Action Libérale Populaire and the Legacy of Catholic Republicans in the French Third Republic

by

Richard Myrick

B.A., California State University, Long Beach, 1985
M.A., Naval Postgraduate School, 2000
M.M.S., Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2004

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Abstract

At the dawn of the twentieth century, French Catholics attempted to build a political movement based on Catholic principles, rejecting the anti-republicanism that had marked the French Right since the Revolution of 1789. Inspired by the *Ralliément*, an admonition by Pope Leo XIII for faithful Catholics in France to work within the republican parliamentary system rather than to advocate for its elimination, the constitutional liberal Jacques Piou and the social Catholic Albert de Mun founded the Catholic Republican party *Action libérale populaire* on a platform of constitutional rights, social reform, anti-socialism, and fiscal conservatism.

This dissertation studies the formation, growth, and challenges of *Action libérale populaire* during the period between its founding in 1901 and the advent of the First World War in 1914, with an emphasis on the party's turning point in the legislative elections of 1906. Opposed by both Intransigents on the Right and Anti-clericals on the Left, Piou and de Mun attempted to unite Catholic Republicans, social Catholics, and secular Republicans within a sustainable Center-Right coalition. With a highly efficient organization, nationwide reach, and a consistent message, the party grew rapidly into the largest mass party in France. However, its inability to secure a legislative majority in the elections of 1906 and the subsequent disintegration of its coalition led to the party's association with historical narratives of failure and decline.

These narratives of failure and decline are assessed by analyzing the formation, growth, and tactics employed by *Action libérale populaire*'s leaders in building their coalition, as well as the challenges they encountered from both allies and opponents. This study approaches questions of success and failure from the divergent views and goals of the party's two founders and challenges the narratives of failure and decline as incomplete. Instead, this dissertation argues

that the Catholic Republican movement was largely successful in the longer term, failing only to produce a coalition that could advance the cause of constitutional reform. This more expansive view of *Action libérale populaire* and the Catholic Republican movement necessitates a reassessment of the French Right during the Third Republic and beyond.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Andrew Orr

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to

my wife Cheryl,

my daughter Kristen,

and my sons Rob and Brandon

Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

In June 1901, two veteran conservative politicians formed the first political party in the history of France. *Action libérale populaire* (ALP, "Popular Liberal Action"), soon to be France's first mass party as well, was founded by the liberal constitutionalist Jacques Piou and the social Catholic Albert de Mun who aimed to ensure Catholic interests had political representation in the increasingly secular Third Republic.[1] Two years before, in June 1899, a majority coalition of the Left—*le Bloc des gauches* ("Left Block")—had united Socialists, Radicals, and the previously anti-socialist moderates of the political Center in response to anti-Republican agitation by religious traditionalists, Monarchists, and Nationalists. The *Bloc des gauches* was anti-nationalist but also anti-clerical and strongly secularist, and its policies were aimed at eliminating the influence of Catholicism in education, government, and the public square. *Action libérale populaire* was founded as the *Bloc des gauches* began its anti-clerical project, and although the new party was officially non-confessional and open to all liberal constitutional Republicans, its leaders prioritized defense of religion in response to government actions that shut down Catholic schools and exiled religious congregations. Committed to constitutional conservatism, the highest priority for *Action libérale populaire* was to secure a legislative majority for a Center-Right coalition in the 1906 elections and thus end the *Bloc des gauches* government's control of the Republic.

[1] ALP was the first political party in France using the definition of a party as a nationwide political organization with a centralized bureaucracy, funding, and policy platform, and with candidates running for local and/or national office as representatives of the party and its platform. Social Catholicism in France was a movement founded in the 1830s that emphasized the obligation of all Catholics to assist the poor and destitute. The impetus for the movement was the rapid growth of industrial capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century, and the growth of social Catholicism paralleled the growth of Socialism because both addressed the effects of economic change.

The historical narrative concerning *Action libérale populaire* is one of a remarkably organized, efficient, well-funded, and nationwide mass party built quickly from a small Catholic Republican base into an effective political coalition and electoral force. However, the party failed to win a majority in the elections of 1906 or to allow the formation of a conservative coalition, and in the ensuing years it served only as a minority party in opposition before disappearing immediately after the conclusion of the First World War. Little of the historiography of the Third Republic touches on this peculiar Catholic Republican party that rapidly expanded to the largest political party in France but seemingly just as rapidly fell into insignificance. The common refrains are the twin narratives of failure in 1906 and decline thereafter, with the implication that the party had little if any impact on future political movements in France. There is truth in these narratives, for indeed *Action libérale populaire* failed to build a coalition capable of unseating the *Bloc des gauches* and the subsequent Radical Republic. The party's coalition certainly fell apart after the election defeat, and Catholic Republicans made little legislative impact in the Chamber of Deputies afterwards, unable to build lasting political coalitions with any other parliamentary group in the years before the First World War. Finally, *Action libérale populaire* did cease to exist as an independent party in 1919 and was not reconstituted.

The narratives of failure and decline associated with *Action libérale populaire* and the Catholic Republican movement it represented are therefore not inaccurate, but they are incomplete. This study will complicate the dominant assessment by viewing the party and the movement that inspired it from the differing standpoints and goals of its two founders. This approach also allows for a thorough examination of the Catholic Republican and social Catholic precursors of *Action libérale populaire*, how the party was built, how decisions were made to

address the constant challenges of political and social change in the Third Republic, and how party leaders attempted to maintain a moderate coalition as a delicate balance among disparate partners. The study also investigates how Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun addressed challenges from political opponents, dissension from recalcitrant members of their coalition, and most importantly, their own disagreements as to vision and goals. Finally, linked to these narratives, this study will argue that the Catholic Republican movement had a realistic chance of achieving electoral success. However, in a rapidly secularizing society, the road to an electoral majority was narrow and constrained by the necessity of negotiating the clerical-secular divide.

In attempting to build a Center-Right coalition that could secure a sustainable legislative majority, *Action libérale populaire* encountered four major obstacles. First, the governments that controlled the Chamber of Deputies from 1899 through the First World War focused on aggressively accelerating the secularization of the nation, forcing ALP to react to crises rather than advance policy. Second, some groups aligned with *Action libérale populaire* were too fractious and undisciplined to form a truly unified coalition, often actively opposing Catholic Republican priorities and alienating the secular Opportunists. Third, after the elections of 1906, growing anti-modernism in Vatican priorities motivated opponents of *Action libérale populaire* to attack the party when unity was most needed. Fourth, the Third Republic's secular identity had been widely accepted by many French Catholics by 1905, further weakening the appeal of political arguments centered on Catholic priorities. This study argues that these obstacles forced *Action libérale populaire*'s leaders to focus on short-term tactical challenges rather than long-range strategic goals, undermining their ability to build an alliance with the group most critical to forming a broad-based Center-Right coalition—secular Opportunists.

A central issue in assessing the failure or success of *Action libérale populaire* is the divergence of strategic goals between the party's cofounders. Although both were inspired by the *Ralliément*, Pope Leo XIII's call for French Catholics to abandon monarchism and embrace the Republic, their motivations differed. As a liberal constitutionalist, Jacques Piou hoped to revise the Third Republic's constitutional laws to distribute power among the branches of government, enact a bill of rights to protect religious freedom under common law, and establish an American-style independent constitutional court. To achieve this goal, Piou envisioned three steps—establishing a legitimate Catholic Republican party, merging the party with conservative and Centrist secular Republicans to form a Center-Right Tory party, and using this Center-Right to win a legislative majority and enact constitutional change. For the social Catholic Albert de Mun, the comparatively limited strategic goal was to ensure Catholic representation in a majority government to preserve or restore Catholicism as the moral guide for the nation and to enact social reforms to protect workers and families. Although both viewed *Action libérale populaire* as a vehicle for their goals, each had a different understanding of the party's role in the Republic, and therefore what constituted success—or failure.

Jacques Piou's original group of Catholic Republicans had been assembled in the Chamber of Deputies in the fifteen years before 1901, and they would form the core of the new party. However, building a broad-based conservative coalition was critical to the goal of creating a legitimate mass party, so every effort was made to accommodate as many groups as possible beyond the original parliamentary faction. In this effort, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* courted four groups. The party's short-term strategy was to first align with Catholic women and social Catholics, two groups with clear loyalty to the Vatican and, it was assumed, Leo XIII's call to support the Republic. Next, Piou and de Mun attempted to recruit from Catholic,

Monarchist, and Nationalist Intransigents, groups with less affinity for *Action libérale populaire*'s goals but with common concerns about the secular Republic and the *Bloc des gauches*. Finally, the party reached out to conservative Opportunists, who as secularists did not support Catholic interests but as conservatives were key to building Piou's Tory party. Attempting to appeal to these disparate groups created new challenges, the most serious of which was distrust between coalition members because of their differing priorities.

Despite encountering numerous obstacles from inside and outside the party, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* built an efficient and disciplined coalition that they believed was capable of producing a legislative majority. However, building a nationwide mass party was not enough for victory in 1906, and *Action libérale populaire*'s inability to secure an electoral majority for itself or for a potential conservative coalition is the primary basis for the narrative of failure. This outcome in turn produced the conditions for the narrative of decline, which reflects two issues for the party in the post-election era. First, in the years after the election loss, *Action libérale populaire* was abandoned by most of the coalition partners it had recruited in its early years, leaving the party almost exclusively composed of its original core group of Catholic Republicans. Second, the party experienced increasingly chilly treatment by the Vatican, whose leadership had soured on the *Ralliément* project and instead adopted a strong commitment to anti-modernism and anti-liberalism. As a result, party President Jacques Piou chose to pursue a cautious approach in the Chamber of Deputies, lending credence to the narrative of decline for a party that appeared no longer effectual or relevant.

In examining how and why *Action libérale populaire* was built and the strategies pursued by its leaders to achieve its aims, this study will argue that the narratives of failure and decline are both only partially true, and only if viewed in the short term. The key to interpreting these

issues is how failure and decline are measured, and the persistence of these narratives of failure and decline in the historiography is tied to the limits of Albert de Mun's vision and goals, which were oriented to the use of majoritarian power to establish social Catholic institutions, renew Christian morality, and enact social and labor reforms. The electoral failure took the nation in the opposite direction, with the Radical Republic and its secular project strengthened by the outcome at the expense of institutional religion. If *Action libérale populaire* is assessed based in this narrow way, then the narratives of failure and decline appear fully supportable. There is no dispute that the party was abandoned by most if its coalition partners, that its leaders accepted a role as a cautious minority party isolated from government, and that many Catholics turned to a form of patriotic nationalism or joined alternative groups, such as the integral nationalists of *Action française*, that rejected any accommodation with the Republic.[2]

However, this study proposes another approach rather than one limited to the results of the elections of 1906. An assessment of *Action libérale populaire* based solely or primarily on the outcome of the election cycle of 1902-1906 tends to support the narratives of failure and decline. In contrast, when measured against the long-term vision and goals of Jacques Piou, *Action libérale populaire* succeeded—eventually. If the narrative of failure is measured by achievements and outcomes well beyond the elections of 1906, then it becomes less convincing. Likewise, the narrative of decline loses its explanatory power when assessed in terms of the party's continued growth and ultimately by its merger into a Center-Right coalition in 1919. As a key part of the rapprochement between secular Republicans and Catholics, and in time between

[2] Integral nationalism was a political philosophy in France largely originated by Charles Maurras in the early twentieth century. Integral nationalism combined nationalism, monarchism, and ultramontane Catholicism, rejecting all forms of liberalism and socialism.

the Republic and the Vatican, the party's significance transcends simple narratives. Further, the influence of the Catholic Republican movement is evident in every Center-Right coalition formed after 1919, although Jacques Piou's vision for constitutional reform would not be realized until 1958 and the founding of the Fifth Republic. Thus, although acknowledging the work of other scholars, this study gives an assessment of *Action libérale populaire* that highlights the long-term constitutional vision of Jacques Piou as well, and therefore arrives at a different conclusion regarding the party's success—or failure. In this light, *Action libérale populaire* assumes a more prominent role in an expanded view of the constitutionally liberal wing of the French Right during the Third Republic, as well as in the effort by Catholic Republicans to ensure a fully accepted role for Catholicism in French politics in the twentieth century.

Organization

The first main chapter provides an outline of the movements that served as antecedents of *Action libérale populaire*. Although the Catholic Republican and social Catholic movements formed during the July Monarchy of the 1830s and 1840s, both movements were dormant during the authoritarian reign of Napoleon III during the Second Empire, from 1852-1870. The political leaders who revived these movements in the 1870s and 1880s had both come of age during the Second Empire, an experience which grounded their political beliefs and drove them to enter politics once the Third Republic had been established. However, Jacques Piou's deep roots in constitutional liberalism and Albert de Mun's social Catholicism produced profound differences in their respective political ideologies, goals, and aspirations, and as a result their partnership in 1899 was one of necessity due to the challenge posed by the newly formed *Bloc des gauches*.

Chapter One begins the examination of Piou's and de Mun's coalition building with the first partnership they formed—with Catholic women's groups. Although women would not receive the right to vote in France until 1944, Catholic women were vital to the growth of *Action libérale populaire*, serving as highly effective recruiters, fund-raisers, and vocal supporters with credibility within traditional Catholic communities and regions. Chapter Two investigates the effort to persuade social Catholics to join the coalition, which appeared to the party's founders to be a natural fit because of Albert de Mun's reputation as the leader most responsible for restarting the movement in the Third Republic. However, social Catholicism had fragmented into a variety of movements since 1871, complicating the recruiting process and producing opponents when allies had been expected.

Chapter Three highlights the three major Intransigent Groups—Catholic, Monarchical, and Nationalist—which were not well aligned with Catholic Republicanism but nonetheless shared *Action libérale populaire*'s priority of defending religion. However, Catholic and Monarchical Intransigents only provided opposition, and as their movements diminished many joined a new and aggressive alternative movement, the integral nationalism of Charles Maurras and *Action française*. Only the Nationalist Intransigents gave support to *Action libérale populaire,* and only in substantial numbers when their own poorly organized movement collapsed in 1904. Chapter Four tracks the attempt to form a coalition with secular Opportunists, the least aligned with *Action libérale populaire* concerning issues of religion but the group most in agreement with Jacques Piou's vision of a Center-Right Tory party. Finally, the Conclusion assesses the effectiveness of and problems with the strategies employed by *Action libérale populaire*'s leaders, the merit of the narratives of failure and decline, and the impact of the party and Catholic Republicans on French conservatism in the twentieth century.

Historiography

The interaction of politics and religion is well-attested in the historiography of the French Third Republic, and scholarship concerning the *Ralliément* of the 1890s and the Separation Law of 1905 has been the subject of renewed interest in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. This interest results not only from the passage of one hundred years since laïcité officially replaced the Concordat regime, but also from continuing questions and controversies about religious identity and practice in France. However, scholarship focusing specifically or exclusively on *Action libérale populaire* has not been a part of the broader historiography. There are no published monographs (in French, English, or any other language) about *Action libérale populaire* itself, although two scholarly articles focus on the formation of ALP: Benjamin Martin's "The Creation of the *Action Libérale Populaire*: An Example of Party Formation in Third Republic France" and Évelyne Janet-Vendroux's "*L'Action libérale populaire dans le Nord à la Belle Époque*."[3] However, in works about politics and religion in the Third Republic, many scholars have included at least portions of the history of *Action libérale populaire* as well as assessments of its efficacy, impact, and legacy within French conservatism.

Scholarship that includes a meaningful analysis of *Action libérale populaire* as part of a broader investigation of French history fits into four categories. First, a number of scholars have focused on the *Ralliément* of the 1890s, and although their work tends to stop short of the founding of *Action libérale populaire*, their analysis of the Catholic Republican movement

[3] Benjamin Martin. "The Creation of the *Action Libérale Populaire*: An Example of Party Formation in Third Republic France" in *French Historical Studies*, Autumn 1976, 660-689. Évelyne Janet-Vendroux, "*L'Action libérale populaire dans le Nord à la Belle Époque*" in *Revue du Nord* Vol. 2,, No. 37 (2007), 415-422.

immediately prior to the party's formation is of value. Second, by far the largest category of scholarly works that include *Action libérale populaire* are those concerning the French Right as a whole or specific groups within the Right. These works all focus on movements other than Catholic Republicanism, but they also often include analysis of the interaction among conservative groups and thus provide valuable insight into the political milieu of the Third Republic, and, by extension, *Action libérale populaire*. Similarly, scholarship that examines the history of the Separation Law of 1905 typically includes analysis of the groups proposing and opposing it, and so the prominent role of *Action libérale populaire* receives attention. Fourth, a diverse group of biographies, compilations of speeches, and other religious or political works provide a more eclectic but still useful body of scholarship that includes arguments touching on the history and accomplishments of *Action libérale populaire*.

The most prominent and influential work focused on the *Ralliément* of the 1890s is *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1889* by Alexander Sedgwick.[4] Although Sedgwick gives a comprehensive political analysis of all the Catholic movements that responded to the *Ralliément*, his main argument is that Leo XIII's intent was less about France and more about regaining lost papal territory from Italy. Sedgwick also pronounces the *Ralliément* over by 1899, assesses it a failure, and makes little mention of what followed. In contrast to Sedgwick, Martin Dumont focuses on the Vatican's efforts to preserve Catholicism in France by persuading Catholics to accept the Republic. In *Le Saint-Siège et l'organisation politique des catholiques français aux lendemains du Ralliement 1890-1902*, Dumont argues that Leo XIII's focus was France itself, although the goal of avoiding the appearance of interference in the politics of a sovereign nation

[4] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1889* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

created the need for intermediaries, and although the book does not examine *Action libérale populaire* in detail, it acknowledges the need for scholars to do so.[5]

Scholarly works focusing on the French Right during the Third Republic are plentiful and provide a variety of perspectives and arguments. Although none of them focus on *Action libérale populaire*, many include the party in a broader assessment of conservatism. Perhaps the most prominent work on the French Right is René Rémond's *The Right Wing in France: From 1815 to de Gaulle*, which traces the origins of French conservatism in the mid-nineteenth century monarchical factions of Legitimism, Orléanism, and Bonapartism and then categorizes all subsequent movements as descendants of these groups.[6] Other scholars such as Zev Sternhell in *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* take much different approaches, examining the *Belle Époque* French Right for their role as ideological precursors of anti-parliamentary groups of the 1920s and 1930s.[7] Sternhell's argument for a blending of Left and Right in these groups is controversial, although his search for groups that would eventually be amenable to the Vichy Regime is widely shared among scholars. Arguing against both these ideas is Kevin Passmore in *The Right In France from the Third Republic to Vichy.* Passmore's remarkably detailed and comprehensive review of seemingly every movement of the French Right during the

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[5] Martin Dumont, *Le Saint-Siège et l'organisation politique des catholiques français aux lendemains du Ralliement 1890-1902* (Paris: *Honoré Champion*, 2012). For additional insight into Leo XIII, see Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes 1830-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); and David J. O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: Encyclicals and Documents from Pope Leo XIII to Pope Francis* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016).

[6] René Rémond, *The Right Wing in France: From 1815 to de Gaulle*, Translated by James M. Laux (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966). See also Gilles Richard, *Histoire de droites en France: de 1815 à nos jours* (Paris: Perrin, 2017).

[7] Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*, Translated by David Maisel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

Third Republic is a self-described effort to move beyond simple categories to broaden the perception of how and why groups form, prosper, or collapse. He argues for a more organic understanding of political movements, emphasizing crowd theory and an elite-populist paradigm.[8]

Scholarship focused on specific groups within the French Right are weighted towards Nationalists, with Bertrand Joly's *Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885-1902* and Robert Lynn Fuller's *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* among the most prominent recent works that account for social as well as intellectual history. Although Joly highlights the populist, emotional, and anti-intellectual nature of French Nationalism in the 1890s, he also argues for continuity with the Boulangist movement of the 1880s, with its blend of both Left and Right.[9] In contrast, Fuller stresses the lack of coherence and the amorphous, reactionary quality of the movement, arguing that it was less a precursor to later movements than a political storm tied specifically to the issues in France in the *Belle Époque*.[10] Complementing these works is William Irvine's *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France,* which stresses the importance of conservatives, most

[8] Kevin Passmore, *The Right In France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Passmore uses theories from psychology to expound on political strategies. Crowd theory (also known as crowd psychology) attempts to explain the behavior of large groups. In his analysis, Passmore uses crowd theory to explain how politicians adapted their electoral strategies after the emergence of mass parties. The elite-populist paradigm is a similar theoretical explanation for how elites retained power during the transition to universal suffrage by adopting populist positions.

[9] Bertrand Joly, *Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885-1902* (Paris: *Les Indes savantes*, 2008).

[10] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: MacFarland and Company, 2012).

notably Monarchists, in the rise of Georges Boulanger as a challenger to the Republic.[11] Unlike Fuller, Irvine argues for continuity on the French Right from Boulangism well into the twentieth century, tying it to fascism.

A second group connected with the Nationalists of the 1890s that has received scholarly attention are the integral nationalists of Charles Maurras and *Action française*. Eugen Weber's *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France*, Michael Sutton's *Nationalism, Positivism, and Catholicism: The Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics* 1890-1914, and Oscar Arnal's *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action française, 1899-1939* examine Maurras and *Action française* from different perspectives. Weber argues that *Action française* was the most important and influential intellectual movement on the French Right in the Third Republic, but that it was unable to translate ideas into political power because its ideology did not match reality.[12] Sutton traces the origins of Maurras' ideology to its positivist roots, ultimately adding credence to Weber's argument that *Action française* was a modernist movement that failed to incorporate traditional monarchism and royalism "coherently."[13] Finally, Arnal strongly criticizes the compromises made by Maurras'

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

[12] Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962). For additional insight into *Action française* before the First World War, see Charles Maurras, *Le Delimme de Marc Sangnier: Essai sur la démocratie religieuse* (Paris: Nouvelle Libraire Nationale, 1906) and Louis Trenard, "*Un Débat dur L'Eglise: Sangnier et Maurras*," in *Etudes maurrassiennes*, Vol. 3 (1974), 211-227.

[13] Michael Sutton, *Nationalism, Positivism, and Catholicism: The Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Catholic supporters in accepting the movement's claims but ignoring the incompatibility of positivism with Catholic doctrine.[14]

Scholars have also studied organizations led by Catholic women in the Third Republic, which included groups that supported the suffrage movement and those that opposed it. Among the most comprehensive of these are Anne Cova's *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: 1870,* as well as essays by Magali Della Sudda such as "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie* (1900-1914)" and "*L'invention de la femme politique moderne. La LPDF, les élections, la République*." Cova argues that Catholic women became politically active to support Catholic traditionalism and maternalism as the Third Republic became increasingly secular.[15] Della Sudda's work complements Cova's thesis of the centrality of traditionalism and maternalism in Catholic women's groups by contrasting the motivations of those who supported women's suffrage with those who did not, and the subsequent rise of women's associations that directly supported political parties.[16] Della Sudda argues that the leaders of Catholic women's groups discouraged support for suffragism because of the suffrage movement's association with Protestant women in Europe and North America.

Unlike most works about the French Right that focus on extreme movements, a few examine more moderate movements. Social Catholicism in the Third Republic was examined in

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[14] Oscar L Arnal, *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action française, 1899-1939* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985).

[15] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la III^e^ République* (Paris: *L'Harmatta*n, 2000).

[16] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914),*" in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 37-60 ; and "*L'invention de la femme politique moderne. La LPDF, les élections, la République*," in *Femmes, Genre et Catholicisme*, edited by Anne Cova, and Bruno Dumons (Paris: LARHA, 2012), 39-53.

the early twentieth century in such works as Parker Thomas Moon's *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* which remains the most comprehensive despite its publication over one hundred years ago.[17] Moon argues that social Catholicism paralleled and competed with socialism for much of the nineteenth century, and remains a convincing work with extensive primary sources and a broad view of the movement and its supporters and opponents. More recent scholarship has focused on movements of Catholic moderates in the twentieth century, exemplified by Jean-Marie Mayeur's *Des Partis catholiques à la Démocratie chrétienne XIXe-XXe siècles* and *Catholicisme social et Démocratie chrétienne: Principes romains, expériences françaises*, as well as *Centrisme et démocratie-chrétienne en France: Le Parti Démocrate Populaire des origines au M.R.P. (1919-1944)* (1990) by Jean-Claude Delbreil. Mayeur argues for the centrality of nineteenth century social Catholicism in the French Christian Democratic parties of the mid-twentieth century, although later movements expanded beyond the earlier focus on labor reform to include broader societal concerns.[18] Delbreil explores the political lineage of these movements, one of the few scholars to note the importance of Catholic Republicans and *Action libérale populaire* in the formation of the *Parti Démocrate Populaire* in 1924.[19] Finally, in *Les 'chrétiens modérés' en France et en*

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[17] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921). For another century-old work with insights concerning Third Republic politics, see Raymond Leslie Buell, *Contemporary French Politics* (New York: D. Appleton, 1920).

[18] Jean-Marie Mayeur, *Des Partis catholiques à la Démocratie chrétienne XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: *Armand Colin*, 1980); and *Catholicisme social et Démocratie chrétienne: Principes romains, expériences françaises* (Paris: *Les Éditions du Cerf*, 1986). See also R. E. M. Irving, *Christian Democracy in France* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); and Joseph A. Buttigieg and Thomas Kselman, ed., *European Christian Democracy: Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspectives* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

[19] Jean-Claude Delbreil, *Centrisme et démocratie-chrétienne en France: Le Parti Démocrate Populaire des origines au M.R.P. (1919-1944)* (Paris: *Publications de la Sorbonne*, 1990).

Europe 1870-1960, a volume edited by Jacques Prévotat and Jean Vavasseur-Desperriers, twenty-eight scholars contribute essays exploring moderation by Catholics in the rapidly changing political landscape of the Third, Fourth, and (early) Fifth Republics.[20] A recurring theme among the contributors to this work is the difficulty of maintaining moderation while pursuing reform.

Scholars have also examined the Separation Law of 1905, which garnered renewed interest both for its one hundredth anniversary and lingering questions as to its continuing applicability in twenty-first century France. Among the most comprehensive works are Maurice Larkin's *L'Église et l'État en France, 1905: la crise de la Séparation* and Jean-Paul Scot's *"L'État chez lui, l'Église chez elle": Comprendre la loi de 1905*. Of broader scope but focused on similar subjects are Malcolm Partin's *Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes, and the Church: The politics of anti-clericalism* and Jacqueline Lalouette's *Histoire de l'anticléricalisme en France* (2020) and *Les congrégations hors la loi ? Autour de la loi du 1er juillet 1901* (co-edited with Jean-Pierre Machelon). Unlike Scot, who provides a densely written narrative history of the Separation Law, Larkin contributes an expansive argument, identifying the Vatican's concerns about the international ramifications of ending the French Concordian settlement as the "prime" motivator for Pius X's strong resistance.[21] Partin emphasizes that anticlericalist premier Émile

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[20]Jacques Prévotat and Jean Vavasseur-Desperriers, ed. *Les 'chrétiens modéré' en France et en Europe 1870-1960* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2013).

[21] Maurice Larkin, *L'Église et l'État en France, 1905: la crise de la Séparation* (Paris: *Éditions Privat*, 2004). Additionally, Larkin wrote two other works that focused on different aspects of the religious issue in the years prior to the Separation Law: *Church and State after the Dreyfus Affair: The Separation Issue in France* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), and *Religion, politics, and preferment in France since 1890: La Belle Époque and its legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Jean-Paul Scot, *"L'État chez lui, l'Église chez elle" Comprendre la loi de 1905* (Paris: *Éditions du Seuil*, 2005).

Combes considered the Concordat of 1801 to be a useful tool for controlling Catholic practice, and was reluctant to dismantle it. In Partin's assessment, Combes eventually acquiesced to the Separation because he was overwhelmed and overruled by the extreme Left of the *Bloc des gauches*.[22] In contrast, Lalouette focuses on the lessening of anticlericalism after 1905, arguing that it had served its purpose but was no longer necessary following the passage of the Separation Law.[23]

Scholarly biographies of prominent Third Republic politicians are a useful if less comprehensive part of the historiography of *Belle Époque* France. Of these, two are notable for their study of figures who influenced the trajectory of Catholic republicanism but were otherwise peripheral to the movement. First, Pierre Sorlin's *Waldeck-Rousseau* is a multi-layered portrait of the politician most responsible for the founding of the *Bloc des gauches*. Sorlin describes Waldeck-Rousseau as a brilliant, if coldly calculating barrister motivated by a quest for personal prestige and an ambition to serve as President of the Republic. Sorlin argues that Waldeck-Rousseau was less a movement leader than a transitional figure, necessary to construct the *Bloc des gauches* but otherwise replaceable.[24] Second, Joan Coffey's *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* examines the leading early proponent of labor reforms among French industrialists by focusing on Harmel's loyalty to the Vatican, exemplified by his sponsorship of and participation in massive worker pilgrimages within France and, eventually, to Rome itself.

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[22] Malcolm Partin, *Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes, and the Church: The politics of anti-clericalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969).

[23] Jacqueline Lalouette, *Histoire de l'anticléricalisme en France* (Paris: *Presses Universitaires de France*, 2020); and (with Jean-Pierre Machelon) ed., *Les congrégations hors la loi ? Autour de la loi du 1er juillet 1901* (Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2002). For a wider perspective on the Separation Law and *laïcité*, see Catherine Maire, *L'Eglise dans L'Etat: Politique et Religion dans La France des Lumières* (Paris: *Éditions Gallimard*, 2019).

[24] Pierre Sorlin, *Waldeck-Rousseau* (Paris: *Librairie Armand Colin*, 1966).

Coffey stresses Harmel's compassion for workers, his life within the Third Order of St. Francis, and his aversion to politics.[25]

Finally, in lieu of published works focusing on *Action libérale populaire* or the Catholic Republican movement, the best scholarship is to be found in biographies of party leaders. Unfortunately, only one biography of Jacques Piou had been published, Joseph Denais' *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou*. A young protégé of Piou during the formation of ALP, Denais went on to a long political career of his own. His biography of Piou is less a work of scholarship than a memorial and a personal memoir, with few documentary references.[26] Piou himself left no personal papers for posterity, although he wrote three books after his retirement in 1919 that are useful as recollections of his political career: *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique,* a biography of his friend and party cofounder; *Le Ralliément: Son histoire,* a history of the *Ralliément* of the 1890s; and *D'une guerre à l'autre 1871-1914,* a history of French foreign affairs leading up to the First World War. These works reflect valuably on major events, but Piou assiduously avoided discussing himself or his motivations, diminishing the usefulness of these works for the historian.[27]

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[25] Joan Coffey, *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003). Married Catholics took vows to follow the Rule of Francis through the Third Order of St. Francis. For a biography of another notable social Catholic who, unlike Harmel, joined ALP, see Hugues Beylard, *Au service de la presse: Paul Féron-Vrau 1864-1955* (Paris: *Les Éditions du centurion*, 1960).

[26] Joseph Denais, *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou* (Paris: *La Nef de Paris Éditions*, 1959). For the recollections of another ALP operative, see Eugène Flornoy, *La lutte par l'association: L'Action libérale populaire* (Paris: J. Gabalda & Cie, 1907).

[27] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique* (Paris*: Éditions Spes*, 1925) ;Jacques Piou, *Le Ralliement: Son histoire* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1928) ; Jacques Piou, *D'une guerre à l'autre 1871-1914* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1932).

However, unlike Jacques Piou, Albert de Mun has attracted much more interest from biographers, and this interest has been aided by the existence of extensive official and private papers, some of which have only recently become available to scholars. De Mun has been studied much more intensively than Piou and scholarly works examining the social Catholic icon continue to be published. The three most notable biographies are Benjamin Martin's *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic*; Philippe Levillain's *Albert de Mun: Catholicisme français et catholicisme romain du Syllabus au Ralliément*; and Édouard Coquet's *Albert de Mun et la séparation de l'Église et de l'État 1904-1907*. All three of these works are thoroughly researched, documented, and comprehensive accounts of their subject, but with different emphases. Martin's is the most comprehensive, beginning in Albert de Mun's youth and concluding with his death in 1914. Martin combines the personal and the political, and this work is the best single source of information about the founding and operation of *Action libérale populaire*, albeit from only one perspective.[28] Levillain's work concentrates on Albert de Mun's career up to the *Ralliément* of the 1890s, with an emphasis on his social Catholic work.[29] Coquet continues the account from the *Ralliément* to the aftermath of the Separation Law's passage in 1905, and explores religious and philosophical themes.[30] Both Levillain and Coquet benefit from the more recent release of personal journals, which had been held from scholarly review by family request.

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[28] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

[29] Philippe Levillain, *Albert de Mun: Catholicisme français et catholicisme romain du Syllabus au Ralliément* (Rome: *Écoles françaises de Rome*, 1983).

[30] Édouard Coquet, *Albert de Mun et la séparation de l'Église et de l'État 1904-1907* (Paris: *Les Éditions du Cerf*, 2019).

Although the otherwise robust historiography concerning politics and religion in the Third Republic contains little analysis of Catholic Republican leaders and *Action libérale populaire*, much can be gleaned from works that explore movements within French conservatism, the clerical-secular divide, and the culmination of a century of conflict in France over the best form a of government. In examining this era, scholars viewed the Catholic Republican movement as of some interest, but only as peripheral and short-lived. This attitude by scholars is indicative of the pervasive narratives of failure and decline that are typically associated with *Action libérale populaire* and limit interest in further study. Nonetheless, the volume and diversity of historiography concerning the Third Republic establishes a useful framework for examining the Catholic Republican movement and provides a valuable historical context.

Chapter 2 - JACQUES PIOU, ALBERT DE MUN, AND THE *RALLIÉMENT*

The origins of France's early twentieth century conflicts over the Catholic Church's place in public life are as deep and complex as the history of the nation itself. From late antiquity, the relationship between spiritual and temporal sovereignty evolved in France alongside a distrust of foreign influences and suppression of domestic dissidents. The French are not unique among European peoples in having such a history, but the peculiarities of the experience in France produced a particular view of power that paved the way for the acceptance of centralized state authority, distrust of pluralism and compromise, and adherence to orthodoxy.[31] Although these characteristics have been consistent over the centuries, their form changed often and, at times, dramatically. For the purposes of this study, the most important shift took place as a result of the Revolution of 1789 and of Napoleon Bonaparte's subsequent religious settlement. The Revolution challenged the privileged status of Catholicism in France for the first time since the 5th Century. Napoleon's compromise with Pope Pius VII, enacted as the Concordat of 1801, ended the most serious conflicts concerning religion inherited from the Revolution. The Concordat remained in effect for a century, but despite producing a degree of religious peace it did not resolve ongoing questions about Catholicism in the political life of France, and in French society more broadly.[32]

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[31] Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven: Yale university Press, 1996), 10-12.

[32] Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours* (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 29-30.

Under this Concordian settlement, the ideas that inspired the founders of *Action libérale populaire* took form. Fifteen years after Napoleon I was sent into his final exile[33], the July Revolution of 1830 led to the establishment of the liberal monarchy of Louis-Phillippe d'Orléans. During Louis-Philippe's reign, religious and secular leaders began to assess the social and political role of religion, and to propose new approaches to Catholicism in public life. The political, economic, and social pressures that developed in France during the 1830s and 1840s shaped these approaches, which included social Catholic concerns for the health and welfare of the growing working class as well as liberal political concerns about balancing representation with order. However, these new movements were truncated by the Revolution of 1848, which produced the Second Republic, and then by the subsequent Coup of 1851 which overthrew the Republic and led to the establishment of the Second Empire in 1852.[34]

Although the ideas that formed the political philosophy undergirding *Action libérale populaire* were first articulated during the Orléanist Monarchy, both the politicians who founded the party came of age during the Bonapartist Second Empire. For Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun, their firmly held beliefs concerning the best form of government and its proper relationship to Catholicism were formed during the eighteen year reign of Emperor Napoleon III. Despite their shared experience of entering adulthood under the autocratic imperial regime, the beliefs of these two men were not identical, as they were shaped under differing conditions. Piou, the bourgeois lawyer born in Angers in 1838, and de Mun, the wealthy noble born in Lumigny in 1841, had social and political beliefs that often did not align with each other and sometimes clashed. Nonetheless, under trying circumstances in the late 1890s they still formed a working

[33] Munro Price, *The perilous Crown: France between Revolutions* (London, Pan Macmillan, 2007), 375-378.

[34] *L'Union*, 15 January 1852, 1.

relationship that survived numerous setbacks—and occasional disagreements—until de Mun's death in 1914. Together, they built the first mass party in France, a party that survived until 1919 and provided the foundation for important movements within French conservatism well into the twentieth century.

Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun certainly provide a vivid contrast in their personalities, backgrounds, and family histories, but their respective beliefs about French society and its political, economic, and religious structures are of special note because they are representative of two significantly different and at times opposing forms of French conservatism. These distinct forms, which grew from contrasting versions of French monarchism, are at once the source of the ideologies and the fault lines that divided Catholic conservatives, and they provided the energy to build coalitions but also the conflicts to undermine them. Although historians often refer to Piou and de Mun simply as "Monarchists," this designation does little to illuminate how at variance their ideas of monarchy were from each other, and to what extent their respective political and social beliefs and priorities arose from two distinct monarchical forms.[35] These two forms—Legitimism and Orléanism—are direct (if not singular) forbears of what was to become social Catholicism and Catholic Republicanism. It is clear that the social Catholic de Mun had Legitimist roots, and the Catholic Republican Piou had Orléanist roots. For both men, these roots were deep, familial, and profound.

[35] The use of the "Monarchist" label applied to both Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun appears without qualification in works by Bertrand Joly, Jean-Paul Scot, Pierre Sorlin, William Irvine, Maurice Larkin, Benjamin Martin, Eugen Weber, Parker Thomas Moon, Philip Nord, Robert Locke, Robert L. Fuller, among others. The term is not inaccurate generally, but is not fully representative of important distinctions in ideology.

Jacques Piou, Catholic Republican

Throughout France's politically, economically, and socially turbulent nineteenth century, it is notable that the movements that eventually came together in *Action libérale populaire* both originated during the July Monarchy of 1830-1848. Certainly, political liberalism could trace its lineage at least a century prior to the July Monarchy, and social Catholicism much further still. However, the specific political and economic conditions that arose during the liberal constitutional monarchy of Louis-Phillipe d'Orléans provoked identifiably new assessments of societal problems—and solutions for how to address them. For future Catholic Republicans like Jacques Piou, the model of the July Monarchy, despite its failures, was the commitment to a British-style constitutional monarchy and gradual reformism paired with economic and political liberalism.[36] Most of all, Orléanist liberals valued progress, but within an established order that avoided what they perceived as the excesses and abuses of both the absolute monarchy of the Bourbon Dynasty and the equally tyrannical revolutionaries of the First Republic and the Bonapartist Empire that eclipsed it. Orléanism was exemplified by the constitutional liberalism of Germaine de Stael, Benjamin Constant, and François Guizot, all of whom based their political philosophies on the pursuit of *juste milieu*—the middle way.[37] Perhaps surprisingly, many Orléanists supported the Second Republic soon after the coup that led to Louis-Philippe's downfall in 1848. However, most were dismayed as the Republic itself was overthrown by its first President, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, soon to be crowned Emperor Napoleon III. With the

[36] Édouard Coquet, *Albert de Mun et la séparation de l'Église et de l'État 1904-1907* (Paris: *Les Éditions du Cerf*, 2019), 14. Coquet refers to Liberal Catholics who intended to Christianize post-1789 France, adapting to taking advantage of the political and economic changes occurring in the nineteenth century.
[37] René Rémond, *The Right Wing in France: From 1815 to de Gaulle*. Translated by James M. Laux. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), 181. Rémond considers *juste milieu* a defining characteristic of Orléanism.

establishment of the Second Empire in 1852, Orléanism went into hibernation until Napoleon III's regime was toppled by the Prussian invasion of 1870.

Jacques Piou (1838-1932) was directly tied to the Orléanism of the July Monarchy. His father, Constance Piou, served as attorney general in Lyon in the 1840s and his great uncle was the prominent constitutional liberal politician Odilon Barrot, who from the 1820s to the 1870s led the "dynastic left . . . [which] wished for as much as possible of the republic, including a major extension of the franchise and 'republican institutions', while remaining loyal to the July Monarchy."[38] Barrot was from Lozère in the southern region of Languedoc, and Piou was raised and educated in the south as well, in the proudly independent and staunchly Catholic city of Toulouse.[39] Constance Piou had relocated to Haute-Garonne on his appointment as First President of the Court of Appeal in Toulouse, where he served until 1870 before winning election to the Chamber of Deputies in 1871.[40] Jacques Piou was born in Angers and always considered himself a Breton, but was raised in the most important city in the Southwest, Toulouse. A bright student, Piou followed his father into the law, excelling as a litigator while also winning election in 1864 as General Councilor of Haute-Garonne as a liberal Monarchist.[41] An opponent of Napoleon III's Empire, the younger Piou also founded a daily newspaper,

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[38] Munro Price, *The Perilous Crown: France between Revolutions* (London: Pan Books, 2008), 205-206. Barrot was among a small group of political figures who bridged nineteenth century French public life from the First Empire to the Third Republic, remaining resolute in his pragmatic constitutional liberalism regardless of regime or cost to himself. This consistency was a quality evident in the political career of Jacques Piou.

[39] Throughout his political life Piou represented constituencies in southern France, either in Haute Garonne or Lozère. Regardless, he considered himself a Breton, since his father's family had lived in Brittany for hundreds of years.

[40] Joseph Denais, *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou* (Paris: *La Nef de Paris Éditions*, 1959, 9.

[41] Jean-Louis Gazzaniga, *Etudes d'histoire de la Profession d'avocat: Défendre par la parole et par l'écrit*. (Toulouse: *Presses de l'Université Toulouse Capitole*, 2004), 321-341.

Progrès Libéral, with the editorial breadth and openness to welcome the collaboration of future leader of the French revolutionary socialists, Jules Guesde.[42] However, after the tumult of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, he left politics and confined himself to life as a barrister for the next fifteen years.[43]

These liberal and legal influences were discernible as Piou re-entered politics in 1885, winning his first seat in the Chamber of Deputies as a representative of the department of Haute-Garonne. The liberalism of Orlèanism was constrained by the pursuit of order, but it was nonetheless grounded in both political and economic liberalism as systems ostensibly based on individual freedom[44]. Reflecting the *juste milieu* of his forbears, Piou's understanding of the role of government was practical and non-dogmatic: "If state socialism is a peril, complete abstention of the state is desertion."[45] Piou was not a theorist nor a scholar but a pragmatic politician with roots in southern France and a firm understanding of the law. As a provincial, he favored decentralization, which was also a major cause for Odilon Barrot in his time.[46] As a lawyer he was a talented debater, tenacious and powerful if not a mesmerizing as an orator. He was a quietly devout Catholic and a committed liberal, but most of all he was a strong supporter of constitutional order. In an era when many French politicians moved easily from one ideology or

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[42] *Le Petit Démocrat*, 24 January 1926, 2. The 87-year old Piou recounted his experiences as a young lawyer and journalist in an interview published in the newspaper of the *Parti Démocrate Populaire*, the heir to *Action libérale populaire* as the party of Catholic Republicans in the interwar period.

[43] Joseph Denais, *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou* (Paris: *La Nef de Paris Éditions*, 1959, 10.

[44] Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democracy Past and Future: Selected Essays*, edited by Samuel Moyn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 153-154.

[45] *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du Congrès Général* décembre 1904, 16. Piou's comment was part of the opening speech of the 1904 ALP Congress in Paris.

[46] François Furet, *Revolutionary France 1770-1880*, translated by Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 477.

party to another, Jacques Piou was among the few who was consistent from his first day in the Chamber of Deputies to his last, over three decades later.[47]

Soon after his first election to the Chamber, Piou joined the conservative *Union des droites* of Baron Armand de Mackau, among a group of fellow conservatives who were committed Monarchists.[48] Piou also supported Edgar Raoul-Duval's initiative to form a *Droite constitutionelle* ("Constitutional Right") in 1886, and there is some evidence that Piou took part in drafting the proposal for the new parliamentary group that was published in *Le Temps* on 24 August 1886.[49] Raoul-Duval, a Protestant and a former Bonapartist, believed that conservatives could only be effective in the future if they fully accepted the Republic rather than cling to the hope of a Monarchist restoration: "A Right in the Republic and not against the Republic."[50] The *Droite constitutionelle* provided a template for Piou's political philosophy for the rest of his career, but it also served as a cautionary tale. Raoul-Duval's proposal was mocked across the political spectrum, with Republicans doubting his sincerity and Monarchists refusing to abandon their pretender to the throne. Raoul-Duval died unexpectedly in 1887, and the *Droite constitutionelle* passed away with him.[51] Piou, the reluctant Monarchist, learned quickly the

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[47] In this regard Piou ironically resembles his longtime Radical adversary, Georges Clemenceau, and for over thirty years these two indefatigable champions of their respective causes engaged in a series of memorable debates on the floor of the Chamber of Deputies.

[48] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1989* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 14-15. Although newly elected in 1885, Piou's incisive intellect and oratory polished by his years in the legal profession allowed him to rise quickly within the leadership of the *Union des droites*.

[49] *La droite républicaine*, 20/27 July 1887, 2.

[50] *La droite républicaine*, 9 January 1887, 1.

[51] *Le Figaro*, 12 Jan 1877, 1. Raoul-Duval was a physically active and seemingly healthy 54, but his health began to fail in 1886 and he died of heart disease on 10 January 1877 while recuperating in Monte Carlo. No other conservative politician, including an admittedly junior deputy in Jacques Piou, was willing to assume leadership of

fragility of coalitions, the depth of entrenched beliefs, and the difficulty of charting a middle course.

Piou certainly considered himself an Orléanist, but his interest was less in the specific form of government than its constitutional strength. As with his fellow liberal Orléanists, Piou's concern was that the laws that established the Third Republic had erroneously ensured "the omnipotence given to legislative power . . . [because] [t]he two assemblies were sovereign in the full monarchic sense of the term."[52] In this view, Parliament was an "autocracy," the President "a decorative figure, without initiative," and no guarantees existed for "the rights of the nation."[53] For Piou and his faction, the concentration of power in the legislature at the expense of judicial and executive oversight was a prescription for the abuse of power. In addition to lauding the British Tories, he also praised the Constitution of the United States, primarily because it was built with checks and balances while ensuring a strong executive to limit majoritarian legislative excess:

> The Republic is the constitutional government of the country . . . [and as such] we want . . . all legitimate rights and freedoms removed from the whims of parliamentary majorities, . . . guaranteed by an *intangible Constitution* entrusted, as in the United States, to the custody of an *independent Supreme Court*. . .[and]. . . the extension of the powers of the President of the Republic . . . (italics original).[54]

Raoul-Duval's movement, and the group quickly dissolved. However, Raoul-Duval's ideas align easily with Piou's Catholic Republican movement in the 1890s.

[52] François Furet, *Revolutionary France 1770-1880*, translated by Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 536. Furet notes the weakness of the essentially ceremonial role of the Presidency, which was among Piou's criticisms of the Third Republic.

[53] Jacques Piou, *Le Ralliément: Son histoire* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1928), 26.

[54] Jacques Piou, *D'une guerre à l'autre 1871-1914*. (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1932), 301. This policy is part of the official ALP political program but reflects the reforms consistently promoted by Piou since the 1880s. Other reforms included provincial and municipal decentralization, citizen referenda, free and secure voting, proportional representation, simplified tax system, and, by 1919, women's suffrage.

