heavy-handed tactics of Wismes in securing funding for the *écoles mutuelles* by inserting special line items into the departmental budget (allowed by the practice of *tutelle administratif*) also contributed to discontent; the struggle over primary schools became as much a battle over political jurisdictions as ideology. “The Departmental Council calls on the help of the government for this part of primary instruction,” the 1821 departmental budget proposal pleaded, “It makes distributions of aid every year for the *écoles mutuelles* of the department, [and] it demands that the Frères de la Doctrine chrétienne be treated with the same favor.”²⁹ The earliest grants went to Angers, but with the Frères established by late 1821 attention turned to other major towns of Maine-et-Loire. A subvention was first proposed in 1823 for Cholet to open a school—an unusual step considering no such request having been made by the municipal council. While departmental councils could provide funding for schools, they exercised no executive control over the communes in

²⁸ “Rapport sur l’instruction publique,” 22 June 1818, AN F¹⁷ 11757. General d’Andigné hardly discusses his service on the council—and nothing about education—in his *Mémoires du Général d’Andigné* (2 vols., ed. Ed. Biré, Paris: Plon, 1900-1901), a common occurrence for many of these notables. For the election of Charles-François d’Andigné (1769-1858) as the first president of the Association, see *Annales de l’Association I*, séance of 19 February 1816, A.Dio.Angers 5 K 21.

²⁹ “Budget des dépenses extraordinaires d’utilité départementale, Exercice 1821,” 21 August 1821, ADML 9 N 2.

their jurisdiction. The municipal council would have to ask for a school before the money could be disbursed, and the new subprefect of Beaupréau Charles Frédéric Auguste de Chantreau (1821-1829) authorized the council to meet to discuss the matter.

The departmental grant was not accepted warmly by Choletais notables. Having just taken over the *école mutuelle* from the defunct Society of Cholet, the municipal council was hardly likely to incur any new expenses—even had their political inclinations favored paying for a Catholic school. A discussion during the annual budget meeting in May 1823 resulted in an ambiguous promise to consider the matter again in the future. Opinions expressed at the next budget session on 15 May 1824 were even more negative. Despite the reassurance of Chantreau that the departmental grant would cover the set-up of the school and that the commune would only be responsible for the annual charges, the council balked at the suggestion:

The municipal council, after having seriously deliberated, considering that it results from the exact information in hand from the censuses of the population, that the number of children that the schools in this town can contain is well superior to that of the children of the commune who are susceptible to attend them; notably in regards to those children badly indigent who can be placed to the number of more than 230 either in the *école mutuelle* or in the primary class of the college, where they are admitted from seven years and from where they almost all leave before the age of eleven years, because from this last age the product of the work which they can deliver is necessary for their subsistence; that these schools are therefore more than sufficient for the teaching of the poorest children.

That the existing schools obtain satisfactory success; that there are formed excellent subjects; that one can cite, for example, many young people who are destined to the priesthood and that the maire has placed freely [i.e., by scholarship] in the college upon leaving the *école mutuelle*.

That it results from the proceeding that there is no need to establish a new school for the indigents, the education of which the Frères of the Christian Doctrine would exclusively be charged, that if such a necessity existed the municipal council would not miss signaling it.³⁰

³⁰ Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 15 May 1824, AM Cholet 1 D 3.

The final vote was eleven to five against opening the school.

The hesitation of the municipal council to accept the subsidy highlights the major issues that would dominate education policy in the nineteenth century, already present at this embryotic stage. The core issue was clearly evident—the distaste of Cholet’s liberal municipal council for the Frères or any Catholic male congregation. While such positions were hardly uncommon, open expression invited reprisals, particularly in the increasingly conservative environment of the mid-1820s. Subprefect Béjarry had launched his attack on the Society of Cholet because of such opinions. So the arguments became hidden in other forms. Financial considerations and lack of interest—either by parents or by other inhabitants—were the two major arguments against education investment.

One example of the financial argument that a commune simply did not have the resources to devote as desired by higher authorities was Saumur’s refusal to open an *école mutuelle* in the 1820s. Despite its status as the second largest and second richest town in the department, no *mutuelliste* society was formed in Saumur similar to those at Angers and Cholet; an effort by three inhabitants in 1816 to garner attention was abandoned “not having found the habitants favorably disposed” according to subprefect Joseph Antoine de Carrère (1815-1828).³¹ Drawing on a narrative widely propagated by pamphleteers, Saumur’s maire and municipal council consistently argued that the such a school would be too expensive. The use of space in *enseignement mutuel*’s pedagogy—with students divided into separate classes all in one room to facilitate using a single teacher—required buildings featuring large open rooms, drastically increasing costs. Responding to an offer of a 300 franc subsidy by rector Poulet de Lisle in 1820, maire

³¹ Letter from Subprefect of Saumur to the Prefect, 8 September 1820, ADML, 77 T 12.

Noël-Henri Mayaud-Lagard (1816-1821) cited “invincible obstacles” in finding a convenient location and the necessary additional funding.³² An offer of 2000 francs the following year from a M. Couché in Paris similarly was refused, with Mayaud-Lagard’s successor Charles Maupassant (1821-1823) stating the preference of the town to move forward with an *école des Frères*—which could be located in any building with two or three moderately-sized rooms—that the departmental council was willing to fund.³³ Yet when the opportunity presented itself in 1824 to purchase the former Récollets facility for an *école des Frères* (and potential attached novitiate) for 35,000 francs—an amount representing over 18% of the town’s annual revenues, with a downpayment equal to its average budget deficit of the period—Saumur’s municipal council jumped at the chance.³⁴ Purses were only as deep as the ideological commitment behind them.

Cholet’s municipal council was ideologically the mirror image of Saumur’s. They, too, claimed expense as one reason not to open a Frères’ school. The congregation demanded a fairly high buy-in cost, stipulated in a contemporary “Prospectus pour un Établissement des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes.”³⁵ In addition to the annual salary of 600 francs for each frère (a minimum of three being required for a community), a moving and equipping charge (for both the school and the lodgings) of 1,200 francs per frère was assessed. Another 600 francs each was charged to help defray the cost of training replacements, the proceeds of which were used under the Restoration to rebuild the

³² Letter from the Maire of Saumur to the Rector, 12 June 1820, ADML 77 T 12.

³³ Letter from the Rector to the Prefect, 7 May 1820; letter from the Interior Minister to the Prefect, 9 August 1820; letter from the Maire of Saumur to the Subprefect of Saumur, 3 April 1822, all in ADML 77 T 12.

³⁴ “Vente entre M. Defos et la ville de Saumur,” 14 August 1824, ADML 77 T 12; budget information from municipal council sessions in AM Saumur 1 D 12 and 1 D 13.

³⁵ “Prospects pour un Établissement des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes,” ADML 77 T 12.

novitiates lost during the Revolution. Revolution policies had one further legacy: the “Prospectus” stipulated (article 7) that the building housing the school belong either to the commune or to a private owner, a requirement designed to prevent the seizure of congregation property as had occurred in 1792-3. Taken together, Cholet or any other commune desiring to establish an *école des Frères* faced at an initial outlay of over 5,000 francs plus the cost of building space, and a minimum annual charge of 1,800 francs. The heavy expense involved was a major factor that limited the Frères’ expansion into areas like western France where communes otherwise were willing to accept them with open arms.³⁶ Some form of subsidies, either from the departmental council or the state, was necessary before a commune would consider such an expense. The grant offered by the departmental council to Cholet was specifically to defray the high costs of establishing an *école des Frères*.

In addition, Cholet’s municipal council made a second argument, claiming that the needs of the commune currently were satisfied by existing schools. Such a charge opens the question of whether parents really did avail themselves of schools when offered. Education officials for most of the century regularly denounced parents for failing to send their kids to school. Ministry of Public Instruction official Paul Lorain entitled the parental attitudes section of his 1837 study of education “Insouciance and Repugnance of Families”—as accurate a summation of his conclusions as there is.³⁷ Republican historians and the initial generations that followed them continued to paint the picture of resistant parents suspicious or just uninterested in education, a narrative that elevated the compulsory education law of 28 March 1882 into an indispensable

³⁶ Gildea, *Education in Provincial France*, 90-91.

³⁷ Paul Lorain, *Tableau de l’instruction primaire en France* (Paris: Hachette, 1837), 14-15.

corrective. More recently, this perception has been challenged. The evidence of attendance used both by academic officials and later historians had significant flaws, namely inadequacies of the collection of statistics in the period. Census information delineating the number of children of school age was questionable at best, while the tendency to collect school attendance data in the summer—the very period when students were most likely to be needed in agricultural or artisan activities—distorted the total number of children who received education during any given year.³⁸ Furthermore, the most comprehensive series of surveys were conducted to justify the implementation and success of the great education laws—or to provide excuses for why those laws were not successful despite the efforts of academic officials—thereby tending to leave long periods or key variables underreported.³⁹

When Cholet's municipal council argued against the Frères, such statistics hardly existed at all. But it is difficult to take the claim of sufficient space seriously in light of the admittedly circumstantial evidence of other schools in Maine-et-Loire. Rare was the school opened that did not quickly have students attending—and the number of schools opened during this period was considerable. The arrondissement of Beaupréau, in which Cholet was located, saw the largest growth in the department during the Restoration, with half the communes (37 out of 73) having schools by early 1821.⁴⁰ The *école mutuelle* in Cholet quickly reached 120 students; the same levels were reached soon after the opening of the *école mutuelle* and the *école des Frères* in Angers. Even for girls, whose education

³⁸ Grew and Harrigan, *School, State and Society*, 67-68.

³⁹ Jean-Noël Luc, *La statistique de l'enseignement primaire 19e-20e siècles: Politique et mode d'emploi* (Paris: I.N.R.P. and Economica, 1985), 3-10; Grew and Harrigan, *School, State and Society*, 14.

⁴⁰ "Tableau comparatif des communes de l'Académie d'Angers qui sont pourvues d'instituteurs," January 1821, AN F¹⁷ 10148.

has traditionally been viewed as a secondary concern for most families, the presence of a school often led to a large number of students. An 1826 report indicates that the school held by the Filles de la Sagesse sometimes accepted as many as twenty or thirty girls a month for free—around a quarter of the students.⁴¹ The *école mutuelle de filles* in Angers welcomed about 150 students a month—with a standing waiting list of the same size.⁴² Generally, there was more demand for spaces in schools than were available. An *école des Frères* in Cholet likely would have resulted in a net increase in the number of students attending school in Cholet. Like the argument that communes did not have money for schools, arguments about the lack of popular interest were driven more often by ideology than experience.

Opening Schools without Municipal Support

The conservative reaction that set in fully in 1825 re-opened the issue of an *école des Frères* in Cholet. While the *écoles mutuelles* in Angers and Baugé were closed by cantonal committees now dominated by ecclesiastics⁴³, the direct control of Cholet's school by the municipal council shielded it from interference. Yet the core of the debate in the mid-1820s—whether to open an *école des Frères* in Cholet—remained as pressing as ever. By 1828, maire Matthieu Cherbonnier (1826-1830) decided to accept the money offered by the departmental council for a new school. Despite Cherbonnier's earlier involvement with the Society of Cholet, he realized that another school would be useful

⁴¹ "Filles admises gratuitement à l'école des religieuses à l'hospice—1826," AM Cholet 1 R 24.

⁴² "Assemblée générale de la Société d'Angers," séances of 15 February 1822, 23 August 1823, and 16 January 1824, all in AN F¹⁷ 11757.

⁴³ See the following chapter for a discussion of the situation at Angers.

in the town—or perhaps just asked himself why freely offered developmental funds should be allowed to go to waste. The resultant comedy of errors doomed efforts to open a Catholic school for boys over a decade.

Cherbonnier's decision was not greeted warmly by the municipal council, which again argued strenuously against the Frères. Some members even spearheaded a December 1829 petition sent to the prefect in an effort to stop the school. Unlike the earlier municipal council comments made in the period when ultraroyalist influence was growing, the “personnes éclairées” writing the petition felt little constraint in voicing their opinions towards the Frères following the liberal victories in the 1827 elections:

We will make all our efforts to repulse the men who, under the pretext of the education they do not give, want to seize the spirit of the lower classes of society with the evident intention of dominating them, and thereby to serve their ambition. What else can one expect from those for whom the means of education is the terror which forms slaves; we give preference to the kindness [*bonté*] which inspires good sentiments and creates citizens.⁴⁴

Public opinion, the petitioners claimed, was clearly against the Frères; an earlier effort by the curés to petition for the Frères apparently garnered barely two dozen signatures, compared with around 200 in the 1829 petition.

Undeterred by this harsh rhetoric, Cherbonnier went ahead with the project. He reached an arrangement with a M. Rousselot, a former adjoint to the maire, for a fifteen-year lease of a building. Repairs and modifications were quickly begun, using more than 4,300 francs out of the now 8,000 franc grant.⁴⁵ Only once the building was ready could a community be requested from the Frères. As Cherbonnier hurried to get the school opened, however, larger events intervened. The Revolution of 1830 catapulted a new

⁴⁴ Petition of the Inhabitants of Cholet, 1 December 1829, ADML 60 T 76.

⁴⁵ Letter of the Subprefect of Beaupréau to Prefect, 24 November 1830, ADML 60 T 76.

liberal administration into power, and they were less than thrilled with the idea of opening an *école des Frères*. With the grant funds already having been transferred to Cholet—thereby putting them at the disposal of the municipal rather than the departmental council—and a significant portion spent on building modifications, the new municipal council wanted to cancel the project but retain use of the building. The arrival of troops to quell counter-revolutionary activity prompted a request to use the building as temporary quarters; Rousselot refused. The municipal council attempted to cite the lease giving them rights to the building, only to discover that the arrangement between Cherbonnier and Rousselot had been verbal and no written record had been kept. Rousselot's position was that the lease had been offered explicitly for a Catholic school; he claimed the lease null and void for any other use.⁴⁶ An alternative proposal, to move the existing *école mutuelle* into the now refurbished building, similarly was refused. Without a written lease specifying its rights to the building, the council had no legal basis to enforce its plans on Rousselot. Outraged, the municipal council took legal action against Cherbonnier for corruption, which dragged on for years. In the meantime, the council ended the Frères project and had the remaining funds transferred to the local National Guard unit.⁴⁷

The conclusion of the Cherbonnier affair left the Filles de la Sagesse's school as the sole Catholic public school in the town. By the 1832, the municipal council voted the construction of a new building for the *école mutuelle*; perhaps not coincidentally, provisions were made for the local Guard unit to use the facility for drills after the school

⁴⁶ Letter from the Maire of Cholet to the Prefect, 23 November 1830, ADML 60 T 76.

⁴⁷ Letter from the Prefect to the Minister of the Interior, 14 December 1830; letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect, 8 March 1831, both in ADML 60 T 76.

day.⁴⁸ It was apparent that Cholet was not going to support an *école des Frères* officially. The only answer was a recourse to private organizations, a practice that had kept Catholic primary education growing despite the virtual disappearance of public funds for such projects in the aftermath of the 1830 Revolution.

The driving force behind the organization was the curé of Notre-Dame de Cholet, René Ploquin (1824-1851). Ploquin had directed the initial efforts for the Frères in the 1820s, those denigrated by liberals in the 1829 petition. While the 1830 Revolution ended any public discussion of new Catholic schools, he continued pushing for private investment. By 1840, he had assembled a group of subscribers with the goal of opening a *pensionnat primaire privé* to be ran by the Dames de la Retraite de la Société de Marie, only to see the project opposed by the municipal council.⁴⁹ Undeterred, Ploquin continued with an even larger goal: the opening of an *école de Frères*. The association, christened the Comité des Écoles and containing a number of prominent businessmen, provided the impetus to form an organization in early 1843.⁵⁰ They benefitted from the donation of the logis d’Autebert—known locally as Maison Jaune—by Clémence Cesbron de la Roulière, daughter of prominent local families who entered the Sacre-Coeur convent.⁵¹ Secure in both funding and a location, the Comité extended an invitation to the Frères to establish a community in Cholet.

⁴⁸ Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 5 November 1832, AM Cholet 1 D 3; “École mutuelle de Cholet: Réparation journalier du travail entre les enfants de l’école et les militaires,” AM Cholet 1 R 24.

⁴⁹ Chamard, *20 siècles*, 174. Charles Loyer held that the 1840 association was the same as the group organized in the 1820s to support the *école des Frères* (“Un siècle d’Instruction publique à Cholet de 1789 à 1882,” 51), although it is difficult to believe that the same group held together for over fifteen years with no major projects on the horizon. It is more likely there was considerable overlap between the two associations.

⁵⁰ “Brefs historiques des communautés,” AL carton “District de Nantes.”

⁵¹ Loyer, “Un siècle d’Instruction publique à Cholet,” 51-52.

As in earlier cases, the municipal council was not pleased with the decision; a vote on 31 May 1843 refused to support a school ran by “junior Jesuits” (*Jésuits subalternes*).⁵² This hardly deterred the private association, which now had the backing of Mgr. Angebault, the recently appointed Bishop of Angers. The dispute reached such a level by summer that maire René-Claude Caternault (1839-1845) requested the help of both prefect Guillaume Gelon (1840-1848) and rector Pierre Henry (1839-1854) to pressure Angebault and the association to “renounce a project which cannot fail to bring about a regrettable division and an inevitable perturbation among the population.” Listing the number of schools in Cholet already, Caternault identified his main concern: “We have in addition an *école mutuelle*, and evidently it is from this school that they [the Frères] would take the subjects whom they plan to invigorate that which they plan. However, the *école mutuelle* is almost always the object of the most active support of the administration.”⁵³ The municipal administration continued to view the Frères as a threat, but couched their arguments in terms of the 1824 argument that interest in education at Cholet was limited and the existing *école mutuelle* was satisfying those needs—and would suffer if a rival was opened. Henry, however, found his hands tied in dealing with the situation. Since initially the school was proposed as a private, and as long as the director (Jean Vincent Camuset, in religion Frère Ulphin) and the school building met all necessary requirements, he had no legal justification to prevent the opening of the

⁵² Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 31 May 1843, AM Cholet 1 D 4.

⁵³ Letter from the Maire of Cholet to the Rector, 2 July 1843, ADML 56 T 26.

school.⁵⁴ Prefect Gelon seemingly remained mute on the matter, but his field of action was as circumscribed as that of Henry.

The école des Frères opened for the 1843-1844 academic year. The fears of the municipal councilers were quickly realized as students left the *école mutuelle* to enroll in the Catholic school. By May 1846, the *école mutuelle* was down to eighteen students, while later the same year the municipal council discussed adding a new classroom and a third soeur to the Filles de la Sagesse school to handle the increase of students.⁵⁵ Despite thirty years of effort, a deep-rooted Catholicism remained among the population in Cholet. The resignation of Piron as the teacher at the *école mutuelle* in 1848 brought the matter to a head. With a lack of students, there was little need for an immediate replacement, and the school was closed for six months while its future was debated.⁵⁶ During the 5 November 1848 council meeting to discuss replacement candidates, a member proposed naming the Frères' school as the communal school:

This school is frequented by nearly all the children and that it would be just and convenient to chose for communal teacher Frère Ulphin, Director of the establishment. This proposition was considered and gave place to a long discussion. Nevertheless, the Council, desirous of yet conserving in the town of Cholet the *école mutuelle primaire*, which has existed for a long time, which has formed excellent subjects, to permit of families of choosing between the two schools and of maintaining a salutary emulation between them, and having yet hope of seeing reborn [and] prospering the *école mutuelle*, decide that this school will be maintained.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Letter from the Rector to the Maire of Cholet, 3 July 1843, ADML 56 T 26. Frère Ulphin's formal declaration of intent to open the school, made on 6 November 1843, included his teaching certifications and a plan of the school building approved by maire Caternault (ADML 56 T 26).

⁵⁵ Conseil municipal de Cholet, séances of 11 May 1846 and 29 November 1846, both in AM Cholet 1 D 4.

⁵⁶ Letter of the Inspecteur primaire to the Prefect, 24 April 1849, ADML 77 T 19.

⁵⁷ Conseil municipal de Cholet, séance of 5 November 1848, AM Cholet 1 D 5.

But merely maintaining the almost empty *école mutuelle* was not enough; the Council refused to provide a subsidy for the Frères, forcing them to continue relying on private funds.

A new teacher was appointed in early 1849 for the *école mutuelle*, and student attendance increased over the following decades. Yet the Frères school, now christened the École Saint-Joseph, was immovably in place. On 30 May 1849, the municipal council under new maire Charles Loyer voted a municipal subsidy in the 1850 budget, a paltry 500 francs, but sufficient to make the school an *école communale*.⁵⁸ The following year, it was raised to parity with the *école mutuelle*, at 1,000 francs a year. The two boys schools and that of the Filles de la Sagesse settled into a peaceful co-existence that would only be disturbed with the coming of the Third Republic.

Beaufort-en-Vallée

Located in the fertile plains of the Authion River valley (locally known simply as “la Vallée”⁵⁹), Beaufort was a major agricultural marketplace for the Baugeois. The town was quite prosperous, with a population of just under 6,000 in 1815 and enjoying an annual revenue of over 15,000 francs. Much of this wealth was plowed into various improvement projects, including extensive swamp-draining and road-building under the Restoration. By mid-century, however, Beaufort’s star began to fade. After not having been assigned a major administrative jurisdiction—such as a subprefecture—during the Revolution, the town was increasingly isolated from the political life of France. In the

⁵⁸ Conseil municipal de Cholet, séances of 30 May 1849, AM Cholet 1 D 5.

⁵⁹ Musset, “Geographical Characteristics,” 97.

1850s, Beaufort failed to win a major railroad concession, despite extensive lobbying by the municipal council and leading citizens. By the dawn of the twentieth century, the population had dropped to 4,100—barely two-thirds that of 1800⁶⁰—and Beaufort slowly became the sleepy agricultural community it remains today. In sum, Beaufort was one of the French towns which lost prestige and identity with the Revolution, first through a diminution of its administrative importance then by being bypassed by the railroads and the economic growth that followed in their wake.⁶¹

The Re-Opening of the College and the First Primary School

Beaufort's efforts to establish public primary education initially focused on their municipal college. Originally established in 1577, the college had educated generations of local notables, and was one of the few ancien régime municipal colleges in Anjou to offer a Latin secondary curriculum as well as a French one.⁶² A number of primary schools appear to have existed in Beaufort at various times in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the college remained the focal point of local education investment and pride.⁶³ Like most municipal colleges, the facility was closed during the Revolutionary turmoils, although the municipal council maintained a letter writing campaign to re-open the school.⁶⁴ When the law of 11 Floréal Year X (1 May 1802)

⁶⁰ Lebrun, ed., *Paroisses et communes*, 54.

⁶¹ Ted W. Margadant, *Urban Rivalries in the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Alan Forest and Peter Jones, eds., *Reshaping France: Town, Country and Region during the French Revolution* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991).

⁶² Grandière, "Les collèges angevins," 65-66; 68.

⁶³ Urseau, *L'instruction primaire avant 1789*, 211-212.

⁶⁴ Letter of the municipal council of Beaufort, 8 Fructidor Year VIII (26 August 1800), ADML 28 T 1.

permitted both the re-establishment of the colleges and placed primary education under communal control, the municipal council wasted little time in opening the old institution and annexing an *école communale* to its primary classes. In March 1810, the town signed a contract (*traité*) with Pierre-Gabriel Edeline to serve as principal of the college; the appointment was approved by Université authorities a year later.⁶⁵ By the Restoration, Beaufort had also recognized a number of additional schools, including a girls' school held at the local hospital under the Soeurs de Saint-Joseph. Only the college, however, received a municipal subsidy during this period: 800 francs a year for a *maître d'écriture*, who was also charged with teaching “arithmetic and commercial bookkeeping” (*le calcul et la tenue des livres de commerce*).⁶⁶

The placement of the *école communale* in the college resulted in early conflicts between Beaufort and state authorities. As a secondary school, the college fell under tighter Université control than did primary schools at the time. The publication of the revised “Statuts de l'Université” on 4 September 1821 placed significant power with state authorities to control municipal colleges. When the college needed a new principal on the retirement of Edeline in 1825, Beaufort's municipal council had hoped to attract an ecclesiastic to take over direction of the institution. Instead new rector Pierre Morice—ironically himself an ecclesiastic—appointed a secular principal, Alexandre Laurent.⁶⁷ The municipal council reacted negatively to the appointment, although long-serving

⁶⁵ Arrêt académique of 10 April 1811, ADML 29 T 2.

⁶⁶ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 25 July 1816, AM Beaufort 1 D 6.

⁶⁷ Arrêt académique of 10 September 1825, ADML 29 T 11.

maire François-Marie Danquetil (1800-1830) attempted to assuage feelings and admitted that the commune had to “cede to the circumstances” and work with the new principal.⁶⁸

This honeymoon period would be short-lived, however, as questions soon emerged concerning the teacher at the primary classes, Achille-François Dubord. By 1829, academic authorities had been criticizing his poor job performance and raising doubts about his *brevet de capacité du premier degré*, issued in 1817 in the neighboring Académie of Poitiers.⁶⁹ The debate lasted into early 1830, and less “ceding” took place this time: the affair saw two members the college’s administrative board resign over a proposed plan to replace Dubord.⁷⁰ Academic authorities were forced to step back, and allow Dubord to keep his position rather than risk alienating more local notables. Dubord was able to continue teaching at the college until 1847, when he resigned in the face of a new controversy over his qualifications.⁷¹ By this time, however, primary education had become separated from the college.

Education Outside the College

The Revolution of 1830 initially brought little change to Beaufort’s schools. The new municipal council expressed a desire to open an *école mutuelle*—but insisted that departmental, academic, and national funding would be necessary.⁷² In the meantime, the

⁶⁸ Letter from the maire of Beaufort to the Rector, 27 July 1825, ADML 29 T 2.

⁶⁹ Inspection report for 1826, ADML 411 T 5. The exact criticism of the *brevet* has not been preserved, but it appears the question was whether Dubord’s knowledge qualified him for the *premier degré* status. For a review of the entire affair, see the letter from the Maire of Beaufort to the Rector, 11 May 1829, ADML 29 T 2.

⁷⁰ Letter of resignation of 10 April 1829, ADML 29 T 8.

⁷¹ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 28 August 1847, AM Beaufort 1 D 8; Letter from the Maire of Beaufort to the Rector, 30 September 1847, ADML 411 T 2.

⁷² Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 15 December 1831, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

college remained the focus. Dubord's primary class remained an *école communale*, and an extension of the college building was planned to allow more students to attend.⁷³ By 1835, subsidies had been acquired for a dedicated *école primaire de garçons* and *normalien* Henri Poupard, highly recommended by none other than the *mutelliste* Pierre-Louis Le Bas (now the director of the *École Normale d'Angers*), was hired.⁷⁴ Yet the college remained the main concern of the council. Fearing the abandonment of the Dubord's classes for the new school, the municipal council moved to "maintain between them a just equilibrium" by strictly reviewing those students admitted free and requiring other children to pay a monthly fee determined by the level of education (reading, writing, or arithmetic) as if they were attending the college.⁷⁵ The subprefect of Baugé initially disapproved of the scheme, but on the grounds that the municipal council intended Poupard's salary to be determined by the revenues rather than fixed as required by law.⁷⁶ At least one parent, the baker Besnard, was more angered, comparing the policy unfavorably to that of the former private schoolteacher, Chaillon, who would work with poorer parents to keep their children in school.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the new *école mutuelle* opened in 1835 as an *école communale* and received a municipal subsidy that was 33% higher than that of Dubord's school (1,200 francs versus 900).⁷⁸ The college, beset by declining attendance caused, in part, by the willingness of parents to send their sons to

⁷³ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séances of 3 May 1834 and 15 March 1835, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

⁷⁴ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 3 February 1834, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

⁷⁵ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 4 May 1835, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

⁷⁶ Letter from the Subprefect of Baugé to the Maire of Beaufort, 6 July 1835, AM Beaufort 1 R 13.

⁷⁷ Letter from M. Besnard to the Maire of Beaufort, 26 October 1835, AM Beaufort 1 R 13.

⁷⁸ "Budget État 1835," AM Beaufort 1 L 2.

colleges and academies located in larger towns—a rejection of the local municipal college that had been so important under the ancien régime.

While willing to fund boys' education, the notables of Beaufort were far less interested in investing in cutting-edge education establishments. Here, the narrative of the lack of parental interest was deployed to make the case. In 1832, a Madame Juinglé applied to the local education surveillance committee to open a school in Beaufort, and was granted permission. The municipal council, who also had to approve the new teacher, preferred the long-established *pensionnat* school ran by Monet and Calabre, accepting poorer day students for almost twenty years and which in their opinion “satisfies completely the desires and the needs of the inhabitants.”⁷⁹ A new school would draw the students from the existing school without “resulting in any advantage to education.” The decision likely reflected a concern with introducing a foreign element into the commune, since the school of Monet and Calabre received no municipal funding at the time and no funding was offered for Juinglé. Once Beaufort began paying for female primary education in 1835, the designated *école communale* was that of Monet and Calabre.⁸⁰

A similar line of reasoning was employed when subprefect Joseph Moreau (1833-1846) inquired in 1834 about the possibility of Beaufort opening an *école primaire supérieure* (EPS). A signature piece of the *loi Guizot*, an EPS was seen as an intermediate step between the primary school and the traditional college that introduced non-bourgeois students to geometry, drafting, science, geography and history.⁸¹ Beaufort's population at time (just over 5,900) placed it under the 6,000 person limit

⁷⁹ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 8 May 1832, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

⁸⁰ “Budget État 1835,” AM Beaufort 1 L 2.

⁸¹ Prost, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France*, 289-290.

requiring such a school; Moreau might have suspected (incorrectly, as it turned out) that Beaufort would break the requirement in the upcoming 1836 census.⁸² In addition to citing the small population of the area, the council argued

The college and the two establishments of primary schools [that of Dubord and of Monet and Calabre] that exist today in Beaufort, with that of *enseignement mutuel* that should soon be formed in this ville, will be sufficient to give the education desired by the fathers of families to their children, especially when the youth of the ville come to a certain level in their studies [they] ordinarily come to complete them in the higher colleges.⁸³

The rejection of the proposal reflected a different understanding of education between state authorities and local communes. For the notables of Beaufort, education remained a binary proposition: basic primary education for the majority of the population, with secondary education for an elite that was handled through an existing network of municipal and other schools (which assumed, correctly, that such a network already existed). The model of an integrated local network of schools—a distant forerunner of the modern *école primaire-collège-lycée* progression—appeared to the municipal council an extravagance. The narrative of population “satisfaction” represented the political side of the argument, but financial concerns likely played a larger role. The municipal subsidy for the college in 1834, the last year in which it remained the sole public education establishment, was approximately 2,500 francs. The opening of the *école mutuelle* and the institution of a subsidy for the girls school of Monet and Calabre added 1,500 francs to the yearly expenditures—in addition to the construction costs of the *école mutuelle* and

⁸² Beaufort’s 1836 population of 5,993 would actually be the high-point of the nineteenth century; the population would steadily decrease in future censuses (Lebrun, *Paroisses et communes*, 54).

⁸³ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 3 February 1834, AM Beaufort 1 D 7. The same argument would be used in 1839 when the Rector again requested an EPS to be opened in Beaufort (séance of 21 May 1839).

the expansion at the college.⁸⁴ Adding a third new expense at the insistence of state authorities hardly could have been attractive.

The hesitancy of communes to spend on new schools in the mid-nineteenth became the stuff of legend, part of a narrative explaining the disinterest of communes and populations in primary education. By not investing in schools, municipal notables (and presumably the surrounding population) *ipso facto* did not place a high emphasis on the long-term benefits of education. As in Saumur and Cholet, the insufficient funds argument was rarely borne out solely by fiscal realities. During the July Monarchy, Beaufort's revenues increased dramatically, reaching a high of over 59,000 francs in 1838. Even during the deep economic crises of 1845-1848, annual receipts were more than twice that of the Restoration years.⁸⁵ Critics knew the funds were available; what was lacking, in their opinion, was will.

In reality, such arguments ignored the numerous other public projects invested in by communes during the period. Primary education formed only one of numerous obligations which were weighted differently at different times—by both the communes and higher authorities. As David Pinkney correctly has pointed out, the late 1830s and 1840s were the period when significant components of the French public infrastructure were constructed; Eugen Weber argued that this infrastructure development began making schools “meaningful and profitable” to the population.⁸⁶ Chief among these components were roads. In Maine-et-Loire and other departments of the West, the

⁸⁴ “Budget État 1834” and “Budget État 1835,” both in AM Beaufort 1 L 2.

⁸⁵ Budget information from various years, AM Beaufort 1 L 2.

⁸⁶ David Pinkney, *Decisive Years in France, 1840-1847* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 3-4; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 303.

Duchesse de Berry's failed 1832 uprising prompted the July Monarchy to launch a crash road-building program for military purposes.⁸⁷ The economic benefits of such roads readily became apparent, and laws of 1836 and 1837 required communes to construct and maintain roads in their jurisdiction.⁸⁸ Other state interests also impacted communal funding priorities. The new arrondissement seat of Segré only began providing a subsidy to its schools in 1829, in part because of government pressure during the Restoration to employ its meager revenues (around 2,000 francs a year) to help construct a building for the tribunal and subprefecture.⁸⁹ Requirements for permanent mairies after 1837 put a further burden on communes, although a common solution was the distinctively French *mairie-école* building complex.⁹⁰ The problem was less a lack of interest in education than an excess of other requirements.

For Beaufort, this period of infrastructure expansion coincided with a remarkable (and expensive) series of land acquisitions. The purchases included former church buildings which had remained in private hands since the Revolution and the old chateau, in ruins.⁹¹ These purchases had little to do with infrastructure development—but everything to do with asserting a municipal identity as a prosperous town with a long and proud history. Education was part of this identity—but on terms defined by the commune, not state officials. The Récollets facility, for instance, was used to house Poupard's *école mutuelle*, but only until a new building (funded by state subsidies) was

⁸⁷ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 196.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 196-197 and 203; Dominique Barjot, *Histoire économique de la France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Nathan, 1995), 240-241; Pinkney, *Decisive Years in France*, 51-52.

⁸⁹ Conseil municipal de Segré, various séances, AM Segré 1 D 2.

⁹⁰ Maurice Agulhon, "La mairie: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité," in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), I: 181.

⁹¹ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 6 May 1832, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

constructed in the early 1840s. More cynically, Beaufort purchased a former sailcloth manufactory from an industrial concern in the late 1830s, after assuring subprefect Moreau that the manufactory's three separate buildings would be ideal for both a boys and a girls school as well as a *salle d'asile*.⁹² The purchase was approved, but the facility was rented to various manufacturing concerns for the next generation, helping to generate the revenue to pay back loans used to purchase all the property. It finally became a school in the 1860s, when it was turned over to the local Frères community when state authorities began pushing for the secularization of *écoles communales*.

The gradual separation of primary education from the municipal college to distinct institutions was a slow process, but not because of a lack of interest amongst local authorities. Rather, education for Beaufort and similar towns in mid-century was a means to an end. That end was a distinctive municipal identity, of which a complete panoply of schools gradually became a part. This municipal identity also came into play in the next stage, the shift towards Catholic education at mid-century.

The Shift to Catholic Education

The struggles of the 1830s to acquire new school buildings left Beaufort well equipped, but another change was coming as communes began shifting back towards Catholic education. The reasons for this were complex. Certainly changes in the political environment played a role; the gradual conservatism of the Parisian government from 1840 onwards found expression at the local level in the conservatism of municipal councils. An increasingly active Catholic press, anchored by newspapers like Louis

⁹² Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séances of 8 October 1836 and 8 November 1837, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

Veillot's *L'Univers*, helped fuel conservative debates on education.⁹³ The turmoil in Paris during the Second Republic solidified conservative opinion in places like Maine-et-Loire. These political changes coincided with the retirement of a generation of teachers that had originally been appointed during the school construction phase following the *loi Guizot*. Segré, for example, lost all its municipal teachers within a few years to infirmity right at the start of the Second Republic.⁹⁴ By mid-century, the Catholic teaching congregations offered considerable advantages for communes beyond the political choices. The noviciate network rebuilt since the Restoration provided a supply of trained teachers, thereby reducing replacement time. Costs were compatible with lay teachers, especially once buildings in which to place schools were at most communes' disposal. The mixture of political will with practical benefits resulted in the largest education shift in mid-century: the turn towards Catholic education.

Catholic congregations became part of Beaufort's education environment through the clichéd route of female education. While Monet and Calabre had been defended earlier as the preferred local girls' teachers, a larger school under municipal control was needed. The municipal council cut subsidies to Monet and Calabre in 1841 since the parents whose children tended to form the majority of the student body, "persons rich or of easy means," could afford to pay the increasing tuition demanded.⁹⁵ The local curé, Augustin Joubert (1794-1858) took advantage of the change of opinion. In a letter dated 14 August 1841, he informed the maire that he had acquired the donation of a local

⁹³ Joseph N. Moody, "The French Catholic Press in the Education Conflict in the 1840's," *French Historical Studies* 7 (Spring 1972): 394-415.

⁹⁴ Conseil municipal de Segré, séance of 16 August 1850, AM Segré 1 D 5.

