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Changing attitudes of French Catholicism in the twentieth century

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The Changing Attitudes of French Catholicism in the Twentieth Century

by

Elizabeth Susan Nelson

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Senior Scholars Program
Colby College
1967
I would like to thank Mr. Jean Bundy of the Modern Languages Department at Colby for his tremendous patience with me while the crisis of writing this paper was part of every waking hour.
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The French Roman Catholic Church is at the doorstep of a religious revolution that has been fermenting for centuries. She is finally realizing that she must adapt herself to the society in which she participates in order that she remain relevant to it and be understood and needed by it. A conflict between the Church and society has been building up for years; the clergy, having remained aloof from society, has awakened to the fact that society wants to reject it along with the antiquity it represents. The clergy must change. Although twentieth century France is very different from that of the Middle Ages, the Church has tried to retain the doctrines and structure it had in the Middle Ages. This, of course, cannot and will not work.

During the Middle Ages, French society was divided by a rigid class system, each class having different rights and
ways of life, thus providing little opportunity for movement into a new class. One simply inherited one's class, and inequality before the law was an essential condition of the social order. In modern times, at least in theory, all men are equal before the law. Furthermore, each man during the Middle Ages was expected to obey his superiors without question: a serf farmed his lord's land; the lord received food; the serf protection. In order to survive, the serf had to obey his lord, and thus, often economy specified the kind of relationship among men. Medieval society was an authoritarian one, not like modern, democratic France. It was also a male and warrior society, that is, its virtues were virile qualities: courage, initiative, physical force, adventure, and scorn of women. On the other hand, today in France, men and women have a more or less equal standing before the law.

Medieval man was superstitious. He lacked the confidence in reason and science that is so common today, simply because we are used to science's playing a daily role in our lives. God ruled the world for medieval man who could not alter God's plans. The elite recognized the power in the ability to reason but had very little communication with the popular masses, and so most medieval men were accustomed to obedience without thought: to their social superiors and to the Church. Thus, it was easy for the Medieval Church to be very
authoritarian and dogmatic, to impose a "code d'obligations extérieures." 

With the sixteenth century and the rise and triumph of the bourgeoisie and town life, feudal society lost its power. The materialistic and practical values of the bourgeoisie conflicted with the abstract and impractical values of the Catholic and medieval tradition. The most important movement of the century was the Renaissance with its young leaders who were tired of the dryness of medieval scholasticism and who attempted to adapt the Italian ideal— that of joy and beauty— to the French way of life. The Italian total love of life was quite the opposite of Catholicism's worry about rules of "good conduct" and the doctrine of original sin which gave a pessimistic outlook on man. Another important development of sixteenth century France was humanism, borrowed from Italy and made into something far more erudite and critical than the original, in keeping with the French spirit. When François I ascended to the throne, humanism gained force and overcame the medieval rigid Church doctrine and her theologians who denounced critical study of religious texts. The universities took up the excitement and encouraged critical study. Reason and man reigned triumphant. Here began the rise of the famous esprit libertin or the quest for rationalism, so greatly influenced by Averoism, which claimed
that, since philosophy is superior to theology, then reason is superior to revelation. The first important libertin was Rabelais who instinctively loved life in all its forms. For him, there are only two ways of existing: by the flesh and by l'esprit, both of which are necessary for a full existence. Man should develop all faculties as much as possible; he has the right and even the duty to do so. Man should be free to do as he wishes because nature is intrinsically good. Evil is the attempt to deform nature. Thus, religious morality and Catholic asceticism are evil; they pretend to guide nature but actually deform it in their attempt to limit its free expression, both intellectual and physical. Such Rabelaisian liberty is inoffensive in that it is simple since it is related to nature which is good according to this thinker, and, moreover, it is not ambitious or self-seeking. God is not connected to this liberty, for He has been made into a merely useful explanation to take away man's responsibility to question life.

The sixteenth century was not only one of philosophical changes but also one of civil and religious changes in the form of wars between the Catholics—strongly represented in Paris—and the Protestants—the bourgeoisie and the nobility—and the ruling powers under François II. The Protestants were fighting for their very right to practice their beliefs. When the dynasty changed, a reign of terror broke loose. The
Protestants became the rebellious party which had to be appeased by the monarchy. Thus, a political marriage was arranged with a Protestant nation, the French government thereby becoming Protestant. But the Protestants continued to rebel, for they doubted the sincerity of the marriage. Once more terror reigned, and finally the king lost his power. The monarchy was restored by Henri IV who converted to Catholicism.

Catholicism was greatly upset by these wars. Anarchy spread within the Church government, discipline was lacking among many ecclesiastics, not enough clergy remained in their dioceses which were thus without guidance, many Churches were destroyed, and the clergy often lived in decadence and/or in ignorance. Such conditions naturally led to disillusionment with the ideals of the Church who did not appear to be living up to what she preached.

Thus, it is not surprising that by the seventeenth century, "Dieu était banni de la vie intellectuelle par la sceptique chrétienne et de la vie morale par le néo-stoïcisme." II A major figure of this century was Descartes who was thoroughly sceptical in his belief, as seen especially in his Dis-cours de la Méthode in which reason becomes the absolute judge of truth; all can be explained by logic. This was the beginning of eighteenth century rationalism. Tradition and revelation were discarded as they had no value according to Descartes.
He reduced the universe to a mere mechanical system in which mystery plays no part. These are truly revolutionary ideas, the complete opposite of the Church's doctrines of obedience to authority, of revelation, of mystery, and of faith in God, not in reason. A reaction against Descartes was natural and to be expected because of fear of his ideas, and it presented itself in the person of Pascal. Pascal defied reason, saying that it is powerless alone and is complete and valuable only if combined with faith. Man is a miserable creature who can find meaning and truth in life only in Christianity.

Pascal actually provoked a religious revival of which the strongest expression was Jansenism which developed in direct opposition to libertinage which professed the power of reason while the Jansenists felt that reason is powerless without faith. The main concern of Jansenism, however, lies in the doctrine of human liberty. Man has been evil since the fall of Adam, but man is not free to work for salvation or to even hope for it because Christ died only for those predestined to go to Heaven and predestination is not based on man's merits. Man can do nothing; God can do all. The moral code of this religious group was very austere and rigid because of its extreme pessimism and despair, and this was a reaction against the scandals in the courts. These doctrines were declared heretical and erroneous and were reduced in appeal.
Another example of the reaction against Descartes but one based on emotion more than an effort at intellectual understanding of his ideas can be found in Bossuet, a truly rigid man who believed that God reigns and He will punish the libertines.

In the field of letters in the seventeenth century we find further evidence of this esprit libertin, for instance, in Molière. In several of his plays, the religious satire was so biting that the works were banned. In "l'Ecole des Femmes," he makes fun of a man whose dread of being deceived uses the idea of a fire-and-brimstone hell as a threat to his intended wife. In "Tartuffe" he mocks the religious hypocrite, and in "Dom Juan" the devout man is stupid.

With the eighteenth century came the men who began directly, although not necessarily intentionally, to move towards the religious upheaval of the Revolution in 1789. Reason and science acquired a nearly divine status during this century. The Church, the monarchy and the nobility had discredited themselves during and after the reign of Louis XIV in the seventeenth century, thus leaving the field wide open to change which showed itself in the deification of reason and not God. The Church progressively weakened, and the number and influence of theological disputes increased tremendously. The age of hypocritical religious devotion in the
court had arrived, as well as the abuse of ecclesiastical power in persecutions against the Jansenists, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Life under the weakening and fearful Church became miserable, for is it not usually the case that an institution, losing its accustomed power, panics at sudden, unprepared-for antagonism against its weaknesses, and then cruelly demands obedience by all others, thus attempting to hide the weaknesses and to prove to itself and to others that it really is strong? Such was the Church's position in the eighteenth century. She had been weakening ever since the breakdown of the authoritarian social structure of feudal times, and her attempts to compensate for loss were cruel and intolerant of criticism. Traditional authorities decayed during this century that led to the French Revolution, and rationalism opened up a direct attack against Catholicism. Reason became supreme, and the Church ceased to be an important intellectual force.

Those philosophers connected with the rationalist movement were known as "philosophes." Bayle, actually of the seventeenth century, in his *Pensées sur le Comète*, was the first major voice raised against religion, especially in regard to its superstitious ideas. He said that one must try to reason out the things one does not understand. It is far too easy
to give unexplained phenomena supernatural labels and to
call the celestial omens. One must not believe blindly but
discuss, a theme taken up also by Fontenelle in his L'His-
toire des oracles.

Voltaire, greatly influenced by the English, was prob-
ably the most outspoken of the eighteenth century philosophers.
He flatly denied all the miracles of the Bible, and he fur-
ther claimed the doctrines of Redemption and original sin are
senseless. He thus began the return to anticlericalism.
Catholicism for Voltaire is filled with superstition and fa-
naticism. Voltaire was also an articulate spokesman for
tolerance, a leitmotif of the century, others being Montes-
quieu and Rousseau.

Tolerance was one of the main issues of the French
Revolution which also clamored for "liberté, égalité, et
fraternité." The religious implications of this revolution
were tremendous and every bit as far-reaching as its political
and social effects. At first, the bourgeoisie seemed content
with its religious life as had been lived for centuries. Re-
ligion was a habit, necessary for social prestige. How-
ever, gradually, their vague and invalid religious ideas
changed. "On voit partout une bourgeoisie plus ou moins pi-
euse, mais si attachée aux idées nouvelles qu'elle laissera
bientôt sa religion traditionnelle pour suivre le développe-
ment de ces idées. "  

21 The nobility was at first barely touched by the brewing storm. The lower classes, however, tired of mistreatment, began making their desires for reform known. A conflict also existed between the lower and upper clergy, the lower greatly desiring reforms of the bishops whom they rarely saw and who often owned a great deal of property while the lower clergy lived in poverty.

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The tension grew. " En vain, toutes les autorités constituées- Parlement, Sorbonne, clergé- dénoncent, condamnent, fulminent. . . . Les curiosités sont trop éveillées, les passions trop surexaltées; pratiquement, après 1770 et surtout vers 1780, rien ne s'oppose plus au flot philosophique qui devient torrent et pénètre partout. "

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Finally, with the taking of the Bastille, the conflict opened in its full force. The old Church was ruined, losing nearly all her privileges. Her wealth was confiscated, and most of the convents were suppressed. The Church was put at the service of the State and made free of home. The clergy, as were all public servants, were to swear fidelity to the king and to the Constitution. Not all clergy wanted to swear to this, and their resistance led to civil war. Napoleon was needed to restore a facsimile
of religious peace. He put an end to the persecutions of Catholics and tried to reconcile them to the Revolution, and he made the Church into an administrative branch of the State, in order that the Church not become too powerful as well as be free of Rome. However, the Church gradually moved away from the State and towards Rome. Furthermore, Napoleon prevented the publication of all atheist documents, thus appearing to defend the Church while, in actuality, acting in the capacity of a dictator.