While many of his conservative peers wanted to restore the monarchy by entirely repealing the French Constitutional Laws of 1875 that had established the Third Republic, Piou wanted to modify them by strengthening the executive and introducing minority protections, such as proportional representation, a constitutional supreme court, and a bill of rights. When Leo XIII called for French Catholics to rally to the Republic, Piou—as a confirmed constitutionalist—was among the first to answer because his commitment was less to monarchy than to a strong executive and constitutional order. In short, Jacques Piou perceived the weaknesses of the Third Republic as primarily political and constitutional. For Piou, the problems faced by Catholics—such as anti-clerical laws, the dilution of Catholic education, and the growing secularization of French society—could and should be addressed politically, but this would only be possible if Catholics took their place in the constitutional order. Piou's belief in the efficacy of and necessity for a French Tory party arose from the realization that although France had moved beyond the absolutism of the *ancien regime* and the Revolutionary and Imperial eras, the nation could still be susceptible to a new secular absolutism if Catholics abdicated their civic responsibility in favor of obstinate nostalgia.[55] Rather, in Piou's view, Catholics must become full and active members of a pluralistic Republic. His message to his fellow Catholics was clear as both a warning and a charge:

> The hour has come, even for the most obstinate "to pardon the inevitable" and to think of their children more than their ancestors. So let the conservatives overcome their diffidence, let them forget the affronts received, the injustices suffered, the calumnies, all these detestable legacies of a century of revolutions; one does not revenge oneself on his

[55] For an exploration of how the Revolution of 1789 replicated the ancien regime's intolerance of competing systems, see Dale Van Kley's *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791*. Van Kley cites both Alexis de Tocqueville and Edgar Quinet in arguing that Louis XIV's suppression of Protestantism in France forestalled the development of pluralistic tolerance and political freedom, and when the Revolution arrived the French simply traded one form of absolutist state for another and failed to create the institutional basis for freedom of conscience, whether political or religious.

> country. . . Are the conservatives going to decide, at last, to follow the nation in its evolution and to second it in its efforts?[56]

Albert de Mun, Social Catholic

Before 1892, compromise with the evolution of the nation in the form of the secular Third Republic was unthinkable for Albert de Mun, because for him the Republic embodied the Revolution itself. In an 1878 speech to the Chamber of Deputies he assailed his Republican opponents: "You are the Revolution! That is sufficient to explain why we are the Counterrevolution!"[57] Born near Paris in Lumigny-Nesles-Ormeaux, de Mun (1841-1914) followed his noble and Legitimist predecessors in considering the Revolution of 1789 to be a catastrophe that destroyed the stability provided by both official Catholicism and the Bourbon Monarchy. The scourge of the Revolution was Enlightenment materialism, which in Legitimist thought produced nothing but despotism throughout the tumultuous nineteenth century of Bonapartist Empires and liberal regimes, Republican or Orléanist. As with the founders of French social Catholicism in the 1830s and 1840s, however, Albert de Mun considered the most pressing issues to be both moral and economic, although also rooted in the upheaval of 1789. The worst injustice was the dislocation and dissolution visited upon common people by rapacious, materialist economic liberalism and the rapid industrial expansion that it fostered. This assessment was clearly similar to that of the growing socialist movement in mid-century France, whether the utopian socialism of Charles Fourier, the syndicalist anarchism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, or the scientific socialism of Karl Marx. As such, Albert de Mun and social Catholics would often propose solutions similar to those of the socialists to improve the lives of

[56] Jacques Piou, "The Conservatives and Democracy" in *Revue des deux mondes* (June 15, 1897), 805.

[57] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 16 November 1878.

the working class.[58] Well into the twentieth century, these ostensibly incompatible groups tried to work together to promote social reform because they both believed that the core problem in French society was economic liberalism itself, especially in its *laissez-faire* form.

For early social Catholics such as journalist Louis Veuillot, Catholics were delinquent in their duties as Christians by allowing economic liberalism to dominate the land and oppress the common people, "while absolving the rich . . .from the duty of assisting [the poor]."[59] Notably, many of these early reformers were also Legitimist Monarchists, with a reflexive disdain for the Revolution of 1789.[60] However, three Catholic reformers of the mid-nineteenth century were of particular importance to the social Catholicism that emerged in the Third Republic. First, journalist-turned Dominican Jean Baptiste Henri Dominique Lacordaire provided the philosophical foundation, insisting that Christianity and democracy were essential elements for a social philosophy arguing for social legislation but also portraying the economic liberalism represented by *laissez-faire* as the abandonment of the weak by the strong: ". . . between the strong and the weak, between the rich and the poor, between the master and the servant, it is freedom which oppresses and the law that frees."[61] Second, journalist Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam provided the practical application. In 1833, Ozanam founded the Society of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul in Paris, dedicated to alleviating poverty by adopting the approach of medieval mendicant

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[58]*Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 7 June 1884. Albert de Mun joined the Left in supporting Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau's trade union bill which repealed the 1791 Le Chapelier Law.

[59]*L'Univer*s, 16 Jan 1842. The words are those of Louis Veuillot.

[60]*L'Univers*, 26 December 1852. Veuillot wrote: France will reject parliamentarism as she has rejected Protestantism, or will perish in the attempt . . .."

[61]Henri Lacordaire, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris, Tome troisième* (Paris: *Ambroise Bray*, 1855), 246. This 1848 speech, entitled "*Du Double Travail de l'Homme*" was the 52nd in series of speeches by Lacordaire, presented in the *Cathedral de Notre Dame* in Paris.

friars.[62] Ozanam advanced the idea that economic liberalism and the concept of labor as a commodity led to pauperism, but his approach to solving the problem was rooted in practical social legislation, not revolution, according to Parker Thomas Moon: "Ozanam's program rested on the general principle that neither Liberty nor Authority must be exaggerated, but each reconciled to each other . . .[r]ejecting the extremes of absolute laissez-faire and dictatorial government intervention . . .."[63]

Third, Lacordaire's philosophy and Ozanam's example inspired others, including a reformer whose work was foundational for the social Catholic movement in the Third Republic. In 1837, 21-year old university student Pierre Olivaint was an agnostic studying at the *École Normal* in Paris when his reading of Buchez and Lacordaire led him to convert to Catholicism. He entered the Society of Jesus as a novice in 1845, was ordained in 1850, and dedicated himself to serving in education. Olivaint took his vows during a time of official government persecution of the Jesuits, but he persevered to establish a model for what would become the signature organization of social Catholicism—the *cercle*, or study circle. Olivaint's *cercles*, the *Réunion des Jeunes gens* (RJG, "Young Men's Meetings"), were weekly meetings for young Catholics, usually young aristocratic or bourgeois men, to study classical and religious texts under the direction of a Jesuit teacher.[64] In 1852, Olivaint served as a teacher and then also rector of the *Collège de Vaugirard* in Paris, where he established *cercles* for young men but also sponsored

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[62]*Lettres de Frédéric Ozanam 1831-1853* (Paris: *J. De Gigord*, 1912), 190-196. The letter of 5 November 1836 from Ozanam to F. Lallier concerns the founding of the Conference of Charity on 23 April 1833. In February 1834, the Conference became the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

[63] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 26.

[64] *Lettres de Jersey*, 1935-1936, Vol XLVI, *Nouvelle Série, Tome XIII* (Wetteren, BE: *Imprimerie De Meester*, 1936), 178-179.

charitable work for a variety of groups, including destitute women.[65] Refusing to flee Paris during the Commune of 1871, Olivaint was arrested with other priests and died a martyr's death, executed by Communards in the frenzied last few days before the destruction of the Paris Commune itself.[66]

The philosophy of Lacordaire and the charitable institutions of Ozanam and Olivaint established a foundation for French social Catholicism, but the movement was dormant politically after the coup of 1851 that ended the Second Republic and led a year later to the rise of the Second Empire. The revival of social Catholicism during the late nineteenth century had its origins in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, which led to the collapse of the Second Empire, the founding of the Third Republic, and the establishment of the short-lived Paris Commune in which Pierre Olivaint lost his life. The humiliating and devastating defeat at the hands of the Prussians in September of 1870 and the subsequent revolutionary uprising and violent suppression of the Commune in May 1871 caused many Catholics in France to question the moral and material worthiness of the nation. For some, the trauma of these disasters produced a commitment to reforming and renewing France. Among them were a few who turned to social Catholicism, none more important or impactful than the future cofounder of *Action libérale populaire*, the Comte Albert de Mun.

Born into a military family of the minor nobility, de Mun attended the military academy at Saint Cyr, deployed to Algeria among other tours of duty, and as a 28-year old cavalry officer

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[65] *Lettres de Jersey*, 1935-1936, Vol XLVI, Nouvelle Série, Tome XIII (Wetteren, BE: *Imprimerie De Meester*, 1936), 79-80

[66] "Father Olivaint, one of the martyrs of the Paris Commune, 1871," in *The Irish Monthly*, Vol. 7 (1879), 270. Pierre Olivaint was executed by Communards along with 62 other hostages (including five other Jesuits) on *Rue Haxo* on 26 May 1871.

served in the army of Napoleon III that was defeated decisively in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871.[67] In October 1871, he was captured after the siege of Metz and held under house arrest for four and a half months in Aachen, along with his compatriot and fellow future social Catholic leader René de La Tour-du-Pin. The humiliating defeat and captivity forced de Mun and La Tour-du-Pin to confront the causes of the catastrophe, and to search for a way forward:

> The loss of military spirit, the abandonment of traditional values, and the weakening of social bonds seemed to be the real causes of our disaster. It was no longer just a hope of revenge that agitated us, but a dream of regeneration; no longer a purely military revival, but a reform of morals and ideas from which came an ambition.[68]

The form of that ambition grew from two experiences—one during captivity in Aachen and the other on return to France and the trauma of the Paris Commune. First, while held in Germany, de Mun and de La Tour-du-Pin were befriended by a Jesuit priest who advised them to read works by French author and politician Émile Keller. For de Mun, Keller's prose provided "the clear, simple, and energetic exposition of catholic truth and revolutionary error, of the principles of Christian society and of the false dogmas of modern society."[69] The two French aristocrats were also introduced to the social Catholicism of William-Emmanuel de Ketteler, a Prussian official who became Bishop of Mainz.[70] Ketteler's description of the Catholic imperative to promote social justice and to oppose the materialism of liberalism and socialism profoundly impacted de Mun and was a turning point in his life. The ideas of Keller and Ketteler

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[67] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: *P. Lethielleux*, 1908), 18.

[68] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: *P. Lethielleux*, 1908), 20.

[69] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: *P. Lethielleux*, 1908), 21.

[70] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: *P. Lethielleux*, 1908), 22.

fostered a love of both faith and country, and "an ardent desire arose to serve both one and the other, devoting ourselves to the people and . . . in our hearts was formed the image of France returned to the Catholic tradition, diverted from the Revolution. . .."[71]

However, the future course for de Mun only came into focus after the violent confrontation between the newly formed provisional government of France and the insurrectionists of the Paris Commune. Although dismayed and angered by the destructive violence of the communards, especially their execution of Pierre Olivaint and the other hostages, he was also profoundly moved by the desperation of the workers who had been drawn to the Commune and its promise of class liberation. The writings of Keller and Ketteler also prompted unsettling questions for de Mun, as noted by Piou: "Had not this religion of mercy and love, before becoming an object of suspicion for the workers, sometimes served the powerful as an instrument of domination? Before being abandoned by the disinherited, had it not often been ignored and distorted by the fortunate?"[72] Albert de Mun's answer was that "the two main causes of the insurrection . . . [were the] apathy of the bourgeoisie class . . . and the ferocious hatred of the working class against society."[73] These connections were made clear to de Mun in November 1871 by Maurice Maignen. A lay brother of the Congregation of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, Maignen visited de Mun in the Louvre, where the young officer had relocated with the army staff in the wake of the Commune. While not absolving the Communards for their violence, Maignen placed equal responsibility on the privileged who ignored the plight of the poor:

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[71] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: *P. Lethielleux*, 1908), 22.

[72] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique* (Paris: Éditions Spes, 1925), 23.

[73] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: *P. Lethielleux*, 1908), 40.

> But who is responsible? It is not the people, the real people, the one who works, the one who suffers. The criminals who burned Paris and massacred hostages, were they not? But these people, who among you know them? Ah! The real responsibility is with you, those who are happy in life, who passed people without seeing them, who know nothing of their soul, of their suffering. I live with them, and I tell you on their behalf: they do not hate you, but they ignore you as you ignore them. Go to them, with an open heart, with an outstretched hand, love them, and serve them.[74]

From these profound experiences in 1870 and 1871 arose the social Catholicism of Albert de Mun, which was to shape Catholic reform in France for the next fifty years. After the war and the Commune, he and La Tour-du-Pin committed themselves to the cause of the working class though the reconciliation of all citizens, a vocation grounded in Catholic teaching. The pivotal moment for de Mun had been the encounter in the Louvre in November 1871, reinforced by his subsequent visit a few days later to the *Cercle Montparnasse,* Maignen's club for boys rescued from the Paris slums. De Mun was both overwhelmed and inspired, and within a month had convinced La Tour-du-Pin and few other officers to raise funds and establish a network of *cercles* across France.[75] In this effort they were following the examples of Olivaint and Maignen in forming study circles, but de Mun's *Oeuvre des Cercles catholiques d'Ouvriers* (OCCO, "Work of the Catholic Workers' Circles") was for workers rather than wealthy students or impoverished boys. Nonetheless, the mission was still to foster the intellectual and moral life of the *cercles*' membership by reading and discussing great ideas, supplying religious instruction, and instilling national renewal. This revival of the study circle led by aristocrats for the benefit of the working class would prove to be the template used by the social Catholics who followed de

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[74] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1925), 24. Piou relates the encounter within the army headquarters in the Louvre, overlooking the burned out walls of the Tuileries Palace which had been destroyed by fires set by Communards in one of their final acts of destruction as the army retook the city on May 26, 1871.

[75] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 13-15. Martin describes the scene of the young cavalry officer in full uniform addressing impoverished boys as 'soldiers of Christ and rejuvenators of France.' Despite the incongruity of an army officer addressing and encouraging young survivors of the Commune, he was applauded warmly.

Mun, and in time became the single most important means of propagating social Catholicism. From its formal establishment in 1872, the OCCO grew rapidly to over 580 *cercles* and 50,000 members nationwide by 1883.[76]

Study circles were soon established all over the nation, led by aristocratic Catholic patrons such as de Mun and La Tour-du-Pin but emulated by others as well. In 1874 a group of Jesuits established the *Conference Olivaint*—named for their compatriot executed by Communards—which brought together primarily aristocratic and bourgeois young men to bolster their Catholic education. The *Conference Olivaint* attracted young men for its intellectual rigor and Catholic orthodoxy, building a reputation for training a new Catholic elite. Among them was a former student of Pierre Olivaint at the *College de Vaugirard* who became a teacher at Vaugirard himself and would eventually return to provide lectures to *Conference* meetings—Henri de Gaulle, father of the future President of France.[77] Groups such as the *Conference Olivaint* were certainly not Republican and were expressly anti-socialist, but their Legitimism was tempered by a concern for the plight of the working class and by a wish to promote Catholicism.[78] As reintroduced to France by Albert de Mun through the OCCO, the *cercle* model became the template for extracurricular Catholic education during the Third Republic, beginning a movement that was emulated throughout the country.

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[76] AN F7 12477/12478, Fonds *Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques d'Ouvrier* et *Association Catholique de le Jeunesse Française*. Membership numbers are from *Sûreté Générale* reports.

[77] Julian Jackson, *De Gaulle* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2018), 16. Charles de Gaulle was born in 1890, and his father ensured he attended Catholic schools, which included a year in Belgium during the worst of the anticlerical agitation in French education in the first decade of the twentieth century.

[78] Martin notes that de Mun established a women's auxiliary for the OCCO, the *Dames Patronnesses*, who would work with working women. See Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 18.

In March 1886, Albert de Mun followed the example of the *Conference Olivaint* by inspiring the founding of a similar organization for young men, the *Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française* (ACJF, "French Young Man's Catholic Association"), which was to be his longest lasting and most impactful project. Addressing a small group of young men at the Paris office of the OCCO, de Mun charged them to build "a great army of young men, organized in local groups, united by a central committee, devoted to the mission of reforming society in accordance with Christian principles." By the ACJF's first general convention in May 1887, a single *cercle* with a membership of fewer than ten had grown to 1,000 members in ten local groups, and by 1903 to 30,000 members in 651 local groups. These groups were remarkably diverse, having expanded beyond young aristocratic and bourgeois men to include clerks, laborers, peasants, miners, and farmers. The local groups, which like the ACJF as a whole were independent, nonetheless adhered to the social Catholicism of Albert de Mun, who founded the ACJF as "an offshoot of or rather a preparatory for the Association of Catholic Workingmen's Clubs." More importantly for *Action libérale populaire*, by 1903 the ACJF provided "the enthusiasm and progressive spirit of youth to the social movement" and "contributed energetic and able recruits," including future ALP deputies such as Henri Bazire and Jean Lerolle.[79]

Meanwhile, in 1876 de Mun entered politics to transform social Catholicism from a local concern into a priority of the national government. He was to serve in the Chamber of Deputies for the next 38 years, with several gaps after election losses, but was a constant presence on the

[79] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 347-351. The ACJF was one of three organizations most represented in the leadership of the Catholic Republican movement after the First World War, along with former members of *Sillon* and *Action libérale populaire*. Of the three, the ACJF was the strongest proponent of social reform.

national political scene for the rest of his life.[80] His skills as an orator were soon evident, and in 1897—based on his Chamber speeches alone—he was elected to fill the *Académie Française* seat left vacant by the death of Jules Simon, the moderate Republican Senator, ten months before. [81] Never an intellectual, de Mun had charisma that arose from his passionate belief in his cause rather than an accumulation of scholarly work or the precision of analytical arguments. His sweeping oratory and single-minded commitment to social Catholicism earned him many opponents, including those on the Left who objected to his religiosity and those on the Right who dismissed his ideas as socialism. In a 1925 biography of his compatriot, Jacques Piou described the conundrum faced by Albert de Mun and his movement as they attempted to produce a program to advance the rights of workers while preserving and bolstering the religious and social order:

> This wise reserve did not prevent the conservative world from accusing them of demagoguery, and the world of labor of reaction. On the right, they were called "state socialists." On the left, they were called "bourgeois clericals." Here, workers circles were hotbeds of revolutionary utopias, and there mere religious brotherhoods, indifferent, hostile even to the fate of the people.[82]

Albert de Mun's approach was both singularly passionate and confounding to those who attempted to label him, but he was adamant that his motives sprang from deep religious commitment and an implacable opposition to Republicanism. If Piou's goal upon entering

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[80] Édouard Coquet, *Albert de Mun et la séparation de l'Église et de l'État 1904-1907* (Paris: *Les Éditions du Cerf*, 2019), 21, 25. Two of de Mun's elections to the Chamber were invalidated, but he subsequently won reelection in each case. He won his last five campaigns beginning in 1894 and concluding before his death in 1914. He always represented districts in Brittany—either Finistère or Morbihan.

[81] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 120. Martin contends that de Mun would not have been elected before 1896 because of his Monarchist past or after 1898 because of his anti-Dreyfus comments. In 1897, however, the Méline government was amenable to the supporters of the *Ralliément*.

[82] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique*. (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1925), 14.

politics was to foster the growth of a French Tory party that included secular Republicans but safeguarded Catholic interests, de Mun was uninterested in such coalitions, which he believed were compromises of principle. For Albert de Mun, there was only one solution to the dilemma of Catholics in what he perceived to be a hostile Republic—a French Catholic Party.[83] De Mun had long admired the prestige and effectiveness of the German *Zentrum*, a confessionally Catholic and electorally effective party within the German Empire. In 1885, de Mun believed the time was right to establish a French version of *Zentrum* and founded the *Union catholique* ("Catholic Union") formally on 19 September.[84]

However, France had a very different history with Catholicism and Republicanism than Germany, and in addition to the expected condemnation of the Left, many on the Right believed the effort disrespected the established leaders of the Monarchist faction and undermined their cause.[85] The *Union catholique* was also not an appealing option for Catholic Republicans such as Piou because they believed the existence of a Catholic party would be perceived by the secular Republican majority in parliament as a threat, making integration into Republican politics even harder than it already was. Piou's assessment was blunt: "The formation of a Catholic party would have been at all times an operation difficult to carry out; it was, at this moment of acute crisis, a chimerical adventure."[86] These sentiments were echoed by the majority of conservatives, who would have nothing to do with the project. Among them was the venerable Monarchist

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[83] Édouard Coquet, *Albert de Mun et la séparation de l'Église et de l'État 1904-1907* (Paris: *Les Éditions du Cerf*, 2019), 21.

[84] *L'Univers*, 22 September 1885. The announcement drew little coverage. Only the Catholic newspaper L'Univers provided information about the project and plans for the upcoming elections.

[85] *Le Temps*, 17 September 1885.

[86] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique*. (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1925), 93.

Intransigent Alfred de Falloux, who attacked de Mun's party and his motives in a letter to *Union des droites* leader Armand de Mackau: "His character is all calculation and pretension, and here is his incorrigible fault—he wants to be the chief at any price."[87]

Leo XIII

Regardless of these attacks, the objections of Monarchist Intransigents or Catholic Republicans did not doom the *Union catholique*. The final blow to de Mun's dream of a confessionally Catholic party came on 8 November 1885 from Pope Leo XIII who through his nuncio made clear to de Mun that he should end the project.[88] From the Vatican perspective, the effort was too divisive, and "[l]ike the leaders of the *Union des droites,* the Pope did not feel that a confessional party could be successful if its members had not achieved consensus on the status of the Republic."[89] Albert de Mun was crushed, recalling later "Leo XIII stopped me with a firm hand. It was a very rough blow . . . I had trouble subduing my reason. . . but I firmly believe today that a correct knowledge of our political state inspired him."[90] On 9 November, a day after the papal message and less than two months after its founding, de Mun reluctantly abandoned the *Union catholique*, if not the dream. Leo's intervention was the most open act in what had been a quiet and consistent policy of urging French Catholic leaders to move away from monarchism,

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[87] AN 156 AP I, 278. Armand Mackau Papers. Letter from Falloux to Mackau, 18 November 1885.

[88] Édouard Coquet, *Albert de Mun et la séparation de l'Église et de l'État 1904-1907* (Paris: *Les Éditions du Cerf*, 2019), 21.

[89] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 61.

[90] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique*. (Paris*: Éditions Spes*, 1925), 95. Piou quotes de Mun in relation to his reflections on accepting the Republic after Leo's call to the *Ralliément*, which did not cause such distress.

most notably before the 1881 elections, only three years after his investiture.[91] Over the ensuing eleven years, Leo encouraged French Catholics to accept the Republic, implicitly at first but eventually with a direct call to support the Republic in 1892. It was in 1885, however, that Leo XIII's actions concerning the *Union catholique* reinforced the alternative agenda and Tory party ideas of Catholic Republicans such as Jacques Piou, and as such can be seen as the beginning of the *Ralliément*.[92]

From his investiture in 1878 until his death in 1903, Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) issued 84 encyclicals, over twice as many as any other modern pontiff and prolific even for one with such a long tenure in the Holy See. Of Leo's encyclicals, 32 addressed specific issues within Catholic nations and another 32 addressed Church practice (including 9 about the rosary alone).[93] The remaining 20 encyclicals declared papal positions on philosophical matters, and of those, 13 were concerned with public policy generally but with a common theme of relations between Church and State. Of these, four of them—*Immortale Dei* (1885), *Libertas* (1888), *Sapientiae Christianae* (1890), and *Rerum Novarum* (1891)—together constitute Leo's comprehensive assessment of the place of Christianity within the life of nations, and the theological, philosophical, and ideological justification for the special status of the Roman Catholic Church

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[91] Jacques Piou, *Le Ralliément: Son histoire* (Paris*: Éditions Spes*, 1928), 14. Leo XIII had instructed his nuncio, Bishop Czacki, to urge Catholic political leaders to "refrain from monarchical declarations." In what was to be a pattern causing frustration for both the Pope and Catholic Republicans like Piou, the request was ignored. The elections went badly, and Monarchist bluster prompted Opportunists to join with the anticlerical left.

[92] *Vatican Apostolic Archive*, File 15/119. In a letter of 11 April 1892 to Cardinal Rampolla, Piou expressed his disapproval of confessionalism: ". . .[i]t is a misunderstanding of our country to believe that by throwing the clergy into [politics] we will end up with something other than failure."

[93] Leo XIII's complete papal works, including all 84 encyclicals, are available at https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en.html. Also see *The Leonine Encyclicals, 1878-1902*, edited by Daniel Schwindt (McPherson: Agnes Dei Publishing, 2014).

within the modern State. The culmination of this effort, the essence of Leo's project, was a fifth encyclical, *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes*, addressed to the "Bishops, Clergy, and Faithful of France," admonishing them to become leaders within a Republic which had been historically hostile to the Church.[94]

That Pope Leo XIII should break with his predecessors concerning support for the Republic in France was a surprise considering his conservative reputation, although hints of rapprochement were evident if not obvious decades before his ascension to the papacy. However, in 1878, when Cardinal Gioacchino Pecci was selected as pope on the third ballot, Eamon Duffy noted that he "was virtually unknown outside Italy."[95] The newly appointed Leo XIII was "not a member of the Curia, and had been bishop of the relatively obscure see of Perugia since 1846." The attributes that allowed him to transcend obscurity were ". . .his impeccably conservative opinions, . . . his success as a diocesan bishop, and . . . his pastoral letters . . .which argued for reconciliation between the Church and the positive aspects of modern culture." More mundane motivations were also influential, such as that Leo placated Vatican politics as "an Italian but not of the Curia" and that he "was almost 68 and too long a tenure would not be likely." To communicate his message he became "a man of encyclicals" in his "duty to the instruct the world; on morality, the rights of labour, the nature of socialism, the Bible, the nature of philosophy, the culture of Europe. . .." [96] Like his thundering predecessor, Pius IX, Leo believed that "[t]he world was in great danger because Christian nations paid no attention to the law of God as interpreted by the Holy Catholic Church." However, unlike the aloof and isolated

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[94] "*Au Milieu des Sollicitudes*," The Holy See, accessed March 1, 2021, www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_16021892_au-milieu-des-sollicitudes.html, 1.

[95] Eamon Duffy, Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 305-306.

[96] Owen Chadwick, A History of the Popes 1830-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 277.

Pius, author of the antimodernist Syllabus of Errors as well as the doctrine of papal infallibility, Leo was convinced that it would be through Catholic engagement with the political life of the Republic rather than fighting against it.

Although Leo wrote encyclicals to address issues in many nations, he focused from the beginning on France, although, as Alexander Sedgwick argued, it "hardly looked promising" because by "1879 the French Presidency, and the majority of both the chambers, were in the hands of the republicans", who "were extremely hostile to the Church and were enacting legislation designed to limit severely its influence on French society."[97] However, three political considerations made rapprochement with France seem possible. First, like the Vatican, France was isolated in Europe, and Leo believed he could use the situation to bridge the gap to Republicans. Second, Leo perceived France's instability and division following the Franco-Prussian War as an opportunity to reassert the Church's role in ensuring order and prosperity. Third, Leo was committed to addressing and healing the "condition of the French Church", most importantly the divisions among French Catholics inherited from the Ultramontanist conflicts of the previous seventy years that "left their scars on the French Church," resulting in a "lack of unity . . . [that] . . . encouraged her enemies."[98] For those 'enemies,' namely the leading French anti-clericalist Republicans such as Jules Ferry and Georges Clemenceau, Leo's acceptance of

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[97] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics 1890-1898 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 5. Sedgwick, along with Maurice Larkin, posit that Leo XIII's interest* in France was a reaction to the loss of Papal territory to the Italian Risorgimento. Both Sedgwick and Larkin argue that Leo's rapprochement with the French Republic was an attempt to acquire a powerful ally in his effort to reacquire lost territory.

[98] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics 1890-1898* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 5.

republicanism was an invitation to thaw relations. Leo used his encyclicals to encourage a rapprochement between Catholics and their political and intellectual opponents.

The Republic, The *Ralliément,* And The Elections Of 1898

In France, Leo's extension of his political argument took the form of a call to action in *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes*. Promulgated in 1892, Leo addressed French Catholics directly, urging them to accept the Republic, but also—and more importantly—to assume leadership of it.[99] In this engagement with the political situation in France, Leo XIII worked to make the best of a deteriorating situation, because many Intransigent French Catholic leaders viewed monarchy as a guarantor of Catholic privilege. By rallying French Catholics to abandon their attachment to monarchy and become active leaders with the Republic, he attempted to forestall the marginalization of French Catholicism in a nation that had rejected monarchism. Conversely, Republicanism in France was defined by its anti-monarchism and anti-clericalism, exemplified by Jules Ferry and the laic laws he sponsored in the early 1880s which came to represent the clerical-secular divide.[100] Leo XIII thus perceived the need to break Catholic attachment to monarchism for the Church to survive—if not thrive—while France rapidly secularized in the late nineteenth century. For Leo, Catholics must exert their influence as participants in the Republic, and as such their "acceptance of [the government] is not only permissible but obligatory, being imposed by the needs of the social good which has made and upholds them" As

[99] *Le Figaro*, 18 February 1892, 1.

[100] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 17 June 1881 and 29 March 1882. These laws mandated free, compulsory, and secular education, intentionally undermining the longstanding institutions of Catholic education. The Ferry Laws soon became the exemplar of laic laws and the focus of the clerical-secular divide.

such, "upright men should unite as one to combat [legislative abuses] by all lawful and honest means . . .."[101]

Leo XIII's call to rally to the Republic jolted French Catholicism from its reflexive anti-republicanism, but it did not produce unity. Intransigent Catholics either ignored the *Ralliément* or bent its meaning to reflect their relative willingness to accept liberal parliamentary government. There certainly was no unanimity concerning how to achieve the Vatican's goals, and as a result, the *Ralliément* of the 1890s was a disjointed effort that produced contradictory movements. Complicating the situation was the inherent difficulty with implementing this vision that arose from the contradiction between attempting to influence the internal politics of sovereign nations while proclaiming respect for national prerogatives. The contradiction was especially troublesome in France, where any hint of 'meddling' by the Vatican drew the immediate and vociferous condemnation of Radicals and undermined Catholic Republican attempts at rapprochement with secular Republicans. As a result, the *Ralliément* of the 1890s lacked direction and focus as each group of Catholics interpreted the Pope's intent to match their ideological perspective.

For Albert de Mun, the *Ralliément* was a means to inculcate Catholic morality and practice into the Republic, preserving or restoring the status of Catholicism while pursuing the social reforms that were his singular passion since 1870. For Jacques Piou, the *Ralliément* created the possibility of partnership with secular Republicans to form a strong Center-Right Tory party inclusive of Catholics and their sensibilities. From these different perspectives, both Piou and de Mun saw the *Ralliément* as a pathway to achieve their goals, but those efforts were

[101] The Holy See. "Au Milieu des Sollicitudes." accessed March 1, 2021. www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_16021892_au-milieu-des-sollicitudes.html.

frustrated in the 1890s by a lack of agreement and coordination among Catholic Republicans and Social Catholics as well as Intransigent Catholics and Monarchists. The lack of unity led to disappointing results in the elections of 1898, which had been the focus for the Center-Right since Leo XIII's call to the *Ralliément*.

The elections of 1898 failed to produce a strong Center-Right majority, and the poor coordination among the various Catholic factions furthered the unwillingness of many secular Republicans to trust that Catholics had truly accepted the Republic. More importantly, nationalist anti-government agitation after the elections, including a coup attempt supported by many Catholic Intransigents, undermined Piou and de Mun's efforts at coalition-building with secularists. Although Centrists were historically opposed to all forms of socialism, the coup attempt and Catholic support for it convinced many secular Republicans that clericalism was more threatening to the Republic than socialism. As a result, the political Center repudiated Catholic groups and chose instead to align with the political Left—including socialists—to form a Center-Left majority that excluded Catholic Republicans entirely.[102] Seven years after Leo's call to the *Ralliément*, the worst-case scenario had been realized, and the future prospects for Piou's Center-Right Tory party coalition appeared to be questionable.

In this desperate situation, Piou and de Mun overcame their differences and cofounded *Action libérale* in 1901, which became *Action libérale populaire* in 1902. For Piou, Albert de Mun brought notoriety and prestige as the founder of social Catholicism in the Third Republic. For de Mun, Piou brought parliamentary pragmatism and the approval of Leo XIII. In charting

[102] *Le Figaro*, 23 June 1899. The coalition of the Left that would eventually acquire the title *Bloc des gauches* was composed of the Center-Left, Radicals, Radical-Socialists, and Socialists. The Center-Right chose not to join, and Catholic Republicans were excluded along with Nationalists, Monarchists, and other groups on the political Right.

their course, the new party's leaders attempted to advance their goals while continually laying the foundation for a new majority. The original goal of a Center-Right coalition that included Catholics remained, but after being rejected by much of the political Center, Piou and de Mun were forced to build a party of their own to establish the legitimacy of Catholic Republicanism. The need to build a much larger party necessitated expanding the relatively small parliamentary group led by Piou into a mass party that could bring together constitutional liberals who prioritized both Catholic concerns and social reforms in a non-confessional party. The party would require a strong and unified message, significant funding, a large-scale communications apparatus, and highly efficient nation-wide organization. Nothing of this kind had yet been attempted in France, but with the exclusion of Catholic Republicans from a Centrist coalition, Piou and de Mun had no other option.

Their first task was to assemble a Catholic Republican coalition from groups which already shared at least some of *Action libérale populaire*'s goals and thus might be willing to support the party. Having learned from their missteps in the previous twenty years, Piou and de Mun established an organized and efficient bureaucracy that fostered productive fundraising, a consistent platform, and a wide-ranging network of publications while allowing for significant decentralized control of policy implementation by local committees. However, the party's two cofounders focused on different priorities. For de Mun, the primary goal was to produce a political party with a strong Catholic identity to pursue both the defense of religion and social reform. For Piou, building a constitutionally liberal party with political and electoral legitimacy was the first step toward joining with Opportunists in a Center-Right Tory coalition, with the ultimate goal of sponsoring constitutional reform on the American model.

As well-planned and well-funded as this project became, Catholic Republicans still had to confront the fractured and squabbling factions that comprised political Catholicism in France—many of whom had scuttled their efforts in the 1898 elections. Questions lingered as to the possibility of a Catholic Republican coalition which included these fractious Catholics with secular Republicans, all the while opposed not just from the political Left but from the Right as well. Regardless of these challenges and the difficulty of reconciling their own different goals, by 1901 Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun were united in their commitment to forming an efficient and disciplined mass party with nationwide reach. They agreed that *Action libérale populaire* would not be a confessional party and as such would be open to all constitutional liberals. They were both committed to ensuring the party was loyally Republican, but that it would also prioritize protecting religious freedom, Catholic interests, and social reform. Most importantly, in recruiting supporters for their project, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* knew they had to move beyond the core group of Catholic Republicans in parliament. So they began building their Catholic Republican coalition with the group in France most strongly committed to Catholicism, the authority of the Vatican, and traditional morality.

Chapter 3 - CATHOLIC WOMEN

To form a larger and more sustainable Center-Right coalition in the wake of the disaster of 1898, Jacques Piou had to look outside the narrow group of parliamentary conservatives who had formed the nucleus of both the conservative Right and the constitutional Right. Both these original factions were composed of groups well aligned with the values of a Catholic Republicanism but were limited in reach and appeal. More importantly, they had been unable to draw support from groups more tangentially linked to Piou's vision that had not survived as viable factions after the fallout of the Dreyfus Affair fractured the Opportunists and led to the fall of the Méline cabinet. If the First *Ralliément* of the 1880s had been derailed by Radicals and Center-Left Opportunists, Piou's coalition-building throughout the 1890s and Étienne Lamy's attempt to unify the wide range of conservative Catholic groups for the 1898 elections had been thwarted by recalcitrant Monarchist and Catholic Intransigents.

For Piou, the failures of the First and Second *Ralliément*, the notably harsher anticlerical tone among Republicans, and the anti-Republicanism of the Intransigents brought about by the Dreyfus Affair required adjustments of his own. The split of the Opportunists into Center-Right and Center-Left factions had scuttled the Second *Ralliément* and Piou's goal of a place for Christian Republicans within the ruling Centrist coalition. Instead, after the Dreyfus Affair and the virulent performance of the Assumptionists and other anti-Dreyfusards, the Centrists determined that there could be no rapprochement with the Catholic Right, which they now perceived as the more imminent threat to the Republic than the "collectivist" Left. The Centrists led by Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau chose to align with the political Left, which included the Radicals, the Radical-Socialists, and the Socialists. The Centrist political alliance with the Socialists was particularly ominous for the Right, and out of character for a Centrist *bloc* that had

opposed socialism as a matter of course. But for this new left-leaning coalition—soon to be termed the *Bloc des gauches*—the unifying idea was the battle cry of the lionized Radical, Léon Gambetta: "clericalism, there is the enemy."[103]

Catholic Republicans, regardless of their participation with anti-Dreyfusardism, were nonetheless blamed for it and left out of the ruling coalition. This reality and the subsequent policy action of *Bloc des gauches* forced Piou and his fellow Catholic Republicans to alter significantly their next strategic approach. Piou responded by creating a new political party to challenge the Centrists from outside the ruling coalition rather than attempt to join it. To accomplish this task, Piou would need to build a nationwide structure, secure funding, and reach out to new partners to form an alliance much larger than Catholic Republicans could produce on their own. He would need to build a party that could attract as many Catholics as possible while also appealing to the right-leaning Opportunists—now called the Progressists—who recoiled at their former Opportunist colleagues' willingness to partner with the Left. Uniting these groups into a Center-Right coalition became Piou's challenge as the new century dawned. The Second *Ralliément* was over. The Third *Ralliément* was about to begin.

One element of the Third Ralliément that distinguished it from the previous *Ralliéments* was the inclusion of women's groups in the Catholic Republican coalition. These organizations

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[103] Léon Gambetta, "*Discours sur les menées ultramontaines; Prononce le 4 mai 1877 a la Chambre des Députés*," in *Discours et plaidoyers choisis de Léon Gambetta, avec une notice biographique par M. Joseph Reinach* (Paris: G. *Charpentier et Cie, Éditeurs*, 1886), 237. Gambetta used the phrase "*le cléricalisme? Voilà l'ennemi*!" to close a speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 4 May 1877. In the speech, he attributed the phrase to his friend Alphonse Peyrat. Gambetta's speech was less an attack of Catholicism and religion in French life than a critique of the Concordat of 1801 and the integrated relationship of religion and government as well as Ultramontanism generally. However, the phrase quickly became a slogan for both sides of the polarizing religious question during the Third Republic.

of Catholic women had deep roots in the tumultuous era of the French Revolution but grew to prominence in the nineteenth century as religious congregations assumed many of the roles formerly performed by religious orders. Although primarily focused on education and social welfare causes, by the late nineteenth century some Catholic women's groups transformed themselves into mass organizations modelled after the British Primrose League with the intent of influencing French politics. Taking advantage of the opportunity for official recognition afforded by the Associations Law of 1901, Catholic women's groups were granted government sanction and grew quickly into some of the largest organizations in France. Recognizing the potential benefit of a partnership with these groups, Catholic Republican leaders chose to begin building their new coalition by proposing an alliance with the largest of these new associations of Catholic women.

The Associations Law

The path taken by Piou and the Catholic Republicans was significantly affected by the actions of their opponents, leading to a series of paradoxes that would characterize the Third *Ralliément*. Perhaps the most important of these was the passage in 1901 of the Associations Law, which was an earnest attempt by Waldeck-Rousseau to build on his 1884 law which had legalized trade unions. The 1884 Law had overturned the Chapelier Law of 1791, put in place by the early First Republic to safeguard against the formation of groups that could oppose or otherwise undermine the authority of the Revolutionary Assembly.[104] The Associations Law expanded on Waldeck-Rousseau's 1884 Trade Union Law by providing the formal means for

[104] Pierre Rosanvallon, *The Demands of Liberty: Civil Society in France since the Revolution*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 193.

any organization with more than twenty members to receive government authorization to incorporate. As a result, authorized groups had both legal standing and the ability to act corporately in holding property, raising funds, and pursuing their aims within a construct of civil society.

However, the Associations Law of 1901 was also constructed largely as a legal mechanism to control, diminish, or in some cases eliminate religious congregations. This was done by including a much higher bar of legitimacy for religious congregations, with specific requirements in the law that applied to no other form of organization. On paper, this did not mean religious congregations could not be granted official status as associations, and any organization could be disapproved if the government chose to do so. But the message was clear—religious congregations would face a more difficult task if they wished to receive government sanction. As French political and social historian Magali Della Sudda explains:

> The difference between these laws (1884, 1901) can be partly explained by the different contexts in which they were passed. The 1901 law drew on a policy of laïcité that sought to attack religious congregations. It reflected republican lawmakers' desire to limit the weight of these congregations, undermining the status they had acquired as a 'State within the State' since the Restoration. The law thus acknowledged the right of all individuals to form associations, while strictly imposing the requirement for religious groups to declare their status to the secular bureaucracy, at the prefecture, requiring most congregations to choose either secularization or exile.[105]

The Associations Law was immediately perceived by traditional Catholics as an assault on their rights, and as further punishment for anti-Dreyfusardism that had already produced the trial and exile of the Assumptionists. The belief on the Catholic Right was that Waldeck-Rousseau and the *Bloc des gauches* were targeting religious congregations not only to

[105] Magali Della Sudda, "Associations and Political Pluralism: The Effects of the Law of 1901" in Julian Wright, Stuart Jones (Eds.), *Pluralism and the Idea of the Republic in France (Basingstoke:* Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 161. Della Sudda is a lecturer at the Political Science Institute of Bordeaux.

marginalize religious expression but as a means for the Republic to eliminate the last and most important societal function still performed by Catholic congregations—education. As such, the Associations Law of 1901 became the most visible rallying point for both sides of the fight over clericalism. For the Left it was a necessary step towards building a truly secular Republic. For the Right it was an attack on religious freedom.

The Associations Law marked the beginning of the Third *Ralliément*, but not only as a perceived broadside against Catholic congregations. The law that was openly acknowledged by Waldeck-Rousseau as a method to constrain religious congregations also provided the means for any group in France to apply for acceptance of their charter as an association and therefore gain official status and the ability to operate within the Republic. French political historian and sociologist Pierre Rosanvallon considered this the first official step by the French Republic to allow for the growth, however haltingly, of what in the anglophone world would be known as civil society.[106] More importantly for Jacques Piou, the Associations Law allowed him to build what became the first legally constituted political party in the Third Republic[107] —*Action libérale populaire*—since the "republican lawmakers had created an opportunity for collective action which Catholics could use in order to defend Church interests within the public sphere."[108]

Piou and his political partner, the Social Catholic deputy Albert de Mun, "presented a set of statutes forming the *Action Libérale Populaire* to the magistrate at the Paris Prefecture of

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[106] Pierre Rosanvallon, *The Demands of Liberty: Civil Society in France since the Revolution*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 2007), 186-188.

[107] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 231.

[108] Magali Della Sudda, "Associations and Political Pluralism: The Effects of the Law of 1901" in Julian Wright, Stuart Jones (Eds.), *Pluralism and the Idea of the Republic in France (Basingstoke:* Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 162.

Police."[109] Thus, on May 17, 1902, less than a year after the passage of the Associations Law, Catholic Republicans who had opposed the law's anti-congregational purpose used it as a means of organizing a new political opposition. Jacques Piou and his Catholic Republicans had experienced the difficulties of fulfilling a political vision of unifying disparate conservative groups against strong opposition. The failures of the First and Second *Ralliéments*, exemplified by the ascendancy of the *Bloc des gauches*, were hard lessons from which a new strategy had to emerge. However, Piou also recognized the Associations Law was a gift for his struggling faction:

> In France the 1901 law gave the victims of current politics an effective weapon: the right to associate in a standing army, to conduct campaigns, to gather resources . . . In the times in which we live wisdom is undoubtedly good, but it also requires valor, while valor itself is not enough. The future goes to those who are organized."[110]

Regardless of this opportunity, earning official approval as an association and building an organization were not enough to ensure *Action libérale populaire*'s success. Piou needed to build his conservative coalition, and in addition to ensuring the continued support of the Catholic Republicans and building stronger ties to the Progressists, he had to look for additional allies. This project was the most significant change from his approach to coalition building employed during his sponsorship of parliamentary groups in the Second *Ralliément* of the 1890s, and he knew this effort would be the most important initiative in building a new party. In what may initially appear to be a surprising move, the first group he approached had not been a significant part of his earlier coalitions and would not form a voting block at all. In yet another irony, these

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[109] Benjamin Martin, "The Creation of the Action Libérale Populaire: An Example of Party Formation in Third Republic France," in *French Historical Studies*, Autumn 1976, 670.
[110] Gaetano Quagliariello, "*L'Action libérale populaire et l'illusion du parti politique (1901-1906)*," in *Associations et champ politique: La Loi de 1901*. Edited by Claire Andrieu, Gilles Le Beguec, Danielle Tartakowsky (Paris: *Éditions de Sorbonne*, 2007), 255. Quagliariello quotes Piou from *Correspondent* of October 10, 1904, crediting Eugene Flornoy's *La lutte par l'association: L'Action libérale populaire* (Paris: *J. Gabalda & Cie*, 1907).

groups had, like *Action libérale populaire*, taken advantage of the Associations Law to organize and expand their reach and influence—newly formed groups of Catholic women.

Jacques Piou's efforts in this regard may seem counter-intuitive but reveal his understanding of the changing landscape of French politics as well as the social and electoral importance of the association he proposed as an ally. Although women did not have voting rights in France in 1901 (and would not until 1944), Piou understood what women's groups could bring to his coalition. They could not bring their votes, but they could provide a support structure, organization, and social influence unmatched by any other group. They certainly brought confessional legitimacy, papal approval, and an unassailable dedication to Roman Catholicism, all valuable qualities for Piou's efforts to persuade Catholic Intransigents to support *Action libérale populaire*. But Catholic women's groups also brought qualities and strengths that no other constituency could provide. Piou's ability to expand his coalition from an alliance of parliamentary groups to a nationwide party with broad appeal depended significantly on the efforts of Catholic women, and they would prove to be his most energetic and steadfast allies during the Third *Ralliément*.

The Revolution, The Congregations, And The Prominence Of Catholic Women

The impact and importance of Catholic women's groups as well as their energetic support of ALP should be viewed in the context of Catholicism in France since the Revolution of 1789. France's long history as a deeply and broadly Catholic nation was bolstered by the widespread presence and influence of religious orders from late antiquity. From the beginning, these included women's orders, which over the centuries became particularly associated with social

concerns such as care for the poor, sick, elderly, and indigent, and with the moral education of children. Hundreds of orders proliferated across France to meet these needs under the auspices of the Catholic Church, and women's orders became firmly embedded in the life of the country up to the advent of the Revolution of 1789. As Sophie Hasquenoph explains: "On the eve of the suppression of religious congregations and orders by the French Revolution, they represented a social force . . . more than 80,000 religious, including 55,000 women, along with a secular and parish clergy of 60,000 individuals. The religious world was therefore of clear importance.[111]

As with many aspects of life in France, the Revolution of 1789 upended the system of religious orders. Although women's orders had essentially no presence in politics, they were not spared from the efforts of the First Republic to secularize the nation and diminish or eliminate the power of and bond between throne and altar. The early actions of the Constituent Assembly were not uniformly hostile to religion, as the overarching goal is reflected in the laws of July 1790, when "the Catholic Church was nationalized and the provision for worship was rationalized and modernized"[112] in line with similar revolutionary projects in other aspects of French society. However, for many Catholics these changes were an unacceptable intrusion into spiritual matters and by 1791 "the bowed tree finally snapped . . . when the Constituent Assembly summarily handed down the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (CCC) and with it, the oath of loyalty to the nation, required of ordained ministers."[113] The Vatican denounced the Civil Constitution, most bishops and half the lower clergy refused to take the oath, and as related by

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[111]Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 938. Hasquenoph's extensive and comprehensive work is the best single-source for the deep history of religious orders and congregations in France.
[112]Nicolas de Bremond d'Ars and Yann Raison du Cleuziou, *French Catholics and Their Church: Pluralism and Deregulation*, translated by Susan Emmanuel (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2015), 8.
[113]Steven Englund, "Church and State in France since the Revolution" in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Spring 1992), 330.

Nicolas de Bremond d'Ars and Yann Raison du Cleuziou, by 1793 the battle between the official Constitutional Church and the dissenting Refractory Church "would contribute to the rise of a policy of de-Christianization that culminated under the Terror in 1793."[114] A decade later, Napoleon finally ended the official persecution of Catholicism by the Republic, but the century that followed was one of constant ebbs and flows in the status and freedom of the Church as political regimes rose and fell.