⁹⁵ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 19 August 1841, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

building for a girls' school, and the promise from the Soeurs de St.-Gildas-de-Bois to provide a community for the school.⁹⁶ Joubert's proposal would give the commune a dedicated girls primary school at considerably less expense than building one from the ground-up. The appeal of a Catholic education undoubtedly exercised significant influence as well, although a recent decision by the municipal council to place the new *salle-d'asile* under a secular teacher made clear such appeal was limited.⁹⁷ By November, the town signed a contract with the Soeurs and the school opened the following spring.

The shift to Catholic education for males had to wait another decade, and depended on a series of crises within the existing institutions. By 1847, Dubord again was under scrutiny by academic authorities for poor performance. The municipal council once again tried to defend his position, but neither they nor the aged Dubord were convinced the struggle was worth the effort. Dubord resigned his position at the college in August 1847, and a new primary teacher, Pierre Delas, was soon appointed.⁹⁸ By the following spring, parental complaints prompted the removal of Delas, and a third teacher, a Cuillierier, was appointed for the following (1848-1849) school year.⁹⁹ The frequent problems with the college, however, appeared to have soured the municipal council on keeping the college as a main component of public education—especially as budget constraints made the upkeep of the college more burdensome. When the *loi* Falloux allowed for the establishment of Catholic secondary schools (article 74), Beaufort saw a

⁹⁶ The letter was read to the Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 25 August 1841, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

⁹⁷ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 24 May 1841, AM Beaufort 1 D 7.

⁹⁸ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séances of 28 August 1847 and 27 October 1847, both in AM Beaufort 1 D 8; letter from the Principal of the College of Beaufort to the Rector, 29 August 1847, and letter from the maire of Beaufort to the rector, 30 September 1847, both in ADML 411 T 2.

⁹⁹ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séances of 15 April 1848 and 24 October 1848, both in AM Beaufort 1 D 8.

way out of the growing problems with the college. The college was turned into an *école libre* (private school) under the direction of an ecclesiastic, Regereau, in exchange for a small annual subvention from the commune—and no responsibility to deal with the day-to-day functioning of the college.¹⁰⁰

The transference of the *école mutuelle* to a Catholic institution was similarly the result of rapidly changing circumstances. Poupard, the teacher at Beaufort's *école mutuelle* originally appointed in 1835, retired due to age in 1851. Once this became known, the municipal council wasted little time in deciding to move towards replacing him with a teaching congregation.¹⁰¹ The decision was helped by the speed with which the community could be established; a noviciate established at Le Mans had sufficient trained frères available. In less than two months, the municipal council had signed a treaty with the Frères to establish a community in Beaufort, making the public school (still referred to as the *école mutuelle*) a Catholic institution.¹⁰²

Russé

Russé was one of the smallest communes established in Maine-et-Loire during the Revolution. Located between Loire tributaries the Authion and the Doil, the village often found itself isolated by seasonal flooding from its nearest neighbor, the commune of Allonnes a few kilometers to the north. Although barely having 250 inhabitants, Russé maintained an old and strong sense of identity, best expressed through the extensive loans

¹⁰⁰ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 24 September 1849, 5 May 1851, and 27 November 1854, all in AM Beaufort 1 D 8. Similar practices were followed by a number of communes, including Cholet.

¹⁰¹ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 31 May 1851, AM Beaufort 1 D 8.

¹⁰² "Traité entre la ville de Beaufort et les Frères des Écoles chrétiennes," 25 July 1851, AM Beaufort 1 R 13.

taken out to construct a local chapel in the seventeenth century. The chapel would benefit the town during the political re-organization in 1790, when Russé won status both as a Catholic parish and as a commune. The parish was suppressed on 20 February 1809 by governmental order as meager religious funds were diverted elsewhere.¹⁰³ Although Russé maintained its municipal status for the next generation, the census of 1836 revealed that the population had hardly grown, counting only 268 inhabitants. Similar to a number of other small communes deemed too small, Russé was ordered reunited with Allonnes by the ordinance of 18 June 1842, ending its independent political existence. As a community, however, Russé remained as active as ever. An episcopal ordinance of 3 May 1846 restored Russé's chapel as a parish church, likely to capture popular support for the Church.¹⁰⁴ The renewed Catholic status helped spur a round of calls for political autonomy from Allonnes that would continue well into the twentieth century. Central to Russé's efforts to re-assert itself as political entity was the ability to open and operate a school.

Small Communes and *Réunion*

Small communes featured a host of problems for building primary schools in the nineteenth century, not the least of which was the inability to provide sufficient funding given their small population and resource base. Private organizations such as the Association and the Society were not feasible given the small populations of the areas; the requirement for significant initial outlays and substantial student bodies likewise mitigated against the early establishment of *écoles mutuelles* or *écoles des Frères*. Most

¹⁰³ Serge Chassagne, "La reconstruction d'une chrétienté," 178.

¹⁰⁴ Port, III: 543-544.

smaller communes continued to rely on individual teachers establishing fee-based schools or receiving small municipal subsidies—or more likely both. Despite the reputation of such schools as mediocre at best, they did provide a crucial step forward in primary education. As the July Monarchy began, this system fell into disfavor, and communes were encouraged to hold publically-funded schools with teachers using either the *mode mutuelle* or the *mode simultané*.¹⁰⁵ Both methods required larger numbers of students and larger classrooms, features representing a considerable hurdle for smaller communes.

Although the *loi* Guizot included the provision for the mandatory holding of schools, the architects were not blind to the problems that would be created for smaller towns. The idea of the *communes réunies* for the holding of schools was one of the central features of the law. The concept was simple: by allowing neighboring communes to jointly hold a single school costs could be reduced. Communes were authorized to pursue such policies in article 9 of the law, although no specific regulations were included to guide the process.¹⁰⁶ In Maine-et-Loire, a number of communes initially jumped at the opportunity to split the cost of primary education amongst themselves. A 1834 survey assessing the desire and ability of communes to open schools revealed forty-one communes willing to reunite with a neighbor, by far the majority (36 communes holding 16 schools) located in the densely populated arrondissement of Saumur.¹⁰⁷

Despite this auspicious beginning, the project quickly fell apart. Within fifteen years, many of the communes voluntarily dissolved these arrangements. The reasons for

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter Six for a discussion on these methods.

¹⁰⁶ Article 11 of the *loi* Guizot extended the idea at the department level for the *écoles normales*, although a royal ordinance was required for such reunions.

¹⁰⁷ “Résumés des votes des Conseils municipaux en Maine-et-Loire pour l’organisation et l’entretien des écoles primaires,” 1834, AN F¹⁷ 9418.

these *disjonctures*, in the contemporary parlance, followed a fairly set pattern. One commune would volunteer to host the school, and erect the *maison-d'école* in their town center. This usually necessitated a long journey for students from the junior partners, which discouraged attendance. Financial concerns also played a role. The junior partners in the relationship often felt the hosting commune was charging exorbitant rates for the non-resident students, which discouraged attendance from both parents responsible for the *retribution scolaire* in addition to reducing the willingness of municipal councils to add students to the municipally-funded rolls. Here, the two narratives of lack of popular interest and financial straits combined to offer smaller communes justification for having a local school. The proliferation of such arguments by the mid-1840s may reflect another factor: the availability of subsidies. As larger and mid-sized towns finished school construction projects begun in the first decade of the July Monarchy, public funds for smaller communes—not to mention sufficient qualified teachers—increased.

One category of communes, however, continued to send students to neighboring towns well into the second half of the century: those *banlieux* adjacent to large urban areas. Many such communes saw little need to spend resources on infrastructure that larger communes, upon whom inhabitants had depended for centuries for specialized services ranging from markets to lawyers to hospitals, could as easily provide. The small communes located around Saumur were especially prone to this viewpoint. Saumur, where the rich trade moving down the Loire River had encouraged an extended line of settlements along the river banks and west-bound trade roads, became ringed with small communes that relied on it for a number of basic services; why not education? Such communes did not see themselves as neglecting their education obligations. Saint-

Hilaire-Saint-Florent, located barely two kilometers northwest of Saumur where the Thouet River joins the Loire, responded angrily to an 1839 charge by the subprefect that their decision not to open a school had left their children without education: “the children of a part of the commune do not remain without education because the Dames de le Bon Pasteur hold a small school for girls and many others, boys and girls, are admitted to the free schools in Saumur.”¹⁰⁸

The economic crises of the 1840s accelerated this process as communes found their finances reduced—simultaneous with the completion of a number of infrastructure projects started in the 1830s. Drained by recent investments, communes were even less likely to take on the new expenses of building a school, or even continuing to support one previously established. Schools offering free education to students, such as those operated by the Society in Angers and the Frères in numerous communes, made such choices easier for inhabitants of the smaller communes. Bagneux, another *banlieu* along the Thouet outside of Saumur, decided in the early 1840s when its communal school teacher retired to pay a subsidy to the *école mutuelle* in Saumur to educate its boys. Combined with the number of Catholic boys already attending the local *école des Frères*, male primary education in Bagneux effectively was being conducted in Saumur. When this policy was questioned under the Second Republic, the municipal council refused to name a new instituteur, arguing instead that

the proximity of the town of Saumur—it is only one kilometer away—renders the presence of an instituteur in the commune useless and superfluous, and even his position would be precarious, because all the students go to the schools [in Saumur], be it those of the Frères or in particular pensions, and it would be almost impossible to make the inhabitants renounce their habits.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Conseil municipal de St-Hilaire-St-Florent, séance of 7 April 1839, AM Saumur 255 W 2.

¹⁰⁹ Conseil municipal de Bagneux, séance of 11 February 1849, AM Saumur 76 W 7.

The problem, the council continued, was insufficient funds to acquire a school building. Such practices attracted the attention of academic authorities. The departmental academic council launched an investigation into Angers' schools in late 1852. Although the numbers proved to be relatively small—approximately 130 boys and 30 girls appeared on the rolls of Angers' communal schools without living in the commune—it nonetheless was a concern for the academic council, largely because over half the students appeared to be staying with relatives or other persons during the school week rather than returning home.¹¹⁰

Such requests did cause problems for the host communes. When Gée approached the municipal council of Beaufort in late 1847 with a request to send students to Beaufort's *école mutuelle*, the councillors agreed—but only on the condition of an annual subsidy from Gée of three francs per student to cover student fees and the additional paper, pens, and ink that would be required.¹¹¹ But by and large, state officials were often more concerned about children attending school outside their home communes than municipal councils. The political idea of each commune as a self-sufficient appears to have become increasingly common—hence the movement away from joined communes or the reliance on neighboring schools. In the case of Russé, however, the opposite occurred.

¹¹⁰ Conseil départemental académique, séances of 21 December 1852 and 4 January 1853, ADML 391 T 19.

¹¹¹ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 23 December 1847, AM Beaufort 1 D 8.

Russé's Efforts to Open a School

Despite Russé's small size, primary education had long been important to the inhabitants. A boys' school had existed in the hamlet as early as 1647, although little information on its operation has survived.¹¹² This school, like others in the region, did not survive the Revolution. Efforts after 1815 to re-establish the school were slow. Writing in September 1828 in response to a request from the *conseil d'arrondissement* for information, Russé maire Louis-René Millerand (1813-1829) responded “there has not been a teacher in the commune until now because it would be useful to have a desire for one from the inhabitants, which we are working on at this moment.”¹¹³ By October, Millerand had appointed a Louis Favre to be the *instituteur communal*—only to have the appointment rescinded by the rector for failure to obtain proper authorization.¹¹⁴

The July Revolution brought considerable changes to the education environment in both Russé and Allonnes. Russé, however, was not among those communes choosing to join with others, despite its small size that made “twinning” an attractive option for many other communes.¹¹⁵ The inhabitants' traditional civic pride and wealth derived from the rich alluvial deposits of the local fields underlay the decision to pursue an independent policy. And Russé was not alone; a number of similarly sized towns also chose to build their own schools.

¹¹² Urseau, *L'instruction primaire avant 1789*, 81; 247.

¹¹³ Letter from the Maire of Russé, 24 September 1828, ADML 56 T 18.

¹¹⁴ Letter from the Maire of Russé to the Rector, 28 October 1828; letter from the Rector to the maire of Russé, 10 November 1828, both in ADML 56 T 18.

¹¹⁵ “Résumés des votes des Conseils municipaux en Maine-et-Loire pour l'organisation et l'entretien des écoles primaires,” 1834, AN F¹⁷ 9418.

The most important change, however, was the appointment of abbé Pierre Aubry to the chapel at Russé. Following the suppression of the parish in 1809, the chapel was placed under the control of a *desservant*, a priest appointed by the bishop but not approved by the government and thereby entitled to neither a government salary nor to tenure in office. The practice, officially recognized in the 1802 Organic Articles, allowed bishops fuller control over priests and limited government interference, but one that easily devolved into a tool of episcopal harassment.¹¹⁶ Pierre Aubry was born in Angers in 1790, and became a member of a new generation of priests trained under the reign of Mgr. Montault during the Empire and the Restoration to rechristianize Maine-et-Loire. As the *desservant* of Bocé (a small commune in the Baugeois) in the early 1830s, Aubry threw his support behind the July Monarchy, which earned him membership in the Legion of Honor in 1833. According to Aubry, Mgr. Montault stripped him of his position in 1836 as a result of his support for the Orléans dynasty and had Aubry re-assignment to Russé as punishment. Aubry spent years petitioning government authorities for a redress of his situation, citing his status as a member of the Legion and a supporter of the regime. His correspondance was so numerous—carton F¹⁹ 5713 in the Archives Nationales is filled solely with his letters about his treatment from the bishops—that authorities quickly learned to mark it “non répondu” and filed it away. Aubry served in Russé until just before his death in 1858.¹¹⁷

When the French state revoked Russé’s communal status on account of its small population and reunited it with Allonnes on 18 June 1842, Aubry found a cause that made

¹¹⁶ Claude Langlois, “Institutions et modèles,” in *Histoire de la France religieuse, tome 3: Du roi Très Chrétien à la laïcité républicaine*, ed. Philippe Joutard (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), 388.

¹¹⁷ Extrait du registre de l’état civil d’Angers, 28 April 1858, ADML 4 O 61.

him a vocal advocate for his new charges. The decision generated resentment among the inhabitants of the hamlet, in large part because the decision placed the entire income of Russé under the control of the municipal council of Allonnes. Any improvements that the inhabitants wanted to make—including opening a school—were at the discretion of Allonnes. In 1846, Bishop Angebault elevated Russé’s chapel back to the status of parish by episcopal ordinance, a move which emboldened Aubry to promote the restoration of Russé’s former status. Aubry developed a strategy based on the “trois grands” of nineteenth-century village life: the mairie, the church, and the schoolhouse.¹¹⁸ Russé in 1846 was down to one—the church—so Aubry set his sights on opening a primary school. With both a parish church and a school, as well as enough income to support them both, a not-insignificant argument could be made for the government to re-instate Russé’s municipal status. The struggle of Aubry and the inhabitants to hold their own school illustrates not only the importance of primary education to municipal identity during the nineteenth century, but also the very real way government in-fighting helped to damp down local efforts to open and maintain schools.

Aubry’s first clumsy attempt commenced as soon as the parish was recognized. Realizing that education authorities were unlikely to sanction the opening of a school without access to the communal property controlled by Allonnes, he petitioned Minister of Public Instruction Narcisse-Achille de Salvandy (1845-1848) in June 1846 for aid in getting the communal status re-instated. The hamlet, according to Aubry’s calculations, had fifty students currently not attending school because they were located too far from

¹¹⁸ I am taking the idea here from Barnett Singer who looked at the interrelationship of these three forces through their physical representatives of the maire, the curé, and the schoolteacher. See his *Village Notables in Nineteenth-Century France: Priests, Mayors, Schoolmasters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

Allonnes—while Russé had the financial resources to open a school if it were still recognized as a commune. Aubry intended for Salvandy to approach the Ministry of the Interior and throw his support behind returning Russé’s municipal status on the basis of getting a school opened. The argument did not impress Salvandy’s office, which refused even to respond to the letter.¹¹⁹

Theoretically, Russé could have opened the school without being a commune. The concept of hamlet schools (*écoles des hameaux*) became increasingly common from the 1840s onward as a means of dealing with populations too isolated to attend communal schools or in case of population growth. The municipal council of Allonnes, which became the administrator of Russé, was the largest obstacle. The members of the council were consistently dismissive of the demands for a school, suspecting Aubry of aggrandizing himself. In a April 1847 meeting convened to discuss the matter at the insistence of the subprefect of Saumur, Allonnes’ maire Pierre Gallé (1840-1848) opined that the demands were “to say more justly, [those] of M. Aubry alone,” stressing the “*he* [my emphasis] demands the creation of a maison d’école at Russé.” The maire’s opinion was backed up by the presence of some inhabitants of Russé who asserted that “this request had been made by him [M. Aubry] without their consent and that they had no knowledge of it.” Gallé continued by reminding the council that the school building was only the first step: “Today it is the demand of the *maison d’école*, later it will be the title of instituteur that M. Aubry will solicit.”¹²⁰ The charge invoked the narrative of the

¹¹⁹ Letter from Aubry to the Minister of Public Instruction, 12 June 1846, AN F¹⁷ 10300. A marginalia note on the letter to a M. Pillet of the Minister’s staff reads “It appears to me there is no response to make to this letter.”

¹²⁰ Conseil municipal d’Allonnes, séance of 4 April 1847, ADML 2 O 13. No record of an official investigation into Aubry illegally holding a school exists. Gallé’s charges were likely more rhetorical than factual.

priestly-dominated education of the *ancien régime*, but now illegal under French laws. The request was unanimously rejected by the municipal council.

More pragmatically, the dismissal of Allonnes' municipal council probably stemmed from another reason: the commune had just spent the last few years building their own new schools. Faced with more students than the schools established in the late 1820s could hold—including the students from Russé that Allonnes was now committed to educating—the municipal council initiated a search for new school buildings in 1843. The result was the purchase of two properties—one school for each sex—totaling over 12,000 francs with building modifications. The purchase was paid for largely by the commune, minus a single departmental subsidy of 500 francs. Finding their revenues not entirely sufficient, the council authorized the sale of poplar trees growing on communal property, a contentious decision which provided almost a third of the total price.¹²¹ In the wake of such expenses, Allonnes was in little position or temperment to pursue yet another such project. Both ideologically and fiscally, Allonnes was in no mood to support Russé's request for a school.

The opening of the *école de Russé*

Another attempt in the wake of the 1848 Revolution offered a greater chance of success. This time, Aubry had the support of the inhabitants in petitioning local authorities. In the fall of 1848, they won the approval of both the Saumur arrondissement council and the departmental council. Bolstered by this success, a petition was drafted to

¹²¹ Conseil municipal d'Allonnes, séances of 8 February 1843 and 28 December 1845; Avis of the departmental primary inspector, 13 April 1844; Letter from the Prefect to the Minister of Public Instruction, 3 December 1844; Royal ordinance of 27 March 1845, all in ADML 2 O 10.

the Minister of the Interior formally requesting the separation of Russé from Allonnes. Prior to the submittal of the petition, Aubry decided to help matters along by sending a letter to Minister of the Interior Léon Faucher (1848-1849) giving his account of why local officials had supported the request: “Russé has its church, its presbytery, a town hall, a cemetery, forty *ares* of municipal land and a *rente sur l’État* of 125 [francs] to construct its schoolhouse.”¹²² Aubry concludes his letter by inviting Faucher to discuss the matter with the Minister of Public Instruction and of Cults the Comte de Falloux, an Angevin native who Aubry assured Faucher “had familiarity with the affair of Russé and it appeared to him worthy of the greatest interest.”¹²³

While Aubry argued that the school served as a measure of Russé’s communal status, the petition for disjuncture from Allonnes submitted by the inhabitants emphasized more practical concerns. Education was the focus of two of the twelve arguments the petition made in support of the restoration of Russé’s communal status. Both emphasized concern with the children being forced to make the daily trek to school:

The reunion of Russé to Allonnes is an obstacle to primary instruction, so useful always, indispensable today. One would not wish the inhabitants of Russé deprived of a school which they possessed until recently, to send their children to the school of Allonnes located five kilometers away, [where] beside the antipathy which exists between the two populations, there is the real danger of the children to follow alone, for five kilometers a road bordered by large and deep ditches, without guards and without railings (*balus*) and full of water for a great part of the year (the plains of Russé are very wet because of their neighboring the Loire).¹²⁴

¹²² Letter from Aubry to the Minister of the Interior, 10 January 1849, AN F¹⁷ 10300.

¹²³ Ibid. Aubry cites the source of Falloux’s knowledge as the latter’s position as member of departmental council and as député. To be sure that Falloux was up to date, however, Aubry sent him a letter the same day recapping the recent decisions of the Saumur arrondissement council and the departmental council (Letter from Aubry to the Minister of Public Instruction, 10 January 1849, AN F¹⁷ 10300).

¹²⁴ Petition of the inhabitants of Russé, 16 January 1849, AN F¹⁷ 10117.

The journey was both dangerous and kept children from participating fully in the life of the commune, as the next article addresses. The frequent and trying trips often led to the cancellation of catechism classes, required to be held in Russé as the children's home parish. Participation in the catechism class was an important stage in the formation of a sense of identity of the children in the commune, particularly in Russé where the parish church provided the only real point of communal identity at the time.

The distance cited in this petition (five kilometers) reflected an old argument, complete with hyperbole on both sides. From the former center-ville of Russé to that of Allonnes is two kilometers as the crow flies, but a child living on the far side of the hamlet easily might have had to follow five kilometers of winding roads to reach the school in Allonnes. The state of the roads were also in question. Gallé during the 1847 debate before Allonnes' municipal council held "the roads from Russé to Allonnes are very passable at all times" and that it was "so easy to demonstrate the falsehood of these facts that we do not believe it necessary to refute them other than by our silence."¹²⁵ Yet the narrative of the dangerous school journey put forth by the petitioners was similar to those used by communes in the early 1840s to argue for separation from *jumeaux* status and assert a demand to state subsidies to build their own schools. In the case of Meigné and Les Ulmes three years earlier, primary inspector Le Brumann approved the decision to separate the two communes upon arguing "there is between the two towns a distance of five kilometers at least, and a vast field to traverse there where there is only faint trails [*petits sentirs*] difficult to follow."¹²⁶ The inhabitants of Russé were deploying an argument they had every expectation would generate sympathy for their position. The

¹²⁵ Conseil municipal d'Allonnes, séance of 4 April 1847, ADML 2 O 13.

¹²⁶ Rapport de l'Inspecteur des écoles, 12 December 1845, AN F¹⁷ 10117.

solution, the petition maintained, lay with restoring to the inhabitants the ability to use their own resources, more than adequate to the task, to open a school—perferably under the aegis of an independent commune of Russé.

Not all higher authorities, however, were welcoming of the complaints of Aubry and his fellow citizens. Despite the concurrence of the elected councils—both the Saumur arrondissement council and the departmental council—state authorities were rather dismissive of the claims. Aubry related to Falloux that he believed the chief obstacle was prefect Grégoire Bordillion (1848-1849), who refused to meet with the Russé delegation.¹²⁷ Born in Angers and educated at the Collège royal d'Angers before completing a law degree at Rennes, Bordillion became the most vocal editorialist in the department. Forced from the editorship of the liberal *Journal de Maine-et-Loire* in 1833 for his criticism of the July Monarchy, he co-founded the daily *Précurseur de l'Ouest* in 1840 as a platform for his republican ideals. Appointed the revolutionary departmental *commissaire* by Ledru-Rollin in February 1848, Bordillion preferred maintaining his position (changed back to prefect in June 1848) rather than stand for the Constituant Assembly, apparently seeing the post as more conducive to spreading republican ideas.¹²⁸ Aubry's contention that a recently-elevated succursal church equated with special administrative status found little support from this devout republican.

Officials in neither the Interior Ministry nor the Ministry of Public Instruction and of Cults were swayed by the arguments either. Russé's status as a commune was no

¹²⁷ Letter from Aubry to the comte de Falloux, 10 January 1849, AN F¹⁷ 10300.

¹²⁸ Marais and Lambert, *Les Préfets de Maine-et-Loire*, 45-46. Bordillion's republican zeal became his undoing: eight of the eleven deputies for the department complained about his activities to the Minister of the Interior in 1849, and his subsequent appointment as prefect of the Isère in August 1849 barely lasted three months before inconspicuous associations with radical republicans in Grenoble prompted his removal from office. One of Bordillion's successors as prefect, Paul Vallon (1850-1857), would eventually suppress the *Précurseur de l'Ouest* following Louis-Napoléon's coup-d'état.

longer open to discussion. The dispute dragged out into the early years of the Second Empire. In the end, a compromise of sorts was struck. Russé would be allowed to open a school—but it would not receive a state subsidy to do so. Rather, a local building was rented in which the school could open.

Conclusion

With over 36,000 communes in existence throughout the nineteenth century, writing a primary education history of an “average” French community is an impossibility. While representing the range of municipalities found across France, Cholet, Beaufort and Russé were each unique. Nonetheless, a number of common themes emerge across their experiences. The most significant—and ironic—was the consistent resistance of public authorities to the expansion of primary education. Three overlapping layers of authority—the national, the departmental, and the communal—could each aid or hamper efforts to open schools. Over time, these excuses to avoid the submitting to demands by higher authorities became accepted as realities in political debates.

The First Narrative: Popular Hostility to Primary Education

Contrary to the views presented by Republican pangyrists and modernization theorists, there was a popular demand for education both among the local notables who had to construct and maintain the schools and the population whose children attended them. Certainly this support was not to the level that either contemporary educators or later historians considered adequate. The records of the nineteenth century document (occasionally extreme) seasonal variations in attendance, children entering school late or

quitting with only the most basic rudiments, and parental hostility to teachers. And the majority of these records are accurate. But primary education is not necessarily an all-or-nothing proposition. The need for extra hands during harvest did not exclude a desire to have those children educated—as the rising attendance in winter indicates. Parental hostility towards teachers could—and did—have far more complex reasons than a mere denigration of education. Even the allocation of a certain period of a child’s life, say from ages six through twelve, for primary education is ultimately a negotiated choice, not an given. The expectation that parents would adopt automatically a new life-path paradigm laid out by education officials was naïve in the extreme. Parents needed to adjust to the new expectations. Opening a school, Grew and Harrigan maintained, was “the beginning of a kind of instruction in itself, teaching parents that at a certain age their children should be given over to the care of others.”¹²⁹

And that instruction extended to communes just as much as to parents. Very early, having a “good” school—or at least an adequate one—became a central component of communal self-identity. Larger towns like Cholet quickly moved to establish primary education—and just as quickly found themselves split along ideological lines over the direction of those schools. Municipal colleges, long a status marker for mid-size towns such as Beaufort who desired a level of recognition with larger urban areas like Cholet and Saumur, were readily expanded to encompass primary schools. The case of Russé is the clearest example of this desire. For Aubry and others, the community’s very identity was intimately tied to a communal school. While the small school eventually established

Such attitudes have persisted well into the twentieth century, as H. D. Lewis noted when

¹²⁹ *School, State and Society*, 31.

encountering the high percentage of small single-classroom rural primary schools in France, almost one out of every four primary schools as late as 1982.¹³⁰

Having a communal school as a component of municipal identity is not the same as possessing a fully developed educational infrastructure. A school was sufficient to claim municipal standing; multiple schools created too many problems for communes, problems that were viewed as outweighing any possible benefits. Ideological disputes were among the most damaging. Cholet's refusal to open an *école des Frères* likely did far more to slow the spread of primary education than disinterest on behalf of the inhabitants. Nor was Cholet unique in this regard; Saumur's disputes over municipal funding of schools resulted in chaos in the 1830s when the Frères were literally kicked out of their school building and forced to turn to a private organization. Aubry's effort to pressure Allonnes into opening a school in Russé was a variation on this theme; the reactions of both maire Gallé and prefect Bordillion reflected a hostility to Aubry as a Catholic priest. In both these cases, the narrative of sufficient schools for the population was used to mask other concerns.

The Second Narrative: Inadequate Resources

But ideology was not the only concern facing communes. Building schools had to struggle for funds. Municipal governments had a number of projects to pursue over the first half of the century. The simple rebuilding in the aftermath of the Revolution and Napoleonic periods, the massive transportation network expansion of mid-century, and boosting the local economic base often took priority. In the face of such demands,

¹³⁰ H. D. Lewis, *The French Education System* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 12.

municipal councils would likely see a minimum level of investment education as sufficient. Once other projects were completed, it would be possible to expand education.

One noted issue in these relations between the various levels of governmental authority was the weakness of the department as an initiator of school policy. While the original conception of the department was, in Alfred Cobban's words, to "canalise" Revolutionary demands for local government into a centrally-dominated system, later regimes were less and less likely to relinquish control.¹³¹ Yet in the field of primary education, the departments played a key role. Until 1869, departmental councils provided more funding for education projects than the national government, approximately 6% of all education funding came from Paris. Yet, despite this financial power, departmental councils had no executive power to force communes to go along with their wishes, a fact vividly illustrated in the cases of the école des Frères in Cholet and with the effort to open a school in Russé. Even for the brief period from 1850 to 1854 when each department had its own académie, policy decisions were made not in the departmental council, but through an academic council dominated by a Parisian-appointed rector and a Parisian-appointed prefect. Rather than "canalizing" local opinion, the departmental councils acted more as a resource based for education policy decided elsewhere.

The Growing Reliance on the State and its Limitations

The general trajectory that emerged over the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century was that the national government in Paris increasingly became the dominant

¹³¹ Alfred Cobban, "The Napoleonic System of Administration in France," *The Modern Law Review* 9 (April 1946), 52. See also Rudolf von Thadden, *La Centralisation contestée* (trans. Hélène Cusa and Patrick Charbonneau. Arles: Actes Sud, 1989).

factor in the provision of education. For the towns that struggled to provide education for their children over the course of the century, this was both a boon and a curse. Subsidies granted by state authorities could overcome limited local resources—or, as the case of Beaufort, provide a convenient source of funds that could allow local resources to be spent elsewhere. But as state authorities became more aware of the narratives local communes deployed to mold education development, interference in local affairs became inevitable as authorities in Paris became more and more interested in “solving” the problems that communes claimed existed. The excuses that were originally used by local authorities to resist state interference became in turn justifications for state imposition.

For national authorities to play such a decisive role, however, it had to overcome the powers granted to local communes and private associations by the February 1816 ordinance to manage schools. Implicit in the ordinance was the belief that local notables, be they members of municipal councils or of private associations, were capable of assessing and of deciding upon education policy. This belief was the basis of the continual claims by local notables to “know best” the educational needs of their communes. Tied to this assertion was the explicit recognition by the February ordinance that schools formed a type of property over which these notables could exercise all the rights of ownership. Getting control of the property of schools became the necessary first step in gaining control over primary education. It would not be an easy step.

CHAPTER FOUR:

L'ÉTAT COMME PROPRIÉTAIRE?

OWNING THE SCHOOLS IN MAINE-ET-LOIRE

In the first week of February 1901, the *Société civile de la Cité* held its annual meeting in Angers' rue du Volier. Founded in 1849 as a legal extension of the Association, the *Société civile* had been the sole remnant to survive the parent body's voluntary dissolution in 1873. As a component of the successor *Oeuvre pour les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes d'Angers* formed by Mgr. Freppel, the Bishop of Angers, the *Société civile* continued to contribute to Catholic schools in Angers. Although the group's activities had diminished over the previous decades—school inspections by members were more and more sporadic, although meeting notes continued to praise outstanding students—it was still deeply devoted to the goal. Its most important contribution was owning and maintaining two schools of the Frères in Angers, the main facility located in the impasse des Jacobins and the school in the rue du Canal.

At this meeting, the members were faced with an extraordinary situation. Partnership in the *Société civile* was based on the ownership of *actions*, stock certificates each worth 200 francs. Intended to finance the debt that the Association had accumulated during an expansion of school building in the 1830s and 1840s, the *actions* were no different than those circulated for corporations—with the notable exception that the *Société civile* regularly did not pay dividends. The organization was a Catholic charity

but assumed the form of a business in 1849 both for financial purposes and to provide a legal bulwark to protect the schools from future government interference by holding them as a form of private property. In over fifty years of its existence, very few of the *actions* had changed hands, and any “profit” generated through donations and interest on accounts or *rentes sur l'État* was used to support the Frères. As strident anticlericalism gained momentum in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair, the teaching congregations and their supporters came under increasing fiscal attack aimed at removing the sources of their wealth and thereby limiting their influence on French society.¹ A government decision of 26 October 1900 decided that the Société civile “presents, by its purpose, the character of a religious association,” and thereby owed almost 4,500 francs in back taxes or face a forfeiture of property.² Faced with this prospect, the members decided to liquidate certain *rentes sur l'État* totaling over 7,700 francs to pay the taxes.³ To avoid future entanglements, the Société civile began renting the two buildings to the Frères in October 1901, for 2,400 francs annually (paid for by donations organized through the local curés).⁴ Members no longer inspected the schools, and the annual meetings resembled those of other small businesses—they became, in effect, only landlords. This fundamental shift in the relationship between the Société civile and the private schools would last until the former folded in 1949, one hundred years after its founding. The

¹ Robert Raymond Tronhot, *Les Temps de la "Sécularisation", 1904-1914: La liquidation des biens de la Congrégation des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes* (Études Lasalliennes; ed. Léon Lauraire. Rome: Frères des Écoles chrétiennes, 1992), 9. See also René Remond, *L'Anticlericalisme en France de 1815 à nos jours*, new edition (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1985) and Christian Sorrel, *La République contre les congrégations: Histoire d'une passion française 1899-1904* (Paris: Cerf, 2003).

² Letter from the Director of Enregistrement to the Société civile, 4 January 1901, A. Dio. Angers 2 J 6.

³ “Société civile de la Cité—Registre des Procès-Verbaux,” séance of 7 February 1901, Archives lasalliennes.

⁴ “Société civile de la Cité—Registre des Procès-Verbaux,” séance of 23 January 1902.

original legal fiction of the Société civile de la Cité as a charity operating under the guise of a business had been forced, through state hostility, into becoming legal reality.

The state's blunt threat to the Société civile—that by not conforming to accepted corporate practices (the pursuit of profits represented by the dividends) the Société civile was therefore a crypto-congregation subject to property seizure—was necessitated by the new *guerre scolaire*. Since the Concordant, an entire system of Catholic schools had emerged, kept open by private benefactors despite the cessation of public funds after 1886. Wresting control of these schools from those who had built them entailed a diverse range of problems, many related to a peculiarity of French education law: the “founders and holders” (*fondeurs et entreteneurs*) of schools held a number of rights derived from their contributions. In effect, these individuals or associations were owners of a distinctive type of property.

The laws emerged as an effort to promote private initiative in opening primary schools, a goal beyond any single body for most of the century. Secure in the provisions of this legal conception, benefactors constructed primary schools—but often embraced pedagogies and curricula at odds with state visions. As a result, an almost free-market education model developed, with *de facto* alternative school systems only partially under the control of state authorities, as in the case first of *enseignement mutuel* and later Catholic schools. The rights of private providers—even in cases where such private groups partnered with communes to open schools—limited the ability of the state to exercise authority over what were nominally public institutions. The result was as the state claimed to hold a monopoly on education, so too was it necessary to own the places

where that education was given. The state had to become the sole *propriétaire* of the schools.

Starting with the legal provisions of the ordinance of 29 February 1816, education laws attempted to balance demands for state oversight of education with the need for private resources to build and operate schools. From the beginning, however, disputes over ownership of schools—often defined in terms of the real property of school buildings themselves—developed into full-scale efforts to displace rival teachers. The closure of the *école mutuelle* in Angers in 1824 represented the first of a series of similar episodes. With the *loi Guizot* and its successors, attempts to curtail property rights of private investors ensued through two means. First, efforts were undertaken to construct schools in each commune that would be totally under municipal ownership. Second, state regulatory regimes were strengthened to insure greater oversight of curriculum and teaching. Private providers, however, were as aware of the legal limitations as state authorities were, and were able to mount effective deterrents to state efforts to impose policies on their “property.” The result was a stand-off between private providers and state oversight that helped propel the state to ever more drastic measures to gain control over primary education.

The Legal Environment: Schools as a Form of Property

At first glance, schools appear an unusual site for a discussion of property. Certainly, school buildings, grounds, and furnishings are real property; they have a physical presence and an administrative existence in the form of deeds, leases, tax liability, and all the other ways that governments “see” property under their jurisdiction.

When a school was provided by means of private investment, whether through an association's subscription drive, the sale of *actions*, or through a bequest, another level of property ownership existed. Defined in article 544 of the Code Civil as "the enjoyment or disposal of items in the most absolute manner, providing such usage is not prohibited by law or regulations," property rights became a central pillar of nineteenth-century French thought.⁵ Challenged after 1848 but never seriously threatened, the inviolability of property obtained what Donald R. Kelley and Bonnie G. Smith has characterized as a "quasi-religious" status in what was fundamentally a bourgeois society.⁶ Property rights easily became a point of contention between those who had built and ran—and therefore owned—schools and state regulation efforts.

The Legacy of the February Ordinance

The idea of schools as property was enshrined in the Restoration's ordinance of 29 February 1816.⁷ Asserting that primary education was the basis of prosperity and order, reason enough for state interest, the authors set out to encourage private investment in primary schools.⁸ The ordinance used three formulations to discuss the relationship between schools and those who supported them. The first identified the owners as "les

⁵ Code civil, [1804].