After the Revolution, religious optimism covered up the undercurrents of disillusionment with Catholicism. It was at this time that the dechristianization movement in France received its first impetus, but this movement did not really take hold until the twentieth century; it was submerged by the allusion of optimism which continued on into and through the nineteenth century when man attempted to humanize religion, for man seemed capable of anything he did if he made use of reason and experience.

This optimism was greatly influenced by the sentimental religiosity of Chateaubriand who claimed that Voltaire was inhuman in his ridicule of Catholicism. His more lyrical than theological work, Le Génie du Christianisme, greatly aided the renewal of religious faith in the nineteenth century. Logically and philosophically speaking, this book has little value and is actually ridiculous. " Le
crocodile pond un œuf comme une poule. Donc, Dieu existe. ... L'homme a le respect des tombes. Donc l'âme est immortelle." The fact that such a book was taken seriously by so many people shows the incredible naïveté of the religious optimism of this century. A similar work today would be ridiculed.

However, the anti-religious and intellectual forces of the Revolution did continue to play an important role in the nineteenth century, even though in a less spectacular form. People sought to end the Church's control of education and marriage and to end her tie with the State for the Church had come to be considered the enemy of progress. At this time appeared evolutionary evidence and historical investigation of Scripture. Science and the Industrial Revolution greatly affected society, and the authority and reliability of the Bible were questioned. Because the rigid Catholic Church found it hard to adjust to these new forces, she tried to hide in her cocoon and to trustingly depend on the Pope for guidance, thus presenting a seemingly united front to the world. The majority of Frenchmen, however, were indifferent to Catholicism. They were tired of religious quarrels and war but were largely unaware of the storm brewing just below the surface, especially among the intellectuals. "La Révolution a donc développé et répandu à travers la France une hostilité militante, encore embryon-
Thus, in nineteenth century France we see a religious revival at the same time as the beginning of the dechristianization of French society. Perhaps the only reason that these two extreme situations could exist as such is because France is habitually a country of contrasts. Even today one finds areas of strongly devout people near strongly dechristianized areas. The French are non-conformists and fiercely proud of it.

With the Second World War came the terrific challenges of the twentieth century. War became more violent than ever before with the rapid advances of science and especially the atom bomb. New regimes mushroomed in Europe as old dynasties fell and Communism and its hostility to religion spread. Instability became a common problem, and, with it., despair with Western civilization, as seen in Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* and the works of Arnold Toynbee. Disillusionment was rampant. With the rapid growth of cities as technocracy developed came rapid urbanization, mobility of residence, worker poverty, labor problems, and the fear of atomization in society and resultant existentialist doctrines. The Space Age was ushered in, and medical re-
search posed heretofore undreamed of problems concerning life prolongation. Man has become sceptical and fearful, and dechristianization has developed into a real and demanding problem for Christianity.

France has been strongly influenced by the instability of the twentieth century West. After the first World War, the Russian-supported Front Populaire paralyzed French life by strikes, riots, suspicion and general unrest, and the Spanish Civil War divided the country into camps for and against the war. The national interests of France were obscured. The people, however, reacted with complacency as in the previous century, and they refused to recognize their problems of unrest. Although they gradually lost confidence in their leaders, they quickly " solved " this problem and placed their hopes in the military leaders at the beginning of the Second World War. Peace and freedom had been taken for granted for so long that the French people in general never doubted victory. Thus, the defeat of France in 1940 by Germany came as a tremendous shock that finally brought the individual to an awareness of himself amidst a world-shattering situation. A resultant feeling of despair and calamity spread throughout the country.

Atheists and Communists soon joined the Resistance movement in an effort to rid themselves of oppression, the Vichy government, which tried to recognize Christianity and to
strengthen the influence of the Church. This could have resulted in clericalism but did not because conflict arose between Church and State in regard to policy concerning the Jews; the Churches then also became part of the resistance.

In the light of the unstable war years, not only the Second World War but also the First and the one with Algeria, because of the great suffering and havoc the French underwent, there were religious revivals during these years. People needed to place hope in something stable; the traditional image of obedience to the Catholic Church seemed to be the natural answer to these people. Furthermore, the clergy had had to fight in the army alongside other young men from whom the clergy had formerly been set apart. A communion was discovered in their common goal of mere survival. Moreover, the clergy gained respect through its unusual courage in the face of adversity in wartime. Neither clergy nor soldiers wanted to lose this communion, found also in prison camps, in concentration camps, and in the resistance movement. However, this active revival of faith and contact between clergy and laity could not stamp out the fermenting undercurrent of religious discontent in France. Up until the past couple decades, the Church withstood all forces that attempted to undermine her power because she always, by working directly upon the consciences of her people, could make them feel guilty if they did not obey her. There were always enough strong and
often fanatical faithful Catholics to overcome forces against the Church. More than simply obedience to doctrine, the main reason that dechristianization did not take hold during the nineteenth century was because of the general optimism of the time. With the twentieth century, however, came not only widespread pessimism but also a general tendency to resist authority. Thus, the two outer forces of optimism and obedience to authority that had held the Church together suddenly disappeared, and her weaknesses were bared, that is, men recognized in the Catholic Church an outdated institution that tried to govern its twentieth century members by medieval doctrines.
(2) Doctrine and Structure

Up until the twentieth century, the Church kept control over her people by means of demanding obedience to her doctrine. However, as we have already seen, her attitude was based on the authoritarian and rigid structure of medieval society, an age of little science or faith in reason and thus greatly different from modern France. Such doctrine, being outdated, is rapidly losing its hold over the people.

The central doctrine of this authoritarian Church is that of unquestioning obedience. Because of love for God, all Catholics must obey the Church, for "far from passing judgment on her, he (the true Catholic) will allow her to judge him, and he will gladly agree to all sacrifices demanded by her unity... The people united by the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost: that is the Church." This spirit of unity should lead to harmony, understanding, and respect among all Catholics, all of whom realize their responsibilities towards the others and the rights of the others. One needs others to be completely human.

An outgrowth of this desire for unity can be seen
in the missionary spirit of the Church. One must announce Christ, especially to the poor since, according to the Book of Matthew, to the poor will be given the kingdom of heaven. All men must be taken into the Church, for Catholic means universal. This missionary doctrine is especially strong now in the threat of the forces of dechristianization which shall be more fully explained later. The Church is afraid of losing her faithful, and her fright is well-founded.

The Church even fears loss of clergy. No longer is it a question of a mission to pagans but it is a question of a mission to a formerly Christian society. The revolution in Catholicism has changed the direction of the missionary movement; the Church realizes that change in her attitudes are necessary because fewer and fewer Catholics believe her.

The Church's desire for control over believers can also be seen in the following three principles, intended to guide the life of all Catholics:

(1) Le mariage chrétien: destiné à assurer la perpétuité du peuple chrétien (St. Thomas), il est de droit naturel mais comporte un côté sacré (mariage-sacrément), car sa fin est l'éducation intellectuelle et morale des enfants en vue de leur bonheur surnaturel; ce que ne saurait
assurer la puissance publique.

(2) Le droit des parents: Du précédent principe découle le devoir, donc le droit pour la famille chrétienne d'éduquer les enfants. Ce droit est un droit naturel, issu de la nature. À l'égard de Dieu, ce droit est, comme tous les autres, un droit dérivé. Les enfants doivent être imprégnés de l'idée de Dieu à l'occasion de tous les actes de la vie, et, particulièrement, dans l'enseignement. Aussi, les familles doivent-elles confier à l'Église, l'essentielle de cette éducation; dualité de droits qui s'accordent et se complètent. Mais, comme la famille est une société imparfaite, la fonction des parents est subordonnée à celle de l'Église. L'Église tient de Jésus-Christ la mission de veiller au salut éternel des baptisés. L'instruction et l'éducation des enfants constituent un moyen privilégié dans ce but. Les matières profanes, sujettes aux influences impures, doivent donc être soumises, comme toutes les disciplines, aux principes chrétiens.

I have thought it necessary to include this frightening quotation in its entirety because of the revealing aspects not only of what is said but also of how it is said, thereby helping to clarify what the reformers of the Church are fighting.

We have, then seen the tremendous potential in the doctrine of obedience. Debate is not possible in Catholicism for it leads to and is comprised of disunity, and reason is to be used only in conjunction with grace and faith.

"The Roman Catholics believes that his creed is capable of reasoned statement and defense; he is not less aware that other factors besides rational analysis must come in to produce conviction. " 
The authoritarian spirit with its rigid demands for obedience is often a sign of inner weakness which is denied and covered up by an outward display of strength. If an institution is intrinsically strong, it its *raison d'être* is logical and fully understood by its adherents, and if membership in this institution is purely voluntary, then the members will follow its ideas out of a sense of respect and duty. Authoritarianism is often seen in a family situation, when a parent is not respected by a child because of weakness in the parent that can be seen in spite of attempts to hide it. In order to obtain obedience from this child, the parent will often threaten and punish the child rather than admit his own weakness, putting blame on the child. This is an unhealthy situation based on fear and deception.

We can find the authoritarian spirit of Catholicism even in the traditional structure of the Church. There is a hierarchy of power, each step on the ladder being obliged to obey those above it; all must obey the Pope, God, and Christ. The structure is one of tightly knit units of control and cooperation; whether or not the latter be voluntary is not of supreme importance, and communication among these units has often been poor or lacking entirely.

The Church is now slowly realizing that true communication will often insure more willing cooperation than demands
made by one level of the hierarchy to the other without consultation. The Church is now aware that the doctrine of obedience has prevented true and open dialogue among members of the hierarchy, and so those on one level cannot fully understand the others' reasons for their peculiar actions and reactions, nor have those on the lower levels been able to make enough important and meaningful decisions.