Somewhat obscured in the larger conflict between the Revolution and the Catholic Church was the often ill-defined status of religious orders. Well before either the nationalization of the Church in 1790 or the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1791, as noted by Steven Englund, the Constituent Assembly had unilaterally suspended new regular male religious from taking monastic vows.[115] With the law of 13 February 1790 the status of religious orders had been cast into doubt, and as the law was expanded to apply to all male and female religious, the long history of monks and nuns in France was effectively ended.[116] The choices given to members of religious orders paralleled those imposed on the clergy—secularize, go underground, or leave the country. As a result, most religious orders as they had been known for over a thousand years in France would cease to exist.

However, the political landscape in France after the Revolution of 1798 alternated from Republic to various forms of monarchy and back again. During this turbulent time, a new form

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[114]Nicolas de Bremond d'Ars and Yann Raison du Cleuziou, *French Catholics and Their Church: Pluralism and Deregulation*, translated by Susan Emmanuel (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2015), 8.

[115]Steven Englund, "Church and State in France since the Revolution" in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Spring 1992), 329.

[116]Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 945-946.

of religious group formed to fill the niche formerly occupied by religious orders. These new groups were the religious congregations, and although not orders in the traditional sense they were still able to earn papal recognition and approval, serve in education and other social services, and in some sense reconstruct the non-clerical religious functions of the abolished orders. A few groups had formed under the less oppressive Directory after 1795, as was particularly the case with Marian congregations.[117] Women's congregations were prominent among them, most notably the *Filles de la Charité, Paris* ("Daughters of Charity, Paris"), the *Sœurs de Saint-Paul de Chartres* ("Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres"), and the *Sœurs de Nevers* ("Sisters of Nevers").[118] These new congregations were tolerated in an unofficial status because of the work they performed, and in the case of the *Filles de la Charité*, whose vocation was that of hospitallers, their contributions would eventually open opportunities for the growth of congregations throughout France.

Although a significant number of orders that had operated in France before the French Revolution slowly and cautiously re-established a presence in France after 1820, the old system of monasteries, convents, and religious schools had been destroyed and would never be restored to its former status. Eventually, the venerable orders including the Benedictines, the Carmelites, the Dominicans, and the Trappists returned to France, although much diminished and without their former property or status.[119] However, their former missions and vocations had largely been

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[117]Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 984.

[118]Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 986

[119]Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 1040.

assumed by the rapidly proliferating congregations which were established under the auspices of the Concordat of 1801, an agreement between Pope Pius VII and Napoleon Bonaparte that aimed to settle the religious question in post-revolutionary France. Following the Concordat, Napoleon applied his pragmatic approach to societal reorganization to what remained of religious orders—and to women's groups in particular. His motivation was not spiritual but rather practical, as he perceived the benefit of legitimizing groups dedicated to providing much needed social services through "proposing a kind of 'congregational concordat' to the nuns."[120] To accomplish this end, Napoleon began in 1805 by issuing a decree placing the *Filles de la Charité* "under the protection of Napoleon's own mother, Laetizia," and ordered his Ministry of Religion to bear the cost of repairs to the congregation's buildings.[121] By 1809 official recognition was extended to other congregations providing medical services, and the growth of congregations began in earnest. By 1825, ten years after Napoleon's exile to St. Helena, the restored Bourbon Monarchy promulgated the Law of 24 May, providing the means for official recognition of women's congregations throughout France.

This legitimizing of women's religious groups, with only grudging extension of similar status to men's groups, was part of a profound shift within French Catholicism throughout the politically turbulent nineteenth century, as noted by Judith Stone: "More quietly and well outside the polemical political arena, religion was becoming ever more a female preoccupation and, for some, a female occupation."[122] Not only did women attend Mass more regularly and in higher

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[120]Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours.* (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 997.

[121]Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours.* (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 1000.

[122] Judith F. Stone, "Anticlericals and *Bonnes Soeurs*: The Rhetoric of the 1901 Law of Associations." In *French Historical Studies*, Volume 23, No. 1 (Winter 2000), 108.

numbers than men, the male religious world was still an area of conflict between secular and regular clergy. However, the feminization of nineteenth century Catholicism had deeper and broader inputs, none more profound than the emphasis on Marianism that had been such an important aspect of congregational survival during the Revolutionary Era. Judith Stone emphasizes how Marianism drove and was driven by Vatican policy: "This was the century of Marian devotion. The new significance of the Virgin Mother influenced and then in turn was supported by Pope Pius IX's promulgation of the Immaculate Conception in 1854."[123]

No event better exemplifies the Marian-centric nature and feminization of French Catholicism in the nineteenth century than the impact of Bernadette Soubirous' visions of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes in 1858. Within four years of the young peasant girl's reluctant recounting of her encounter with Mary, the small market town in the Haute Pyrénées was transformed into one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Europe. Beyond Marianism, the nineteenth century saw a revival of the veneration of Jeanne d'Arc, and in the 1890s the simple spirituality and early death of Thérèse Martin, a Carmelite nun who died of tuberculosis in 1897 at the age of 24 led to the establishment of the Basilica of Sainte Thérèse in Lisieux as the second most visited pilgrimage site in France (after Lourdes). These three women and their veneration throughout French Catholicism are part of a larger narrative of female devotion, social vocation, and Catholic renewal as promulgated by the Roman Church itself. As evidence, by the early 1930s all three—Bernadette Soubirous, Jeanne d'Arc, and Thérèse de Lisieux—had been canonized by the Vatican.[124]

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[123] Judith F. Stone, "Anticlericals and *Bonnes Soeurs*: The Rhetoric of the 1901 Law of Associations." In *French Historical Studies*, Volume 23, No. 1 (Winter 2000), 109.

[124] Benedict XV canonized *Jeanne d'Arc* (16 May 1920); Pius XI canonized *Thérèse de Lisieux* (17 May 1925) and *Bernadette Soubirous* (8 Dec 1933).

Within this context and because of the practical utility for cash-strapped governments of congregations in providing for medical, educational, and social welfare services, the growth of religious groups was encouraged. Growth began in earnest in the 1830s under the liberal July Monarchy, and as a result, "the number of male clergy grew from 45,000 in 1830 to 75,000 in 1878, and the number of women from 31,000 in 1831 to 127,000 in 1878.[125] The Catholic Church had clearly recovered much of its former influence in France, with a "vast network of hospices, schools, patronages, newspapers, publishing houses . . . [and] religious colleges . . . and trained nearly half of pupils in secondary education . . .."[126]A government survey in 1861 counted nearly 1,200 registered women's congregations (of which 922 were authorized), with fifty women's communities in Paris alone, and "the regular clergy—men and women combined—were about five times more than the secular clergy."[127] By the mid-1890s, "the regular clergy numbered more than 150,000 members, 80 percent of them women."[128]

Throughout this century of prominence for Catholic women, one otherwise insignificant group born during the most turbulent years of the Revolutionary Era eventually became particularly important to the founders of *Action libérale populaire*. In 1791, a group of Parisian women, all from aristocratic backgrounds, met to form a new organization that would allow them to practice their calling to a religious vocation without drawing the attention of the Revolutionary

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[125]Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 24. The construction of prominent Catholic buildings such as the Basilique de Notre-Dame de l'Immaculée-Conception (Lourdes, completed 1908), the *Basilique Notre-Dame Fourvière* (Lyon, completed 1896) and the *Basilique du Sacre-Coeur* (Paris, completed 1914) were all products of this period of growth as well as challenge for Catholicism in France.

[126] Gilles Richard, *Histoire de droites en France: de 1815 à nos jours* (Paris: *Perrin*, 2017), 79.

[127] Sophie Hasquenoph, *Histoire des ordres et congrégations religieuses en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours.* (Paris: *Champ Vallon*, 2009), 1075.

[128] Gilles Richard, *Histoire de droites en France: de 1815 à nos jours* (Paris: *Perrin*, 2017), 79.

authorities. These were women who were likely to have entered into a religious order and eventually taken vows, but now believed they must answer their religious calling without drawing attention to themselves. These were the *Filles des Coeur du Marie* (FCM, "Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Mary"), and what they began in 1790 outlasted the First Republic as they pursued their vocation throughout the nineteenth century, regardless of the nature of the ruling regime. They took four secret vows after their novitiate—obedience, chastity, poverty, and maintenance of the secrecy of their vows. Wearing no habit and living otherwise standard lives, they took a pledge of service and depended on the guidance of Jesuits and the financial support of wealthy aristocratic or bourgeois women, who ensured that FCM members could pursue their vocation and both recruit and retain new members.[129]

The Coalition's First Allies

The rise to prominence of women within French Catholicism in the nineteenth century helps explain why the ALP leadership sought Catholic women's groups to provide a foundation of legitimacy for the new party among Catholics and to boost the visibility and credibility of the Catholic Republican movement. From the founding of the party, prominent Catholic women energetically supported *Action libérale populaire*, viewing the party as the standard-bearer for Catholic defense with the full papal approval. The largest and most important Catholic women's group that aligned with *Action libérale populaire* was the *Ligue des patriotiques françaises* (LPDF, "League of Patriotic French Women"), which like ALP was founded in 1902 and within

[129] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914)*," in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 40. Della Sudda provides this information based on information obtained from the Vatican Apostolic Archive, which maintains a file on *La Société des Filles du cœur de Marie*.

short order had formed an alliance with Piou's political party. However, the LPDF was itself the product of a split with another association. In typical French fashion, the LPDF was formed from a faction within a group inaugurated a few months earlier, the *Ligue de Femmes Françaises* (LFF, "League of French Women").

The LFF had been formed in Lyon in September 1901, making it one of the first organizations in France recognized under the Associations law (passed on 2 July 1901). The LFF was founded by a group of Lyonnaise Social Catholic women under the guidance of their Jesuit advisor, Father Antonin Eymieu, and soon had added chapters in many other French cities.[130] The leadership group of LFF was overwhelmingly legitimist and therefore Monarchist, dubious if not hostile to the Republic and unwilling to enter active politics. Instead, for the LFF ". . .what mattered for the catholic feminine leagues was to create a Catholic polity that would replace lay universalism with Christian universalism. Until they could achieve this goal, they wanted the state to avoid interfering with their education policies, undermining their feminine prerogatives."[131] The LFF leaders—and Father Eymieu, their spiritual leader who was a Monarchist Intransigent—were not interested in aligning their organization with *Action libérale populaire*, especially after the poor result for Catholic Republicans in the elections of 1902.

However, the leaders of the Paris chapter of LFF, who were more inclined to Orléanist liberalism, disagreed with the founding group about supporting Piou and *Action libérale populaire*. The Paris chapter was advised to align with ALP by their Chaplain (another Jesuit) Father Regis Pupey-Girard, along with Cardinal Richard, the Archbishop of Paris, and the

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[130] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 71.
[131] Magali Della Sudda, "Associations and Political Pluralism: The Effects of the Law of 1901" in Julian Wright, Stuart Jones (Eds.), *Pluralism and the Idea of the Republic in France (Basingstoke:* Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 169.

Mother Superior of the *Filles du Coeur de Marie* from which some of the Paris group leaders were drawn.[132] Chief among these were the first three Presidents of the LPDF. The Baroness Ghislaine de Broglie (1901-1906), the Baroness Geneviève de Reille (1906-1911) and the Viscomtesse Marthe de Velard (1911-1933) were longtime supporters of the FCM and were the most prominent spokeswomen for the LPDF. The most energetic of the leadership group, Marie Frossard, was a member of the FCM and served as the Secretary General of the LPDF and its successor organizations from 1902 until her death in 1954.[133] As Broglie and Reille were also married to key leaders of the *Ralliément,* their willingness to partner with *Action libérale populaire* was no surprise.[134] However, from its inception the leaders of the LPDF publicly and repeatedly stressed their independence as an organization, the social and moral as opposed to political nature of their mission, and that their alliance with ALP as between equals. Their leaders emphasized that if the LPDF took orders, it was from Rome, not Paris.

In November 1901 the Paris chapter requested to pursue its more political aims, which Father Eymieu and the LFF rejected. The impasse set off a simmering conflict between the two groups that was only resolved when the Parisians, now led by the Baroness de Brigode, split from the Lyon-based group in May 1902.[135] If the central reason for the parting of the ways between the LFF and the LPDF was political affiliation, the origins of the differences between the Lyon and Paris factions were no accident or whim. Although Father Pupey-Girard portrayed

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[132] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914),*" in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 40.
[133] Anne Cova and Bruno Dumons, ed. *Destins de femmes: Religion, culture et société (France, XIX^{e}-XX^{e} siècles)*. (Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2010), 187.
[134] Anne Cova and Bruno Dumons, ed. *Destins de femmes: Religion, culture et société (France, XIX^{e}-XX^{e} siècles)*. (Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2010), 345.
[135] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 73-74.

the LPDF as produced by "[a] group of Parisian ladies [who] were looking for ways to help men save the country and they had the idea to make quests to support the elections of the right candidates,"[136] in reality the Paris chapter had been specifically formed, according to Magali Della Sudda, "on the initiative of the provincial of the Society of Jesus, the Archbishop of Paris, [and] the Mother Superior [of the FCM), at the request of the Catholic candidates concerned about the financing of their campaign in the legislative election of 1902 . . .."[137] The Catholic candidates were from ALP, as opposed to the Monarchist candidates supported by the LFF. According to Pupey-Girard, however, Jacques Piou did not get all he wanted—subsequent public statements aside—because "[P]upey-Girard proposed, discussed, and supported until its adoption the project of concordat between the two associations which made them 'friends and allies' while safeguarding their independence and mutual autonomy."[138]

Key leaders of the LPDF also had deep ties to their counterparts in *Action libérale populaire*, most clearly in the case of the LPDF's second President, the Baroness de Reille. Married to Baron René-Charles Reille, a wealthy mine owner and long-serving Bonapartist deputy, Geneviève Reille had actively campaigned for her husband in his first election to the Chamber in 1869 and continued to do so until his death in 1898.[139] She ensured her three sons—

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[136] Archives of the Society of Jesus, Province of France, *fonds Pupey-Girard* (HPu60) "League 1901-1906", manuscript letter.

[137] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914)*," in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 39.

[138] Archives of the Society of Jesus, Province of France, fonds Pupey-Girard (HPu60) "League 1901-1906", manuscript letter. Pupey-Girard contends that both Piou and Archbishop Richard preferred the LPDF to be an auxiliary of ALP.

[139] Anne Cova and Bruno Dumons, ed. *Destins de femmes: Religion, culture et société (France, XIX^{e}-XX^{e} siècles)*. Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2010, 345. The Reille's had impeccable First Empire credentials. The Baron de Reille was

André, Amédée and Xavier—all followed their father into politics, the latter two as part of *Action libérale populaire* (André died in 1898).[140] Genevieve Reille was especially active in the campaign, particularly in the early years of the LPDF before taking the reins as President in 1906. Her years of political involvement were evident in her ability to convey the larger message of ALP and the LPDF both forcefully and effectively. For example, in 1902 she addressed an audience in Paris, evenly split between men and women, and received a standing ovation in response to her attacks on Émile Combes and both Britain and Germany as she promised to "fight to the end, even if we have to carry our battle to the streets!"[141] Reille's dedication to the cause and willingness to publicly campaign in support of ALP was indicative of why Piou actively courted and praised the LPDF.

The exemplar of LPDF zeal and energy was Marie Frossard, who fully supported league Presidents but exceeded all of them in dedication to the organization's mission. Born in 1863 in the Jura in Eastern France, Frossard was one of 17 children in a deeply religious family.[142] Early in life she devoted herself to educating children, chose not to marry, and at the age of 30 entered religious service as a novice with the *Filles des Coeur du Marie* in Paris, taking her vows in 1897. Renewing her vows in 1901, "she was asked by her superior, Mother Faivre, to found the

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the grandson of Napoleonic Maréchal Masséna, while the Baroness de Reille was the granddaughter of Maréchal Soult.

[140] Baron Amédée Reille was an important member of Jacques Piou's *Action libérale* parliamentary group, founded in 1899, and was a key supporter of Albert de Mun and Piou in the founding of ALP in 1901. See Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 227-228.

[141] Robert Lynn Fuller *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914*. (Jefferson: MacFarland and Company, 2012), 205.

[142] Dumons, Bruno. "*Des femmes catholiques face a la loi. Création de la Ligue des femmes françaises*," in Lalouette, Jacqueline and Machelon, Jean-Pierre, ed. *Les congrégations hors la loi ? Autour de la loi du 1er juillet 1901* (Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2002), 140.

Paris committee of the LFF in Paris."[143] Frossard would spend the rest of her life in the service of Catholic women's groups, and her single-minded dedication and belief in the necessity of her work were clear in her public pronouncements, such as this passage about Catholic women from a letter read to ALP delegates attending the party's General Congress in December, 1905:

> The Church once relied on women to establish herself, as the epistles of St. Paul prove; the Church today relies on women to maintain herself. It is up to us to respond to her call, it is up to us to set the example as the Christian women of the first days, to make our groups of Liguers similar to those first Christians; loving, helping each other, supporting and enlightening each other.[144]

Marie Frossard was a key link between the conservative Catholicism of traditional women, the vocational aspirations of nineteenth century congregations, and the political program of Catholic Republicanism of Jacques Piou. The efforts of Frossard and her LPDF associates would prove necessary and indispensable for the growth and influence of *Action libérale populaire*.

This kind of partnership was quite new in France, and despite the LPDF's insistence that it was above electoral politics its aggressive promotion of the mission and the candidates of ALP represents a significant break from the activities of Catholic women's groups in the past. Catholic women's groups in the early Third Republic were primarily organized to support social Catholic causes such as establishing charity networks and "against the backdrop of industrialization, domestic values."[145] Following Pope Leo XIII's call to the *Ralliément* and the growth of social Catholicism following his promulgation of *Rerum Novarum*, Catholic women

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[143] Anne Cova and Bruno Dumons, ed. *Destins de femmes: Religion, culture et société (France, XIX^e^-XX^e^ siècles)*. Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2010, 187.

[144] Marie Frossard letter to the 1905 ALP Congress, *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du 2 Congrès Général*, December 1905, 40-42.

[145] Caroline Campbell, *Political Belief in France, 1927-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 14.

moved to the forefront of social action in services traditionally provided by women, such as primary education and social welfare.[146] Unlike the other new groups of Catholic women organized under the auspices of the Associations Law, the LPDF's mission was closely tied to political causes, as evidenced by the league's close collaboration with ALP and the split this precipitated with the LFF.

The Variety Of Catholic Women's Groups In France

The LFF and the LPDF were certainly not the only Catholic women's groups to form in the early years of the Associations Law, but the LPDF was the only association allied with ALP. Jacques Piou's and ALP's involvement in the founding of the LPDF marked the clear connection between the leadership groups of the two associations and ensured that the LPDF allied with *Action libérale populaire*. However, the LPDF was the only Catholic women's association to actively support ALP because most Catholic women's groups saw themselves as apolitical. For instance, the oldest of these groups, *Action sociale de la femme* (ASF, "Women's Social Action"), was formed in 1901 to educate women and girls intellectually and socially to support strong families.[147] The *Devoir des femmes françaises* (DFF, "Duty of French Women") was founded in 1901 to promote patriotism in the family, as well as to fight subversive influences such as materialism and modernism.[148] In 1902, the *Ligue sociale d'acheteurs* (LSA, "Social Buyers League") was founded by and for women on the model of the American Consumers

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[146] Caroline Campbell, *Political Belief in France, 1927-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 14.

[147] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 69.

[148] *Devoir des femmes françaises, Bulletin Mensuel, Tome I, 1902, 182 rue de Rivoli*, Paris.

League to promote responsibility and improved wages for homeworkers.[149] While all of these associations were founded by Catholic women on religious imperatives, none were actively involved in electoral politics other than the LFF, which limited its support to Monarchist candidates.

Thus, on 24 June 1902, only a month after splitting from the LFF, the *Ligue patriotique des Françaises, Comité de l'action libérale populaire de Paris* was officially constituted and registered with Paris police.[150] The addition of a reference to *Action libérale populaire* is again telling, since ALP had only received official status a month before. After the official establishment of the LPDF, the LFF continued to reject any alliance with *Action libérale populaire* because of Piou's acceptance of the Republic. While the LFF remained a relatively small group that backed royalist politicians, the LPDF grew rapidly and actively supported ALP's electoral strategy. As with *Action libérale populaire*, the LPDF quickly built a nationally representative organization and expanded rapidly by accessing ". . .pre-existing networks of Catholic women and children's associations and aided by a clergy that favored the women's apostolic mission."[151] Much like their British counterparts in the Conservative Party-affiliated Primrose League, the LPDF leadership was overrepresented by aristocratic and bourgeois women, but membership was open to all Catholic women in France. The mission of the LPDF

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[149] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 86.

[150] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 77. The LFF, Action sociale de la femme, Devoir des femmes françaises, and the Ligue sociale d'acheteurs adopted missions focused on education and social welfare, but none reached the size or influence of the LPDF.

[151] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914)*," in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 41.

was to create a mass movement of women to bolster the influence of Catholicism among the electorate, led by the social and religious elite but attracting working class women through social services in local communities.[152] The result was impressive, as within three years the LPDF had grown to over 300,000 dues-paying members organized by 350 committees throughout France.[153]

One clear and intentional difference between ALP and LPDF was the relative emphasis on and identification with confessionalism. Piou was adamant—and Leo XIII insisted—that from its founding *Action libérale populaire* would be a non-confessional party. If Albert de Mun and other social Catholics never lost their hope for a French version of the German *Zentrum* party, Piou and his fellow liberal Catholic Republicans recognized that in France, confessionalism would be a barrier to alliance with Progressists and moderate Catholics alike in a nation which he considered not anti-religious but anti-clerical.[154] His reasoning for ensuring *Action libérale populaire* did not combine Catholicism with its political mission was also one of a clear delineation between the spheres of religion and politics:

> These two words, Catholic Party, should not be associated. The latter has a narrow, mean, restrictive sense; the former is a synonym of universality. The latter implies passions and rivalries, the former fraternity and love. "party" implies "political party," with its constitutional doctrine, its plan of campaign, its combinations, its alliances, its financial, social, and diplomatic program.[155]

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[152] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914)*," in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 41.

[153] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 14.

[154] Joseph Denais. *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou*. (Paris: *La Nef de Paris Éditions s*, 1959), 44.

[155] Jacques Piou, "*Le rôle des catholiques à l'heure actuelle*," *Echo de la LPDF*, Vol 31, No. 3 (July 1905), 635.

In contrast, the LPDF's identity was proudly and boldly Catholic from inception, as Anna Cova notes: "On June 22, 1903, a delegation of the LPDF went on pilgrimage to the Basilica of Montmartre to officially consecrate the league to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The daisy was chosen as a rallying sign and Jeanne d'Arc chosen as the patroness of the league."[156] While *Action libérale populaire* opened membership to non-Catholics but excluded Monarchists, the LPDF was open to Monarchists but excluded non-Catholics, clearly showing that the two organizations "were indeed different [from ALP], for they often prioritized the Catholic struggle over alliance with the Progressists . . . because Catholicism was the condition of their engagement with the world . . ."[157] The league's second president, Geneviève de Reille, described the purpose of the LPDF in blunt terms: "We have never wanted to found a political league—only a league of religious and social defense. We are neither Rallies, nor Bonapartists, nor Royalists. We are convinced Catholics, who have decided to unite the whole of France to defend our liberties [and] contribute our zeal to making a Christian France."[158]

The result of these different approaches was an insistence by the leadership groups of both the ALP and the LPDF that theirs was an alliance of equals.[159] Public statements worked to establish the independence of the LPDF, arguing against any hint that the women's group was an auxiliary to *Action libérale populaire*. For the ALP, "The LPDF is completely autonomous. They

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[156] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 78.

[157] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 146.

[158] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 146. Cova quotes Geneviève de Reille from Le Patrie of 8 May 1904.

[159] Marie Frossard letter to the 1905 ALP Congress, *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du 2e Congrès Général* December 1905, 40-42.

are attached to us only by the bonds of affection and, as they themselves say, they are for us friends and allies. But I repeat, they are autonomous. They decide their affairs sovereignly and we are only spectators, often grateful for all the dedication they put into the accomplishment of this work."[160] For their part, the LPDF was "proud to be the friend and ally of the ALP," but with the understanding that the women's group was "[a] work of religious, patriotic, and social defense" while "the ALP was an electoral work." This partnership and its clearly defined missions would allow the LPDF to provide direct support to the political process while maintaining the accepted role of Catholic women, but the alliance would be even more vital to the growth and success of *Action libérale populaire.*

A Primrose League For France

One clear inspiration for the LPDF was a similar women's group in the United Kingdom that for the two previous decades proved the effectiveness of organized conservative women in the promotion of conservative social and political causes. This British group was the Primrose League, founded by aristocratic men in 1883 as a somewhat obscure medievalist social club.[161] However, the League's membership was open to all and membership quickly grew as men and women alike swelled its ranks and expanded its mission from nostalgia to social and political action.[162] This was particularly true for the League's Ladies Grand Council, which was operated by women for women and became the center of conservative outreach to all communities in

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[160] M. Toussaint, ALP Steering Committee, *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du Congrès Général* December 1905, 39-40.

[161] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 20.

[162] Martin Pugh, "Popular Conservatism in Britain: Continuity and Change, 1880-1987", in *Journal of British Studies* (July 1988) Vol. 27, No. 3, 259.

Britain.[163] Despite the differences in culture and political systems between the United Kingdom and France, the Primrose League was a notable inspiration for the women of the LPDF for three primary reasons.

First, the Primrose League was run by women, with the goals of conservative women in mind. Although their proximate function was to increase the size and reach of the Conservative Party by reaching new voters, their methods built on the strengths of social action and direct contact with the people of their communities.[164] To address the growing urban working class, the women of the Primrose League established chapters and attendant social services in the burgeoning cities of the industrial belt, although they neglected no part of the country. As a result, women of the Primrose League became the public face and frontline workers for Conservative outreach not just to women of all classes, but ". . .they relished tackling the male electors too."[165] Although these bold and energetic women did not have voting rights themselves, they were a political force by their willingness to proselytize the conservative message across the country and regardless of political class.

Second, although the Primrose League was established by aristocratic women, membership was not restricted by the infamous British class system. This openness to all classes was a central tenet of the organization, as the Tories were well aware of how the expansion of suffrage would vastly increase the voting population and were determined to compete for newly enfranchised voters. The Primrose League actively courted middle class women, who by tradition and societal strictures had been actively excluded from formal political expression,

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[163] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 22.
[164] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 55.

[165] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 55.

giving these women an outlet for civic participation.[166] But the League also recruited women from the working class as a way to expand Conservative support among working class men.[167] The result was spectacular. From an enrollment in March 1885 of 11,366 (including 1,381 women in leadership positions), by March 1901 the Primrose League had grown to 1,556,639 dues paying members (including 64,906 leading women). [168]

Third, the Primrose League served as an entry point for women into the political arena, not as voters or initially as candidates but as representatives of a party that they believed acted in the interests and to the betterment of the nation and empire, and the Church of England. This activity focused first on social services, but rapidly expanded into electoral canvassing, recruiting, and even active campaigning for conservative candidates.[169] The women of the Primrose League were inveterate fundraisers as well and are justifiably credited with bolstering the financial standing of the Tories well past the turn of the country, both as fundraisers and as a vast pool of volunteer labor. Martin Pugh argues that the Primrose League prepared the Conservative Party to not just survive the advent of women's suffrage but to thrive after its codification in 1919, quite in contrast to the Tories' longstanding rivals of the Liberal Party, who faded after 1919 and were replaced as Britain's' "second party" by Labour.[170]

Although the LPDF drew inspiration from the example and activities of the Primrose League, the French women did not adopt the iconography or choose a name reminiscent of their British counterparts. This was not to avoid association with the Primrose League, which both the

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[166] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 43-45.

[167] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 54-55.

[168] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 27.

[169] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 29, 53.

[170] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 57.

LPDF and ALP maintained cordial contact. Rather, the Primrose League had inspired a previous French imitator, *La Rose de France* (LRF, "The Rose of France").[171] As described in its organizational bulletin, this group was formed in 1888 with the expressed goal of "restoration of the monarchy and the defense of conservative interests."[172] However, the LRF was a complete failure because of a lack of organization, an appeal based solely on publicity in newspapers, and a membership composed entirely of aristocratic or bourgeois women. Led by the exiled Comtesse de Paris, the wife of the Orléanist pretender to the throne, the LRF's biggest flaw was its goal of restoring the monarchy because when the Comte de Paris died in 1894 with no recognized line of succession, the LRF ceased to have a purpose.[173] Not surprisingly, the founders of the LPDF chose to avoid any appearance of association with this Monarchist failure. Thus, the LPDF took inspiration from the Primrose League but would form a specifically French identity and mission.

The use of the Primrose League as a model for the LPDF fit well with a consistent theme in Jacques Piou's thinking from his start in politics. From his earliest forays into the political world Piou viewed the British Tory Party as an example of what could be achieved in France if the larger body of conservatives united into a grand coalition. In his view, a Tory party represented both conservative governance and constitutional liberalism and was an essential part of a stable and balanced political system.[174] For Piou, the British Tory Party and its Liberal Party rival formed the ideal model of a two party system that if implemented in France could drive

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[171] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 60-61. Passmore refers to the LRF as the *Ligue de la Rose*.

[172] *Le Combattant, Vigie Mentonnaise*, October 7, 1888. Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Droit, économie, politique, JO-12475.

[173] The Comte and Comtesse de Paris had been living in exile in Britain since 1886.

[174] Joseph Denais. *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou*. (Paris: *La Nef de Paris Éditions*, 1959), 29.

reform while maintaining a liberal system as they had under Disraeli and Gladstone in Britain. Piou's vision of a Center-Right Tory coalition in France animated each of his *Ralliément* projects, a vision he maintained throughout his long political career, as emphasized by Parker Thomas Moon:

> [Piou] . . . cherished at heart the conviction that since the mass of the nation seemed determined to maintain the Republic, it was the duty of conservatives to join together in a great "Tory party," a party of conservative progress, with a program of reconstruction to preserve and ameliorate existing institutions, as an alternative to the program of the Left, which, in his way of thinking, was essentially a program of negations, destructive rather than constructive in aim.[175]

As he attempted to form Center-Right coalitions in the 1880s, 1890s, and in the early 1900s, Jacques Piou consistently maintained the goal of building a French version of the British Tory party as a grand conservative alliance that included Catholics as fully accepted and valued members.[176] In light of the effectiveness of the Primrose League in Britain, it was only natural that he supported the LPDF as its counterpart and ALP's partner in France.

However, the cultural conditions and challenges faced by the LPDF in France were quite different than those faced by the Primrose League in Britain, and different approaches required to address them. The leaders of the LPDF recognized the benefits of emulating the organization and energy displayed by the Primrose League, just as *Action libérale populaire*'s founders hoped to build a French facsimile of the Tories. As with their British counterparts, the LPDF was founded and led by aristocratic women of means, but the Ligue's leaders rapidly expanded their recruitment to include membership from across French society.[177] However, unlike the Primrose

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[175] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 261.
[176] Jacques Piou, *Le Ralliément: Son histoire* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1928), 57.
[177] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 133.

League—and ALP—membership in the LPDF was restricted to Catholics, and this also highlights one of the principal differences between the two women's organization—the centrality of a conspicuously religious sensibility in the LPDF's engagement with their society. As opposed to the less religiously tinged approach of the Primrose League, the members of the LPDF considered their mission to include "transmitting religious and national ideas to children, reconciling the classes through charity, and inspiring men to action on behalf of Church and Nation, thus moralizing the male world."[178]

A Complementary Partnership

Regardless of their differences, the LPDF was very much like the Primrose League in four key components of their program. First, the LPDF emphasized social beneficence. The founding documents of LPDF committed the league to "work on public education. . .to improve the lot of workers and to develop social works and institutions, such as mutual societies, trade unions, social secretariats, free employment offices, child protection, the children's fund, [and] day care centers."[179] Far from idle words, the LPDF established some form of all these services throughout France under the guidance of local committees, and as Marie Frossard reported to the ALP Congress in 1905, "[f]rom this idea were born all the social works of the League which so usefully connect the women of the world and the women of the people. They learn to know each

[178] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 145.

[179] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 79-80.

other, to value each other, to help each other . . .”[180] As noted by Anne Cova, the focus of LPDF social activity was “. . . above all, the defense of the family, whose mother is the central pivot.”[181] But as with the Primrose League, these outreach efforts had intended political ends as well.

Second, the LPDF, perhaps paradoxically for an organization founded by Parisian aristocrats, emphasized decentralization and regionalism. This was very much in concert with ALP, which took a similar approach both in policy proposals and party structure.[182] To some degree this effort reflects the nature of the regions of France where the most devout catholics resided, notably Brittany and the Rhone Valley.[183] The LPDF as well as ALP championed regional language rights, for instance, an issue of great importance to Bretons and Occitans alike, but also in line with the sentiments of the lower clergy.[184] The impact of these efforts was clear—the LPDF (and by extension ALP) were perceived by provincial residents as attuned to the values and interests of each region, as opposed to the centralizing and homogenizing

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[180] Marie Frossard letter to the 1905 ALP Congress, *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du Congrès Génér*al, December 1905, 40-42.

[181] Anne Cova, *Au service de l’Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L’Harmattan*, 2000), 85-86.

[182] Magali Della Sudda, “Associations and Political Pluralism: The Effects of the Law of 1901,” in Julian Wright, Stuart Jones (Eds.), *Pluralism and the Idea of the Republic in France (Basingstoke:* Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 163. ALP proposed a new constitution in 1907 that incorporated federalism, pluralism, and intermediary bodies within the Republic. Notably, Jacques Piou was one of the early proponents in France of proportional representation.

[183] Bruno Dumons, “*Mobilisation politique et ligues féminines dans la France catholique du début du siècle la ligue des femmes françaises et la ligue patriotique des françaises* (1901-1914).” In *Vingtième Siècle. Revue D’Histoire* Vol. 1, No.73, 2002, 47.

[184] Marie Frossard speech to the 1906 LPDF Congress, *Programme du Congrès de la Ligue Patriotiques de Françaises, à Tarbes et à Lourdes*, 10, 11, 12, et 13 October 1906, *Ligue Patriotiques de Françaises Action Libérale Populaire, à Tarbes et à Lourdes*, 113.

government in Paris.[185] The LPDF furthered this effort in support of *Action libérale populaire* by conducting surveys of voter rolls to force authorities to purge ineligible voters, while leading registration drives of local men sympathetic to Catholic republicanism. In one representative example, LPDF representatives in Marseilles registered 500 men to vote prior to the 1902 elections.[186]

Third, like the Primrose League the LPDF had advantages in voter outreach and public representation that the political party they were formed to support could not match or wished to avoid. In the French case, *Action libérale populaire* was building a broad coalition around a non-confessional party, and as such, overt religious displays were inadvisable. As a technically independent Catholic organization, the LPDF did not suffer this restriction. LPDF members actively participated in religious observances and commemorations, sending the message to Catholics that the alliance was reassuringly orthodox. Further, the LPDF sponsored events that brought together large groups as a platform for spreading the ALP message but under the auspices of an organization of Catholic women. Representative of this approach was a meeting sponsored by the LPDF in June 1903, which attracted 3,000 people to the *Salle Humbert de Romans*, in the Passy neighborhood of Paris to hear a presentation by "Jacques Piou, François Coppée, … [and *Sillon*'s] Marc Sangnier" followed by a "concert to which the singers of Saint-Gervais lent their assistance."[187] By providing a forum for Piou under the sponsorship of a

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[185] Magali Della Sudda, "Associations and Political Pluralism: The Effects of the Law of 1901" in Julian Wright, Stuart Jones (Eds.), *Pluralism and the Idea of the Republic in France (Basingstoke:* Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 173.

[186] Robert Lynn Fuller *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914*. (Jefferson: MacFarland and Company, 2012), 203. In these efforts the LPDF once again mimicked the Primrose League.

[187] *Le Petit Parisien*, 22 June 1903, 4. *Sillon* (the 'Furrow") was a social Catholic group founded in 1894 that focused on lay leadership and study circles for young men. Marc Sangnier assumed leadership of the group in 1899

Catholic women's group, the LPDF broadened ALP's reach and legitimated the political message within a social and religious setting.

Perhaps even more important was the LPDF's energetic and overwhelming participation in public actions, taking to the streets to protest government actions such as the eviction of congregations from schools.[188] Such actions were off-limits to the ALP membership, as Piou was well aware he needed to avoid any possible association with the street fighting and public (and often violent) disturbances common among nationalist and socialist leagues in the 1890s. The Women of the LPDF performed this function without the stigma of violence and public disorder associated with male groups and were able to make a show of force without *Action libérale populaire* incurring the penalty of public condemnation.

This was on full display in July 1902 when an LPDF demonstration drew 50,000 marchers in imitation of the labor movement's tactic of collective action but with a Catholic revision, as elated by Magali Della Sudda:

> This discourse was absent from the [ALP], which did not want to place itself on the same battleground as the men of its rival party. The demonstration at the Place de la Concorde was legitimate because it was women who had organized it. . .The patronage of Jeanne d'Arc. . .enabled them to assume the role of female combatant against "partisan politics" by drawing from history this model of a female warrior who could justify their activism . . .[189]

In a pattern that would be repeated often over the ensuing four years, the actions of the Combes government against religious congregations—and especially Catholic schools—fueled the

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and eventually transformed *Sillon* into a political party that was dissolved in 1910 after Vatican condemnation of its purported modernism. See Chapter IV (Social Catholicism) of this study.

[188] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie* (1900-1914)," in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 51.

[189] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914)*," in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 52.

protests. On July 27, Albert de Mun's wife, Simone, and Jacques Piou's wife, Julie, led the "mothers of Paris" protests against what became known as the "inventories crisis".[190] The massive crowd of women marched behind the Comtesse de Mun and Madame Piou "down the Champs Elysees to seek an interview with President Émile Loubet."[191] No audience with the President was forthcoming, but the show of force projected the message the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* wanted to send to the nation—the movement was large, and its members were motivated.

Such displays were common for the LPDF from the beginning, especially in the lead-up to the elections of 1902. In one example, LPDF women joined in public actions in the hotly contested election campaign in Nîmes, a city with historically bitter clashes between anti-clericals and Catholics.[192] Clashes in the streets broke out throughout the spring, and notably the "proclerical crowds frequently contained large numbers of women."[193] Among them was (once again) Simone de Mun, who represented the LPDF in joining the protests and actively recruited for both the LPDF and ALP.[194] In 1905, Marie Frossard summarized the readiness of the LPDF to protest publicly over the previous three years by listing the causes that drew Catholic women to the streets:

> Always at the head of the protest movement or ready to enter the one that others have created before us, we protested against the dismissal of the nuns, the closure of free

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[190] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 148.

[191] *Le Gaulois*, 28 July 1902.

[192] Nîmes was a center of Protestantism and, later, of Federalism. With no clear political majority, electoral contests in the ancient city often precipitated street battles.

[193] Archives nationale F7 12455. Fuller cites this file as well as several others from Marseilles, Albertville, and Rouen.

[194] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: MacFarland and Company, 2012), 204.

> schools, against the insults made to the Supreme Pontiff and against the kidnapping of the Crucifixes.[195]

The most important result of the LPDF's willingness to engage in public protests was that they allowed the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* to ensure their message was loudly and visibly presented on the street while avoiding any association with the violence typical of the far Left and Right. The women could accomplish what the men could not.

Finally, the LPDF was central to the ALP's ability to raise the funds necessary to produce a robust electoral and public relations campaign. Like the Primrose League, the LPDF membership were consistently effective fundraisers, and as such "they represent the main resource for *Action libérale populaire* and their activity, for its intensity and the results obtained is not comparable to any other female party structure of the time."[196] As with street protests, the women of the LPDF could raise funds without the stigma of a direct connection to electoral politics, a distinct liability among Catholics who were still wary of the Republic and the crass and often ugly world of parliamentary democracy. Whether the funding sources were wealthy donors, membership dues, or religious organizations, women typically eluded the intense governmental scrutiny common with ALP's own fundraising efforts.[197] Further, the LPDF's fundraising was significant enough to merit the interference of the Vatican, which would decide

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[195] Marie Frossard letter to the 1905 ALP Congress, *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du Congrès Général*, December 1905, 43.

[196] Gaetano Quagliariello, "*L'Action libérale populaire et l'illusion du parti politique (1901-1906),* " in *Associations et champ politique: La Loi de 1901*. Edited by Claire Andrieu, Gilles Le Beguec, Danielle Tartakowsky (Paris: *Éditions de Sorbonne*, 2007), 259. Police reports support the assertion of the LPDF's fundraising prowess.

[197] ALP was subject to repeated accusations of illegal fundraising through the Catholic Church or even of money-laundering through British holding companies. Though none of these accusations were ever proven (although at least a few probably were true), the effect was to limit the scope of ALP's sources of funds.

which candidates would receive support after consultation with Jacques Piou.[198] As with the Primrose League, the LPDF was successful in bolstering the resources available to the political party they supported and were vital to the growth and reach of Catholic Republicanism in the early part of the twentieth century.

The End Of The Alliance

From their initial alliance in 1901 until 1907, the LPDF and ALP worked closely as partners to build the foundation, the organization, and the network of conservative Catholics in France much as the Primrose League and the Tory Party had done in Britain. However, events in France were changing rapidly and unlike the Tories, *Action libérale populaire* was never able to gain control of the government. Always working from behind, ALP was forced to use whatever leverage became available to augment its position leading up to the all-important elections of 1906. Unfortunately for Jacques Piou, several events undermined his alliance with the LPDF, and although the partnership remained strong at least until 1907, in time the LPDF's goals changed, and the partnership was dissolved.

Three issues led to the weakening of the LPDF's commitment to ALP, and all three were tied to the foundational principles of the LPDF itself. First and foremost, although it was committed to the *Ralliément* with the Republic, the LPDF owed its ultimate allegiance to the Pope. From 1901 to 1903 this was a tremendous asset to *Action libérale populaire*, since Leo XIII strongly backed Piou's effort to build a coalition party within France. However, on 20 July 1903, Leo died and was succeeded in the Holy See by Pius X. Pius was quite unlike Leo XIII,

[198] Maurice Larkin, *L'Église et l'État en France, 1905: la crise de la Séparation* (Paris: *Éditions Privat*, 2004), 172.

and more clearly resembled Leo's storming predecessor, Pius IX. Although the tone from the Vatican did not shift immediately—Pius initially continued Leo's endorsement of ALP—the support would not last. As Pius' support for the ALP project began to wane in the aftermath of the French government's often harsh evictions of congregations and the sudden closing of Catholic schools, the LPDF took note, as noted by Kevin Passmore:

> Defeat in 1906 undermined the ALP. Pius X did not abandon Piou's party, for he endorsed good government within the Republic, meaning cooperation of catholics with Moderate Republicans. Yet he also urged "all men of goodwill to [stand on] ground clearly catholic and religious," meaning unity including Monarchists. . . Gradually, Pope Pius X turned away from party politics altogether . . . Catholic women were now to focus on apostleship, "outside politics"—which actually meant that the LPDF became more open to Royalists.[199]

The second and more impactful issue was the passage of the Separation Law of 1905, which abrogated the religious settlement of the Concordat of 1801, ended the special status of Catholicism in France, required religious institutions to register as associations, and eliminated government financial support for clergy. ALP politicians strongly opposed the passage of the law in the Chamber of Deputies and through Congresses and campaigns but were ultimately unable to block it. The Pope's vehement response, including the preclusion of Catholics from following the new law's dictates and the eventual severing of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the French Republic, was viewed as a result of *Action libérale populaire*'s failure by many Catholics, including some within the LPDF. Regardless, the women's league and ALP did not immediately drift apart, and in fact used the angry reaction by many French Catholics to the official separation of Church and State to build momentum toward the elections of 1906, now seen as more critical than ever.

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[199] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 152-153.

The third and final issue was the result of the elections of 1906. The primary purpose of ALP in the Third *Ralliément* and the LPDF's support of Piou's party since 1902 was to build a grand conservative coalition that could win a majority in the Chamber of Deputies and safeguard Catholic interests. However, *Action libérale populaire* failed to produce a legislative majority in 1906, undercut by a series of events that diminished its electoral appeal and prevented the achievement of the party's most important goal. This led to two outcomes that eroded LPDF support for ALP and eventually led to the dissolution of the alliance. First, the disappointing result in 1906, on the heels of the passage of the Separations Law in 1905, resulted in an internal conflict among the leadership of the LPDF. Ghislaine de Brigode had served as President of the LPDF since its inception, but her loyalty was to the Vatican and to the FCM rather than to ALP or the electoral project of Catholic Republicanism, and after the 1906 elections she came to believe the association with Piou's party was no longer in concert with the LPDF's religious mandate.[200] Geneviève Reille, who was much less tied to FCM and much more connected to ALP, disagreed. Decisively, Archbishop Richard backed Reille, and Brigode quietly resigned as President, replaced by Reille, who was elected on 3 July 1906.[201]

Although the rift was damaging and difficult, with her strong personality and consistent vision Reille provided the leadership to keep the LPDF on track. However, the second outcome was a more serious blow to the partnership with *Action libérale populaire* and could not be negotiated because of its source—the Vatican. With the death of Leo XIII in 1903, ALP lost its staunchest supporter. The new Pope, Pius X, did not disavow ALP but only renewed Vatican

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[200] Magali Della Sudda, "La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914)," in Revue française de science politique, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 40.

[201] Anne Cova and Bruno Dumons, ed. *Destins de femmes: Religion, culture et société (France, XIX^{e}-XX^{e} siècles)*. Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2010, 95.

support privately.[202] After the electoral disappointment of 1906 and the rupture in diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the French Republic, the formal shift for the LPDF came in the form of an address to the 1907 LPDF Congress in Lourdes by the Vatican Secretary of State, Merry del Val. Vatican policy was now that the LPDF should focus on "strictly religious and social grounds and to abandon electoral work once and for all."[203] The message was clear and unequivocal—the LPDF's partnership with ALP was not to continue.

The LPDF After 1907

The LPDF did not at first formally abandon ALP, but after the 1907 Congress in Lourdes the "ALP" moniker was removed from the league's official name, and by 1908 the LPDF was no longer providing financial support to Piou's Party.[204] The purpose of the alliance had not been realized and it was unclear if it could be going forward. With the Vatican reprisals after the passage of the Separation Law and the inability of ALP to build an electorally successful coalition, the alliance was no longer of any use to the LPDF. The split with ALP was not based on clashes of leadership or arguments over specific policies. In the end, the Vatican's erosion of belief in Jacque Piou's project translated into a similar loss of commitment by the LPDF to ALP. With the Vatican no longer backing ALP as a means to restore Catholicism in France and nor

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[202] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 148.

[203] Magali Della Sudda, "*La Politique Malgré Elles: Mobilisations féminines catholiques en France et en Italie (1900-1914)*," in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 60., No. 1 (2010), 41.

[204] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 79.

endorsing direct electoral activity by Catholic women's groups, there was no longer any justification for the LPDF to continue its alliance with ALP.

By 1908 the LPDF had thoroughly refocused on social and moral issues and moved away from politics. By 1910, with the death of Geneviève Reille and the election of Marthe de Velard as LPDF President, the organization was committed to the social and religious work favored by most its FCM affiliated members, including Velard.[205] The organization was far from fading, however, and in fact continued its tremendous growth for the next two decades. In 1933, long after the ALP had been absorbed into the conservative *Bloc national* and a year after Jacque Piou's death, the LPDF reunited with the LFF to form to the *Ligue feminine d'action catholique française* (LFACF, "Women's League of Catholic Action"), to become the largest women's organization in France with over 3 million members.[206] Marie Frossard had served for 32 years as the Secretary General of the LPDF when the two groups merged and afterwards she assumed the leadership of the new organization. Frossard remained active in Catholic women's leagues—and a member of the FDC—until her death in 1954.[207]

As evidenced by the creation of the LFACF, the interwar period was marked by other significant changes in how Catholic women approached politics in parallel to the evolution of Catholic Republicanism. Among these changes was the LPDF's attitude toward women's suffrage, which had not been a priority for most Catholic women's groups during the first two

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[205] Anne Cova and Bruno Dumons, ed. *Destins de femmes: Religion, culture et société (France, XIX^{e}-XX^{e} siècles)*. Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2010, 432.