⁶ Donald R. Kelley and Bonnie G. Smith, "What Was Property? Legal Dimensions of the Social Question in France (1789-1848)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128 (September 1984): 200-230; 201. Although Kelley and Smith were referencing attitudes during the July Monarchy specifically, Paul Bastid has made similar claims for the first half of the nineteenth century generally (*Les institutions politiques de la monarchie parlementaire française (1814-1848)*) (Paris: Éditions du Recueil Sirey, 1954), 383).

⁷ Ordonnance royale of 29 February 1816, reprinted in Octave Gréard, ed., *La législation de l'instruction primaire en France depuis 1789 jusqu'à nos jours* (2 vols. Paris: Charles de Mourgues Frères, 1874), I: 87-94.

⁸ Christian Nique, *Comment l'École devint une affaire d'État* (Paris: Nathan, 1990), 22-5.

personnes ou les associations,” a broad category that included everything from a single benefactor of a school to large groups such as the Society and the Association in Angers. Communes themselves were also recognized as potential owners (articles 20 and 22), but the teaching congregations were held only to providing teachers to communes which requested them (articles 36 and 37). These owners had delineated rights to the extent that they had “found or maintained” (*auraient fondé ou entretiendraient*) such schools. The rights, therefore, were based on financial contribution to establishment. The clearest example was the right to set the curriculum contained in article 31, limited to “the persons or associations who hold schools at their cost.” Continuing contributions to the school, not merely the initial provision of funds, was the requirement to determine school policies. Finally, the transferability of all rights to the heirs or successors of the original owners provided a legal longevity to school foundations.

Owners were granted two rights directly concerning school operations. The first established the right to present teachers for open positions (article 18). Such teachers had to meet qualifications (the *brevet de capacité*) and be vetted by the maires and curés of the communes for their past service and moral rectitude. Furthermore, local surveillance committees (organized at the canton level) had an effective veto over all teachers (article 23). The second right concerned the setting of internal rules and regulations, both concerning financial and disciplinary matters (article 19) and in terms of pedagogy and curriculum (article 31). As with the case of teachers, there were some limitations. Disciplinary matters were subject to review by the committees, who would take the advice of the owners into consideration. Curricula had to meet the requirements set out by the national Commission of Public Instruction (established in article 30), charged with

recommending (*indiquer*) pedagogies and texts for use.

In treating schools as a form of property, the Restoration was hardly breaking new ground. Many of the privileges granted by the February ordinance were long common practice. Frères founder Jean-Baptiste de la Salle made the private ownership of schools a central concern, seeing it as a means of defraying costs and insuring independence from the Church hierarchy.⁹ The original *école des Frères* in Angers was established in 1741 in a building acquired from a local organization planning a school for vagabond children.¹⁰ Although the Revolution had attempted to stop such practices and recast education as solely a public concern¹¹, the necessity for private charity soon re-emerged. Napoleon re-instituted the practice of private benefactors, although such individuals had no rights in determining policies.¹² The pros and cons of private funding were a focal point for discussions of education policy under the early Restoration. For example, the plot of an 1818 Parisian vaudeville play *L'École de village, ou l'Enseignement mutuel* turned on M. de Celicour, the benefactor of a rural school since before the Revolution, exercising his ownership rights to select the teachers and the pedagogy to be followed.¹³

⁹ *Annales de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes*, 2 vols. (Paris and Tours: Poussielgue and Alfred Mame et fils, 1883), I: 119; 223-224; Georges Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes, tome I: L'oeuvre religieuse et pédagogique de Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle* (Paris: Plon, 1937), 255-257. Rigault relates a number of examples of De La Salle closing schools when bishops became too demanding for oversight of the establishments (Ibid., 256).

¹⁰ *Annales de l'Institut*, II: 112-6.

¹¹ R. R. Palmer, "How Five Centuries of Educational Philanthropy Disappeared in the French Revolution," *History of Education Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1986): 181-197.

¹² Marais, *Histoire du don*, 25-6. Article 43 of the law of 11 *floréal* Year 10 (1 May 1802) specifically allowed donations to schools, while later Université legislation limited the influence of benefactors.

¹³ Brazier, Dumersan and Delestre-Poirson, *L'École de village, ou l'Enseignement mutuel* (Paris: chez Ladvocat, 1818).

The number of groups willing to set up schools sparked this public discussion. The municipalities themselves were among the more persistent supporters. Given some freedom to manage their own affairs under the Napoleonic regime, Reims, Lyon, Bordeaux, Nantes and other municipalities opened schools (often staffed by the returned Frères) well before the establishment of the Université. Likewise, charitable individuals established schools, such as Madame de Trans (Anne-Madeleine de Chalmillard) who financed the Frères' first post-Revolution Parisian school at Gros-Cailou or Madame de Rémusat's holding of an *école mutuelle* in her own home in Lille.¹⁴ The pace of both municipal and private school building accelerated after the fall of Napoleon and into the Restoration, assisted by groups like the *Société élémentaire* and men such as the Baron de Gérando and Ambroise Rendu, both contributors to the February ordinance. The Frères and other re-established congregations took the lesson of the Revolutionary property seizures to heart and insisted that school property be owned by groups other than themselves, creating a further incentive for private investment.¹⁵ Given the activity of non-state actors, the property clauses of the ordinance of 29 February 1816 represented a commitment to harness such resources by providing legal recognition of these efforts. The cost of this commitment would not become clear for decades.

On the surface, the February ordinance was a product of the liberal aspirations of the early Restoration. Parents and communes were free to choose the school for their children, tied neither to the Church nor the state-centric proposals of the Revolution. Yet the ordinance did not embrace a *laissez-faire* approach. The cantonal committees and

¹⁴ Ibid., 18; François Jacquet-Francillon, *Naissances de l'école du peuple, 1815-1870* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Atelier, 1995), 49.

¹⁵ "Prospectus pour un Établissement des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes," ADML 71 T 9.

regular inspections sought to insure that teachers and internal policies met some level of standardization, while a national body would create the broad parameters of curricula. Christian Nique notes that only four of the forty-two articles concern private providers, the rest detailing the prerogatives of the state; he sees in this the beginnings of the state dominance of education under the guise of a “libéralisme surveillé.”¹⁶ Fearful of a totally unregulated environment but desirous of encouraging primary schools, the framers of the ordinance opted for a compromise system very much like that of the old regime.

The combination of the four articles concerning private providers, however, left significant latitude for individuals and private associations to control policy in the schools they established and supported. Despite the oversight of local and national authorities, the ability to select teachers and set internal regulations combined to give these schools almost total control over their curricula. The extension of these privileges to successors—be they heirs or new association leadership—provided for continuity. Coupled with the initiative already demonstrated by private associations in promoting and acquiring the capital for new schools, French law in 1816 allowed for the creation of alternative school systems that were effectively independent. Here lay the legal genesis of a Catholic school system, able to hire members of Catholic teaching congregations and to set Catholic curricula. As long as private funding remained necessary, the provisions guaranteeing the rights of school owners would remain an obstacle to the state control of primary education.

¹⁶ Nique, *Comment l'École*, 23; “Les trois étapes du refus français d’appliquer le libéralisme à l’éducation (1816-1828-1830),” *Administration et éducation* 85 (2000): 18-21: 20-21. Claude Lelièvre uses the same term in *Histoire des institutions scolaires (1789-1989)* (Paris: Nathan, 1990), 60.

The effectiveness of the February ordinance over the first fifteen years was mixed. A flurry of communal schools had opened by 1821, although a number were merely formal recognitions of existing schools. The disputes instigated by the ultraroyalists' bids for power in mid-decade created chaos for primary education, not the least by effectively discouraging private investment through heavy-handed attempts to force non-Catholic schools to close. When communes once again became interested in primary education after 1828, it was with the conviction that greater state participation was necessary not only to encourage school construction but also to prevent ultraroyalist abuses by guaranteeing some level of protection for private investment.¹⁷

Yet the resource issue remained a vexing question at all levels. François Guizot, named Minister of Public Instruction on October 1832, recognized the fundamental problem; the "Exposé des motifs" for the 1833 law that would bear his name dwelt on the issue.¹⁸ He intended to bring the resources of the state to bear on this problem. State funds, limited under the Restoration to patronage grants, became a regular part of the national budget. For the most part, however, the practices of the Restoration were assumed to be continued. Article 13, granting the right of communes to impose special school taxes, begins "In default of foundations, donations or legacies which would assure a locale and a salary, in accordance with the preceding article, the municipal council will deliberate on the means to provide them"—with state funding among the last options.¹⁹ Guizot was a realist; while in theory the state should provide the funds to build schools,

¹⁷ Nique, "Les trois étapes du refus français," 21.

¹⁸ Reprinted in Allaire and Frank, 71-79.

¹⁹ Ibid., 81.

such an expense was beyond its ability. Private philanthropy was still the first means of acquiring schools.

To compensate for a continued reliance on private interests, Guizot opted for a strengthening of state powers to oversee schools. Teacher certifications were tightened, and the establishment of the *écoles normales* (one per department) to train teachers provided the foundation of a state-supplied professional teaching corps. The first real national inspection regime would be established in 1835, supplementing and eventually supplanting the local surveillance committees instituted under earlier laws. Yet the ultimate goal of having schools undeniably under state control never was relinquished completely. Recognizing the fact that acquiring the school building was the largest obstacle that many communes faced, Guizot stated in an 1834 report that “it is necessary to aim for, as soon as possible...that the school building (*maison d'école*) be made the property of the commune. It is one of the practical conditions for the duration and good organization of the school.”²⁰ Guizot’s formulation was indicative of a pragmatic approach: establish schools by whatever means necessary, but always with the goal of making them public institutions.

Guizot’s technique of increasing state ownership of schools when possible while simultaneously tightening oversight would become the standard policy for the remainder of the century. While the question of *liberté d’enseignement* flaring in the 1840s largely concerned secondary schools, the limitation of Université oversight in favor of the desires of the owners of schools was central to the debates. The argument of many (mostly

²⁰ François Guizot, *Rapport au roi par le ministre secrétaire d’État au département de l’instruction publique, sur l’exécution de la loi du 28 juin 1833, relative à l’instruction publique* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1834), 30.

Catholic) proponents of the *liberté d'enseignement* included something that appeared very similar to the February ordinance: privately funded schools with significant latitude in the choice of teachers and curricula. The *loi Falloux* of 1850 embodied many of these principles at the primary as well as the secondary education level. The flurry of Catholic college foundations, the number of municipal colleges hiring ecclesiastics as principals, and the transfer of *écoles communales* to congregations in the 1850s reflected the dissatisfaction of communes with state oversight and helped cement the impression that the law turned education back over to the Church.

Yet the *loi Falloux* was far closer to the *loi Guizot* than to the February ordinance. While article 40, covering the ability of communes to raise special taxes for primary schools, begins with almost verbatim reprint of article 13 of the 1833 law emphasizing the importance of private charity, no significant recanting of state oversight was included.²¹ If anything, the Second Empire saw a strengthening of oversight, first through the re-introduction of traditional *académies* in 1854 (after a four-year flirtation with department-level bodies) then through an increasingly professional and efficient inspectorate. If the Falloux Law's attitude on the matter is explained by the traditional reading of placing primary education back under the control of the Catholic Church, the Third Republic's continuation of the same policy is more unusual. As late as 1886, the *loi Goblet* mentions the importance of private philanthropy in supporting schools, even as it made the additional taxes originally intended for when such aid failed mandatory.²² Only in the last decade of the century, as the Church-State separation debate came to dominate French politics, would such private charity actively be discouraged.

²¹ Reprinted in Gréard, II: 120-146.

²² Reprinted in Allaire and Frank, 102-112.

The Intertwining of Private and Public: Establishing the Schools in Angers

School buildings themselves, unsurprisingly, became the focal point for many conflicts on school property ownership. The biggest conflict on schools as property concerned, not surprisingly, school buildings themselves. Acquiring a *maison d'école* presented a daunting hurdle for the first establishment of schools, being vital but also the single largest expense. But school buildings also were clear, unequivocal, physical manifestations of property, ones that could easily become objects in a legal challenge to the ownership of a school. In this way, the *maisons d'école* came to play a significant role in the education disputes of the century.

Implicit in early education policy was the belief that communes had appropriate buildings in which to house schools. Such thinking was overly optimistic, betraying national authorities' poor understanding of the actual conditions in many communes. The most likely source of buildings, the *biens nationaux* seized during the Revolution, were often no longer in municipal hands. The best structures were quickly put to use for state purposes, sold to private individuals under the Directory, or returned to their original owners during the Empire and Restoration. Outside the *biens nationaux*, there were numerous other buildings that municipalities could employ. Municipal colleges and the hospitals—often ran by female congregations—were commonly employed, but primary education remained a secondary concern at these facilities. Rural communes were even worse off, as many simply did not own any buildings large enough to hold classes. The lack of communal buildings meant that purchasing or constructing a building became necessary—both significantly more complex and costly endeavors.

In their search to defray the costs, communes worked together with other institutions willing to contribute to establishing schools. While departmental councils and the state provided some funding, more came from the traditional patronage of local notables and private associations. Often, the private partners took the initiative. Simple necessity made private providers willing and able to pay for teachers but lacking the capital necessary for buildings cooperate with local governments. The cooperation between government and private associations to purchase school buildings brought the question of property ownership sharply into focus as disputes quickly developed between communes and private owners over the direction of the jointly-owned schools. The experiences of the Society and the Association in Angers illustrate these conflicts, revealing patterns that would reoccur throughout the century.

Both organizations appointed committees to locate appropriate buildings almost immediately upon forming. After the failure of authorities to come forward with suitable public buildings, the two organizations faced the prospect of acquiring private property. The Society could barely cover the cost of a school, raising about 2,000 francs a year in subscriptions.²³ The Association had already realized that its contribution to the Frères would be only of a supplemental character: despite the individual wealth of members, the Association was hardly able to muster more funds than the Society.²⁴ Although the organizations seized the initiative, they did so with the clear understanding that the acquisitions would only be possible with the consent and the funding of governmental authorities. It was the beginning of a long period of legal entanglements with communal

²³ “Rapport de l’Assemblée Générale de la Société d’Angers,” 10 January 1823 and 16 January 1824, AN, F¹⁷ 11757.

²⁴ *Annales de l’Association* I, séance of 6 February 1817; *Annales de l’Association* II, séance of 5 July 1821.

and state authorities that would see the forced closure of both facilities at one time or another.

The Society, having acquired a teacher within a few months of its establishment, quickly opened an *école mutuelle* in the rented Récollets facility in January 1817. It regarded this arrangement as temporary, however, and never stopped petitioning for a permanent location. When the lease expired in June 1817, the school moved across town to the old Cordeliers chapel, also rented; a girls' school was opened on the second floor of the building in January 1821. A local lawyer, Alexandre Monnier, and his wife Marie Mercier-Monnier had purchased the Cordeliers, a *bien national*, on 29 September 1796 (7 *vendémiaire* Year 5). Both had been members of the Society from its beginning, a factor that likely encouraged them to rent the facility.²⁵ On 19 December 1821 they agreed to sell the property the Society for 12,000 francs. An additional 4,000 francs was considered necessary for conversion to an *école mutuelle* for the two sexes and housing for the Gellerats (the husband and wife team who shared the teaching duties), bringing the total acquisition cost to 16,000 francs.²⁶

Aware of its precarious financial position, the Society took steps to involve the government early in the process of acquisition. The Society's contribution of half the purchase cost was provided by a loan to be paid off by the sale of *actions* to members; twenty *actions* each of 400 francs were purchased.²⁷ Drawing on the continued patronage

²⁵ Alexandre Monnier is included in the list of subscribers from the Society assembly general of 24 January 1817 ("Discours de M. l'abbé Tardy, président, dans la séance du 24 janvier 1817", AM Angers 1 R 39). Mme. Monnier appears separately in a list of female members included in a printed fund-raising letter distributed in the spring of 1822 (Letter of 18 March 1822, BM Angers C19545).

²⁶ "Vente entre M. & Mme. Monnier à la Société de l'Enseignement mutuel," 19 December 1821, ADML 77 T 9.

²⁷ "Assemblée général de la Société," 28 March 1822, AN F¹⁷ 11757. Each *action* bore an annual interest rate of 5%, and were guaranteed by the Cordeliers building itself.

of Joseph Lainé, the Society received the matching contribution of 8,000 francs from the Richelieu government.²⁸ An internal report by the Bureau of Public Instruction supported the purchase as encouragement for other *écoles mutuelles* in western France.²⁹ The report refers only to the Society as the *propriétaire* of the facility; no later correspondence between the Ministry and local authorities mention any specific legal arrangements about ownership. Although the prefect Baron de Wismes co-signed the contract, the failure to address the ownership issue would have serious repercussions for the Society.

The first *école de Frères* was established in an altogether different manner, with the Bishop of Angers, Charles Montault (1802-1839), playing the leading role. Promised a community of Frères by late 1820 provided a suitable location was available, Mgr. Montault himself rented the hôtel Dugesclin, with a small contribution from the Association.³⁰ Still, the necessity to house a community of Frères in addition to the school made merely renting an unattractive option. Montault entered into negotiations with a local widow, Louise de Maulne. Her property, located near the hôtel Dugesclin on the Tertre St. Laurent, comprised 0.33 hectares (approximately 0.82 acres) with a large building and attached courtyard and gardens, sufficient space to house the community and hold classes. The only problem—not insignificant—was the location on the right bank of the Maine, placing the school across the river and at a good distance from the center of Angers proper. Still, the property was ideally suited, and the price sealed the

²⁸ Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect, 25 July 1821, ADML 77 T 9. Lainé, the former Interior Minister, served as a minister-without-portfolio in the Richelieu government.

²⁹ “Rapport présenté à Son Excellence le Ministre Secrétaire d’État au Département de l’Intérieur,” Bureau de l’Instruction Publique, 29 June 1821, AN F¹⁷ 11757. Gellerat’s school had been an *école modèle* since 1819 (*Arrêt académique* of 25 January 1819, ADML 77 T 3), and played a key role in training the staff for other schools in the region.

³⁰ “Angers—Historique de la Maison,” carton “49—Angers, St Maurice—Historiques Document généraux,” Archives Lasalliennes.

deal. A private agreement between Maulne and Montault was signed on 18 April 1820, whereby the bishop promised to acquire 13,000 francs to purchase the property, and Maulne agreed not to sell to other buyers in the meantime.³¹

Montault's independent efforts sparked a legal controversy once his *fait accompli* became known. The departmental council had voted a subvention of 9,000 francs for an *école des Frères* in Angers in May 1819.³² The bishop clearly believed he was acting on behalf of the council's wishes and that the voted funds were at his disposal, as did the prefect when he had the property assessed.³³ The final contract, signed between Maulne and Montault on 7 May 1820, contained a provision that the bishop would transfer the property to a designated authority under the original contract conditions. Unlike the Society's purchase of the Cordeliers, Montault had no intention of becoming the owner himself.

The exact owner of the property, however, remained unclear. Brillet de Villemorge, the maire of Angers (and president of the Association at the time), realized the vagueness of the arrangements when informed of the sale. In order to obtain a royal ordinance authorizing the purchase, he sought the advice of the departmental Director-General as to whom the building was to belong—the town of Angers, the community of Frères, or the bishop?³⁴ Not certain of the answer, this official referred the question up the bureaucratic chain, a process taking two years. The wrangling about the ownership

³¹ "Acte privé entre Mme. de Maulne et Mgr. Montault", 18 April 1820, AM Angers 64 M 1.

³² Conseil général de Maine-et-Loire, session of 14 August 1819, "Budget des dépenses extraordinaires d'utilité départementale. Exercice 1819," ADML 9 N 2.

³³ Letter from Mgr. Montault to the Prefect, 7 May 1820, A. Dio. Angers 2 J 2; "Estimation de la maison achetée de Mdm. Vve. de Maulne pour les frères de la doctrine chrétienne," 15 April 1820, AM Angers 64 M 1.

³⁴ Letter from the Maire of Angers to the Prefecture Directeur General, 12 May 1820, A. Dio. Angers 2 J 2.

details tried Montault's patience, who as the responsible party ultimately had to provide the money promised—as well as continuing to rent the hôtel Dugesclin in the meantime. His correspondence over the intervening years betrayed increasing worry. The death of Mme. de Maulne in the fall of 1822 only heightened the tension; her heirs were demanding a quick settlement of the issue.³⁵

By October 1822, the Conseiller d'État for Charitable and Health Establishments had reached a final ruling on the matter. He rejected the prefect's argument that since the purchase had been made by the department and an unofficial representative of the Frères (Montault), Angers itself would not be a party to the arrangement. The Conseiller concluded that

primary schools, whether they are directed by the Christian Brothers [the Frères] or by any other instructors, are nonetheless communal establishments. It is therefore in the name of the commune that buildings for schools or the lodging of teachers must be made.³⁶

This is among the earliest statements of a policy of communal ownership of the *maison d'école* that would become standard with the *loi Guizot*. The question of the bishop's role, however, was less clear. Although the purchase was made with departmental funds, the only name on any documents was Montault's—yet he was not an official agent of any institution. The solution was to treat the school as a donation by Montault to the commune of Angers, although no record of why a donation was the preferred solution remains. By the end of the century, this legal fiction would have serious repercussions for the Frères. The official word having been received, the prefect authorized Angers' municipal council to accept the “gift” of Mgr. Montault—a mere formality by this point.

³⁵ Copy of letter from the Bishop to the Prefect, 4 November 1822, A. Dio. Angers 2 J 2.

³⁶ Letter from the Conseiller d'État to the Prefect, 21 October 1822, ADML 77 T 12.

The council voted to accept the building on 17 February 1823, and a royal ordinance was issued the following August.³⁷ The first article of the ordinance stated explicitly that the acquisition was for an *école des Frères*.

The Suppression of the *école mutuelle*

By mid-1824, the primary school situation in Angers appeared to be running smoothly. Both the mutuellistes and the Frères had permanent school buildings, and were educating hundreds of young boys and girls. Political maneuvering and the increasing conservatism in Paris, however, began upsetting this situation. Bishop Denis de Frayssinous, an outspoken critic of non-Catholic education, became Grand-Maître of the Université and then Minister of Public Instruction by 1824.³⁸ Frayssinous' chief accomplishment was the ordinance of 4 April 1824, re-organizing the *comités cantonnaux* to increase ecclesiastical representation and thereby "remitting primary instruction to the clergy."³⁹ In Maine-et-Loire, the effects of the April ordinance were quickly felt. An ecclesiastic, abbé Pierre Morice, replaced Pouillet de Lisle as rector of the Académie d'Angers. By late June 1824, the *comité cantonal* of Angers re-organized along the new guidelines. Dominated by Mgr. Montault (serving personally as the president) and Brillet de Villemorge, the committee was hardly amiable to the mutuellistes.

³⁷ Extrait des délibérations du Conseil Municipal d'Angers, 17 February 1823; Ordonnance royale of 6 August 1823, both in AM Angers 64 M 1.

³⁸ Adrien Garnier, *Frayssinous: Son rôle dans l'Université sous la Restauration (1822-1828)* (Paris and Rodez: Auguste Picard and Carrère, 1925).

³⁹ Prost, *L'Enseignement en France*, 502.

The new committee wasted little time moving against the *écoles mutuelles*, calling a special hearing on 15 November 1824. The committee did not, strictly speaking, order the school to be closed. Rather, they attacked Jean-Baptiste Gellerat's authorization as school director on the rather dubious charge of failing to be properly installed. The original 1816 *comité cantonal* of Angers (presided over by the abbé Breton, curé of the Cathédrale St. Maurice and also a member of the 1824 committee) had never made a decision on the qualification of Jean-Gabriel Adville, the instructor dispatched by the *Société élémentaire* in Paris to train Gellerat. At a 27 February 1817 meeting, Breton had been charged with contacting Parisian authorities about the unknown director, but never had the chance. The following day (28 February 1817), rector Pouillet de Lisle issued an *arrêt académique* overruling the "indirect opposition of the committees" and naming Gellerat the director of the new *école mutuelle*—with the condition that he complete his training under Adville, whose credentials the rector found acceptable.⁴⁰ The 1824 committee decided upon review that Gellerat's nomination had violated the February ordinance. Although a provisional authorization could have been granted until the matter was sorted out, the committee refused, citing both Gellerat's employment of an unauthorized *sous-maître* and the supposed lack of religious instruction in the school. Gellerat's authorization to direct the school was revoked, effective 1 January 1825.⁴¹

The suspension of Gellerat, while certainly detrimental to the *école mutuelle*, could have been addressed simply by the Society presenting a qualified replacement

⁴⁰ Arrêt académique, 28 February 1817, AN F¹⁷ 10148.

⁴¹ Arrêté du comité pour l'interdiction de l'école élémentaire mutuelle d'Angers, 15 November 1824, AM Angers 1 R 42. Revealingly, Gellerat would be allowed to continue teaching his paying students even after the suppression of the school—hardly an indictment of his competence. Montault even issued an *autorisation épiscopale* to this effect on 28 April 1825.

teacher for the committee's approval. The committee, however, went further; the same order stipulated the school be transferred to the Frères. Such a decision not only entailed the suppression of the *école mutuelle de garçons*, but also the closure of the girls' school under Mme. Gellerat.⁴² As Gellerat himself realized, the goal of Montault "has always been to take possession of the locale, and there establish an *école des Frères*."⁴³ The transfer accomplished two important goals in the effort to crush the mutuellistes. First, the location of the Cordeliers in the heart of Angers solved the logistic problem of the Frères being situated on the outskirts of town. Second, it placed the Society at a severe disadvantage in opening another school; the process of finding a building that had strained the time and the resources of the Society's first years would have to be undertaken again, in a less conducive political environment.⁴⁴ The entire scheme, however, rested on the authority of the *comité cantonal* to transfer the school—which in turn depended on clearly defining who "owned" the *école mutuelle*.

The Society did not hesitate to respond, although its initial approach provides some insight into the perception of their position. A membership list compiled in March 1825 at the request of the prefect, Antoine Martin de Puiseux (1823-1826), listed twenty-three *avocats*, *avoués*, *notaires*, and *conseillers* of the various tribunals and courts out of 119 named society members, plus a significant number of *négociants*, *propriétaires*, and

⁴² The omission of Mme. Gellerat from the committee's consideration, and from any inclusion in the subsequent official correspondence on the matter (her school is mentioned by the Society on occasion) is intriguing. She had been trained in the *méthode mutuelle* by her husband, a natural point of contention once Gellerat's credentials were questioned. Since the Frères did not teach girls, and it was unlikely that a female congregation would deign to share the facility, the omission indicates the dispute was more about acquiring the *école mutuelle* building than Gellerat's qualifications.

⁴³ Letter from Gellerat to the Society, 24 March 1827, AM Angers 1 R 50.

⁴⁴ The closure of the *école mutuelle* would also be an occasion to solve other problems; Montault attempted to have the 1400 franc annual municipal subvention to the *école mutuelle* transferred to the Frères as well (Letter from Mgr. Montault to the First Adjoint-Maire, 28 March 1825, AM Angers 1 R 52).

greffiers.⁴⁵ A quarter or even a third of the members had regular, daily experience with the Code Civil—particularly in relation to property matters—making a legal argument appear the natural avenue of attack. Yet the Society’s first response was to draw on patronage networks they had established over the previous eight years. In the first months of 1825, the Society dispatched a flurry of letters to various authorities, including Frayssinous and the Minister of the Maison du Roi (the Duc de Doudeauville); by the summer, petitions were being sent from A. Taillandier, the Society’s Parisian legal representative, to the Duc d’Orléans and even to the dauphin, the former Duc d’Angoulême who had purchased six subscriptions for the *école mutuelle* in Cholet in 1817.⁴⁶ This correspondence emphasized the past protection the state and the royal family had shown *enseignement mutuel*.

While the Society attempted to mobilize patronage networks, their opponents began laying a legal argument based on property ownership. A week after revoking Gellerat’s authorization, Montault was working with Villemorge to prepare a statement for the prefect on the municipal contributions to the *école mutuelle*.⁴⁷ The intent was to demonstrate that municipal subventions—estimated at over 10,000 francs since 1817—made the commune the principal contributor to the school. He also compiled a list of the Society members who would need to be reimbursed for the *actions* they had purchased. Montault’s own recent experience with the ownership of the Tertre St. Laurent property

⁴⁵ Letter from the Society to the Prefect, 9 March 1825, ADML 77 T 9.

⁴⁶ Letter of the Society to the Minister of the Maison du Roi, 29 January 1825; Letter of the Secretary of the Duc d’Orléans to the Society, 30 July 1825; Letter of the Secretary of the Dauphin to A. Taillandier, 13 July 1825, all in AM Angers 1 R 52. Significantly, departmental authorities were ignored, despite the role they had played early in the Society’s history. The departure of Wismes and Pouillet de Lisle in 1823 and 1824, respectively, may have convinced the Society that the local administration would be less sympathetic to their position.

⁴⁷ Letter from the Bishop to the Maire d’Angers, 24 November 1824, AM Angers 1 R 52.

accounted for his diligence in collecting this data. But the same approach was being considered at the highest levels. Informed by the Duc de Doudeauville of the Society's petition, Frayssinous wrote the prefect directly requesting specifics on the contract between Monnier, the Society, and the department.⁴⁸ After analyzing the contract, he concluded that the Society had been the minor partner (4,000 out of the 12,000 franc price—the construction work being ignored) in the purchase of the building—a conclusion that Montault had reached simultaneously.⁴⁹ Frayssinous also identified a second significant argument: no stipulation was recorded in the contract about the building being specifically for an *école mutuelle*. Unlike the Tertre St. Laurent property, no restrictions were placed on the use of the Cordeliers.

Having settled to his satisfaction that the commune owned the school, Frayssinous backed the ruling of the committee. On 9 April 1825, Martin de Puiseux ordered the Cordeliers building turned over to the Frères. Arguing that the original intent (*l'intention primitive*) of all parties—the Society as well as then-prefect Wismes—had been to acquire a school for the poor boys of the town, the prefect concluded “the oversight and the regulation of the method of teaching being essentially to the charge of the Government.”⁵⁰ The first article identified the Society as the owner of one-third of the building, following the argument outlined by Frayssinous. The remaining four articles of the *arrêt* laid out a procedure to resolve the thorny issue of the split ownership. After turning over the keys to the building, the Society was invited to establish a commission

⁴⁸ Letter from the Minister to the Prefect, 7 February 1825, ADML 77 T 9.

⁴⁹ Letter from the Minister to the Prefect, 26 February 1825; Letters from the Bishop of Angers to the Prefect, 17 December 1824 and 14 February 1825, all in ADML 77 T 9; Letter from the Minister of the Interior to Monnier, 16 April 1825, AM Angers 1 R 52.

⁵⁰ *Arrêt préfectoral*, 9 April 1825, AM Angers 1 R 52.

and select an expert, both of which would work with the government's expert to assess the value of the school building, land and furnishings. Presumably, once the evaluation had been made, a financial settlement would then be decided, although no specific mechanism for reimbursement was promised. The process would leave Angers the sole owner of the Cordeliers.

The Society, already realizing the limitations of their patronage approach, had formed a commission of five members in early March 1825 to manage the effort to save the school. Headed unofficially by Monnier, the members were charged with the keys to the Cordeliers building and would serve as representatives for future negotiations.⁵¹ The issuance of the *arrêt préfectoral* placed the committee members in a precarious position. An officer was dispatched to collect the keys, which three members—Gellerat, a M. DeFarey, and Pierre-Louis Le Bas—surrendered. Monnier and Thomas-Louis Desmazières, the president of the Tribunal, refused the order, Monnier writing back to the prefect that he would not take action until the Society could debate the issue.⁵² The effort was clearly to threaten the individual members into abandoning their duty. Gellerat, still holding his private school, and Le Bas, in the precarious position of being the secretary of the Académie d'Angers, were particularly vulnerable. It fell to Monnier and Desmazières, both with relatively high positions within the local judicial establishment and thereby somewhat shielded from retaliation, to continue the fight.

⁵¹ Letter of the Society to the Prefect, 6 March 1825, ADML 77 T 9. The original members of the commission were Monnier, Pierre-René Ponceau, Jacques Gautret, Gilles Talbot, and Gustave Tessier de la Motte. By the time of the *arrêt* of 9 April 1825 was enacted, only Monnier remained of the original commission.

⁵² Letter of the Maire of Angers to the Prefect, 15 April 1825, ADML 77 T 9; Monnier's letter to the Prefect, dated 8 April 1825, is included with this letter.

With the failure of the effort to strong-arm the Society into surrendering the building, the legal battle began. The January 1825 procuration by sixty-three Society members establishing the five-man commission stated their intention to fight in court for their property rights.⁵³ The fullest statement of the Society's position was the printed *Mémoire* prepared for the Conseil d'État in mid-1825. The argument began by challenging Angers' ownership; the Society claimed that "it was in the role of benefactor that the Government intervened," not as a co-owner.⁵⁴ They cast the state's contribution as a gift made to the Society, holding that Interior Minister Joseph-Jérôme Siméon (1820-1821) had expressed this same position in a 1821 letter. Even if the government would be considered a *co-proprétaire*, the argument continues, the Society would have an equal say on the use of the property, since it was indivisible. Therefore, they concluded, the prefect's decision to transfer the school was beyond his competence; it was a legal, not an administrative matter.

It was at this point that the entire affair ground to a halt. The Society refused to budge and threatened legal action to prevent the municipality from taking the building, which remained unoccupied during the three years of the dispute. No legal action appears to have been completed; there is no indication that the Conseil d'État heard the case. State authorities did not take any action against the Society; there is no mention in any of the extant correspondence about a decision in the matter. This is particularly striking vis-à-vis Monnier and Desmazières for refusing to cede the keys. The standing of these two within Angers' courts undoubtedly required a bit of caution on the part of authorities. The

⁵³ Reprinted in the *Mémoire pour MM. les Membres composant l'Association fondatrice de l'école élémentaire et gratuite d'Enseignement mutuel d'Angers* ([Paris]: Hippolyte Tiliard, s.d.), 25-31.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

situation may also reflect how tenuous the hold on power of the ultraroyalists was during their years of supposed triumph; unsure of the reaction of the courts, authorities might have decided to wait out the results of the 1827 elections.

Those elections that would resolve the issue with the defeat of the ultraroyalists. The replacement of Frayssinous as Minister of Public Instruction and of Cultes by Antoine de Vatimesnil in late January 1828 began a reversal of the anti-*mutuelliste* policies. The ordinance of 21 April 1828, by re-organizing (yet again) the *comités cantonnaux* to reduce the influence of the bishops, removed the last remaining obstacle to the re-opening of the *école mutuelle*. The Society moved back into the Cordeliers, and the Gellerats were granted new authorizations to teach. The eve of the July Revolution saw both the Society's and the Frères' schools open, providing education for over 500 boys and almost 200 girls in Angers. While the relationship between the two groups was hardly amiable, a certain *mode de vivre* had been reached, and some of the animosity dissipated.

The suppression of Angers' *école mutuelle* contained the elements that would dominate subsequent debates on school property. First, whatever the willingness of education civil society to provide for schools, the total expenses were beyond the capability of private organizations and even local governments to provide. Cooperation was necessary—and cooperation bought inevitable conflicts. Second, the experience demonstrated both a power and a limit of the state's authority in education matters—the question of who owned the schools. The original removal of Gellerat by the *comité cantonnaux* was on account of his failure to conform to installation formalities—a clear, if petty, use of administrative oversight. His replacement by the Frères, however, was not; it

was ultimately based on the commune's ownership of the Cordeliers building. The Society's response in losing the political patronage it had earlier enjoyed was to invoke the legal argument of property rights. Control of education depended on owning the schools, a lesson not lost in later political showdowns.

Curtailing Private Ownership: The State Building Schools

The experiences of the Restoration exercised tremendous influence on subsequent efforts to open primary schools. From the late 1820s until the dawn of the Third Republic, debates on school property shifted to the wisdom of non-state actors controlling schools. Initially, however, the real property of schools remained the chief source of conflict. With the continuing paucity of communal resources making state investment vital, an opportunity was presented to sidestep the problems of the February ordinance. New policies insisted that communes rather than private associations or individuals own school buildings (*maisons d'école*)—the single largest expense and the clearest evidence of ownership. The greater commitment to primary education meant more funding in national and departmental budgets for subsidies for school construction. The added benefit was that if the state built the schools, the rights that were incumbent with such ownership came to them. The obverse, however, was true as well; private groups who provided schools were secure in their ability to select teachers and curriculum. And despite the state's best efforts, private funds continued to be central to education development. The gap between public ownership of schools and the continued need to encourage private investment ultimately represented a major stumbling block to state efforts to exercise complete control over primary education.

The process brought some unwelcome changes as efforts to meet new commitments strained resources. Larger towns that had established schools under the Restoration found state subsidies cut and their requests for new constructions deprioritized. As late as 1856, the Minister of Public Instruction informed the Society that its schools “must no longer count on the aid (*secours*) of the government which is reserved to provide exclusively for poor communes.”⁵⁵ Many communes hesitant to build schools earlier did so from a lack of resources rather than interest. Even the subprefectural seat of Segré struggled to support its schools after first funding them in 1829, with a population of only 1,200 and an average budget of 2,000 francs.⁵⁶ Above all, rural communes had the most need of assistance; “the problems of popular education in the nineteenth century,” Françoise Mayeur reflected, “were largely those of the school in the rural environment.”⁵⁷ Lacking both the local resources and the populations large enough to support private organizations (despite the help of urban sympathizers, such as two members of the Society who withdrew their subscriptions in 1829 to help open an *école mutuelle* in La Cornuaille⁵⁸), the countryside became dependent on outside aid—which national authorities and private providers took as both an obligation and an opportunity.