With the recognition of this problem of communication, forward steps have been made, especially within the link between the Hierarchy and the people: the priests. The priest is instrumental in the various movements attempting to reform the Church and thus prevent her stagnation. Priest means the people's chief, and it is only natural, therefore, that he be this link. He could not do so before because he lived in an unnatural world, apart from society, except when called upon to guide the faithful in spiritual matters. However, with the fear of dechristianization, his work in the missionary field has greatly increased. He is coming into contact with all the laity, non-Catholic and former Catholic, as well as those who have remained within the Church. This job of evangelization is harder for the urban priest than for the country priest because of the severity of the dechristianization of the working class. The rural class is less
hostile or indifferent to the Church, and so the rural priest can retain the traditional spiritual, celibate role more easily. The urban priest must, on the other hand, be part of the temporal world to keep his work necessary, because the temporal world is fighting him as never before. People are less willing to blindly obey doctrine than medieval man, for the former wants to reason while the latter did not. Communication rather than obedience is a major issue in contemporary Catholicism.
(3) Forces attempting to weaken the position of the Catholic Church

The position of the French Catholic Church of the twentieth century has been greatly weakened. She has tried to maintain her inflexible attitudes of the past in the framework of a rapidly evolving society. Thus, she has become an unnecessary and irrelevant appendage on the outskirts of French society which, for a large part, is still in the habit of thinking itself Catholic. The Church is finally recognizing this irrelevance, her major weakness, but if she cannot overcome it, the forces of the twentieth century will overpower her. These forces include the following: a general atmosphere of instability, Communism, the kind of philosophical despair characteristic of atheistic Existentialism, urbanization and dechristianization.

Instability is the broadest term that can be used to describe the twentieth century. Before this century, of course social changes occurred and, indeed, upset those who did not want and/or understand the newness. However, then, changes came about at a fairly slow rate of speed until the Industrial Revolution. Suddenly, science advanced so rapidly
that society could not adapt to changes fast enough. Problems grew on problems that did not have time to be solved. The pace has been further accelerated in the twentieth century. The Space Age and the atom bomb gave science its greatest impetus ever, and discoveries have been taking place at a breath-taking rate. Medical research and its new moral problems concerning eugenics, life prolongation and creation as our "right to play God" have created tremendous conflict. Because urbanization has developed too rapidly, cities are vastly overcrowded; the influx into cities, especially Paris, has far outstripped the rate of building construction. People must work under atrocious conditions, for social reform is always an issue fraught with slowness and opposition. France is overweighted by the economic and social power of Paris, while most of the rest of France has little value outside the local community. And people greatly fear the anonymous character of city life that does not give the familial type of comfort found in a small village where everyone knows each other. Alienation is perhaps the greatest fear of the twentieth century, possibly the century offering the most difficult challenges man has ever known. If religion is to be helpful to him as he faces this challenge, it must be reformed to meet his needs.
In order to understand why Communism can be so tempting a doctrine for the French Catholics, especially for the workers, we must compare the two ideologies. The popularity of Communism with the workers will be discussed more fully in the section on the worker-priests.

The similarities between Communism and Catholicism are striking. The Communist works for the State, and the Catholic works for the Church. The two institutions differ, but the fact of their attempt to control their members by authoritarian means must be noted. In both, members profess faith and hope in their respective doctrine. The early Christian Church was a religion of slaves who protested against the established order, and Marxism emphasizes the man who must protest against the existing evils of his social order. It is principally among the workers of urban France that one can find an example of both Christian and Communist values in practice at the same time by the same people: work, justice, solidarity, conscience, faith in an ideal future of no strife, and the presence of activists who try to convert others to the faith.
There are also differences between the two doctrines. For instance, Catholics believe that because of original sin, man is debased and cannot become pure on his own. On the other hand, Communists believe that man can perfect himself without the help of an outside force. Catholics believe that the individual is very important while, for Communists, political and economical institutions are far more important than the individual. Catholicism claims to be against revolution; reforms must be worked out through analysis and conservation of what is valuable from the past, whereas in Communism, change is brought about through revolution. For the Catholic, spiritual life is determined by the Church and by God, but, for the Communist, spiritual life is determined by economy. One is abstract and ideal; the other is practical.

Communism has influenced not only the worker non-Christian class but also the other classes. Jacques Maritain, a French Communist, during the Second World War, began his effort to suppress the bourgeoisie and the political right, to make them desert Catholic association, and to become part of the fermenting revolution to form a democracy without classes, counting on the help of God. He wanted to create a general liberty, a new Christianity, a Christian democracy. Philosophy and politics are very closely related
according to Maritain, so much so that they are really the opposite sides of the very same coin, Christian philosophy's being the speculative side and Christian politics' being the practical. Politics involves "the problem of the meaning of the world and the earthly commonwealth confronted with the Kingdom of God." This democracy must be made up of rational freedom, thus demanding respect and a keen sense of responsibility which are also Christian values. Each man is related to the political body in the following way: he is part of it and, at the same time, superior to it because of what is eternal in him through his spiritual interests and his final destination. Through his contact with God, he thus transcends the political body. In addition, the Church, since its concern is spiritual, is superior to the political body. This, obviously, is a dangerous statement that could lead to rationalization of Church control over the State, even when the two are separated by law. He also says that the political body and the Church must cooperate but that this involves, to a large extent, the State's necessary awareness of the good of the Church and the need to ask for help from the Church. Maritain's idea of a classless society is really the only justification for calling him Communist, since the rest of his thought is so clearly Church oriented.

Communists have been welcomed to basically Catholic
groups, like the MFP, Mouvement populaire familiale. Its members desire to improve living conditions for workers as well as to reduce class hatred and the call to class warfare sought by Communists. The Boimondeau Community is another example. Its founder, a devout Roman Catholic, who left the seminary to become a workman, lived in dire poverty and tried to improve the working and living conditions of this class. In the 1940's he set up a community which manufactured watch casings and encouraged education. The community was communist in its common produce and effort, but members were not only Communists but also Roman Catholic and Protestant. Other similar communities grew up at this time in France.

The Catholic Church, greatly fearing the influence of Communism, has tried to keep its members from being swayed by this atheist body. And thus, in 1960, the French Roman Catholic Church sent the following Directive of Rome to her members: (1) The Church has complete jurisdiction over all her faithful; (2) All the political and social problems of French Catholics are actually part of the Church which must intervene and interpret. (3) The Church is the judge in the collaboration among faithful and non-faithful. (4) Christians should not and cannot become Marxists because Marxists are atheists. In the very wording of this directive we can see the panic of the Church in face of opposition.
Existentialism, a major and popular current in contemporary French philosophy, developed as an attempt to explain and to comply with the despair of twentieth century man fighting an unstable, frightful world. He is not comforted by what is to the existentialists an irrelevant traditional religion which has become an easy, lazy crutch for many and which is understood by few. He needs something which will give him stability but also something which he can see, not like abstract belief in God. He is left with no choice but to learn to rely upon himself, to find meaning in his life in a hostile world by means of his own strength. He also must fight against the absolutism of Catholicism and of a world trying to control him by its tensions and fears, for example, war, famine, over-population, machine dominance, and alienation. Existentialism, then, is the search for the values of self-knowledge and self-reliance, a passionate return to the individual and his liberty to save himself by himself. God, for him, is an obstacle.

"Est-ce Dieu qui donne un sens à notre vie, ou au contraire,
est-ce notre croyance en Dieu qui fausse notre compréhension de la vie et, de ce fait, nous empêche d'assurer pleinement notre humanité ?

Man should reach adulthood and rely on himself, not God. In actuality, the idea of God has little to do with the lives of most Catholics in dechristianized France, for religion plays a very minor and indifferent role in their lives; thus they live as if there were no God. The center of life for the atheistic existentialist is man here and now. As Sartre, the head of this movement, put it, "Que Dieu existe ou qu'il n'existe pas, cela revient au même."

The man who cannot make a meaningful existence for himself but who also does not believe in God is in a fearful position. He is alienated from meaning and worth; his life means nothing to him. Such a man is Antoine Roquentin, the main character of Sartre's *La Nausée*. He discovers that the objects around him have no less significance of Life than he does. They exist in the same manner. He is a prisoner in his own life which is without reason and intent. Roquentin is an adequate although pessimistic symbol of dechristianized atheistic man.

Who is this God Roquentin does not know? This can be discovered in other works by Sartre or in *L'Athéïsme d'un Chrétienn* by D. Patte. God for Sartre is irrelevant and infantile. The Christian God is an Absolute power, authoritarian
and demanding of obedience. If one makes something absolute, one betrays the rest of one's life, environment, "contingence," by acting only for the Absolute and disregarding the rest. Furthermore, belief in an absolute God takes away man's sense of responsibility, for he can then blame all happenings on God and not on himself. This is a childish way to behave but has been encouraged by belief in such an absolute God. Probably Sartre feels so strongly able to rely on himself is because, as a child, there was no one in his life in an absolute position of authority, thereby making it necessary for him to depend upon his own judgment. Probably Sartre feels so strongly able to rely on himself is because, as a child, there was no one in his life in an absolute position of authority, thereby making it necessary for him to depend upon his own judgment. 64

We must question why Roquentin could not discover any meaning in his life. He is merely a man, and is thus limited by his finitude and is caught up in the infernal circle of bad faith. This bad faith is the refusal to measure up to one's human situation and is one's resultant escape into an idealism such as religion. Often one is not even aware of this escape, which fixes one's life within certain moments to the point of existing as if nothing else were there or were important. This is the attitude of death in life, a part of every man. Man wants to be free of this limiting circle, but, if he were, he would be unadaptable to human life since the circle is inevitable. He therefore yearns for the unat-
tainable, creating a tension which is "entre la liberté qui cherche à néantiser la contingence et la contingence elle-même." He also looks for someone else who is not reducible to an object as was Roquentin, that is, a person who is truly free and who is an authentic revealer. Such a person cannot be found, however, to Sartre's way of thinking, for all men are caught up in the infernal circle of bad faith and cannot, therefore, live an authentic life: "Ne pouvant me connaître que par autrui, qui me trahit sans cesse, je le trahirai sans cesse à mon tour puisqu'il faudrait que je me connaisse pour avoir une relation authentique avec autrui." But Sartre is not thoroughly pessimistic, for men, if he is realistic, can take stock of this situation of absurdity in its past, present, and future condition and then rise above it. He must "tenir compte de tous les événements qui nous sont imposés de l'extérieur... de telle manière que nous ne les subissions plus. Car si nous les subissions, c'est que nous renonçons à notre liberté. Nous nous laissons aliéner par ces événements. Nous perdons alors toute notre dignité humaine. ...[We must accept these events] en sachant qu'ils nous sont nécessaires pour nous permettre d'avancer en maintenant la tension de notre être, de même que le poids est nécessaire au bout de la corde pour que je puisse la maintenir tendue."
Such a common and dark view of man has resulted from the fearful and not yet understood forces of the twentieth century as well as from man's loss of the familiar support of religion. The atheistic existentialism of Sartre and many others is an attempt to make man analyze himself, to reason thoroughly; it is a humanism that, in some cases fights and, in other cases, is merely indifferent to the Roman Catholic Church of France.
Urbanization

The rapid urbanization of a formerly rural France has been a major force leading to the modern dechristianization crisis. Urban, technical man’s practical attitudes are very different from those of medieval, idealistic man. The former sees and acts; the latter contemplates. Moreover, urban man is looking for security and comfort, while medieval man celebrated poverty and the lack of property and comfort.