[206] Anne Cova, *Au service de l'Église, de la patrie et de la famille: Femmes catholiques et maternité sous la IIIe République* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2000), 215. The mending of the 1902 split between the LFF and LDPF was directed by the Vatican with the intent of creating a more united front for Catholic women.

[207] Anne Cova and Bruno Dumons, ed. *Destins de femmes: Religion, culture et société (France, XIX^{e}-XX^{e} siècles)*. Paris: *Letouzey & Ané*, 2010, 189.

decades of the twentieth century, preferring to continue to support the family vote. However, at the end of the First World War the Vatican changed its policy and expressed support for women's suffrage, undoubtedly in response to the extension of voting rights to women across much of the Europe and North America.[208] For Catholic women's organizations in France, this change was perceived in the context of their original mission:

> Promoting women's suffrage helped solidify the idea of France's exceptionalism. French women wanted to affirm France's position as a leader in Catholicism, and they were prepared to hold leadership positions themselves. Catholic women gradually came to believe that women's suffrage would allow them to restore Catholicism in France and strengthen its special catholic position.[209]

The LPDF alliance with ALP effectively ended with the failure of 1906, but this does not diminish the importance of the LPDF to the ALP's remarkable growth, organization, resourcing, and impact both before and after 1906. For regardless of electoral defeat and the end of the alliance, ALP did not fade away. Although a minority party, Piou's group remained the largest conservative party until the outbreak of the First World War and was respected throughout France as a strong and credible force in the Chamber of Deputies for many more years. It was during those years filled with international turmoil and catastrophic war that the strength of the foundation laid by the LPDF and ALP would become more clear. The Third *Ralliément* ended in yet another the failure to ensure conservative Catholic Republican representation in a governing coalition, just as the two before it had. But Jacques Piou and *Action libérale populaire* were not finished with the *Ralliément*.

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[208] Emily Machen, "French Women and the Global Fight for Faith: Catholic International Religious Outreach in Turn-of-the-Century France". *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 2 (Spring, 2014), 314.
[209]Emily Machen, "French Women and the Global Fight for Faith: Catholic International Religious Outreach in Turn-of-the-Century France". *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 2 (Spring, 2014), 315. Catholic Women's' groups justified their change of position largely as a defense of motherhood and family life, which they perceived as under threat in the aftermath of the Great War.

Chapter 4 - SOCIAL CATHOLICS

Action libérale populaire's alliance with the LPDF provided a key base of support with an influential and visible group within French society, but with women's suffrage in France still four decades away the LPDF could not directly provide voters. The next concern for Jacques Piou was to expand ALP's electoral base beyond the Catholic Republicans that formed the core of the party and were, like Piou, primarily socially conservative Catholics who favored a non-confessional party that protected Catholic interests while also promoting liberal political and economic policies. This combination of religious identity and constitutional liberalism was the bridge from Catholic groups to Republican Centrists, a connection that Piou believed was essential to building a French Tory party. Constructing and maintaining this bridge was the tactical imperative for the ALP project to succeed but also the strategic goal of ensuring that any Center-Right coalition in France included Catholics. This task was especially difficult in the first decade of the twentieth century due to the wariness with which both secular Opportunists and traditional Catholics viewed each other in the early Third Republic's turbulent religious milieu.

Piou's solution was once again counterintuitive but ultimately forced on him by his limited options. He would continue to propose partnerships with Opportunist politicians in the Chamber of Deputies, attempting to win their support by insisting on his dedication to the Republic and to constitutional order. But he would simultaneously court the most active and socially progressive Catholic groups to join, support, or at least not work against his party. These groups were varied in their approaches, organization, and acceptance of Piou's liberalism, but they had in common certain assumptions about the responsibility of Catholics to their society, and more specifically to the least favored classes. With their influence and energy, these groups appeared critical to Piou's efforts to build a party that appealed to voters beyond his bourgeois

and liberal base. To gain the acceptance of socially progressive Catholics, Piou needed to incorporate into *Action libérale populaire* the tenets and priorities that defined this disparate group, who together were known by the movement they all embraced—social Catholicism—and that meant a partnership with the movement's founder, Comte Albert de Mun.

Social Catholicism

Albert de Mun embraced social Catholicism following his military service during France's humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871.[210] Captured and held captive along with his friend René de La Tour-du-Pin, on release he witnessed the violence of the Paris Commune. From these profound experiences arose his social Catholicism, which was to shape Catholic reform in France for the next fifty years. After the war and the Commune, de Mun and La Tour-du-Pin committed themselves to the cause of the working class, establishing a network of *cercles* for workers across France.[211] The result was the *Oeuvre des Cercles catholiques d'Ouvriers* ("Work of the Catholic Workers' Circles," OCCO), which fostered the intellectual and moral life of workers and would prove to be the template used by the social Catholics that followed de Mun's lead. From its formal establishment in 1872 the OCCO grew rapidly, with 150 cercles and 18,000 members in 1875 to 375 cercles and 40,000 members in 1878. [212] In March 1886, Albert de Mun founded a similar organization for young men from wealthy families, the *Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française* ("French Young Man's Catholic

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[210] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: *P. Lethielleux*, 1908), 18.
[211] *Discours du Comte Albert de Mun,* Vol. I, 13-20.
[212] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 19. Martin's numbers are estimates due to the lack of precise membership records within the organization or in *Sûreté Générale* reports.

Association," ACJF), which was to be his longest lasting and most impactful project. Addressing a small group at the Paris office of the OCCO, de Mun charged them to build "a great army of young men, organized in local groups, united by a central committee, devoted to the mission of reforming society in accordance with Christian principles."[213] By the ACJF's first general convention in May 1887, the small Parisian group of less than ten had grown to 1,000 members in ten local groups, and by 1903 to 30,000 members in 651 local groups.[214] These groups were remarkably diverse, having expanded beyond young aristocratic and bourgeois men to include clerks, laborers, peasants, miners, and farmers.[215] The local groups, which like the ACJF as a whole were independent, nonetheless adhered to the social Catholicism of Albert de Mun, who founded the ACJF as "an offshoot of or rather a preparatory for the Association of Catholic Workingmen's Clubs," but more importantly for ALP, by 1903 the ACJF provided "the enthusiasm and progressive spirt of youth to the social movement" and "has contributed energetic and able recruits," including future ALP deputies such as Henri Bazire and Jean Lerolle.[216]

Léon Harmel's Christian Corporation

In 1876, ten years before the founding of the ACJF, Albert de Mun entered politics in an attempt to bring social Catholic reforms to government. He was to serve in the Chamber of

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[213] *Action Libérale Brochure Jaune 29, Action social des Jeunes; Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française*, 3-4.
[214] *Action Libérale Brochure Jaune 29, Action social des Jeunes ; Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française*, 3-6, 10, 31; *Annuaire de Action Libérale Populaire, 1904-1905*, 324.
[215] *Annuaire de Action Libérale Populaire, 1904-1905*, 323. By 1903, ACJF groups were roughly 45 percent farmers, 35 percent laborers, and the remaining 20 percent composed of clerks, students, and bourgeois.
[216] *Compte Rendu Semaines Sociale: du St. Étienne, 267, 515; du Limoges, 129, 222; du Versailles, 291, 423; du Rouen, 245. Compte Rendu, Action Libérale Populaire Congrès General, 1904*, 148; *1905*, 126; *1906*, 40, 54; *1907*, 64; *1908*, 49.

Deputies for the next 38 years, and despite with several gaps after election losses, he was a constant presence as a voice for social reform on the national political scene for the rest of his life.[217] However, he and René de La Tour-du-Pin were not the only wealthy and prominent Catholics to adopt social Catholicism. In the early 1860s and far away from the politics of the Chamber of Deputies, a third generation owner of a textile factory in northern France had begun experimenting with social Catholic ideas and a "Christian corporation" that was "both hierarchical and fraternal" in the operation of his business.[218] Soon to be the exemplar of social Catholicism put into successful practice, Léon Harmel not only introduced worker protections and a fair wage for his employees to his factory in Val-de-Bois, near Lille, but also worker *cercles* focused on practical but also moral education grounded in Catholicism.[219] Energetic and extroverted, Harmel led worker group discussions himself as the guiding *patron*, and in 1871 he began leading workers on pilgrimages within France and, by 1885, to Rome.[220] Harmel became a favorite of Leo XIII, and an exemplar of the properly Catholic industrialist described in *Rerum Novarum*.

Albert de Mun had begun leading pilgrimages of his *cercles* in the early 1870s as well, and it was on just such a journey that de Mun and Harmel first met. In August of 1873, de Mun

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[217] Édouard Coquet, *Albert de Mun et la séparation de l'Église et de l'État 1904-1907* (Paris: *Les Éditions du Cerf*, 2019), 21, 25. Two of de Mun's elections to the Chamber were invalidated, but he subsequently won reelection in each case. He won his last five campaigns beginning in 1894 and concluding before his death in 1914. He always represented districts in Brittany—either Finistère or Morbihan.

[218] Joan L. Coffey,. *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 73, 103.

[219] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 117.

[220] Joan L. Coffey. *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 150.

and La Tour-du-Pin were leading a group of 2,500 pilgrims from the OCCO to Notre Dame de Liesse, near Reims in northern France.[221] Unexpectedly, they found themselves alongside a boisterous crowd of thousands, complete with brass band and singing. At the head of this new group was Léon Harmel himself, brimming with energy and excitement. De Mun was not impressed by the display:

> Harmel had announced that his cercle would be making the pilgrimage, but he hadn't seen fit to join our group. Instead, we were ambushed on the road by a brass band emerging from a small wood. Drums beating and bugles sounding, the Val-de-Bois detachment led the column. I was furious about such crass disorder interrupting our well-ordered march.[222]

Clearly, Albert de Mun's dedication to the plight of the worker had not fully diminished his aristocratic haughtiness, here directed at what he considered Harmel's "bourgeois coarseness."[223] However, René de La Tour-du-Pin's reaction was quite different, as he recognized in Léon Harmel the potential to expand social Catholicism beyond what the two aristocrats had been able to build themselves. As Albert de Mun recalled in his memoirs of those early years:

> René de La Tour-du-Pin immediately saw the importance of the support that we could receive from this industrialist whose intelligent audacity had inaugurated a new method. . . . We found brilliant confirmation of the principles which were the foundation of our movement. An immense future was opening up before us. . .From then on, it was integrated into both our social legislation and our corporate organization[224]

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[221] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 20.

[222] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1908), 217-218.

[223] Joan L. Coffey. *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 117.

[224] Albert de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale: Souvenirs de la Fondation de L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques D'ouvriers [1871-1875]* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1908), 218.

What La Tour-du-Pin recognized was that Harmel had proceeded far beyond de Mun's idealized social Catholicism by putting its principles into practice. This was the example the OCCO needed to advance the movement of social Catholicism. In short, "[w]hat de Mun demanded in theory, Harmel achieved in fact—the reorganization of industry on a Christian basis."[225] Properly castigated, de Mun approached Harmel and a productive partnership began. The two men would together lead a series of worker pilgrimages to Rome, increasing the visibility of their project and becoming confidantes of Leo XIII. De Mun would also visit Val-de-Bois regularly, taking lessons and inspiration from Harmel's approach to his workers circles, the ACJF, and to the Chamber of Deputies where de Mun would be a leading voice for labor reforms and worker protections. Harmel and de Mun endorsed the *syndicat mixte* approach to unions, with workers and management working together in factory-based organizations. This approach, often termed "corporatism," was an alternative to *syndicat séparé*, in which workers formed their own unions. Both Harmel and de Mun preferred *syndicat mixte* as it matched their hierarchical *patron* backgrounds, but also because it was geared toward harmony between workers and managers rather than what they saw as the more adversarial *syndicat séparé*, with its socialist and class struggle overtones.

By the early 1890s, initiatives such as workers circles, the ACJF, and the OCCO had produced a new generation of social Catholics who perceived the Republic's problems in terms of the labor movement and thus were more focused on economic issues than political causes. Léon Harmel never ran for office or joined a political party, and both Albert de Mun and René de La Tour-du-Pin were staunchly monarchist. Although de Mun continued to serve in the Chamber

[225] Bouscaren, Anthony T. "Origins of French Christian Democracy," in *Thought: Fordham University Quarterly*, Vol 31, No. 4 (1956), 542-566.

of Deputies he remained an anti-constitutionalist at heart. However, as the 1880s drew to a close, the secularization of the Republic intensified with the passage of laic laws and expulsions of Catholic teaching orders that further diminished the reach of Catholic education. In response, social Catholics generally remained true to their Legitimist roots while focusing their efforts on protecting workers from what they believed was at the heart of France's problems—*laissez faire* industrialists and economic liberals. Adherence to monarchism put them at odds with the strongly anti-socialist governing coalition of Opportunists, but also with socialists who continued to accuse social Catholics of intransigent religiosity and monarchism. The growing social Catholic movement paradoxically united anti-socialist Opportunists and socialists in concerns about the nature of de Mun and La Tour-du-Pin's motives.

These conditions made Jacques Piou's efforts to build bridges between Catholic Republicans and Opportunists frustratingly difficult. Opportunist distrust of social Catholicism extended to Catholicism generally, and the prospects for rapprochement, let alone a Tory party, looked increasingly unlikely in the 1880s. If there had been any prospect of success for this first, tentative *Ralliément*, it was scuttled by the involvement of Piou, de Mun, and many other conservative politicians in the Boulanger Affair.[226] A veteran of the Franco-Prussian War, General Georges Boulanger's charisma and dashing reputation led to his appointment as Minister of War in 1886, but his outspoken disdain for Germany and his cross-border provocations boosted his popularity among the French population. It also led to his dismissal as Minister of War in 1887, but this only boosted his popularity and by 1888 he was winning elections on a

[226] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 86. Martin's treatment of the Boulanger Affair stresses de Mun's central role in convincing conservatives to support the general's populist campaign but also de Mun's doubts about Boulanger from the beginning. For a less sympathetic view of conservatives during the affair, see William Irvine's *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

platform of revenge against the Germans and reform of the constitution of the Republic. Boulanger's popularity and challenge to the government rallied those from both Left and Right who opposed the Republic but also united those who saw him as a threat to the established order.

As a result, General Boulanger's rise to populist prominence was fueled by support from across the political spectrum, with the notable and key absence of the Republican Opportunists.[227] The Opportunists controlled the ruling coalition, and thus were the target of Boulanger's criticism and popular discontent. Socialists, Radicals, Liberals, and Monarchists all joined the Boulangist movement, until the general proved to be unworthy of their confidence and fled the country under threat of arrest in 1899. All those who had supported his populist movement were left exposed and excluded from government after the predictably disastrous elections that followed, with the Republicans—Radicals and Opportunists united in opposition to Boulangism—sweeping to victory.[228] The outcome was especially disastrous for Piou and the Catholic Republicans since they had seriously and foolishly damaged their credibility with their intended coalition partners—the Opportunists.

Leo XIII And The *Ralliément* Of The 1890s

The failure of the first *Ralliément* and the debacle of the Boulanger Affair convinced Jacques Piou that a more focused strategy was needed to advance the cause of Catholic Republicanism. In January of 1890 when the *Union des droites* reconfirmed Armand de Mackau as the leader of their parliamentary group, they also confirmed their commitment to

[227] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47.
[228] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-198.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 29.

constitutional liberalism by appointing Piou as one of Mackau's closest assistants.[229] In March of 1890, Piou went a step further and established another group, the *Droites constitutionelle* ("Constitutional Right," DC, reusing the name of Raoul-Duval's group from 1887) ostensibly allied with the *Union des droites* but more aggressive in declaring acceptance of the Republic and popular sovereignty. [230] Ten years later, the members of this group formed the core of Piou's *Action libérale populaire*, but in 1890 these constitutional liberals who supported the Republic attracted only a handful of fellow deputies. In the wake of the Boulanger Affair, conservatives were unwilling to commit to bold new ventures, especially led by those who had supported Boulanger. If Piou was attempting to launch a second *Ralliément*, it appeared no more likely of success than the first.

However, beginning in 1890 the Vatican supplied Piou a lifeline and simultaneously prompted a massive shift in French social Catholicism. First, at a dinner in November 1890 held in honor of the French Navy in Algiers, the Vatican's Primate of North Africa, Cardinal Lavigerie, offered a toast to the Republic and instructed the band to play *La Marseillaise*—stunning his dinner guests and much of France.[231] Second, in February 1891, Jacques Piou was summoned to Rome for an audience with the Pope. In the two hour meeting, Leo praised

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[229] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 86.

[230] *Le Figaro*, 21 March 1890; 31 March 1890.

[231] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1989* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 39. In an argument echoed by Maurice Larkin in *L'Église et l'État en France, 1905: la crise de la Séparation* (Paris: *Éditions Privat*, 2004), Sedgwick views Leo's actions concerning France as motivated by a desire to regain the Papal States lost to the Italian Risorgimento in 1870 as well as the need to reverse the diminishment of Vatican authority across Europe in the late nineteenth century. Thus, Sedgwick argues that *Ralliément* of the 1890s was an attempt to win the favor of the French Republic against the hostility of both Italy and Germany, furthered by Vatican overtures to the Russian Empire. For Larkin, the effort was hopelessly optimistic, for Sedgwick, a pragmatic if futile interference in French affairs.

Cardinal Lavigerie's actions in Algiers three months before, and encouraged the Catholic Republican cause in words recorded by Piou:

> You have the right idea; Catholics must unite on the legal ground to defend the ideas of conservatism and religion. . . Let the royalists keep their hopes, it they wish, but let them not speak of them. The republican form is accepted in your country . . . I know that to ask [Catholic Monarchists]to accept the republican form is to ask them to make a great sacrifice; Whatever it costs them, it is necessary for the cause of religion. I, deep in my heart, am also a royalist; But we must resign ourselves to what is necessary.[232]

The visit boosted Piou's position immensely and his group gained members once the Pope's approval was reported.[233] However, the third and most important papal action was yet to come.

In 1892, Leo XIII promulgated the encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Au milieu des sollicitudes*, formally permitting acceptance of the Republic and breaking the hold of anti-republicanism and monarchism on Catholics in France, although not all Catholics answered his call.[234] The publication of these encyclicals marked the beginning of what most scholars term the *Ralliément*, which in this study is considered the second such movement, the *Ralliément* of the 1890s. Regardless of the nomenclature, it was the single most important shift in French Catholicism since the Revolution and would impact all Catholics in France, whether they followed the Pope's directive and rallied to support the Republic or not. For Jacques Piou, there was now a pathway to prove to Republican Opportunists that conservative Catholics could be reliable partners in government, and to reinforce this message the *Droite constitutionelle* officially changed its name in March of 1893 to the *Droite républicaine* ("Republican Right,"

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[232] Jacques Piou, *Le Ralliement: Son histoire* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1928), 33.

[233] *L'Observateur Français*, 25 February 1891.

[234] The Holy See, "Rerum Novarum", accessed 25 May 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html; "Au Milieu des Sollicitudes", accessed 25 May 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_16021892_au-milieu-des-sollicitudes.html

DR).[235] For social Catholics like Albert de Mun, René de La Tour-du-Pin, and Léon Harmel, the papal encyclicals forced a choice between their long-held anti-Republicanism (and attendant monarchism) and a new and awkward embrace of the Republic that they associated with secularism, anticlericalism, and anti-Catholicism.

Leo's encyclicals were not a surprise to Léon Harmel since he had played his part to provide a pathway to address the Pope's concerns about both socialism and capitalism as examples of materialist systems devoid of spiritual or moral foundation. So, it is understandable that of the prominent social Catholics, Harmel was the most ready to discard his anti-Republicanism and embrace the Republic, declaring "[w]e ought to clearly affirm ourselves as republicans, as democrats, and as Christians, in order to serve God, the people, and our country."[236] Moreover, Leo XIII's endorsement of Catholic trade unions pushed Harmel to adjust his model from one based on *syndicat mixte* to *syndicat séparé*.[237] This was a change much more difficult for Albert de Mun to make, as his conception of a harmonious workplace presupposed a cooperative effort between workers and managers. Thus, he believed *syndicat séparé* could lead to the kind of acrimony more in line with the socialist paradigm of class struggle. In time, de Mun would embrace Catholic trade unionism as well, but his reticence was quite different from the reaction of Harmel, as well as the younger generation of social Catholics who had been nurtured in associations like the ACJF.

One area of agreement between Léon Harmel and Albert de Mun was the willingness of these two traditional Legitimists to abandon monarchism following Leo XIII's directive to

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[235] *L'Observateur Français*, 28 April 1893.

[236] Joan L. Coffey, *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 202.

[237] Léon Harmel letter to M. Tiberghein, 19 April 1893.

embrace the Republic, although de Mun did so with significantly more reluctance.[238] This was also understandable considering how de Mun had established his political career on anti-Republicanism and the defense of Catholicism from a Monarchist perspective, positions he believed were inextricably linked. However, in a speech to the ACJF conference in Grenoble on 23 May 1892, the Monarchist conscience of social Catholicism since 1871 made his position clear: "I intend to place my political action on the constitutional terrain, to conform to the directions of the Supreme Pontiff."[239] The following month in Lille he reiterated his pledge:

> I said in Grenoble and I repeat here that I am determined, by placing my political actions on constitutional ground, to conform my attitude to the leadership of the Supreme Pontiff. I will add nothing more, happy if I can, by my example, help in this great work of a modern society hungry for harmony and peace, to join my hand to those who stretch from the other side of the gap dug by our long divisions, to help the new generation to cross it.[240]

These words were not without cost, as Albert de Mun was abandoned by many long-time colleagues and friends, most notably and painfully his long-time compatriot René de La Tour-du-Pin.[241] The two cofounders of social Catholicism in the Third Republic never reconciled, despite de Mun's attempts, and by 1905 La Tour-du-Pin had migrated from Legitimist monarchism to supporting the hybrid Monarchist Nationalism of Charles Maurras and *Action française*.[242]

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[238] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 94. According to Martin, both de Mun and his wife Simone were ostracized from their Parisian social circle. This strengthened their religious commitment, and by 1903 they had taken vows with the Third Order of Saint Francis.

[239] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1925), 136.

[240] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1925), 137-138.

[241] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 95.

[242] Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 68. The commitment worked in both directions, as La Tour-du-Pin influenced the growth and philosophical approach of Maurras.

Multiple Responses To The *Ralliément*

If many Catholics were dismayed by the Pope's call to accept the Republic, and as a result either refused to do so or did so with no conviction, a significant group did follow Leo's direction and a new movement was born. Or, rather, new movements were born, because the *Ralliément* of the 1890s was a diverse affair with often conflicting approaches.[243] This diversity is the key ingredient to the emergence of what eventually would become distinctive applications of the *Ralliément* with influences and policies tied to either the political left or right. Leo's admonition for French Catholics to embrace the Republic was understandably non-specific, as he was careful to avoid meddling in the political affairs of a sovereign nation. However, this left the strategy for how the *Ralliément* was to be implemented at the discretion of French Catholics themselves, and as a result of their lack of unity the second *Ralliément* was a somewhat haphazard affair, without coherent purpose and singular leadership.

Regardless, no one could have been as pleased by the Pope's call to rally than Jacques Piou.[244] In his perception, Leo XIII had given him the backing to pursue his goal of uniting those who embraced the *Ralliément* under the banner of Catholic Republicanism, creating a viable political force that could then be accepted by the ruling Opportunists into what could potentially become Piou's hoped for French Tory party: "it seemed possible, likely, to bring the Catholic masses and their Center-Right representatives closer to those moderate Republicans who formed

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[243] Kevin Passmore identifies four distinct *Ralliément* movements in the 1890s—papal, conservative, parliamentary, and popular, as well as a movement of Catholics who opposed the *Ralliément*. He identifies Piou with the parliamentary *Ralliément*. See Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 81-95.

[244] Joseph Denais, *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou* (Paris: *La Nef de Paris Éditions*, 1959), 51.

a Center-Left. . .the great Tory party, dreamed of by Jacques Piou, was within sight."[245] But his hopes were dashed by the reaction to the *Ralliément* of two very different Catholic groups—Monarchists and social Catholics. For their part, Monarchists refused to rally, and instead actively opposed Piou's campaign and then voted against Catholic Republican candidates in the 1893 elections, the first legislative elections following Leo's call. Monarchists not only managed to ensure a disappointing electoral outcome for Catholic Republicans, but they also attacked Piou directly, and he lost his first election since arriving in the Chamber of Deputies in 1885.

Although the dismal result also led to Albert de Mun's defeat, the larger issue for Piou was that social Catholics were not following his lead any more than the Monarchists, although most social Catholics at least supported the *Ralliément* in principle. This began with de Mun, who as early as June 1892 accepted the Republic but refused to join with Piou and prominent Catholic Republicans Étienne Lamy and Gaston David in prioritizing economic liberalism over social Catholicism to "best cement the Opportunists to the Rallies."[246] Albert de Mun "saw [Piou's] *Droite constitutionelle* as insufficiently Catholic and social" so he "organized a rival movement supported by the [ACJF]," took a third of the deputies supporting the *Ralliément* with him, and briefly "revived the idea of Catholic Party."[247] Ultimately, however, his election loss in 1893 [248], the falling out with La Tour-du-Pin, and the conflict over strategy with Catholic Republicans were compounded in June 1893 by the first of a long series of medical issues that

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[245] Joseph Denais, *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou* (Paris: *La Nef de Paris Éditions*, 1959), 64.
[246] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 97.
[247] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 84.
[248] *Assemblée nationale base de données des députés français depuis 1789*. Unlike Piou, de Mun regained his seat in 1894 in a by-election.

would periodically sideline de Mun for the rest of his life.[249] As de Mun retreated to his country estate to recover from a painful spasmodic neuralgia, it was Léon Harmel who led the way in orienting the social Catholic *Ralliément* to economic issues. The old industrialist was soon joined by a group of young priests who would transform social Catholicism from the movement initially fostered by Albert de Mun into a new and aggressive force in France—Clerical Democracy.

Clerical Democracy And *Abbé Démocrate*

For clarification, this new movement was known by its adherents as *démocratie Chrétienne*—Christian Democracy—and this is the moniker under which it most often appears among historians.[250] For this study, the term "Clerical Democracy" will be used instead, for three reasons. First, the form of Christian Democracy that grew to prominence in the twentieth century and remains a political force in Europe is only tangentially related to this movement in the 1890s in France. Second, this study will refer to another movement that was a precursor for a French form of Christian Democracy by the term "Catholic Democracy." Third, almost all the leaders of the Clerical Democratic movement were priests, usually referred to as the *Abbé démocrate*. These priests were grounded in social Catholicism, but their approach was much more radical than anything Albert de Mun had conceived.

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[249] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 107. Mun suffered from tic douloureux, which caused the left side of his face to contort uncontrollably and made speaking not just difficult but painful.

[250] All the historians referenced in this study use the term "Christian Democracy" for this movement, and it is clearly completely correct and historically accurate to do so. The purpose here is not to challenge a long-established term, but to ensure clarity in comparing similar movements that nonetheless fall outside the current common usage of the term.

Although each *Abbé démocrate* formed his own organization and was typically regionally based, grouping them together is justified because their missions and motivations were very similar, and they worked in concert regularly. This was most evident in a series of congresses held in the 1890s in which most of the *Abbé démocrate* attended. Léon Harmel took it upon himself to lead the movement, and he called for the first conference, held in Reims in 1893. The *Abbé démocrate* were not only quite different than the other *Ralliément* leaders, but with their relative youth and boundless energy they fueled a movement not well aligned with Catholic Republicanism:

> They were, for the most part, bright young priests and laymen who had reached maturity under the Third republic and were not interested in the chimeric possibility of a restoration. They were profoundly democratic and believed that the principles of the French Revolution could benefit the Church. In this belief they differed sharply from [de Mun and La Tour-du-Pin].[251]

Thus, Clerical Democrats and Catholic Republicans both answered Leo XIII's call to the *Ralliément*, but with notably different aims. Unlike Piou and his Catholic Republicans, Clerical Democrats commonly embraced "anti-capitalism, social reformism, intransigent Catholicism, antisemitism, corporatism, and the desire to 'go to the people.'"[252] In contrast to Albert de Mun's *cercles* movement, "[Clerical] Democracy was appealing to the class-conscious action of labor; social Catholicism, to the reconciliation and mutual devotion of the classes."[253] The most irreconcilable practical difference, however, was the Clerical Democrats' refusal "to be

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[251] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1989* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 65.

[252] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). 85.

[253] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 369.

conciliatory toward Republicans in power."[254] By disavowing any partnership with secular Opportunists, the *Abbé démocrate* compromised the Catholic Republicans' "attempt to reach out to moderate Republicans."[255]

Of the Clerical Democrat leaders, only one proved to be amenable to the Catholic Republican movement. Although his willingness to compromise set him apart from his fellow *Abbé démocrate,* Pierre Garnier was representative of the entire Clerical Democrat movement. A Breton from a peasant family, Pierre Garnier was a perfect fit for a movement that emphasized both the working class and traditional Catholicism. As with all *Abbé démocrate,* he was virulently opposed to economic liberalism, but fully embraced the Republic through the papal *Ralliément*. He saw the potential of organized participation of Catholic workers in the political system, even if his goal was not a pluralistic democracy but a Catholic one. Thus, his "objectives were frankly political,"[256] and "ostensibly sought to conquer the working class world by proposing a clearly social and clerical, and even a theocratic program."[257] An energetic and passionate speaker, he quickly gained a loyal following, notably (and unusually for a Catholic movement in the 1890s) among the urban working class.[258] In common with most other *Abbé démocrate,* Garnier also was a journalist, having written for the largest Catholic daily in France, *La Croix.* However, as the Clerical Democracy movement gathered momentum in 1893, he

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[254] Alexander Sedgwick, The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1989 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 12.

[255] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 75.

[256] Philip G. Nord, "Three Views of Christian Democracy in *Fin de Siècle* France" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19 (1984), 715

[257] Bertrand Joly, *Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885-1902* (Paris: *Les Indes savantes*, 2008), 324.

[258] Stephen Wilson, "Populism in France at the time of the Dreyfus Affair: The Union Nationale". In *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 10, No. 4 (October 1975), 671-672.

founded his own journal, *Le Peuple Français*, which became the voice of the most important Clerical Democratic organization during the *Ralliément* of the 1890s —Garnier's own *Union nationale* ("National Union," UN).[259]

The *Union nationale* bore all the hallmarks of similar organizations founded by the other *Abbé démocrates*—strongly and exclusively Catholic, anti-capitalist, anti-secularist, anti-socialist, and dedicated to the working class—but was the largest of them all.[260] As was typical in France at the time, Garnier attacked the Opportunist government as "simply the regime of the Jews, the Protestants, and the Freemasons."[261] Garnier's anti-secularism manifested most strongly in his criticism of Freemasons—perhaps the most common group to sustain attacks from Catholics—with the simple imperative: "We must fight Freemasonry."[262] Finally, although anti-socialist, Garnier's version of social Catholicism combined elements of both left and right, but only its strongly Catholic and clericalist orientation distinguished it from the political left. As a group, "[Clerical] Democrats were radical exponents of social legislation and trade unionism . . . [with] state intervention in favor of unions," with a clear focus on economic issues.[263] Although the leadership and reputation of Léon Harmel were critical to the establishment of the Clerical Democracy movement, by mid-decade Pierre Garnier and the other *Abbé démocrate* had made it

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[259] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1989* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 87.

[260] Bertrand Joly, *Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885-1902* (Paris: *Les Indes savantes*, 2008), 324. Estimates of Garnier's following are unreliable, but plausibly could have exceeded 100,000 based on the readership of *Le Peuple Français*.

[261] *Abbé* Garnier speech in Troyes, 1899.

[262] *Union National Programme Législatif*, 1893.

[263] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 368.

their own—and quite different from the parliamentary *Ralliément* envisioned by Catholic Republicans.

With the growth of Clerical Democracy, the social Catholic movement overall began to evolve away from Albert de Mun's conservative vision of Catholic unity and cooperation between classes to a more confrontational focus on class struggle and economic democracy, if still eschewing a socialist revolution. Neither fit well with Jacques Piou's constitutional liberalism, and although adherents of all three approaches adopted Leo XIII's call to *Ralliément,* there was little interaction or trust between them. The future cofounders of *Action libérale populaire* hardly appeared likely allies either, with Piou's rejecting de Mun's efforts to launch a Catholic party and de Mun's rejecting Piou's insistence on the necessity of collaboration with Opportunists to build a Tory party. When both Piou and de Mun were defeated in the elections of 1893, their active involvement in the *Ralliément* appeared in jeopardy. Piou remained active through making speeches and writing commentaries, and de Mun faced a medical crisis that limited his public life for two years, leadership of the *Ralliément* passed to another leading Catholic Republican, Étienne Lamy.

Catholic Democracy And *Sillon*

As Clerical Democracy grew into a significant movement in the 1890s, another approach to the *Ralliément* had quietly begun to gain a following of its own. Although it would eventually grow into a political movement in the first decade of the twentieth century, Catholic Democracy was primarily an educational and spiritual movement in the immediate aftermath of Leo's call to rally. This movement was exemplified by *Sillon* ("The Furrow"), which took its name from a journal published by its founders. Tracing its origins to a group of students at the *Collège*

Stanislas, a Jesuit institution near Paris, *Sillon* was an indirect product of the study circle movement founded by Albert de Mun, as *Sillonnistes* were inspired by de Mun's example although not directly affiliated with him or with the ACJF. *Sillon* strove to produce a similarly educated young man as the ACJF, dedicated both to Catholic spirituality and social Catholic concern for the working class. Notably, from its inception *Sillon* was also supportive of the Republic, and therefore was a natural fit for the *Ralliément*. However, *Sillon* was not a mass movement, but rather an organization that facilitated the founding and growth of community-based study circles that brought together Catholics of all classes for education and spiritual growth.

The literary magazine *Le Sillon* was founded in 1894 by a former *Collège Stanislas* student, Paul Renaudin, and quickly became a forum for discussion of social Catholic ideas.[264] However, this discussion forum transformed into the impactful movement that it became when in 1899 leadership passed to a charismatic 26-year old aristocrat from Paris whose name would be the one most associated with *Sillon* going forward—Marc Sangnier. Once in charge, Sangnier quickly emerged as the unchallenged leader of *Sillon*, serving as both its public face and its most effective voice. Sangnier also brought clarity to *Sillon*'s mission, and it is in this accomplishment that he can rightly be considered the originator of the Catholic Democracy in France. With influences from Léon Harmel and Albert de Mun, Sangnier developed his own fusion of Catholic and democratic currents. As with Harmel and the Clerical Democrats, Sangnier focused on the working class, but as with de Mun he sought to bring together all classes for moral and spiritual education.

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[264] Vincent Rogard, "*Marc Sangnier et l'éducation sociale du peuple*," in *Vie Sociale*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (February 2012), 41.

> The *Sillon* was not a political party or a school of political economy; nor was it an ordinary propagandist association. It was something more, 'a movement, a life, a common soul,'—a brotherhood claiming the allegiance of heart as well as of mind. Its aim was to impart, at first to a chosen few or elite group, and through them to the masses generally, an ardent spirit of political and social democracy, of liberty, equality, and fraternity.[265]

Along with promoting this nearly mystical understanding of democracy, what set Sangnier apart were two distinctive qualities. First, he stressed the centrality of local communities, of parish priests rather than the episcopate, and of a consequent flattening of hierarchies, encouraging "an unabashedly lay character within *Sillon*. . .."[266] Second, *Sillon* "was held together less by an administrative structure than by the charismatic personality of its leader, a cult of youth, and a sense of comradeship."[267] Marc Sangnier and the *Sillon* movement aimed to establish a new society in France that was truly democratic socially, economically, and politically, with the goal of bolstering the common people's control of their own lives through popular sovereignty both as citizens of the Republic and as Catholics: "Democracy is an organization of society in which the forces social, legal and economic in the fullness of their hierarchical development, cooperate proportionally and in such a way that the 'last result of their action' turns to the advantage of the lower classes."[268] Foundationally, although *Sillon* originated within the larger movement of social Catholicism, it was created in the midst of the *Ralliément*

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[265] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 375.

[266] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978) ,167.

[267] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 167.

[268] *Le Sillon*, 1 January 1904, 325.

of the 1890s and reflected a more purely egalitarian, moral, communitarian, and all-encompassing spiritual vision.

The *Fédération Électorale* And The Elections Of 1898

If Catholic Republicans focused on political solutions, and Clerical Democrats on economic solutions, Catholic Democrats like Sangnier focused on moral solutions. These three movements all grew in response to the *Ralliément*, but their approaches and priorities were significantly different. These differences made forming a unified effort extremely difficult, a situation further complicated by the often bombastic and inflammatory rhetoric of the *Abbé démocrate*. For this delicate task, in January 1896 Leo XIII quietly requested Étienne Lamy form and lead a unified *Ralliément* effort for the elections of 1898. Widely respected across the political landscape and with impeccable credentials as both a strong Catholic and a committed Republican, Lamy established the *Fédération électorale* ("Electoral Federation," FE) in 1897 with the goal of uniting the various groups formed in response to the *Ralliément*. As with Piou, Lamy also supported an alliance with Opportunists, but such an alliance was always going to be precarious while Opportunist suspicions of clericalism were heightened by the presence of the bombastic Clerical Democrats. Lamy's unenviable task was difficult from the outset, but there were reasons for optimism as the project began.

By 1895, conditions seemed propitious for both electoral success and cooperation with Opportunists. The *Ralliément* and the multiple approaches it had inspired brought many Catholics into politics, and the *Fédération électorale* led by Lamy showed early promise of

uniting Catholic Republicans, Catholic Democrats, and Clerical Democrats.[269] Likewise, a series of anarchist attacks beginning in December 1893 with an ineffectual smoke bomb thrown into the Chamber of Deputies culminated in June 1894 with the assassination of President Sadi Carnot.[270] These attacks, along with increasingly aggressive rhetoric from socialist leaders such as Jean Jaurès and Jules Guesde prompted Opportunists to recoil from the socialist Left and tentatively embrace Catholic Republicans. By 1896, a new government came to power headed by Jules Méline, an Opportunist with no ties to the *Ralliément* but who was nonetheless sympathetic to Catholic interests and willing to partner with Catholic Republicans.[271] Four years after Leo XIII launched the *Ralliément*, the Méline government appeared to be on the verge of fulfilling Piou's vison of a building a Center-Right Tory party, with Catholic deputies accepted as part of the coalition.

With these unusually positive developments for Catholic Republicans as a backdrop, both de Mun and Piou emerged from their respective political exiles with new approaches. Recovered sufficiently from his tic douloureux, Albert de Mun chose to employ high drama in May 1896 to endorse publicly his unity with the Opportunists in abandoning his long-held insistence on counterrevolution. He chose as his stage the commemoration in Reims of the baptism of the Frankish leader Clovis, the symbolic founding event of France as a Christian nation: "One

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[269] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1989* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 101. Sedgwick notes the first meeting of the Fédération électorale took place on April 5, 1897, at Étienne Lamy's house in Paris with all groups represented, including such luminaries as Léon Harmel and Gaston David—but not Jacques Piou or Albert de Mun.

[270] *Le Figaro*, 25 June 1984, 1.

[271] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 74. Passmore notes that many on the Center-Right shared Piou's Orléanist heritage and sensibilities, if not his religious focus. These Opportunists formed the *Grand Cercle Républicain* in 1898 in imitation of the Tory clubs of Britain. See Passmore, 77.

hundred years after the Revolution broke the pact concluded in the cathedral of Reims, the voice of his successor evokes this pact of Clovis, and Catholic France is moved."[272] Belying the dramatics, this shift in de Mun's public stance was pragmatic, as he was still skeptical of Piou's approach and would remain so for the rest of his life. Although the specific impetus for this change of heart is unclear, Piou's response to it was not: "Conservatives, defeated as they are, can do much to divert this democracy from the road that leads to the abyss and towards the road that leads to salvation. If they no longer have great electoral impact, they still exercise a great social influence; And it is on the social terrain that the decisive battle will be fought."[273] With de Mun willing to move toward Piou's vision of building a grand conservative coalition in collaboration with Opportunists, Piou in time became willing to adopt some of de Mun's tenets of social Catholicism. This exchange, tentative as it was, marked the beginning of the partnership that would produce *Action libérale populaire* in 1901.

However, newfound commonality between Piou and de Mun was not matched by the disparate groups within the *Fédération électorale*, where differences in political and economic approaches overwhelmed any hope of unity. Although Lamy and his *Fédération* ultimately proved to be woefully ineffectual in uniting Catholics for the 1898 elections, the polarizing effect of the Dreyfus Affair was much more damaging, for two reasons. First, the willingness of Opportunists to work with Catholic Republicans diminished significantly due to a poisonous atmosphere caused by the repellent antisemitism of Clerical Democrats, matched only by the antisemitism and anti-Republicanism of Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents. Second, although the Méline government held on to power after the 1898 elections, the Dreyfus Affair also split

[272] *Le Gaulois*, 16 May 1896. Clovis was baptized in 496, and crowned King of the Franks in 509 as Clovis I.

[273] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 1897, 804.

the Opportunists. When a weakened Jules Méline resigned in June 1898, he was eventually replaced in 1899 by the anti-clericalist René Waldeck-Rousseau, whose Opportunists abandoned Méline's inclusion of Catholic Republicans, put aside their anti-socialism in favor of anticlericalism, and formed an alliance with the entire left—the Radicals, the Radical-Socialists, and the Socialists—known as the *Bloc des gauches*. Piou assessed the disaster metaphorically:

> Everything was expected of M. Méline. The Ralliement was winning. This was his golden age. Relations between the Republic and the Holy See were marked by close cordiality. Leo XIII's policy had two or three years of relative success. Why this golden age suddenly became an iron age is beyond the historian's understanding.[274]

Founding *Action Libérale Populaire*

The Waldeck-Rousseau government was unified by its anticlericalism, and Catholic Republicans were once again bereft of an alliance with Opportunists, with the exception of Méline's group—now called Progressists—who as members of the Center-Right had refused to follow Waldeck-Rousseau and his Center-Left Opportunists—now called Centrists—into an alliance with socialists. In the five years since 1896, any hopes for Piou's Tory party had been shattered by Catholic disunity and ill-discipline, matched by the surging political strength of a united Left intent on ending any vestiges of clericalism in French society. Not only had the *Ralliément* of the 1890s failed, but the situation for traditional Catholics was now much worse, and Clerical Democrats were pulling social Catholicism radically away from de Mun's original vision. It was in this moment that Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun put aside their differences and founded *Action libérale populaire*. Jacques Piou brought his pragmatic, liberal, constitutionalist Catholic Republicanism, and de Mun brought his worker-oriented social Catholicism. As Piou

[274] Jacques Piou, *Le Ralliement: Son histoire* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1928), 74.

tells, it, "*Action libérale populaire* was not the Catholic party [Albert de Mun] had dreamed of . . . [but he] strongly desired its foundation, insisting that its title be the affirmation of a resolute offensive and the very real claim of lost freedoms."[275]

Action libérale became *Action libérale populaire* at the insistence of Albert de Mun, with the purpose of expanding the new party's identity beyond parliamentary deputies:

> It is called *Action* because it must be a center of life and activity. It is called *Libérale* because it wishes to maintain or restore in their integrity all public liberties, without refusing their benefits to anyone. It is called *Populaire* because it takes its strength through the number of its adherents and wants to defend above all the interests of laborers constantly betrayed by those who promise all before the election but deliver nothing afterwards. [276]

The motto chosen for this new organization would remain unchanged throughout its existence, and was an attempt to summarize the fusion of Catholic Republicanism and social Catholicism: "Freedom for all, equality before the law, common law, improvement of the lot of the workers."[277] The foundation of this new party incorporating two distinctly different approaches to the *Ralliément* appeared sound, but its strength would soon be tested. When *Action libérale populaire* was formed in 1901, the social Catholic movement was still fractured from the disaster of the *Fédération électorale* and the collapse of the Méline government in 1898. Piou's call for support was inclusive, imploring all "parties engaged in the same struggle" to form an alliance and for "all honest people to unite; [Piou] asked all liberals, whatever their origin, to rally for the

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[275] Jacques Piou, *Le Comte Albert de Mun: Sa Vie Publique* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1925), 204.

[276] Benjamin Martin, "The Creation of the *Action Libérale Populaire*: An Example of Party Formation in Third Republic France" in *French Historical Studies*, Autumn 1976, 670.

[277] *Année 1905 Almanach de L'Action Libérale Populaire* (Paris: *Au Secrétariat de l'Action Libérale Populaire 7, rue Las-Cases, Paris VII*), 3. This phrase became the motto of ALP, regularly used in publications and speeches by Jacques Piou.

same fight: 'When M. Waldeck-Rousseau puts his hand in that of the collectivists . . .would the liberals have any scruples?[278]

Action Libérale Populaire And The Clerical Democrats

The question for Piou and de Mun leading into the 1902 elections was this: how many social Catholics could be persuaded to join a liberal, Catholic Republican party whose goal was an alliance with Progressists? Would the Clerical Democrat followers of Léon Harmel and the *Abbé démocrate* support *Action libérale populaire*? Would the Catholic Democrats of Marc Sangnier and *Sillon* join the cause? In short order, Léon Harmel and the *Abbé démocrate* answered the *Action libérale populaire*'s call for support with a resounding "no," but for quite different reasons. Harmel never ran for political office and did not affiliate with any party.[279] Although Harmel assumed leadership of the Clerical Democrats and attended all their congresses from 1893 to 1897, his partnership with de Mun was fading as the turn of the century approached. By 1897, de Mun was no longer accompanying Harmel on worker pilgrimages to Rome, and although this was due as much to de Mun's medical challenges as to a rift between the two social Catholic leaders, the shift in association was clear.[280] Under pressure from the Vatican, Harmel supported the *Fédération électorale* but retreated from active involvement in

[278] *Le Correspondant*, 1 January 1901, 781.

[279] Joan L. Coffey, *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 209. Harmel insisted that his refusal to participate directly in politics allowed him "freedom on the social terrain."

[280] Joan L. Coffey, *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 205.

politics after the debacle of the 1898 elections.[281] Léon Harmel had at no point in his public life expressed support for any of Jacques Piou's initiatives, so it is not surprising that the old industrialist did not follow Albert de Mun into *Action libérale populaire*, nor express any support for Catholic Republicanism into the new century.

Léon Harmel's shift towards Clerical Democracy after 1893 included the expression of another element of *Abbé démocrate* thinking—antisemitism. Harmel's antisemitism was tied to his focus on economic issues, most especially his portrayal of the impact of financialized, laissez-faire capitalism on the small landowners and shopkeepers of the *petite bourgeoisie*. Although including condemnation for Freemasons and Protestants as well, Harmel reserved special disapprobation for Jewish influence on the economy, which he believed was destroying the social structures of "religion, family, fatherland, labor, and property."[282] As the Dreyfus Affair polarized France in the late 1890s, the antisemitic message of Clerical Democrats—and others, such as Nationalists—was regularly repeated by Harmel. If not as virulent and bombastic as the *Abbé démocrate,* Harmel nonetheless incorporated their ideas, including the threat of "the Triplice from within—the Masonic, the Jewish, and the Protestant."[283] Harmel's adoption of these ideas, along with his unwillingness to engage in day-to-day politics made his inclusion in the *Action libérale populaire* coalition unlikely, both from his perspective and that of the ALP leadership.

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[281] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 123-124.

[282] *Bulletin Union Fraternelle du Commerce et l'industrie*, March 1898, 1. Harmel delivered the speech on 27 June 1897 at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Montmartre, Paris.

[283] *La France Libre supplément*, 10 December 1897.