This expansion did not proceed in the same chaotic fashion as the first schools under the Restoration. When a second *école mutuelle* was built in Angers in the early

⁵⁵ “Registre du Bureau d’administration de la Société,” tome 2, séance of 28 June 1856, AM Angers 1 R 43.

⁵⁶ Conseil municipal de Segré, séance of 15 May 1829, AM Segré 1 D 2.

⁵⁷ Françoise Mayeur, *Histoire générale de l’enseignement et de l’éducation en France, tome III: De la Révolution à l’École républicaine (1789-1930)* (Paris: Perrin “Collection Tempus”, 2004), 8.

⁵⁸ “Registre du Bureau d’Administration de la Société,” tome I, séance of 19 December 1829, AM Angers 1 R 43 (a third member resigned for a similar reason on 26 April 1830 to help found a school at Marcé-près-Seiches).

1830s, the Society members purchased a new set of *actions* to match a much larger government subsidy—but ownership was clearly placed with the municipality. Yet future joint state-private efforts to purchase school buildings were avoided, and the new generation of schools were established under single ownership. The few lingering cases were resolved, as when Saumur’s municipal council removed the Frères from the Récollets building in 1833 to install an *école mutuelle*.⁵⁹ Cholet constructed a new building for their *école mutuelle* paid for entirely with public funds. Likewise, when the Association desired to establish new schools in the 1830s and 1840s, they did so through direct purchases of buildings which gave them total ownership.⁶⁰ While private schools would still accept (or, often, were forced by necessity to accept) annual subventions to hold schools, the *maisons d’école* belonged firmly to the school owners.

Even with the new impetus on schooling building, financing the acquisition or the construction of a *maison d’école* continued to strain communal resources much as it had under the Restoration. Unfortunately, few public options to supplement communal budgets were available. The budget for the Ministry of Public Instruction increased to three million francs in 1833, sixty times the budget included in the February ordinance, and continued to grow for decades.⁶¹ These increased sums, however, had to be divided between the large number of communes, resulting in fairly low subsidies. Until 1869,

⁵⁹ Council municipal de Saumur, séance of 18 August 1833, AM Saumur 1 D 14.

⁶⁰ “Angers—Historique de la Maison,” carton “49—Angers, St Maurice—Historiques Document généraux,” Archives Lasalliennes.

⁶¹ Hervé Terral, *Les savoirs du maître: Enseigner de Guizot à Ferry* (Paris and Montreal: L’Harmattan, 1998), 26.

departmental councils provided the most funding for new school construction.⁶² For many departments, including Maine-et-Loire, the sums became pressing. An 1844 report from the primary inspectors estimated it would take 1,039,000 francs to provide those Angevin communes required to have a *maison d'école* with one—this at the tail end of the building period associated with the *loi Guizot*. The next year, the departmental council voted subventions of just over 31,000 francs for the thirty-three neediest communes.⁶³ Until the mid-1870s, the estimates hovered at half a million francs, while departmental subventions averaged around 1,000 francs for each of the roughly two dozen communes helped each year.

While the number of boys' schools grew dramatically—by 1855, less than a dozen communes required to have one lacked a school—the large number of communes that did not wholly own their *maison d'école* (71 out of 355) after more than twenty years of effort reflected the real financial constraints on creating a state-dominated school system.⁶⁴ Urban areas with burgeoning populations found little support to build additional schools beyond those required by laws. In Angers, for example, the two *écoles mutuelles* (each comprising separate classes for boys and for girls) remained the only non-Catholic primary schools from 1834 until the late 1870s—although the population doubled over

⁶² Ministère de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts, *Statistique de l'enseignement primaire, tome 2: Statistique comparée de l'enseignement primaire (1829-1877)* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1880), table 74.

⁶³ “Statistique de l'Instruction primaire dans le département de Maine-et-Loire pendant l'année 1844,” 15 August 1844, ADML, 51 T 3; “État de propositions pour la réparation d'une somme votée par le conseil général au budget départemental de 1845 pour aider les communes dans les frais d'acquisition, de construction et de réparations de maisons d'école,” 26 August 1845, ADML, 62 T 4.

⁶⁴ “Exposé de la situation d'enseignement primaire en 1855,” 7 August 1855, ADML, 51 T 5. Approximately 355 out of 376 communes had boys' schools or *écoles mixte* serving both sexes. For comparison, the estimate for funds to furnish the remainder of the communes with schools was 710,000 francs. The statistics for Maine-et-Loire compare well with other departments around France. For an example on the other side of Saint Malo-Geneva line, see René Lemoine, *La Loi Guizot 28 juin 1833: Son application dans le département de la Somme* (Paris: Hachette, 1933), 405.

the period.⁶⁵ For girls' schools, the situation was even less encouraging; only 117 *maisons* belonged to the commune, about a third of the *écoles de filles* in the department.⁶⁶ By mid-century, the state was still struggling to become the sole *propriétaire* of school buildings.

Private contributors remained major players in the primary education market. The 1855 statistics for *écoles de filles* showed eighty-one *maisons d'école* were rented by communes from private individuals, and 151 belonged to fabriques, societies or teaching congregations. Unlike the Restoration, however, private investment was weighted heavily towards Catholic (and a small number of Protestant) schools. Non-religious civil society was weakened, ironically, by the official support thrown behind the *mutuelliste* schools following the July Monarchy. The willingness of municipal councils to turn over schools to liberal instructors (Saumur and Beaufort) and diminish or end support for Catholic schools (Angers and Cholet) gave the appearance of a battle won. New schools constructed at public expense were unquestionably communal property, and the adoption of the sobriquet *écoles mutuelles* even when *enseignement mutuel* was not practiced symbolized the connection between state schools and the earlier liberal pedagogy. While the Society continued in Angers, no other large liberal association survived the early 1830s—which meant by mid-century, there were no privately-owned liberal schools considered as the *école communale*. Secure in the belief that the ownership of schools had been definitively settled in favor of the communes, liberal notables perceived little need for alternative support structures. When the conservative reaction of the 1850s

⁶⁵ Lebrun, ed., *Paroisses et communes de France: Maine-et-Loire*, 36.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Only 17 communes required to have an *école de filles* was lacking one, but 37 communes had more than one.

resulted in communes inviting Catholic instructors to take over their schools, liberals could only complain bitterly from the sidelines.

Supporters of Catholic education had the opposite experience. The rapid turnover of buildings and the loss of municipal subsidies after 1830 forced a greater reliance on private resources. The civil society that had played an important role in the initial construction of schools under the Restoration continued to provide vital services. Private associations in Saumur and Cholet were able to acquire buildings and open Catholic schools through subscriptions, while appeals for *liberalités* funded open competition with the state in rural communes.⁶⁷ The *fabriques*, as the official property agents of the parish, became owners of buildings and *rentes* left by donations and wills for schools. Protestants used the same techniques to attach an *école protestante* to the new temple in Saumur in 1843.⁶⁸ While the Catholics' supposed triumph following the *loi Falloux* appeared to grant the advantages liberals had enjoyed under the July Monarchy, any benefits were short-lived. The quick reversal of state patronage after 1860 and an increasingly hostile political environment forced Catholics back on their own resources. The continued success of Catholics in funding schools was a key determinate in the shift under the Second Empire from discussing who owned schools to whether anyone outside the state should own them.

⁶⁷ Commission des Écoles Chrétiennes de Saumur, séance of 10 May 1833, *Commission des Écoles Chrétiennes—Registre des délibérations 1833 à 1844*, AP St. Pierre de Saumur, boîte K; Charles Loyer, "Un siècle d'Instruction publique à Cholet de 1789 à 1882," 51, Fonds Loyer, Société des Sciences, Lettres et Beaux-Arts de Cholet.

⁶⁸ Letter from the subprefect of Saumur to the maire of Saumur, 3 February 1843; *Bienfaisance mutuelle—Société de l'Église Chrétienne réformé de Saumur: Règlement général*, both in AM Saumur 2 M 15.

The Power of the Purse and the Selection of Teachers

The *maison d'école* was only one component in running a school. Ongoing expenses, most importantly the teacher's salaries, had to be provided for as well. The February ordinance had granted those who provided these funds, the *entreteneurs*, with rights similar to the founders. Authorities quickly seized upon the ploy of creating financial strains by the denial of resources, making it difficult for non-approved schools to establish themselves or to continue operating. When Lainé's government pushed the establishment of *écoles mutuelles*, departmental and municipal councils either refused or begrudgingly allocated the money—only to offer larger amounts for *écoles des Frères* to be established.⁶⁹ During the ultraroyalist reaction, even these pittance were withdrawn. When the *loi Guizot* made minimum teacher salaries a communal charge, a powerful new tool for the curtailment of private investment in education was created. The charge to municipal councils to establish schools, and the administrative *tutelle* wielded by subprefects and prefects over municipal budgets created a “power of the purse”: the ability to deny funding to schools to operate.

The practice of cutting funding to rival schools became common at every political shift. Beginning in 1829, the municipal council of Angers began reducing the subvention to the Frères to help the reinstalled *mutuellistes*; after reaching parity in 1831, the *mutuellistes* received more than the Frères for the rest of the July Monarchy.⁷⁰ Cholet's municipal council, never supportive of former maire Matherin Cherbonnier's efforts to open a Catholic boys' school, demanded in late 1830 that the funds remaining from a

⁶⁹ See Garnier, *Frayssinous*, 464 for other examples from around France.

⁷⁰ *Comptes administratifs et budgets de la ville d'Angers de 1831 à 1840* and *Comptes administratifs et budgets de la ville d'Angers de 1841 à 1850*, AM Angers, série L.

grant by the departmental council instead be used to support the new local National Guard unit. Minister of Public Instruction Camille de Montalivet overruled the objections of prefect Hyacinthe Barthélémy (1830-1834) and acceded to the request, helping delay the foundation of an *école de Frères* for over a decade.⁷¹

The practice could be directed at specific teachers for political purposes. In 1835, Chemillé's communal teacher Augustin Daveau, who openly stated his Catholic and pro-Bourbon preferences, refused to display the tricolor flag at a prize ceremony held in conjunction with the annual *fête du roi* (1 May). At the insistence of liberal maire Pierre Mignot-Deslandes (1830-1837) and the local *juge de paix* Charles-Jean Cesbron-Lavau, a former maire of Cholet who also sat on the arrondissement committee, Daveau was stripped of his designation as *instituteur communal*.⁷² While Daveau was allowed to continue holding a private school, the supportive municipal council found its efforts to maintain the communal subsidy provided in the *loi Guizot* blocked by higher authorities. Rector Aimé-Lucien Collet-Dubignon (1831-1838) stated flatly that once deprived of the title of *instituteur communal*, Daveau could no longer be guaranteed the minimum salary or lodging allowance—which the rector would insure that authorities would enforce.⁷³

Such practices, however, were a double-edged sword. A generation later, a conservative reaction would reverse this trend. As conservatives gained power in communes across France, communal schools were turned back over to Catholic teachers.

⁷¹ Letter from the Prefect to the Minister, 14 December 1830; Letter from the Interior Minister to the Prefect, 8 March 1831, both in ADML, 60 T 76.

⁷² Letter from Cesbron-Lavau to the President of the Comité Supérieur de Cholet, 4 May 1835, AM Cholet 1 R 16.

⁷³ Letter of the Rector to the President of the Comité Supérieur de Cholet, 3 June 1835, AM Cholet 1 R 16.

Both Segré and Beaufort installed the Frères when their teachers retired (for poor health and age, respectively).⁷⁴ In Angers, the subsidies of the Society schools and the Frères were returned to parity in 1854, a situation lasting until the Third Republic.⁷⁵ Communes shifting schools from *laïque* to religious teachers helped create the impression that the *loi Falloux* turned education back over to the Church.

The threat of the revocation of funds helped structure relations between private providers of education and the communes. The informal agreements of the Restoration gave way to *traités* (contracts) between municipalities and the teaching congregations. These highly-detailed *traités* laid out the basic conditions for a congregation to open a school in a commune. Often included was a minimal time commitment (initially only a few years) that would help justify and secure a new community. By mid-century, such provisions were used to protect against the revocation of funding due to political shifts. When Beaufort approached the Frères in 1851 to become the communal teachers, the resultant treaty specified that the community would be supported for fifteen years.⁷⁶ Other common stipulations included the payment of the annual subsidies in trimestrial installments (which mirrored the practice of mandatory minimum salaries established by the *loi Guizot*) and clear delineation of responsibilities for repairs to *maisons d'école* owned by communes. Being legal contracts, the *traités* provided protection for the

⁷⁴ Conseil municipal de Segré, séance of 16 August 1850, AM Segré, 1 D 5; Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 31 May 1851, AM Beaufort, 1 D 8.

⁷⁵ *Comptes administratifs et budgets de la ville d'Angers de 1841 à 1860* and *Comptes administratifs et budgets de la ville d'Angers de 1861 à 1865*, AM Angers, série L.

⁷⁶ “Traité entre la ville de Beaufort et les Frères des Écoles chrétiennes,” 25 July 1851, AM Beaufort 1 R 13. The practice of mandating minimal terms of service was not limited to education matters. By the 1850s, the Soeurs de Sainte Anne de la Providence were asking for fifteen year commitments to attach *soeurs hospitalières* providing medical services to communities as well (“Traité pour une Soeur hospitalière entré la commune de Villebernier et la Congrégation de Ste. Anne de la Providence de Saumur,” 1 April 1853, Archives Delanoue M-18-4).

congregations, and communes appeared hesitant to challenge them. Beaufort, for example, was quick to replace the Frères—but only when the contract expired in 1866.⁷⁷

State Oversight and Inspection Régimes

The second component of the effort to bring primary education under state control was administrative, aimed at limiting the rights of owners to nominate teachers and to set internal discipline. The selection of teachers entailed an *ipso facto* declaration of the curriculum to be followed in a school; hence the importance, especially for Catholics, to be the “owners” of schools. Of course, the state—in the guise of the local *comités de surveillance*, the police authority of the prefect, or the academic authority of the rector—held a significant level of oversight over the free exercise of these rights. The veto power of authorities strengthened with the growing professionalization of the primary education inspectorate, while tightening certification standards encouraged a professionalization of the teaching corps.⁷⁸ Yet the episode of the closure of the *école mutuelle* in Angers had demonstrated not only that the administrative power to regulate teachers could metastasize into a political weapon, but also the effectiveness of any such administrative policies was limited ultimately by the question of ownership.

In the effort to rein in the chaotic post-Revolutionary education environment, the ability to certify teachers emerged as a powerful tool. The proliferation of individuals passing themselves off as teachers—often in exchange for high fees—was a significant problem by the time of the Empire. Authorities had a much larger reason to be concerned:

⁷⁷ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 20 February 1866, AM Beaufort 1 D 9.

⁷⁸ Jean Ferrier, *Les Inspecteurs des écoles primaires 1835-1995: Ils ont construit l'école publique*, 2 vols. (Paris and Montreal: L'Harmattan, 1997); Lelièvre, *Histoire des institutions scolaires*, 66-70.

who knew what kind of ideas such teachers were conveying to children? Hence one reason for Napoleon's support of the Frères; he "would rather see the village children in the hands of a monk...whose views I know, than in those of a half-baked scholar."⁷⁹ The Bourbons were hardly less concerned, and found allies among educators themselves. Both the Frères and the *Société élémentaire* supported some form of regulation as well, seeing both a justification of their own programs and security of future growth when communes began opening primary schools.

Most early efforts to regulate teachers aimed at addressing the problem of incompetence or fraud. But such administrative techniques were quickly put to use in the enforcement of curricular orthodoxy. The introduction of *enseignement mutuel*, for example, resulted in a proliferation of teachers claiming to have been trained in the new and largely unfamiliar technique. Joseph Lainé, who as Interior Minister in 1818 had oversight of education, attempted to keep prefects and rectors informed of these fraudulent teachers, especially those claiming to represent Catholic teaching congregations practicing *enseignement mutuel* (very few of which even experimented with the technique).⁸⁰ The effort to guard the greatest legacy of the Napoleonic Université, the state monopoly on secondary education, provided another avenue for the policing of curricula. The abbé Forêt, *curé* of St. Pierre in Saumur, became involved in a long-running dispute with state authorities over a parish primary school he was running

⁷⁹ Quoted in Dansette, I: 147-148. See also Georges Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, IV: 101-102.

⁸⁰ For a noted example, a Mme. Stephanie Picot pedaled enough claims to represent the "Religieuses de St. Joseph" that Lainé sent out preemptive warnings to all prefects alerting them of her scheme (Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect, 27 February 1818, ADML 77 T 6).

that taught Latin, the distinctive component of the French secondary curriculum. Forêt was eventually taken to court in 1831, resulting in a heavy fine.⁸¹

While the regulatory regime was effective against those operating illegally, its utility to instill sanctioned or displace popular teachers was more ambiguous. The effort to close the *école mutuelle* in Angers was one demonstration of limitations. While Gellerat could be removed, the cantonal committee was unsuccessful in transferring the school to the Frères once the Society invoked their right as owners. Nor could national or departmental authorities force communes to accept teachers they did not want. Despite the efforts of Lainé, Wismes, and subprefect Joseph Antoine de Carrère (1815-1828), Saumur steadfastly refused to open an *école mutuelle* until the July Revolution resulted in the re-constitution of the municipal council. Likewise, Cholet's municipal council repeatedly refused departmental subsidies for an *école des Frères*, and greeted Cherbonnier's eventual unilateral acceptance tepidly. Without the support of local governments—and the funding they controlled—the state had few options in forcing teachers on schools.

Communes clearly recognized their position under the February ordinance, and used their rights to select and protect teachers. In 1829, the primary teacher of Beaufort's municipal college, Achille-François Dubord, came under criticism by academic authorities for poor performance and concerns about his *brevet de capacité*, issued in 1817 in the neighboring Académie of Poitiers. Although the college was a secondary institution, the primary classes were considered the *école communale* at the time. An 1825 decision naming a non-ecclesiastic principal aroused indignation; the municipal

⁸¹ Letter from the Rector to the Minister of Public Instruction, 9 February 1831, AN F¹⁷ 10149.

council read the effort to replace the popular Dubord as further interference by the state.⁸² The debate lasted into early 1830, and saw the resignations of local leaders from the college's administrative board. The academic authorities were forced to step back, and allow Dubord to keep his position rather than risk alienating local notables further.

The regulatory regime developing after the *loi Guizot* provided a means to resolve such issues. Although the primary inspection corps was woefully understaffed for the first decade of its existence, the mid-1840s witnessed a general acceptance of a conception of a “good teacher” defined through the inspection reports. When rector Pierre Henry (1839-1854) again ordered the replacement of Dubord in 1847, the poor performance of the aged teacher was no longer debatable—but the question of ownership for determining his replacement was still paramount. College principal Louis Champagne explained the ambiguous position of the Beaufort municipal council during an August 1847 meeting to Henry:

The majority of the municipal councilors did not dare to speak [during the session]. You will soon receive a deliberation demanding the continuance of a teacher, signed by these men, who all will separately avow that the teacher they protect is no longer capable of fulfilling the functions assigned to him.... The motive is easy to understand: it comes from the fear that distresses each councilor of himself taking the responsibility of having approved the dismissal of an old functionary that they have long known and that they respect for the services that he had rendered earlier, and above all the claim they have always had of the right, in voting the salaries of functionaries of the college, of being consulted on the changing of these same functionaries.⁸³

The council, however, did no more than threaten to withhold funds (the power of the purse) until a suitable teacher was selected, and maire René-Jean Béconnais-Languedoue

⁸² For a summary of the main points of the dispute, see letter from the Maire of Beaufort to the Rector, 11 May 1829, ADML 29 T 2. Complaints about Dubord's teaching—which brought into the question his *brevet du premier degré*—date from the first year of new principal (Inspection report for 1826, ADML 411 T 5).

⁸³ Letter from the Principal of the College of Beaufort-en-Vallée to the Rector, 29 August 1847, ADML 411 T 2.

bluntly informed Henry that the council would exercise its right to choose a replacement.⁸⁴ When Dubord decided to retire rather than fight the ruling of the rector, the council acquiesced. The episode left a bitter taste in the mouth of the municipal council, and likely played a role in the decision of the council to turn every school in Beaufort, including the college, over to Catholic teachers in the wake of the *loi Falloux*.

School owners were not the only ones to assert property rights to further their goals. Teachers were also acquainted with the provisions of the law, and attempted to use it to protect themselves. Henriette Bouvalet, the *institutrice* for the public girls' school in Gesté, came under attack by the local committee in 1843 for incompetence. The committee argued that the money spent for the dwindling number of students at Bouvalet's school would be better used at a competing *école de filles* held by the Soeurs de Saint-Gildas-des-Bois. This opinion was shared by both the *comité d'arrondissement* and Cretté, the primary school inspector. The funds, however, had originally come from an legacy left by former curé Prosper Paul de la Morlaye to the local fabrique, with the Bishop of Angers charged as executor. Bouvalet held that only the Bishop had the right to replace the teacher. Her confidence, however, was misplaced; Mgr. Angebault agreed with the report of Bouvalet's poor performance and agreed to transfer the money as requested by the authorities.⁸⁵ Bouvalet gambled on the traditional hostility between the bishop and municipal authorities. In this case, however, Mgr. Angebault's interest in

⁸⁴ Conseil municipal de Beaufort, séance of 28 August 1847, AM Beaufort 1 D 8; Letter from the Maire of Beaufort to the Rector, 30 September 1847, ADML 411 T 2.

⁸⁵ Comité local du Gesté, séance of 12 April 1843; Comité d'arrondissement de Beaupréau, séance of 16 July 1843; letter from the Inspector primaire of Beaupréau [Cretté] to the Rector, 31 July 1843; copy of testament of Prosper Paul de la Morlaye, 26 March 1831; letter of the Inspector primaire to the Rector, 31 July 1843, all in ADML 56 T 26.

education—and past history with the Soeurs de Saint Gildas, who he had previously directed—won out.

In no area of education policy was the credentialing question more contentious than in the matter of the Catholic teaching congregations. When the February ordinance introduced the *brevet de capacité*, the Frères balked at such a requirement, seeing it (correctly) as an effort to place them under state dominion. Citing their original authorization under the Université statutes of 1808, an arrangement worked out in 1819 granted the Frères the right to substitute the *lettre d'obédience* issued by superior of the congregation for the *brevet*.⁸⁶ Other teaching congregations also claimed this status, maintaining that state authorization of a congregation equated with academic authorization of their capability to teach. While the early years of the July Monarchy attempted to strengthen this requirement, the need for teachers for the vastly expanded number of schools following the *loi Guizot* mitigated against significant modifications. The *lettre d'obédience* was accepted for all female congregations, while the director of individual male communities were required to sit for the exams. This arrangement lasted until 1880.

Undoubtedly, the administrative regime did impose a higher standard on teachers over the course of the century. The *maîtres-* and *maîtresses-d'école* of the 1870s were, overall, better qualified and more professional than their counterparts of the Restoration. As a means of exercising control over the selection of teachers and forcing the adoption of a state-selected curriculum, however, inspection controls had one fundamental problem: the locus of action was the individual teacher, or at most a single congregation.

⁸⁶ Rigault, IV: 373-383; Prost, 163-164; Bedel, 28.

While lack of authorization, immorality, or simple poor teaching could trigger the removal of a specific teacher, little could be done against a type of teacher (mutuellistes, congreganistes, or merely the incompetants). Nothing prevented private providers from merely selecting another teacher of their preference; as long as that teacher met the necessary legal qualifications, the state had to abide by the choice. The removal of a category of teachers required more than a simple set of requirements; it required a political willingness to deem certain groups as unworthy of the profession. The Third Republic would prove itself equal to the task.

Conclusion

Over the course of the nineteenth century, it was clear to private providers and to the state that the exercise of their rights to oversee education depended on owning schools. For private groups, this goal in turn depended on the ability of supporters to provide funding independent from that of the commune, the departmental councils, and the state. With sufficient funding to maintain positions as “founders and holders,” private providers could resist even the most direct attempts to seize control of schools. As the century progressed, liberal groups fell further and further behind Catholics in this crucial struggle, as centuries of practice in supporting charity establishments were now deployed to keep Catholic schools operating. Most importantly, Catholics were able to capitalize on *liberalités* to fund schools. A traditional form of charity support, *liberalités* came to form the centerpiece of fund-raising for Catholic schools, especially in rural areas or for girls’ schools where such gifts allowed Catholics to move faster than state players in constructing these sorts of schools. Groups such as the Société civile were born of this

process. State efforts to regulate *liberalités* ran afoul not only of property rights, but also the larger issue of inheritances that continued to roil French legal thought following the Revolution.

Yet real property was not the only property in play. There is something distinctive about schools beyond the mere physical components that comprise them. They are the location where a community's future is formed, and therefore represent something more than a barn or a field. Society at large has an alternative claim to ownership, whereby schools and the education conveyed through them comprise a form of metaphorical property. Over the course of the century, the state increasingly invoked these overarching property of education claims as an important tool to counter and eventually supersede the real property rights of those who built and supported schools. The debate over *liberalités* that opened on the eve of the Second Empire provided the means for the state to assert its rights as the metaphysical *propriétaire* of primary education in France.

CHAPTER FIVE:
ALTERNATIVES TO THE STATE—
LIBERALITÉS, DONS ET LEGS

By the early 1840s, the Association stood on the verge of a dramatic extension of the Frères schools in Angers. Certainly, the previous decade had been difficult. The liberal resurgence after 1828 resulted in the municipal subsidy to the Frères reduced to less than half what it had been under the Restoration, with the Association increasingly called upon to make up the difference. The efforts of long-serving president the Comte de Boissard to turn the Association solely to supporting Catholic education were in part a response to this new situation. Like its mutuelliste rival the Society, the Association had been reduced to door-to-door fundraising by the mid-1830s, with members assigned to escort priests through each parish to seek donations.¹ While the main Frères community located at the Tertre-St.-Laurent on the right bank of the Maine continued to flourish, the small school established in the Rue du Petit-Mule had been closed for health reasons, reducing the Frères presence in the heart of Angers proper. Yet the community of Frères had increased by 1836 to eleven members to keep up with the growing demand for classes, including evening classes for adults held from 1838 onwards.² The Association had also negotiated the purchase of two new buildings that would allow both the

¹ *Annales de l'Association*, tome III, séance of 15 November 1832.

² *Ibid.*, séances of 15 November 1836 and 19 March 1838.

replacement of the closed school in the Rue du Petit-Mule and the expansion in the formerly unserved parishes of Notre-Dame and St. Serge.³ Encouraged by all this activity—particularly the acquisition of substantial new property—the Association’s oft-times president the Comte de Boissard thought it high time “to give to our association [a] legal and solid foundation.”⁴ Fifty-two of the 54 members present at the meeting agreed to revise the original 1816 constitution, designed largely for a social organization, to accommodate the increasing role of the Association as a corporate body holding large amounts of property.

Boissard’s effort to regularize the rules and the legal status of the Association proved remarkably prescient. The new buildings costing a total of 36,000 francs and the increasing amount of funds handled annually together justified clearer and more rigorous by-laws. But a larger problem loomed for the Association that necessitated a re-conceptualization of their identity. The nature of primary education had shifted over the previous quarter century. Gone were the days of the small school supported by local notables; primary education was increasingly a large-scale undertaking requiring careful, consistent management. Buildings represented the single largest expense in the establishment of a school, but they were less and less the main concern. Schools require considerable constant upkeep: supplies such as paper and ink need to be stocked, textbooks required replacement on occasion, and routine maintenance or sanitary measures such as blanching the walls or emptying the latrines needed to be performed. Most importantly of all, the salaries of a slowly but inextricably professionalizing

³ Ibid., séances of 14 April 1835 and 12 May 1835.

⁴ Ibid., séance of 18 April 1838.

teaching corps needed paid, and new or replacement teachers attracted. More than ever, schools required a constant—and carefully managed—source of revenue.

Three main means of providing this income existed. The first was for the communes to provide funding out of their own revenues. Considered the natural source of income, the revenue stream did not work well in practice. A poor economic climate, lack of interest, inherent parsimony, political divisions among municipal councils, and (most ironically of all) the *tutelle* oversight wielded by prefects and subprefects all combined to make such revenue spotty at best. A second source of income from the schools came from the private associations such as the Society and the Association. The subscriptions taken out by members on a monthly or yearly basis provided regular—if not consistent—revenues. Like the ability to raise communal revenue, however, subscription organizations required a certain critical mass of population and resources to function effectively. Smaller communes could not generate these kinds of revenue streams. It was this reality that the Guizot laws attempted to address by increasing state funding, although such revenues continued to be insufficient.

But there was another revenue stream that could assist the founding and maintenance of schools: private philanthropy in the form of *liberalités*. Either through the agency of donations or, more importantly, legacies left in wills, such charity provided a significant source of start-up and maintenance funds for rural schools. Although such gifts could be made on behalf of a corporate body—the occasional donations made by individual members of both the Society and the Association early in their operations are one example—most such philanthropy (and all legacies, by definition) was by individuals. It was this factor that made “dons et legs” so attractive; rich, well-meaning

individuals were hardly constrained just to the larger urban areas in nineteenth century France. The origin of such resources as solely individual property made the questions concerning them much more difficult than disputes over municipal funding or school buildings. In particular, the timeframe of liberalités—especially those left *en perpetuité*—meant that state oversight was even more restricted than in the case of other forms of funding. Once assigned to a particular task, the liberalité became, in effect, beyond state oversight.

The increased importance of liberalités to educational institutions exacerbated the property debates that had already come to dominate many educational disputes. Unlike subscriptions, actions, or subsidies, liberalités represented a more-or-less permanent source of funding; once made they were less subject to political or administrative pressures. Subsidies could be cut and political changes could discourage people from joining organizations, but the one-time nature of donations and legacies prevented such control. Legacies in particular represented a problem, since the final wishes of a dying person represented a huge cultural and psychological hurdle. Finally, donations and legacies could be large enough to fund a school for decades with little external support, removing yet more techniques of control.

The only real way the state could gain control over primary education was to solve the property issue in such a way as to assert control over these liberalités—while leaving the underlying property concerns intact. The solution was to assert a new form of property, public property over which the state's claims would supersede those of other members. Through a series of steps, state officials developed a legal case for education

itself as the property of the state, and therefore requiring the subordination of other property rights.

The Return of Private Charity after the Revolution

Individual donations and legacies had been one of the chief means of funding schools (or most other social welfare institutions, for that matter) for centuries. By the eighteenth century, they were seriously under attack—Turgot’s *Encyclopedie* article on "Fondations" being only the most public expression of a general mood.⁵ The Enlightenment’s reconceptualization of the public both emphasized the creation of new education opportunities and denigrated the leaving of funds to private institutions fulfilling public functions. Left to the “frivolous vanity” of individuals seeking to be remembered eternally for their generosity, Turgot warned that such projects removed vital resources from society for unproductive and potentially detrimental ends: “If all the men who had lived had had a tomb, it would well be necessary, to find land to cultivate, to tear down those sterile monuments and mix in [to the soil] the ashes of the dead to nourish the living.”⁶ Public control of liberalités, he maintained, was the only way to insure that such charity would be used efficiently. The Revolution followed the general argument against traditional philanthropy, voting to abolish almost all legal sanction of it—and then failing to provide any alternative once it became clear that the state was not able to provide replacement sources of funds.⁷ Private charity re-emerged under the Empire as a necessary evil for a range of charity projects, including primary education.

⁵ See comments in the Introduction.

⁶ “Fondations,” in the *Encyclopedie*, 7: 75. See also Nourrisson, I: 23.

⁷ Marais, *Histoire du don*, 22-23.

The legislation concerning donations and legacies during the nineteenth century was incredibly complicated, in large part the result of the twin issues of securing equitable inheritances and fears of creating non-state controlled charitable institutions—with the latter concern gaining prominence as the century progressed. After the various experimentations of the Revolution, the Empire slowly allowed private charity to re-emerge—albeit with significant limitations. Donations and legacies to schools were authorized by the laws of 17 March 1808 and 15 November 1811, but only to pre-existing authorized establishments. Such funds could not be used to create new institutions, but the recognition granted to contributors—mainly places of honor at the annual *distributions de prix* and perhaps a listing on a plaque inside the school—publicly tied them as supporters, not patrons, of the schools.⁸ Under this system, education in all its forms remained the unquestionable property of the state.

The return of the Bourbons initially did little officially to change this—much to the chagrin of supporters seeking to return to the pre-Revolutionary situation. However, it rapidly became apparent that some form of public assistance would be necessary to complete the various projects the new regime desired to pursue. The stipulations of the ordinance of 29 February 1816 granting significant oversight powers to those funding schools was the clearest example of the compromises the new regime was willing to make. The specific mention of the powers of heirs in article 17 indicated at least a partial acceptance of liberalités left *en perpétuité*.⁹ Yet the Bourbons did not totally surrender the concept of public oversight over gifts. Despite a heated debate in both Chambers seeking to totally exempt religious bodies from governmental authorization, Lainé and other

⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁹ Reprinted in Gréard, I: 89.

liberals were able to keep a Napoleonic-era requirement of a royal ordinance for the acceptance of any liberalité over 1000 francs (law of 2 January 1817).¹⁰ Bourbon policies did dramatically extend the range of who could receive donations and legacies, but also instituted the administrative controls that would be used by later governments to rein in charitable giving.

Officials of the July Monarchy were more suspicious of charitable giving, even when they, too, needed to rely on private funding for a number of public projects. The new government increasingly distrusted the private organizations that would be accepting liberalités. Religious organizations saw a significant increase in donations and legacies in the final years of the Restoration, to levels not exceeded until the Second Empire.¹¹ The result was the institution of a policy of assessing “need” into the approval process for private philanthropy: donations that could not be justified as necessary to advance the public interest in education could be rejected by authorities.¹²

Why Private Charity?

Such individual giving did not replace the role of private associations; indeed, organized civil society would remain a vital supplier of resources to schools throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. The primary beneficiaries of private individual philanthropy, however, were not the subscriber organizations, but the smaller communes and poor districts of cities. These areas, lacking the resources to support subscriber

¹⁰ Marais, *Histoire du don*, 34-35. The Napoleonic decision was an Avis du Conseil d’État, 17 January 1806 (Adams, “In the Public Interest,” 299).

¹¹ Marais, *Histoire du don*, 165.

¹² *Ibid.*, 38-43.

organizations of their own, became a natural area of concern for state authorities and those interested expanding education, for whatever reason. If the urban areas of France provided a fertile environment for proving the importance of local initiative in the establishment of primary schooling under the Restoration, working-class districts and rural communes benefited from that experience over the rest of the nineteenth century.¹³ Although the state clearly recognized the importance of expanding schools in these districts, they presented very real problems for authorities. Often too poor to provide funding through taxation or even sufficient *retribution scolaire* for the teachers, schools in such areas needed significant amounts of funding. It is little wonder that state authorities were willing to accept assistance. Yet once these areas were provided with a school, additional aid became a double-edged sword. A second school in an area appeared initially as a mark of development or progress, but the provisions of ownership meant that philanthropists could exercise long-term control over any established schools, thereby creating competing sources of primary education. The battles that developed in the 1850s and 1860s over charitable support, especially for Catholic schools, turned exactly on this issue.

The continuation in administrative personnel insured that this approach remained policy for decades, right into the early days of the Third Republic. Although not problematic in the 1830s—the “need” for funding was too great—authorities would increasingly reign in charitable donations from the 1850s onward.

¹³ This basic idea was termed “fulfillment” by Grew and Harrigan: as certain areas of France saw a sufficient number of schools established, their interest changed to improving or fine-tuning them (*School, State and Society*, 41-44).

The Établissements d'utilité publique

One of the easiest ways for an organization to access the potential of liberalités was to become one of the recognized institutions authorized by the state to accept donations and legacies, known as an *établissement d'utilité publique*. French law gave the state the ability to authorize all donations and legacies of more than 1000 francs.¹⁴ This oversight power provided a powerful tool to influence the establishment of schools, and one that was particularly problematic for educational civil society. In short, any case-by-case approval of liberalités became susceptible to changes in the political environment and the personnel charged with granting approval. But by going through the legal procedure to be declared an *établissement d'utilité publique*, organizations could automatically accept future liberalités with limited interference from officials. Yet the process had a price: it placed within the hands of government officials both the definition of public utility and the relationship of any petitioning organization to this goal.

Unsurprisingly, charitable religious institutions were among the largest beneficiaries of such status, particularly those responsible for the operation of hospitals. Such institutions served an unquestionable public good, and the necessity of large amounts of regular funding made a simplification of the acceptance process desirable. More recently, historians such as Jean-Luc Marais, Catherine Duprat and Christine Adams have turned their attention to secular authorities' use of *établissements d'utilité publique*, particularly the *bureaux de bienfaisance*.¹⁵ These charity bodies were set up in

¹⁴ Law of 25 January 1816, quoted in Marais, 34.