The France of medieval times was predominantly rural. With the sixteenth century came the rise of towns and the bourgeoisie with its materialistic preoccupations, and with the eighteenth century came the Industrial Revolution. The strength of the Catholic Church during the course of these years relied upon the traditional of authoritarianism. Society has evolved since medieval times, but the Church has remained relatively static. Urbanization picked up speed in the nineteenth century with the growing familiarity of man with scientific methods. The twentieth century ushered in the World Wars, the Space Age and a highly technical society. Many people greatly fear and denounce the technical, seemingly overwhelming society, while
others try to understand and to cope with it. The Catholic Church has never before had to face the problems of mestanization, which are particularly difficult in the working class.

This class is far less well assimilated in French society than its American counterpart. The French worker feels inferior to the bourgeois who seems to consider him subhuman. The working class has rejected Catholicism, which seems to be controlled by the bourgeoisie whom the workers resent and by whom they feel they are exploited. The bourgeois influences on the French Catholic Church are many and cannot be denied; from a study by Adrien Dansette, we find the following: There are many things for which one must pay in the Church such as first Communion where there are reserved seats, marriage which distinguishes classes by how the ceremony is performed and how much it costs, and funerals where the same things can be found as in the marriage ceremony. The Church, as the bourgeoisie, is very "comme il faut:" one must go to Mass, help the Church, perfect oneself, acquire merits to assure a place in Heaven. There is the conscious and the unconscious feeling on the part of the bourgeoisie of superiority over the working class. Furthermore, many priests are influenced by the bourgeoisie. In the nineteenth century, the priests came predominantly from
rural areas, and to be a priest was a symbol of social prestige, but, with the rise of the farmers' economic level, fewer men needed to enter the seminaries for reasons of prestige until, by 1948, most came from the middle class, with a small number from the working class. With such a one class orientation, the Church cannot hope to understand or to be understood by the working class.

God seems useless to the French worker. God has "promised" a better life in the future, but the life of the worker on earth has been so impoverished that its abuses should not be tolerated. Why should he bear hardships for a God he cannot understand or communicate with, and who is cruel if He permits some abuses? Catholicism is too abstract for these people who must improve their present lot. Communism's doctrine of help and equality in the near and definite future would obviously appeal to the worker, and the Church should not be surprised.

The working class will be lost to Catholicism unless the Church is willing among its members, to give it realistic and practical hope. The worker-priest movement which will be discussed later is perhaps the noblest effort to prevent such a loss and to meet the problems of urbanization.
With all these problems, then, it is not in the least bit surprising when one realizes the extent of the dechristianization of France. This has already been discussed in relation to the worker class, but dechristianization has touched all the classes. France is now a country of much religious indifference in the face of Christian traditions. Catholicism, if not rejected, in most cases, is merely a habit.

On a envoyé les enfants au catéchisme parce qu’une telle initiation doit faire, pense-t-on, partie de leur bagage. On a tenu à ce qu’ils fassent leur confession de foi pour des raisons de prestige sociale, parce que cela faisait plaisir à la grand-mère ou parce que cette cérémonie permet de réunir la famille pour une sorte de fête... qui marque l’entrée dans l’adolescence.

Many statistical studies have been done concerning the crisis of dechristianization. For example, in one such study we discover the following: out of one hundred French, thirty-four practice regularly; thirty-three irregularly; eighteen observe communion, marriage and funerals. Actually, these figures are too generous and do not account for the many people who do not understand the doctrines of the Church
and the many who are merely conformists in religious behavior.

Further figures from this study reveal: (1) Two women practice for every man. (2) Most children follow catechism but (3) from the day of the first Communion, a large number ceases to practice regularly: bourgeois/24 - 50%, worker/50 - 80%. Practice also lessens at the time of military service and of marriage; after thirty-five to thirty-nine is reached, the number increases regularly. (4) The passive faithful (children and old people) are more numerous than active practicing Catholics, and the most numerous of all are the bourgeois. (5) Two to ten percent of adult workers practice. (6) Religious indifference at its strongest is found among the very rich and the very poor. (7) The majority of French Catholic adults are of the middle classes.

However, one must be suspicious of statistics which really tell us little and which can deceive us. The reasons for action or lack thereof cannot be seen in such a study.

During the time I have spent in France, I have seen many examples of the various types of French Catholics and non-Catholics. In the family with whom I stayed, there is the very devout Catholic who refuses to question any doctrines because of unconscious fear of destroying the very foundation of his life. As is often the case, this person is the mother. The father represents the Catholic who feels he
"should" practice but whose religion is actually merely a habit and a source of comfort. There was a perceptible change from infrequent questions about the validity of doctrine to an almost desperate clinging to it as his mother's illness brought her closer to death. The children of this family are under the age of thirteen, and so they are not intellectually ready to question. However, for this very reason of lack of mature judgment, I found it annoying to see them carefully mimic words and thoughts which they cannot possibly understand. At the University, the dechristianization crisis was very apparent but not so strong as it would be in Paris; I was in a traditionally staunchly devout Catholic region. Students tended to verge on, if not hostility, at least active rejection of Catholicism. Indifference was to be seen in the father of another family I met.

Just among these few people can be seen not only the devout but also the indifferent and hostile French attitude to Catholicism. I am sorry to say that of all the devout Catholics I met, only one seemed to want to think sensitively, and this was a priest who is very actively engaged in the reform movement in Catholicism.
(4) Efforts the Church is making to regain a position of strength

In order to once more be important in the lives of men, the Catholic Church must enter the temporal world. In medieval times, the clergy lived apart from society, and even the laity was preoccupied with the spiritual life, in his supreme faith in the doctrine of eschatology and in the Kingdom of God. He could bear the evils of this temporal world since he felt that all would be amended in the future life. What the Church actually did was to confuse the spiritual with the temporal in attempting to apply abstract spiritual values to temporal settings. Man, human by nature, is limited by his finite condition and his natural desires for not only food and the like but the compassion of others. The Church must face the simple fact that her members are human. She must follow the example of other intellectual disciplines which have changed since the Middle Ages, as stated by the theologian Van Buren:

Astrology has been reduced to astronomy; for example, we have excluded from the study of the stars a cosmological or metaphysical theory about their effect on human life. Alchemy was reduced to chemistry by the rigorous application of an empirical method. During the Renaissance, the metaphysical ideas and purposes of medieval painting were excluded, leaving 'only' the work of art. In almost every field of human learning, the metaphysical and cosmological aspect has disappeared and the subject matter has been limited to the human, the historical, the empirical. Theology cannot escape this tendency if it is to be a serious mode of contemporary thought.
The Church is finally recognizing the forces that are trying to undermine her and is attempting to regain her position of importance in French life through a movement of reform. Religious sociology has been a great help in understanding the problems. The Church has discovered that she must speak directly to each social milieu. "If we do not concern ourselves with the fact that men are quarrymen, sailors, or bourgeois, the Kingdom usually makes no impact on their milieu. Its expansion is held up through our fault." The Church is now working through each class, as seen in the worker-priest movement and other missionary groups. She is recognizing the value of work with the laity which, more directly involved in the problems of class structure, is more prepared to cope with them than a priest set apart from class distinctions. Although the social doctrine of the Church is vague, it generally represents the recognition of man's dignity. It comprises the following ideas: (1) Each man will be judged according to the way he has treated other men. (2) Each man must possess minimum material property in order to be above the level of animals and to give him the chance to think and act beyond his instinctual needs. (3) Each social class is dependent on all others. Realizing each man's value, the Church is making a valid effort at reform.
The Laity

Work with the laity is one of the major areas in the reform movement. The lay people are the official witnesses of the living faith who understand their milieu better than the priest who must work directly with them. "Toujours chef de culte, toujours responsable je l'enseignement religieux, le prêtre de demain sera aussi et de plus en plus l'auxiliaire des laïcs dans la christianisation de leurs tâches profanes." The lay men have gained a status they lacked in the hierarchical structure of medieval society. The views of the laity are now respected and considered along with those of the clergy.

The Church of the Middle Ages gave little or no consideration in the area of spiritual thought if not part of the Hierarchy. This attitude can be seen as an extension of the tendency towards class rigidity during this period. To take a rather extreme but nonetheless revealing example, the thoughts of the serf were unimportant to the lord. Then why should the thoughts of the laity be influential in the life of the clerics? Rigid class structure was consistently followed throughout medieval society.

With the exception of the separation of Church and
State during the French Revolution, the Church has been closely allied to the State throughout French history. This has led to much conflict between the two about who has the power to step in where. After heated debate between them in the nineteenth century, in 1905, the Separation Act finally disbanded the "union." The animosity has gradually lessened since that time because the area within which each institution can act is now more clearly defined. Theoretically, what concerns the Church comes under her power and vice versa. However, there is always the danger of interpretation of the rights and power of the institution as we have seen in the philosophy of Jacques Maritain who feels that the Church is intrinsically superior to the State.

Since the Separation Act, then, France has become a laic republic, thereby bringing the laity into focus since the laity runs the government. The conflict between clergy and laity has lessened also because of the change in class structure. Members of different classes have far more respect and communication with other classes than they had in medieval times.

In actuality, the very survival of the Church depends on help from the laity who refuse to blindly obey the Church which no longer can "prove" the right to control all moves of the laity. If the laity does not support the Church, then who will? The Church will fall back helplessly upon herself,
and become an institution of all chiefs and no Indians.

This movement toward cooperation is part of the general trend to reform. The forces of reformation come not only from the outside pressure of a society that is demanding the Church to change but also from within. It is impossible for the Church to ignore the reformation, and she is now actively participating in it. Reformation will be far more meaningful than it has been in the past when it came only from the Hierarchy and without consultation with the laity. However, reform directly influences the laity, the Church members, and it is simply unjust if the laity cannot have a voice in the religious revolution. Moreover, since the Catholic Church of France is existing within a democracy, she must adopt democratic methods or else prove herself to be detrimental to the goals of society as a whole. Her hierarchical structure is irrelevant to French democracy; she can no longer order her people to do something without listening and making use of their wishes, for this, ideally, is how a democracy works.