If Léon Harmel's unwillingness to assist *Action libérale populaire* and his drift into the antisemitism of Clerical Democracy were disappointments, Jacques Piou had further concerns about the movement Harmel had done so much to help build in the 1890s. Piou was especially dubious about the *Abbé démocrate* who had caused so much dissension in the *Fédération électorale*, frightened the Progressists, and routinely expressed a distasteful and bombastic antisemitism. However, Clerical Democrats could not simply be ignored. As a significant movement in France, any effort to engage with Catholics and attract them to *Action libérale populaire* required addressing the arguments of the *Abbé démocrate*. Fortunately for Piou, once again the Vatican provided the means for resolving a political dilemma. In the January 1901 encyclical *Graves de Communi Re*, Leo XIII explicitly defined Christian democracy as acceptable only as a social movement, not a political one. The Pope warned against the tendency of Clerical Democrats to attack legitimate authority, to focus on the poor to the exclusion of all else, and to embrace elements of socialism that threatened natural rights, such as to property.[284] *Graves de Communi Re* "essentially ended . . . the [Clerical] democratic movement in France."[285] In short order, the *Abbé démocrate* and Clerical Democrats were out of the political business.

However, Clerical Democrats as a group would still have nothing to do with *Action libérale populaire*, viewing Piou's party as hopelessly compromised by economic liberalism and a willingness to ally with Progressists. Piou's attempts to emphasize defense of religion following Catholic outrage over the suppression of congregations in 1902-1903 and the Separation Law crisis of 1905-1906 failed to attract Clerical Democrats in significant numbers.

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[284] The Holy See, "Graves de Communi Re", accessed 25 May 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18011901_graves-de-communi-re.html.

[285] Joan L. Coffey, *Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 228.

For the *Abbé démocrate*, *Action libérale populaire* "was simply a maneuver of the reactionary Monarchists and conservatives, an attempt to create a confessional Catholic Party within which the conservatives would have the upper hand." [286] If there was any hope for Catholic Republicans to find common ground with Clerical Democrats on promoting social reform, it was quickly disabused:

> Consequently, although the program of [*Action libérale populaire*] . . . was very similar to their own, these [Clerical] Democrats attacked the new party with a violence and indignation which knew no bounds. . . In his book on *The Republican Catholics*, published in 1905, [*Abbé* Pierre] Dabry declared that the organization of the party was a supreme blunder, the great political crime, the cause of anticlerical legislation which marked the early years of the new century."[287]

Another representative attack came from *Abbé* Paul Naudet, who declared that *Action libérale populaire* "was a clerical, bourgeois, and royalist party which had turned the *Ralliément* into a lie."[288] For Naudet, ALP was not worthy of its own name, insisting that the party "was neither populist nor liberal."[289]

Perhaps the most persistent and vociferous Clerical Democrat critic of *Action libérale populaire* was *Abbé* Dabry, one of the founding *Abbé démocrates* and publisher of the journal *La Vie Catholique* ("Catholic Life").[290] For Dabry, Piou and *Action libérale populaire* combined

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[286] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 370.

[287] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 370.

[288] *Justice sociale*, 14 March 1903, 1.

[289] Paul Naudet, *Pourquois les catholiques ont perdu la bataille* (Paris: *Ancienne Librairie Thorin et Fils*, 1904), 217. Naudet distrusted the influence of Monarchists in ALP, including the two former Monarchists who founded the party. This was a common theme and concern common among Clerical Democrats, who tended to be from peasant or working class backgrounds.

[290] *La Vie Catholique* (Dabry) and *Justice sociale* (Naudet) were both condemned as modernist and shut down by Vatican decree in February 1908.

hostility to the Republic with exclusively religious demands in a reactionary party. Dabry went so far as to accuse Piou of attempting to unite rallied Catholics to oppose Clerical Democrats, and in so doing had brought only disaster—the suppression of religious congregations, the closing of Catholic schools, and the abrogation of the Concordat.[291] Regardless of the veracity of Dabry's charges, they are representative of the clear and unequivocal message of the *Abbé démocrate* to social Catholics concerning cooperation with *Action libérale populaire*. Even Paul Gayraud, one of the few *Abbé démocrate* to win election as a deputy, was a continuous problem for Albert de Mun. Elected in 1898 and sitting with the ALP group in the Chamber of Deputies from 1902 until his death in 1910, *Abbé* Gayraud's unpredictability and lack of support for ALP policies caused de Mun to lament Gayraud as epitomizing Clerical Democrats, "this floating mass of illusionists, which makes the Republic a dogma linked to Christianity... [and] instinctively pronounces itself against any attitude suspected of being profitable to the reactionaries, the opposition parties, or even shared by them."[292] Both the Catholic Republican Jacques Piou and the social Catholic Albert de Mun eventually lost hope that they would receive any substantive support from Clerical Democrats, who the ALP leaders viewed as promoting a "false liberalism, with which the democratic school is infected."[293]

However, there was one exception. Quite unexpectedly, Piou managed to gain the support of one prominent *Abbé démocrate*—Pierre Garnier—who in desperation sought a lifeline

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[291] Pierre Dabry, *Les catholiques républicains, Histoire et souvenirs 1800-1903* (Paris: *Chevalier et Rivière*, 1905), 700. Dabry argued that Catholics cannot be concentrated in one party, but rather should be integrated into many groups to influence politics and culture more broadly than as a party prioritizing the defense of religion.

[292] AN 378 AP 4 Carnet X. Letter attached to notebook from Albert de Mun to Vatican Secretary of State, Merry del Val, 7 April 1906.

[293] AN 378 AP 4 Carnet VII, 103. Notebook entry, 1905.

in *Action libérale populaire* to avoid the collapse of his organization after *Graves de Communi Re*. The papal encyclical had rendered the continuation of the *Union nationale* untenable, and Piou was perfectly willing to welcome as much of its membership as would join him. By 1902, *Action libérale populaire* had essentially absorbed the *Union nationale*, its funding sources, a portion of its membership, and its publications. This included Garnier's own *Le Peuple Français*, which was soon being written and published by de Mun's youth organization, the AJCF.[294] Overall, however, Clerical Democrats and their version of social Catholicism proved to be a poor match for *Action libérale populaire*, and much-needed support drifted out of politics, towards socialism, or into movements that rejected the Republic entirely, such as *Action française*.

Action Libérale Populaire And *Sillon*

Of the social Catholic groups that emerged during the *Ralliément* of the 1890s, *Sillon* proved the most resilient, as well as the most enigmatic. Marc Sangnier did not fully embrace *Action libérale populaire* in 1901, but neither did he refuse to assist Piou's efforts, and his support appeared to wane only gradually until a clear break was evident by 1907. In 1902, however, "cooperative efforts were established between Marc Sangnier and Jacques Piou [and] [t]hey encouraged each other's work. . .. "[295] When Piou lost his reelection bid in 1902, Sangnier publicly encouraged his much older compatriot: "You have just lost a seat, [but] what does it

[294] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 147.

[295] Oscar L. Arnal, *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action française, 1899-1939* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 39. However, these two men came from different generations and their interaction was formal, not friendly. In 1902, Piou was 64 years old and Sangnier was 29 years old.

matter if you win France!"[296] For the first four years of the party's existence, Sangnier spoke regularly at party functions and the two groups appeared to be aligned. Sangnier's contribution was symbolic because his movement was never very large despite its notoriety.[297] Regardless, as he was a recognized social Catholic leader and a charismatic speaker with strong appeal to younger audiences, Sangnier's contribution was welcomed in light of Harmel's rejection of ALP.[298]

Action libérale populaire leaders actively courted the support of Sangnier and his followers, such as presiding at *Sillonniste* gatherings and praising the work of *Sillon* publicly and consistently. In early 1903, Jacques Piou chaired just such a meeting, and in lauding "the eloquent president of *Action libérale populaire*," *Le Sillon* reported Piou's remarks to the gathering of young men: "You will show no cowardice. You will continue to do what you have [always] done. You will [represent *Sillon* at] public meetings. You will show what Christianity has done for France and for the world. You will multiply Study Circles and People's Institutes."[299] At the Besançon ACJF conference in November, Albert de Mun highlighted the commonality of *Sillon* and the ACJF as well, noting "we wholeheartedly applaud their success and, while maintaining our particular methods, necessitated by the apostolate to which we are engaged, we are happy to meet with them, united in heart and mind, in the great work of penetrating democratic ideas into Catholic circles."[300] On a more personal note, de Mun wrote to

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[296] *Le Sillon*, 25 June 1902, 479. Sangnier's comment came at a conference hosted by ALP in Paris on 18 June 1902, one month after the second round of legislative elections. Sangnier was 29, and Piou 63.

[297] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 167. Martin notes that *Sillon* never claimed more than 10,000 members at its height.

[298] Joseph Denais, *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou* (Paris: *La Nef de Paris Éditions*, 1959), 32.

[299] *Le Sillon*, 10 January 1903, 58.

[300] *Le Sillon*, 1 July 1903, 462.

Sangnier in December, describing "[a] natural sympathy between us . . . for our souls carry the same ferment . . . [and when] you told me the history of your work and asked me about my own, we spoke the same language."[301]

Well into 1904, these efforts appeared to be reciprocated. At the closing session of the *Bonne Presse* in October, the speakers included both Marc Sangnier and Jacques Piou. In his address, Sangnier generously praised the President of ALP: "We wish to proclaim loudly how much we admire the dedication and tireless tenacity of the one who has taken on this difficult task—to unite all honest people in the field of defense against the sectarians who oppress all of us who are Catholic."[302] Piou responded with a toast, emphasizing the common goal of their independent organizations:

> Let us drink to the young people who, through various channels, in different organizations, and with different methods, tend towards the same goal. I have never intended to hinder the initiative of anyone. I congratulate our friends from the ACJF, always in the breach, and my collaborators at every moment. I also congratulate the young people of *Sillon* and their leader, Marc Sangnier, who puts an admirable talent at the service of boundless dedication.[303]

In the 1904-05 *Action libérale populaire* annual, *Sillon* was listed as a 'Friend of ALP' along with de Mun's ACJF.[304] The bonds between *Sillon* and ACJF, with their focus on youth and education, were quite deep. Sangnier and the leader of the ACJF, Paul Lerolle, had met as classmates at the *Collège Stanislas* and had worked together as leaders in student movements.[305]

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[301] *Le Sillon*, 1 July 1903, 452.

[302] *Le Sillon*, 10 July 1904, 319.

[303] *Le Sillon*, 10 July 1904, 319.

[304] *Annuaire de L'Action Libérale Populaire et du La Ligue Patriotiques des Françaises, 1904-1905* (Paris: *Au Secrétariat de L'Action Libérale Populaire et au Secrétariat de la Ligue Patriotique des Françaises. No. 7, rue Las-Cases, Paris, et 53 rue de Vaugirard, Paris*), 323-329.

[305] Jean-Jacques Greteau, *Marc Sangnier: Le semeur d'espérances* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2009). 97. This is the institution where *Sillon* was first formed.

However, even with his deep respect for Albert de Mun and Jacques Piou, and his longstanding personal connections with the ACJF, Sangnier's support for *Action libérale populaire* was never unequivocal. A month before the *Bonne Presse* Conference, Sangnier had led *Sillonnistes* on their first pilgrimage to Rome, but not with the ACJF, Albert de Mun, or any other affiliate of *Action libérale populaire*:

> To show our solidarity with all the Catholics of France and our desire for union, we thought it appropriate to make the Pilgrimage of *Sillon* coincide in Rome with that of *La France au Travail*, which for so many years has been considered the great official French pilgrimage, and which the papacy has never ceased to encourage and bless.[306]

In short, Sangnier chose to associate his organization's public display of devotion to Catholicism with *La France au Travail* ("France at Work"), which was founded and operated by Léon Harmel—no friend of ALP. Sangnier and Harmel were already well acquainted, and it was Harmel who mentored and encouraged Sangnier after *Sillon* suffered papal censure in 1910. By these actions, Sangnier sent a clear message to ALP as well as his own movement—*Sillon* was an independent organization and would choose its own path.

If their connection with *Sillon* and Sangnier was not as strong as ALP leaders would have hoped, meaningful collaboration did occur. As *Sillon* was an organization created to appeal to the young, Sangnier created the *Jeunes Garde* ("Young Guard"), the *Sillonniste* youth arm that wore conspicuous uniforms, marched in parades, and patrolled *Sillon* events.[307] Working in concert with *Action libérale populaire*, Sangnier authorized the *Jeunes Gardes* to participate in the widespread protests and street demonstrations that erupted around France in response to the

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[306] *Le Sillon*, 1 January 1904, 41-43.

[307] Raymond Grew, "Suspended Bridges to Democracy: The Uncertain Origins of Christian Democracy in France and Italy" in Joseph A. Buttigieg and Thomas Kselman, ed. *European Christian Democracy: Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspectives* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 19.

closure of Catholic schools and the suppression of religious congregations by the Combes *Bloc des gauches* government in 1902.[308] These actions, which also included the LPDF, were repeated during the inventory crisis of January 1906 following the government's indelicate enforcement of the Separation Law of 1905. Piou's intent was to harness Catholic discontent with the government's actions and to transform it into electoral results. Thus, he encouraged his allies to publicly protest but kept the rank and file of *Action libérale populaire* above the fray. Sangnier supported this policy, and the *Jeunes Gardes* participated in protests well into 1906.[309]

Abandoned By *Sillon*

By 1905, however, there were more obvious signs that *Sillon* would be moving in its own direction. First, an undercurrent of rivalry with affiliates of *Action libérale populaire* quietly grew, especially between the conservative ACJF and the more independent-minded *Sillon Cercles d'Études*. The competition between these two youth organizations is exemplified by a typical *Sillonniste* quip as they recruited young Catholics: "If Sillon scares you or your parents, you can safely enroll under the banner of the ACJF."[310] Second, a major change came from inside *Sillon* itself, where Sangnier led a purge of the movement's senior leadership. In June of 1905, Sangnier summarily dismissed the Secretary General of *Sillon*, Charles d'Hellencourt, who was a long-time *Sillonniste* and had held the post since 1903. By October of 1905, much of the

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[308] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 193-194.

[309] *Almanach du Sillon des Cercles d'Étude et des Instituts Populaire*, 1904 (Paris: *Sillon*, 1904), 20-21.

[310] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 167. Sillonnistes enjoyed a reputation for youthful rebellion and more than a little distance from the episcopate, certainly in contrast to the more cerebral ACJF.

established leadership had been removed and replaced by a younger and more radical cadre.[311] The 'Crisis of 1905' was ultimately caused by Marc Sangnier himself, as his young followers supported his status as both "infallible" and the "sole embodiment of *Sillon*."[312] However, the more practical reason for the purge was Sangnier's desire for the authority to change *Sillon* into a broader movement—social, economic, political, cultural—beyond Catholicism.[313] By removing leaders who were willing to question his decisions, Sangnier assumed complete control of the movement. When the purge was complete, *Sillon*'s support for *Action libérale populaire* evaporated:

> *Sillon*'s break with the ALP's social policy was less polemic but much more substantive [than the *Abbé démocrate*]. Convinced that economic democracy was necessary to preserve political democracy, the bourgeois followers of Marc Sangnier invited militant proletarians into their study circles so that the two groups might prepare a future democracy worthy of that name . . . and broke with the class collaborationism of traditional social Catholicism. . .."[314]

The *Sillon* Crisis of 1905 had ramifications well into the twentieth century, as the dissidents purged by Sangnier gravitated towards Piou's vision by the 1920s.[315] However, in 1905 there was no benefit for Piou or de Mun in Sangnier's leftward drift. If any question

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[311] Charles d'Hellencourt was stunned and dismayed by his dismissal after years of loyal service, and his bitterness was reflected in his reference to Sangnier as an "absolute monarch'. See Denis Lefèvre, *Marc Sangnier: L'aventure du catholicisme social* (Paris: *MamE,* 2008), 116.

[312] Georges Périnelle letter to Charles d'Hellencourt, 26 June 1905, attached to Book III of Christian Notebooks, 2.

[313] G. Périnelle and Michel Launay, "*La crise du Sillon dans l'été 1905*," in *Revue Historique*, Vol. 245, No. 2 (498) (April-June 1971), 426. The purge was accompanied by other changes, such as a more centralized structure and strict adherence to the *Sillon* message across all *Sillon* affiliates. See Denis Lefèvre, *Marc Sangnier: L'aventure du catholicisme social* (Paris: *MamE*, 2008), 114.

[314] Oscar L. Arnal, *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action française, 1899-1939* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 40-41.

[315] Jean-Claude Delbreil, *Centrisme et démocratie-chrétienne en France: Le Parti Démocrate Populaire des origines au M.R.P. (1919-1944)* (Paris: *Publications de la Sorbonne*, 1990), 13.

remained concerning *Sillon*'s embrace of the Left, it was answered during a debate in March of 1905 between Sangnier and revolutionary socialist leader Jules Guesde. "The meeting appeared to observers as a joint meeting . . .of a parliamentary election campaign" in which the *Sillonniste* leader concluded by addressing his 'opponent' as a fellow traveler: "Be convinced, Comrade Guesde, that when the capitalists no longer have any meaning, they will be suppressed like the old feudal barons when humanity no longer had use for them . . .."[316] The purge and the shift towards the political Left prompted some notable supporters of *Sillon* to become sharp critics, focusing on Sangnier himself: "We must maintain a homogeneity of ideas. . .not faith in a man, blind to his word, [in] worship of his person . . . [because] then Sangnierism would replace *Sillonism*."[317]

Despite these developments, *Sillon*'s move away from ALP was subtle, discernible only in small changes in tone. In the pivotal election year of 1906, *Sillonniste* journals published less enthusiastic portrayals of ALP affiliates, such as a study of the failure of the *Ralliément* that quoted Étienne Lamy's unflattering 'praise' of Jacques Piou: "Courageous, yes, but of the slow fuse rather than action. Bound by his friendships, origins, and commitments among Monarchists and attracted to the Republic only by reason."[318] In June 1906, *Sillon*'s daily *L'Eveil démocratique* published a similar article about the ACJF, calling for the dismantling of the

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[316] Jean-Jacques Greteau*, Marc Sangnier: Le semeur d'espérances* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2009), 99.

[317] Maurice Deslandres letter to Maurice Blondel, 8 August 1905. Published as "Lettres à Maurice Blondel 1903-1910," in *Revue française d'histoire des idées*, Vol. 1, No. 37, 2013, 165. This letter is one of 52 held in the Maurice Blondel Archives at the *Universite Catholique de Louvain*.

[318] *Le Sillon*, 1 January 1906, 370. The article, written by Sangnier's personal secretary Georges Hoog, is similarly mildly positive although also disparaging Piou and ALP.

organization founded by Albert de Mun due to its supposed lack of a singular message in doctrine and politics.[319]

By early 1906, Sangnier was no longer working with *Action libérale populaire* in any capacity, and although he publicly praised Jacques Piou in *Le Sillon*, he insisted that he could not continue to support the Catholic Republican project that he argued was too reactionary:

> I have a very high regard for [Piou]. He is a man infinitely superior to his collaborators in the *Action libérale*. I quickly realized he was unable, even if he had wanted to, to free *Action libérale populaire* from the old conservative clientele, and I knew that I could not, in good conscience, remain associated with *Action libérale*. That is why, despite the affection that M. Piou never ceased to show me, and the esteem which I profess for his selfless character, I did not believe I could lend myself to such an equivocation.[320]

Sangnier was less generous on a visit to Rome in 1907, where he gave a lecture on the social influence of Catholicism: "The transalpine newspaper *Italia* notes his remarks, where [he] unleashes 'sharp points at this Catholic party in which France mummifies itself in platonic desires of an unrealizable ideal, and which has thus contributed to the disintegration of French Catholicism.'" [321] By 1907 Sangnier had founded *Grand Sillon*, a political party with broadly ecumenical ambitions and an undercurrent of challenge to the episcopate.[322]

As 1907 drew to a close, Sangnier discarded all pretense of support for ALP in an editorial published in *Le Sillon*. Insisting that he was being punished for refusing to align himself with movements he could not support, he named those he claimed abandoned him in his hour of need because he had declined to subordinate himself to them:

> My conscience did not allow me to serve a policy I thought harmful to my country, despite the admirable intentions of many of those who promoted it. . .thus, I gradually became a target. When some royalists at *Action française* publicly insulted me, neither *La*

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[319] *L'Eveil democratique*, 29 June 1906, 1-2.

[320] *Le Sillon*, 10 January 1907, 311.

[321] Jean-Jacques Greteau, *Marc Sangnier: Le semeur d'espérances* (Paris: *L'Harmattan*, 2009), 120-121.

[322] Denis Lefèvre, *Marc Sangnier: L'aventure du catholicisme social* (Paris: *MamE*, 2008), 124.

> *Croix*, nor *L'Univers*, nor M. Piou, nor any religious authority, not the ACJF presided over by my old friend Jean Lerolle—not one of them took my defense...[323]

Finally, in May 1910, *Le Sillon* published a post-mortem on *Action libérale populaire*, arguing that "the republican founders of [ALP] did not have the energy to close themselves off to the right . . . and [so] gradually became again the old conservative party, fighting with the same cadres, under the orders of the same leaders, both republican Catholicism and Monarchist Catholics."[324] Thus, ALP "seems to us only a transitional form, destined to disappear or to transform itself completely. . ."[325] It is indeed ironic that on 25 August 1910, only three months after these words were published, the convergence of Sangnier's personal ambition, a conservative Vatican under Pius X, and a blistering campaign against *Sillon* by Charles Maurras and other Intransigents led to formal papal condemnation in *Notre Charge Apostolique* ("Our Apostolic Mandate") and the permanent and irrevocable disbanding of *Sillon*.[326]

The ACJF

There was one social Catholic group that was of tremendous help to Piou and de Mun, and along with the LPDF was by far the most loyal partner and supplied the most dependable supporters on campaign.[327] That group was the ACJF, which might appear obvious because the association was founded by de Mun on his social Catholic principles, and indeed those ties were

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[323] *Le Sillon*, 10 September 1907, 321-322.

[324] *Le Sillon*, 10 May 1910, 445.

[325] *Le Sillon*, 10 May 1910, 447.

[326] *L'Univers*, 31 August 1910, 1.

[327] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 350.

essential to the willingness of ACJF leaders to assist *Action libérale populaire*.[328] However, by 1901 the ACJF was an independent organization with no direct ties to any political faction. From its inception the ACJF's mission had been to educate young Catholics in a wide variety of theological and moral subjects and prepare them to assume leadership positions throughout France, both in government and in society at large. In two decades of existence, the ACJF had been very successful in building a cadre of energetic and young Catholic leaders who were capable of not just assuming de Mun's mission but in formulating their own.[329]

In the critical first five years of *Action libérale populaire*, it was the young men of the ACJF, along with the women of the LPDF, who voluntarily provided the widespread and localized public presence for Piou and de Mun's message. ACJF members performed tasks essential to a mass party, including canvassing voters, publishing local and regional journals and newspapers, and distributing campaign literature. Thus, ACJF members represented the largest portion of the party's grassroots workers, without which ALP could not have reached a mass audience. Not all ACJF members were in favor of this move into openly political action which "compromised their social efforts."[330] Jacques Piou's exhortation to these young men was direct: "In this electoral army that decides the fate of the country by a majority of votes, service is

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[328] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 147.

[329] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 351. These young leaders included Jean Lerolle and Joseph Zamanski, both of whom be among the founders of the *Parti démocrate populaire* (PDP) in 1924, the precursor of the most successful Christian Democratic party in French history, the *Mouvement républicaine populaire* (MRP) of the 1940s and 1950s.

[330] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 166.

compulsory for all."[331] The significant support provided by the ACJF was the most important practical effect of Albert de Mun's involvement with *Action libérale populaire*, but the inability of the party to incorporate leading social Catholic organizations beyond the one founded by de Mun himself reveals the significant gap between Catholic Republicans and social Catholics in the priorities and strategies employed for social and political engagement.

The Misaligned Partnership

From the establishment of ALP until 1905, party leaders prioritized the inclusion of social Catholic themes and the leaders who espoused them as critical to the success of the project. Both Albert de Mun and Jacques Piou believed social Catholicism would be essential to the association's growth into a nationwide party with mass appeal to Catholics beyond the important but numerically marginal Catholic Republican base. Albert de Mun was himself a social Catholic leader, if no longer at the forefront of the movement by 1901. Jacques Piou was a pragmatic Catholic Republican who recognized that of the organized Catholic groups with which he could align, social Catholics were among the most in tune with *Action libérale populaire*'s goals, if perhaps not as enthusiastically as the women of the LPDF. However, by 1905 it was clear that the party's outreach to social Catholics had not produced the results in numbers or alliances as had been hoped. Léon Harmel was not directly hostile to *Action libérale populaire* but neither did he provide any tangible support. The *Abbé démocrate* of the Clerical Catholic movement were unimpressed with Piou's political project, refused to support it, and attacked it

[331] Jacques Piou, Speech to the Olivaint Conférence, 19 June 1901. By 1901, the Olivaint Conférence was in close association with the ACJF. This speech was delivered 12 months prior to the formal founding of ALP, and is included in Jacques Piou, *Questions Religieuses et Sociales* (Paris: *Plon-Nourrit et Cie*, 1910), 84-91.

mercilessly, with the exception of a desperate Pierre Garnier. Finally, although *Sillon* initially partnered with *Action libérale populaire,* by 1905 Marc Sangnier and his movement were competitors rather than supporters. In the end, these social Catholic movements were ultimately of negligible help to Piou and de Mun in the crucial years of 1905 and 1906, when *Action libérale populaire* faced the dual challenges of the Separation Law of 1905 and the all-important elections of 1906. Only the ACJF provided significant and dependable support, remaining loyal to their founder.

In the attempt to attract social Catholics to *Action libérale populaire*, Piou and de Mun were unable to reconcile the priorities of their most important coalition partners—practicing Catholics and secular Progressists. Social Catholics emphasized the need for immediate social and political reforms to dismantle economic liberalism and protect workers, all within the context of re-Christianizing the nation. Progressists were reticent about wholesale reform due to their ties to the economic interests targeted by social Catholics, and also considered any attempt to reintroduce Catholicism's former position of privilege as an unacceptable return to clericalism. These differences were further complicated between 1902 and 1906 by a series of crises precipitated by government actions, including the eviction of teaching congregations, a clandestine scheme to deny promotions to Catholic army officers, and the passage of the Separation Law, all of which infuriated many Catholics. Piou could not ignore these developments, and attempted to exploit them by shifting *Action libérale populaire*'s public posture to emphasize defense of religion.[332] Unfortunately for Piou, his efforts did not placate social Catholics who still mistrusted the party's rapprochement with Progressists, so essential for

[332] Benjamin Martin, "The Creation of the *Action Libérale Populaire*: An Example of Party Formation in Third Republic France" in *French Historical Studies*, Autumn 1976, 680.

a Center-Right Tory coalition. For their part, Progressists were not pleased by Piou's overt appeals to Catholic solidarity and were especially leery of what they perceived as social Catholicism's inclination to socialist solutions.[333] If reconciling these two groups was always going to be a difficult task, the circumstances generated by the *Bloc des gauches* appeared to render it chimerical.

The largely failed attempt to bring social Catholics en masse into the *Action libérale populaire* coalition was a disappointment to Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun, and undoubtedly weakened their electoral prospects in 1906. Further, the presence of only the ACJF in the coalition from among French social Catholic groups reveals that, at least in terms of party organization, the emphasis on social Catholicism at the founding of *Action libérale populaire* may have been a miscalculation. However, it can also be argued that if the party had been formed primarily based on de Mun's social Catholic principles rather than on Piou's Catholic Republican priorities, social Catholics might have been more supportive. Albert de Mun certainly believed so, privately expressing his dismay that ". . . here we fall, in full, into the old conservative union, as Mackau had conceived of it. . .."[334] Piou's goal of building a Center-Right Tory party was not shared by de Mun, and the failure of *Action libérale populaire* to attract a significant number of social Catholics is one result of the disconsonance between the visons of these two men. Regardless, it is clear that the commonalities between the Catholic Republican and social Catholic interpretations of the *Ralliément* were not enough to overcome their two key differences—a relative willingness for rapprochement with secular Republican Opportunists, and

[333] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 169-170.

[334] AN 378 AP 4 Carnet V, 141. Notebook entry, 1904.

acceptance of economic liberalism, if mitigated by social reform. Catholic Republicans were committed to both, and social Catholics were not. The result was lukewarm support of *Action libérale populaire* from social Catholics before 1905 and virtual abandonment after 1906.

Chapter 5 - INTRANSIGENTS: CATHOLIC, MONARCHIST, AND NATIONALIST

In forming political partnerships with Catholic women and social Catholics, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* believed they could bolster the Catholic Republican movement with groups well-aligned with the party's strategic goals of constitutional revision, labor reform, and Catholic representation in a Center-Right Tory coalition. If their effort to bring Catholic women into the movement was largely a success, and their attempt to convince social Catholics to follow suit was a disappointment, both targeted groups were considered prime candidates for alignment with *Action libérale populaire* because each had a very strong Catholic identity and each might show a willingness to answer Leo XIII's call to support the *Ralliément*. However, beyond these two groups and the liberal and constitutional Catholics that formed the core of Jacques Piou's original parliamentary group, prospects among conservative Catholics were considerably less bright. With good reason, both Piou and Albert de Mun considered most of the conservatives who had not rallied to the Republic as opponents to be overcome or absorbed rather than as allies to be pursued.

As a result, in building their broad-based party, *Action libérale populaire* leaders faced consistent challenges from three otherwise distinct groups who were united primarily by their loathing of the Third Republic's parliamentary system. By 1905, these groups—Catholic, Monarchist, and Nationalist Intransigents—had little electoral strength remaining but were able to influence the opinions and loyalties of the French Catholics needed by *Action libérale populaire* to solidify their coalition. While the waning political prospects of Intransigents created opportunities for Catholic Republicans to provide a conservative and Catholic alternative, the

continued ideological reach of Intransigent groups meant that they could not be ignored. The perceived need to counteract intransigency continually tested the resolve of *Action libérale populaire*'s leaders to hold true to their strategic goals rather than to pursue tactical aims.

In the critical years between 1902 and 1906, the *Bloc des gauches* government's anticlerical actions resulted in a series of crises for Catholics.[335] Concurrently, changes in Vatican leadership undercut ALP's *Ralliément* mandate, leading Piou and de Mun to prioritize the defense of religion in an effort to attract uncommitted Catholic voters.[336] However, this tactical decision tied the party to the outcome of these crises, and *Action libérale populaire*'s failure to mitigate government anticlericalism or to secure a legislative majority provided the opportunity for clerical and Monarchist critics to question the party's effectiveness, orthodoxy, and purpose. Consequently, *Action libérale populaire* faced an uncertain future after 1906 as it bore the brunt of withering attacks from a new and aggressive movement assembled from the remnants of intransigency—the integral nationalists of Charles Maurras and *Action française*.[337]

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Intransigents who vehemently and implacably opposed parliamentary government were united by little else, and so they cannot be viewed as a coherent and autonomous movement. Their origins, and the origins of their opposition to parliamentarianism, were often quite different but their intransigence towards any accommodation to the liberal parliamentary system also ensured their opposition to the Catholic

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[335] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 154.

[336] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 162.

[337] Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 35.

Republicanism of *Action libérale populaire*. Two of these groups—Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents—had similarly deep roots in pre-1789 France, but their differing emphases concerning the institutions of religion and monarchy produced distinct tactics. The third group—Nationalist Intransigents—were much less well-defined, divergent in aims from each other, and only coalesced clearly in the 1890s amid calls for national unity and defense against all perceived threats to the nation, external or internal. As Intransigents, all three groups were animated less by what they promoted than by what they opposed, and the challenge for *Action libérale populaire* was to provide a distinct alternative, despite many in the Catholic Republican movement, including Piou and de Mun, having origins in the precursors to these Intransigent groups.[338]

Intransigents In *Belle Époque* France

As in discussing social Catholics, clarity in terminology is of great importance here as well because terms used to describe these groups in *Belle Époque* France often have meanings different from those used commonly a century later. First, in this study the term "intransigent" is used for all three groups—Catholic, Monarchist, and Nationalist Intransigents— to define opposition to the system of liberal parliamentarianism which had developed in France since the Revolution of 1789. Catholic Intransigents completely opposed the results of the Revolution—including the Republic itself—based on the desire to restore Catholicism in France to its pre-1789 prestige and privilege. The Assumptionist *Abbé* Bouvy summed up Catholic Intransigents'

[338] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1889* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 59.

focus when he told a Catholic congress: "Our beloved France must always be Catholic."[339] By 1900, the former distinctions of rival Vatican-centric Ultramontanism and Franco-centric Gallicanism had lost much of their meaning due to the overwhelming secularism of the Third Republic. The exemplar of Republican secularism was the passage in 1881 and 1882 of the Ferry Laws, the "laic" laws that mandated free and secular education, considered by many Catholics to be a direct attack on religious education. Following the passage of the Ferry Laws and the perceived waning of Catholicism in France, Catholic Intransigents of all types coalesced in rearguard opposition to the Third Republic.[340]

Second, Monarchist Intransigents also opposed the Republic, if not the Revolution of 1789 in its entirety. This is because the term "Monarchist" encompasses groups that developed both before the Revolution of 1789, such as the Bourbon Legitimists, and after it, such as the Bonapartists and Orléanists. This usage as an inclusive term is also an alternative to referring to Bourbon Legitimists and the Orléanists who replaced them in 1830 as "royalists", so called because both dynastic houses descended from the original French royal dynasty, the House of Capet. Likewise, the use of "Monarchist" also supersedes the practice of referring to Bonapartists as "Imperialists," so designated because both Napoleon I and Napoleon III had no origins in the House of Capet but rather gave themselves the title "Emperor." These common distinctions are not without merit, but as with Ultramontanes and Gallicans, by 1900 they had lost their importance. When the last recognized Bourbon pretender died childless in 1883,

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[339] *Compte rendu général du congrès national de Rheims du 21 au 25 octobre 1896* (Lille, 1897), 512. This speech from *Abbé* Bouvy of the Assumptionists expressed the core belief of Catholic Intransigents.

[340] AN F19 5612. Fonds de la *Union de la France Chrétienne*. The program of the *Union de la France Chrétienne* stressed the central policy issue for Catholic Intransigents was the existence of the laic laws—particularly the *loi scoliare* (such as the Ferry Laws) and the *loi militaire* (concerning service of clergy).

followed by passage of the Law of Exile in 1886, the old distinctions became increasingly less relevant.[341] The term "Monarchist Intransigents," therefore, includes all who considered monarchism of any type as the only legitimate form of government for France, and whose only aspiration was the end of the Republic and the restoration of a monarchy. In response to Leo XIII's call to support the Republic, Comte Paul-Gabriel d'Haussonville, a close associate of the Comte de Paris, succinctly summarized their position: "We will never renounce our rights to be Monarchists."[342]

Third, Nationalist Intransigents constituted a significantly different kind of group because they were unified less by their adherence to a religious or political system than by their veneration of France as a unified nation, of the French people as the product of a distinct civilization, and of the army as the exemplar of both nation and people.[343] At its height in the early twentieth century, this form of Nationalism with roots in late 1880s Boulangism appeared ascendant, and as such quite different from the rearguard movements of Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents. Nationalism as a term of reference is still very much in current usage and has many connotations, some of which apply at least somewhat to the French *fin de siècle* version. However, the Nationalists discussed in this chapter were the product of distinct conditions and issues in late nineteenth century France, and by 1905 at the latest they were a spent force, falling as quickly as they had risen.[344] As such, the use of the term "Nationalist Intransigents" serves to

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[341] *Journal officiel de la République française. Lois et décrets. 23 Juin 1886*. 2805. The Law of Exile prohibited any member of a royal house with a claim to the throne to reside within the Metropole.

[342] *Le Figaro*, 19 June 1893. The remarks were reported from a d'Haussonville speech in Montauban on 26 September 1892.

[343] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012), 10.

[344] Bertrand Joly, *Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885-1902* (Paris: *Les Indes savantes*, 2008), 316.

not only distinguish them from Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents of the same period, but also from later French Nationalists and from nationalist movements of all kinds in other nations. The importance of this distinction lies in the major if unintentional and unexpected role Nationalist Intransigents played in the growth and reach of *Action libérale populaire* in the first decade of the twentieth century, a result situated within the dynamic interplay of politics and religion that gripped France from 1892 to 1914.

From Leo XIII's promulgation of *Au milieu des sollicitudes* in 1892, Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun each pursued their separate visions for Catholics in the Republic under the *Ralliément,* only joining forces after the failure of Étienne Lamy's *Federation Électorale* in the legislative elections of 1898. Of the three intransigent groups, the most problematic for those who answered Leo's call to rally were the Monarchist Intransigents, who maintained a strong minority electoral presence in conservative regions of France and did not fit the pope's expectations: "For Leo XIII, conservatives were Catholics first and incidentally Monarchists; for the [Monarchist Intransigents], they were Monarchists, then Catholics."[345] With no hope of restoration of the monarchy short of a collapse of the Republican government, Monarchist Intransigents openly opposed *Federation Électorale* candidates in the May 1898 elections to prevent the formation of a strong Center-Right coalition that included Catholic Republicans.[346] Monarchist efforts succeeded in ensuring the coalition led by Opportunist Jules Méline, which had been in power for two years, was too weak to govern despite maintaining its majority. Méline's subsequent resignation in June 1898 precipitated twelve months of political turbulence,

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[345] Henri Rollet, *Albert de Mun et le parti Catholique* (Paris: *Éditions Contemporaines,* 1949), 118.

[346] Parker Thomas Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France: A Study in the History of Social Politics*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921214.

with two more premiers forced to resign on no confidence votes, the death in office of the President of the Republic, and the beginning of the final act of the ongoing Dreyfus Affair. It was in this milieu that Nationalist Intransigents began their brief but memorable tenure as influencers of national policy.

Nationalist Agitation And The *Bloc Des Gauches*

The architect of the entrance of National Intransigents into French politics was Paul Déroulède, a poet and playwright with a flair for the dramatic.[347] There is no Nationalist Intransigent leader who exemplifies the entire movement, but Déroulède was one of a particular type who rose to prominence in the 1880s and 1890s and was influential well into the twentieth century. He cofounded the *Ligue de Patriotes* (LDP, "League of Patriots") in 1882, but he rose to prominence by joining his league to the Boulangist movement in 1889. The move was ill-advised, as the LPD collapsed when General Boulanger fled the country in 1890. However, Déroulède reconstituted the league in 1898 to take advantage of the surge in nationalism resulting from the Dreyfus Affair.[348] It is in its Boulangist origins that Nationalist intransigency can best be understood, since the ill-fated *General Revanche* represented most of the components that survived in the Nationalist Intransigent movements of the 1890s. Boulanger promoted much of what was to become the Nationalist Intransigent agenda, particularly his distrust of parliament, his desire for a strong leader, his belief in the mystical unity of the nation, his fear of both foreign and domestic threats, and his belief in the role of the army as the people's exemplar

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[347] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 105. Nationalist Intransigent groups attracted intellectuals of various types, but among movement leaders were a remarkable number of poets, playwrights, and assorted other authors.

[348] Bertrand Joly, *Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885-1902* (Paris: *Les Indes savantes*, 2008), 342.

and guarantor. Paul Déroulède embraced all these things but was left adrift after Boulanger fled the country in 1889 and the Republican Opportunists subsequently consolidated their electoral majority.

By early 1899, with the government in turmoil after the indecisive elections of 1898, Déroulède sensed an opportunity to overthrow the Republic after the unexpected death of President Félix Faure and the subsequent election of Émile Loubet over the conservative favorite, former premier Jules Méline. At Faure's funeral on 23 February, Déroulède led a farcical attempt to rally soldiers marching in the honorary parade to seize control of the government.[349] At the key moment, Déroulède approached General Guadérique Roget, who was on horseback leading his unit in the procession. Grabbing the reins of the general's horse, Déroulède implored Roget to join him:

> Follow us, general, follow us to the Place de la Bastille . . . to the Elysée [Palace]! Friends await us! It will be the fourth of September without spilling blood [a reference to the Battle of Sedan in 1870)! . . . We need you to establish the popular Republic; the army has betrayed me![350]

Unimpressed, Roget and his troops returned to their barracks and Déroulède was told to leave.[351] Refusing to depart, Déroulède was arrested, tried, and acquitted, arrested again for another insurrection plot, convicted, and went into exile in Spain for ten years.[352] But his failed insurrections had an effect he had not planned. Coupled with inept but widespread unruly

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[349] *Le Figaro*, 24 February 1903, 1.

[350] AN F7 12453, Testimony of Paul Déroulède. Ironically, Felix Faure had founded the *Ligue de Patriotes* along with Déroulède and Henri Martin in 1882. The reference to Sedan had personal meaning, since Déroulède had served in Napoleon III's army and was captured by the Germans during the battle.

[351] *Le Figaro*, 24 February 1903, 3.

[352] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012), 127-130, 151.

protests after the Court of Cassation ordered a retrial for Captain Dreyfus, these provocative actions by Nationalist Intransigents strengthened the resolve of the ruling Opportunists to rid the nation of movements unwilling to accept the Republic.

In June 1899, President Loubet appointed long-standing Opportunist leader Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau as President of the Council of Ministers (the equivalent of 'Prime Minister' in the Fifth Republic), and the new premier immediately shocked the nation by including in his cabinet both General Gaston de Gallifet, hated by socialists for his role in the pacification of the Paris Commune, and Alexandre Millerand, loathed by conservatives on principle because he was a socialist.[353] Waldeck-Rousseau used the next three years to build the *Bloc des gauches*, a coalition anchored by Center-Left Opportunists that included the entire political Left—Radicals, Radical Socialists, and Socialists—and excluded the Right. This move split the Opportunists into the Center-Left Centrists and the Center-Right Progressists and ended the reign of the united Center. The Progressists refused to join a coalition that included Socialists, and the Centrists refused to cooperate with any group they considered clericalists, which included Catholic Republicans. In effect, Waldeck-Rousseau and the Centrists, despite their longstanding opposition to socialism, prioritized anticlericalism over antisocialism at this key moment in French history.

The Assumptionists

One major reason for Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau's choice to align with socialists instead of Catholic Republicans was the persistent and effective political activity of a notably influential

[353] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012), 140.

Catholic congregation, *Les Augustins de l'Assomption* ("the Augustinians of the Assumption"), typically called the Assumptionists. Founded in 1850, by the 1890s the Assumptionists had built a publishing empire unrivalled in France and used it to great effect.[354] *La Croix,* their flagship daily, had by far the largest circulation in France and was highly influential among practicing Catholics, and their Bonne Presse publishing house produced hundreds of books and journals each year. Although publicly agreeing to support Leo XIII's *Ralliément* and technically part of the *Federation Électorale*, the Assumptionists in reality remained Catholic Intransigents, employing their newspapers and their own electoral committee, the *Comité Justice-Égalité* ("Justice-Equality Committee"), to support Monarchist candidates friendly to their ultramontane sentiments as they saw fit.[355]

However, it was the Assumptionist attacks on the government, especially relating to the Dreyfus Affair, that drew Waldeck-Rousseau's attention. Intransigent movements typically contained elements of antisemitism, as well as being anti-Protestant, anti-Freemason, and anti-*Mètique* ("resident foreigner"). Not all Intransigents accepted these ideas, but for many they were common themes, most notably within the aptly named *Ligue Antisemitique* (LA, "Antisemitic League"). Among these groups, however, the Assumptionists with assets such as *La Croix* exceeded all others in reach and influence, and their anti-government message was a constant drumbeat. Most importantly, with their focus on the Dreyfus Affair and a seemingly

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[354] Judson Mather, "The Assumptionist Response to Secularisation, 1870-1900", in *Modern European Social History*, Robert J. Bezucha, ed. (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1972), 59. Maurice Larkin, *L'Église et l'État en France, 1905: la crise de la Séparation* (Paris: *Éditions Privat*, 2004), 70-71. By the late 1890s *La Croix*'s daily circulation approached 200,000 but adding local weekly editions the regular readership approached 500,000 nationwide. In comparison, the Catholic newspaper with the next highest circulation, L'*Univers*, had 20,000 readers.

[355] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics: 1890-1889* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 8.

endless series of virulent and caustic attacks published in *La Croix* that targeted Alfred Dreyfus, those who supported him, and the government generally, the Assumptionists were perceived by Republican leaders like Waldeck-Rousseau as a destabilizing force.

In August 1899, after a military court retried Alfred Dreyfus and once again found him guilty of treason, Waldeck-Rousseau decided to use extrajudicial means to free the falsely accused officer. The premier recommended a presidential pardon, which Loubet granted in December 1899. However, Waldeck-Rousseau was not content to allow Dreyfus' most virulent accusers to escape without repercussion. In a clear move intended to root out both clericalism and anti-Republicanism, he directed the police to raid the Assumptionist headquarters in Paris, searching for evidence of anti-government conspiracies. They found none, but still arrested twelve Assumptionist brothers and charged them with constituting an unauthorized order.[356] The trial in February 1900 took two days, with guilty verdicts, small fines, and the order to disperse the congregation. On 7 March Leo XIII decided to end the Assumptionist distraction that in his view had seriously damaged the *Ralliement* project, directing all Bonne Presse publications be remanded to civilian control, as with the *Comité Justice-Égalité*.[357] *La Croix* was taken over by well-respected industrialist Paul Féron-Vrau, who quickly rid the newspaper of its odious editorializing and kept it from falling into oblivion but also aligned it editorially with *Action libérale populaire*.[358] By 1905, Jacques Piou and Féron-Vrau had created an impressive

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[356] Benjamin Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 138.

[357] Jacques Nobécourt, "*Une Affaire la Rocque en 1899: Avant le P.S.F, Justice-Égalité?*," in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, Volume 47, No. 3 (July-September 2000), 514.

[358] AN F7 12719, *Fonds Action libérale populaire*. From multiple reports, between 1903 and 1908 Piou and Féron-Vrau acquired fourteen regional dailies, building a sizable publicity apparatus for the party.

publishing empire of their own, including fourteen provincial journals in addition to the already established *Bulletin Action Libérale Populaire* and *La Croix*.[359] The *Comité Justice-Égalité* was taken over by General Raymond de la Rocque, who similarly cleansed the organization of its vitriolic antisemitism, but by 1904 it had been displaced by ALP and ceased to exist.[360]

For the leaders of *Action libérale populaire,* Déroulède's futile coup attempt in 1899 and the trial and exile in 1901 of the Assumptionist leaders cleared away noisy competitors, provided access to a highly productive publishing network, and created political room to build a truly nationwide mass party on an already established foundation of Catholic Republicanism and social Catholicism. However, the missteps of Nationalist and Catholic Intransigents had also bolstered the commitment of Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau and the *Bloc des gauches* to secure their hold on government in the elections of 1902 and then to finally end what they perceived was the threat to the Republic posed by nationalism and clericalism. In the elections of May 1902, the *Bloc* did indeed secure control, and although their victory was narrow it was sufficient to proceed with an aggressive anticlerical agenda. It was in this difficult political environment that *Action libérale populaire* would attempt to challenge the *Bloc des gauches,* and this contest would shape Piou'" and de Mun's tactical decisions for the next four years.

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[359] Benjamin Martin, "The Creation of the *Action Libérale Populaire*: An Example of Party Formation in Third Republic France," in *French Historical Studies*, Autumn 1976, 674.

[360] Jacques Nobécourt, "*Une Affaire la Rocque en 1899: Avant le P.S.F, Justice-Égalité?*," in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, Volume 47, No. 3 (July-September 2000), 513. General Raymond de la Rocque was the father of Colonel François de la Rocque, leader of the *Croix de Feu* Rightist movement of the 1930s.

Moderate Nationalism And The *Ligue De La Patrie Française*

By 1902, Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents were isolated from political influence by the decline in support by the electorate of their movements and were fighting for political and cultural survival. The victory of the *Bloc des gauches* heightened Intransigents fears of Republican secularism and what it could mean for the nation. Equally distressing was how rapidly *Action libérale populaire* replaced Intransigents as the acknowledged representatives of traditionalism in France, complete with the personal approval of Leo XIII. However, *Action libérale populaire* was not alone in serving as the *Bloc des gauches*' opposition in the Chamber. In addition to the Progressists—Centrists who refused to form a coalition with socialists—a relatively new Nationalist Intransigent group had done reasonably well in the elections of 1902, securing their place as the standard bearers for the nationalist movement. The *Ligue de la Patrie Française* (LPF, "League of the French Fatherland") was formed in October 1898 by a group of lycée professors, but soon was led by charismatic writer and drama critic Jules Lemaître.[361] The LPF grew to 20,000 members by 1902, with an unusually strong presence in left-leaning Paris and the beneficence of many wealthy donors who had given up on the fading Monarchist movements.[362] Lemaître, along with writer François Coppée and cofounder Gabriel Syveton built a large and wealthy organization, but unlike *Action libérale populaire,* the LPF was plagued by

[361] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 107-108. The three founders were Gabriel Syveton, Léon Dausset, and Henri Vaugeois. Syveton and Dausset served in elected office and remain with the LPF. Vaugeois abandoned the league in 1899 to join a new movement—*Action française*.