¹⁵ Marais, *Histoire du don*, 187-192; Catherine Duprat, *Usage et pratiques de la philanthropie: Pauvreté, action sociale et lien social, à Paris, au cours du premier XIXe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Association pour l'étude de l'histoire de la sécurité sociale, 1996-1997); Christine Adams, "In the Public Interest: Charitable Association, the State, and the Status of *utilité publique* in Nineteenth-Century France," *Law and History Review* 25 (Summer 2007): 283-321.

each commune, and served to manage the wide range of services for the poor. Like the hospitals, sheer necessity made some simple process of acceptance of liberalités indispensable. If hospitals and charity boards could easily follow the process of becoming recognized, why not educational civil society?

The original purpose of the concept of an *établissement d'utilité publique* arose during debates on the Code Civil in 1802-1803. Revolutionary experiences had made clear the inability of the government to provide a number of key services, but the old suspicion of charitable giving as a form of egotism that was both inefficient and potentially antithetical to the public good remained strong amongst the politicians of the Consulate. The need to protect equitable inheritance, one of the most popular Revolutionary achievements, also weighed heavily on lawmakers.¹⁶ In the end, however, the provisions within the Code Civil dealing with liberalités for public uses were far more concerned with establishing some form of government *tutelle* over usage rather than how such donations were made. Article 910 of the Code Civil summarized the official government position: "Provisions made during life [*les dispositions entre vifs*] or by testament which profit hospitals, the poor of a commune, or *établissements d'utilité publique*, will not take effect except when they will have been authorized by the government."¹⁷

While the law was clear on the government's authority to authorize donations, the process of becoming an *établissement d'utilité publique* was left undefined. Two major issues grew out of this oversight. The first concerned the power of the government to

¹⁶ Marais, *Histoire du don*, 26.

¹⁷ *Code civil*, 1804. Article 937 repeated this same concept when placing the management of liberalités to the administrators of charities, but only after governmental approval (Marais, *Histoire du don*, 26).

recognize individual organizations. The provisions of Article 291 of the Penal Code restricting the right of association without governmental authorization provided a convenient means of recognizing organizations, doubly so when the law of 10 April 1834 made such recognition even tougher in the aftermath of the unrest of the early July Monarchy.¹⁸ The sporadic application of the provisions—for example, the Association’s total lack of any official approval compared with the Society’s extensive correspondence with prefect Baron de Wismes and Minister Lainé¹⁹—only confused the issue. The process was complicated further by a division of power between local and national authorities. Prefects and subprefects were charged with authorizing local bodies, but national authorities granted the designation as an *établissement d’utilité publique*. Since the decision on *utilité publique* required a de jure assessment of the structure and the goals of a private organization, applicants often were placed in a position of double jeopardy by having to be authorized twice years or decades apart. Christine Adams has documented the case of the Societies for Maternal Charity of Bordeaux and of Marseilles, both originally authorized under the Empire, locally re-authorized by prefects during the Restoration following the collapse of the national organization (the Imperial Society for Maternal Charity) to which they belonged, but forced to undergo the process again in the 1840s by national authorities to be granted the status of *utilité publique*.²⁰

The importance of this authorization was closely bound with the second issue of the *utilité publique* designation. While a private organization may have been authorized to meet, the ability to act as an autonomous legal entity, to be what was known under

¹⁸ Nourrisson, II: 363; Adams, “In the Public Interest,” 303-304.

¹⁹ See Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of the authorization of these two organizations.

²⁰ Adams, “In the Public Interest,” 299-302.

French law a *personne morale*. An entire panoply of rights, most significantly the right to own property, depended on having this legal status. A running debate since 1789 raged in French legal circles as to whether institutions or associations had legal rights in the same manner as individuals—that is, natural rights derived from the fact of existence—or rights that were solely granted by public authorities.²¹ Article 910 of the Code Civil implied that it was from state that *établissements d'utilité publique* derived their rights as a *personne morale*; jurisprudence over the remainder of the century tended to support this position even when no law specifically stipulated the fact.²² The combination of the ability to authorize associations, determine which of their activities were in the public good, and regulate the rights associations could pursue those activities gave the state the perfect set of tools to begin dismantling the concept of education as a form of private property.

The mutuellistes and charity

The mutuellistes first recognized the importance of such charitable giving. The ultraroyalist reaction of the mid-1820s provided the catalyst as governmental subsidies for *écoles mutuelles* disappeared practically overnight and subscribers became rare either due to concerns that *enseignement mutuel* would be outlawed or fears of political backlash. When the political crisis subsided, the members of the Société pour l'encouragement de l'instruction primaire in Lyon realized that being recognized as an *établissement d'utilité publique* might provide some stability in future political conflicts. That a society in Lyon hit upon this approach was likely not coincidental; the strong

²¹ Nourrisson, I: 18; Marais, *Histoire du don*, 27.

²² Marais, *Histoire du don*, 27.

Catholic presence in Lyonnais provided a potential model of using *liberalités*.²³ The Society of Lyon received their status by royal ordinance on 5 April 1829, less than a year after Villemain's reforms had allowed the *mutuellistes* to re-establish themselves.²⁴ The Société élémentaire in Paris, following events in Lyon closely, decided to apply for their own status the following year, being granted a royal ordinance issued by the new July Monarchy on 29 April 1831.²⁵

The Society of Angers, endeavoring to reconstruct itself in the aftermath of the effort to close the *école mutuelle*, regarded the efforts of Lyon's Society pour l'encouragement with interest. While the Society had retained control of the Cordeliers building, it remained financially weakened. A core number of members had stayed with the Society during the three long years of the closing of the school, and new members joined once it was clear the organization was no longer in disfavor with the government. Yet the *école mutuelle* remained an expensive undertaking on a yearly basis, and the establishment of any new schools—still a goal of the Society—would require substantially more funds than could be raised through subscriptions alone. Tapping into the private charity market appeared a natural next step. At the same meeting in early July 1829 in which a new set of governing rules were accepted, the Society began the process of applying to be similarly recognized.²⁶ The Society in Angers was recognized as an *établissement d'utilité publique* by royal ordinance of 3 December 1831, allowed them to

²³ Curtis, 26; 34.

²⁴ Reprint in Gréard, I: 174-178. Villemain's educational reforms were included in a royal ordinance of 21 April 1828.

²⁵ Ibid., I: 205-218.

²⁶ "Registre du bureau d'administration de la Société," tome I, séance of 4 July 1829, AM Angers I R 43.

“receive legacies and donations, acquiring or alienating [them] after obtaining authorization conforming to laws on the matter.”²⁷

In reality, the recognition of the Society did little to change their financial status. In place of the large donations hoped for when pursuing the policy, the *liberalités* left were usually on the order of a few hundred francs; Etienne Orye’s 1000 franc legacy was one of the few exceptions over the next thirty-five years.²⁸ When the second *école mutuelle* was built in the Boulevard de Laval in the early 1830s, funding came exclusively from a combination of an additional sale of actions and a substantial set of public subsidies.²⁹ The primary revenue source outside of member subscriptions continued to be public subsidies, either in the form of the annual municipal payment for teachers or special grants from the departmental council or Paris. These latter grants often ranged from 1500 to 3000 francs every few years, and provided the most significant source of revenue for building repairs and expansions.³⁰

The inability of the Society to capitalize on its authorization as an *établissement d’utilité publique* likely had more than one cause. One of the more promising benefits of *liberalités*, the donation of buildings in which schools could be placed, was complicated

²⁷ Ordonnance royale of 3 December 1831, AM Angers 1 R 42.

²⁸ “Dépot des Testament et Codicilles de M. Orye,” 27 June 1867, ADML 4 O 46. Some examples of smaller gifts include a legacy from Amant Fidèle Constant Bellanger in early 1849 of 100 francs (letter from the Maire of Angers to the Society, 10 February 1849, AM Angers 1 R 42), 500 francs left by a M. Heurtelou in 1841 (letter from the Prefect to the Society, 21 December 1841, AM Angers 1 R 49),

²⁹ “Registre du bureau d’administration de la Société,” tome I, séance of 11 November 1831, AM Angers 1 R 43. Included in the subsidies was 3000 francs from the departmental council that had originally been intended for a new *école des Frères* before the July Revolution (letter from the Maire of Angers to the Society, 15 July 1831, AM Angers 1 R 49).

³⁰ AM Angers 1 R 49 contains numerous pieces of correspondence from the 1830s through the late 1850s related to these requests.

by the requirements of mutuelliste pedagogy.³¹ A tendency away from direct charity appeared to be common amongst Society members, although such evidence is circumstantial at best. For example, when a Vaignard le Rueloue was offered reimbursement for an action purchased in 1824, he requested the Society keep the funds—providing they be used to pay his annual membership subscription, resulting in a net gain of zero for the Society.³² In contrast, the *actionnaires* of the Association hardly considered their contributions until the anti-clerical policies of the turn of the century forced the payment of regular dividends.

This apparent lack of charity may have been related to the most significant reason the Society failed to attract *liberalités*: the perception that the mutuellistes and secularism in general had “won” the education war of the 1830s. The stripping of subsidies and buildings for congregational schools with the advent of the July Monarchy coincided with the mutuelliste efforts to build a funding base. The windfall resulting from the shift away from congregations and the new funds made available by the *loi Guizot* appeared to the mutuellistes as proof that they had secured sufficient government support to dispense with private funding. Those mutuelliste societies which had survived the ultraroyalist reaction of 1824-1828 and who suffered the continual problems of raising funds (the Society of Baugé, for example, was requesting subsidies from the Society in Angers by 1831³³) slowly turned their schools over to municipal administrations, effectively following the model of the Society of Cholet in the 1820s. Only those organizations in

³¹ See Chapter 6 for a discussion of these requirements.

³² “Registre du bureau d’administration de la Société,” tome I, séance of 19 December 1829, AM Angers 1 R 43.

³³ *Ibid.*, séance of 22 January 1831.

larger towns like the Society of Angers, where a large subscription and charity base existed, survived the July Monarchy.

The real benefactors of the use of *liberalités* for schools would be, ironically, the Catholic against whom the *mutuellistes* had struggled. Finding themselves on the losing side of the political battle of 1830, Catholics watched as the favored status of the congregations for municipal, departmental, and state funding disappeared. Unwilling to surrender the educational terrain to secular authorities, Catholic educational civil society rallied to the occasion, and began using the approach pioneered by the *mutuellistes*. Such practices increased the tension between Catholics and state authorities.

Growing Concerns: The Rejection of the Association

The Association had a more troublesome experience in following the lead of the *mutuellistes* in this matter. The 1830s and 1840s saw a proliferation of Catholic charitable societies. Saumur would see one of the larger organizations develop in response to the expulsion of the Frères from the Récollets. A subscriber society in Cholet finally established an *école des Frères* in 1843. In smaller towns groups of notables, often led by the local curé, pooled together sufficient funds to invite in one of the smaller teaching congregations. The heated political atmosphere of the mid-1840s, when the *ultramontane* movement was beginning to flex its muscle, led to an interpretation amongst liberals that perhaps the victories of 1830 were not as complete as originally thought. Contributing to this fear, overstated as it may have been, was the lack of any alternative on the liberal side; the *mutuelliste* movement was defunct by this time with only a handful of local societies (the Society in Angers and the Société élémentaire in Paris among them)

remaining active. Catholics, although largely remaining outside the official channels of funding schools envisioned by the *loi* Guizot, were strengthening their position as one of the major education providers in France.

In Angers, the Association entered the 1840s in a very strong position and planned a major expansion of *écoles des Frères*. The centerpiece was to be a large property located in the Impasse des Jacobins known locally as the *hôtel Falloux* after its owner the Comte de Falloux (this was the father of the Alfred de Falloux who guided the drafting of the 1850 education law). Located in the center of Angers proper, the facility would finally give the Frères a permanent presence to counter the Society's school at the Cordeliers. Additional purchases included a building to be used as school for the Notre-Dame and St. Serge parishes and dedicated meeting rooms for the Association in the Rue du Volier. The outlay for these purchases was a staggering 36,000 francs, payable with interest by the end of the decade. In addition, the Association was bearing most of the annual cost of supporting the Frères, about 6,000 francs on average. Between the subscriptions and the *quêtes* (door-to-door fundraising), the Association barely met this amount most years. Surveying these figures while chairing Association meetings in the early 1840s, the Comte de Boissard's concerns were well-justified.³⁴ Without a new source of revenue and a clarification of the organization's legal status, the whole project was in jeopardy.

Boissard found an ally in the new Bishop of Angers, Guillaume Angebault. Drawing on his experiences in directing the *Soeurs de Saint-Gildas-du-Bois* and other education projects in the diocese of Nantes, Mgr. Angebault stressed from his first

³⁴ *Annales de l'Association*, tome III, séance of 7 January 1840.

meeting with the Association's executive committee the necessity of regularizing operations.³⁵ Angebault's apparent model was the Société de Providence, a Nantais Catholic organization established at the same time as the Association but devoted exclusively to education from the start.³⁶ Being a Catholic organization and already operating within traditional charity practices like the quêtes, the acceptance of liberalités was an obvious answer to the dilemma. Unlike the Society, the Association knew that private individuals were more than willing to contribute to their goals. In discussing the decision to be declared an établissement d'utilité publique, Association president the Chevalier Frédéric-Joseph de Caqueray (1771-1845) assured members that "this legal recognition is all the more urgent in that many pious and benevolent persons have manifested the intention to give to the Christian schools as soon as the society with security and legality can receive the gifts that they intend to make to it."³⁷

A request to be declared an *établissement d'utilité publique* was formally made in 1844. The Association took every effort to assure its acceptance. The organization's statutes were again rewritten, and the new name of the *Société d'encouragement en faveur des écoles chrétiennes d'Angers* assumed for the purpose (and removing all reference to politically sensitive subject of Bourbon legitimatism).³⁸ Boissard worked closely with sympathetic local député Eugène Janvier and newly-elected vice-president the Vicomte de Falloux, whose standing in Parisian literary circles was soon to be

³⁵ Registre des délibérations du Bureau [de l'Association religieuse], séance of 22 November 1842, A. Dio. Angers 5 K 21 bis.

³⁶ Suteau, 26-28.

³⁷ *Annales de l'Association*, tome IV, séance of 29 April 1844.

³⁸ Letter from the Association to the Minister of Public Instruction, 20 April 1844, AN F¹⁷ 10300.

parlayed into a political career.³⁹ De Caqueray attempted to arrange a meeting with prefect Guillaume Bellon to assuage any of his concerns, although the meeting proved impossible to schedule.⁴⁰

Despite the effort put forth by the Association to address any concerns authorities might have, the request to be recognized was rejected by the Ministry of Public Instruction on the advice of the Conseil d'État in 1846.⁴¹ Political prejudices undoubtedly played a role in the decision. Rector Pierre Henry argued against the granting of recognition on concerns of legitimist texts being used by the Frères, although a later investigation raised doubts on the accusation.⁴² But the legal reason for the rejection was founded on growing concerns about organizations capable of holding schools. In his advice to the Minister, Prefect Bellon believed that any recognition of the Association was “useless” because the Frères themselves were already authorized to accept liberalités and to hold buildings and property.⁴³ The hesitancy of the Frères to actually hold property and their increased dependence on the funding provided by the Association were beside the point for Bellon; the *écoles des Frères* would *legally* continue to exist with or without the authorization of the Association. Aware of the historical precedent of the Society's

³⁹ Letter from E. Janvier to the Minister of Public Instruction, 19 January 1845, AN F¹⁷ 10300; *Annales de l'Association*, tome IV, séance of 14 November 1844. The Vicomte Alfred de Falloux was elected vice-president of the Association at the same meeting; he resigned the position less than a year later when he entered politics as the député for Segré.

⁴⁰ *Annales de l'Association*, tome IV, séances of 13 June 1844 and of 23 January 1845.

⁴¹ Decision of the Conseil d'État, 13 December 1844, quoted in the Note pour le Minister, 4 March 1846, AN F¹⁷ 10300; *Annales de l'Association*, tome IV, séance of 14 April 1846.

⁴² Letter from the Rector to the Minister of Public Instruction, 8 November 1844, AN F¹⁷ 10300. A list of problematic books was given in a later letter from the Rector to the Minister of Public Instruction, dated 8 July 1845, AN F¹⁷ 10300.

⁴³ Letter from the Prefect of Maine-et-Loire to the Minister of Public Instruction, 21 September 1844, AN F¹⁷ 10300. See Chapter 2 for how the Frères insistence on school buildings being owned by parties other than themselves resulted in an increased public role by groups like the Association.

earlier status, Bellon argued the two situations were different; the *écoles mutuelles* of 1831 had no other institution to which to appeal for legal standing or support. A few months later, the Conseil d'État made essentially the same argument in its advice to reject the authorization.⁴⁴ Another year of petitioning by the Association and its proponents was unable to sway the Ministry of Public Instruction to reverse this initial decision.

In essence, the government was curtailing the ability to own and open schools by claiming a right of determining sufficiency. Since one group, the Frères, was already operating Catholic schools in the area, additional groups were deemed not necessary. This marked a significant change from earlier education policy, in which the tendency was to encourage schools to open as quickly as possible as long as minimal standards were set. While Bellon makes no reference to the political views of the Association that was the centerpiece of Henry's negative advice, it is difficult to believe that he was ignorant of the ramifications of authorizing the Association to open at least two new Catholic schools. Nor could he not have been aware of the dependence of the Frères on the Association. Association members made no secret of their goals in the application process, and the quarterly processions of Catholic notables and parish priests going door-to-door asking for money for Catholic schools in the chef-lieu of a department was an event only the most incompetent of prefects could have missed. Given the charged political environment of the 1840s, the approach of Bellon and the Conseil d'État has the appearance of an effort to halt the spread of Catholic schools hidden behind a thin veil of legalese.

⁴⁴ "Note pour le Conseil royal," 4 December 1844, AN F¹⁷ 10300.

The major result of the government's denial of the Association's legal status was a concern that the property currently held by the organization was in legal limbo. Without the legal recognition as an *établissement d'utilité publique*, the Association's ability to hold property under the rights of a *personne morale* were also in jeopardy. An early proposal to donate the school property to either the Frères or the Bishop of Angers was rejected due to the expense in additional taxes, as well as still saddling the Association with the original debt.⁴⁵ In the end, a third option was settled upon: the Association would create a daughter organization as a non-trading private company, a *société civile* in French legal parlance.⁴⁶ Working with local notary Pierre Dely⁴⁷, the *Société civile de la Cité* was constituted on 8 March 1849, effectively acting as a holding company for the Association's property and shielding it from the possibility of government seizure. Partnership in the *Société civile* was through the purchase of *actions* priced at 200 francs and promising 5% interest; two hundred such *actions* comprised the initial offering.⁴⁸ The company was to last for forty years, at which time the actions were to be reimbursed.

While this arrangement did not allow charitable contributions to be accepted, it did provide stability for the Frères by guaranteeing the school properties. The *Société civile* also allowed the Association to tap other forms of financing. Under the guidance of

⁴⁵ Letter from the Comte de Boissard to Député Eugene Janvier, 5 July 1843, AN F¹⁷ 10230.

⁴⁶ The first reference to the idea of establishing an *société civile* was raised by Theodore de Quatrebarbes in a presidential speech at the Association meeting on 20 November 1845 (*Annales de l'Association*, tome IV), although his comments indicate the idea had been floated earlier. The final decision was taken after an appointed commission (the names of whose members was not recorded) recommended it as the best approach (*Annales de l'Association*, tome IV, séance of 14 June 1847).

⁴⁷ Pierre Dely (1807-1873) would be the notaire for the Association and the *Société civile de la Cité* for decades. He also played a major role in reviving and firmly establishing the *Société industrielle d'Angers*—founded in 1830 by Ch. Giraud and Guillory aîné, both prominent members of the Society and an indication of the vivacity of civil society generally during the period.

⁴⁸ Bureau d'Angers, Registre des actes civils publics, 5 mars 1849 – 16 avril 1849, acte enregistrée 17 March 1849, ADML 3 Q 270.

newly-elected *directeur-gérant* (managing director) the Comte de Boissard, a loan was taken out to amortize the property purchases. By the 1860s, the Société civile began purchasing *rentes sur l'État* with the excess revenues from the quêtes, the interest on which was used to support the schools in addition to providing potential additional capital. And while the Société civile could in theory raise funding to acquire more buildings, the denial of the status as an *établissement d'utilité publique* removed the most lucrative source of expansion—*liberalités*. Future *écoles des Frères* would be installed under the control of *fabriques* or the *mense épiscopal* itself, bodies which could accept *dons et legs* and hold property. In the end, the state decision not to recognize the Association as an *établissement d'utilité publique* had resulted in solidifying property rights in the hands of a private organization or the government's own chief rival, the Catholic church.

Curtailing Private Charity: The Fabriques

When discussing education policy in nineteenth-century France, there is a tendency to speak of Catholic schools in the sense that they were owned by the Church as a corporate body. In reality, Catholic schools were owned by a whole range of institutions—virtually everyone but the Catholic Church. Private organizations like the Association comprised one group, but they tended to be susceptible to the twin problems of maintaining sufficient membership levels and governmental regulations on their operations. Congregations certainly were authorized to accept *liberalités*, although they were caught in the general suspicion of private organizations at mid-century and forced to undergo a new process of becoming recognized as *établissements d'utilité publique* in

1850s, even if they had been authorized under earlier regimes.⁴⁹ If the status of the congregations, private organizations and the Church itself to accept donations and legacies were subject to easy manipulation by authorities, one institution presented a significant problem for the state: the *fabriques*.

Why Fabriques?

As the legal representatives of a parish, they had broad powers to manage property and a legal personality to pursue their duties—including the recognition to accept donations and legacies. The fact they were located in every commune in France meant that a national network of stable institution capable of managing property over the long term was available—a feature that Catholics did not fail to recognize. The *fabriques*, therefore, were ideally suited to serve as owners of schools.

By mid-century, increasing numbers of *fabriques* were becoming owners of schools. Part of the reason was natural demographics; testaments written earlier in the century came into effect as the testators died. Joseph Desnoyers, the architect and long-time Association member (he had chaired the committees that ultimately purchased the *hôtel Falloux*) left a building and funds to the Fabrique St-Jacques in Angers to found a fourth *école des Frères* in that parish of Angers when he died in 1851; his will was written in 1841.⁵⁰ Efforts to displace Catholic schools also spurred *fabriques* into action; the *Commission des écoles chrétiennes* in Saumur was established in 1833 through the

⁴⁹ See the various authorizations for congregations active in Maine-et-Loire in AN F¹⁷ 9494. Although Adams does not discuss congregations in “In the Public Interest”, the process the congregations underwent during the Second Empire was identical to what she describes as happening to secular organizations under the late July Monarchy.

⁵⁰ Testament de Joseph Desnoyers, 28 February 1841, A. Dio. Angers P413.

fabrique of St-Pierre de Saumur to help support the Frères after being expelled from the Récollets.⁵¹ In 1856, the *fabrique* would purchase from the ville of Saumur the building housing the *école de Frères*—which had originally been left as a legacy to Saumur to establish such a school. This placed the property of the Catholic school squarely under the control of the *fabrique*, where it remained until after the turn of the century.

State authorities had little legal means at their disposal to move against the *fabriques*. The institutions were too important in managing the Church, and cutting off donations and legacies to *fabriques* risked a huge public backlash. Yet testaments leaving buildings and funds to *fabriques* “en perpetuité” and naming bishops and *curés* the executors was providing for the construction of an alternative school system. By the 1860s, the state hit upon a technique: granting themselves co-ownership powers. The Conseil d’État began arguing that since schools were communal property, all legacies left for them were to be jointly managed by the legatee—often the *fabrique*—and the commune jointly.

Vieil-Baugé and the Legs Langotière

One of the first decisions of this type concerned the legs Langotière to the *fabrique* of Vieil-Baugé in 1861. A small commune located less than two kilometers southwest of Baugé, the town was the site of the Battle of Holy Saturday (21 March 1421) during Henry V of England’s final campaign in France, although the defeat of English forces did little to halt Henry’s advance.⁵² The town remained relatively quiet for

⁵¹ Commission des écoles chrétiennes—Registre des délibérations 1833 à 1844, Archives paroissiales de St-Pierre de Saumur, boîte H.

⁵² Port, IV: 752.

the next few centuries, although a number of non-constitutional clergy practiced in the area for most of the Revolution. Vieil-Baugé hovered around 2,000 inhabitants for the first half of the nineteenth century, but the commune lost a quarter of its population during the Second Empire.⁵³ Despite the generally conservative nature of the town, the proximity of Baugé introduced some radicalization in local politics. For example, Jacques Lofficial, the ex-Napoleonic subprefect whose participation in the mutuelliste Society of Baugé had caused considerable consternation for authorities under the Restoration, was appointed as maire in 1841 and served until 1848—when he again became the subprefect of Baugé. Yet, for the most part, Vieil-Baugé was an example of the small conservative towns that were common across the French countryside.

The commune would be catapulted to national prominence over what initially appeared to be a routine inheritance case. In 1859, local notable Alexandre Henri Menoir de Langotière died. His 1856 will left to the fabrique of Vieil-Baugé a house worth 4,000 francs to be used as a girls' school and a sum of 8,000 francs in a *rente sur l'État*, the interest of which was to be used to provide two soeurs from a female religious organization to direct the school. By late 1862, the fabrique believed it had an air-tight decision on the matter; the acceptance of such bequests had been routine for decades. When the official decree was issued, however, the fabrique found itself on the receiving end of a new public policy. The key provision was Article 2 of the decree: "Not authorized, as being contrary to the laws, are the clauses of the above-cited testament of Sr. de Langotière, stipulating that the soeurs established at Vieil-Baugé will be at the

⁵³ Lebrun, *Paroisses et communes de France: Maine-et-Loire*, 439.

choice and under the supervision of the curé of this parish.”⁵⁴ Instead, the commune was named co-heir, assuming the controlling property rights—which included, potentially the ability to name the teachers. The contradicted the express statements in the will that the curé of the commune serve as executor in the choice of teachers.

The fabrique, backed by the Bishop of Angers and Catholic legal experts such as François Housset, launched a decade-long legal battle against the decision.⁵⁵ The centerpiece of their argument was property rights, now taken to include the dying wishes of the testator. The state, however, marshaled an argument that had been developing since the 1830s. Since education was itself an *utilité publique*, public authorities were obligated to exercise control over any resources that could be used to support education.⁵⁶ The maire of the commune, as the authorized representative of public authorities, had to be included among the heirs. Comparisons with the earlier struggle over the closing of the *école mutuelle* in Angers illustrate the change in approach. The Society was able to effectively battle the state to a standstill because of a real property claim after having contributed a substantial portion (one-third or one-half, depending on whether additional construction was included) of the cost of the Cordeliers property.⁵⁷ With real property in play, the issue devolved into a simple (in theory, at least) determination of which party had the controlling interest and how the minority partner would be reimbursed. While the question of the type of pedagogy to be followed in the school was at the center of the

⁵⁴ Décret impérial of 18 November 1853, AN F¹⁷ 9495.

⁵⁵ François Housset, *Mémoire ampliatif pour la fabrique de Vieil-Baugé contre la Commune de ce nom* (Paris: Renou et Maulde, 1869).

⁵⁶ Marais, *Histoire du don*, 42. The Conseil d’État had rejected a decision to implement the mandatory naming of municipal authorities as co-heirs for charities in 1837, but the concept gradually became an accepted principle of jurisprudence.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 4 for details of the situation.

dispute, it was immaterial for the legal question. The Vieil-Baugé case placed the control of education as the central legal issue. Any claims to the real property of school—the bequest itself—were predicated on who controlled the education to be given at the school. The state, through its power to define education itself as an *utilité publique*, was able to designate the commune, represented by the maire, as at least a partial property owner. Any claims to the real property of the school were subordinated to the larger claim of the state. In other words, the provisions of February 1816 ordinance guaranteeing the direction of schools to those who had funded them had been overturned through a feat of legal legerdemain. The state now claimed an *a priori* right to control schools regardless of who actually established and maintained them.

The final decision, enforced through the décret impérial of 8 July 1870, asserted the right of the commune to joint ownership of the legacy and, therefore, of the school.⁵⁸ Initially, the decision made no real difference; the Soeurs continued to teach at the school much as they would have if the curé had made the decision. But all the parties recognized the potential for the future. The collapse of Napoleon III's regime a scant few months later brought hope for a reversal of the decision. Hoping to emulate their father's generosity, three of the Langotière children made the donation of a second building valued at 3000 francs to support an *école de filles* ran by the Soeurs de la Salle de Vihiers in 1872. The school matriculated around fifty students, six of whom were on the official communal list of indigent children and entitling the school to a municipal subsidy of 100 francs (the curé organized donations for the remainder of the operating budget). Noting that the subsidy was a bit high for a mere half-dozen communal students, the rector

⁵⁸ Décret impérial, 8 July 1870, AN F¹⁷ 9495.

nonetheless wrote approvingly of the school and recommended the acceptance of the donation—with the provision that the authorization state specifically the building was to be used as a school. The donation was duly authorized on 10 March 1875.⁵⁹ The failure to name the commune as a co-beneficiary in this case did not represent a change in state attitudes, however; the intention was never for the building to house an *école communale*. Indeed, the school was effectively privatized a decade later when municipal subsidies for religious teachers were outlawed by the loi Goblet. In the end, the nascent Third Republic not only stood by the original decision to name the commune co-heir, but took the principles outlined in the controversy as the basis for a new approach to educational policy. The decision would become a model for similar decisions throughout France.⁶⁰

Conclusion: Education as the Property of the State

By the Second Empire, a new claim to property ownership came to supersede the private property rights instituted by the February 1816 ordinance. The administrative oversight envisioned as the chief role of public authorities under the early Restoration slowly proved itself inadequate as a control over a burgeoning education system. The July Monarchy's emphasis on assisting rural and smaller communes in building schools appeared to solve the problem by aligning ownership with public authorities. With the changing political winds of the late 1840s, however, this faith was misplaced: the shift to Catholic teachers was already well underway by the time the *loi Falloux* formally recognized the practice. The rapid expansion of Catholic schools—notably those

⁵⁹ Rapport du Recteur de l'Académie de Rennes, 28 December 1874; décret of 10 March 1875, both in AN F¹⁷ 9495.

⁶⁰ Details of the case are included in a footnote in Gréard's 1874 edition of education laws, as the basis of similar decisions during the first years of the Third Republic.

established independently with little or no public support beyond municipal subsidies—placed those desiring greater state oversight in a dilemma. If private ownership was sanctoset and academic oversight limited to *de jure* questions of qualifications and misconduct, how could the state have a greater say?

The solution was novel: the state asserted an overarching claim to education itself as a form of property. Through the power to define an *utilité publique*, the state slowly developed a set of principles that overrode the school control provisions of the February 1816 ordinance without undermining the principle of unalienable property ownership at the heart of nineteenth-century liberal thought. These principles allowed the state to control both the schools and to limit those organizations who sought to challenge its authority through stripping them of the rights of *personne morale* as part of an administrative process of authorizing *établissements d'utilité publique*. By separating real property from the larger metaphorical property of education itself, the state was even able to exercise control over what was legally private property—which is exactly what happened in 1900 when the Société civile was forced to pay dividends to its members at the risk of having the school buildings seized.

The Association's decision to establish the Société civile was both prescient and ultimately wrong. Boissard, Dely, and others pushing for an independent business entity to protect the physical property of their schools clearly suspected the path that the Third Republic would ultimately take: a rehash of the Revolution's property seizures. Despite the seizure of Catholic-owned schools in the aftermath of the 1905 Law of Separation of Church and State, the Société civile was able to keep the physical property of their schools—although at the heavy price of not being able to effectively influence the

operation of the schools themselves. The educational civil society, and the notables which composed it, that had done so much to establish schools found itself reduced to the status of a mere landlord.

CHAPTER SIX:
PEDAGOGIES OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

In reality, controlling schools as a physical institution was only part of the solution to gaining control of education. While restricting those who could teach and the locations in which they taught were certainly powerful tools, they left considerable latitude for public involvement in the process of education. If the public could look into schoolrooms and assess for themselves how children were doing, it could claim a right to help decide and even implement policy. At the most basic level, private organizations—particularly non-teaching groups such as the Association and the Society—derived their legitimacy from an assumption that a “good” education was obvious to any educated person. Likewise for local notables; surveillance committees established by most of the education laws of the century relied on the educational discernment of maires, curés, juges de paix, and other appointed notables. Primary education was a public institution, and the public was heavily involved.

Yet by the time of the Third Republic, the situation had changed. Private organizations that directly ran schools were disappearing. School inspection and teacher hiring were largely in the hands of academic authorities, more than ever directed out of Paris. A professionalized teaching corps debated pedagogical practice not through local public meetings and mass pamphleteering, but within the confines of professional conferences and journals. Even for Catholic education, policy decisions were more likely

to be coordinated through the annual retreats of the teaching congregations and the episcopal hierarchy. As a public institution, primary education became more dominated by specialized interests.

Central in this process was a shift in educational philosophy at both the pedagogical level and among society at large. A very public debate over education techniques started during the Restoration, and the hostility between the supporters of the congregations and the *mutuellistes* marked the lines of dispute over primary education for the remainder of the century. Yet this same hostility hid a remarkable similarity in thinking. Both sides initially viewed primary education as a means to ensure order in the aftermath of the Revolution. This provided a benchmark for the notables in making decisions concerning the operation of schools: the order within the classroom and amongst students indicated a successful teacher and school. Efforts to assess the content of education often entailed no more than quizzing students on perfunctory questions. As pedagogical interest began focusing more on how individual students learned, pedagogical competency required much greater knowledge. A successful school became identified far more with the success of individual students—success measured by increased reliance on tests, including the *dictées*—rather than a collective sense of order. An increasingly professionalized teaching corps, embracing both secular and Catholic teachers, began asserting their own authority to determine an education that was successful. The effort was blunted by notables claiming equal competence based not on a mastery of technique but an ability to ascertain the outcome of a good education.

Pedagogical Effervescence: The Pedagogies of Primary Education

Three broad pedagogical approaches were recognized by nineteenth-century education bureaucrats, and formed the foundation of public discussions of education. The oldest, effectively the practice of an individual offering instruction to students on a one-on-one basis, was referred to as the *mode individuel*. While widely denigrated even before the Revolution, the individual method exploded during the Empire and the Restoration as communes attempted to rebuild schools. Competing with the single teacher were two approaches that arose out of more community-oriented educational concerns. The methods pioneered by Catholic educators in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, best exemplified by the prolific Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes, were well-known throughout most of France. The *mode simultan * grouped students into classes of rough comparable ability, allowing teachers to instruct larger groups of students using standardized curricula. Napoleon’s re-authorization of the teaching congregations allowed the popular teachers to return, although their decimated ranks would not fully recover until well into the July Monarchy. Finally, a new technique was imported from Britain. Dubbed the *mode mutuelle* after the practice of using advanced students as assistant teachers, the approach enjoyed strong support in liberal circles, where it was promoted as a means to educate larger numbers of students more quickly than the *mode simultan *.

As the academic bureaucratic infrastructure became elucidated more fully from the July Monarchy onwards, the pedagogical landscape underwent significant changes. The *mode individuel* became officially condemned, although it would be a generation before the last of these teachers retired or were replaced. With the regulation of 19 July

1833, a working knowledge of both the *mode simultané* and the *mode mutuelle* was required before the granting of the *brevet de capacité*; the École Normale d'Angers made arrangements with both the Society's schools and those of the Frères to hold practicums for this purpose.¹ Yet the *mode mutuelle* was already waning in popularity, and a new distinctly French pedagogy, based in large part on the Frères' *mode simultané*, was slowly developing towards which all schools were moving. In the public debates and amongst academic bureaucrats, the two methods remained conceptually separated—the result of the politics embodied in the two approaches. Even while the pedagogies converged, the ideological origins, Catholic and liberal, remained dominant in most people's thinking.

Mode individuel

The most basic, and therefore by far the most common, way of educating students was to gather a small number around a single teacher, with each student receiving individual instruction. Dubbed the *mode individuel* by nineteenth-century bureaucrats, the technique basically allowed a teacher to collect a number of (hopefully paying) students who were then instructed individually. The practice had considerable appeal for early modern society. The solitary teacher met the growing need for education, but did not require an extensive public investment since he (or more rarely she) was paid directly by parents. The fee-based nature of the schooling served as an efficient gate-keeping mechanism, providing an expansion of instruction beyond the college system but still limiting it to only the better-off members of the local community. Nor did such schools

¹ *Guide des écoles primaires*, 73; for the École Normale d'Angers, see Bucher, *Une aventure*, 226.

conflict with the catechism classes of the local curé—classes which held significantly more importance for local populations and authorities. In the best cases, the teachers were respected within the community as a resource. Monsieur Berthier, the teacher of the village *école mixte* in Rétif de la Bretonne’s *La vie de mon père* (1779), is praised for the “familiar lessons of ordinary life, between Husband and Wife, Brother and Sister, et cetera” which because of Berthier’s large family “appeared as only the fruit of his experiences.”² Only later is it realized the curriculum had been planned in detail with the village curé, an indication of the close connection between the schoolteacher and public authorities even at this early stage.