The former rigidity of the Church, then has in large part been caused by the lack of consideration for the laity. This inherent weakness in the Church has grown to the point that, the laity now being in a strong political position in a laic republic, the Church is fast becoming irrelevant to society. Her weaknesses of poor communication and unrealistic
attitudes towards temporal life have been uncovered, and in order not to crumble, the Church must use and is using the laity to carry out her doctrine.

Therefore, many lay groups of Catholic influence are developing in France. And this new cooperation between clergy and laity is merely a symbol of the doctrine of unity. The major lay groups form part of a broad plan called "Action Catholique," a plan to respond to the need of young people who want to live in a Christian democracy and remain faithful to the ruling class. Its motto is "piété, étude, et action." A union of the spiritual and temporal, it is made up of missionary groups who work within their respective class, in the local government, in the schools, in the families, in clubs. All members of Catholic Action must practice a "révision de vie," the application of Catholic principles to daily life. The effects of Catholic Action on its members are the following: (1) fortification of the links between the individual and the group it is trying to convert and (2) changing of the ideas of a class, that is to say, teaching the people how to live as Catholics, not as workers, etc.

The most difficult class to penetrate is the worker class which developed as a major social force when there was widespread opposition to the Church because of the Church's
connection with the aristocracy in pre-Revolutionary times. Workers and bourgeoisie formed this opposition which was reconciled with the bourgeoisie but continued with the workers who felt that the Church then allied herself with the bourgeoisie to the exclusion of the workers. The effort of Catholicism to reach the worker class through its milieu was the beginning of the social principles of Catholic Action as started in the interim between the two World Wars.

The original Catholic Action group connected with the working class is JOC (Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne), founded in Belgium in 1925 and introduced into France the following year. This group gained importance with rapidity. At first, the central interest of JOC was piety and the spiritual aspects of work rather than the political and temporal aspects. Offshoots grew out of JOC which took a political orientation. The Church, trying to keep out of politics, created an adult group ACO (Action Catholic Ouvrière) in 1950 that was so tightly bound up within Catholic Action that its spiritual orientation seemed insured.

The ACO increased its membership while that of the JOC decreased. This can be explained by the fact that the dechristianization crisis is especially strong among the youth of France while often adults will turn to religion in time of need.
Members of the ACO must participate in other groups but only ones involved with temporal affairs and particularly those actively towards the improvement of the lot of the proletariat. However, the Communist party is definitely considered out of limits.

Both the ACO and the JOC are closely allied with the Hierarchy. This relation is two way in that the members of these groups inform the Hierarchy of their work which the Hierarchy interprets.

These groups are progressively losing influence and members for several reasons. Their politics are too idealistic, and they do not get down to practicality. It is too difficult for them to contend with the hostility and indifference of the worker class, the most dechristianized class in France. What is needed is realism as will be later seen in the worker-priest movement.

The groups that work within rural France, although of little political significance, are more powerful than their worker class counterparts, the reason being that rural France is, by its conservative nature, far more attached to the Church than are the urban centers. It is the Catholic Action of this area that is freest from Church controls since there is little danger of dechristianization in this predominantly Catholic area. The rural equivalent of ACO, the MRR ( Mouvement Familial Rural ) was founded by laymen, not by the
Church. The other groups for rural youth, the JAC (Jeunesse Agricole Chrétien) and its feminine counterpart, the JACF, are the most successful Catholic Action groups merely because they meet with so little opposition, although enthusiasm may often be lacking due to widely scattered population. Youthful members often join the adult groups when qualified while this is rare in the worker class.

Rural Catholic Action has very little political interest, not even in its publications. Most activities concern the technical problems of rural life as related to Catholicism. This is another reason why their relation with the Hierarchy is so lacking in conflict. They come up against far less opposition and can therefore act with more freedom.

Catholic Action plays a minor role in the bourgeoisie because this is the class that controls the Church even though it often does not understand and value its Catholicism but uses it for reasons of social prestige. The groups trying to reach this class differ from the others. These groups are more varied since they are organized on the conviction that the bourgeoisie itself is composed of more diversified people. The activities of Catholic Action in this class are almost
always spiritual and pious. Emphasis is on the individual whereas in the other two classes emphasis is on the mass. Furthermore, there is very little political activity in the bourgeois Catholic Action, a natural result of the extreme spiritual activity. The main bourgeois groups are JIC (Jeunesse Indépendante Chrétienne) and AIC (Action Catholique Indépendante).

In the academic world can be found the more specialized groups. The JEC (Jeunesse Étudiante Chrétienne) has been of very little importance although it seemed dynamic at its inception in the 1930's. The other group, FFC (Fédération Française des Étudiants Chrétiens), founded in 1922, is a loose federation of student clubs that are already Catholic while the JEC is concerned with the missionary effort and is far more politically oriented.

One of the main sources of weakness with these student groups is the large turnover rate, thus requiring ability to adapt rapidly to change, and tending towards instability. Although these groups may appear to be relatively unimportant, they may very well furnish many future leaders of France.

Professors also have Catholic Action groups, Paroisse Universitaire to deal with the public school issues and Les Enseignants Chrétiens to deal with those of the private schools. The major concern of both groups is that of state
aid to Catholic schools; other issues appear unimportant to them. Members of the former tend to favor laic schools and were thus opposed to the Barange Law which will be discussed later. Paroisse Universitaire is losing sight of the missionary intent of Catholic Action and shows definite influence by forces outside the Church.

Beyond these groups can be found those whose purpose is only temporal, as opposed to only spiritual action or a combination thereof. These groups, too, must be approved by the Church. AFC ( Associations Familiales Catholiques ) is one such group as is the scouting movement which tries to instill the Catholic doctrines of unity and obedience in the children. Most Scouts come from the bourgeoisie.

These, then, are the major lay groups, working in conjunction with the Church, to bring Catholicism into man's everyday life. Through this missionary movement, the Church is trying to become relevant to modern life and to instigate reforms with the help of the laity.
It is in the worker-priest movement that we find the most ardent effort to reach a disillusioned laity. Priests involving themselves with the workers, are trying to bring the Church into a hostile world in which Catholic doctrine carries little meaning. The French worker is poor, has little education, and feels he must fight against overwhelming odds. He is not well integrated into French society which does not want to accept the problems urbanization has caused— that of poverty—or accept the feeling among workers that they are exploited by the bourgeoisie. To bring the Church to these people, the workers, the worker-priest must try not to distinguish himself from the worker. This movement represents a revolution in the French missionary effort. The problem is not "so much a matter of bringing the workers 'back' to the Church as of 'planting' the Church in the workers' world," a penetration into the working world.

The main intent of the worker-priest movement was put by its true founder, Cardinal Suhard:

\textit{Etre témoin, ce n'est pas faire la propagande, ni même choc, c'est faire mystère, c'est vivre de telle façon que la vie soit inexplicable si Dieu n'existe pas. Témoins ... par leur ferme volonté d'établir avec les masses déshéritées une réelle communauté de destin. La vie de ces prêtres n'est ni une évasion, ni une étude de moeurs, ni même une prétention de conquête: c'est une vocation de rédemption.}
How, then, did this movement begin? The conflict between the worker and the rest of French society originated in the Revolution of 1789, a civil war between right and left elements which split the country into: the aristocracy against the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals, a split which became that of the rich against the peasants and farmers. As society evolved from predominately rural to predominately urban, the split became that between worker and bourgeoisie.

Urbanization and its inevitable result in poverty developed too quickly to be adequately coped with; society was not prepared to do so and did not understand the worker.

After World War Two and the appearance of the book *France, Pays de Mission?* the Cardinal Suhard of Paris decided that the anti-Christian situation must be approached through missionary means. During this time within the working class, the climate was one of struggle against the middle class. Workers' unions were nationalized, and Communism gained strength among these people who were tempted by the vision of good life that it promised. The prevalent strikes pointed out the gravity of the conflict between the worker and the rest of French society. The worker-priest movement was an attempt to resolve this conflict.

During the war, priests, fighting along side of the laymen, became united with the temporal world. A communion
developed between clergy and laity which the clergy which
the clergy did not want to thwart. Thus, the conflicts in
the worker world presented a perfect opportunity for secular
work. Those priests wishing to take part in such an
effort received permission to do so from Cardinal Suhard.
This developed into the Mission de Paris, the first step
in the worker-priest movement. This mission became
larger, and its methods changed from speaking to the worker
to working with him in an effort to rid the Church of its
bourgeois image. The priests did not wear the ecclesiastical
garb; they worked in the factories; they participated in strikes; they were members of syndicates, a vital
worker method of organization against abuse. These
priests became Christian workers.

The religious ideas of the worker-priests shook the
Church which they considered too rigid, which did not attempt
to understand society. The traditional priest is authoritarian,
and he studies in seminaries isolated from reality, but
he thinks he is capable of valuable analysis of reality.
Such a priest could not become part of the worker world. "We
must not be of the clergy, of the Catholic world, of a reli-
gious order first and foremost, but of the worker's world
and its suffering." Man should realize that he is re-
sponsible for his world and that shrugging off responsibil-
ity onto God is childish. The clergy should not be excluded
from this obligation, for his duties are not only spiritual
and evangelical but also humanist.

Finding priests qualified for the worker-priest movement was difficult. They had to be not only spiritual leaders but also responsible as members of temporal society. Those who might be attracted by the taste of novelty were systematically eliminated, as were the romantics who imagine it is only necessary to be a worker in order to be good, and who think only of the salvation of the working class, to the exclusion of all others."

As the movement gained strength and as Communism infiltrated the thinking of nearly all the worker-priests, the Hierarchy became afraid that the political aspect might overshadow the religious. However orthodox the individual worker-priest, it often happened that the more favorably disposed those in his milieu became to him, the more steadfastly they rejected the Church, which they continued to see purely as an apparatus. The estrangement between the worker-priest and the Hierarchy grew through a severe lack of communication. The Church did not understand the mentality of the workers or the fact that the worker-priests would fail unless they became like the workers. The Church could not keep its sense of balance in the situation. She did not know what to do and was rapidly losing hold of the clergy in this movement. "That a priest should work with his hands
is one thing: it is difficult to see what right anyone could have to forbid it. But for a priest to become a workman is another and it raised quite a different problem. Although this transformation does not call in question the theological distinction between clergy and laymen, it still upsets the social expression of this distinction upon which the whole ecclesiastical establishment has been slowly building itself up since the Middle Ages. Suddenly, clergymen were not blindly obeying the Church; she was at a loss, and she went from approval to disapproval of the movement.