[362] AN F7 13229, *Ligue de la Patrie Française*. The LPF claimed 100,000 members, but Bertrand Joly's estimate of 21,000 appears accurate, if conservative. See Joly, 303. Major donors included Edmond Archdeacon and the Hennessy Brothers. See Fuller, 181-182.

inefficiency, mismanagement, and dissension.[363] Regardless of these problems, if it could build internal unity the LPF had the membership and funding to establish a strong movement. Coppée's plea to conservatives as the 1902 elections approached echoed this theme: "In going to the polls, think only of the country. Forget the candidates' shades of opinion, and choose them according to their past, their good names, and their characters."[364]

Lemaître was a dedicated nationalist, a secularist, and a Republican if not a committed supporter of the parliamentary form. Crucially, although not hostile to Catholic concerns, he did not prioritize them, and as such the LPF and ALP did not perceive each other as direct competitors. In fact, the two organizations coordinated campaigns to avoid entering candidates in opposition to each other in elections. However, by 1902 issues of anticlericalism and Catholicism could not be avoided, and the religious issue caused the LPF to fracture and fade from influence. The issue within the LPF leadership was that although Lemaître distanced himself from Catholic concerns, François Coppée, a dedicated Catholic who admired both Piou and de Mun, most decidedly did not. Coppée's vocal support for *Action libérale populaire* caused a rift with Lemaître, and in May 1902, in the immediate aftermath of a successful election campaign, Coppée resigned from the LPF and joined ALP.[365] Lemaître was overjoyed, finally rid of what he considered an annoying distraction from the important work of building national unity.[366] Unfortunately, he discovered too late that half the LPF's membership were loyal to

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[363] Bertrand Joly, *Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885-1902* (Paris: *Les Indes savantes*, 2008), 306.

[364] *Le Gaulois*, 2 December 1901, 2.

[365] *Le Gaulois*, 30 May 1902.

[366] *L'Echo de Paris*, 29 May 1902.

Coppée, and by summer the Coppée loyalists had abandoned the league.[367] Although many former nationalists also joined the Progressists, the LPF's loss was *Action libérale populaire*'s gain, especially in light of the actions of the victorious *Bloc des gauches* government, now led by the Radical Émile Combes after Waldeck-Rousseau stepped down for health reasons.

The Schools Crisis

When *Action libérale populaire* officially launched as a nationwide party in June 1902, Piou's strategic goal, consistent with his efforts since 1885 was the inclusion of Catholics and their interests in a grand Center-Right Tory coalition as well as Anglo-American inspired constitutional reform. The party also emphasized social and labor reform in deference to Albert de Mun and his social Catholic priorities. Maintaining these goals within a disciplined message while avoiding the label of a "Catholic Party" was made more difficult by two elements. First, in response to the perception among Catholics that the Associations Law of 1901 unfairly targeted religious congregations, *Action libérale populaire* now also prioritized freedom of association for religious groups. Second, Émile Combes immediately challenged *Action libérale populaire*'s dedication to this new priority by precipitating a crisis that drew Piou and de Mun into the front lines of the army of religious defense.

One month after the elections of 1902, the newly appointed premier, Émile Combes, unilaterally ordered the closing of 3,000 Catholic schools, the eviction of teaching congregations, and the confiscation of their property.[368] The premier justified his actions as necessary to fight

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[367] AN F712719, 12878. Police reports indicate entire LPF committees transferring to ALP.

[368] AN F19 6076. File contains the 30 June 1902 circular letter from Combes to prefects requiring the closure of congregational schools.

against "Caesarian reaction and theocratic pretensions."[369] The reaction of Catholic groups was swift and strong, with protests forming all over the nation but particularly in traditional Catholic strongholds such as Brittany and the Upper Rhone Valley.[370] The Mothers of Paris march on 27 July, notable for the leading role played by the LPDF, inaugurated a wave of protests around the country. In the first of what would become a pattern of exploiting anti-Catholic incidents, *Action libérale populaire* publicly joined the protests with a letter from Albert de Mun read at the protest and printed in both *Le Figaro* and *Le Gaulois* on 29 July 1902:

> With you, [I] . . . condemn the criminal madness of a ministry reduced to appealing to sectarian passions, to conceal its political and social impotence, to be replaced by religious war, by the hunt for humble Daughters of Charity. . . I [thank] with you the Liberals of all parties, of all opinions, who generously came to lend a hand to Catholics in the defense of rights and freedom. . . Finally, I [urge you] . . . to remember your souls and freedom, that our law is strong enough, powerful enough, our cause sacred enough so that we never compromise them by violence without result, nor by political ulterior motives, that the more we remain irreproachable in the loyalty of our attitude, calm and dignified in our firmness, the better we will rally to us the crowd of good citizens, but that, on this terrain of legal resistance, nothing should make us hesitate or retreat.[371]

Albert de Mun's call to protest but to do so nonviolently was a recurring theme for *Action libérale populaire*, as the new party strongly opposed the street violence and confrontations that had marked nationalist and other conservative as well as socialist leagues. Not only was this approach an effort to ensure their movement built a perception of legality and constitutionality and to appeal to the broad sweep of voters who found such tactics repugnant, but to prove their respectability to potential Progressist allies. Jacques Piou reinforced the foundational aims of *Action libérale populaire* in a speech to a crowd of 5,000 supporters in Nantes on 23 August

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[369] *Journal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés: compte rendu in-extenso,* 14 June 1902. Combes' comments were part of a speech to the Chamber of Deputies on,13 June 1902.

[370] AN F19 6077, 6079. Protests in Brittany were particularly unruly, as evidenced by the prefect of Finisterre's unwillingness to execute the circular without the support of the military.

[371] *Le Gaulois,* 29 July 1902, 1-2.

1902. Rather than limiting his focus to the current crisis, he broadened the view to the party's larger goals: "[I]t is not sufficient merely to unite. We must be organized, not just for an ephemeral protest or an upcoming election, but to persevere in a long, patient struggle. From particles of dust, organization can create granite."[372]

In their rapid and organized response to Combes' heavy-handed actions, Piou and de Mun reacted to the tactical situation in the moment to prioritize the recruitment of new members rather than advancing the party's strategic goals.[373] Focusing on tactical reactions to Combes' actions became of pattern for ALP, with negative strategic consequences in the longer term. By aligning the party with the defense of religion, Piou and de Mun not only tied ALP to the outcome of each crisis but also risked alienating their potential allies among secular Progressists. However, as a recruiting tool for the party the tactic of capitalizing on crises was highly successful, with a surge of memberships as well as donations seemingly justifying the approach. Exploiting opportunities for recruitment had certainly been effective in 1902, when Piou's efficient organization was a clear contrast to the LPF, from whom ALP continued to draw members in the wake of Coppée's defection and the schools crisis. Despite the benefit to ALP in recruiting new members, the party's efforts to reverse Combes' school policy were ineffective. Regardless, Piou outlined the impetus and promise behind the party's challenge to the *Bloc des gauches* as well as its recruiting success in a 25 March 1903 article published in *Le Correspondant*:

> *Action Libérale Populaire* . . . was born of the last elections, [from] an . . . effort . . . shattered in an unequal struggle. The spectacle of this struggle convinced [us] that to fight without preparation is to fight without hope. . .. Perhaps it will be judged that in

[372] *Bulletin Action Libérale Populaire*, 27 August 1902.

[373] *Bulletin Action Libérale Populaire*, 20 August 1902. ALP operatives used protests as recruiting opportunities in traditionally Catholic regions such as Brittany and Lozère.

> conceiving the ambition to form this federation . . . [we] were not aware either of the time in which [we] lived or of [our] own [limited] influence. … [If so, our] imprudence is already forgiven, [to] judge at least by the reception given to [our] first efforts; because the small troop of the beginning has in a few months become an army . . . [in this] first attempt . . . to organize, under the aegis of the law, the forces of resistance hitherto dispersed, and to direct, with patience and method, the good fight for rights and freedom.[374]

Jacques Piou's consistent emphasis on disciplined organization and a clear mission reflected the lessons learned from the elections of 1893, 1898 and 1902. His assessment was blunt and directive as to what was required to compete with the *Bloc des gauches*: "It is only in legend that we see improvised militias beating professional armies."[375] Piou and de Mun were adamant that there would be no repeat of the disjointed and unwieldy *Federation Électorale* of 1898. Entering 1903, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* had made significant progress in building a professional army of their own to oppose the *Bloc des gauches.* ALP had become a firmly established national party with a strong central organization, but also with flexibly decentralized committees forming across France to meet local conditions. In less than a year since its founding, *Action libérale populaire* had grown into a legitimate political force through prescient strategic planning, but it was clear that the tactical exploitation of the schools crisis had been critical to the party's rapid growth in membership. By inadvertently giving *Action libérale populaire* a productive recruiting tool in 1902, Émile Combes helped establish the party's tactical approach. That approach would reemerge in March 1903, as the premier followed suit with another crisis ripe for exploitation by the army of religious defense.

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[374] *Le Correspondant*, 25 March 1903, 1035, 1040.

[375] *Le Correspondant*, 25 March 1903, 1036.

The Congregations Crisis

Combes' began his project to rapidly secularize France with school closings, but his next move was to target religious congregations themselves. After obtaining assurance of *Bloc des gauches* support, he used the special stipulations of the Associations Law requiring approval by the Chamber of Deputies itself to deny official authorization to all but a handful of religious Congregations.[376] Brilliant politically, the move stunned the opposition, as described by Benjmain Martin: "Between 18 and 26 March, in three easy votes, the deputies disbanded 400 congregations. Another 215, including the most prominent, Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans, had expected the worst and did not bother to apply."[377] Women's congregations were not spared—the only congregations receiving authorization were Trappists or others considered no threat to serve as educators of children. Not only Catholic Republicans were aghast at the audacity of the *Bloc des gauche.* Independents such as Alexandre Ribot, the Revolutionary Socialist Jules Guesde, and even Waldeck-Rousseau himself objected to what they claimed was an injustice and misuse of the Associations Law. Their protests were to no avail, however, and the government enacted the immediate closure of all the non-authorized Congregations.[378]

The fledgling *Action liberal populaire* appeared to have another explosive issue to exploit, but Piou and de Mun were not the only politicians willing to use Combes' disbanding of religious congregations and the resulting anger against the government for a recruiting

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[376] Malcolm O. Partin, *Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes, and the Church: The politics of anti-clericalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969), 164.

[377] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 162.

[378] AN, F19 6268, Lois et décrets sur les congregations.

advantage. Rather, the leaders of *Action liberal populaire* found themselves the target of attacks in March 1903, but not from the *Bloc des gauches.* Monarchist Intransigents, seemingly relegated to the fringes of politics, struck quickly in a bid to blame the schools and congregations crises on the ineptitude of *Action liberal populaire*. This direct challenge to Piou and de Mun's leadership of the religious defense movement took the form of plans for a new, all-encompassing confessional party, the *Comité catholique*. Led by truly intransigent Monarchists Émile Keller and Denys Cochin, the *Comité catholique* launched a bid to displace *Action liberal populaire*, appealing to Catholic unity in response to government repression that Piou and de Mun had been unable to prevent.

Piou's reaction was swift and direct, attacking Monarchists and other Intransigents as hopelessly out of touch with the reality of politics in the Third Republic and therefore condemned to continual failure:

> Whether all the apostles of war to the death are simple resigned people who stun themselves by making noise or clever people who dispense with acting by shouting loudly, it would be a great injustice to pretend so. Most are in good faith; side by side with a few charlatans, there is a crowd of sincere obstinates whom nothing can shake, neither time, nor bad luck, nor the increasing audacity of an enemy intoxicated by long unpunished successes.[379]

Albert de Mun's response was more measured, ensuring in the party's formal reply to refrain from attacks and instead listing the reasons the *Comité catholique* was untenable. As one who had made two previous attempts to form a confessional party, only to be thwarted by Leo XIII himself, his words carried much weight:

> We regret that we are unable to give our adherence or encourage that of our friends. . . On the one hand we are persuaded that the multiplicity of parties, the dispersion of resources and of efforts . . .is one of the principle causes of the weakness of the conservatives. On the other hand, we consider that no catholic association, called to exercise political action . . . can exercise power or receive the indispensable approbation

[379] *Le Correspondant*, 25 March 1903, 1030.

> of the pope if it is not republican. *Action libérale populaire*, already very strong and growing more powerful daily, better than any other organization is able to face the exigencies which confront catholics today . . .The unity of command and cohesion of efforts are the essential needs of our cause.[380]

The most important point in this official response is the reference to Vatican support, which under Leo XIII required adherence to the *Ralliément*. Without this element, the *Comité catholique* could not get off the ground and the challenge to *Action libérale populaire* dissolved by June 1903.

However, the episode highlighted two problems for *Action libérale populaire*. First, party leaders could be challenged for their failure to stop government actions they had exploited to attract new members. Second, they depended on the support of the Holy See for much of their legitimacy. For this reason, Piou and de Mun received a major shock on 30 July 1903. At the age of 92, Pope Leo XIII died in his Vatican residence. In most respects, *Action libérale populaire* was a product of Leo XIII's work in France since his ascension in 1878, and his endorsement of the party, its leaders, and its goals constituted foundational strengths for the party in supplanting Catholic and Monarchist intransigency in French Catholicism. The loss of their sponsoring pontiff created a sense of unease for *Action libérale populaire*'s leaders, which was not allayed by Albert de Mun's visit to Rome in August 1903 for an audience with the new pope, Pius X. De Mun's reception from Pius and his new Secretary of State, Merry del Val, was noticeably chillier than his accustomed visits to Leo XIII's Vatican.[381]

De Mun's concerns about future Vatican support for *Action libérale populaire* were eventually borne out, but he received neither censure nor endorsement after this first visit. As

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[380] AN 156, AP I, 278, de Mun to Mackau, 1 May 1903.

[381] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 165.

such he resolved to heighten the party's dedication to social reform and defense of religion, which became the focus of the first *Action libérale populaire* congress, held in the Pyrenean city of Pau during December 1903. As the year drew to a close, it appeared that Catholic Intransigents remained effectively marginalized despite Leo XIII's death, Monarchist Intransigents had been defeated by Piou's and de Mun's maneuvering, and Nationalist Intransigents were reduced to the relatively benign LPF. What the two party leaders could not anticipate was a series of crises awaiting them in 1904, and how the continuing presence of Intransigents would influence the party's response. These crises in turn would shape *Action libérale populaire*'s fortunes, both positively and negatively, for the next decade.

The Diplomatic Crisis

In March 1904 Émile Combes introduced a new bill to close more Catholic schools, eliciting the now familiar protests and charges of repression. However, even more consequential was a vote not concerning schools or congregations but the funding of a diplomatic visit to Italy by President Loubet. The trip was considered a diplomatic insult by Pius X due to the Vatican's ongoing dispute with the Italian Republic concerning formerly papal lands now held by Italy. With the Loubet visit looming at the end of the month, Albert de Mun arrived in Rome on 6 April for a series of meetings with Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry de Val, followed by an audience with Pius X. If de Mun's meeting with the Pope the previous year had been ineffectual, the follow-up was massively disappointing. Although commending *Action libérale populaire* for its efforts in the defense of religion, the Pope would not publicly endorse the party. Worse, the Vatican would not close the door on other groups in France, including Monarchists. It was a crushing blow to de Mun personally and seriously weakened ALP's position with French

Catholics relative to their Intransigent opponents. As de Mun wrote after the visit: "We are as abandoned as we can be, without being formally disavowed."[382]

Regardless, *Action libérale populaire* continued its growth in membership and reach, clearly benefiting from the organization and efficiency stressed by Piou and in marked contrast to the *Ligue de la Patrie Française*. The LPF had continued its slow collapse since the departure of Coppée two years before, punctuated by the disastrous result in the 1904 municipal elections in Paris, the party's stronghold, where it was supplanted primarily by socialists. A discouraged Lemaître could only lament how far the LPF had fallen since its success in 1902. Piou sought to reinforce the progress made by *Action libérale populaire* since 1902, its obvious contrast to the LPF, and the need to hold steady on the course set for the legislative elections in 1906 in a message to the party membership: "To act methodically and with patience . . . to extend . . . the network of an organization that combines discipline and decentralization, to have committees and trusted men everywhere, and to do it all without ceasing, without weakness . . . that is what we seek."[383]

Meanwhile, President Loubet's visit to Italy predictably provoked a diplomatic row, followed by a series of cascading charges between Paris and the Vatican. Combes recalled the French Ambassador on 17 May, and then took the stunning step of cutting diplomatic relations with the Vatican on 29 July. Only twelve months after Leo XIII's death, Combes' provocations and the new pope's obstinacy had seemingly brought the relationship between the Third Republic and the Holy See to a new low. Barely noticed as the Vatican drama unfolded, in August the delegates to the Amsterdam conference of the Second International voted to forbid

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[382] AN 378 AP 4 Carnet VI, 38. Notebook entry, 1904.

[383] *Le Correspondant*, 10 October 1904, 101-104.

member socialist parties from forming coalitions with bourgeois governments.[384] This vote would eventually have profound consequences for the future of Catholic Republicanism, but as the summer of 1904 drew to a close all attention was on the diplomatic conflict between Combes and Pius X, which was about to intensify.

In September 1904, Émile Combes took the rupture with the Vatican a step further by proposing to abrogate the Concordat of 1801 and formalize the Separation of Church and State in France. On 22 October, the Chamber of Deputies approved the concept of Separation, preparing the way for the formal proposal of a Separation Bill. A committee set up by Combes had been preparing the bill since 1902, but he accelerated the process. Once again, Combes had taken the initiative with an action that drew Piou and de Mun into a reactive protest, and the ineffectiveness of *Action libérale populaire*'s countermoves was proving a liability to be readily exploited by Intransigents. However, a week after the Chamber voted to move forward with a Separation Bill, a new scandal broke that would have major implications for Combes, *Action libérale populaire*, and the *Bloc des gauches*.

The *Affaire Des Fiches*

On 28 October 1904, Nationalist deputy Jean Guyot-Villeneuve—coincidentally the brother-in-law of Piou's daughter, Léonie—accused the Minister of War, General Louis André, of orchestrating the use of freemasons to compile information surreptitiously about military

[384] Daniel De Leon, *Flashlights of the Amsterdam International Socialist Conference 1904* (New York: New York Labor News Company, 1904), 96. De Leon attended the conference and reported the entire proceedings in detail for the American labor movement. The conference included an extended debate between Juan Juarès and Jules Guesde concerning the Dresden Resolution, which stipulated that all member socialist parties could not align with bourgeois governments. Juarès lost the argument, and the Dresden Resolution passed.

officers who attended mass, sent their children to Catholic schools, or otherwise showed themselves to be practicing Catholics. Guyot charged that officers thus identified were then excluded from promotion lists in an effort to rid the army's senior echelon of Catholic influence. The charge was explosive as it combined many of the longstanding accusations by Catholics about their persecution by the Third Republic generally and the *Bloc des gauches* in particular. In his address to the Chamber, Guyot was forceful and direct, as he reported in *Le Figaro*: "I bring proof—authenticated documents—establishing the existence of the [systematic] denunciation [of Catholics] in the army. When [General André] arrived at the Ministry of War, he had a plan to execute: the purge of the army, as he said. The information he used to carry out this plan came first from the *Sûreté Générale*, and then from the Grand Orient itself."[385]

General André indignantly denied the practice, soon labeled the *Affaire des fiches* ("Affair of the Cards"), and Guyot was challenged by *Bloc des gauches* deputies to supply further evidence. A week later Guyot produced irrefutable evidence of ongoing, widespread, systematic spying and collection of information by freemasons, along with letters detailing exactly how the information was used to prevent the promotion of practicing Catholics.[386] The *Affaire des fiches* became the biggest scandal of Combes' tenure and was yet another recruiting gift from the premier to *Action libérale populaire.* ALP leaders used the affair to appropriate the nationalist issue of support for the army, especially stressing the need for religious freedom and

[385] *Le Figaro*, 29 October 1904, 1. Jean's older brother Camille Guyot-Villeneuve married Léonie Thérèse Piou in 1893, and served as mayor of Saint-Bouize (Cher) from 1893-1939 and an ALP deputy from Basse-Alpes from 1906-1910.

[386] *Le Figaro*, November 1904. The newspaper printed much of the evidence supporting Guyot's charges in this extended edition, including handwritten notes from leaders of the Ministry of War and the Grand Orient.

without the negative connotations of the Dreyfus Affair.[387] The *Affaire des fiches* also provided ample evidence for Piou to condemn the corruption of the Combes government and to position ALP as the party of religious defense in a speech at the mid-December General Congress in Paris:

> [We] are meeting in particularly moving circumstances, in the wake of unprecedented scandals which have shown the excesses of depravity to which governments without ideals and beliefs descend. . . . [Our coalition] today represents all generous causes: honesty, justice, freedom, patriotism, conscience. Each of the groups that compose it will defend them under its banner and with its methods. But all will have a common goal: the deliverance of the homeland. Gathered together with the same goal of preserving public safety, we are resolved and well prepared to fight against freemasonry and internationalism in this, the party of God and France.[388]

Unexpected Benefits

This year of difficulties for *Action libérale populaire* ended with high hopes, punctuated by the rousing party General Congress held as the government scandal unfolded. Such was not the case with the LPF, which was collapsing because of a series of events tied in some respects to the *Affaires de fiches*. In December 1904, Lemaître's replacement as de facto leader of the league, the pugnacious former lycée professor Gabriel Syveton, was found dead in his office. Ruled a suicide by police, enough unanswered questions remained to generate yet another scandal and a persistent new anti-government controversy. There was no controversy about the effect on the LPF, however. What was left of the league collapsed after Syveton's death, and yet again a Nationalist Intransigent loss was *Action libérale populaire*'s gain. The LPF's collapse certainly proved a benefit to ALP's fundraising, as the trend for wealthy conservative donors to

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[387] *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du 2e Congrès Général,* December 1905, 238.

[388] *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du Congrès Général,* December 1904, 17. Piou's speech inaugurated the congress on 15 December, setting the tone for the entire gathering.

shift their emphasis from nationalist leagues to the Catholic Republican party accelerated in 1905.

Among the most prominent donors to refocus their giving to support *Action libérale populaire* were four who were representative of the trend but also reflected the movement's diversity. First, Edmond Archdeacon was the scion of a Franco-Irish banking family and a wealthy horse breeder in his own right who had funded various royalist campaigns prior to focusing on nationalist candidates beginning in 1902, when he donated over one million francs.[389] Disillusioned by the direction of the LPF, by 1903 he redirected contributions to *Action libérale populaire*[390], estimated by the *Sûreté Générale* to be 250,000 francs per year.[391] Second, the Hennessey Family, of cognac fame, were major donors to the LPF through the 1902 campaign.[392] In 1901, Albert de Mun's daughter Marguerite married the son and heir of Maurice Hennessy, the future politician Jean, forming a family and political alliance, with contributions soon following.[393] Third, the Comtesse de Kersaint was a major donor to the LPF until 1902, but then transferred her giving to *Action Libérale Populaire*, much to the frustration of Charles Maurras, whose entreaties she rejected.[394]

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[389] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012), 182.

[390] APP, BA 1150.

[391] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012), 225

[392] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012), 182.

[393] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 158.

[394] AN F7 15983.2. Maurras reacted to the rejection by spreading rumors about the private life of the Comtesse.

Fourth, another likely contributor was the wealthy and reclusive widow of sugar and real estate magnate Jules Lebaudy. Amicie Lebaudy had disapproved of her husband's business practices, and after his death in 1892 she lived simply and spent her inheritance anonymously on causes aligned with social Catholicism. She funded the construction of housing for destitute workers, founded schools in France and Quebec, and provided scholarships for the *Institut Pasteur*, all in strict anonymity.[395] However, she also strongly supported the LPF and National Intransigent causes, exemplified by her underwriting of the successful 1902 campaign of the controversial nationalist deputy, Gabriel Syveton.[396] With Syveton's death after the *Affaires des fiches* and the subsequent collapse of the LPF, there is evidence that she transferred her contributions if not her complete loyalty to *Action libérale populaire*, which is fitting because Amicie Lebaudy was Jacques Piou's younger sister.[397]

Despite the difficulties encountered by *Action libérale populaire* in 1904, with increased funding from new donors and dues from new members as well as political momentum from the *Affaires des fiches*, the party entered 1905 with great anticipation. The successful party Congress in December 1904 highlighted the impressive growth, organization, and commitment of the

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[395] *Archives générales de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit* (C.S.Sp.), 149-IV. Note from Louis Martin, Director of the Pasteur Hospital, from a speech for the inauguration of the bust of Madame Jules Lebaudy at the *Institut Pasteur*, 19 June 1926, 4.

[396] Bernard Ducol, "*Madame Jules Lebaudy (1847-1916) bienfaitrice de la congrégation du Saint-Esprit: Le compte est bon!*," *in Mémoire Spiritaine*, Vol. 12, No. 12, (November 1995), 158.

[397] Amicie Lebaudy files, held at the University College, London. Much of the evidence of Amicie Lebaudy's likely financial support of *Action libérale populaire* is linked to her patronage of Coutts Bank, in London, which was also the bank used by the party. Coutts Bank was renowned for its discretion and privacy, which led to multiple attempts by *the Sûreté Générale* to find evidence of money laundering by ALP, although the police focused on the possibility of contributions from the Vatican. No evidence was found. For police suspicion of ALP funding, see AN F7 12719, *Sûreté* report of 29 July 1903.

party, and its efficient management, publications network, significant revenue, and strong message made it the envy of other parties. Since 1902, Émile Combes had unwittingly provided Piou and de Mun a series of crises that served as effective propaganda for recruiting new members and soliciting donations. The exploitation of crises had become a standard practice, to significant benefit but also at some cost, although how much was not yet clear. Accepting the role of defending religion in the nation's political life seemed natural, but it pulled the party away from its strategic goals towards tactical engagements. The focus on the defense of religion tied *Action libérale populaire* to battles that all eventually proved to be lost causes and placed the party's focus on the cabinet's actions rather than their own policies. Regardless, the practice appeared to have worked well in building the party's membership, and *Action libérale populaire* leaders were confident they were prepared to guide the party to success in the elections of 1906—just 15 months away.

The Separation Crisis

The political uproar following the *Affaires des fiches* proved too much for Émile Combes, who resigned from his position as president of the council of ministers on 19 January 1905.[398] He was replaced by Maurice Rouvier, and both Piou and de Mun hoped that the new premier, a Radical but formerly an Opportunist, would be more conciliatory toward Catholics than his predecessor. Rouvier was not an anticlerical idealogue like Combes, but he intended to continue with *Bloc des gauches* priorities, including accelerating the implementation of Separation. As such, Rouvier directed the Separation Committee to present their proposal as soon as possible,

[398] *Le Figaro*, 20 January 1905.

and in early March the committee leader, socialist Aristide Briand, presented the proposed Separation Bill to the Chamber for debate. Briand was open to amendments, and some were enacted, but following their pattern since 1902, *Action libérale populaire* leaders publicly treated the Separation Bill debate as another crisis to exploit, declaring their irreconcilable opposition. In reality, Piou was engaged in negotiations behind closed doors to improve the bill, but as the party of religious defense there could be no public concessions.[399]

Albert de Mun attacked the bill relentlessly through the first few months of 1905. In a series of articles appearing in *Le Figaro*, he argued that the abrogation of the Concordat of 1801 was just another step in the campaign by Republicans to remove Catholicism not just from politics, but from any position of influence in French society and to replace it with secularism:

> M. Ferdinand Buisson . . . clarified [the situation] months ago. "The school without God, the courtroom without God, the asylum and the hospice without God". . . Let us no longer be told about the provocation the of Pope! The separation of Church and State is the culmination of a twenty-five-year policy; it is the definitive break, long prepared, of France with God. M. Buisson may call this intellectual and social emancipation, [but] others will see it as moral decadence and national degradation. However, without yet addressing this debate, let us take note of the [key] fact. The separation of Church and State is the official apostasy of France.[400]

De Mun's arguments were impassioned but ultimately ineffective. By most measures the Separation Bill was not the harsh rejection of religion wished for by the more anticlerical radicals and socialists, and it was this moderation which convinced many Progressists to support it. For Piou and de Mun, opposition to the bill was necessary to uphold their legitimacy as the leaders in the defense of religion. However, this choice once again positioned them on the losing

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[399] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 181-183.

[400] *Le Figaro*, 13 March 1905, 1.

side of a political contest. On 3 July 1905, the Separation Bill was approved in the Chamber by a vote of 341-233.

Aristide Briand considered the Separation Law an act of conciliation, and many Catholics agreed, including the influential intellectuals known as the "Green Cardinals."[401] But the Vatican reacted coldly, if not immediately so. The most pressing questions concerned the retention of Catholic hierarchy and the disposition of church property, although the law outlined what appeared to be clear and fair processes to resolve these issues, as, in Briand's words, "a law of tolerance and equity."[402] Briand insisted the Separation Law was designed to avoid conflict, and if all parties cooperated that goal could be achieved.[403] Approved by the Senate in early December, President Loubet signed the Law into effect on 9 December 1905. Religious groups were given a full year to register their organizations and their property. Vatican reaction remained muted, but hope remained for Briand that a confrontation could be avoided.

Two other significant political events occurred in 1905 that went largely unnoticed due to the Separation Law debate, but which would have great significance for the future of French politics. First, in January, leaders of a movement born in the 1890s formed a new league quite unlike anything before it in France. Recognizing the moment was right to expand their Monarchist and integral nationalism nationally, the *Ligue d'Action française* was officially

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[401] *Le Figaro*, 26 March 1906, 1-2. The newspaper printed a private letter from the Green Cardinals to French bishops arguing for acceptance of religious associations. The Green 'Cardinals' were not clergy but rather prominent Catholic intellectuals. They received their nickname because many of them wore the *l'habit vert* ("green robe") as members of the *Académie française,* and because they quite regularly pronounced their judgment on important matters, solicited or not. Among them were Ferdinand Brunetière, Paul-Gabriel d'Haussonville, Charles-Jean-Melchior de Vogüé, and Denys Cochin.

[402] J*ournal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés: compte rendu in-extenso*, 7 March 1906, 1261.

[403] Aristide Briand, *La Séparation: Discussion de la loi, 1904-1905* (Paris: *Bibliothèque-Charpentier,* 1908), 305.

formed under the presidency of Henri Vaugeois, who had been one of the founders of the LPF in 1898. However, it was no secret that the real force both intellectually and ideologically behind the new league was Charles Maurras, who within five years had propelled the LAF to far-reaching influence, even within the Vatican itself. More importantly for *Action libérale populaire*, the LAF was soon to become a destination for both Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents, giving new life to movements that had been quickly fading away.

Second, in April, and in conformity with the mandates of the Second International, the two main socialist parties in France—the reformist *Parti socialiste français* (PSF, "French Socialist Party") and the revolutionary *Parti socialiste de France* (PSdF, "Socialist Party of France")—put aside their differences to form the nation's first unified socialist party, the *Section française de l'internationale d'ouvriere* (SFIO, "French Section of the Worker's International"). In conjunction with this action, and as required for international socialist parties after the Amsterdam Conference the previous year, the unified SFIO promptly withdrew from the "bourgeois" *Bloc des gauches* coalition. This action effectively ended the *Bloc des gauches* by removing its far left wing, revived the dormant anti-socialism of the remaining *Bloc* coalition parties, created a new competitor to the left of the Radical-Socialists, and instantly moved the government to the right. In time, this shift would be significant for *Action libérale populaire*, but in 1905 it had little effect on Catholic Republican political strategy.

Despite the turbulence of the year, in December 1905 *Action libérale populaire* still appeared to be on course for success. At the annual party congress, once again held in Paris, the mood was exuberant. With elections only five months away, the party had grown in one year from 160,000 dues-paying members to 200,000, and from 700 committees across the nation to over 1,200. ALP's Executive Secretary Louis Laya celebrating the party's success praising the

"fortresses erected on all sides against the Jacobin strongholds . . . ."[404] With the Separation Law as the latest crisis to exploit, the party seemed poised to reach its greatest success, and party leaders entertained the possibility of winning a majority in the Chamber and replacing the *Bloc des gauche*s with a government of their own. The party had weathered all storms and withstood all attacks while remaining resolute in the defense of religion. It had thoroughly supplanted Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents as a legitimate political voice for Catholics, and had absorbed much of the financial, press, and regional support formerly tied to Nationalist Intransigents. The tactics of the previous three years appeared to have bolstered the strength and popularity of the party, which remained well funded, well organized, and motivated for the campaign to come.

If in 1905 Marc Sangnier was already moving *Sillon* away from its alliance with *Action libérale populaire*, the table of honor at the 1905 party congress reflected the party's still impressive reach. To Piou's left was his personal friend Paul Beauregard, an influential Progressist deputy. To Piou's right was Denys Cochin, the former Monarchist Intransigent who only two years before had failed in an attempt to subvert and supplant *Action libérale populaire* with a confessionally Catholic party, the *Comité catholique*.[405] The party was unified, energized, and appeared to include a broad cross section of Catholics and conservatives, including former Nationalists and Monarchists. However, Piou made clear in his opening address that blind

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[404] *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du 2e Congrès Général,* December 1905, 16. Louis Laya, formerly with the *Comité Justice-Egalite*, was instrumental in coordinating ALP's message through the network of journals he organized.

[405] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 193.

optimism was not an option, and the party must be prepared for a struggle regardless of the electoral outcome:

> Despite our successes, many years of persevering effort will be necessary to give ALP the material organization and moral authority on which victory depends. . . Of course, this consultation of 1906 worries us. How could it be otherwise in a country of universal suffrage, when all the great interests of the country depend on a few votes . . . in Parliament? If it preoccupies us, it does not absorb us. It is a date, not a deadline. Victorious, we will continue our work to give victory a lasting foundation; defeated, the next day we will [rebuild] by preparing public opinion. For . . . as long as the public mind does not have the mores of freedom, as long as France . . . does not have, with precise doctrines, means of action permanent and regular, everything . . . will remain at the mercy of a gust of wind. The upcoming elections are for us only one episode of the great battle in which we are engaged.[406]

His words were prescient, because little would go according to plan for Catholic Republicans in the next five months, and by midsummer 1906 the Catholic and Nationalist Intransigents, many now aligned with the *Ligue de Action Française*, would lead the attack on *Action libérale populaire* as Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun faced the consequences of their choice of priorities since 1902.

The Inventories Crisis And The Elections Of 1906

The first opportunity for *Action libérale populaire* in 1906 arose from the poorly executed actions of the Rouvier government. On 29 December 1905 and again on 2 January 1906, Maurice Rouvier published circulars mandating the immediate inventory of all ecclesiastical property.[407] Religiously observant Catholics were outraged, much as they had been in previous years after school closures and suppression of congregations. However, the government's timing was puzzlingly poor, with elections a few months away and no pressing

[406] *Action Libérale Populaire: Compte-Rendu du 2e Congrès Général*, December 1905, 12.

[407] AN F7 12399, *Fonds du Inventoriés* (these files contain the circulars issued by the Rouvier government).

need for inventories considering religious organizations still had eleven months to register their property under the Separations Law. Regardless, Rouvier proceeded with inventories, protests began within days, and *Action libérale populaire* was ready to exploit yet another gift of a crisis. *La Croix* was employed to heighten the outrage, publicizing the anger over disrespect for religious property and, especially, the mishandling of the consecrated host.[408] Albert de Mun added his encouragement for Catholics to engage in "fruitful intransigence."[409] Riots broke out across the country as Catholics barricaded themselves in churches and police used force to complete the inventories.

In this moment of conflict, Pius X chose to end his silence concerning the Separation Law to promulgate the encyclical *Vehementor Nos*. Published on 11 February, the Pope formally condemned the law in the strongest terms, leaving no doubt as to the Vatican's unwillingness to compromise.[410] The Vatican action simply intensified the crisis, and by the end of February Piou and de Mun realized they were losing control of the situation. On 6 March, police shot and killed a protestor who had fired on them as they forced their way into a barricaded church.[411] The incident was the culmination of two months of fruitless and unnecessary violence, and it cost Rouvier his premiership. After losing a vote of confidence, he resigned on 11 March and was replaced by the inoffensive journeyman Radical, Jean Sarrien, whose immediate goal was to form a solidly Centrist government to effectively "concentrate all the nuances of republican opinion."[412] Despite the turmoil, it appeared *Action libérale populaire* had weathered the

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[408] *La Croix*, 12 January 1906, 1.

[409] *Le Gaulois*, 12 January 1906, 1.

[410] The Holy See, "*Vehementor Nos*."

[411] *Le Gaulois*, 7 March 1906, 1.

[412] *Le Figaro*, 12 March 1906, 1.

conflict, with the government in disgrace and the elections just two months away. Sarrien was not a leader of renown and would himself be replaced by the end of the summer. However, he made two appointments after assuming office that would prove to be spectacularly successful for the Center-Left government, and disastrous for *Action libérale populaire*.

First, he chose as his Minister of Public Instruction and Religious Affairs the primary author of the Separation Law, Aristide Briand. Briand, who had recently left the SFIO over its refusal to continue participation in the coalition government, proved as able and conciliatory as a minister as he had been in negotiating the Separation Law itself. Briand would do much to diffuse the anger and fear of Catholics concerning the law—a marked contrast to the combative approach of the Vatican—and thus diminish the issue's effectiveness politically for *Action libérale populaire*. Second, and of much more immediate importance, Sarrien chose as his Minister of the Interior the irascible Georges Clemenceau, one of the most consistently anticlerical Radicals in the Chamber.[413] If Piou and de Mun had been tempted to assume Clemenceau would provide them with another crisis to exploit, they would quickly find otherwise. For if Clemenceau's reputation for combativeness was well earned, he was also an experienced and uncommonly shrewd politician. In the two months following his appointment he amply displayed this quality, and in the process he outmaneuvered his opponents, ensured an election victory, and by the end of the summer was appointed premier.

Georges Clemenceau was appointed Minister of the Interior on 11 March, and his first major action was as unexpected as it was brilliant. On 16 March, countermanding the express

[413] Gregor Dallas, *At the Heart of a Tiger: Clemenceau and His World 1841-1929* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993), 379. Dallas argues that Clemenceau had his pick of ministries and chose the Ministry of the Interior when Sarrien would have preferred him as Minister of War.

intent of Sarrien, he unilaterally suspended all inventories of religious property. In justifying this abrupt change, he proclaimed, "I believe that the question is whether or not candlesticks will be counted as worth a human life."[414] In one act, Clemenceau peacefully diffused the protest movement by Catholics against the government, ended the political usefulness of the crisis for *Action libérale populaire*, and established himself as a leader willing to compromise his strong anticlericalism in the interest of public order. The party would not be able to exploit the inventories crisis further, although, for Piou and de Mun, the change was a relief from the possibility of escalating violence that could be blamed on ALP.

Clemenceau's second act was less intentional but had the effect of establishing his independence from socialists while earning the grudging admiration of conservatives. Just a day before he assumed control of the Ministry of the Interior, a catastrophic and deadly explosion and subsequent fire in a coal mine near Lens quickly led to worker outrage and widespread strikes in the Nord.[415] By 17 March, Clemenceau attempted to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the strikes, but he hedged his bets by deploying thousands of troops to the region. The situation rapidly deteriorated and by mid-April the Nord was in revolt. Clemenceau's use of police and soldiers restored order by the end of April, but not before earning him the enmity of socialists and trade unionists for his heavy-handed tactics.[416] More importantly for Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun, Clemenceau's response to the strike alleviated the concerns of some conservative about

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[414] *Le Figaro*, 21 March 1906, 4. Clemenceau made this remark on 20 March while answering questions in the Senate about his change in government policy concerning inventories.

[415] *Le Gaulois*, 11 March 1906, 1.

[416] Gregor Dallas, *At the Heart of a Tiger: Clemenceau and His World 1841-1929* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993), 398.

collectivist influence in the government, undercutting one of *Action libérale populaire*'s campaign themes.

Clemenceau's third act, although not on the scale of the first two, provided some electoral insurance against *Action libérale populaire* and displayed his penchant for rough, underhanded politics. With no evidence but excellent timing, Clemenceau accused Piou of bribing officials of France's most combative labor union, the *Confederation générale du travail* (CGT, "General Confederation of Labor"), to embarrass the government by initiating widespread strikes on 1 May, just five days before the elections. The charge, based on news of police searches carried out on 27 April, was never substantiated and of course vehemently denied by Piou, but coming so close to the election it scandalized *Action libérale populaire* and introduced doubts about the reputation for honesty enjoyed by the party's president.[417] In less than two months, Clemenceau had thoroughly outmaneuvered Piou and undermined *Action libérale populaire*'s opportunity to exploit Catholic outrage, isolated the socialists while assuaging conservatives who otherwise might have opposed him, eroded support for ALP with independent voters in the days before the election, and bolstered his own reputation with independents.

Not surprisingly, the elections proved a disappointment for *Action libérale populaire*. Despite losing the socialists from the *Bloc des gauches* coalition, the remaining groups of Radicals, Radical-Socialists, and Centrists still won a majority and left no bargaining room for ALP or for the Progressists. *Action libérale populaire* was not destroyed by the election, but the Catholic Republican coalition fell well short of achieving an electoral majority. The more

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[417] *Journal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés: compte rendu in-extenso,* 10 July 1906, 2216-2219. After the election, Piou insisted on an investigation to prove the charge. Clemenceau then declared amnesty for all associated with the 'plot', which closed the case from further review. No evidence was ever produced.

significant issue after the elections of 1906 was the loss of support from within the Catholic Republican coalition itself. Marc Sangnier had already abandoned the party and would form his own in 1907. The LPDF also distanced itself from ALP, withdrawing from politics entirely by 1910 to focus on social welfare concerns. Social Catholics had never been on board, and most *Abbé démocrates* continued to reject the party. Most of the young leaders of the ACJF remained with the coalition, and soon would form the next wave of *Action libérale populaire* deputies. But as with the LPDF, the organization itself pulled away from the party and from involvement in politics of any kind, focusing on the mission of social relief on which they had been founded. As a result, after four years of coalition building, *Action libérale populaire* was largely left with the core group of Catholic Republicans with which it began. These party loyalists and dedicated constitutional liberals would ensure the party continued as a recognized movement in the Chamber but would be unable to mount the kind of challenge that had just been thwarted.

Action Française And Integral Nationalism

As for the Catholic, Monarchist, and Nationalist Intransigents, the new and growing *Action française* movement incorporated all their concerns in a curiously modern and combative form, well placed to reap the benefits of *Action libérale populaire*'s failure more than any other group. Intransigents who had been marginalized by the rise of Catholic Republicans and Democrats were welcomed into the national integralist fold, boosting the status and prestige of the new movement. De Mun's estranged social Catholic friend, René La Tour-du-Pin, had joined Maurras by 1905. The disaffected former LPF leader, Jules Lemaître, moved into a prominent if

ceremonial role in the *Action française* camp.[418] Denys Cochin, the once-and-future Monarchist who had received a place of honor with *Action libérale populaire* at their 1905 Congress, abandoned Piou and de Mun for Maurras by 1907.[419] And Jacques Maritain, recent Catholic convert and future celebrated Catholic philosopher, chose the integral nationalism of *Action française* over the Catholic Republicanism of *Action libérale populaire* by 1907.[420]

Although Charles Maurras focused his journalistic attacks more consistently on Marc Sangnier due to *Sillon*'s appeal to young Catholics, *Action française* did not neglect Piou and de Mun. Maurras and the integralists who supported him saw *Action libérale populaire* as the embodiment of Catholic acquiescence to Republican error. They were joined by the withering criticism of *Abbé démocrates* such as Paul Naudet and Pierre Dabry in denouncing *Action libérale populaire*, Piou, and Catholic Republicanism writ large for their record of electoral and policy failures. *Action française* launched their first attacks shortly after the May 1906 elections. Henri Vaugeois, the director of the bulletin *L'Action française*, described the results of the election as a clear indication for "French conservatives, Catholics, and patriots [of] the ineptitude of those in whom they had confided, these charlatans who at least now might show embarrassment, [although] the most notorious succeeded. . . M. Jacques Piou . . . has become a deputy again."[421] However, the central message to Catholic Republicans was the futility of their approach and the promise of the new alternative, as noted by Henri Vaugeois:

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[418] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012), 228.

[419] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 208.

[420] Jean-Claude Delbreil, *Centrisme et démocratie-chrétienne en France: Le Parti Démocrate Populaire des origines au M.R.P. (1919-1944)* (Paris: *Publications de la Sorbonne*, 1990), 119.

[421] *L'Action Française*, 15 May 1906, 247-248.

> For these Catholics, these patriots, these conservatives. . .it was not enough for them to call themselves, to believe themselves, to want to be Republicans; to be admitted to, tolerated by the Republic. We will show them that the Republic is not a harmless word . . . but a concrete reality, deeply rooted, that cannot be [partially accepted]. We therefore call on [all to join the] work of *Action française* . . . to [obliterate] half-republicanism, and all the hypocritical attempts allowed to encumber so many lofty French minds since 1873.[422]

In 1907, *Action française* used a theatrical production in this drumbeat of mockery. One of the founders of *Action française*, playwright Maurice Pujo, composed the anti-Republican play *Les Nuées*, which adapted Aristophanes' *The Clouds* to contemporary France.[423] The principal antagonist in the play, 'Baron Pié', is a thinly disguised composite of Piou and de Mun who cynically uses the *Ralliément* to advance his own interests while being shunned both by the Monarchists he abandons and the Republicans he courts. Pujo perfectly expresses the sentiments of Maurras concerning *Action libérale populaire*, with Pié memorably describing the utility of Republicanism to "lull men to sleep with generous illusions and noble chimeras, to make them forget their true condition, the laws of nature, and their real interests."[424]

Charles Maurras engaged in these attacks directly, always with the goal of discrediting the Catholic Republican movement while belittling its leaders. The consistent message of *Action française* was that the attempt by Piou and Mun to ensure that Catholic interests and institutions were represented and respected within the Republic was not only a foolish chimera but a ruse. In a withering critique in 1908, he wrote of Jacques Piou:

> The privilege of age has not alerted him of his obvious political incapacity, nor of the peril for the unfortunate who follow him. . .The simple conception of a coup de force seems perilous to him, appalling . . .[and] the virtue of action too much for him.. . and

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[422] *L'Action Française*, 15 May 1906, 248-249.

[423] Jessica Wardhaugh, "*Une Rire Nouveau: Action Française* and the Art of Political Satire," in *French History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 2008), 74-83.

[424] Maurice Pujo, *Les Nuées - Comédie contemporaine en trois actes et en prose imitée d'Aristophane* (Paris: *Nouvelle Libraire Nationale*, 1908), 78.

> the pale herd that follows him . . . [while] pursuing [unachievable] rights, legality, and constitutionalism . . .[He] thought he was a leader because he had a headquarters building [in Paris] and an [organization] around France. . . But he does nothing for those he leads, although he has been able to make considerable deposits [for himself] abroad . . ."[425]

The editor of *L'Action Française*, Léon Daudet, furthered this argument, tying the ineffectiveness of *Action libérale populaire* to the wishful thinking and naivete of its proposed reforms: "M. Piou thinks with good will, the love of universal suffrage, the education of the masses, unrigged ballot boxes, and honest controllers, *Action libérale* will succeed in making the Republic a more than acceptable regime, glorious for France and pleasing to every Frenchman."[426] For Daudet, this approach has been a complete failure, and failure has its costs: "M. Piou is at this moment being abandoned by the unfortunate troops who he had been leading to defeat for twenty years."[427] Naturally, the remedy can be found with the integral nationalism of *Action française*.