Yet such advantages were balanced by the acknowledged drawbacks, and the single-tutor “schools” long were an object of disparagement. The image of the half-literate “scholar,” ensconced in his home surrounded by dirty children who amused themselves while he directed attention to a single student at a time became a trope of popular French thinking.³ A standardized curriculum was impossible when instruction depended on the contents of the teacher’s own library or whatever books could be obtained by the students’ parents. Many teachers had a reputation of being too ready to employ ridicule or corporal punishment, particularly the dreaded *fêrule*, to keep students in line. Morality was another concern; the isolated status of teachers within the community was believed to contribute to a lack of restraint. Although in a different social

² Nicolas-Edme Rétif de la Bretonne, *La vie de mon père*, 3rd ed. (Neufchatel: n.p., 1788 [1779]), 31.

³ François Lebrun, Marc Venard, and Jean Quéniart, *Histoire générale de l’enseignement et de l’éducation en France, tome II: De Gutenberg aux Lumières (1480-1789)* (Paris: Perrin “Collection Tempus”, 2003 [1981]), 434-435.

context, Stendhal's Julien Sorel embodied the wanton ways of immorality and drunkenness often suspected of rural (and not a few urban) teachers.⁴

These complaints became magnified in the aftermath of the Revolution. Individual teachers provided a ready means of re-establishing some level of education after the ravages of the Revolution—and there were plenty of persons, qualified or not, willing to tutor students for money. Many of the first schools in Maine-et-Loire were held by such teachers. Yet political and academic authorities were understandably nervous with the lack of an effective way to police either the content being taught or the conduct of the teachers. Napoleon fumed against such teachers, preferring the Frères to “a half-baked scholar who has no basis for his moral principles and no firm ideas at all.”⁵ Individual teachers were accepted during much of the Restoration, but only as an interim necessity until schools utilizing the *mode simultané* or the *mode mutuelle* could be constructed. But the days of this old teaching approach were numbered.

By the end of the 1820s, the emergence of the first generation of restored Catholic schools and of *écoles mutuelles* had done much to undermine the prospects of the older pedagogy. The two new methods offered faster, more consistent, and better disciplined schools, the first feature of particular interest to communes seeking to reduce costs. Moreover, they enjoyed the overwhelming support of academic authorities, who sought some unity on the curriculum and remained suspicious of unregulated teachers. By 1829, Minister of Public Instruction Vatimesnil could clearly express frustration with the *mode*

⁴ Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir: Chronique de 1830* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1997 [1830]). For examples of the fears of immorality of teachers, see the warnings in *Manuel complet de l'enseignement mutuel, ou instructions pour les fondateurs et les directeurs des écoles d'après la méthode mutuelle* (Paris: Paul Dupont et L. Hachette, 1834), 163-165. Weber gives numerous examples of moral problems from inspection reports in *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 305-307.

⁵ Quoted in Dansette, I: 147-148.

individuel in a circular to academic officials: “It is so defective in all points, it consumes so miserably the time of children, it is the habitual cause of such abuse and disorder, that one could not too soon come to suppress it in the double interest of instruction and of morals.”⁶ Vativesnil’s attack was possible largely because alternative pedagogies, complete with rigorous teacher training and some unity of technique and curriculum, had demonstrated their worth.

The Frères and *Mode Simultané*

The problems of the individual teacher were recognized well before the Revolution. By the seventeenth century, the interrelated pressures of increased interest in education among the populace and simmering tensions between Protestants and Catholics resulted in effervescent efforts in school expansion and pedagogical innovation. Within this context, the twin concerns of discipline and curricular (read doctrinal) purity drove pedagogical ideals away from the isolated, single teacher model towards more structured, institutionalized, and standardized paradigms. In the French case, the primary innovators—the Jesuits, the Oratoriens, Charles Démi, the Ursulines, Nicolas Roland, and numerous others—all developed out of the Catholic education tradition, likely the result of efforts to develop a Catholic answer to the Protestant emphasis on individual education.⁷ By the last quarter of the sixteenth century, a Catholic model of popular schooling had been established. It was from this model that the most important organizer

⁶ Circulaire of 31 January 1829, quoted in Pierre Giolitto, *Histoire de l’enseignement primaire au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Nathan, 1983), 18.

⁷ Ashworth, “L’école, l’État et société civile en France depuis le XVIe siècle,” I:220. Ashworth and others have noted that the number of Protestant schools in France was hardly a threat to the Catholics; the ideological need to defeat the Protestants at their own game was the driving force. For the Catholic innovators that influenced De La Salle, see Rigault, I: 540-541.

of primary education, Jean-Baptiste De La Salle (1651-1719), developed the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes and the distinctive pedagogy that would influence generations of educators.

Born into a well-off bourgeois family in Reims and early entering the path of priesthood early, popular education was not originally an interest. In the late 1670s, De La Salle began assisting Nicolas Roland (1642-1678), a canon in Reims, with a series of schools for orphaned and abandoned girls; these schools were staffed by a congregation guided by Roland known as the Soeurs de l'Enfant-Jésus. Direction of the congregation fell to De La Salle with the untimely death of Roland, and educational matters began to consume more of his time. He found a rich discussion. In Lyon, priest Charles Démiá (1637-1689) had argued in his *Remonstrances* (1666) to merchants and other civic leaders that the education of the poor was not only part of the Christian duty, but also necessary to provide the state with productive and obedient citizens; a series of schools were soon founded to meet these goals.⁸ Démiá's arguments made a deep impression of De La Salle, and the children of artisans and the poor would become the focus of his efforts. The founder's vision was incorporated into the core purposes of the order:

This Institut is of the greatest necessity, because the artisans and the poor ordinarily have been little instructed, and occupied all day by earning their living and that of their children, cannot give them [their children] themselves the instructions that are necessary to them, and an education honest and christian.⁹

Closer to home, De La Salle made the acquaintance of a layman, Adrien Nyel, who had been summoned to Reims by local widow Mme. de Maillefer to establish a school for

⁸ Rigault, I: 66-69.

⁹ Chapter I, article 4, *Règles et constitutions de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes, approuvées par N. S. P. le Pape Benoît XIII* (Versailles: Imprimerie de Beau Jeune, 1852), 2.

poor boys, following his apparent success in similar programs at Rouen.¹⁰ De La Salle soon realized that while Nyel's approach had potential, the lack of an adequately-trained teaching corps would eventually cause the schools (expanding rapidly in the early 1680s at Nyel's insistence) to diminish in quality. In May 1684, De La Salle called together teachers from all the schools that Nyel founded to organize the Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. The new congregation kept the organizational model of a traditional religious order, but its members were exclusively laymen, a decision made to maintain independence from the Church hierarchy. De La Salle devoted the remainder of his life to questions of education. The emphasis on the children of the lower classes heavily influenced the resultant pedagogy, two components of which are particularly noteworthy.

The first concerned the curriculum, as De La Salle realized that a more practical course of studies than the contemporary emphasis on Latin and the *éducation de goût* stressing the rhetoric and the style of classical authors was necessary. He therefore broke with the reigning educational paradigms of the day. French rather than Latin formed the foundation for instruction; Latin reading instruction followed only once a student had mastered French.¹¹ The 1811 edition of the *Conduite des Écoles*, the first used to guide the post-Revolution Institut, allowed students twelve or older to move directly from French reading to French writing classes, bypassing Latin in its entirety for these students who were likely to soon enter into apprenticeship programs.¹² Institut historian André Prévot has argued that the recognition of many of their students would be entering trades

¹⁰ John William Adamson, *Pioneers of Modern Education, 1600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 213-219; Battersby, *De La Salle*, 35-36.

¹¹ This requirement was stated in Chapter VII, article 4 of the Institut's rules: "They will teach the students to read 1. French, 2. Latin, 3. handwritten letters, 4. to write" (*Règles et constitutions de l'Institut*, 16). See also Battersby, *De La Salle*, 15-17.

¹² *Conduite des Écoles*, 67ff.

rather than professions structured the Frères pedagogical thinking; terms like “métier” figure prominently in the writings of De La Salle and other Frères on the content of instruction.¹³ Furthermore, instruction in the reading of handwriting (an indispensable skill before the widespread introduction of the typewriter) focused on the everyday documents—letters, invoices, receipts and leases—students could be expected to encounter regularly.¹⁴ De La Salle’s program truly was popular in the sense of giving a practical education attractive to many non-elite Frenchmen.

The second innovation concerned the grouping of students according to academic ability. This was partially the result of De La Salle’s conception of a dedicated teaching community, that required a minimum of three Frères for each school. With multiple teachers available, it was possible to hold separate classes. A traditional breakdown of material—whereby students were expected to know how to read competently before being taught writing, and reading and writing being seen as necessary for instruction in basic mathematics—provided a simple framework upon which to divide classes. Students could be assessed at various stages and assigned to levels based on ability as their education advanced. After the introductory classes covering the alphabet and basic syllables, a typical class under a single teacher would have three groups of students (*commerçants, médiocres* and *avancés*), usually seated together by group.¹⁵ Lessons based on a common theme would be given to each group in turn; thus, the students would be instructed simultaneously, hence the term *mode simultanée*. The teacher would then

¹³ André Prévot, *L'Enseignement technique chez les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes au XVIIIe et au XIXe siècles* (Paris: Liget, 1964), 9-13.

¹⁴ *Conduite des Écoles*, 65-66.

¹⁵ *Conduite des écoles*, 38-39.

move between the three groups, checking assignments and offering specialized instruction to bring individual students up to speed. One benefit of this arrangement was that students were constantly exposed to a review of material. Promotion was determined by a review of work by the senior member of the community, the Frère Director, or a designated inspector for larger schools.¹⁶

Such a complicated pedagogy required a well-trained teaching corps operating within a standardized curriculum. The result was the most significant innovation of De La Salle: a series of novitiates to train teachers. The first was the house where the order was founded in Reims, moved to the Saint Sulpice parish in Paris in 1688. In 1705 the novitiate was established at Saint-Yon in Rouen; the subsequent association of the Institut with this house would earn them the sobriquet “Frères de Saint-Yon.” Additional novitiates were opened throughout the eighteenth-century to keep up with the demand for teachers; Angers’ *école des Frères* had a novitiate attached. This system ensured the Institut prospered in the last decades of the ancien régime by delivering trained teachers for the ever increasing number of students.

The benefits of De La Salle’s pedagogy, combined with a successful organizational model of Frères communities supported locally by municipal councils or private associations, helped the Frères spread across France in the eighteenth century. The basics of the teaching method were adopted by other teaching congregations, even if some of the stricter requirements (such as the minimum of three members to open a community) were often ignored as a matter of practicality. This success made them a target during the Revolution; the order suffered considerably, and were forced to re-

¹⁶ Ibid., 43.

locate operations to Rome where they enjoyed the protection of Pope Pius VI. Yet the pedagogy of the Frères continued to exercise influence on French educational thinking. A M. Gaudin praised the *Conduite des écoles* as an acceptable guide before the Committee on Public Instruction in April 1792.¹⁷ More importantly, the idea of a trained teaching corps was recognized as indispensable for a national education project. While the Revolution was never able to carry out its plans, the close association of elements of De La Salle's pedagogy with the Revolutionary heritage would become an important marker for the future.

The Concordat paved the way for the Frères to return to France, and Napoleon gave them a prominent place in his education plans. While the Frères struggled to re-establish themselves, serious problems were becoming evident with their method, the lack of trained teachers being the most significant. Not only had the Revolution decimated the ranks of Frères, the requirement of a minimum of three teachers for each school made training a new generation of teachers a slow process. Yet the demand for the teaching of the Frères was loud, and some believed that a solution lay in modifying De La Salle's program to allow for a single teacher. A curé in the Breton commune of Auray (Morbihan), Gabriel Deshayes (1767-1841), was the most influential proponent of an alternative approach. Deshayes had played the pivotal role in establishing the first post-Revolutionary Frères community in Brittany in 1811, as well as numerous other educational projects.¹⁸ By the first years of the Restoration, he became convinced that a single teacher thoroughly trained in the Frères' method could just as effectively maintain

¹⁷ Quoted in Battersby, *De La Salle*, 76.

¹⁸ Louis Pérouas, *Gabriel Deshayes: Un grand pionnier de la restauration catholique dans l'Ouest de la France (1767-1841)* (Paris: Éditions Don Bosco, 2003), 32-34.

a small school, thereby solving the teacher supply problem and offering an alternative to the traditional individual teacher for small rural communes. Another priest at Saint-Brieuc (Côtes-du-Nord) had reached the same conclusion: Jean-Marie-Robert de la Mennais (1780-1860), older brother to the Catholic philosopher Félicité de la Mennais. In June 1819, Deshayes and de la Mennais established the Frères de l'Instruction chrétienne, the first of the smaller congregations commonly referred to as *petits frères*.¹⁹ Deshayes' extensive connections with female congregations in western France led to similar practices being instituted in the Filles de la Sagesse, the Soeurs de Saint-Gildas-de-Bois (with the assistance of young Nantais priest Guillaume Angebault, the future Bishop of Angers), and the Soeurs de l'Instruction chrétienne.²⁰ Deshayes' basic model of the Frères' pedagogical techniques in a single teacher school made Catholic education available on a much larger scale than was possible under the ancien régime, and was used in one version or another by many of the smaller teaching congregations throughout the nineteenth century.

Enseignement Mutuel

Deshayes was not alone in attempting to create a model of education that was simultaneously rigorous and available to even the smallest community. As Deshayes struggled to get his congregations organized, a new pedagogical approach was spreading across France: *enseignement mutuel*. The origins of the technique were actually English—or, more precisely, among the English population in Madras, India. Andrew Bell (1753-1832), a Scottish Anglican minister, was master of the Military Male Orphan

¹⁹ Ibid., 59-79; Zind, *Les nouvelles congrégations*, 12ff.

²⁰ Pérouas, 43-55.

Asylum, established in 1789 for the sons of military members killed or wounded in India. Faced with the large number of charges, Bell experimented with allowing students to serve as tutors, thereby reducing the workload on teachers. Key to the method was a very elaborate and regulated classroom organization that imparted both discipline and a desire to participate amongst the students:

It is the division of labour, which leaves to the master the simple and easy charge of directing, regulating, and controlling his intellectual and moral machine. It is the uninterrupted succession of short and easy lessons—It is the adaptation of every task to the ready capacity of the scholar, which renders the yoke of learning easy, and its burden light. It is the perpetual presence and never-ceasing vigilance of its numerous overseers, which preclude idleness, ensure diligence, prevent ill behaviour of every sort, and almost supercede the necessity of punishment. It is example, method, general laws, and equal justice, which take hold of children, by their love of imitation, and their sense of fitness and propriety, and obtain an immediate and willing conformity.²¹

Bell claimed amazing success for his school, and wrote a report, “An Experiment in Education Made at the Male Asylum at Madras,” upon his return to England in 1797, where the few printed copies were circulated amongst friends. Through an acquaintance, the report arrived into the hands of Samuel Nichols, the master of London’s oldest Protestant school, St. Botolph’s in Aldgate.²² Nichols adopted Bell’s system in early 1798; the following year the mayor of Kendal, Cumbria, the physician Dr. Briggs, found in Bell’s method a cost-effective means of rural education, helping galvanize the establishment of charity schools using variations of the technique.

Bell’s reticence to promote his system, however, left the field open to rivals also experimenting with peer-teacher models. The most important of these, and the one whose

²¹ Andrew Bell, *The Madras School, or Elements of Tuition* (London: J. Murray, 1808), 3-4.

²² Robert Southey and Charles Cuthbert Southey, *The Life of the Rev. Andrew Bell*, 3 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1844), II: 49-50. For the publication history of Bell’s report, see David Salmon, *Joseph Lancaster* (London and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1904), 22.

name became most associated with the system, was Joseph Lancaster (1778-1832). The son of a Quaker merchant, he opened a school in Borough Road, London in 1801, advertising education that would be free or “those who do not wish to have education for nothing may pay for it if they please.”²³ The lack of steady income generated by such a policy left Lancaster unable to afford assistants, and soon he was relying on advanced students who had mastered a particular lesson to help others. Pleased with the results of the system, Lancaster worked to propagate the method. In contrast to Bell, he had a flair for publicity. Beginning in 1803, he began self-publishing a series of pamphlets promoting his method; the most complete of these, *The British System of Education* (1810), became the standard reference for Lancasterian schools established as far afield as Canada and the United States. Lancaster also built a nation-wide network of patrons, starting with a small number of subscribers for his Borough Road school but eventually including the King and large numbers of the royal household.²⁴ By 1808, he developed this patronage network into a full-fledged subscription-based society, which became the forerunner of the British and Foreign School Society prominent later in the century.

It was Lancaster’s pamphlets and schools that exercised the decisive influence on the French mutuellistes, many of whom were *émigrés* dislocated during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic turmoils. National leaders such as the Duc de la Rochefoucaud-Liancourt (1747-1827) likely had their first encounter with Lancasterian

²³ Quoted in Jeffrey Stern, “Introduction,” in Joseph Lancaster, *Seven Pamphlets: Joseph Lancaster*, with an introduction by Jeffrey Stern (Bristol and Taipei: Thoemmes Press and Unifacmanu Trading Company, 1995), vii; Salmon, *Joseph Lancaster*, 16. The quote is from the sign Lancaster posted at the front of his school.

²⁴ Salmon, 16-19.

schools as exiles in England, as did local Angevin activist abbé Joachim Tardy.²⁵ Alexandre de Laborde (1773-1842) toured Lancasterian schools while in exile in England during the Hundred Days; his *Plan d'éducation pour les enfants pauvres* would become, along with Rochefoucauld-Liancourt's translation of *The British System of Education*, one of the foundational documents of the mutuelliste movement.²⁶ Yet Bell's method was hardly unknown, and other child-centric pedagogies were being implemented across Europe. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), for example, established an orphanage school at Burgdorf in Switzerland. The system devised at this school, detailed in "Wie Gertrud ihre Kinder lehrt" ("How Gertrude Teaches Her Children," 1801), was hugely popular in central Europe, and was mentioned frequently by *mutuellistes* as an example of how widespread such child-centric pedagogies were in Europe.²⁷ It is possible that the Baron de Gérando, another of the mutuelliste leaders, saw a similar method at work in Switzerland during the years of his exile.

The prime interest in *enseignement mutuel* lay with the alleged efficiency of education, measured by two variables: cost and speed. In theory, most *écoles mutuelles*

²⁵ François-Alexandre-Frédéric de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt fled France following the events of 10 August 1792 and spent some time at Bury-St-Edmunds with the English agronomist Arthur Young (Charles Defodon, "La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt," in *Nouveau dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, ed. Ferdinand Buisson (Paris: Hachette, 1911); Tronchot, "L'Enseignement mutuel en France," I:105). Abbé Marie-Joachim Tardy (1755-1819), the first president and driving force behind the Society, had passed most of the Revolution writing a French dictionary and guides for French *émigrés* in London (Port, IV: 460).

²⁶ Alexandre de Laborde, *Plan d'éducation pour les enfants pauvres, d'après les deux méthodes combinées du docteur Bell et de M. Lancaster*, 2nd ed. (Paris: L. Colas, 1818); Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, trans., *Système anglais d'instruction, ou Recueil complet des améliorations et inventions mises en pratique aux écoles royales en Angleterre* (Paris: n.p, 1815).

²⁷ Edward Biber, *Henry Pestalozzi, and His Plan of Education* (London: John Souter, 1831), 47-51; 65-67. The Gertrude of the title was a reference to the heroine of Pestalozzi's popular 1781 novel *Leonard and Gertrude*.

required only a single teacher who would be charged with up to a few hundred students. The single teacher represented considerable savings in salary and lodging, especially in larger urban areas where the number of potential students was large; it also appeared to solve the issue of the limited supply of teachers that were available in post-Revolutionary France. If cost was the concern on the side of the providers of education, speed was of the utmost importance to parents. Parents wanted their children to gain at least the rudiments of education, but were constrained financially to turn children to productive work as soon as possible. The eighteen month program offered by *enseignement mutuel* met this requirement.

The capacity of a single teacher to handle the huge number of students of different levels of ability depended on an unique classroom organization, both pedagogically and spatially. For each subject—reading, writing, and arithmetic—the students were sorted into one of eight sections or *classes*. Each *classe* was assigned to a single *banc* (preferably a long bench-and-desk combination, although a table would do), all of which faced the raised platform from which the teacher instructed. The *banc* of the beginning (often but not always the youngest) students, sitting closest to the teacher, had desk tops containing boxes of sand, which provided a cheap, reusable surface for beginners to practice letter and number formation. The other seven *bancs* had wooden tops for students to practice writing. Only the eighth class was allowed to write with ink pens and paper; the less advanced classes wrote on slate boards with chalk, an innovation that promised to reduce the expenses of ink and paper vis-à-vis the schools of the Frères.²⁸

²⁸ Le Bas, *Coup-d'oeil*, 18.

Instruction in a given subject proceeded by classe. The instruction of basic writing skills was the typical example used to illustrate the method.²⁹ After all the students were seated, the teacher began the lesson by teaching to the first class, demonstrating the formation of a particular letter—“A” serves the purpose as well as any. He (or she) would show how to form the letter, which the students would then duplicate in the sandboxes in front of them. The students would then be given a simple assignment, and a moniteur (see below) would assist. The teacher would then move to the next class, and give a lecture on writing the same letter as part of two-letter syllables, such as “an”. After the lesson, the second class would be given an assignment, and the teacher would move to the third class where the lesson would include three-letter syllables. Instruction continued all the way up to the eighth class, where the lesson would be four-syllable words using the letter. Basic arithmetic was originally subject to a more complex procedure, but by the late 1820s pedagogical practice was based on the developmental model divided into eight classes.³⁰ Such a progression reinforced the lesson for all students. Less advanced students, by hearing the lessons of the upper classes, could begin to understand where they were heading, while advance students were subjected to a constant review by hearing the beginning lessons.

Once all eight classes had been instructed and the practice assignments completed, the next subject would be taught. This was one of the fundamental changes that *enseignement mutuel* brought to French pedagogy: concurrent instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. Whereas the Frères divided classes based on mastery of these

²⁹ *Guide de l'enseignement mutuel, avec graveurs et tableaux*, 2nd ed. (Paris: L. Colas, 1818), 43-58. L. Colas was the house printer for the Société élémentaire.

³⁰ *Guide de l'enseignement mutuel*, 77-80; *Manuel complet de l'enseignement mutuel*, 58-61.

subjects successively, the *mutuellistes* taught each subject each day, dividing students according to ability within each subject. While pedagogically sophisticated, the practice created one huge hurdle: moving over a hundred students into new arrangements within a single room. A complicated series of signals, ranging from motions and taps from the teacher's baton (*baguette*) to flags attached to the ends of the bancs to signal when classes were finished with assignments, were employed in an effort to impose some level of order during these changes.

Central to *enseignement mutuel* was the use of advanced students known as *moniteurs*—the root of the term monitorial system. At the most basic level, *moniteurs* served as mentors or teaching assistants, guiding younger students in exercises while the teacher was engaged in instructing each class in turn. As the teacher moved from one class to the next, the *moniteurs* for a particular class would supervise assignments. Above the *moniteurs particuliers* stood the *moniteurs généraux*, older students who were charged with filling in as needed and serving to maintain the general level of discipline in the school.

The most important duty of the *moniteurs* was teaching reading in the distinctive reading circles (see Figure 3). These pedagogical spaces, where *moniteurs* directly instructed other students, became the emblematic symbol of *enseignement mutuel*; the Société élémentaire used an engraving of a reading circle as their letterhead during the early Restoration. Reading groups of approximately ten students would gather around semi-circular markings or railings placed along the classroom walls, with a *moniteur* in the center.³¹ The *moniteur* would point to a written example on a poster or board, asking

³¹ *Guide de l'enseignement mutuel*, 58-77; *Le coup-d'oeil*, 23-26; *Manuel complet de l'enseignement mutuel*, 48-57.

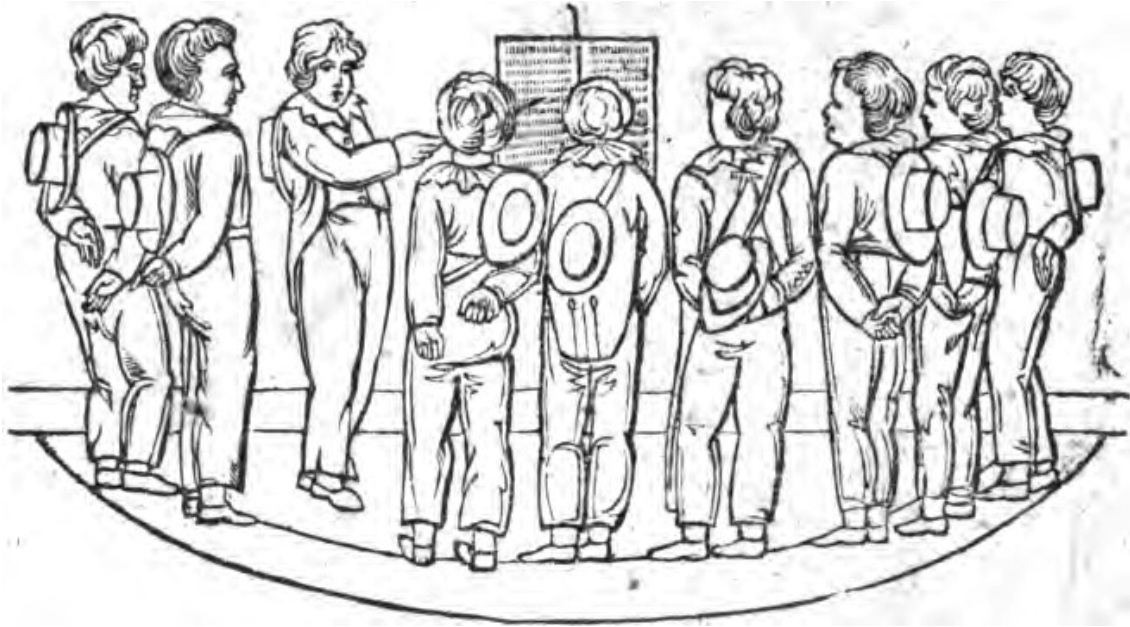


Figure 3: The prototypical reading circle, with moniteur directing other students. From Joseph Lancaster, *The Lancasterian System of Education, with Improvements* (Baltimore: Wm. Ogden Miles, 1821), 31.

each student in turn to read the passage. The first student to correctly read the line advanced to the “front” of the group (the position furthest to the moniteur’s right), with the others arranging themselves accordingly. If a student misread a line, he or she surrendered their place to the first student who read the line correctly. At the end of the session, the student in the first position would receive recognition of his performance: public acclaim, a *billet* that could be redeemed for a few centimes, a piece of candy, or a small token or medallion.

Behavior and comportment were the basis of selecting moniteurs, more so than mastery of subject matter. “To be nominated moniteur général,” the 1834 *Manuel complet de l’enseignement mutuel* advised, “it is necessary to be distinguished by one’s

good conduct and one's moral firmness rather than by the superiority of instruction."³²

Those selected attended a special class session before the beginning of each day to be instructed in the specific exercises. Moniteurs, like well-performing students, were to be rewarded with small tokens, although these were often substantially better than those for students. Small cash payments—up to fifty centimes—and books were often used.³³

Naturally, the moniteurs were also held to much higher standards than other students. If found engaged in misconduct—including abuse of their charges—moniteurs could expect severe and public punishment that at minimum would entail their removal from their position.³⁴ Yet many of these moniteurs proved to be exemplary students, and a number were offered the opportunity to help establish other schools or continue their education. Jean Delaunay, one of the first *moniteurs généraux* for Gellerat's school in Angers, was dispatched to a new school in Le Mans (where his performance was praised by the prefect) and received a position in the École des Beaux-Arts in Angers through the recommendations of Society members.³⁵

³² *Manuel complet de l'enseignement mutuel* (Paris: Paul Dupont and L. Hachette, 1834), 27.

³³ *Guide de l'enseignement mutuel*, 204. The *Guide* even recommended having a box near the door of the school where visitors could donate small change that would then be divided weekly amongst the moniteurs (20). The most popular books amongst the mutuellistes tended to be almanachs, often supplied by the Société élémentaire in Paris through the offices of the prefecture (see letter from the Société élémentaire to the Prefect, 1 February 1819 and other examples in ADML 77 T 1).

³⁴ *Le coup-d'oeil*, 20. Theft in schools was a common complaint, and occasionally moniteurs were identified as the culprits. For an example, see letter from Tardy to the Prefect, 31 December 1817, ADML 77 T 3.

³⁵ Letter from the Prefect of the Sarthe to the Society, 4 April 1818, ADML 77 T 5; Assemblée générale of the Society, 19 August 1819, AN F¹⁷ 11757. A second moniteur, identified only as "jeune Richard" and who had assisted in establishing schools in Baugé and Cholet, was also awarded a position at the École des Beaux-Arts later the same year (Assemblée générale of the Society, 30 December 1819, AN F¹⁷ 11757).

Towards a French Method of Education

Despite the extensive amounts of official support thrown behind *enseignement mutuel* during the Restoration, serious doubts about the method had emerged by 1830. The chief problem was the necessity of having a large number of students and the sheer expense involved in constructing the specialty classrooms, neither of which made the technique acceptable to the small towns which became the new focus of education policy for the July Monarchy. Former teaching student and publisher Louis Hachette, whose manual *Guide des écoles primaires* saw five editions by 1834, admitted by the early 1830s that the full effectiveness of the method was obtained only in large urban areas.³⁶ Moreover, doubts began to be raised about the effectiveness of the method. Many educators began to find the rigid mechanism of *enseignement mutuel* non-conducive to student learning. Teacher quality in the mutuelliste schools, furthermore, came under question. Training for mutuelliste teachers continued to be conducted through a mentorship system, and the quality suffered enormously. While the main École Normale Élémentaire in Paris remained under the direction of one of the first mutuelliste teachers in France, Louis-Charles Sarazin (1797-1865), it alone could not produce enough new teachers to meet growing demand, and the old *écoles modèles mutuelles* were not recognized under the Guizot regime.³⁷

The early July Monarchy promised to be an era of resurgence for the mutuellistes, as commune after commune opened “écoles mutuelles” to the acclamation of liberal

³⁶ *Guide des écoles primaires*, 5th ed. (Paris: L. Hachette, 1834), 69-70. Louis Hachette (1800-1864) was a student at the École Normale Supérieure until expelled for political activism in 1822. His initial publishing inventory was built on pedagogical works, dictionaries, and translations of the classics, only moving into popular works in mid-century.

³⁷ Tronchot, “L’enseignement mutuel en France,” III: 247; for information on Sarazin, see Eugène Brouard, “Sarazin,” in *Dictionnaire pédagogique*.

municipal councils and authorities in Paris. But, in truth, *enseignement mutuel* was defunct as a pedagogy by the mid-1830s. Many of the new schools were mutuelliste in name only, adopting the moniker to garner political support but relying on imperfect understandings of the technique or even using the *mode simultan e* borrowed from the congregations. The Society grew concerned as members of the administrative bureau noted that “many country schools taking the title of * coles d’enseignement mutuel* do not follow at all or at least very imperfectly the method.”³⁸ A member of the bureau, a M. Genevraye, was dispatched to visit one such school at Brissac; his report—delayed for six months as he attempted fruitlessly to meet with the director of the school—concluded that “these schools are far from following the methods indicated by the manual.”³⁹

But the Society was fighting a losing battle. While the *mode mutuel* continued to be included in the curriculum of the new  cole Normale d’Angers (whose first principal was the Society’s own Le Bas), the Society’s own teachers and sympathetic members were modifying their practices, spurred by discussions occurring in mutuelliste circles across France.⁴⁰ Even the role of the moniteurs were changing. In March 1834, the Society agreed to pay two graduates of the * cole de filles*, Josephine Rousseau and Rose B rard, a set salary as to act as moniteurs until they could be placed as teachers in their own schools.⁴¹ These moniteurs became, in effect, *sous-ma tresses* charged with their own class sections under the supervision of Mme. Gellerat—a situation barely

³⁸ *Registre du bureau d’administration de la Soci t *, tome I, s ance of 4 December 1834, AM Angers 1 R 43.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, s ance of 5 June 1833.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, s ances of 18 August 1832 and 22 November 1833.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, s ance of 17 March 1834. The salaries were only 100 francs per year, about half of the minimum salary for a communal school mistress in the period.

distinguishable from that of the congregations. Paid sous-maîtres replacing student moniteurs became the practice for the Society after July 1837; their schools were also now mutuelliste in name only.⁴² The last traditional *école mutuelle* in Maine-et-Loire, complete with long bancs and reading circles, was opened in Chazé-sur-Argos in 1836.

With the demise of *enseignement mutuel* in the 1830s, the development of a distinctively French pedagogical model began in earnest. The wide-spread establishment of *écoles normales* in the departments promised to solve the teacher shortage, although in reality it would take decades to catch up with the demand for schools unleashed by the *loi Guizot*.⁴³ The congregations had a head start through their use of novitiates, and were better positioned to take advantage of the post-Guizot expansion. Indeed, the 1850 *loi Falloux* may have actually helped the secular cause by reducing demand for secular teachers as Catholic congregations took over schools, thereby giving the *écoles normales* a chance to solidify curricula and concentrate on quality over quantity. When opinion turned against the congregations in the 1860s, France had a new generation of secular teachers ready to step into the vacuum.

How these new teachers instructed their students would, ultimately, be derived from the same source as the model of the *écoles normales*—the congregations. The *mode simultané* offered many of the same advantages over the *mode individuel* as *enseignement mutuel*, but without the complicated routines and infrastructure investment. Moreover, the experience of smaller congregations such as those established by Deshayes had

⁴² Ibid., séance of 22 July 1837; “Rapport de Morneau et le Commission des Études sur sous-maîtres,” 19 June 1837, AM Angers 1 R 42. One entertaining example of how far the Society’s practices had changed is a 1852 wedding invitation (Letter of Th. Pinot et Vre. Saulnier à M. le Président de la Société, AM Angers 1 R 42) to the Society members from two sous-maîtres at the schools—a far cry from 14-year-old Jean Delaunay being praised by the Prefect of the Sarthe!

⁴³ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 307.

demonstrated that a single-teacher school could employ the method proficiently in rural communes. In larger municipalities, larger schools more and more resembled those of the Frères with multiple classes under separate teachers; the Society's 1837 decision on *sous-maîtres* effectively set their schools on this path.

The biggest changes occurred in the actual content of lessons, leading to what Antoine Prost termed the “révolution pédagogique” of the century.⁴⁴ By 1830, educators such as Michel-Auguste Peigné (1799-1869) began promoting the teaching of reading by phonetic syllables rather than letter combinations. This proved a more intuitive way for students to learn French as the connection between the spoken and the written became more apparent.⁴⁵ While Peigné's system gained popularity, the teaching of writing became seen as more important to education. By mid-century, it had gone from a topic to be taught only once reading was mastered to a topic taught simultaneously with reading—effectively duplicating the mutuelliste practice of teaching the two topics at the same time. While the Société élémentaire became one of the earliest proponents of Peigné's system, even congregations saw advantages in the new approach. According to Tronchot, the 1837 edition of the *Conduite des Écoles* borrow the syllable-based system from the mutuellistes, while the Frères de l'Instruction chrétienne adopted a variation of Peigné's system in 1847.⁴⁶ By the 1870s, these new approaches had merged into a

⁴⁴ Prost, 121.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 120-122; Buisson, “Peigné,” in *Dictionnaire pédagogique*. Incidentally, Peigné's method also sealed the demise of Latin as the basis for primary education. Latin pronunciation was more basic than French, with each letter having a single unique sound. This had been the reason for teaching Latin first—students could learn the “pure” sounds of each letter, then how they changed in French. While De La Salle had insisted on teaching French, his method continued to rely on teaching a variety of letter phonetics, which complicated the teaching of writing. The syllable system side-stepped this issue.

⁴⁶ Tronchot, “L'enseignement mutuel en France,” III: 527-529; Prost, 121.

distinctly French pedagogical model which was shared by both secular and congregation schools.

In one important way, however, the development of this new pedagogy differed significantly from the debates of the Restoration: it was conducted almost exclusively amongst education professionals. The increasing complexity of the pedagogy, in particular the increased emphasis on how individual students learned rather than group dynamics, was the significant factor. Peigné (and promoters such as Louis Hachette) came out of the few *écoles normales* established during the Restoration, and wrote his work for the new generation of *normaliens* during the July Monarchy. Education debates within the congregations were conducted amongst the directors at the novitiates and during the annual retreats, which increasingly combined the features of a professional meeting with religious renewal. Increasingly marginalized were men like the Baron de Gérando, Rochefoucauld-Lioncourt, Deshayes, De La Mennais, or even De La Salle himself—knowledgeable amateurs for whom education was only part of their lifework. Little by little, pedagogy became a topic too complex for public debate—at least from the perspective of education professionals. Yet the decisions concerning opening schools and the hiring of teachers remained with local notables, either as members of municipal councils or through private organizations. What were their criteria for determining a successful school?

The Public Judges Education

On the epistemological level, local notables of the nineteenth-century were considered capable not only of choosing between Catholic and mutuelliste teachers, but

also of being able to assess, on an ongoing basis, the performance of those teachers and their students. Such competence was the underlying principle of notable participation in the running of primary schools. The assumption of a generally-available competence was embodied in the earliest education laws. The February ordinance placed with the maires, municipal councils, and curés considerable powers of oversight. The basic decisions of establishing a school, selecting a location and then a teacher, were all considered local decisions. Certainly such teachers had to be qualified—a determination entrusted to academic authorities and their juries d'examen—and curriculum parameters were handed down from Paris. Yet the “local fit” of a teacher was considerable an important enough attribute to leave much of the decision-making to the maire and the commune.