On the other hand, the workers' reaction of the movement went from disapproval to approval. At first, the workers feared the Church or were hostile or indifferent to it. However, with the passing of time, they realized that these priests were working with them, that they were not bourgeois trying to exploit them. The priest was timidly but finally accepted by a large number of workers.

The worker-priest movement turned out to be far different from original expectations. Often, the priests were more influenced by the political ideas of the workers that they heard daily than vice versa. The worker-priest, in order to be a valid part of the workers' environment, had to join their organizations, the most important of which, the CGT, (Confédération Générale de Travail), was dominated by the
Communists.

Inevitably, if they were members of the CGT, they consorted with the Communists, yet if they resigned from the CGT and abandoned all union activity, they would be viewed as traitors to the working class and would have to face the reproach: 'We always knew that priests could never be on the side of the workers. We trusted you, and now look what has happened.'

We have seen in the section on Communism why the Church could not accept the doctrines of Communism. However, the fear of this doctrine was so widely discussed that the Church actually became an excellent method of propaganda. But, the fear of the loss of the priests to the Communists was well-founded.

The worker-priests became something different from what the Church had expected. The commitments they gradually took on were consented to rather than approved of by the Church... They got farther and farther away from the hierarchal conceptions... They had been assigned a not very clearly defined missionary task, but one which seemed to get clearer the more they changed.

A worker-priest wrote the following about this issue:

Si notre mission nous a amenés à un tel dépouillement de notre vie religieuse, c'est peut-être qu'elle a remplacé l'exercice par le vital, la fonction par le service de l'engagement... c'était une nouvelle expression de la Foi, à partir de la conscience prolétarienne,

There were many obstacles to the success of the worker-
priest movement, the most important being Communism and the weakness of the Hierarchy in face of this threat. Another was the unity of the Church that was broken as the worker-priests separated their religious and sociological duties. The worker-priest was neither completely worker nor priest. His traditional, classical and idealistic education was an obstacle to his proper functioning within the movement. He was poorly prepared and very naive. He tried to use abstract doctrines of hope and faith in God in a world that did not have the patience or the time for such ideas. And the social doctrine of the Church is too general and abstract to have practical use in secular life. Furthermore, the workers resented the fact that the priests not only lacked familial duties but also could fall back on the protection of the Church if need be. Lastly, there were the inevitable temptations of secular life, and it was difficult to retain the vows of chastity.

In 1952, a novel by Gilbert Cesbron appeared that well represented all these conflicts within this movement. Its title: Les Saints vont en enfer. The book brought up the central problem of the movement: the misunderstanding of the goal and influence of the worker-priest, that it to say, whether he should be first a worker and then a priest or vice versa.

Pierre, the worker-priest at Sagny, an imaginary, industrial, extremely poor city near Paris, symbolizes the conflict between worker-priest and Hierarchy. For him, the traditions and doctrines of the Church are not so important
as showing the workers how to be dignified men. He joins strikes that are for the purpose of bettering working conditions and is then accused of the Archbishop of being Communist, for it is known that the strike has been much influenced by the Communists. The Archbishop asks him where his influence lies, meaning purely spiritual influence. To Pierre, whose direct spiritual goals are of secondary importance, the humanistic influence is far more important; for example, he protected the small Etienne from a brutal father. Spiritual influence develops from what has begun in the temporal world. But the Archbishop is not satisfied and cannot comprehend the value of putting the temporal world over the spiritual. It becomes impossible for these two men to have a meaningful relationship; they completely fail to understand another for they are opposites, the Archbishop's being idealistic and unrealistic and Pierre's being practical and realistic. The tension is too great between them, and the Archbishop saves himself by ordering Pierre to be sent to a monastery. Lack of communication ends a useful mission among the laity.

The tension in France concerning the worker-priest movement grew to be so strong that the mission was finally suppressed as was Pierre, and it took from 1954 through 1959. Here are the important points of the 1954 Communiqué which explained the terms of the suppression: (1) Special
cated forms of missionary work for the spiritual guidance of workers could continue. (2) Only the Church has the right to decide what the clergy can do. (3) The term "worker-priest" would have to be replaced by "priest of the worker mission." (4) Manual work would be limited in order to give the priest enough time for spiritual duties. How like a scared child this sound!

The Suppression greatly upset the worker-priest who reacted in diverse manners. He could passively resist, try to reverse the decision, reject the decision and quit the clergy or continue working as he had before the movement. Most vacillated from one possibility to another, in a state of shock, disillusionment, and/or resentment. Many tried to continue factory work while remaining spiritual leaders. Confusion reigned.

Could it be that there was no reasonable attitude considering not the individual conscience but the march of events—save one of complete submission? Or could it be that the missionary effort of Catholicism is always coming up against the same obstacles, is afraid every time to meet them, and prefers to sacrifice its power units? An important question, not to be lightly answered, or evaded—one which in the future must be at the center of theological study about the Church.

The disillusionment with the result of the worker-priest movement has given strong impetus to the forces of de-christianization.

Missionary work in this class has continued in spite
of the Suppression. "Enough clergy realizes that the Church will lose all respect of the laity and much of the clergy in contemporary France if she does not attempt to work with the secular world. The suppression of this movement shows the world how dreadfully inadequate the Church is to cope with the twentieth century, but the clandestine continuance of the movement shows that there are many priests who are now facing and trying to overcome the inadequacies of their Church.
An area in which the Church finds its traditional power threatened and which is also an area of reform is in education. The twentieth century is one which is in the process of questioning of not only parochial but also public schools as set up by Napoleon. The antagonism between the Catholic and laic schools is a major force aimed against weakness in the Church, in this case, her rigid outlook on life as taught and lived by her school system.

The conflict between the two educational systems started fairly soon after the French Revolution. Before that time, the Church had effectively monopolized all forms of education in France, but, since Church and State were joined, church schools were not really private but public schools. After the Revolution, the entire school system was nationalized, although some private schools did continue to exist. Religious instruction continued to be a central part of the curriculum in the public schools, and so relations between Church and State in regard to this matter did not suffer greatly. Around the 1830's when the State began attempts to exert some control over the Church by forbidding the Jesuits to teach, antagonism between the
Church and State developed. By 1875, Catholics had complete right to establish schools that were independent of the State due to a strong movement to legalize private schools. However, anti-clericism continued to increase until it resulted in the Separation Act of 1905 by which the republic became laic since Church and State were now separated by law. Religious instruction was removed from public schools, religious orders were forbidden to teach in private schools, and State support of clergy and of Catholic schools was ended. Catholics greatly feared these laws instigated by the laity for the laws seemed to be aimed against the very survival of religious faith. Opposition to the laity grew, and work among Catholics in the field of education has been, for the most part, an effort to regain State aid to their schools.

It was not until 1951 that the Church began getting at least part of the aid she wanted, and this was accomplished with the Barangé Law of that year and according to which the parents of children in Catholic schools receive a certain sum of money per year per child. The Debré Law of 1959 was more generous. For all private French schools, there are three alternatives among which they can choose: (1) They can be integrated into the state education system. (2) The State can give salaries to the teachers who would be civil servants, thus giving the school the right...
to financial aid from the State. (3) Financial aid would be only for the teachers, not for the whole school, and teaching would be geared to that of state schools. This is the proposition most schools accepted. Catholics still feel that the State is not giving them enough aid and that their schools are inferior to public schools, especially in respect to sciences.

Much of the French laity protested against this law, especially the CNAL (Comité National d’Action Laique) which is against the private school because it claims that such a school destroys national unity. The CNAL circulated a petition against the Debré Law; the petition was signed by many who agreed that "le rétablissement complet de la laïcité de l’École et de l’État doit être un des éléments essentiels du programme des partis et des groupements qui veulent défendre et restaurer la démocratie." The CNAL is also against the Barange Law which appears to be against the principles of the Separation Act of 1905 and the Constitution of 1946 in which the preamble states that public education is the duty of the State for all laity and is contrary to the general interests of the public school. The conflict actually has not been resolved, and it is a lucid symbol of the antagonism between Catholic and dechristianized France.

As much as the Catholic may deny it, the lay school, since the Separation Act, has played a vital role in the educational system of France, especially because the lay school
realizes the need to study man in his society in a realistic manner in order to help him understand the forces of the twentieth century.

The laity is not anti-Catholic; it is anti-clerical; it believes that every man should be free to decide for himself whether or not he believes in God, quite the opposite from Catholicism. The laity is optimistic and does not degrade man into a defenseless creature who cannot stand on his own feet except with the help of an outside force. "L'esprit cléricale, c'est à la prétention d'une minorité à dominer la majorité au nom d'un dogme; l'esprit laïque, c'est la prétention de la majorité à assurer son bonheur elle-même." 121

However, as in any reform movement, voices are being raised in protest against the lay schools, the school of the devil. APEL (Union Nationale des Associations des Parents d'Elèves de l'Enseignement Libre) is a Catholic parental organization of confessional, dogmatic overtones. Its two aims are to organize all the parents of Catholic children of school age into a solid pressure group and to make use of this group to influence general public opinion. The major work of APEL is in the area of the conflict between lay and Catholic schools, APEL defending the interests of the Catholic schools. It is especially strong during elections and also when it organizes huge conferences such as the one in 1959 in Caen numbering fifty thousand to ninety thousand participants. With the Fifth Republic and its greater stability
than those of earlier times, ABEL has lost some of its effectiveness.

On the other hand, we can find many French who are against the Catholic schools. "Education ... is the chief means of cultural transmission and diffusion. ... Any threat to it is a threat to the nation itself. Thus secular bodies have claimed, for example, that confessional schools disrupt national unity." These people fear the Catholic Church's claim to control over the faithful and its mission to convert all others. In the Catholic schools they see a new tactic of the Church to dominate the state. The Catholic school, they claim, is against the French laws of liberty. "La thèse catholique, c'est le monopole pour l'enseignement dirigé par l'Église et payé par l'État."