Unlike Marc Sangnier, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* largely ignored these insults, preferring to avoid the trap of engaging in a debate with those who had no political record of their own to parse. However, the criticism was incessant—between 1908 and 1914 nearly a third of all *Action française* dailies led with an attack on Jacques Piou, Albert de Mun, or *Action libérale populaire*.[428] A response appeared to be appropriate, and with both Piou and de Mun serving as deputies in the Chamber the task fell to the stalwart Catholic Republican Étienne Lamy. Long retired from politics and serving as editorial director of *Le Correspondant*, Lamy engaged in a debate with Maurras through a series of essays, wisely avoiding Sangnier's

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[425] *L'Action Française, Organe du Nationalisme Intégral*, 25 April 1908, 1.

[426] *L'Action Française, Organe du Nationalisme Intégral*, 19 August 1908, 1.

[427] *L'Action Française, Organe du Nationalisme Intégral*, 19 August 1908, 1.

[428] *L'Action française* editions accessed from the collection held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

mistake of publishing in *L'Action française*. When Lamy chose to end the debate, he held the last word for himself, and his rebuke of Maurras defended Catholic Republicanism while questioning the orthodoxy and Catholicity of *Action française*:

> I commend these reflections to the few Catholics of *Action française* who have complained about my reservations. [I concede] [T]hat Catholics form a considerable majority in the group. . . [However], the masters whose works are cited, the organizers whom Paris sends to the provinces, the deposits of political orthodoxy and the censors of intellectual heresies, the men who *Action* [*française*] most shows to its friends and enemies are not Catholics. . . *Action française* is more than a party, it is a school. Its main action is not to fight in elections, but in pulpits, [working] to create unity in people's minds. Who will make this unity? Is there no reason to fear that this propaganda of contrary doctrines, these pulpits open to both the Syllabus and Auguste Comte, are not the royal path to indifference?[429]

The Vatican's Antimodernist Campaign

If Lamy's response to Maurras was a welcome defense of ALP for the party's leaders, he could not directly address the more pressing issue for Catholic Republicans from 1907 to 1914. For while the attacks by *Action française* were troubling, the more ominous development was the Vatican's openness to Intransigents as the pontificate of Pius X became increasingly unfriendly towards liberal republicanism. The Vatican's negative turn accelerated in August 1906 with another encyclical concerning the Separation Law. *Gravissiomo Officii Munere* picked up where *Vehementor Nos* left off, forbidding participation by Catholics in religious associations—a stipulation of the Law—and therefore forgoing government recognition, which was required to retain the right to use religious property.[430] In effect, the Vatican was challenging the French Republic to seize ecclesiastical property when the deadline for inventories passed on 9 December

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[429] *Le Correspondant*, 10 June 1908, 987-988. "Syllabus" refers to the Syllabus of Errors promulgated by Pope Pius IX in 1864 in an appendix to the encyclical *Quanta cura*. In the Syllabus, Pius IX condemned 80 errors but focused on liberalism, nationalism, and pluralism.

[430] The Holy See, "*Gravissiomo Officii Munere*."

1906. In response, the newly appointed premier once again preempted his opponents. In October, Clemenceau quietly resumed the inventories he had suspended in March, avoiding the confrontations expected when the deadline expired. In another conciliatory act, Minister of Public Instruction and Religious Affairs Aristide Briand unilaterally extended the deadline for a year. However, conciliation by the Clemenceau government had no effect as the Vatican was unmoved.

On the contrary, in July 1907 Pius X published the Apostolic constitution (law) *Lamentabili Sane Exitu* which elucidated a new Syllabus of 65 errors of modernism. In September, the pope fully energized the Vatican's campaign against modernism with the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*[431], which led directly to the establishment of the *Solidatum Pianum*, a secret society within the Vatican charged with exposing unorthodoxy and heresy.[432] As the pontificate of Pius X grew increasingly suspicious of all ideas it viewed as modernist, Catholic Republicans found themselves subject to scrutiny, a marked contrast to the strong and enthusiastic support they had received from Leo XIII. Maurice Larkin argues that: "without renouncing the *Ralliément*, Pius X and Merry del Val gradually undermined its spirit and strategy."[433] The Vatican had changed significantly under Pius X, and for the leaders of *Action libérale populaire,* the optimism of 1905 had been shattered by electoral failure and doubts about papal support.

As the influence of *Action française* and intransigent integralism grew in Rome, Charles Maurras and his followers bolstered the Vatican's attack on modernism. Both *Sillon* and *Action*

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[431] The Holy See, "*Pascendi Dominici Gregis*."

[432] Oscar Arnal, *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action Française 1899-1939* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 52.

[433] Maurice Larkin, *L'Église et l'État en France, 1905: la crise de la Séparation* (Paris: *Éditions Privat*, 2004), 237.

libérale populaire were targets for the integral nationalists, who attempted to persuade Pius that all groups associated with constitutional liberalism and social Catholicism were imbued with modernism and should be formally condemned.[434] Pius X was persuaded by these arguments to condemn *Sillon* in August 1910, and as *Action française* rejoiced, *Action libérale populaire* faced an uncertain future. On 1 September 1910, Albert de Mun wrote to his confessor, Father Louis Trégard, about his concerns: "Assuredly, I do not believe that either my ideas or my work has been rebuked, but I do feel myself profoundly troubled, uncertain of my way, and worried what gain the eternal enemies of Catholic social action will take from this."[435]

De Mun's concerns were well justified, but not realized, in part because, unlike *Sillon*, *Action libérale populaire* had been founded with the direct blessing of Leo XIII.[436] However, from 1910 until Pius X's death in 1914 the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* were wise to avoid actions that might be used against them by *Action française* and other anti-Republican Intransigents to discredit the Catholic Republican movement. The degree of integralist influence within the papacy was exemplified by Pius X's reaction to the recommendation by the Congregation of the Index to condemn some of Maurras's works.[437] The Pope concurred with the findings but withheld publication in the *Index Librorum Prohibitum*, effectively allowing *Action française* to remain in good standing with Rome despite official disapprobation. Only with Pius

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[434] Benjamin Martin, "A Letter of Albert de Mun on the Papal Condemnation of *Sillon*," in *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol 64, No. 1 (Jan 1978), 48.

[435] Albert de Mun letter to Louis Trégard of 1 September 1910, *Archives Jésuites de la Province de Paris, Fonds Albert de Mun*.

[436]Benjamin Martin, "A Letter of Albert de Mun on the Papal Condemnation of *Sillon*," in *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol 64, No. 1 (January 1978), 48.

[437] Eugen Weber, *Action française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 222.

XI's consistorial allocution and revised index promulgated in December 1926 did Maurras and his ideas receive full papal condemnation.[438]

A Precarious Balance

Under these conditions, the caution exhibited by the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* was understandable. *Action française* had played a significant role in the condemnation of *Sillon*, and with Maurras's antipathy towards Catholic Republicans and his manifest influence in Rome, the time did not appear right for bold moves that could be attacked as counter to papal direction. This reticence was to have negative consequences for Piou's intended political overtures to Centrists, whose migration to the right in the wake of the formation of the SFIO had made them more amenable to working with Catholic Republicans. With its future in doubt, Piou chose to avoid pursuing stronger ties with Centrists until the situation in Rome became more amenable. In the years between 1910 and 1914, *Action libérale populaire* made only tentative moves to align with secular Republicans. Piou was forced to maintain his cautious course while weathering the storm of criticism emanating from the Intransigents.

A recurring difficulty for Catholic Republicans or for any other political or social group associated with Catholicism was the persistent question of loyalty to a 'foreign power', an accusation ironically quite similar to the one levied at the SFIO for its association with the Socialist International. The 'Vatican-control' trope was certainly not new to France or any nation where Catholicism had a significant presence, but it had particularly impacted the Catholic Republican movement because it attempted to bridge the divide between the Republic and

[438] *L'Osservatore romano*, 31 December 1926.

Catholics, if not the Vatican itself. The leaders of *Action libérale populaire* had clearly worked in concert with the Vatican under Leo XIII, and although the close coordination diminished with Pius X the intent by Piou to retain Vatican approval continued. However, the need to avoid any appearance of disloyalty to the Republic necessitated reticence about working too closely with the Vatican, while the threat of accusations of modernism by Intransigents forced Piou to be cautious when cooperating with secular Opportunists. This delicate balance was an ever present challenge for *Action libérale populaire*, but especially in the years between the elections of 1906 and the outbreak of the First World War.

When Piou and de Mun founded *Action libérale populaire*, their strategic goals were clear. However, in an effort to attract members and publicity to their party, they had embraced the tactic of exploiting a series of crises produced by actions of the Combes and Rouvier governments. Their emphasis on the defense of religion succeeded in attracting new members, including some Monarchists and nationalists who otherwise might not have done so. The tactic worked, until Piou met his match in Clemenceau. After the elections of 1906, what appeared to be a robust coalition was reduced to its more resolute core, which was forced to accept its status as a minority party, with no prospects for a more ambitious outcome. Despite these clear failures, which Intransigent critics never tired of detailing, Piou and de Mun had built a credible party structure with efficient organization, a remarkable achievement and one that kept *Action libérale populaire* as a consistent presence in the Chamber of Deputies for years to come.

The failure in 1906 also caused party leaders to refocus on their core goals. They realized that the Separation Law, despite the controversy surrounding it and the Vatican's unending opposition to it, had effectively ended the battle over religious establishment in the Third Republic and removed clericalism as a central issue in politics. Piou and de Mun could now

return to their core strategic goals of ensuring that Catholics were represented in a Center-Right coalition, labor reforms to guarantee the rights of workers, and constitutional reforms to bolster civil rights and limit the centralized power of the legislature. By 1907, the party's two cofounders accepted their status as leaders of a minority party and the reality of their limited ability to effect these changes on their own. The goal of forming their own government after winning a majority was likely never truly possible to achieve, but after 1906 it was no longer the focus. However, the goal of *Action libérale populaire* joining a Center-Right coalition with Progressists was not abandoned, as it was the only realistic pathway to success.

Building a Center-Right Tory coalition had been Piou's focus since the 1880s, and even during the tactical shift from 1902 to 1906 he had continued to work towards it. The project of building a such a coalition, and the complex and shifting conditions under which Catholic Republicans were forced to pursue it for three decades, were tied immutably to the nature of Republican centrism in the early Third Republic. Opportunists were the most important political group in the Third Republic, and even after they fractured into Centrists and Progressists in 1899, they remained the essential foundation of any ruling coalition. If *Action libérale populaire* was to have a lasting impact in French politics, it required bridging the gap of trust with secular Republicans. Without it, there would be no continuation of the 'great battle in which we are engaged'.

Chapter 6 - OPPORTUNISTS

In attempting to build a broad-based political party that was both sustainable and electorally competitive, Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun recruited groups they believed were aligned with their goals and sufficient in membership to expand their reach beyond the original core of Catholic Republicans. Their mixed results reflected the nature of the groups they recruited, the strength and resolve of their opposition, the rapidly changing political and religious landscape, and their own tactical decisions. Further, each group had their own goals and priorities, and balancing these with those of ALP was a constant challenge. Nonetheless, in recruiting Catholic women, social Catholics, and Intransigents, Piou and de Mun appealed to the social and religious concerns of fellow Catholics, attempting to unite these disparate groups to further the Catholic Republican movement. Having learned from previous failures in 1889, 1893, 1898, and 1902, the ALP's leaders sought to form a robust mass party—highly organized, strictly disciplined, well-funded, and represented across the nation. However, the party thus constituted was just the first step in a larger strategic vision of a Center-Right Tory party that had been Jacques Piou's focus since he entered national politics in 1885. The second step was critical, since Piou was convinced that Catholic Republicans could not build a Center-Right party on their own. He believed the Catholic Republican movement had to be integrated into the most important political group in the Third Republic—the Opportunists.

Notably, in the two decades prior to the formation of *Action liberal populaire*, this vision was Jacques Piou's, rather than Albert de Mun's.[439] Even after 1902, de Mun emphasized social

[439] Eduard Coquet, *Albert de Mun et la séparation de l'Église et de l'État 1904-1907* (Paris: *Les Éditions du Cerf*, 2019), 88.

reform and the defense of religion as the most important goals for the party, rarely engaging in the long-term coalition-building and constitutional reform that occupied Piou. Albert de Mun remained suspicious of secularist Republicans even as Jacques Piou attempted to form political alliances with them.[440] De Mun's reticence about joining with secularists points to a fundamental difference between the two *Action liberal populaire* founders, a difference that was never fully resolved despite their long association. Albert de Mun perceived politics as a means to advance religious and social ends, believing that the political system should be used by Catholics to achieve their goals. Jacques Piou viewed the political system itself as the key, believing that without constitutionally strong and balanced institutions, the nation would be at the mercy of whatever government was in power, the "tyranny of parliamentary majorities."[441] If Albert de Mun's goal was to gain political power and to ensure justice through Catholic unity, Jacques Piou's goal to enact constitutional reform to guarantee individual rights and to establish judicial checks on legislative actions. For Piou, constitutional reform could be achieved only through forging unity among conservative elements. These different views explain why these two men did not form a partnership until forced to do so by the rise of the *Bloc des gauches* in 1899, and why after the election defeat in 1906 they pursued differing goals, producing friction that persisted until 1914.

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[440] *Bulletin Action Libérale Populaire*, 18 August 1904. In an editorial following the death of Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau, Mun refused to praise the premier who had formed the *Bloc des gauches* but who had also condemned the actions of Émile Combes in an address to the Senate on 27 June 1903.

[441] *Action libérale populaire, Compte-rendu du Congrès General*, December 1904, 267.

The Opportunists

The focus of these differing perceptions and goals was the group known collectively as Opportunists, so labelled by their Radical opponents as a term of derision.[442] Regardless of how they were labelled, Opportunists were the largest, most influential, and most diverse political group in the Third Republic, at least until they fractured in the fallout from the 1898 elections. As with other political groupings in the early Third Republic, Opportunists included conservative, moderate, and radical wings, and they did not comprise a political party but a loose parliamentary association. However, Opportunists shared several broadly understood principles, and these were held with enough strength to sustain the grouping until 1899. They were self-identified Centrists, opposing those they perceived as the extremes of Left and Right. As the largest of the groups that pushed through the constitutional laws of 1875, Opportunists were definitionally Republican, eschewing any hint of monarchism. They were also economic liberals, hesitant about social and labor reforms and strongly opposed to socialism. But most importantly and problematically for Catholic Republicans, Opportunists were strongly secularist and, as such, anticlerical. As a rule, Opportunists were tolerant of religion itself, but their secularist principles were exemplified by their strong commitment to the laic laws.[443] This commitment, and the way it was perceived by Catholic groups, was the key obstacle faced by Jacques Piou in attempting to form a Center-Right coalition that included Catholics.

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[442] Alan Kahan, "Defining Opportunism: The Writings of Eugene Spuller," in *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 1994), 424. The term implied timidity and a lack of ideological rigor, but the Opportunists adopted it as an indicator of their practical moderation and tolerance.

[443] The 'laic laws' refer to legislation passed in the 1880s that promoted a more secular society. Most prominent (and controversial with Catholics) were laws ensuring a free, secular education open to all citizens. However, laws were also enacted to eliminate clerical exemptions from military service, among others. Support for or opposition to the Laic laws became the surest marker of where a politician stood along the clerical-secular divide.

As with most political groups and movements in the Third Republic, there is no unanimity in terminology. While acknowledging some terms are not used by all historians, conventions will be used to promote clarity. First, 'Opportunist' describes the broad category of moderate Republicans in the Third Republic, both before and after the 1899 split. After 1899, the Opportunists of the Center-Left will be referred to as Centrists, as in the relative balance in place until 1912 they occupied the political Center. The Opportunists of the Center-Right are known conventionally as Progressists, a term that predated the split in 1899 but that is now the most common label for this group.[444] The remaining Opportunists refused to align directly with the other two and became known as Independents, the label still typically used for them. These three factions were loosely organized and were essentially parliamentary groups, but beginning in 1901 they followed the lead of Catholic Republicans, Radicals, and Socialists in forming political parties of their own.[445] Although the Centrist Opportunists were the smallest of the three in number of deputies, they joined with the parties of the Left in the *Bloc des gauches* and thus were part of the coalition that controlled the Chamber up to the First World War. Since Independent and Progressist Opportunists were relatively conservative and typically remained in opposition to the *Bloc des gauches*, they constituted the group most amenable to partnership with *Action libérale populaire* and as such were the focus of Piou's coalition-building.

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[444] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 23 November 1893. The most likely origin of the term was a speech presented to the Chamber of Deputies in November 1983. Opportunist deputy Paul Deschanel, who argued that "the best method of preventing the growth of revolutionary socialism in France is through a progressive policy."

[445] Kevin Passmore, *The Right In France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 127-128.

The Perpetually Elusive Coalition

Building coalitions was Piou's self-appointed task starting with his entry into national politics, beginning in earnest with Edgar Raoul-Duval's *Droite constitutionelle* in 1886, going off course during the Boulanger Affair but resuming in the 1890s with Jacques Piou's new *Droite constitutionelle*, which was reconstituted as the *Droite républicaine* in 1891. Finally, Piou's coalition-building culminated with *Action libérale* in 1901, which grew into *Action libérale populaire* in 1902 and continued as such until 1919. Each of these associations or parties was formed with the goal of eventually forging an alliance with secular Opportunists to produce a liberal, constitutional Center-Right party that protected religious freedom.[446] With similar policy goals and aspirations, Catholic Republicans and Opportunists seemed to be natural allies, especially after the more conservative Independents and Progressists rejected the *Bloc des gauches* and entered the opposition. However, a functional coalition of conservative Opportunists and Catholic Republicans remained politically elusive until 1912, although by 1919 the two movements went a step further and merged into a single party.

In examining the reasons for the failure of these groups to form an alliance in the 29 years it was pursued by Piou, four elements can be discerned. First, until 1903 at the earliest, Opportunists had enough electoral strength without Catholic Republican assistance that they simply did not need an alliance.[447] Second, Catholic Republicans were unable to institute policy and electoral discipline into the Catholic coalitions that rose and fell, victims of internal dissension and the disruptive strength of intransigency and anti-Republicanism. To Opportunists,

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[446] Jacques Piou, "*Les Élections du 1906*," speech presented in Lille, 6 November 1905. Published by the Secretariat of *Action Libérale Populaire*, 7 Rue de las Cases, Paris.

[447] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics 1890-1898* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 70.

Catholic Republicans often appeared—with reason—to be unfocused and undependable.[448] Third, groups outside the moderate Center of each movement consistently destabilized coalitions by making accusations of treachery by the coalition-builders, whether it was Radicals accusing Opportunists of supporting reactionary clericalists or Intransigents accusing Catholic Republicans of abetting the secularization of France. These accusations were effective because distrust between Catholics and Republicans following nearly a century of political conflict still had currency. Fourth, and most importantly, the clerical-secular divide was symbolized by the laic laws, which remained a contentious issue that defined each group in contradistinction to the other. The Opportunists refused to consider ending restrictions on Catholic schools or requirements for clergy to serve in the military, while Catholic Republicans considered a willingness to modify the laic laws a perquisite for their coalition. The surest way to scuttle an alliance between these two groups was to insist on the need either to repeal or to fully enforce the laic laws.[449]

Radicals coaxed Opportunists tempted to ally with Catholic Republicans to drift left with calls for "Republican concentration," which limited coalitions to secularist Republican groups—Radicals and Opportunists. This coalition had wrested control of the Chamber from Monarchists in the 1870s and defeated Boulangism in the 1880s. Both groups were anticlerical and antisocialist, but whereas the Radicals were opposed to any expression of religion in the public

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[448] The failure of the *Fédération électorale* in 1898 to ensure a united and disciplined campaign made a lasting impression on their ostensible allies, the Progressist and Independent Opportunists, as well as Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau.

[449] *Le Gaulois*, 19 April 1898. In a speech in Paris on 18 April 1898, Étienne Lamy insisted that the Méline government commit to repealing the laic laws, a day after Méline had told him in a private meeting that he could only promise toleration in enforcement. With no room to compromise on such an emotional issue for both sides, Lamy had seriously damaged Méline's electoral prospects and by extension any hope of a Center-Right coalition.

square and somewhat tolerant of nonrevolutionary and reformist socialism, Opportunists were vehemently opposed to socialism but only concerned themselves with religion in their support of the laic laws that mandated secularism in schools and the military. Differences aside, nostalgic appeals to 'concentration' and Republican unity against clericalism and monarchism were often effective and thus a constant impediment to Catholic Republican overtures to Opportunists in the 1890s. However, the difficulties caused by the clerical-secular divide and Republican concentration should not obscure the consistent and genuine attempts to form political partnerships across the gap—from both sides.

Piou and his Catholic Republican compatriots began their quest for a Center-Right alliance with Opportunists through Raoul-Duval's proposals in 1886, but this work was undone by their foolish participation in Boulangism. Opportunists and Radicals united under the banner of Republican concentration to defeat the Boulangist movement in 1889. General Boulanger subsequently fled the country, and the victorious Republicans were understandably dubious about the commitment to the Republic of those who had assisted the general.[450] Despite their misgivings about conservatives after the Boulanger Affair, the response of Opportunists was guarded but surprisingly positive towards those who had supported Boulanger. Paul Deschanel, a young Opportunist who would eventually serve as President of the Republic in 1920, reached out to conservatives in words that echoed Raoul-Duval and Piou: "It is time for enlightened

[450] *La France Nouvelle*, 25 May 1890. A speech by conservative leader Albert de Broglie acknowledged the 'recent shock' and stressed the need for overtures to repair the wreckage of Boulangism. Both de Mun and Piou had been members of the "Douze," the twelve conservative leaders led by Armand de Mackau who convinced the *Comte de Paris* to support Boulanger financially in the hope that a Boulangist victory might lead to "constitutional revision"—restoration of the monarchy. See AN AP 518, *Louis de Tremoil Papers* for letter from Albert de Mun to Tremoil concerning involvement with the "Douze."

Conservatives . . . to abandon faction and to loyally accept the constitution. . . There is no salvation for them or for us except in the formation of a conservative party, a Tory party, within the Republic."[451] In establishing the *Droite constitutionelle* in 1890, Piou was following Deschanel's advice, and although Opportunists were generally supportive of Piou's effort, Republican leader Eugène Spuller recommended caution regarding the future of Catholic Republicanism: "We must observe that if M. Piou, while accepting the Republic, fails to inspire confidence in his political position, he will never acquire the strength he needs to be a strong influence among the conservatives and his [acceptance] of the Republic will be useless...."[452]

Pope Leo XIII's admonition for Catholics to support the Republic in 1892 accelerated Piou's efforts, aided by Opportunists who sought to soften the position that other Republicans, especially the Radicals, had pursued concerning religion. Among the leading Opportunists, Jules Méline was the most conciliatory, calling religion "a great moral and social force."[453] But wariness remained, exemplified by Raymond Poincaré's defense of Republican concentration, which excluded Catholic Republicans: "We are resolved to do everything in our power to maintain a union which seems as necessary to us today as it was yesterday, and which will prove to be necessary tomorrow."[454] Opportunists did not trust the commitment to republicanism of those who only recently had been Monarchists, and although Opportunists were willing to coordinate election strategies with Catholic Republicans, there would be no alliance. As such, despite the *Ralliément*, there would be no Center-Right Tory coalition for the elections of 1893,

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[451] Paul Deschanel, *Questions actuelles; discours prononcés à la Chambre des Députés*, (Paris: Hetzel, 1890), 311.

[452] *La République Française*, 18 December 1890, 1.

[453] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics 1890-1898* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 123.

[454] *La République Française*, 24 February 1892, 1.

which were a disappointment for Catholic Republicans. However, Radical losses meant that the Opportunists emerged as an independent governing majority.[455] With concerns about socialism guiding their actions, the Opportunists infuriated the left by making overtures to the right, exemplified by Eugène Spuller's call on 3 March 1894 for an *esprit nouveau* ("new spirit") of toleration and cooperation between the Opportunists and conservatives who had rallied to the Republic.[456] In 1895, Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau expressed his hope for the *Ralliément*:

> [The Republic] must remain faithful to [its principles] and apply them in a broad spirit of freedom and tolerance. If we gather new members, I will rejoice . . . For my part, I consider the accession to the Republic of a whole part of our country which has lived for [so long] entrenched in its political discontent . . . to be one of the resources of the future. It is to this conquest that all our efforts should be directed, and for this to succeed . . .we need a government with the courage to move within the sphere of its independence and the activity guaranteed to it by the Constitution, which does not exclude control, seeking life and duration not in maneuvers of parliamentary strategy, but in a fair and simple presentation of solutions inspired by the public opinion of the country.[457]

Although the Opportunists indicated their willingness to tolerate Catholic Republicans, their tolerance did not lead to meaningful collaboration. The guarded conciliation expressed by Deschanel, Spuller, and Waldeck-Rousseau could not bridge the clerical-secular divide, which remained an issue because the *Ralliément* had splintered into the often contradictory forms of Clerical Democracy, Catholic Democracy, and social Catholicism as well as Catholic Republicanism. However, despite these difficulties, in 1896 Jules Méline formed a government that actively sought collaboration with Catholic groups. Méline appeased Opportunists who questioned his acceptance of Catholic Republicans by explaining that "the right is not voting

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[455] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics 1890-1898* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 129.

[456] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 3 March 1894.

[457] *Le Temps*, 11 March 1895, 2. Elected Senator from the Loire in 1894, Waldeck-Rousseau presented this speech in the Forézien city of Montbrison on 10 March 1895.

with us-it is voting against the social revolution."[458] However, Méline represented the conservative wing of the Opportunists, and although a committed secularist and defender of the laic laws he was also ready to defend Catholics as part of the Republic: "I consider the *Ralliément* to be a great victory for the Republic, and I do not hesitate to declare that I am proud of it. . .. We have always been respectful and conciliatory toward religion . . .. We have always chosen appeasement over intolerance."[459]

Méline's conciliation did not extend to including Catholic Republicans in his government, and collaboration was limited to mutual assistance agreements in the elections of 1898, as negotiated between Méline and de Mun. However, these small steps toward integration were undone by the indiscipline and fractiousness of some groups who joined Leo XIII's *Ralliément*, but whose actions undercut the Catholic Republican movement. First, under pressure from the Assumptionists and other members of the *Fédération électorale,* Étienne Lamy countermanded de Mun by what he did in a meeting with Méline less than two months before the election. Lamy demanded that the premier promise to repeal the laic laws in exchange for *Fédération* support, and when Méline refused to promise more than tolerance, Lamy terminated the interview as well as any meaningful collaboration.[460] The exasperated Méline is reputed to have responded with "Catholics have not forgotten nor learned anything."[461] Second, the *Justice-Egalite Comité* run by the Assumptionists actively worked against many Opportunist candidates in favor or their own Catholic candidates, undermining the entire Center-Right

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[458] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 30 April 1896.

[459] *La République Française*, 2 May 1898, 1.

[460] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 125.

[461] Jacques Piou, *D'une guerre à l'autre 1871-1914* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1932), 161.

effort.[462] Raymond Poincaré wrote to Méline after the election, decrying the Premier's courting of "people with whom I could never associate . . .[who] want to make you a prisoner of a reactionary coalition."[463] Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau, who had led the effort within the Opportunists to solidify a strong Center-Right coalition, was incensed at the lost opportunity. He blamed the Assumptionists, against whom he would soon take revenge.[464]. Although Méline won a slight majority in the May elections, he resigned in June 1898 when it was clear he would not have enough support to choose his own ministers. As he resigned his premiership, Méline's words to Albert de Mun reflected his bitterness: "Remember this day well. It will haunt you."[465]

If the 1890s were a lost opportunity, the disappointment prompted Piou and de Mun to unite their efforts and form *Action libérale* in 1901. Despite their personal differences, they both recognized that they must build a strong, disciplined party to legitimate Catholic Republicanism and begin again the effort to align with Opportunists in a Center-Right Tory party. The issues concerning the laic laws, charges of clericalism, and lingering distrust remained, but the founding of *Action libérale* began the project of proving to Opportunists that Catholic Republicans were not only committed to the Republic but could produce a legitimate mass party worthy of inclusion in a Center-Right coalition. A Center-Right coalition with secular Opportunists was Piou's vision, however, and although he loyally supported the party publicly,

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[462] Pierre Sorlin, *Waldeck-Rousseau* (Paris: *Librairie Armand Colin*, 1966), 385.

[463] Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics 1890-1898* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 151.

[464] Jacques Piou, *D'une guerre à l'autre 1871-1914* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1932), 174.

[465] Jacques Piou, *Le Ralliément: Son histoire* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1928), 79.

Albert de Mun was never fully committed to Piou's coalition and constitutional goals.[466] De Mun had been slow to answer Leo's call in 1892, and although committed to the *Ralliément* and the Republic he was less pleased with Republicans themselves. However, with nowhere else to turn for the defense of religion against the *Bloc des gauches* and assured of Piou's promise to emphasize social reforms, de Mun agreed to cofound *Action libérale populaire* "reluctantly, out of a sense of duty."[467]

The Opportunists Fracture

As trying as the 1890s had been for Catholic Republicans and social Catholics, the cost had been high for the Opportunists as well. In 1899 Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau formed a coalition that would become the *Bloc des gauches*, choosing the Radical approach of anticlericalism as an organizing principle instead of the Opportunist preference for antisocialism.[468] In addition to exiling the Assumptionists and passing the anticlerical Associations Law, the previously conservative Waldeck-Rousseau empowered the anticlericalist Radical Republic, which would govern France for most of the next two decades. Waldeck-Rousseau's inclusion of socialists in the *Bloc* fractured the Opportunists into three parliamentary groups. The Center-Left Opportunists who joined the *Bloc des gauches* became the Centrists, and the conservative Opportunists who supported Méline formed the Progressists. A third group—whose most

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[466] *Le Figaro*, 8 January 1893, 1. Piou published an article outlining the benefits of a two party system which included a "truly Republican Conservative party." Concurrently, Mun's priorities remained those of social Catholicism. His overtures to Opportunists were intended to further labor and social reforms. See Martin, 101.

[467] AN 378/4 *Carnets d'Albert de Mun* XI, p. 38.

[468] Kevin Passmore, *The Right In France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 139.

prominent member was Raymond Poincaré—called themselves Independents, acknowledged no single leader, and refused to align with any other parliamentary group. Because the Progressists and Independents remained tolerant of Catholic Republicans, they became the focus for Piou's next attempt to build a conservative coalition.

In this effort, Catholic Republicans were aided by the gradual weakening of the three Opportunist factions, in part the result of Piou and de Mun's introduction of a new institution to France—the political party. *Action libérale* became the first party in French history in June 1901, followed in July by the *Parti républicaine, radical et radical-socialiste* (PRRRS, "Republican, Radical, and Radical-Socialist Party", usually called the *Parti radical*, PR, "Radical Party") and in October by the Centrists of the *Alliance républicaine démocratique* (ARD, "Democratic Republican Alliance").[469] The socialists followed suit in November 1901 with their competing reform and revolutionary parties that would merge in 1905 to form the SFIO. Progressists resisted the trend, but in 1903 formed a party of their own, the *Fédération Républicaine* (FR, "Republican Federation").[470] Only the Independent Opportunists refused to form a party of their own, although some members joined parties. Of the major political groups—Socialists, Radicals (and Radical-Socialists), Catholic Republicans, and Opportunists—all were unified except the Opportunists. The fragmentation of Opportunists in 1899 cost them their former position as a governing coalition, forcing the Centrists to depend on Radical support while the Progressists and Independents turned to Catholic Republicans.

In short order, leaders of political movements who had preferred the closed world of parliamentary groups and who had avoided the formation of formal, nationwide, organized

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[469] *Le Temps*, 24 June 1901, 2 for the Radical Party. *Le Figaro*, 23 October 1901, 2, for the ARD.

[470] *Le Figaro*, 19 November 1903, 3.

parties were now faced with a major change to the political landscape. Notably, *Action libérale populaire* led the way by intentionally forming a mass party, growing rapidly to become the largest in France. This strategy was employed primarily because, as a minority party, *Action libérale populaire* was forced to build its movement from outside the Chamber of Deputies. Until the end of the First World War, only the parties representing political minorities—the SFIO and ALP—were truly mass parties, with membership extended beyond a relatively small base of party representatives and operatives. For this reason, regardless of the growth of parties, leadership and coalition-building within the Chamber of Deputies was the focus of political activity far more than the parties themselves.

Aligned But Not United

Whether focused on parties or on parliamentary factions, by early 1901, the new political situation produced by the Opportunist split and the rise of the *Bloc des gauches* forced groups to seek potential alignments in preparation for the elections of 1902. Only four years removed from their disastrous attempt at collaboration in the elections of 1898, Progressists, Independents, and Catholic Republicans found common ground in their reaction to the anticlerical tone of the Associations Law, but more importantly in the Centrist's alliance with socialists. Concerning the Associations Law and the persecution of the congregations, Jules Méline applied a secular argument to Piou's call for religious freedom:

> [W]e [do not] endorse [the congregations'] doctrines. . . but we do not recognize the right to suppress them, as long as they do nothing to contradict the laws of the land. We see nothing immoral in the use that citizens can make of their freedom to live in common, to pray in common, to make charity in common.[471]

[471] *Le Figaro*, 29 April 1901, 2.

Méline presented the contrast between the Progressists and the *Bloc des gauches* with an example from French history: "A choice must be made between the liberal republic and the Jacobin republic."[472] Raymond Poincaré argued that "we do not accept that the State should seize property . . . and we believe [unlike the provisions of the Associations Law] that the authorization must come from the executive power . . .."[473] For Poincaré, there was no change to the insistence on a secular Republic, but also no acceptance of collectivism of any kind: "Neither reaction nor revolution was the motto that the Progressive Republican Party took at the beginning of this legislature, and it does not intend to change it."[474]

Despite these pronouncements, and the fact that Catholic Republicans, Progressists, and Independents were all opposed to the *Bloc des gauches*, Méline and the Independents like Poincaré refused to form anything more than a "loose electoral alliance" to not compete with each other in the elections of 1902, while urging Piou and de Mun to ensure their followers showed better discipline than in 1898.[475] The disappointment with yet another failure to persuade their most sought-after allies to join them in a political coalition was the final step towards forming *Action libérale* in June 1901, and Piou and de Mun immediately began to organize their new party, raise funds, and expand their membership. Refusing to relinquish his vision of a Center-Right coalition, Piou made clear in a speech to supporters in July 1901 that *Action libérale* was not formed to fight alone in opposition:

> We invite all those who think like us to help us in our effort. We are among the soldiers of the great army of order and freedom . . . The goal we are pursuing is to build a majority that ensures . . . the triumph of equality in freedom. . . We will join with all

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[472] *Le Figaro*, 29 April 1901, 2.

[473] *Le Temps*, 12 May 1901, 2.

[474] *Le Temps*, 12 May 1901, 2.

[475] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 145.

> liberals and moderates who share our goals. . . Leave behind the old quarrels. There are now two parties. On the one hand, all the friends of order and freedom; on the other, the Jacobins. Will and energy are the conditions for success. If you remain indifferent, you are lost . . ..[476]

Eschewing Piou's invitation, Progressists and Independents maintained their distance from Catholic Republicans and were not as energetic in their preparations. The election results reflected their lack of effort, as *Action libérale'*s gains were offset by Progressist losses, along with no change to the number of Independents in the Chamber.[477] Following the election, a disconsolate Méline resigned from his leadership of the Progressists, replaced by the much younger Paul Beauregard, who also was a close friend of Jacques Piou. With the *Bloc des gauches* retaining control of the government, Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau resigned as Premier and was succeeded by the Radical anti-clericalist Émile Combes.[478] Days after the election, *Action libérale* was reformed as *Action libérale populaire* with the intent of building a mass party that could rally the opposition and defeat the *Bloc des gauches* in 1906. Jacques Piou, who had lost his bid for reelection, would guide the party from its headquarters at 7 Rue las Cases in the Fifth Arrondisement of Paris, while Albert de Mun led the party's delegation in the Chamber of Deputies. Although continually frustrated by the reticence of Progressists and Independents to form a coalition with *Action libérale populaire*, as well as the challenge of building a party while addressing the provocations of the Combes government, courting the Opportunists remained a core goal for Jacques Piou.

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[476] *Le Figaro*, 6 July 1901, 2.

[477] *Le Gaulois*, 12 May 1902, 1.

[478] *Le Figaro*, 25 May 1902,1.

The Intractable Clerical-Secular Divide

Despite the anticlericalist campaign launched by Émile Combes immediately after assuming the premiership in June 1902, as well as the subsequent emphasis on religious defense by the leaders of *Action libérale populaire*, the long-range goal remained building a Center-Right coalition. However, as the Combes government pursued policies targeting Catholic schools, religious congregations, Catholic military officers, and ultimately the Concordat of 1801, the decision by Piou and de Mun to exploit these actions subverted a rapprochement with conservative Opportunists by eroding trust in their commitment to the secular Republic. Progressists and Independents were quite reasonably concerned with Catholic Republican focus on religion, seemingly adopting the anti-secularist conservatism of the Intransigents to bolster its membership with reactionaries.[479] To counter this, Piou pursued a dual-track approach. In public pronouncements, campaign rallies, and speeches, he emphasized the defense of religion. Behind closed doors, however, he worked to reassure conservative Opportunists of *Action libérale populaire*'s commitment to the Republic, constitutionalism, and a conservative coalition.

The political affinity between Catholic Republicans and conservative Opportunists was reflected in the similarities between the platforms of *Action libérale populaire* and the *Fédération républicaine*, the Progressist party formed in November 1903 by Jules Méline, Eugène Motte, Alexander Ribot, and Louis Marin. The *Fédération* supported a Bill of Rights, a Supreme Court, proportional representation, and decentralized administration, all positions in line with those of *Action libérale populaire*.[480] The *Fédération républicaine'*s program included "respect for and guarantee of freedom in all its forms; political freedom, freedom of conscience,

[479] Albert Mun's effort to persuade Denys Cochin to support ALP was one such example.

[480] Raymond Leslie Buell, *Contemporary French Politics* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1920), 19, 24.

freedom of education, freedom of work" as well as "brotherhood and solidarity opposed to class antagonism and hatred; practical reforms beneficial to the mass of workers instead of utopias and ruinous experiments."[481] This clear support for religious freedom and opposition to socialist collectivism proclaimed at the *Fédération* General Assembly on 7 December 1904 closely matched the published policy positions presented at the *Action libérale populaire* General Congress only two weeks later.[482] Jacques Piou reinforced the common cause between the groups: "[T]he opposition today represents all generous causes: honesty, justice, freedom, patriotism, conscience. Each of the groups that compose it will defend them under its banner and with its methods; But all will have a common goal: the deliverance of the homeland."[483]

As *Action libérale populaire* grew in membership and revenue, Piou was also able to provide the kind of support to Progressist and Independent candidates that was not possible before 1902. As an efficient and highly organized mass party, *Action libérale populaire*'s reach belied its modest representation in the Chamber. With large-scale financial, communications, and personnel resources, the party far exceeded Piou's parliamentary groups of the 1880s and 1890s, and the party's leaders used this newfound influence to court conservative Opportunists. By 1904, individual Progressists were aligning more directly with *Action libérale populaire*, including the President of the *Fédération républicaine*, Eugène Motte. Although Motte certainly was generally supportive of the Catholic Republican program, his motives were also pecuniary. In exchange for a closer partnership, Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun were quite willing to assist Motte in paying debts accumulated in the operation of his extensive political organization in the

[481] *Fédération Républicaine Compte-Rendu L'Assemblée Général du 7 décembre 1904*, 36.

[482] *Action libérale populaire, Compte-rendu du Congrès General, décembre 1904, 289-304.*

[483] *Action libérale populaire, Compte-rendu du Congrès General, décembre 1904, 17.*

Nord.[484] In preparation for the by-elections of 1904, Piou instructed *Action libérale populaire* party members to support their local Progressist candidate.[485] Although the results were generally positive, overtures to sympathetic Centrists and Independents were rebuffed, and any further collaboration blunted by the clerical-secular divide. As such, despite *Action libérale populaire*'s support for Progressist candidates, their campaigns remained separate, with the exception of a few rallies that featured both Jacques Piou and Progressist leader Paul Beauregard, a close friend and dependable political ally of Piou.[486]

If *Action libérale populaire* struggled to earn the trust of conservative Opportunists, the party had no difficulty gaining the attention of their political opponents in the *Bloc des gauches*. Police reports filed in May 1902, a month before to the party's official founding, noted its potential and expressed concern that "organized around the country, [ALP] will be highly dangerous to the [Radical] government."[487] By 1904, this police prediction was shared by members of the *Bloc des gauches*, who were astonished by the rapid growth, wealth, and influence of the new Catholic Republican party. By 1904, senior members of the *Bloc des gauches* noted that Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun had built an organization wholly unlike the disorganized *Fédération électorale* of the 1890s. This realization prompted the Radical Party's Executive Secretary, Louis Bonnet, to warn his compatriots that *Action libérale populaire* represented a new and much greater challenge, as "[w]e have never before fought an

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[484] AN F7 12719, *sûreté* reports filed 27 February and 5 March, 1904. Motte's success was well-known—he had twice defeated socialist Jules Guesde in campaigns to represent heavily industrial Roubaix for the Chamber of Deputies.

[485] *Bulletin Action Libérale Populaire*, 14 January 1904, 1.

[486] *L'Action libérale populaire de la Gironde*, 6 March 1904, 1.

[487] AN F7 12179, *Fonds Action libérale populaire*, *sûreté* report filed 22 May 1902.

organization so strong, so extensive, and so well-funded."[488] Perhaps the clearest and most direct indication of *Action libérale populaire*'s position as the government's chief opponent was advanced by the premier himself. Paraphrasing Leon Gambetta's famous 1877 invective against clericalists, Émile Combes issued this warning—and directive—to his fellow leaders of the *Bloc des gauches*: "*Action libérale populaire*—voila l'ennemi!"[489]

Although *Action libérale populaire* focused almost exclusively on domestic issues, an international crisis in 1905 and its consequent impact on the priorities of Albert de Mun had long-term implications for the party. Since 1901, the security situation along the border between French Algeria and independent Morocco had been deteriorating due to the activities of Moroccan rebel groups. In early 1905, the Radical government of Louis Rouvier proposed reforms to the Sultan of Morocco that would, in effect, establish a French protectorate. Eager to assert German power abroad, Kaiser Wilhelm II ostentatiously visited Tangiers himself, and on 31 March declared his opposition to the French proposal.[490] The resulting First Moroccan Crisis was eventually resolved peacefully on 7 April 1906 at the conclusion of the multilateral Algeciras Conference.[491] Although the crisis was resolved without military conflict or notable concessions, it nonetheless provoked questions in France about national prestige, diplomatic influence, and military readiness. At the forefront of the debate was Albert de Mun. Despite his

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[488] *Bulletin Action libérale populaire*, 13 October 1904, 1. The ALP newspaper reprinted Bonnet's remark, which was made in October 1904 to the Radical Party congress held in Toulouse.

[489] *Bulletin Action libérale populaire*, 3 September 1903, 1. Combes' remark was made in a speech on 23 August 1903, as recorded in the ALP's *Bulletin*. By referencing Gambetta's comment, Combes was drawing an unmistakable parallel between Catholic Republicans in the early 1900s and the anti-Republican movement of the 1870s.

[490] *Le Figaro*, 1 April 1905. 1.

[491] *Le Temps*, 8 April 1906, 1. The French reaction was mixed, as many viewed the agreement as capitulation. France was granted a here of influence in Morocco but made territorial concession Germany elsewhere in Africa.

preoccupation with the Separation Law debate, De Mun published a series of articles highlighting concerns about French weakness in comparison to Germany, both militarily and morally after the bruising years of anticlerical strife:

> It is time that M. Rouvier, if he wants to live up to the role that history has thrown on his shoulders, hears and understands the national clamor. Civil peace is not . . . the only necessity . . . Quietly, everyone is talking about it, asking anxiously: "The army? The fleet? National defense?" The poignant memories of recent years barely overwhelm our consciences: moral destruction, material disorder, everything passes before them in a painful examination. . . France needs a strong and powerful army. Ministers, this is what we ask of you and what you owe the country![492]

The Election

In later years, Albert de Mun became a strident advocate for national defense. But as 1905 drew to a close, his primary aim was to win a majority in the pivotal legislative elections of 1906. In four years, *Action libérale populaire* had grown into the largest party in France, and despite the tactical emphasis on religious defense that had consumed the energy of the party leaders, they had still managed to build tentative alliances with Progressists and Independents. However, a Center-Right coalition of conservative Republicans remained elusive, and as with the elections of 1902 each party campaigned on its own program. One reason for the continued reticence of conservative Opportunists to align closely with Catholic Republicans was the willingness of Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun to tolerate and in some instances celebrate the presence of controversial former Monarchists and nationalists within the *Action libérale populaire* coalition. At the party congress in December 1905, Piou urged his party to "stretch out frankly one hand to the right, one hand to the left. Whoever fights the Bloc and defends freedom is your ally, whoever he is, wherever he comes from, but on the other hand resolutely reject these

[492] *Le Gaulois*, 15 June 1905, 1.

two-sided candidates who spare all parties and prepare all betrayals."[493] The inclusion of Intransigents proved unacceptable to some notable Progressists and Independents, and the refusal of Raymond Poincaré, Alexandre Ribot, and Louis Barthou to continue any further cooperation with *Action libérale populaire* convinced a significant number of their fellow conservative Opportunists to follow their lead.[494]

In attempting to accommodate groups on the fringe of their movement for tactical advantage in the election, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* had risked their delicately balanced strategic alliance with conservative Opportunists who found any hint of clericalism or intransigency a danger to the Republic. Once again, the clerical-secular divide proved a hindrance to a merging of parties, and the lack of a unified effort to oppose the *Bloc des gauches* was an obstacle to producing a campaign capable of defeating the Radicals and the political maneuvering of Georges Clemenceau. Of equal importance was the changing political affinities of Catholic voters, who by 1905 were less motivated by confessional identity and more accepting of the Republic. For many Catholics, despite the religious defense arguments of *Action libérale populaire* and the Vatican, they had been given no compelling reason to remove a government which had moved past the anticlericalism of Émile Combes to a more reasonable and conciliatory approach following the passage of the Separation Law.[495] As such, the election

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[493] *Action libérale populaire, Compte-rendu du Congrès General*, December 1905, 238.

[494] AN F7 12399, *Fonds Action libérale populaire, sûreté* report filed 19 December 1905. The report notes the forming and breaking of alliances. Defense of religion itself was not the issue for Progressists such as Alexandre Ribot, who had strongly condemned the Combes government's persecution of congregational schools, arguing that ". . . the use of force . . . accompanied by brutality . . . [to impose] the absolute right of the majority . . . is the negation of the true republican spirit." See *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 4 March 1904.

[495] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 200.

results were a disappointment for all the opposition parties, but especially for *Action libérale populaire*, which had been built specifically to produce a majority in the Chamber of Deputies.[496]

The election outcome also accelerated a shift in the political balance within France, a process that had begun in 1905 with the formation of the SFIO. The shift had its greatest impact among the parties of the Left, because the newly united socialists of the SFIO adopted as their own the non-collaborationist and anti-militarist directives of the Second International.[497] This was the breaking point for the other coalition partners of the *Bloc des gauches*, but especially for the Radicals, who had tolerated the collectivist ideology of the socialists in exchange for support in the Radicals' anticlerical campaign. The anticlerical campaign had been largely won by the end of 1905, and the scope of the Radical victory in 1906 meant that not only did they no longer need socialist support in the Chamber, Radical leaders now viewed the SFIO as direct rivals for working-class votes.[498] True to their Jacobin traditions, the Radicals were also displeased by the increasingly pacifist rhetoric SFIO leadership, deepening the rift between Georges Clemenceau and Jean Juarès that had originated during the government's suppression of the miners' strike in May 1906. As a result, beginning with Clemenceau's ascent to the premiership, the Radicals moved gradually to the Center and the Centrists moved in turn to the Center-Right.

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[496] *Le Figaro*, 21 May 1906. ALP net loss from 1902 was 14, from 78 to 64. The Radical Coalition consolidated its majority without the SFIO, which no longer collaborated with the *Bloc des gauches* coalition.