Of course, not all the decisions that local notables were required to make necessitated competency in educational affairs. The most fundamental of mayoral and curial duties, that of assessing the behavior of a teacher and the signing the *certificat de moralité*, called for no special knowledge of pedagogical theory. Instead, the position of these notables atop local information networks was the most important qualification. A more questionable case was the requirement of the maire to inspect any proposed schoolroom. Required in the interest of public safety, particularly in the aftermath of the cholera epidemics that struck France in the early 1830s and in 1849, such inspections claimed also to certify schools as adequate for educational purposes. Give the small size, poor ventilation, insalubrities, and inadequate lighting that plagued French schools until the end of the century, such surveillance was ineffective, to say the least.

Yet throughout most the century, the conviction that a local notable could competently assess the performance of a school and the teacher conducting it persisted.

The foundation for this practice was laid during the Restoration, when the question of *écoles communales* was first raised. Prominent members of the community became deeply involved in this process, either through their positions on the municipal council, one of the local inspection councils, or through participation in educational civil society. These notables learned to judge schools largely through public discussions of education—most notably the discussion carried out through pamphlets during Restoration.

The Education Pamphlet War

The struggle between the supporters of the Frères and the mutuellistes was conducted during the early years of the Restoration through a very public pamphlet war. Pamphlets offered an ideal means of taking the debates on education to audiences across France. Relatively cheap to produce, they combined the detailed discussions of monographs with the timeliness of newspapers. Most importantly, they could be specifically targeted at the notables in communes across France that would play a crucial early role in establishing schools. The effort attracted some of the major figures of the day, including educator Ambroise Rendu (1778-1860), the conservative politician Vicomte de Bonald (1754-1840), and Jean-Marie-Robert De La Mennais.⁴⁷ The anti-mutuelliste pamphlets were particularly vitriolic, and Interior Minister Lainé issued instructions to prefects to warn against some of the more notorious volumes. Even so, the official *Le Moniteur Universel* featured an article on *enseignement mutuel* in January

⁴⁷ Ambroise Rendu's *Essai sur l'instruction publique, et particulièrement sur l'instruction primaire, où l'on prouve que la méthode des écoles chrétiennes est le principe et le modèle de la méthode de l'enseignement mutuel* (3 vols., Paris: A. Égron, 1819) argued that the Frères could adopt enseignement mutuel in order to benefit from its perceived efficiency.

1818 as a means of answering the most virulent criticisms.⁴⁸ The article did little to abate the conflict.

Angevin authors played major roles in this conflict, both in local debates and at the national level. One of the first comprehensive guides to *enseignement mutuel* was penned at the request of the Society by Pierre-Louis Le Bas, who served as the secretary for the Académie d'Angers. Entitled *Coup-d'oeil sur la méthode de l'enseignement mutuel*, Le Bas' work was intended to summarize the new method and outline its advantages for potential subscribers to the Society, who paid to have 500 copies printed and distributed as one of their first official acts.⁴⁹ On the national stage another Angevin mutuelliste, François-Joseph Grille (1782-1853), used his unique perspective as a bureaucrat within the Ministry of the Interior (where he had played a minor role in the drafting of the February ordinance) to write a fictional narrative, *L'École de village*, describing the successes and tribulations of establishing a school.⁵⁰ Lest one forgets that Maine-et-Loire was part of the Catholic West, vehement local opponents of *enseignement mutuel* also exercised their quills. Georges Laurent Aubert Dupetit-Thouars (1757-1830), scion of a local Angevin family better known for its naval officers, had his critical article in the *Mercure royale* republished in 1820 as *L'homme machine ou l'enseignement mutuel*.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Instruction publique. Éducation primaire," *Le Moniteur Universel*, 13 January 1818, 50-52.

⁴⁹ The draft of Le Bas' work was read before the Society meeting of 20 December 1816, after which 500 copies were ordered to be printed (*Le coup d'oeil*, i).

⁵⁰ François-Joseph Grille, *L'École de village, ou l'Enseignement mutuel défendu contre ses ennemis. Par un amateur* (Paris: L. Colas and A. Eymery, 1818). For a discussion of Grille's role in the drafting of the February Ordinance, see Tronchot, "L'Enseignement mutuel en France," I: 10-11.

⁵¹ Georges Laurent Aubert Dupetit-Thouars, *L'homme machine ou l'enseignement mutuel* ([Paris]: Anthe. Boucher, 1820). This 32-page pamphlet was a reprint of an article that originally appeared in the *Mercure royale*, tome IV.

The majority of the content of the mutuelliste pamphlets focused on the pedagogy, a goal necessitated by the newness of the method. Most communal leaders in France had a long acquaintance with the pedagogical approach of the Frères, either through having attended a school using a variation of the technique or through reputation. *Enseignement mutuel* was new and radical; breaking the barrier of novelty was paramount. The blunt and detailed discussion of the method was necessary to familiarize decision makers with the basics. The earliest pamphlets drew heavily on the methodical discussion and efficiency rhetoric, offering detailed descriptions of the classroom processes. These pamphlets mirrored the approach of Joseph Lancaster—hardly surprising, since some of the first were merely translations of Lancaster’s works.

A chief argument on the efficiency side concerned the issue of costs, perhaps the major stumbling block amongst local notables in getting schools established. The mutuellistes’ argument rested on two major points. The first was the requirement of a single teacher rather than the minimum of three Frères—which meant only one salary rather than three. This was an argument that was accepted on all sides, and the impetus for Deshayes and others to begin their experiments. A more sophisticated argument stemmed from the specifics of *enseignement mutuel*. The promise of a curriculum lasting eighteen months rather than four years meant substantial savings for the communes who had to support students during that period. The pedagogy promised to save funds as well; the practice of writing with chalk on slate boards rather than with ink-and-paper appeared to offer a significant reduction in operating expenses. These arguments were taken to almost absurd levels at times.

Naturally, novelty brought suspicions of its own. The English and Protestant pedigree of *enseignement mutuel* was an obvious disadvantage, and one upon which critics readily seized. The anonymous author of *L'Institut des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes et les nouvelles écoles à la Lancaster, cités au tribunal de l'opinion publique* (1817) easily painted the method as a foreign import, a “Trojan horse” sent to infiltrate a weakened France.⁵² Much preferable were the “indigenous” Frères whose success was borne out by “time and the seal of experience.”⁵³ Abbé Dubois of Orleans argued that rather than a “respectable sect” the Quakers supporting Bell and Lancaster were “fanatics” seemingly determined to replace the Catholic Frères in French schools.⁵⁴

The mutuellistes, sensitive to these charges, countered by portraying their pedagogy as a logical development of the Frères’ own practices. Grille’s narrator echoed this argument in his acknowledgement of the past contributions of the Frères. Many viewed *enseignement mutuel* as a natural progression of the *mode simultané*; Le Bas noted that “the Frères were those who approached closest to the perfection [of education] so vainly sought.” The January 1818 *Moniteur universel* article echoed this sentiment, although with a barely disguised conviction that the Frères’ method was antiquated.⁵⁵ Not all mutuellistes were so convinced; Derode argued that the only contribution of the Frères had been zeal, aptitude, and the concept of free education rather than any real

⁵² *L'Institut des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes, et les nouvelles écoles à la Lancaster, cités au tribunal de l'opinion publique, ou lettre d'un catholique, Père de Famille, Membre d'un Comité cantonal pour la surveillance et l'amélioration des Écoles primaires; à M. le comte Chabrol de Volvic, Préfet de la Seine* (Paris: Adrien Le Clere, 1817), 7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁴ Abbé Dubois, *Réponse. Des défenseurs des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes, à un long article relatif à l'instruction publique, inséré dans le Moniteur du 13 janvier 1818* (Orleans: Darnault-Maurant, 1818), 12-13.

⁵⁵ “Instruction publique. Éducation primaire,” 52.

pedagogical breakthrough.⁵⁶ Some supporters of the Frères were even willing to concede the similarity in the two methods; Dubois-Bergeron thought the main difference between the two modes was who actually did the teaching.⁵⁷

A variation of the natural progression argument offered an alternative genealogy which placed *enseignement mutuel* firmly within French tradition. Particular attention was placed on the school of a Chevalier Paulet (sometimes Pawlet) opened in Paris around 1780, underwritten by Louis XVI. Like Bell, Paulet offered lessons to orphaned children of injured or deceased military officers, and utilized students to help in instruction. If this method had developed with Paulet's school in France, the obvious question became why England became the accepted home of the technique. The *mutuellistes* spun a tale of promising developments derailed by the Revolution. Paulet's school and other experiments had been ended when the endowments and other forms of patronage (especially royal) were ended. The Revolution left the field open for British innovators to move ahead of the French. Pierre-Louis Le Bas summarized the argument most succinctly: "this system born in France, naturalized in England, [which] had been unknown to us, or rather it had been forgotten."⁵⁸

In asserting this autochthonous origin, Le Bas and other *mutuellistes* were likely not merely retroactively reading history. The *mutuellistes* would not have had to search hard to find teachers experimenting with similar techniques in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Grille directly challenged the charge that the Frères alone held a

⁵⁶ Derode, *L'Enseignement mutuel aura-t-il tort? Observations sur les objections de M. le vicomte de Bonald* (Paris: Fain, 1822), 19.

⁵⁷ Dubois-Bergeron, 18.

⁵⁸ Le Bas, *Coup-d'oeil*, 9; Jacquet-Francillon, 50.

proven pedagogy by drawing on the number of schools across Europe utilizing *enseignement mutuel* or variations like Pestalozzi's system.⁵⁹ Such claims could border on the extravagant; an 1819 Society report claimed that *écoles mutuelles* “flourished in France, in Germany, in England, in Russia” and were being built “in Italy, in Spain, in Portugal, in America, and even on the wild shores [*rives sauvages*] of Africa.”⁶⁰

Opponents, however, were not inclined to accept dubious lineages and popularity in other countries as evidence of superiority. De La Mennais mocked the adoption by non-European countries: “Who therefore would find wrong an education that *the blacks of the republic of Haiti* [emphasis in original] find excellent?”⁶¹ The anonymous author of *L'Institut des Frères* asserted unequivocally the method was better suited to the authoritarian Germans or Russians—or Napoleon's army—than true Frenchmen.⁶² Dupetit-Thouars argued that even if *enseignement mutuel* could save “some days” in the teaching of reading and writing, it was a system elsewhere used for horses—or machines.⁶³ For Frenchmen in the teens, the model of a machine was as likely the Napoleonic military unit as English factories. Abbé Dubois referred to the military movements of children in *écoles mutuelles*, concluding “this taste would have pleased Bonaparte; but it is contrary to the intentions of the great majority of the French.”⁶⁴

⁵⁹ *L'École de village*, 8-9.

⁶⁰ Assemblée générale of the Society, séance of 30 December 1819, AN F¹⁷ 11757. The use of the phrase “*rives sauvages*” here clearly indicates the Mediterranean coast of North Africa.

⁶¹ Jean-Marie-Robert De La Mennais, *De l'enseignement mutuel* (Saint-Brieuc: Prud'homme, 1819), 6.

⁶² *L'Institut des Frères*, 7.

⁶³ *L'homme machine*, 4; 20-21.

⁶⁴ Abbé Dubois, *Question importante. Les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes peuvent-ils adopter la Méthode d'enseigner connue sous le nom Méthode de Lancaster, ou Méthode d'enseignement mutuel; et s'ils pouvoient l'adopter, seroit-il avantageux pour le Public qu'ils le fissent?* (Orleans: Darnault-Maurant, 1817), 15.

Dubois-Bergeron in his *Des nouvelles écoles à la Lancaster* derisively mixed both models. The chaotic re-arranging of students when changing subjects in the school—“not to say the Caserne”—was “the maneuver of the Champ-de-Mars.”⁶⁵ The reading circles were compared with “our cotton machines [*mécaniques à coton*]” and the teacher as the “entrepreneur.”⁶⁶

Mutuellistes could respond only weakly to these charges. A member of the mutuelliste Society of Saint-Brieuc, writing in response to De La Mennais’ attacks, remarked that the traditional Frères practice of marching students in double lines (an image later made popular in Ludwig Bemelmans’ *Madeline* stories) bore a closer resemblance to military formations than an *école mutuelle* classroom—a superficial charge at best.⁶⁷ Another response was to humorously embrace the stereotype. A short vaudeville skit performed in Paris in September 1818, entitled *L’École de Village*, contains a scene where the students march into a classroom to attend a lesson given for the benefit of the school’s benefactor, M. Cécicour. Julien, the main male character, plays the role of moniteur, leading the students into the class like a drill sergeant, complete with commands such as “Halt!” and “Front!” The play ends with the students still in a military-like formation as Lucie, the heroic young mutuelliste teacher, asks the audience to contribute to establishing schools.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ P. Dubois-Bergeron, *Des nouvelles écoles à la Lancaster, comparées avec l’enseignement des Frères des écoles chrétiennes* (Paris: Adrien Le Clere, 1817), 24; 22-23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 25; 28.

⁶⁷ L. Bienvenue, *Réponse à l’écrit de M. Robert de la Mennais, vicaire-général du diocèse de Saint-Brieuc, sur l’enseignement mutuel* (Paris: Fain, [1819]), 10.

⁶⁸ Brazier, Du Mersan, and Delestre-Poirson, “L’École de village, ou l’Enseignement mutuel, comédie en un acte, mêlée de vaudevilles” (Paris: chez Ladvoat, 1818), 26; 30-31.

Despite the best efforts of the mutuellistes, their opponents had captured one major philosophical point. The French language makes a distinction between *instruction*, basic knowledge such as reading and writing, and *éducation*, the situation of that knowledge within a moral framework. *Enseignement mutuel*, the argument ran, instructed; it did not educate. Being forced through a curriculum in eighteen months left little time to explore the content of the lessons, adding meaning to a rote learning of spelling and grammar. The use of moniteurs made the situation worse; were children actually being asked to derive moral lessons from other children? In the quest for stability in the aftermath of the Revolution, this was not an idle question.

Moral education could not just be taught, the arguments ran, but required models to emulate. The concept of emulation runs as a constant theme throughout the pamphlet war, and for good reason: emulation provided the crucial link between the current stable social order and the future. The real issue of the pamphlet war was the meaning of “social order” in post-Revolutionary France. More explicitly, the question was how to prevent another Revolution. The choice of models represented distinctive approaches to guaranteeing social order within the community. The *mode simultané* and the *mode mutuelle* embodied two different conceptions of communal relations: one based on patriarchal hierarchy, the other on individualism and, understatedly, on competition.

For the supporters of the Frères, the members of the Catholic congregation were the ideal role models for students. As *L'Institut des Frères* argued, the Frères' attributes—devoutness, discipline, unity, and devoted as “single soul” to their duties—exemplified the best attributes of a stable, loyal society. Dupetit-Thouars invoked the entire panoply of paternal hierarchy in his comparison of the Frère-student with the

father-son relationship. But, *mutuellistes* countered, children could learn from fellow students just as much as from the teacher. Seeing fellow students move up through classes or becoming *moniteurs*, Le Bas maintained, could create a powerful desire for both working hard and for recognizing the importance of discipline and social distinctions within a community.⁶⁹ For opponents, the utilization of *moniteurs* merely laid the foundation for future revolutionary activity. The pedagogy instilled “the essential vice,” according to De La Mennais, “inspiring in the young the pride of domination and the taste for independence.”⁷⁰ Dupetit-Thouars argued pithily that *enseignement mutuel* offered but an emulation “between two students, [who] knowing nothing, can learn nothing mutually.”⁷¹

The seriousness of this issue is reflected in the often brutal symbols deployed in the pamphlets against the other side, which were remarkably consistent. Both Le Bas and Grille employed the image of parting clouds to allow the light of education to flood France. This double-edged symbol is not only a positive statement on the promise of *enseignement mutuel* but simultaneously an indictment against the Frères, who by seeking to restore the *ancien régime* are conspiring to keep France in shadow. They would, in effect, turn the clock back to the time before the Revolution—thus setting the stage for another period of chaos. Proponents of the Frères were no less bombastic, turning to Old Testament charges of idolatry against their rivals. The placement of children as the model of emulation appears as the Golden Calf, a false god erected by a leaderless society in the wilderness in order to provide a semblance of hope. The

⁶⁹ *Coup-d’oeil*, 29-30.

⁷⁰ De La Mennais, 5.

⁷¹ *L’Homme machine*, 3.

mutuellistes, Dupetit-Thouars fumed, “would bend their knees before the idols they themselves have fabricated.”⁷² This false god would not create order; it would simply unleash a new round of revolutionary promises doomed to toss France into conflict. In deciding on which type of school for their children to attend, the communes were not just deciding on pedagogical or financial issues. They were asked to vote in what was in effect a referendum on the future of France.

So what criteria could the local notable, either sitting on a municipal council in a small rural commune or willing to devote time and wealth in a private organization, use to make such a decision? More importantly, by what measure would he know that his decision had been the correct one? If the question was ultimately about maintaining the social order, the most obvious measure of success was the discipline of the students. A successful school was one in which the students were well-behaved, respectful to their elders, and able to give answers to basic questions. These were the promised goals set out in the pamphlets, and that which was desired by the notables of the ravaged towns of France who spend the next half-century glancing over their shoulder to catch a glimpse of the next revolutionary outbreak. Such promises were easy for these notables to judge—and by virtue of being able to judge for notables to assert a role in the operation of primary education.

Inspecting the Schools

The ability to weigh competing education approaches in the abstract, presented as polemic arguments, is a given for any public sphere. If the pamphlet war had been merely

⁷² *L'Institut des Frères*, 15-16. The story of the Golden Calf is given in Exodus 32. Various versions of the story of Moloch are given in Jeremiah 7.31 and 19.5, as well as Ezekiel, 20.25-21.

an academic—if one excuses the pun—debate, it would not have caused the uproar it did. But the pamphlet war was more; the voluminous publications were intended not just to inform but to guide policies of communes and private organizations as they established the first generation of primary schools. The extensive details of teaching and school operations were intended as much to provide a model of an ideal school as to persuade on the superiority of a method. The purpose of these models was to allow members of the local community to come into the classroom with a clear idea of how the school should be functioning. The pamphlets provided a common baseline for both the notables making decisions locally and for the first generation of inspectors charged with overseeing schools.

Local School Inspection Committees

The idea of inspecting (*surveiller*, in the French parlance) schools on a regular basis had been introduced by Louis XIV in the royal ordinance of 13 December 1698. Village curés were charged with monitoring the schools, the result of the government’s primary interest in education as a means of insuring religious instruction and obedience.⁷³ Such inspection was sporadic at best, given the minor importance given to primary education by state authorities during the period. After 1789, various proposals intended to strengthened the oversight of schools. The plans of 1793 envisioned in each district “a commission composed of enlightened men recommended by their patriotism and by their

⁷³ Lelièvre, *Histoire des institutions scolaires*, 54-55. The royal ordinance of 14 May 1724 restated the provisions of Louis XIV’s ordinance, making it official policy until the Revolution.

good morals.”⁷⁴ Five years later, Jacques-Antoine Dulaure (1755-1835) recommended in a report to the Directory the creation of a “surveillant des écoles” in each department.⁷⁵ This official would be paid by the national government and charged with not only guaranteeing the morality of teachers and students, but their academic progress as well. These two proposals, one based on local notables concerned predominantly with questions of the social order and the second on a centrally-directed professional entity interested in both order and pedagogy, marked the poles of the inspection debate in the following century.

Napoleon’s creation of the Université in 1808 in theory embraced the centralized approach; the establishment of académies provided a structure in which a national surveillance system could operate. In reality, Napoleon had little interest in primary education, and the primary task of academic inspectors was to monitor the political content taught in secondary schools.⁷⁶ The Bourbons attempted to merge the two models, keeping the académies and their inspectors, but also incorporating local officials into a new inspection regime. The académie inspectors maintained their roles for secondary schools, but also took on a new role in certifying primary teachers for the various levels of *brevet de capacité*. The February 1816 ordinance included provisions for two additional levels of inspection. The opening articles established *comités cantonnaux* charged with “overseeing and encouraging primary instruction.”⁷⁷ These committees,

⁷⁴ Decree of 29 Frimaire Year 2 (19 December 1793), quoted in Jean Ferrier, *Les Inspecteurs des écoles primaires 1835-1995: Ils ont construit l'école publique* (2 vols.; Paris and Montreal: L'Harmattan, 1997), I: 26.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, I: 27.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I: 28.

⁷⁷ Ordonnance royale of 29 February 1916, article 1.

meeting under the jurisdiction of the prefects, were comprised on the cantonal curé, the juge de paix, the principals of any municipal colleges within the canton, and three or more additional members chosen by the rector in consultation with the inspectors and the subprefects. Finally, at the communal level, the maire and the curé were to serve as *surveillants spéciaux* to monitor the day-to-day functioning of schools.

Like many other Restoration efforts to blend state oversight with local autonomy, the inspection regime established by February ordinance fared poorly in practice. The rectors and their inspectors were too few to do more than handle the exams for the *brevet*. The shared educational duties of the maires and the curés would form one of the major sources of tension between these community leaders for the rest of the century, although the hostility might have been greater in retrospect than in reality.⁷⁸ For each Cholet or Saumur that witnessed open hostility between the two, there was an Angers where Restoration maire Villemorge strongly supported the curé's quest for Catholic schools—not to mention numerous rural towns that saw little conflict at all.

The real weak point in this combined system was the *comités cantonnaux*; it would not be an exaggeration to see them as an almost complete failure. Although the original intention was for these bodies to meet approximately once a month, the majority of committees rarely convened and many existed only on paper.⁷⁹ One problem was the status of a large part of the membership as unpaid appointees. Being nominated for membership could be seen as following in a long tradition of local charity which local

⁷⁸ For examples of the maire-curé conflicts, see Singer, *Village Notables*, 67. Robert L. Koepke has argued that village curés were often strong supporters of education development and many times were able to rally local support through good relationships with maires (“Cooperation, Not Conflict: Curés and Primary School Inspectors in July Monarchy France, 1833-1848,” *Church History* 64 (December 1995): 594-609). See also Curtis, *Educating the Faithful*, 34.

⁷⁹ Mayeur, *Histoire de l'enseignement*, 342.

notables would take as a honor. In reality, the very real requirements of regular meetings was often more a burden. Further complicating matters was the extensive politicization of the committees. Many Catholic clergy openly opposed the committees, seeing them as a means to rubber-stamp the establishment of *écoles mutuelles*. Curés soon discovered they could bring proceedings to a halt simply by refusing to attend; as one of the *membres de droit*, their presence was required. Mgr. Frayssinous attempted to correct both problems by effectively turning the committees over to the clergy (ordinance of 8 April 1824), an action directly resulting the closure of a number of *écoles mutuelles*, including those in Angers.⁸⁰ The defeat of the ultras resulted in a return to the *comités cantonnaux* in 1828, albeit with reduced quorum requirements (only three members needed to be present) to side step the issue of attendance.

By the time of the loi Guizot, the limitations of the notable-dominated committees had become too significant to ignore. The 1833 law replaced the *comités cantonnaux* with *comités locaux* serving under a *comité d'arrondissement*. This arrangement mirrored the evolving political structure that favored the commune as the locus of action and the arrondissement and its subprefect responsible for policing; the canton increasingly came to be solely an electoral rather than administrative unit. Following the success of the 1834 national inspection of schools, Guizot moved to supplement this system with a permanent professional inspectorate under state control (ordonnance royale of 26 February 1835)—effectively adopting Dulaure's Directory-era proposal.⁸¹ A single *inspecteur primaire* was assigned to each department, with the charge to inspect all schools yearly. Such a

⁸⁰ See Chapter Four for details of this situation.

⁸¹ Prost, 92; Ferrier, I: 35. It was only with the ordonnance royale of 18 November 1845 that the inspecteurs were fully integrated into state functionary hierarchy in terms of pay and status (Prost, 93).

task was daunting for most French departments. By 1835 Maine-et-Loire had over 400 *écoles publiques de garçons* or *mixte*, requiring the first inspectors to visit multiple schools a day in the more than 150 days a year spent traveling the department.⁸² The office of *sous-inspecteur* was created in 1837 to shoulder some of the burden, although the expansion of schools and the extension of the inspection regime to *écoles des filles* after 1836 continue to put strains on the system. Yet an important first step in moving away from notable control of school inspection had been made.

Private School Inspection

The French state was not the only entity interested in monitoring primary education. The private organizations that comprised educational civil society had a vested interest in monitoring the progress of at least own schools, if not also that of rival organizations. While these private inspections carried no weight in the determination of government policy, they did form an important conduit through which notables could exercise authority over schools and provided first-hand knowledge.

The mutuellistes made public openness one of the hallmarks of their program. Visitors to the school were to be encouraged, to see for themselves the benefits in discipline and in instruction the method offered—and hopefully be so impressed with the school to take out subscriptions. The *écoles mutuelles*, like their English counterparts, maintained guest registers for visitors to sign and make comments. The visits of noteworthy persons, especially those in a position to influence governmental support, were reported widely. When the Russian Grand Duke Nicolas visited the Lancasterian

⁸² Inspecteur travel logs, 1833-1840, ADML 442 T 1. In addition, the inspectors would make day trips out of Angers to visit closer communes.

school at Newcastle-on-Tyne in England in early 1817, the event was widely proclaimed in mutuelliste circles in France as an example of the international support shown for the method; the Society in Angers took pride in the fact that the Grand Duke had “deigned to sign his name in Russian in the register.”⁸³ The Duc d’Angoulême took out six subscriptions to the Society of Cholet after a tour through a model school in November 1817. Local notables were expected to follow the example of such august visitors.

The participation of the notables in the running of mutuelliste schools, however, did not stop at donating funds. Members of the various societies participated continually in the operation of the schools. Status reports made at the regular general assemblies covered not only details of the budget and the number of students attending the schools, but the number of students progressing through each classe.⁸⁴ Furthermore, members were encouraged to serve on inspection committees that visited the schools regularly. As early as 1819, the Société élémentaire had established a semi-professional post of *inspecteur des écoles mutuelles*, but the local associations tended to use small committees drawn from the local membership.⁸⁵ Generally composed of three members reporting regularly to the executive bureau, these bodies had no legal standing outside the organizations to which they belonged. Yet by the 1830s these private inspectors compiled regular reports (usually quarterly) and participated in the local debates about pedagogical changes.

⁸³ Procès-verbal of the Society, séance of 24 January 1817, AN F¹⁷ 11757.

⁸⁴ The reports that the Society sent to Lainé at the Ministry of the Interior and contained in AN F¹⁷ 11757 are the best examples of this documentation, although numerous examples exist in most departmental and municipal archives.

⁸⁵ Nique, *Comment l’école*, 164.

The question of school inspection initially divided the teaching congregations and their secular competitors. The Frères and other congregations had long resisted having visitors enter their schools. The Frères' initial reasoning was De La Salle's efforts to maintain independence from the Church hierarchy; not allowing curés and other representatives of bishops into the schools was the surest means of limiting interference. The monastic model on which many of the congregations were founded also contributed to an insular environment. Such resistance to public inspection was invoked regularly before and after the Revolution as evidence of the congregations having something to hide. These policies were modified in the nineteenth century, but only mildly. The *Règles et Constitutions* of the Frères allowed for ecclesiastics and "person[s] of authority" (providing they were male) to enter schools, but only with the permission and under the escort of the Frère-Directeur or his authorized representative.⁸⁶ A partial exception was made to those desiring to learn the teaching method of the Frères and who had the written permission of the Frère-Directeur—likely a recognition of the value of demonstrating the superiority of the *mode simultané*.⁸⁷ The *Conduite des Écoles* even specified building walls laying next to streets should have windows a minimum of seven feet above ground level to prevent passersby from peering into classes, although limiting student distractions may have been a more important consideration here than preventing observation.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Règles et Constitutions*, chap. IX, art. 18; the prohibition on females entering the schools is article 20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, art. 19.

⁸⁸ *Conduite des Écoles*, 273.

On the surface, such strict regulations complicated the transparency that the mutuellistes embraced. Yet the Frères employed other techniques that placed them ahead of the mutuellistes in accountability. The basics of *mode simultanée* were well-known and required none of the public explanations that the mode mutuelle required, eliminating a major reason for a public visitation policy. Moreover, the Frères enjoyed an internal inspection regime centered on Frères-Inspecteurs who visited the schools. The semi-professional inspections helped ensure a consistency across the *écoles des Frères* that the mutuellistes never replicated. Although smaller congregations had less resources, they also attempted to maintain some level of internal oversight, using regular inspections and the annual retreats.⁸⁹ With the advent of the July Monarchy, the Frères made a further change: members of the private organizations that supported them were allowed to visit the school as well. The Comte de Boissard recommended the Association follow the Society in setting up a series of regular visits to inspect the schools they were supporting in the early 1840s. The Frères, recognizing that their continued operation depended on the funding provided by the Association, acquiesced to the decision and allowed such inspections to continue into the next century.⁹⁰

For the first half of the nineteenth century, the participation of local notables was viewed as a necessity for installing a good school in a locality. Pedagogical arguments were structured to appeal directly to community leaders to assist in and to influence decision making, and education policies were structured to encourage notable input. The basis for these structures was a belief that a “good education” was readily apparent to all

⁸⁹ Curtis, *Educating the Faithful*, 70.

⁹⁰ *Annales de l'Association*, tome III, séance of 5 January 1843. The last discussion of school inspection by the Association's successor, the Société civile de la Cité, was on 28 February 1900 (“Société civile de la Cité—Procès-Verbaux,” AL).

persons in positions of authority. The overwhelming concern with social order in the aftermath of the Revolution provided a ready reference point. When that reference point shifted—when education became more about measuring attendance, student literacy, and the most effective pedagogies—the role of the notables began to decline.

The End of the Notables?

While the first efforts to establish a professional inspectorate were hampered by lack of personnel and an insistence on integrating local notables into a workable system, by the 1840s it was becoming clear to many that school inspection was increasingly a state prerogative. Guizot's education policies attempted to strike a balance between local control and the necessity of central oversight, only slightly different from the model of his predecessors. But continuing problems with notable participation (or, more correctly, the lack thereof) in the local committees, the tendency to place local interests such as protecting popular teachers or insisting on sending students to neighboring communes to save municipal funding, and a changing educational environment which increasingly valued professional opinions combined to diminish the attractiveness of notable participation.

A New Professional Inspectorate

The *loi Falloux* marked the beginning of the end of public notable participation in education inspection. While the model of each department having its own rector and académie appeared a step towards decentralization, the lower inspection committees dominated by notables were eliminated. The new departmental academic council was

largely the preserve of administrative professionals; the rector chaired, and the various inspectors were *membres de droit*.⁹¹ Maires and curés continued to play a minor role in keeping an eye on schools and the morality of teachers, but a decree of 1852 limited their ability to choose a communal teacher to selecting from a list of approved candidates presented by the departmental council—a response to the frequent battles between academic authorities and local committees such as the various effort to unseat Dubord at Beaufort.⁹² Inspecteurs primaires were now assigned to each arrondissement, completing the alignment of police and academic administrations.⁹³ The re-introduction of multi-department académies in 1854 marked the beginning of the French primary inspectorate that would last through the Second Empire and Third Republic. The powers of the departmental rectors to nominate teachers was transferred to the prefects—although they could only nominate teachers who were approved in writing by academic officials. The inspection regime established by 1854—stripped of the participation of local notables and even curtailing the input of prefects—lasted throughout the Second Empire and most of the Third Republic.⁹⁴

Moreover, the inspectors themselves were significantly different from an earlier generation. Most of the first generation of inspectors, those put in place with *loi Guizot*, had been teachers, but often trained in the chaotic environment of the Restoration. By the 1850s, inspectors were likely to have come out of the *écoles normales*, and many were heavily involved in the pedagogical debates of mid-century. Jean-Édouard Gellerat, the

⁹¹ Prost, 93.

⁹² See Chapter 3 for the controversies surround Dubord and the municipal college of Beaufort.

⁹³ Ferrier, I: 38.

⁹⁴ Prost, 93.

son of the Gellerats who had taught at the école mutuelle d'Angers during the first decades of its existence, had been among the first students at the École Normale d'Angers. In the 1830s and 1840s, he served as the instituteur communal in numerous towns in Maine-et-Loire, and wrote a well-received text on the teaching of vocal music. Léon de Lens (1809-1882), the *inspecteur d'académie* overseeing Maine-et-Loire for most of the Second Empire and whose annual academic expositions brought together teachers from across the department, was a second-generation inspector; his father had served as an inspector for medical schools during the Restoration.⁹⁵ These men were professionals, and their reports reflect a much deeper concern with statistical measures of literacy or comparisons of pedagogical efficiency than the questions of social order that occupied earlier inspectors. Most importantly, this new generation of inspectors had the confidence of state officials, who increasingly relied on their reports and views to form the "official" status of education in France.

The elimination of notable participation in the inspection of schools significantly undermined educational civil society. Despite the numerous problems with the committees, those institutions both validated the competency of local notables to judge education and provided useful, if limited, experience. The post-1854 system deprived the next generation of notables of these benefits. Thereafter, the main outlet for notables to participate in education debates was within the private organizations themselves, but even here the notables were facing increased challenges to their authority.

⁹⁵ Isabelle Havelange, Françoise Huguet and Bernadette Lebedeff, *Les Inspecteurs généraux de l'Instruction publique: dictionnaire biographique 1802-1914* (Paris: Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique/Édition du CNRS, 1986), 290-291.

The Distribution des Prix

The annual distribution des prix ceremony remains for many French the highpoint of the school year. In the smaller communes especially, the community gathers to watch the best of its children step forward to receive prizes or certificates. Such ceremonies in the nineteenth-century were hardly different. Parents came to see their children—and by reflection, themselves—recognized for their talents. The teachers also (usually) enjoyed these ceremonies, seeing in them a vindication of their status as one of the *trois grands* of the ville. The maire and members of the municipal council, the curé and, in the larger cities such luminaries as the bishop, the rector, or members of the prefectural corps, gathered to preside over the event and gave speeches praising the young students.⁹⁶

The distribution des prix ceremonies also served another function for the Association, the Society, and other private organizations. They became the primary events through which the educational approaches of the two sets of schools could be publicly acknowledged, although popular acclamation was not the only goal. The ceremonies were an important means of attracting new students. In the period before compulsory attendance laws⁹⁷, schools needed to attract parents to send their children—to advertise, in other words. The public recognition of students—and by extension their parents—provided an incentive for other parents. More importantly, such displays attracted the attention of potential subscribers to the organizations and of municipal

⁹⁶ François Morvan, *La distribution des prix. Les lauriers de l'école, du XVIIème siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Perrin, 2002). For the continued importance of the distribution des prix ceremonies in French communal life, especially for parents, see Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Education and Identity in Rural France: The Politics of Schooling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁹⁷ Compulsory attendance was put into effect with the law of 28 March 1882 (one of the Ferry laws), but the acceptance of regular attendance of children between the ages of 7 and 12 had largely been achieved by this time; see Jean Peneff, *Écoles publiques, écoles privées dans l'Ouest 1880-1950* (Collection Logiques Sociales, ed. Dominique Desjeux. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1987), 12; 218.

authorities who were increasingly vital as a source of subsidies to both the Society and the Association. The distribution des prix became the heir to the school visits and the pamphlet war, the chief means through which the various education approaches were publicly discussed.

Given the importance of the awards ceremonies, the Association and the Society took efforts to promote their students in the best possible light. By the 1840s, the two organizations hit upon a novel means of utilizing the event: displays of student work were assembled at the location of the ceremony. The idea likely came from the salons or the agricultural/industrial fairs that were beginning to be a regular annual part of French life, even in the provinces. Initially, the displays were likely relatively tame: fine examples of penmanship from advanced students, draftings or other drawings from the *dessein lineaire* classes, and pieces of needlework from the girls' schools. As these displays became grander, so did the projects. Students began building scale models of local buildings in exquisite detail, demonstrating the combination of skill, discipline, diligence, and respect for the local community that notables had come to expect as the proper outcome of education. These models were offered to public as self-explanatory vindications of the schools and their pedagogies.

One group, however, remained unimpressed with these displays: the teachers themselves. Both the Frères and the mutuelliste teachers came to criticize the displays, seeing in them an imposition of the sponsoring societies in the practicing of the teachers' own profession. At Angers, the Frères community resigned themselves to the displays, although they perceived them as more inconvenient than useful.⁹⁸ While understated on

⁹⁸ "Angers. Historique de la Maison," entry for 1853-1854, AL 49—Angers, St Maurice—Historiques Document généraux.

the surface, the comment about the displays is the only substantive criticism of the Association recorded in the house journal spanning from the 1820s to the turn of the century; despite the traditional deference the local community of Frères held for their benefactors, the model displays struck a nerve. The mutuelliste teachers were not so restrained. A joint letter from the four teachers was submitted to the bureau d'administration of the Society, arguing that “the special projects meant for these expositions take up a considerable amount of time of some students and above all the teachers, and the majority of students do not profit from them in any manner whatsoever.”⁹⁹ The tone of the complaint conveys the growing self-confidence of the teachers to assert their expertise over that of the Society members. The Society set up a commission to look into the matter, only to decide to continue the expositions but to focus more on direct school work rather than special projects such as the model building.¹⁰⁰

While the teachers lost the battles over the exhibitions at the distribution des prix, the education environment was moving against the local notables. As both the teachers and the academic inspectorate became increasingly professionalized, local notables increasingly found themselves either standing outside the pedagogical debates or ignored when they attempted to voice concerns over educational policy. Ironically, the great split in pedagogy that had defined educational civil society transformed into a split that separated educational civil society from education professionals. Rather than the Catholic versus mutuelliste battles of the Restoration and July Monarchy, education disputes of the Second Empire were as, if not more, likely to divide into notables versus teachers or local

⁹⁹ Bureau d'administration of the Society, séance of 6 May 1848, AM Angers 1 R 43.