Catholics believe that they should send their children to Catholic schools. Leon XIII said that the Church should watch over the education of all Catholics who must be taught only by Catholic teachers in schools only for Catholics. (see the three principles as stated in the section on dogma). Many Catholic parents still hold to this. "Nous voulons que nos enfants construisent leur vie sur des bases solides, qu'ils affermissent leur foi avant d'être lâchés dans le monde."

This argument, then, between Catholic schools and lay schools has been an important force in twentieth century
Catholicism. It is exposing the weaknesses of Catholicism and making it come to grips with secular society.

In order to understand the reform movement in Catholic schools, we must first see how they have been traditionally, when emphasis was put on God and not on society. Latin, the language of Catholicism and of classical culture, was stressed. The extreme rigidity of the Catholic school system is clearly shown in the kind of people who go through these schools and how they live their Catholicism afterwards. "Comment se fait-il que la plupart des hommes qui sortent des écoles chrétiennes fassent des chrétiens si peu engagés?" The reason for this is the passive attitude of the Catholic schools where one is taught to submit without question to authority. "La monarchie de l'enseignement ... est un mal dont souffre périodiquement l'Eglise, car la paresse est la tentation des puissances établies." 126

It is clear from the works of many commentators that the Catholic school must be rejuvenated by reinstilling in it the excitement of early Catholicism. Catholic schools have been too narrow and sterile, the opposite of education's role which is to show the totality of the world to the student; if he sees only part of the world, then his education is not stable nor valuable. The Catholic schools are finally realizing the need to change and are being greatly influenced by the humanistic approach of the lay schools.

Perhaps the Catholic school will become passé, per-
It is not, but the fact remains that the Church is working to give it a relevant place in contemporary French society by acquiring a more democratic attitude.
Also in the area of politics we can find examples of the Church's attempt to strengthen her weakening position in the twentieth century. She thinks that she has the right to intervene in political affairs, for all human activity concerns with soul, whether directly or indirectly. Her influence is probably most strongly felt at election time when the bishops encourage the people to vote in certain manner, insisting that it is even a duty to vote this way and not another.

An important way for the Church to become involved in politics is through the Catholic parties. It was hardly necessary for the Church to sponsor parties during the conflict between Church and State which led up to the Separation Act in 1905 because nearly all the republican right defied Catholic interests while the left defended the Church. During this era the most important Catholic party, the MRP (Mouvement Republicain Populaire) had its beginnings. With the development of Catholic Action, more and more people have become interested in Catholic political parties whose policies, however, have almost always been poorly defined and often there have been serious divisions between the right and left.
elements of the parties.

Is the MRP really a Catholic party or is its main objective political rather than Catholic? In order to answer this, we must first look at its doctrinal aspects. In general, the MRP falls under the category of Christian Democracy, which is against carrying over the hierarchic principles of Catholicism into the political structure. However, it has often been recognized that the MRP has not always lived up to its high ideals. Perhaps the major weakness of the party's objectives is their vagueness.

Is any democratic party opposed to the primacy and liberty of every man? Could not these principles be accepted just as well by a Socialist humanist like Léon Blum or a Marxist Protestant like André Philip? One also has the impression that the MRP... has renounced those principles that seem to evoke specific programs. 129

In application of its doctrine, the MRP often has been used to oppose Communism, especially during the struggle with Marxist parties in the Fourth Republic. However, the link between the MRP and the Church remains vague and is not ideologically necessary. There is no reason why people believing the ideas of the MRP could not be Protestants or agnostic humanists. Thus, all shades of Catholic political opinions excluding "integrisme" can find a place in the MRP.

The MRP is more directly linked with the Church in its organizational aspects than in its doctrinal aspects. Specialized
teams similar to those of Catholic Action, although not a very important part of the structure, maintain unofficial ties with Catholic Action. The ties with the Church were noticeable before and right after the passage of the Bronge Law, but connections with the Church seem to have declined since that time. Perhaps the Church is afraid of too-close ties with a single political party because of the seriousness of conflict at the turn of the twentieth century. The MRP may be correct not to involve itself directly with the Church, for it is the first party of Catholic inspiration not to arouse the hostility of the laity.

In the area of individual members, most people within the party or just those who vote for its doctrines do so for religious reasons, while Catholics in other parties join them for political reasons. Moreover, there are few non-Catholics in the MRP, and its appeal lies within Catholicism in general rather than a specific social class or group attitude: "The MRP attracts a large proportion of old retired widows as well as young voters, workers as well as Catholic industrialists, and in this it is unique among French parties."

As far as its political activities are concerned the MRP is usually at the center rather than at the right or the left, but, this not always being the case and much controversy being prevalent among its members, the party is actually unstable and politically ambiguous. Georges Morvan of "Union
de la Gauche Socialiste" in "Le Monde" of February 7, 1959, said, referring to this ambiguity, that "it wanted peace in Algeria, but it makes war. It was for democracy, but it has favored autocratic power." With such vagueness of intent, it is hard for someone with definite political ideas to become a member of the party. However, this vagueness is also useful as it unites Catholics within the framework of a practical effort to incorporate Catholicism in the social life of France, and this effort is necessary if Catholicism is to be relevant to the modern world.

In order to fully understand the political significance of French Catholicism we must note where the divisions of the Church fall into the political structure. In general, on the left, can be found the most progressive elements within Catholic Action, social action groups, the press, and even bishops. On the right can be found those Catholics whose opinions range from conservatism to extreme authoritarianism, and the center involves the moderate groups. (See table at end). Although this method of placing Catholics in the political sphere according to their Catholic as well as their political attitudes is merely general and therefore liable to exceptions, it is useful in giving a picture of wholeness to the impact of Catholicism on French political thought. The type of Catholic on the right tends to be conservative or extremely tradition-minded in his views on life in general,
but he is not necessarily passive; he may actively fight for his beliefs as we will later see in the section on the intégriste movement.

In light of this discussion, it may be concluded that the MRP, the political arm of the Catholic Church of France, does not limit its political horizons to the demands of the Church and is thus an indication of movement away from the rigidity of Catholic medieval attitudes.
Parish re-organization

The attempts to reorganize the parishes to fit the needs of modern French society represent not only the effort of the Church to regain her position of importance but also a new and expanding link between clergy and laity. The parishes must be restructured. An institution is created to respond to a need. If the need changes but the institution does not, then the institution becomes inadequate for the new need, forming an obstacle to the society of which it is a part.

In the present parish system of France, we see symbolized this problem of a society which has outgrown a formally vital institution, the traditional parish, which was based on a rural society of many years ago. The division of the land into parishes was planned to fit the geographical needs of society. In general there were few areas of greater population density than others; most people lived on farms or in small villages. Each parish had approximately an even number of people. However, with the growth of cities since the time of the Industrial Revolution, some areas of the country have become far more populated than others, while the geographical division into parishes has not changed, thus resulting in an unbalanced structure of one priest's having a rural area of the same number of kilometers as the area of an urban priest which however is far more densely
populated. The urban priest is overburdened because the parish system has remained static while the society has not. Moreover, in the rural environment, the parish had a family nature because all members, since there were so few, knew each other. This type of parish was one of true community spirit. However, urban society is such that there are too many people in the same geographical sized group to know each other. The need to know each other is still there, but the institution no longer is adequate to meet the need.

Another characteristic of the rural and traditional parish that has changed is that of mobility: the rural family stayed in the same general area most of their lives while urban man is mobile; he not only works far from home but he also may change his home several times during his life. The former family was part of a constant community whereas the latter, often changing his community, has perhaps an even greater need to feel part of a community since his life is less secure.

The role of the traditional parish was that of the unity of a community with the Hierarchy and with God. The doctrine of unity, central to Catholicism, can also be seen in the structure of the Hierarchy, the Trinity, the Universal Church, and the Eucharist where man is united with Christ. Although the Church realizes that the parish must change in order to meet the need of an evolving society, she wants to retain the doctrine of unity since it is basic to Catholicism.
The rural parish can retain approximately the same characteristics it had originally since rural life has retained its smallness of size. However, since urban France is so different in that it is mobile and its mass qualities tend to give it an anonymous as opposed to a familial atmosphere.

Community life, in keeping with the Catholic doctrine of unity, can also be developed in the urban parish. One may create "paroisses communautés missionaires, fondés sur la participation active de tous, sur la responsabilité et la solidarité des chrétiens en face du monde à évangéliser." However, this idea is too idealistic. Everyone does not want to work for the Church and should not have to do so. Small parishes should be created in which Catholics would be members as of a large federation, and there should be real effort at communication among the various parts.

In his book on the parish system, Connan has described his idea of the parish of the year 2000. It will be formed of a "laïcat" which will act in the Christian community in the family and school and will meet often. The councils of laymen within it will be elected, and there will be a head curé, responsible for one sector, who will work directly with the laity and his bishop, and the laity and clergy will be in direct contact with seminaries. This unified structure will be composed of sectors which will form a "Super-paroisse."

In the new urban parish, the Church will still retain
the unified, communal spirit of the rural parish, but the structure of the former must be more complex than the structure of the latter since an urban community as a whole is more complex than a rural one.
Reforms in doctrine and structure

In the area of doctrine and structure, the very heart of Catholicism, can be seen further efforts at reform. Change is definitely needed. Catholic liturgy has been too complicated and often seems to be like magic. "Il ne suffit pas de donner un expose de ... theologie ..., mais it faut que les fideles puissent la toucher." 

Another uhhage is needed in the authoritarian structure of the Church. Everyone, bourgeoisie and workers, clergy and laymen, should cooperate in the decisions of the Church in order to be willing to obey these decisions. This obedience is not blind; it is rational, for it is based on laws and decision made freely. Such an attitude of democracy will give rise to a new conscience of responsibility within the Church.

We have already seen the acceptance of the laymen into the Church, previously considered inferior to the clergy but whose point of view is now considered valuable and necessary to a full understanding of the temporal world. Priests realize that their educational system must be revised so that they will understand the society which they are entering. They must study subjects that are not only spiritual but also temporal, that concern contemporary society and its problems.
The clergy can hope to be understood by the laity only if he in turn attempts to understand his society. This attitude can be seen in a priest I met in Rouen. Not only does he accomplish his duties of saying Mass and similar spiritual tasks, but he also works directly with the laity, consulting them in spiritual and temporal matters. This man used to be a worker-priest. When the movement was suppressed, he felt that he could not represent the Church unless he continued to develop the communion of spirit he had discovered with the laity as part of the worker-priest movement. He realizes that the Church is unimportant unless understood by her members, the laity. He felt that it is only natural to work with the laity and that this is the most vital function of the Church.
Existentialism and Christianity

An attempt to give man hope in overcoming the loss of traditional Catholicism can be found in D. Patte's book on Sartre: L'Athéisme d'un Chrétien, in which he adds Christianity where Sartre ended; Patte is a Christian Existentialist. Sartre, as we have seen, said man needs a "révélateur" to get out of the infernal circle, but he believed that there has been no such man; Patte says that this man is Jesus.