¹⁰⁰ Bureau d'administration of the Society, séance of 5 February 1851, AM Angers 1 R 43.

officials versus state bureaucrats. As much as property laws increasingly offered little protection against the centralization of policy, assertion of equal competence steadily became less useful in contesting control of local schools. By the 1870s, claims to educational knowledge by local notables with no professional credentials held little weight in the bitter debates on public education in France.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
THE DECLINE AND RISE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

In the late 1860s, news of a new book by the Comte de Madré, *Un moyen de créer et d'entretenir des écoles par voie d'association*, spread among Catholics in France.¹ Aided by a positive review of the book before the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques by Augustin Cochin (1823-1872)² that may have been sponsored by the book's venerable education publisher L. Hachette, the volume promised to aid in the legal establishment of private associations that wanted to open schools. Included amongst its 248 pages were detailed discussions of the legal questions that opening schools, advice on dealing with inspections by academic and governmental authorities that might be suspicious of the organization, and policies for an accurate and honest reporting of finances. In addition, a series of model forms covering everything from a constitution to basic contracts with teachers to publicity sheets were included that would allow a new organization to establish itself quickly and legally. In many ways, de Madré's volume harkened back to the education pamphlets of the early Restoration, and timely in that many Catholic schools faced new republican municipal councils likely to cut subsidies.

¹ Andrien de Madré, *Un moyen de créer et entretenir des écoles spécialement par voie d'association* (Paris: L. Hachette et Cie., 1867).

² A printed copy of Cochin's fifteen page review is located amongst Mgr. Angebault's collection of educational documents in A.Dio.Angers 8 J 5. This is the grandfather of the historian Augustin Cochin (1876-1916).

The only problem was that the publication was fifty years too late. The educational civil society that de Madré sought to aid was already disappearing.

Educational Civil Society and the New Generation

By the early 1860s, both the Society and the Association were running strong. The *écoles des Frères* had just under 1,000 students, with an additional 250 adults taking evening classes.³ The four *écoles mutuelles* had roughly 500 students between them, with an additional 100 or so adult evening students. Financially, both the Society and the Association began the 1860s with a positive balance on their financial books. The properties of all the schools were legally secure and in repair, although such repairs continued to be a vexing problem for budgets. Here, the differences in building ownership made a significant difference. The *écoles mutuelles*, housed in buildings owned by the municipality of Angers, were maintained largely at public expense. Only internal work that directly impacted the teaching and routine maintenance such as the annual blanching of the walls were at the Society's charge.⁴ The schools supported by the Association, on the other hand, were all private property; despite the municipal subsidies paid to the Frères and the status of the schools as *écoles communales*, all maintenance costs were born by the Association. The refusal of municipal authorities to aid in these oftentimes daunting expenses were often seen as evidence of growing municipal hostility to

³ Letters concerning school inspections from the Association to Mgr. Angebault, especially those of 30 April 1864 and 22 March 1866, A.Dio.Angers 2 J 2.

⁴ A representative list of charges is found in "Registre du Bureau d'administration [of the Society]," tome II, séance of 14 August 1861, AM Angers 1 R 43. The "blanching" of the walls consisted of an annual washing of all internal walls with a chlorine solution, generally conducted over school holidays. The practice was instituted after the cholera epidemics of the 1830s.

the *écoles des Frères*.⁵ The 1860s saw a whole list of new expenses for the organizations related to building management: gas lighting, fire insurance policies, and, for the Association at least, various forms of property taxes.⁶

The annual expense of holding the schools had grown over the years, especially in terms of teacher salaries. The Frères community had grown to twenty-one members, spread between four separate schools serving five of the seven parishes in Angers. The four *écoles mutuelles* (one for each sex at both the Cordeliers and the Boulevard de Laval) continued, but with larger teaching staffs. The appointment of *sous-maîtres* that had started in the late 1830s had become standard practice. The expansion of the teaching corps resulted in greatly increased costs for the two groups. Of the Society's yearly budget of close to 12,000 francs, teacher salaries accounted for two-thirds (7,960 francs); salary raises for the *sous-maîtres* had increased this to 10,600 francs by 1864.⁷ The Association was not doing much better, with over 20,000 francs a year being required to support the Frères.⁸

To meet these high salary requirements, both the Association and the Society had turned increasingly to municipal subsidies. From 1854 onwards, the subsidies paid to the two sets of schools had been equalized, beginning at 6,900 francs each in 1854 and

⁵ See, for example, letters from the Maire of Angers to the Director of the Frères Community, 12 August 1856 and 28 October 1856, A.Dio.Angers 2 J 2. The dispute in this case concerned some extensive repairs demanded by the communal to the latrines at the Tertre St-Laurent school.

⁶ For examples of the variety of expenses, see "Registre du Bureau d'administration [of the Society]," tome II, séance of 14 August 1861; "Procès-verbal de la Société civile de la Cité, séance of 19 Novembre 1868" and a collection of tax receipts from 1863-1869, both in A.Dio.Angers 2 J 2.

⁷ "Registre du Bureau d'administration [of the Society]," tome II, séances of 31 December 1861 and 28 July 1864.

⁸ Letter from the Comte de Boissard to Mgr. Angebault, 22 March 1866, A.Dio.Angers 2 J 2.

increasing to 9,900 francs with the 1862 budget.⁹ In addition, the Society continued to rely heavily on occasional subsidies from national authorities, particularly for large building repairs. The subsidies had come to form the largest single source of income for both organizations. Subscriptions for the Society had remained relatively consistent with just under 2,000 francs being collected most years.¹⁰ Since the Société civile de la Cité had been formed, the Association's subscription fees were used for the social activities of the Cercle de l'Association, but membership had shrunk; just over 500 francs a year were collected for most of the 1860s. The main additional source of the Association's revenue was the quêtes. While these had been wildly successful in the 1850s—allowing the Société civile de la Cité to pay back the debts incurred from purchasing the *hôtel Falloux* and additional properties—charitable donations dropped off considerably in the 1860s.¹¹ In reality, both the écoles mutuelles and those of the Frères were dependent almost entirely on public funds by the middle of the Second Empire.

Yet these were hardly the same organizations that built the schools in Angers over the preceding decades. Their role in providing primary education was more on the order of managing funding from various sources than actively helping run the schools. Meeting attendance, always a problem for any form of civil society, decreased regularly even if official paying members did not. Gone were the large bi-annual general assemblies of the early days of the Society; meetings during the Second Empire took place in one of the

⁹ “Comptes administratifs et budgets de la ville d'Angers,” AM Angers série L.

¹⁰ “Registre du Bureau d'administration [of the Society],” tome II, séances of 31 December 1861. The meeting notes contain comparisons with some previous years.

¹¹ Letter from the Comte de Boissard to Mgr. Angebault, 18 November 1864, A.Dio.Angers, 2 J 2. The situation by the mid-1860s was so serious that Mgr. Angebault appointed a priest to undertake an independent investigation into potential sources of revenues for the Frères (letter from F. Chesneau to Mgr. Angebault, 23 February 1865, A.Dio.Angers, 2 J 2).

classrooms at the Boulevard de Laval in the early evening. At the Association, Boissard grew concerned that an arcane by-law setting meetings on the Monday after the second Sunday of each month was being confused by members with the second Monday of a month—only to be reminded by another member that the actual date of meetings was posted in advance, and the fact was members were just not attending the meetings.¹² Those that did attend regularly formed a subgroup within each organization that virtually monopolized executive positions. In both the Society and the Association, the records of elections and committee appointment during the mid-century decades betrays a certain monotony. Rare was the year that the Comte de Boissard was not elected as either President or Vice-President of the Association; linen-textile magnate Max Richard (1818-1901) hand-wrote the majority of meeting records for the Society as their long-serving secretary; local notary Émile Boltz performed an audit that regularized the bookkeeping of the Société civile de la Cité in the early 1860s only to continue to serve as treasurer in the 1890s.

This longevity of key members certainly provided the stability to maintain consistent policies over decades, but it also represented a major structural problem with the organizations: they were unable to attract active younger members. While subscription rolls did not decline much, the lack of interest in participation among the younger members indicated some form of generation shift. Some of this may have been due to age. Younger members of the Association, such as Albin de Caqueray (the son of former president the Chevalier de Caqueray), were often quite vocal in discussions about

¹² *Annales de l'Association*, tome V, séance of 15 March 1869. The situation for the Association grew so desperate that meetings were cancelled because of the lack of members (séance of 11 May 1863), and attendance equalling that of regular meetings in the 1840s became the object of special note in the meeting minutes (séance of 23 June 1862).

outfitting the meetings rooms with billiard tables—although older members were more than willing to contribute to such pursuits as well.¹³

But these young men were not just hedonists or belonged to the organization to gain some form of superficial social standing. They represented a new generation of public men with values different from those of their fathers. In an important (and ironic) way, they tended to be much more ideologically oriented. Their public participation was less likely to be tied to local works of charity than increasingly to national movements. For Maurice Agulhon, Philip Nord, and numerous other scholars, this growing awareness of national politics as central to local struggles marks the generation coming of age in the 1860s as the originators of France’s modern civil society—and the virtually synonymous Third Republic.¹⁴ Nord admits that this new generation of political leaders “left the old elites ample room to maneuver,” which he views as one of the “genetic flaws” of the Third Republic’s political culture.¹⁵ In truth, the world of the Association and the Society was fast disappearing, and would not even survive into the Third Republic.

The Society Sells Its Schools

The Society reached the decision to exit the education field first. While the finances of the Society were in some ways in much better shape than the Association, their role in the provision of primary education had shrunk considerably. They neither owned the school buildings nor collected large sums of money for the schools by

¹³ *Annales de l'Association*, tome IV, séance of 17 February 1851; long time member De La Villeboisnet volunteered to pay for the re-covering of a second billard table out of his own pocket to put it back into use faster (séance of 13 February 1865).

¹⁴ Agulhon, *The Republic in the Village*; Nord, *The Republican Moment*. See also Auspitz, *The Radical Bourgeoisie*, 3.

¹⁵ Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 249; 247.

themselves; their primary function was to petition various public authorities to provide subsidies for the schools. The Society had effectively evolved into an interest group rather than a provider of first resort.

It took a member of the new political generation to recognize this fact. At its general assembly of 16 June 1860, the Society elected René Montrieux (1806-1883) president.¹⁶ Appointed as maire of Angers the previous year and serving as a député for Maine-et-Loire, Montrieux was a local merchant in *ardoises* (the distinctive blue slate quarried from Trélazé just south of Angers) who had gradually introduced English industrial techniques into Angers following a visit to the Great Exhibition in 1851.¹⁷ Politically, Montrieux leaned towards moderate republicanism, and his tenure as mayor resulted in a significant modernization of Angers' civic infrastructure. Believing that having good schools was part of a modern city—a connection that he was not the first to make—Montrieux saw the continued struggles of the Society to secure on an ad hoc basis funding as detrimental to the schools. He began proposing that the Society turn the schools over to the municipality, who could manage them better.

Not all members of the Society were completely happy with the decision. Max Richard, the long-serving secretary, resigned soon after talk of the sale began among the executive council members. Although his stated reasons concerned personal matters that made it impossible to oversee the transfer, his resignation letter expressed frustration with what had happen to the Society. It was not just the paucity of resources to keep the schools running that prompted the decision to divest themselves of the schools, nor the better resources offered by the municipality, nor the difficulties in constantly trying to

¹⁶ “Registre du Bureau d’administration [of the Society],” tome II, séance of 16 June 1860.

¹⁷ Port, *Dictionnaire*, II: 473.

find the best teachers. Rather, the Society existed in an educational environment that had little need for the public involvement that had been the original purpose of the organization. Richard used the selection of teachers as an example: “The choice of these teachers and sous-maîtres are completely foreign to [the Society]. The sous-maîtres are constantly placed and removed by the Inspector of the Academy or are granted leave by this functionary with the administration ever being consulted or even warned.”¹⁸ Two of the most cherished rights granted under the February 1816 ordinance, the selection of teachers and the handling of internal affairs, had been transferred to other authorities; Richard’s job had been reduced literally to signing the checks as the designated representative of the often absent president, Montrieux. No clearer statement of the end of educational civil society could have been written.

Montrieux formally submitted his proposal to the Society at a meeting on 25 August 1866. Only thirteen members were present, a sign of the continuing ability to attract members. After outlining the growing expenses of the schools and the inability of the Society to develop new sources of revenues, the Society voted 12 to 1 to negotiate the transfer of the écoles mutuelles to the municipality of Angers.¹⁹ Three weeks later, Montrieux presented the proposal to the municipal council, arguing before this body that the school had been established and operated largely through municipal funds, and the outright transfer would legitimize what was already the de facto ownership of the schools by the commune.²⁰ The municipal council accepted the proposition, and agreed to assume direct control of the salaries of the teachers and the maintenance of the buildings for the

¹⁸ Letter of Max Richard to the President of the Society, 24 June 1866, AM Angers 1 R 53.

¹⁹ Extrait du registre de la Société, séance of 25 August 1866, AM Angers 1 R 53.

²⁰ Conseil municipal d’Angers, séance of 14 September 1866, AM Angers 1 R 53.

1866-1867 academic year. In addition, a sum of 9,900 francs—equivalent to the yearly subsidy for the écoles mutuelles—was transferred to the Society to use pay off expenses, including reimbursing the outstanding actions sold in 1823 and the early 1830s. In effect, the Society sold its schools to the municipality. Angers had its first truly public primary schools.

Mgr. Freppel and the Oeuvre des Écoles Chrétiennes

The end of the 1860s saw significant changes among Catholic society in Angers. The Comte de Boissard, after forty years of service to the Association, retired in 1870 for reasons of age. His resignation resulted in the transfer of power. While the Comte de Falloux, now in retirement, was nominated as honorary president, the Vicomte Ernest de Ruillé (1820-1903), scion of an old Angevin noble family and a close friend of Falloux, took over the day-to-day leadership of the Association. Meanwhile, Émile Boltz became the interim directeur-gérant of the Société civile de la Cité. Both were capable men possessing the talent and the knowledge that would have easily allowed the organizations to continue functioning even in increasingly difficult financial straits.

What the Association lost, however, was the support of the primary backer of itself, the Bishop of Angers. In the fall of 1869, Mgr. Angebault succumbed to illness after twenty-seven years as the Bishop of Angers. His replacement was Charles Émile Freppel (1827-1891), the headstrong Catholic ideologue who would become for many anti-clerical republicans in the 1880s the epitome of the corrupt, domineering Catholic bishop when serving as the only clerical member of the legislature (he represented Brest). Born in Alsace and ordained in 1849, Freppel quickly made a name for himself as a

vitriolic ultramontane preacher.²¹ Under the Second Empire, he offered philosophy and theology courses at the Sorbonne. Called to Rome in 1869 at the request of Pius IX, Freppel played a role in the development of the doctrine of papal infallibility.²² He was nominated by Napoleon III for the seat of Angers, to which he was appointed in the summer of 1870. Whereas Angebault's career had started among local Catholic society, Freppel was the product of the quasi-authoritarian episcopal culture dominated by Paris.

From his arrival at the start of the Franco-Prussian War, Monseigneur Freppel maintained cool relations with the Association, a sharp break with the practices of his predecessors. Freppel's pet project was a grand Cercle Catholique d'Angers, uniting all the classes under a single body. While somewhat similar to Restoration policies such as the Mission de France out of which the Association grew, Freppel's organizations would be much more centralized in order to compete with the growing republican state. Decades of Catholic philanthropy naming bishops, curés and fabriques owners of schools—particularly second *écoles communales* or in working class neighborhoods—coincided with a new generation of activist bishops in the 1870s interested in mirroring state efforts by coordinating education spending on the diocese level. Freppel subscribed to this view, clearly seeing the importance of having a distinctive Catholic education program, running from *écoles maternelles* all the way to higher education (which was secured by his creation of the *Université Catholique de l'Ouest* in 1875). Primary education was the foundation of the system, and soon after arriving in 1870 Freppel worked to coordinate

²¹ Étienne Cornut, *Monseigneur Freppel, d'après des documents authentiques et inédits* (Paris: Victor Retaux et fils, 1893).

²² *Ibid.*, 145-190.

efforts throughout the diocese—but as the means to an end rather than a goal in its own right.

Correctly reading that the Association had increasing difficulty in raising funds—which Angebault had already suspected—Mgr. Freppel decided that the time was ripe to dispense with the organization. In late 1872, he approached the aged Comte de Falloux with a proposal that Association members avail themselves of the new Cercle Catholique facilities established in the Rue d’Alsace, turning over their meeting rooms in the Rue de Volier over to the Frères. Such a move, Freppel argued, would reinforce Catholic unity in Angers, so necessary in “a struggle [against non-Catholics] becoming more lively day by day.”²³ While Mgr. Freppel had stated in his proposition letter that “in promoting a desire [to ask for the rooms] motivated by the necessity of the moment, I do not have the least intention of striking a blow [*porter atteinte*] against the Association,” it was clear that the request marked the end of the organization as an independent body. The Association voted a week later to disband the organization effective 31 December 1872, and transfer the remaining funds and the meeting rooms in the Rue de Volier to the bishop.²⁴ Even the leadership of the Frères in Paris took notice; Frère Calixte wrote on behalf of the Supérieur-Général of the Institut “our hearts...will conserve the ineffaceable memory of your numerous sacrifices, and your exemplary devotion to the Christian education of more than 60,000 children.”²⁵

²³ Letter from Mgr. Freppel to the Comte de Falloux, 6 July 1872, A.Dio.Angers 5 K 21.

²⁴ Assemblée générale de l’Association, 12 July 1872, A. Dio. Angers 5 K 21. The total value of the mobilier transferred to the Bishop was just over 6,300 francs (“Association Religieuse d’Angers: État des mobiliers lui appartenant qu’elle abandonne à Monseigneur l’Évêque,” 14 January 1873, A. Dio. Angers 5 K 21).

²⁵ Letter from the Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes to the Comte de Falloux, 16 November 1872, A.Dio.Angers 5 K 21. For a brief biography of Macé, see Arthur Dessoie, “Macé (Jean),” in *Dictionnaire pédagogique*.

The *Ligue d'Enseignement* and the *Oeuvre pour les Frères*

The dissolution of the Society and the Association in such short order was likely a shock to local civil society, but did not entail its collapse. New organizations emerged that were devoted to education, but in ways that were both more political and less technical than the Association or the Society had been.

The *Ligue d'Enseignement* had been founded in 1866 by radical activist Jean Macé.²⁶ By the early 1870s, local branches had been established in Angers and Baugé. In contrast to the earlier organizations, the members of the *Ligue* were not expected to be involved in the running of the schools. Rather, the local branches of the *Ligue* were charged with speaking to the public about issues of concern to education, engaging in what Avner Halpern has called “positivistic leadership” of identifying and promoting issues and thereby assert authority over decision making.²⁷ Unlike the pamphlet war, however, the topics were not the most efficient pedagogies or how to set up and organize schools; they were the necessity of a secular education and its importance to the democratic future of France. This was an ideological battle stripped to its political fundamentals. The openly political nature of the *Ligue* cercles quickly brought them to the attention of authorities. The rector noted of the Cercle Baugeois that “the composition of this executive committee is completely radical,” echoing the same trepidation that Baron de Wismes felt when discovering Napoleonic radicals amongst the mutuelliste

²⁶ Katherine Auspitz, *The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'enseignement and the Origins of the Third Republic 1866-1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). For a biography

²⁷ Avner Halpern, *The Democratisation of France, 1840-1901: Sociabilité, Freemasonry, and Radicalism* (Atlanta, London, and Sydney: Minerva Press, 1999), 15.

society of Baugé almost sixty years earlier.²⁸ The Ligue was not a group of educators, but a political movement whose field of action was the ballot box rather than the classroom. For the new generation of republicans such as Macé, education policy was designed by professionals and implemented through politics.

For the Catholics, civil society remained largely local, but increasingly dominated by the episcopal hierarchy. When the Association dissolved itself, the Société civile de la Cité became part of Freppel's new *Oeuvre pour les Frères*. As the actual owners of the school buildings, the Société civile represented the most valuable component remaining from the Association's effort to build schools. Under the new umbrella organization, however, the members of the Société civile played minor roles. The new Oeuvre was set up as a clergy-dominated venture. Although men like Ruillé and Boltz were part of the directing committee, a triumvirate of the curés of the parishes of St. Maurice, St. Laud and St. Serge appointed the committee and set most of the actual policies of the organization.²⁹ In its first decades of existence, the Oeuvre raised substantial amounts of money for the Frères through a combination of direct quêtes collected during church services, charity subscriptions that carried no further privileges of participation in the organization (but did include females as subscribers), and in the 1880s an annual fund-raising drive sponsored by the local diocese newspaper, *La Semaine Religieuse*.³⁰

²⁸ Rapport of the Rector of the Académie de Rennes to the Minister of Public Instruction, 29 January 1874, AN F¹⁷ 12525; see also the letter from the Prefect to the Minister of Public Instruction, 6 January 1874, AN F¹⁷ 12524 and "Rapport au le Cercle angevin de la Ligue de l'Enseignement," 7 July 1877, ADML 40 M 3bis.

²⁹ "Oeuvre des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes d'Angers: Budget, 1874 à 1901," séances of 1874 and 1875, A.Dio.Angers 2 J 3.

³⁰ Ibid., séances of 1879 through 1881 *et al.*

The Société civile found itself as only one of these components. The situation did not sit well with the Vicomte de Ruillé, who felt that Mgr. Freppel had reduced the Société civile into a “fictional element” in his plans.³¹ Freppel claimed he had only wanted to serve as the protector for the Frères, but “seeing that the association of the Cité [sic] will only come to [the Frères] aid only with a small sum, I had searched for their aid from the resources from voluntary subscriptions and the offerings of patrons.”³² Freppel had a valid point: most years saw donations from the Société civile of less than 1000 francs, about 5% of the Oeuvre’s budget. Chastised by this recognition of their limitations, the Société civile increasingly took on the appearance of a small business. The yearly meetings covered the basics of the organization’s budget and the election of officers.³³ Each meeting ended with a vote to not pay dividends on the outstanding actions that had formed the original capital of the Société civile. Although the most commonly given reason was the poor state of finances, a tax investigation in the early 1880s led De Ruillé, as the elected directeur-gérant, to assert that the original actions “had no other basis than graciousness [*gratuité*] and disinterest.”³⁴ By the 1890s, members began visiting the Frères schools, but more as interested visitors rather than the school inspections that Association members had undertaken; even these were ended when a new round of state persecution began in 1900. For all practical extents and purposes, Catholic educational civil society had died with the Second Empire.

³¹ Quoted in the letter from Mgr. Freppel to the Vicomte de Ruillé, 20 May 1875, A.Dio.Angers 2 J 3.

³² Letter from Mgr. Freppel to the Vicomte de Ruillé, 18 May 1875, A.Dio.Angers 2 J 3.

³³ “Société civile de la Cité—Procès Verbaux, 1873-1949,” Archives lasalliennes.

³⁴ Ibid., séance of 5 January 1884.

Towards A Real State Monopoly

While the private organizations that had helped to build French schools dissolved themselves and a new civil society was reconstituted, a larger storm brewed. The collapse of the Second Empire re-opened a series of political battles, including the old question of who should be in charge of education. While superficially similar to the struggles during the Restoration and the 1840s, the new struggle was a much more visceral affair where quarter was neither expected nor given. The question over who owned the schools had to be decided for once and for all.

The New Republican Governments

The ascent of republican majorities in local elections in the last decades of the Second Empire was a marker for the changes to come. Like previous regime changes, the effort of the post-Second Empire government (recognizing that its form was rather unsettled until 1875 at the earliest) was accompanied by a series of transfers of schools from congregational to secular instructors. While this trend had started in the 1860s, the transfers of the 1870s were accompanied by a significantly more acrimony—and a greater willingness to fight the battles publicly. When the municipal council of Angers decided to cut drastically the funding of the Frères in 1872, they had a study of the history of the municipality's relationship with the Frères published in two slim paper booklets. Similarly, the decision of the municipal council of Saumur to cut funding for the Frères at the same sparked a series of pamphlets as the curé of St-Pierre attempted to

reverse the decision.³⁵ As during the 1830s, Catholics increasingly were forced to rely on private resources for their schools. The success of Freppel's *Oeuvre pour les Frères* in not only keeping the schools open but opening new ones (in the parish of St. Laud in 1878) demonstrated that Catholics had not fallen into the trap of the *mutuellistes* of the July Monarchy of relying too exclusively on public subsidies.

A new public sphere, increasingly dominated by political parties and a new form of civil society whose primary purpose was to sway political decisions rather than serve as providers of services, contributed to a level of education debate that had not been seen since the pamphleteering of the Restoration. By the 1880s, a full-scale war between the two systems erupted, the *guerre scolaire*. The laws of the Third Republic, engineered by Jules Ferry, attempted to fundamentally shift the education environment. Education was now made free (16 June 1881) and compulsory (28 March 1882) simultaneously created a new need for funding for schools—more so for secular schools, since many Catholic ones were essentially *gratuité* on principle—and put greater strain on Catholic resources. A law of 3 August 1886 (later embedded in the *loi* Goblet of 30 October 1886) removed members of congregations from teaching in all *écoles communales*, allowing a five-year transition process.³⁶

For Angers, this meant a final drive to remove the Frères from all communal property. In 1891, the Frères were expelled from the Tertre de St-Laurent building by force. In a virtual replay of the 1824 episode with the *école mutuelle*, municipal

³⁵ *Conseil Municipal d'Angers: Question des Écoles* [1872] and *Conseil Municipal d'Angers: Question des Écoles, Troisième partie* [1873], both in AM Angers, 1 R 40; "Appel aux habitants de Saumur en faveur de nos écoles congréganistes" [1871], A.Dio.Angers 2 J 12.

³⁶ Robert Raymond Tronchot, *Les Temps de la Sécularisation, 1904-1914: La liquidation des biens de la Congrégation des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes* (Études Lasalliennes; ed. Frère Léon Lauraire. Rome: Frères des Écoles chrétiennes, 1992), 10-11.

authorities argued the original departmental council decision in 1819 to purchase the building intended to create a communal school, not a Catholic one. As the owner of the school property, the commune had the right to determine who taught at the school. An eight-year legal battle was waged by the Vicomte de Ruillé, arguing that the building was originally a donation from Mgr. Montault to which De Ruillé, as the directeur-gérant of the Société civile stood in role of executor. The argument did not hold before a secular French court, and a settlement was reached whereby Ruillé dropped the suit in exchange for an indemnity of 10,000 francs for repairs made to the property by the diocese over the previous seventy years.³⁷ The building became an *école laïque communale*.

Another tactic to displace the congregations was a revival of the Guizot policy to simply out build them. The law of 1 June 1878 obligated communes to acquire or build a maison d'école that belonged entirely to the commune, and authorization the creation of special accounts (caisses des écoles) to help fund such schools.³⁸ The dramatic increase in public instruction funding in the 1879 budget was designed to further this project. The flurry of school construction over the next twenty years became a core part of the claim of republicans to have created the French education system.

The most recognizable result of the Third Republic's efforts to construct an republican school system is the dyad seen still in many smaller French towns of the *école* and the *mairie* combined into the single building. Quickly becoming a symbol—or a caricature, depending on one's political viewpoint—of the new government's nationalizing drive, the combined building is representative of the schools-as-property question in numerous ways. In practical terms, such designs were the result of financial

³⁷ “Acte entre de Ruillé et la ville d'Angers,” 17 July 1899, AM Angers, 64 M 1.

³⁸ Prost, 114.

efficiency. The state involved in helping smaller communes establish government services, be it the banal services (état civil or passport application), the post or the schools. Many communes already had buildings that were serving as mairies; extending the existing building or replacing it on the same piece of land with a larger building much cheaper than conducting two building projects on two separate lots, one of which would likely have to be purchased. Furthermore, since most mairies were centrally located in towns, locating the school in vicinity also made it more accessible. Beyond these practical considerations, however, the placement of school adjacent to the mairie also had a legibly symbolic purpose. Education was now annexed to the government, in the form of the democratically-elected maire and municipal council housed in the building where the basic events of life were recorded and thereby made legible to the state. Just as importantly, such association marked the mairie/école dyad as distinctly separate from the third member of the communes *trois grands*, the *église*. Finally, it was a position no private school could ever hope to fulfill, constrained as they were to whatever property had been purchased over the preceding years to house them. In a very real way, the school was now simultaneously the physical and the metaphorical property of the state.

In real terms, however, the construction effort made little change. Even with the addition of approximately 10,000 primary schools³⁹, saw considerable efforts by private funding to match the growth. An education stalemate existed; Catholic resources were stretched thin, but they held on to their schools, and had even be able to expand over the previous decade by building new schools. Some indication of the success of this effort can be gauged by the estimates put forward after the turn of the century to replace the

³⁹ Grew and Harrigan, 251, table S.1.

congregation classes: to absorb the 178,000 students in congrégation schools, the French state would have to provide over 350 new schools at a cost of almost 47 million francs.⁴⁰

While the state became the largest owner of schools in France, it still was unable to monopolize primary education.

The Final Separation of Church and State

It was the Dreyfus Affair that precipitated the end of *guerre scolaire*. As the strident republican anticlericalism led by Radical politicians such as former seminarian Émile Combes gained momentum, the religious and teaching congregations came under increasing attack as foreign elements undermining secular France.⁴¹ By the mid-1890s, the question of the property held by the congregations became a central locus of debate in French politics. A government inquiry in 1900 attempted to assess not only the numbers of such congregations, but also the wealth controlled by these institutions and how it had grown over the previous twenty years—the origin of Waldeck-Rousseau’s billion franc religions remark.⁴² While largely focusing on the wealth through which the congregations could influence public opinion on the Dreyfus case, this revival of pre-Revolutionary charges of excess wealth was easily applied to range of secondary issues. This included explaining the failure of the Ferry construction plan and the loi Goblet to give France an entirely secular primary school system. As a result, increased attention was directed to the Catholic schools and the congregations themselves.

⁴⁰ Tronchot, *Les Temps de la Sécularisation*, 11-12.

⁴¹ Martin O. Partin, *Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes, and the Church: The Politics of Anti-Clericalism, 1899-1905* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1969), 5-6.

⁴² Tronchot, *Les Temps de la Sécularisation*, 9.

While the property provisions of French law remained the single largest obstacle in keeping the state from totally controlling Catholic schools, hard experience had demonstrated that Catholics could not rely solely on a secular government to uphold property laws. The late 1890s saw a flurry of new private organizations established to protect the *écoles des Frères* from the gathering storm. Tronchot's detailing of the contract establishing the *Société L'Avenir* in Paris in 1898 resembles the guiding documents of the *Société civile de la Cité*—with the exception that many of the *sociétaires* were actually Frères using their given names.⁴³ The seizure of the property of the religious congregations or held by religious authorities during the Combes crusade of 1904-5 was intended to be a fatal blow to Catholic education; it would be basically a replay of the effort to drive the *mutuellistes* out of Angers in 1825, only on a national scale. Yet much of the school property remained beyond the reach of the government. The survival of the *écoles des Frères* “owned” by the *Société civile de la Cité* are a testament; the schools were transferred to the Frères directly in 1949, and remain private schools in Angers today. Of the seven *écoles des Frères* in Angers in 1901, only two—both part of the *mense épiscopale*—were seized. The others, all privately owned, were beyond the reach of the *loi Combes*. Nor were the *Société civile* and similar private associations unique. Even after the *loi Combes*, *L'Avenir* would remain the owner of sixty-five former *écoles des Frères* in France and Algeria.

Ultimately, the laws of 1901 and 1904-5 banning the teaching congregations suppressed the nineteenth century Catholic school network—an exercise of the state's

⁴³ Ibid., 97-105. Tronchot includes the *Société civile de la Cité* in with his list of the sociétés established in the 1890s, given the founding date as 1898. This coincides with a re-registering of the *Société civile*'s charter, which Tronchot likely read as a new foundation.

administrative power over the certification of teachers rather than the ability to be the largest owner of schools in France. Even then, the success was marginal. Less than a quarter of congregational schools were actually closed in France after the 1904 law.⁴⁴ The state was able to ban the congregations, but private property remained beyond their control. Many former congregational schools continued to operate as private schools, often with the former *congrégationistes* remaining after resigning their vows. They remained until after the Second World War. A calmer political environment allowed the congregations to return—but only as the paid employees of the public school system.

Conclusion: Blockheads and Hearts of Gold

If any one word intertwines the stories of primary education development and civil society in nineteenth-century France, it is democratization. Nineteenth-century republicans and modernization theorists such as Eugen Weber saw the development of primary education along nationalized, secular and standardized lines as both a guarantee and a marker of a democratic society. The relationship between civil society and democracy has become so strong in both the academy and the world of policy that it is too often forgotten the terms are not synonymous. There is little question, however, that democracy requires both an education and a society open enough in which to act. Theoretically, the public institutions of a democratic society must reflect these principles as well.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Atkin, “The Politics of Legality: The Religious Orders in France, 1901-45,” in *Religion, Society and Politics in France since 1789*, ed. Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin (London and Rio Grande, Ohio: The Hambledon Press, 1991), 153.

The civil society that built and ran many of the primary schools in the first half of the nineteenth century was in many ways a more public institution than the national education system that followed. Its members were the elite local notables, true, most of whom had not been educated in the schools that they organized. Nor were their interest totally disinterested; they had their goals, the securement of social order above all, that often resulted in a stubborn resistance to outside direction. Yet these same men enthusiastically embraced the concept of an education for all, and took solid, concrete steps to make that concept a reality. Many read the pamphlets, took seriously their obligations to visit and inspect schools, and believed that small encouragements of a token or a book awarded as part of the *distribution des prix* ceremony helped promote their goal. They were willing to work with the state, and even to accept rivals, however begrudgingly.

By mid-century, however, the world around these men had changed. The small sums that had sufficed to open a school in the 1820s would rarely pay the salary of the larger schools of the 1860s. The recourse to public funds became more and more important, and with the limitations on the actions civil society could undertake. The increasing professionalization of both government administrators and teachers steadily pushed local actors out of pedagogical debates. Educational civil society attempted to assert their continued relevance, by developing new sources of revenue and appealing to property rights to maintain control of that which they had built. By the 1860s, many members of this civil society realized that the world had indeed changed, and educational civil society began to disappear. Ceding to the circumstances, they dissolved the institutions they had built. They and their sons joined a new, different civil society that

was far more compartmentalized. Education policies were designed by professionals, promoted by politicians, enacted by bureaucrats, and financed from the state. All the members of the new civil society had to do was pick a side, secular or Catholic, and promote their policies with their votes, their voices and their wallets. Those that refused, men such as the Vicomte de Ruillé or Max Richard, had to be reminded they belonged to the past.

From the perspective of the victors of political struggles, and all too often those who view their achievement years or decades later, it is all too easy to dismiss any outcome except the one that actually occurred. And so it was with the educational civil society that had played a vital role in the establish of the French primary education system. Devoted to outdated pedagogies, working in an understanding of French political life that disappeared over a century, dissolving themselves on the eve of the greatest struggle over education France faced, these groups were forgotten as remnants of a by-gone era. But France is still dotted with their monuments, the numerous school properties that found their origin by means of the Society, the Association and its “blockheads” [*Têtes de bois*], private benefactors, Catholic fabriques, or Protestant congregations. And they stand today, not plowed under to nourish the new by latter-day Turgots but part of a living society that continue to use their bequests. Before dismissing the local notables who built the schools in Maine-et-Loire, we should perhaps remember the description of the Association given by the Curé of Saint-Maurice in an 1893: “*Têtes de bois, mais Coeurs d’or!*” —“Heads of Wood, but Hearts of Gold!”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Discours prononcé par M. le Curé de la Cathédrale avant la bénédiction de l'école des frères de Saint-Maurice par Mgr. Mathieu, Évêque d'Angers, le 9 avril 1893* (Angers: Imp. F. Lecoq, 1893), 5.

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Bibliothèque municipale d'Angers

The library has a small collection of documents related to the Society, likely collected under the guidance of mutuelliste François Grille during his tenure as librarian.

Archives municipales de Beaufort-en-Vallée

Archives municipales de Cholet

Société des Sciences, Lettres et Arts de Cholet

The Société SLA hosts a large collection of local histories, including the bound copy of an article in an unidentified local newspaper on the history of the Catholic schools in Cholet by Charles Loyer, "Un siècle d'Instruction publique à Cholet de 1789 à 1882."

Archives municipales de Saumur

Also incorporated into the archives of Saumur are the records of the suburban communes of Bagneux and Saint-Hilaire-Saint-Florent.

Archives paroissiales de Saint-Pierre de Saumur

Archives municipales de Segré

Archives Lasalliennes (Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes), Lyon

Archives des Servantes des Pauvres de Jeanne Delanoue, Saint-Hilaire-Saint-Florent
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