Christians have been locked in this circle of bad faith and alienated by their absolute beliefs in their rights of the Church, in their moral lives, and in the God they worship. These Christians are not unlike idolators narrow in their beliefs. Because of this absolute character which tends to negate everything not directly connected with it, their moralism has become an escape from responsibility; all problems are given to God and analyzed within a rigid set of laws. Furthermore, their continuous efforts to prove the existence of God and thus to find Him give Him an absolute character and He then becomes a "Dieu-mort".

Patte explains how the Christian can overcome this binding absolute circle: through Jesus as revealed by God,
Who is authentic par excellence. This God is transcended; He must be so in order to transcend beyond the infernal circle. But He is also present within humanity and authentic through Jesus, and He is not the absolute alienating God of the Middle Ages.

The special qualities of Jesus were recognized by the disciples who, being men, were part of the infernal circle. They, however, realized that they could overcome the circle through this man Jesus, the liberator without bad faith.

Patte also points out basic similarities between Existentialism and Christianity. Tension is a necessary element of both. Existential tension exists between the liberty which tries to "nâmantiser" the situations of life. The Christian tension is that striving towards the Kingdom of God. Both Existentialism and Christianity also include the attempt to rise above the events of life and not to fall down in the face of catastrophe.

Gabriel Marcel is another Christian Existentialist, a lay Catholic thinker of agnostic familial background who later converted to Catholicism. His main concern is the problem of alienation, the root of which can be found in a totalitarian state or a mass democracy in which the traditional concern of the major class, the bourgeoisie, is property,
the "tragic substitution of having for being; having is an illusion, for what we think we have really has us; property controls and de-personalizes those who make it their greatest need." This whole idea can also be found in the New Testament. According to Marcel, this preoccupied with property alienates man from others. Alienation can be avoided only spiritually. Man must depend not only on himself but also on something beyond himself. The Mystery of Incarnation is very real for Marcel; religion is faith in and response to the Word made Flesh. Spiritual unity is needed to combat alienation, this unity being the "We-reality" which involves personal existense in and for the corporate personal body, that is, each individual is responsible to all others. Here we see a strong Catholic influence on his thinking, for the doctrine of unity is a central one. Each man must be open to the ideas of others and this is his responsibility. Hope and fidelity in man, in Christ, in God, and in the Church are a vital part of Marcel's philosophy. Here he is very far away from the atheistic Existentialist, not only in the usual differentiation involving belief in God but also in Marcel's optimism.
Is the reform movement successful or is it a failure?

After study of the reforms of the Church, of its attempts to work within the twentieth century and to leave its sheltered attitudes of the Middle Ages, the question of whether or not the Church has succeeded in her new role and whether she should continue work in this new direction must be asked. Her new role is that of guiding man in the world. To do this well, she must adapt herself to the society of which she is a part. If she cannot do so, she will be no more than "un pur spiritualisme." She must interpret "les signes des temps... à la lumière de l'Evangile, de telle sorte qu'elle puisse répondre, d'une manière adaptée à chaque génération, aux questions éternelles des hommes sur le sens de la vie." Man needs religion as an explanation of the otherwise unexplainable, and Catholicism can continue to have a vital role in the life of many if it satisfies that need in a way that is consistent with contemporary values.

Of course, there are always those who resist change.
This opposition can be seen in a politically and religiously important struggle in contemporary France: the progressistes vs. the intégristes. The intégristes are usually hostile to new ideas, are pessimistic, and lack confidence in man. They see the world as intrinsically bad, and they are an obstacle to all reform, refusing to admit that the dechristianization crisis is real. The progressistes are divided into bourgeois and Communist camps. The latter identify the cause of the poor with God. Emmanuel Mounier, the founder, said that "l'élément essentiel du communisme réside en sa 'force centrale, ' en son ' mystère,' en sa 'charge mystérieuse:' un part du Royaume de Dieu." He recognizes that atheism, totalitarianism and materialism, important Communist doctrines, are not in keeping with Catholicism, but he feels that these are Communism's reformable, accidental doctrines.

Another Communist progressiste, Georges Hourdin, announced that the socialization of the world is inevitable. His influence is strong among the young French intellectuals. It must be remembered, however, that some progressistes are also from the middle class.

The intégristes are resentful, scared and confused of the reform movement in general. Man is at the center of life, suddenly loaded down with responsibility, and these people fear that the entire sense of mystery and the sacred in the traditional Church has been lost. These people are the extreme authoritarians who are afraid of the secular world for which they are not prepared.
If the Church is to gain strength in the twentieth century, she will have to defeat her authoritarian elements. If she does not do so, either a schism will develop or she will perish because of irrelevance to modern society. But man needs some form of religion to help him find meaning in his life. Otherwise, all that he does is futile. Existentialism is one of the major responses of modern times to this search for meaning which has perhaps been best described by Victor Frankl, a philosopher-psychiatrist whose experiences in the German concentration camps of World War Two pointed out this search. The men who could hold onto ideas and who recognized meaning within and inspite of suffering survived better than those who felt all was lost. In his book *From Death-Camp to Existentialism*, Frankl has developed these ideas into a school of philosophical-psychiatry, Logotherapy, through which he shows that man's will-to-meaning must be fulfilled; if not, he undergoes existential frustration. And this quest for meaning is what religion is, and with Frankl, it becomes a healthy belief in "God Who puts responsibility onto man. The traditional God of Catholicism is the opposite, is absolute, and no longer fills the needs of a man who thinks perceptively. Disillusionment with Catholicism has led to the dechristianization crisis, but the forces eating at Ca-
The Church is emerging from her inflexible past. She has always professed herself to be against birth control by "artificial means," and yet, a vast number of Catholics use such means, and the Church is slowly recognizing this. I know of Catholic doctors who prescribe the pills and of Catholic families who use them, both in France and the United States. It is probably only a matter of time before some more official acceptance of birth-control practices comes from the Church.

If the Catholic Church has been very slow in accepting social change, it has begun to move in this direction. One has only to read the daily newspapers to witness the tremendous amount of dialogue among Catholics and other religious groups, and even the Jews have been freed of blame for the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Church is making a valiant although slow attempt to shake free of medieval attitudes and practices and to adapt herself to life in the twentieth century. If she continues to do so, then, although in greatly altered form, she will continue to be a central aspect of the lives of the French people.
### Major Catholic Political Tendencies in Contemporary France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of Impact</th>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Extreme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kind of Membership</td>
<td>Intellectual elite and workers</td>
<td>Catholic masses plus most clergy</td>
<td>Large membership, economic elite, some support of Rome</td>
<td>Small groups, based on influential power elites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Activity</td>
<td>Very active in temporal life</td>
<td>Pious work stressed, no great enthusiasm</td>
<td>Pious work stressed, no great enthusiasm</td>
<td>Very active in temporal, which they insist is part of spiritual life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Activity</td>
<td>Stands out, noticed by large number of people</td>
<td>Hard to differentiate from other center groups</td>
<td>Hard to differentiate from other Right groups</td>
<td>Hard to differentiate as most considers itself &quot;Catholic&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness compared to similar &quot;neutral&quot; groups</td>
<td>Limited number, many intellectuals and other leaders</td>
<td>Large in number but not in influence</td>
<td>Large in number, few leaders</td>
<td>Small audience but strategic elite as army people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kind of Audience</td>
<td>Could increase if Catholic Action trained elite take key places in organizations</td>
<td>Will probably keep mass following</td>
<td>Permanent solution of school problem might decrease its impact</td>
<td>Very great if unrest and crisis continue although this seems unlikely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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FOOTNOTES

3. Ibid., 220.
4. Ibid., 223.
6. Ibid., 72.
9. Ibid., chapters nine and ten.
12. Lanson, 179 and Poulet, II, 86.
14. Lanson, 200-206.
15. Poulet, II, 94.
16. Ibid., 216.
17. Ibid., 217.
18. Ibid., 218.
19. Ibid., 221.
21. Ibid., 262.
22. Ibid., 263.
23. Ibid., 265.
26. Ibid., 22-54.
29. Dansette, 197-199.
30. Lanson, 524.
32. Dansette, 158.
33. Ibid., 157.
34. Latourette, 1-10.
37. Latourette, 131.


44. Lubac, 26.

45. Corbishley, 7.

46. Dansette, 468.


49. Dansette, 46, 179, 189.

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51. Corbishley, 94-95, 97.

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ABSTRACT

The intent of this paper is to explain the relation of the Roman Catholic Church to French society, first through an historical perspective beginning with the Middle Ages and then through various aspects of contemporary French society.

Up until the twentieth century, the Church has been a central part of France, although she was strongest during the Middle Ages when the structure of the Church was based on the structure of the society: a rigid hierarchy that demanded obedience to any authority. Catholic doctrines were questioned, however, with the development of humanistic, libertine thought, with the deification of reason, and with the French Revolution and its cry for tolerance. Here began the dechristianization crisis which remained an undercurrent until the pessimism and instability of the twentieth century undercut the optimism of the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century represents many threats to the Catholic Church which must change in order to remain a functioning part of society. The practical promises of Communism appeal especially to the worker class which has grown the farthest away from Catholicism of all French classes;
the French worker feels that the bourgeoisie controls the Church, and, since the worker is poorly assimilated into French society in general, he also feels excluded from the Church. The popularity of existentialism and its attempt to comply with the despair of twentieth century man is a further threat to Catholicism. The dechristianization crisis is an enormous problem that must be met and solved by the Church if she is to once again be pertinent to society.

The Church recognizes the need for reform, the most important work being done with the laity whose ideas are finally respected by the clergy who realize that the only way to become part of society is to understand it in all its forms and the only way to fully understand something is to study it directly and in depth. Catholic Action groups, Catholic teams who work with the laity of all classes, form a vital effort at communication with French society, but the most important job has been accomplished through the worker-priest movement which has quietly continued to function in spite of suppression. Reform is also present in the Catholic schools, which are far less isolated from society than traditionally. Through politics, especially with Catholic parties, as well as through reforms in the structure and liturgy of the Church, can be seen further attempts to re-establish a position of importance. Although there is the usual opposition to reform, the Church is making an honest effort to relate once again to France.