[497] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 13 May 1909. The SFIO's aggressive antimilitarism was exemplified by a memorable and impactful incident in the Chamber on 13 May 1909. To protest a defense bill, Jean Juarès led the socialist deputies in singing the *Internationale* while standing on desks and shaking their fists. The session had to be suspended, and the wedge between socialists and Radicals grew wider.

[498] Robert Lynn Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886-1914* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012), 219.

A Difference Of Vision

Following the disappointing election results in 1906, Piou watched helplessly as *Action libérale populaire* was abandoned by many of the coalition partners it had recruited since 1902. The party was soon dismissed by its opponents as irrelevant, and attacked mercilessly by not just *Action Française*, but by *Sillon* as well. From 1906 to 1914, the party's future was in doubt as it was drawn down to its core constituency of Catholic Republicans. Critically, after 1907, the differing strategic visions of the party's two founders led to disagreements that could potentially have scuttled the entire project. Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun put aside these differences in the party's early years as they worked tirelessly to build a party that could win a majority in the elections of 1906. The failure in those elections and the disintegration of the coalition exposed tensions that had been ignored. Piou's strategy of uniting Catholic Republicans in a mass party, uniting with secular Opportunists in a Center-Right Tory party, and enacting constitutional checks and balances appeared to be beyond reach, as did De Mun's strategy of using Catholic electoral strength to influence policy.

One issue that exemplified the fundamental philosophical difference between these two Catholic politicians was their approach to the seemingly mundane application of common law (*droit commun*, or 'common right'). As the term was used by both Piou and de Mun, 'common law' was not the system of legal precedent as understood among anglophones, but rather the equal application of the law for all citizens and associations without privileges or exclusions.[499] For Albert de Mun, acceptance of the special consequences of common law on Catholicism was

[499] Martin Dumont, *Le Saint-Siège et l'organisation politique des catholiques français aux lendemains du Ralliement 1890-1902* (Paris: *Honoré Champion*, 2012), 493. The acceptance or rejection of common law divided Catholics as fundamentally as any issue concerning modernism and liberalism. Because common law could be supported by some interpretations of Thomism but rejected on other grounds, agreement was elusive and contested.

to assault religious prerogative and privilege, in effect placing human law above divine law. For Jacques Piou, acceptance of common law was a prerequisite for equal protection under the law, and rejecting common law meant the loss of religious freedom. This difference was fundamental because it reveals Piou as the truer Republican, embracing the idea that religious organizations must be part of the Republic to receive the benefits of it. Albert de Mun insisted on the necessity of Catholic religious privilege, revealing his frustration with Piou as recorded in a private journal entry on 8 June 1906:

> I had a conversation with Piou that pained me; he wants to declare . . . that for the Church we ask only for common law. In these matters, he does not know the value of words. This proposal is unacceptable. Freedom, yes; it presupposes for the Church the free enjoyment of all rights for all those who ask for it. [However], common law is the pure formula of liberalism. Freedom for the Church consists . . . of not being governed by common law. We will not be able to agree with this.[500]

Piou refused to change his reasoning, and in a speech to the party congress in November reinforced his position: "We do not set a trap for the Republic. We simply ask it to be a national government instead of a sect government. We do not ask for any privilege or favor, but likewise we do not want to be excluded from common law. We want to live under just laws."[501]

This disagreement did not fracture the party, but it reveals an underlying tension that would never be fully resolved. For his part, Piou refused to give up his strategic vision, and as such focused his efforts on ensuring the survival of *Action libérale populaire*. In his thinking, if Catholic Republicans could not sustain a viable, legitimate, respectable political party there was no chance of Catholics being included in a Center-Right Tory party, let alone being able to

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[500] AN 378/4 *Carnets d'Albert de Mun* XI, 60.

[501] *La Croix*, 27 November 1906, 1. The speech was presented on 25 November. Étienne Lamy had outlined a similar position in 1898, arguing that Catholics would fail if they expected special privileges rather than the limitations of common law that applied to all citizens. See Martin Dumont, *Le Saint-Siège et l'organisation politique des catholiques français aux lendemains du Ralliément 1890-1902* (Paris: *Honoré Champion*, 2012), 436.

promote liberal constitutional reform. Acceptance of common law was a step toward this goal. Piou's election to the Chamber in 1906 put him in a position to assume party leadership both inside and outside the Palais Bourbon, and he used his influence to ensure *Action libérale populaire* took an active role in parliament. With its role as a minority opposition party now seemingly a reality for the foreseeable future, the 64 deputies of *Action libérale populaire* adopted a strategy of aggressively proposing legislation that highlighted their party platform. A month after the elections, the party's deputies had proposed bills to establish a system of proportional representation in the Chamber of Deputies as well as a constitutional supreme court.[502] In line with their personal priorities, Albert de Mun sponsored a bill to organize labor into corporations and Jacques Piou introduced legislation to establish an American-style Bill of Rights.[503] None of these proposals survived votes in committees controlled by the Radical government, but the deputies representing *Action libérale populaire* used the system to establish their presence in the Chamber as a constitutionally liberal party.

Piou's wish to emulate the American model was in line with his long-held beliefs about constitutional rights as well as a system of checks and balances on legislative power. However, this was another area of disagreement with Albert de Mun, who was much less enamored of the American system. For de Mun, the United States was a poor model for France due to the much different histories of the two countries. In a commentary published in *Le Figaro* in 1905, de Mun

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[502] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, June 1906. Proportional representation guarantees seats in parliament for parties that reach of threshold of the popular votes, usually 5 percent. Minority parties that otherwise would not secure seats in a first-past-the-post majoritarian system are able to gain representation in a proportional representation system, which is why ALP proposed it. A supreme court with the authority to rule on the constitutionality of laws passed in the legislature did not exist in France during the Third Republic, nor indeed in any French system until the founding of the Fifth Republic in 1958.

[503] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, July 1906.

referred to the United States as "the classic land of freedom," but that calls to emulate it were based on "a little illusion . . . an erroneous point of view." De Mun argued that the lack of an official religion in the United States meant that laws are enacted and administered by the government "as if there is no true religion." He perceived in the American system the work of "our old Huguenots. . . descendants of Calvinists, the secularizers of society."[504] For Albert de Mun, France was a Catholic nation that required Catholic sensibilities, institutions, and privileges. As appealing as some aspects of the American Republic may have appeared, in Albert de Mun's reasoning it withheld Catholicism's rightful privileges and thus would always be too foreign and fundamentally Calvinist.

Caution, Survival, And Growth

Regardless of the relative merits of an American-style system, hopes for eventual constitutional change in France remained distant goals as long as *Action libérale populaire* continued as a minority party with no coalition support. Jacques Piou's intent after the election failure of 1906 was still to form a coalition with conservative Opportunists. To build a Center-Right coalition, Piou believed he had to establish ALP's long-term legitimacy by earning a reputation for efficient leadership and parliamentary acumen. As such, Piou's focus on the party's visibility and dependability within the Chamber of Deputies worked to this end. Further, this emphasis also produced a loyal and growing membership, belying the narrative of a party in decline due to the loss of support after the elections.[505] On the contrary, *Action libérale populaire*

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[504] *Le Figaro*, 23 March 1905, 1.

[505] The narratives of failure and decline is common among scholars of the French Right. Kevin Passmore (149), Benjamin Martin (221), Maurice Larkin (181), and René Rémond (207), are representative in describing a party that failed and then disintegrated into insignificance.

continued to grow, if not as rapidly as immediately after its founding, reflecting its well-established position as a constitutionally liberal party of loyal Catholic Republicans. Despite the loss of much of its pre-election coalition, growth was consistent in the years prior to the First World War. From 200,000 dues-paying members and 1,200 committees across the country in 1905, the party grew to 290,000 members and 2,500 committees in 1909.[506] *Action libérale populaire* was the largest party in France until 1911, when its membership was surpassed by the Radical Party.

Piou's approach during the years leading up to 1914 was measured, purposely avoiding controversial issues that might draw the unhelpful attention of critics within the Vatican or the Opportunist parties. His priority was party survival because without a legitimate Catholic Republican party he believed the goal of a Tory party and liberal constitutional change could not be achieved. The attacks he weathered from Radicals, Socialists, and Maurrassians were annoying, but not as serious as two other threats. First, the anti-modernists in the Vatican were ever vigilant in their pursuit of Catholic politicians suspected of alignment with secular Republicans, a watchfulness that only grew more intense in 1907 with Pius XI's promulgation of *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* and the anti-modernist investigations that came as a consequence of the encyclical.[507] The threat of being accused of modernism naturally limited Piou's ability to build ties to Opportunists. Second, Piou also faced threats to his leadership from within the party,

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[506] Membership numbers are those reported by the party in the *Compte-Rendu du Congrès Général* in 1905 and 1909. These totals were corroborated by Sûreté reports filed concurrently (AN F7 12878 *Fonds Action libérale populaire*). Of note, these numbers were for verified dues-paying members, so they do not account for others who supported the party but were not official members.

[507] *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907) and *Lamentabili Sans Exiter* (1907) led to the establishment in 1909 of the *Sapinière* (formally the "Solidatium Pianum," or the Society of Pius IV), a Vatican secret society charged with investigating and exposing evidence of modernist teaching.

orchestrated by those who opposed his long-range goals. One such attempt was made by the ever-present Denys Cochin, whose "Monarchist coup" of the Catholic Republican movement in 1903 had been thwarted by Leo XIII. After briefly supporting *Action libérale populaire* in 1905, Cochin reverted to form after 1906, using a highly placed party operative, Léonce de Castelnau, to force a restructuring of *Action liberal populaire* that would have effectively seized control from Piou. Piou skillfully outmaneuvered Castelnau and Cochin and the plot produced nothing, but the threat to the long-term survival of the party was real and contributed to Piou's operational caution.[508]

Charting A New Course

Frustrated by Piou's emphasis on party survival rather than social reform, Albert de Mun pursued a different role after the election defeat in 1906. In part due to limitations on public speaking as a result of his heart condition, he focused on writing articles for newspapers, especially the Catholic *Le Gaulois*. Since the First Moroccan Crisis in 1905, his attention had been drawn to national defense readiness, and by 1907 he was producing articles that promoted a form of patriotic nationalism that was unrelated to the mission of *Action liberal populaire*. Rather than a lament for the loss of Catholic privilege, he warned of the rise of Germany and praised the growth of French patriotic nationalism. In the midst of increasing tensions in Algeria he evoked the ambitions of Kaiser Wilhem II: "The Germans agitate all of Europe at the present time, always with a claim to omnipotence. The gesture of Tangier had no other meaning."[509] Yet,

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[508] AN F7 12719 and 12878, *Fonds Action libérale populaire*. These files contain multiple *Sûreté* reports from 1907 to 1909 that detail Piou's efforts to reassert control and isolate Castelnau.

[509] *Le Gaulois*, 12 September 1908.

the centrality of Catholicism was not forgotten, but now was presented as inextricably linked with patriotism, as in this description by the Archbishop of Paris, Léon-Adolphe Amette, of the Requiem Mass for Cardinal Richard before a massive crowd in the Cathedral of Notre Dame on 1 February 1908:

> The crowd silently entered the enormous structure, making a dull rustle like that of a calm stream rolling on pebbles. It increased by the minute—six thousand men and women entered one-by-one through the half-open portal. In this peaceful splendor, and in this grandiose harmony, I felt rising in me a love for the old cathedral, and, with it, the love for religion, of which it is the magnificent image, and a love for the country whose august history it has witnessed for seven centuries.[510]

Albert de Mun's newfound support for patriotic nationalism also eventually produced an outcome as unexpected as it was welcomed—it bridged the clerical-secular divide to Progressists and Independents. This was especially the case with Raymond Poincaré, whose political fortunes had continued to rise as the Center-Left moved to the Center. Poincaré had earned a reputation for finely honed political instincts, but despite his loose party affiliation (Independent but active with the ARD) he was a consistently secularist Opportunist who was anti-socialist and anti-clericalist but generally tolerant. He was also ambitious, and to achieve his ambitions he took actions that, in time, built personal trust with Albert de Mun. Poincaré had always been a strong supporter of the laic laws and as such had little in common on religious issues with de Mun. However, in 1908, three seats became available in the *Académie française,* and in seeking support for his candidacy Poincaré approached de Mun, who as member of the *Académie* had significant influence. With de Mun's assistance, Poincaré's bid was successful. Raymond

[510] *La Croix*, 5 February 1908, 1.

Poincaré earned the *habit vert* on 18 March 1909 and Albert de Mun gained a grateful personal ally.[511]

In July 1909, the Radical government of Georges Clemenceau fell, and Aristide Briand was selected to form a new government.[512] Briand had left the SFIO in 1904 and in 1911 would be among the founders of the reformist *Parti républicaine-socialiste* (PR, Republican-Socialist party), but in 1909 he still identified himself as a Socialist and thus was distrusted by most Catholic Republicans, including Briand's old debating foe, Jacques Piou. Although Piou remained cautious concerning coalitions with prominent secularists that might draw Vatican attention, Albert de Mun's move towards patriotic nationalism had changed Piou's perspective: "Briand . . . even Poincaré . . .are only forms of the same regime . . . but . . . [Briand] is not a doctrinaire Jacobin . . In his heart, I am sure that Briand would like to arrange an entente with the Vatican . . .but [cannot openly] do so."[513] Convinced that Briand would be willing to cooperate with *Action libérale populaire* if he was less dependent on Radical support, de Mun was angered to find Piou strongly opposed to any overtures to the premier. De Mun's exasperation is clear in a letter he wrote to Piou in January 1910:

> You have astonished me with your disposition towards the ministry. What interest do you see in immediately taking an attitude of hostility, bad humor and resentment? Can we not loyally and openly explain our ideas, and our situation in the country and in Parliament; declare ourselves ready to collaborate in social, electoral, and administrative reforms? …Right now, in the face of Briand's ministerial declaration, I do not see why we would vote against it, and I can see very well why we could vote in favor... The fear of being denounced as conciliators should not influence us. What matters is to make our policy. However, this policy is a policy of rapprochement, of agreement with the affordable

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[511] *Le Figaro*, 19 March 1909, 2-3.

[512] *Le Figaro*, 25 July 1909 ,1.

[513] *Archives de la Société de Jésus, Province de Paris*. Trégard Papers. The comment is from a letter from Mun to his confessor, Father Trégard.

> fraction of progressives...We want to orient our conduct in such a way as to make possible… the constitution of a great party; Let's not start by isolating ourselves.[514]

Piou was unmoved, holding to his task of ensuring the survival of the party. For Albert de Mun, this was the opportunity he and Piou had worked for since 1901—the possibility of an invitation for a position of influence within the Republican government. For Piou, an overture to a former opponent—especially one who was largely responsible for writing the Separation Law—was too risky while the future of the party remained in doubt, especially with the Vatican increasingly influenced by Integralists.[515]

In the elections of May 1910, *Action libérale populaire* increased their seats in the Chamber by twelve, a modest but welcome validation of Piou's cautious approach and a reversal of the party's losses in 1906. Moreover, in August 1910, the reasoning behind Piou's strategy of political caution was thoroughly vindicated. Pius X's formal condemnation of *Sillon* and the subsequent disbanding of Marc Sangnier's organization was a reminder to Catholic Republicans of how precarious their position had become. In February 1911, Aristide Briand resigned, and his government fell, ending Albert de Mun's hopes for collaboration. Briand was replaced by Ernest Monis, who in June was replaced in turn by Joseph Caillaux, a Radical with no tolerance for Catholic Republicans.[516] The conditions for rapprochement between Centrists and Catholic

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[514] Joseph Denais, *Un Apôtre de la Liberté: Jacques Piou* (Paris: *Le Nef de Paris Éditions*, 1959), 209-210.

[515] Among the most influential antimodernists was Father Emmanuel Bailly, the Superior General of the Assumptionists, who had relocated to Rome after their exile from France in 1900. He was the younger brother of Vincent de Paul Bailly, the founder of *La Croix* and one of the Assumptionist leaders arrested by Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau in 1899.

[516] *Le Gaulois*, 28 June 1911. Monis was seriously injured in a mishap at an airshow near Paris on 21 May 1911. Caillaux won the vote to replace him on 24 June. Caillaux had been a founding member of the ARD in 1901, but switched to the Radical Party in 1910, earning him the enmity of his former colleagues.

Republicans appeared to be worsening, with no end to Radical governments increasingly inhospitable to *Action libérale populaire.*

However, international tensions were on the rise again as the military situation in Morocco worsened. On 21 May 1911, a French army force deployed to Morocco to relieve the European colony in Fez, besieged by rebels. In response, on 1 July Kaiser Wilhelm dispatched the gunboat *Panther* to the Moroccan port of Agadir, provoking the Second Moroccan Crisis.[517] Secret negotiations by the Caillaux government began within a week of the Agadir Incident, and by November the crisis had been resolved peacefully. But unlike the resolution to the First Moroccan Crisis five years earlier, the Franco-German Accords of 1911 required territorial concessions by France and were considered a humiliation by Albert de Mun, among many others.[518] The crisis heightened de Mun's newly formed patriotic nationalism, exemplified by his speech during the debate on the Franco-German treaty in the Chamber of Deputies in 14 December 1911. Speaking directly to Caillaux, de Mun thundered his disapprobation at the capitulation he believed the treaty represented: "For a nation, the sentiment of patriotism is the safeguard of its honor, and honor is the first of its interests. You should thank this generous nation that may save you from yourself!"[519]

Albert de Mun's words inspired patriotism but not disapproval of the treaty, which was seen by the majority of deputies as a necessary compromise to prevent open war. Despite the

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[517] *Le Figaro*, 2 July 1911.

[518] The Franco-German Accords of 1911 resulted in German recognition of Morocco as a French protectorate, but the anger in France stemmed from the concession of French territory in central Africa to Germany, which was seen as a reward for German bellicosity while France gained essentially nothing from the agreement that it had not possessed prior to the crisis.

[519] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 14 December 1911.

Chamber's approval of the Franco-German Accords, the controversy over what was widely perceived by many in France as capitulation led to the collapse of the Caillaux government in January 1912, and de Mun's hopes returned with the appointment of Raymond Poincaré as the new president of the council of ministers. Albert de Mun now believed that *Action libérale populaire* must support a strong national leader, and that Poincaré would fill that role. Once again, de Mun tried to convince Piou to work with a secularist premier, and once again Piou resisted. However, for the first time since the election failure of 1912, Piou's extreme caution began to ease. Poincaré's continued strong public support for the laic laws did not inspire confidence, but unlike Clemenceau, Briand, Monis, or Caillaux, Poincaré was an Independent Opportunist and had built a reputation for measured and tolerant pragmatism. Although the younger members of the *Action libérale populaire* delegation voted in favor of the Poincaré government, Piou and de Mun did not. However, as observers inside and outside the Chamber saw, both Piou and de Mun abstained, rather than voting against Poincaré.[520] For the first time in *Action libérale populaire*'s presence in the Chamber, Catholic Republicans did not oppose a secularist government.

The Bridge Of Patriotic Nationalism

If Jacques Piou eased his cautious approach to secular Republicans in January 1911 with tentative support for Raymond Poincaré's government, an incident in March marked an even more significant milestone for Piou, de Mun, Poincaré, and *Action libérale populaire*. During a contentious debate on an election reform bill in the Commission of Elections, Poincaré argued

[520] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 16 February 1912.

for the Radicals against proportional representation, which had been proposed by conservatives. Progressist leader Charles Benoist responded that the difference between Poincaré and the conservatives was quite small. The premier's angry retort stunned the committee room: "There is the entire religious question! I have never varied on that."[521] With one intemperate remark, Poincaré had risked losing the support of Catholics by reopening the most emotionally charged issue between the two sides, threatening to scuttle their nascent rapprochement. In this tense moment, Albert de Mun did the unexpected. Rather than attack Poincaré, he published an open letter to the premier on 11 March: "Yes, the religious question separates our souls. That is only too true. But in this grievous separation there remains to unite us, despite all, something so sacred that we must not allow it to be torn by disputes and passions; there remains France."[522] Poincaré's response was published the following day: "It goes without saying that in all questions of national interest, this difference is effaced by the unanimity of patriotism."[523]

A careless remark by Poincaré had provided de Mun with the opportunity to not just prove his magnanimity, but to accomplish what had eluded Catholic Republicans—a way to bridge the clerical-secular gap. For the French, it seemed, the path to rapprochement was not through compromise, but through the unity of patriotism. Over the next two years, as the First and Second Balkan Wars heightened tensions that would explode into the First World War, the growing personal respect and friendship between Poincaré and de Mun would mirror the slow process of building trust between *Action libérale populaire* and the Centrist parties. Not only did Poincaré appoint Progressists to leadership positions in his government, but he also made the

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[521] AN C7447, *Fonds Commission des Elections* 5 March 1912. Albert de Mun was not present when this incident occurred, but he quickly received confirmation from Benoist.

[522] *L'Echo de Paris*, 11 March 1912, 1.

[523] *L'Echo de Paris*, 12 March 1912, 1.

symbolic gesture of giving his support to establishing a national holiday in honor of Jeanne d'Arc, a favorite cause of traditionalist Catholics.[524] With the government's clear attempts at conciliation with Catholics while attempting to bolster national defense as international tensions grew, the still-cautious Jacques Piou made the concession of authorizing the *Bulletin Action Libérale Populaire* to publish an endorsement of Poincaré.[525]

The next step in this rapprochement came in January 1913, when Raymond Poincaré declared his intention to run for President of the Republic and asked for the support of *Action libérale populaire*. Under the constitutional laws of the Third Republic, the President was selected by a vote by the combined legislature, and as such Poincaré's request was an admission of his intent to include Catholic Republicans in his political base. This action drew the ire of Radicals, and most especially of Georges Clemenceau, who supported the candidacy of Jules Pams, a relatively obscure senator with no national leadership credentials.[526] To Clemenceau's chagrin, Poincaré's gamble to appeal to conservatives proved successful, and on 17 January 1913 he won an overwhelming victory over Pams.[527] Over the next 20 months, battles over military conscription and national defense would roil France, and Poincaré would be forced to appoint five premiers in succession as governments formed and fell amidst intense political turbulence. Through it all, *Action libérale populaire* stood by Poincaré and his commitment to patriotism and

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[524] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 24 May 1912. On 18 March, Pius XI had beatified *Jeanne d'Arc*, and on 8 May the ceremony had been repeated in the *Cathedral de Notre Dame* in Paris, attended by huge crowds. Poincaré's proclamation was extraordinary due to the Catholic connection and identification with the Maid of Orléans.

[525] *Bulletin Action libérale populaire*, 15 November 1912.

[526] *Le Figaro*, 10 January 1913., 1. In a front page article one week before the election, Fernand Vandérem assessed Pams as an "amiable" candidate, but for whom "to ask the question is to solve it."

[527] *Le Radical*, 18 February 1913, 1. Poincaré received 483 votes to 296 for his closest challenger, Jules Pams, the candidate supported by Clemenceau, Caillaux, and Juarès.

national strength, although by this time the last and most loyal remnants of the original Catholic Republican coalition—the Catholic Women of the LPDF and the youth of the ACJF—formally cut their ties to the party and any involvement in politics to concentrate on social welfare. If de Mun's goal was to follow a strong national leader while Piou's goal remained the formation of a Center-Right Tory coalition, by the end of 1913 it was clear that the future of *Action libérale populaire* was tied to the political strength of the Centrists and Progressists.

In December 1913, an initiative by Centrists to form a new majority coalition to contest the elections of 1914 appeared to provide an opportunity for *Action libérale populaire*. Led by Aristide Briand, the *Fédération des gauches* ("Federation of the Left") was a direct challenge to the Radicals, who had controlled the Chamber almost continuously since 1902.[528] Despite its name, the *Fédération*'s priorities of patriotic nationalism, military strength, and a balanced budget—as well as its slogan (*La République, c'est la liberté*, "The Republic is Freedom")—were formulated to appeal to Catholic conservatives.[529] Once again, Albert de Mun recognized an opportunity to advance Catholic Republicanism, and once again Jacques Piou resisted extending the support of Catholic Republicans out of concern for the Vatican's response. De Mun's frustration was clear in a letter he sent to Father Trégard on 4 January 1914:

> We can hope to modify the state of the nation only through a discreet entente with the moderates . . . to include Briand, Millerand, Barthou, and Poincaré. . . [although] [w]e and they must calculate our public declarations carefully. Piou has instead changed the focus of the ALP, making it a Catholic republican party . . . while I have come around to the first conception of the party. That is why Piou preoccupies himself so much with the pope and the cardinal, while I believe that an entente with the moderates, at first secret but made public after its success, could give us diplomatic relations with the Vatican, a renegotiated separation, and educational freedom for Catholics.[530]

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[528] *Le Temps*, 23 December 1913.

[529] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978),, 282.

[530] *Archives de la Société de Jésus, Province de Paris*. Trégard Papers, Mun to Trégard, 4 January 1914.

As with their previous disagreements concerning political strategy, de Mun did not accept Piou's prioritization of party survival over bold overtures to Opportunists. However, if it appeared to de Mun that *Action libérale populaire* had been transformed into a party only for Catholic Republicans, for Piou this was the first condition of establishing legitimacy that could lead to a position as equals in a Center-Right coalition rather than as barely tolerated junior partners in support of Centrist ambitions.

Piou's Patience Is Rewarded

Albert de Mun's comment to Father Trégard about Piou's focus on Rome was correct, but his context was misplaced. Although wary of repeating *Sillon*'s mistakes, Piou had responded to the positive overtures of Raymond Poincaré by quietly and carefully establishing a link with a sympathetic leader within the Vatican. In April 1913, Piou had sent *Action libérale populaire*'s young executive secretary, Xavier de la Rochefoucauld, on a mission to Rome to meet with Eugenio Pacelli, the urbane Vatican Under-Secretary of State who disapproved of the *Sapinière* and its secret activities.[531] In December 1913, La Rochefoucauld again met with Pacelli in Rome, this time with a letter from de Mun requesting endorsement of ALP's tentative alignment with Centrists. Although Pacelli did not endorse the plan, he did not oppose it either.[532] Finally, in February 1914, after party delegates voted to formally support the *Fédération des gauches*, La

[531] AN 142 AP 14/1 *Fonds Xavier de la Rochefoucauld*. As *Comte de Rochefoucauld*, Xavier de la Rochefoucauld was a member of one of the oldest noble families in France, although from a cadet branch. He was distantly related to Jean de la Rochefoucauld, the 18th *Duc de la Rochefoucauld*, who married Jacques Piou's grandniece (through his sister Amicie) Edmée Frish de Fels, in 1917.

[532] AN 142 AP 14/1 *Fonds Xavier de la Rochefoucauld*.

Rochefoucauld again visited Rome, returning with Pacelli's blessing for *Action libérale populaire*'s support of the *Fédération*.[533]

After years of caution, Piou now had the confidence that *Action libérale populaire* could form coalitions as equal partners with secularist Republicans without risking condemnation by the Vatican. His efforts to ensure the party as a legitimate parliamentary force had been rewarded, although at the cost of eight lost years and unrelenting tension with Albert de Mun. This breakthrough had been made possible by the formation of the *Fédération des gauches*, so it is indeed ironic that in the legislative elections in April and May 1914, the *Fédération* failed to produce a majority and soon disbanded.[534] For the leaders of *Action libérale populaire*, the survival of the party was victory enough, although once again they could expect to be in opposition to yet another Radical government. However, on 28 June 1914, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was assassinated by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo, and forty-one days later, France was at war. In an address to the nation, presented in the Palais-Bourbon, Raymond Poincaré called for unity in words reminiscent of Albert de Mun:

> France has just been the object of a brutal and premeditated attack, which is an insolent challenge to the law of nations . . . In the war that is coming, France will have for itself the right whose eternal moral power cannot be ignored by peoples and individuals with impunity. She will be heroically defended by all her sons, whose *Union Sacrée* [sacred

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[533] AN 142 AP 14/1 *Fonds Xavier de la Rochefoucauld*. Eugenio Pacelli's unsigned letter of 4 February approving ALP's support for *Fédération des gauches* had particular resonance because on 1 February, Pacelli had been appointed to direct the Department of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs. This department within the Office of the Secretary of State oversaw all Vatican interactions with political leaders within sovereign states. As such, Pacelli not only had the influence but also the authority to support ALP.

[534] *Le Gaulois*, 11 May 194. Although the elections produced few changes, the moderates and conservatives lost a few seats and certainly did not gain a majority. *Action libérale populaire* lost three seats, finishing with 73. However, the primary reason for the diminishment of the *Fédération des gauches* was the onset of the First World War and the need for national unity.

union] will not be broken before the enemy and who are today fraternally assembled in the same indignation against the aggressor and in the same patriotic faith.[535]

René Viviani had been appointed premier on 13 June 1914, and by the end of August President Poincaré urged the Radical-Socialist premier to diversify his government in light of Poincaré's evocation of a *Union Sacrée*.[536] Viviani appointed the former socialist Alexandre Millerand as his Minister of War, and at Poincaré's suggestion Millerand asked Albert de Mun to join him.[537] De Mun threw himself into the task of improving a poorly functioning logistical system that was already hindering the war effort. Shortly thereafter, the government relocated to Bordeaux, and both de Mun and his wife accompanied Poincaré to the Gironde.[538] Ignoring his medical condition, he worked tirelessly in the performance of his new duties. The old cavalryman was in his element again, free from the politics that had dominated his life since 1871.

On 20 August 1914, as the Germans occupied Brussels and the French prepared for the attack that would become the Battle of Charleroi, Pope Pius X died in Rome. Two weeks later, Cardinal Giacomo della Chiesa was elected as the next pontiff, installed as Pope Benedict XV on 21 November 1914.[539] A friend and close colleague of Eugenio Pacelli, Benedict was an opponent of the Integralists and the *Sapinière* as well. The secret society was not immediately disbanded but was marginalized and soon lost its influence within the papacy.[540] In the eleven

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[535] *Le Figaro*, 5 August 1914, 1. *Le Figaro* reprinted Raymond Poincaré's address, which was presented to the Chamber of Deputies the day before.

[536] All major political parties put aside partisanship under the banner of the Union Sacrée, most especially *Action libérale populaire*, which intended to prove its worth in defense of the Republic.

[537] Le *Gaulois*, 27 August 1914, 1.

[538] *Le Gaulois*, 3 September 1914, 1.

[539] *Le Figaro*, 4 September 1914 and 22 November 1914.

[540] The *Sapinière* was formally disbanded in 1921 by Benedict's successor, Pius XI.

years since the death of Leo XIII, Catholic Republicans had endured a tenuous existence, never fully confident of Vatican approval. With the ascension of Benedict XV, the movement's continuation appeared to be ensured. Pacelli had provided a lifeline to *Action libérale populaire,* and his contribution was key. The papacy of Benedict XV would be constrained and defined by the First World War, limiting his influence in French politics. Nonetheless, Eugenio Pacelli served as a trusted confidante to Benedict, as well as to Benedict's successor, Pius XI. It is indeed ironic that this key advisor to a pope elected as war enveloped Europe would himself ascend to the office, as Pope Pius XII, on 2 March 1939.[541]

The Partnership Ends But The Movement Continues

Albert de Mun had lived to see the ascension of Benedict XV, but only just. On October 6, 1914, the heart condition that had limited his activities for nearly twenty years finally took his life.[542] Such was his impact that at his funeral in Bordeaux on 10 October, all the leaders of the nation, including Raymond Poincaré and Aristide Briand, broke precedent and attended the religious service in the Church of *Notre-Dame de Bordeaux*. Twenty thousand mourners lined the streets.[543] Following speeches by Paul Deschanel and the Archbishop of Bordeaux, Jacques Piou addressed the assembly, concluding his tribute with the following words:

> France needed Albert de Mun as the hour of bloody sacrifices and heroic struggles was upon her. He braved death in his almost superhuman labor. He strengthened the courage

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[541] *Le Figaro*, 3 March 1939, 1.

[542] *Le Gaulois*, 7 October 1914, 1. *Le Gaulois*' front page story included tributes from three of Albert de Mun's fellow members of the *Académie Française*. The first wo were historian Frédéric Masson and writer René Doumic The Third was Denys Cochin, the Monarchist Intransigent politician who had caused such difficulty for ALP over the previous decade. Regardless, Cochin wrote an emotional and respectful tribute to his old opponent.

[543] Benjamin F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun: Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978),, 295.

> of some and assuaged the fears of others. He leaves us without having known the blessings of victory, nor the hour of our great rebuilding. But if Albert de Mun is no longer with us, he still watches over us and our common struggle.[544]

Albert de Mun never fully embraced Piou's vision for a Center-Right Tory party, or for constitutional change on the American model. His original ambition was to build a Catholic party, which evolved by 1910 into a patriotic nationalist party. Piou's insistence that the party could only avoid Vatican disapprobation by a cautious approach to alliances with secularists created a rift between the two men, exacerbated by de Mun's willingness to accede leadership to secular Republicans. Often at odds with each other in the lean years following the election failure of 1906, in the end it was the combined efforts of Piou and de Mun that created the conditions for a coalition with secular Republicans. Rapprochement eventually led to entente, and then merger, but not for another five long and war-torn years. *Action libérale populaire* did not accomplish this alone, as the conditions necessary for the opportunity to arise were the result of events beyond the party's control. The shift to the right by the political Center was precipitated by the growth and unification of socialist parties; the gradual diminishment of anticlericalism resulted from the passage of the Separation Law that Piou and de Mun had opposed; and the newfound embrace of patriotic nationalism was a reaction to the growing power and ambitions of the German Empire.

At times, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* created their own difficulties, as with their neglect of Progressists and Independents while pursuing tactical victories in the defense of religion. For their part, Opportunists retained a wariness of clericalism that made close cooperation with *Action libérale populaire* unappealing. Nonetheless, Piou's patient and cautious strategy of preserving the party while proving its political legitimacy, Republican loyalty, and

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[544] *Le Gaulois*, 11 October 1914, 3.

resilience ensured that Catholic Republicans were prepared to join with Centrists when the opportunity finally arose. However, it was de Mun's personal charisma and emphatic embrace of patriotic nationalism that bridged the clerical-secular divide and won the admiration and friendship of leading Opportunists, most importantly Raymond Poincaré. When *Action libérale* was founded in 1901, the strategic goal of its cofounders was to help form a Center-Right coalition of Catholic Republicans and Opportunists. Of all the groups pursued by Piou and de Mun in pursuit of this goal, the Opportunists were the most important, and the most elusive. However, in the end, as difficult as it was to form the partnership, when Catholic Women, social Catholics, and Intransigents had all moved on, the coalition with Opportunists had been achieved.

Chapter 7 -CONCLUSION

As the First World War engulfed Europe in 1914, northeastern France soon emerged as the primary battlefront of the Western Theater. As much as any other nation on the continent, the war impacted every aspect of life in France. The familiar rhythm of politics suddenly halted. All political parties suspended their usual competition with each other, uniting in support of the war effort. *Action libérale populaire* was no exception, its leaders limiting party operations to those needed to assist the government's priorities. But as a result the positive momentum experienced by the party in the two years before the war was frozen for the next five. This voluntary political hibernation was not unique to *Action libérale populaire*, but it proved emphatically that Catholic Republicans were loyal patriots and supporters of the Republic, a perception fostered by Jacques Piou. Through the ebbs and flows of the war, many members of *Action libérale populaire* fought alongside their former political opponents in defense of France. The brothers Amédée and Xavier Reille, sons of the LPDF's Geneviève Reille, served in the Navy and Army respectively. Henri Bazire, a former President of the ACJF, died from the effects of a gas attack during the Battle of Verdun, and Claude Cochin, elected to the Chamber in 1914, was felled by influenza. Most notably, Émile Driant left the Chamber of Deputies to command two infantry battalions but was killed in action at Verdun. By the end of the war, the Catholic Republicans of *Action libérale populaire* had suffered along with the nation and proven beyond all doubt their loyalty to the Republic.[545]

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[545] Bazire died in 1919 from the effects of gas exposure in 1919; see *La Croix*, 5 March 1919, 2. Cochin, a promising young deputy and the nephew of Denys Cochin, died less than two months after the Armistice; see *Le Temps*, 1 January 1919, 2. Driant had been a career military officer who resigned his commission after the *Affaires*

However, by 1919, *Action libérale populaire* had ceased to exist as an independent political party, and it is at this point that most historical analysis of Catholic Republicanism ends. Scholarly proponents of the narratives centered on failure and decline argue that the disappearance of the party was inevitable, delayed until after the First World War only by the suspension of political activity between 1914 and 1919. Regardless of how organized, efficient, and well-funded *Action libérale populaire* had been in its early years, after the failure of 1906 it was doomed to irrelevancy and oblivion, with no legacy beyond a notable if fruitless fight against the Separation Law. As this study has shown, there is some truth in these narratives. *Action libérale populaire* certainly failed to build a coalition capable of forming an electoral majority in 1906, the Catholic Republican coalition subsequently was a minor legislative force in the years before the First World War, and the party seemingly disappeared after the Allied victory. Limiting the assessment of *Action libérale populaire* to these facts that support the narratives of failure and decline, the historical impact of the party appears to be limited to its unsuccessful opposition to the *Bloc des gauches* and its successor, the Radical Republic. The problem with this conclusion is that it limits the party to the election cycle between 1902 and 1906, and thus fails to consider the long-term strategic vision for *Action libérale populaire*. A comprehensive assessment of ALP must account for why its leaders built the largest mass party in France, how they overcame the internal and external obstacles they encountered, and how their Catholic Republican movement impacted politics in France beyond the legislative elections of 1906.

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des Fiches. In 1914, at the age of 59 and recently elected to the Chamber, he volunteered for military service and was granted an infantry command. He died leading his solders in a fighting retreat at the *Bois des Caures*; see *La Croix*, 11 April 1916, 2.

Jacques Piou's strategy focused well beyond the elections of 1906, as *Action libérale populaire* was envisioned to be a Catholic Republican component within a Center-Right coalition formed with other conservative groups, especially the secular Opportunists. The goal was to ensure the long-term sustainability of Catholic Republican interests within a broad-based constitutionally liberal coalition rather than as an independent or confessionally Catholic party. However, to become part of a Center-Right coalition a legitimate mass party had to be built first, and to accomplish this outcome, the leaders of *Action liberal populaire* courted four groups in addition to Jacques Piou's original core faction of parliamentary Catholic Republicans. The party first aligned with Catholic women, as represented by the LPDF, and this alliance bolstered *Action liberal populaire*'s claim as a non-confessional party that defended Catholic interests. Next, the party sought to align with social Catholics, who along with Catholic women had the strongest loyalty to the Vatican but also had fully embraced Leo XIII's call to support the Republic. The third group courted by *Action libérale populaire* were Intransigents, whether Catholic, Monarchist, or Nationalist, all less aligned with the party's goals than the first two groups but with common concerns about the actions of the *Bloc des gauches*. Fourth, party leaders attempted to align with Progressists, who although committed to secularism still shared *Action libérale populaire*'s foundational conservatism and commitment to constitutional liberalism. These groups all brought different strengths that contributed to *Action liberal populaire'*s formation and growth into a nationwide mass party, but accommodating their divergent priorities proved to be a constant challenge to the party's maintenance of a disciplined and unified coalition.

A recurring question in the historiography of *Action libérale populaire* is whether the party ever had a real chance of success, given its ties to Catholicism and the opposition it

encountered after its founding in 1901. Certainly, the task of building a coalition that could secure a sustainable legislative majority in 1906 was difficult for a minority opposition party, and among the obstacles encountered, four were of particular note. Assessing these obstacles and how the party addressed them provides insight into whether success was realistic. First, the strongly anti-clericalist Radical Left, a key component of governments that controlled the Chamber of Deputies from 1899 through the First World War, focused on accelerating the process of secularization and creating a dynamic and united front against clericalism. The series of crises precipitated by the Radical Republic beginning in 1902 certainly impacted the tactics adopted by *Action libérale populaire*, and the failure to stop the government garnered criticism from the party's Intransigent opponents. Nonetheless, party leaders exploited these crises to display their commitment to the defense of religions, using the accompanying publicity to recruit new members. The tactic of religious defense reflected *Action libérale populaire*'s commitment to one of its core priorities—religious freedom—so the emphasis on religion was not a surprise. Nonetheless, it weakened their appeal to secular Opportunists, a group critical as strategic allies. If the tradeoff was not catastrophic, it still had a significant cost.

Second, the groups aligned with *Action libérale populaire*'s tactic of religious defense were too fractious and undisciplined to form a truly unified coalition, and many were vehemently opposed to accepting the Republic and thus actively worked against the Catholic Republican movement. This complete rejection of the Republic was particularly true of the Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents, and by attempting to bring as many as possible into the coalition, party leaders risked alienating not just the secular Opportunists but also the core group of Catholic Republicans and social Catholics, because these three groups were firmly committed to the Republic and concerned about any association with anti-republicans. Attitudes among Catholic

Republicans were especially harsh towards Monarchist Intransigents, who had done so much damage to the Catholic Republican cause in the elections of 1893 and 1898. Notably, the most significant problem associated with Intransigents was their electoral undependability, and as such they were never considered an essential part of the party's strategy. However, their inclusion was yet another problem that weakened the party's alignment with other potential partners, most of all the secular Opportunists.

Third, after the elections of 1906, changes in Vatican leadership and priorities caused dissension and wariness within the party, allowing Intransigent opponents of *Action libérale populaire* to attack the party when unity was most needed. Soon after the election failure in 1906, allies began abandoning the party. First to depart were the few Catholic and Monarchist Intransigents who had supported *Action libérale populaire*, many of whom joined with the much larger group of Nationalist Intransigents who transferred their loyalty to the integral nationalism of *Action française*. Catholic Democrats such as Marc Sangnier and his *Sillon* followers had broken with the party by 1907, and other members left for the Opportunist parties, such as the *Fédération républicaine* or the *Alliance Républicaine Démocratique*. Finally, by 1910 both the LPDF and the ACJF had distanced themselves from the party to focus solely on social welfare concerns. Despite these losses, many of which were driven by the decline in support from the Vatican, *Action libérale populaire* continued to grow, although the broad-based coalition could not be sustained with the loss of so many groups, and the party soon became almost exclusively Catholic Republican. Jacques Piou's priority became party survival. Fittingly, then, he adopted a cautious approach to avoid further erosion. Certainly, this approach limited the reach and influence of *Action libérale populaire* leading up to the First World War, but his choices reflect an adaptation to the conditions of the time rather than insistence on an unrealistic vision.

Finally, and most importantly, the Third Republic and its concomitant secularization of politics and education in France had been widely accepted by many French Catholics by 1905, producing an electorate increasingly unmoved by calls for the defense of religion as a political priority. This argument is the most difficult to prove because both comprehensive and specific demographic information about the French electorate is lacking. Certainly, significant pockets of intransigency remained, but it is noteworthy that in 1897 Jacques Piou implored his fellow Catholics to accept the permanence of the Republic because most French citizens had already done so. Acceptance of the Republic as the legitimate government of France was the basis for his call for a Catholic Republican coalition as a precursor to a larger Center-Right Tory party. His long-range goal was to institute constitutional protections as the best means of ensuring personal and religious freedom. The changing attitudes of the nation concerning the Republic required prudence and adjustment, but such were the ideas on which *Action libérale populaire* was founded.

Despite encountering these obstacles from inside and outside the party, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* built an efficient and disciplined organization that they believed was capable of producing a successful electoral coalition and subsequently a legislative majority in 1906. Again, this coalition was envisioned by Jacques Piou as the precursor to a Center-Right, constitutionally liberal party that was committed to protecting personal and religious freedoms through common law, rather than through a confessionally Catholic political party. Further, by 1905 the *Bloc des gauches* itself was fracturing as the SFIO broke away from bourgeois coalitions, conflicts emerged within the *Bloc* over trade unionism, and international tensions produced disagreement on the Left concerning support for pacifism or militarism. Concurrently, with the passage of the Separation Law, anticlericalism receded as a unifying issue among the

parties of the Left. So, achieving the vision of a Center-Right legislative majority was indeed plausible, but the margin for error was slim because of the tenuous commitment of allies to the Catholic Republican coalition and the rapidly changing political landscape. Under these circumstances, the choice by Jacques Piou and Albert de Mun to continue their emphasis on the defense of religion in early 1906 was a serious error, calling into question the party's claim of non-confessionalism and weakening the resolve of their secular Progressist and Independent Opportunist allies as the election approached. Finally, the leaders of *Action libérale populaire* were thoroughly outmaneuvered tactically by Georges Clemenceau immediately prior to the election, and their inability to respond adequately was the final blow to their hopes of victory. The margin for success was too slim for these errors to be overcome.

In the end, building a nationwide mass party was not enough for victory in 1906, and *Action libérale populaire*'s inability to secure an electoral majority is the primary basis for the failure narrative so often presented in the historiography. The election outcome that resulted in the narrative of failure in turn produced the conditions for the narrative of decline, with Jacques Piou's strategy of caution lending credence to the argument that as the First World War approached, the party was no longer effectual or relevant. Nonetheless, this study has argued that the failure and decline narratives are only partially true, and true only if viewed in the short term. The key to interpreting these issues is how failure and decline are measured, and the persistence of these narratives of failure and decline is tied to the limited vision and goals of Albert de Mun, which were oriented to the use of majoritarian power to establish social Catholic institutions, renew Christian morality, and enact social and labor reforms. The electoral failure of 1906 took the nation in the opposite direction, with the Radical Republic and its secular project strengthened by the outcome at the expense of institutional religion. If *Action libérale populaire*

is assessed within this narrow view, then the narratives of failure and decline appear fully supportable. There is no dispute that the party was abandoned by most if its coalition partners, that its leaders accepted the role of a cautious minority party isolated from government, and that many Catholics turned to a form of patriotic nationalism or joined alternative groups that rejected any accommodation with the Republic, such as the integral nationalists of *Action française*.

The key to a more nuanced understanding of the legacy of *Action libérale populaire* is a broader view. Notably, assessments of the failure and decline narratives assume a different frame when the events of 1919 and 1920 are taken into account. In the decline narrative, although *Action libérale populaire* continued as an independent party from 1914 to 1919, it did so only because of the political hibernation of all parties during the war. Once the war ended, Jacques Piou retired, and the party he co-founded quietly disappeared and was of no further consequence. This interpretation of events is common in the political historiography of the Third Republic, but it neglects four outcomes that significantly alter the narrative from one of decline to one of continuity. First, Piou did indeed retire, and although there are conflicting accounts of his willingness to do so, one thing is certain—at the age of 81 he was ready to allow his young protégé, Xavier de la Rochefoucauld, to assume day to day operation of the party. In the first Chamber elections since 1914, he stepped aside to let a younger politician run for the seat from Lozère that he had occupied since 1906.[546] Piou quickly became a sought-after elder statesman,

[546] As Piou remembered the decision, "I . . . realized . . . that the voters wanted to bother themselves as little as possible with veterans and make a new policy with new me; there was only to give way to the young and the less compromised." Jacques Piou, *D'une guerre à l'autre 1871-1914* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1932), 206.

and his influence within the Catholic Republican movement continued unabated.[547] However, he did not serve in any office of governmental office again.

The second outcome that alters the narrative of decline was that *Action libérale populaire* did not disappear. Rather, in December 1918, the party joined the *Entente républicaine et démocratique* (ERD, "Republican and Democratic Agreement"), through which all Center-Right parties agreed to work together. A year later, in early November 1919, *Action libérale populaire* officially merged with the *Fédération républicaine,* formally uniting Catholic Republicans and Progressists in one party. This new Center-Right *Fédération républicaine* would be a true merger as a constitutionally liberal party that represented Catholic interests while fully accepting the secularity of the Republic. Nearly twenty years after the founding of *Action libérale populaire,* Jacques Piou's goal of establishing a larger Center-Right party in coalition with Progressists had been realized, although he was no longer in the Chamber of Deputies to lead it. The merger took place as the nation prepared for the legislative elections of November 1919, the first since the onset of war in 1914.

The merged party joined with the other parties of the Republican Center in the *Bloc national,* which appeared to be the strongest political coalition following the war because it included Radicals who had moved to the political Right. However, a major issue remained that split the constituent parties of the *Bloc national* over the wording of the election manifesto. The old clerical-secular divide resurfaced because Radicals insisted on the inviolability of the laic

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[547] *Le Petit Démocrate*, 24 January 1926, 2. In this article, Piou was interviewed by one of the leaders of the newly formed *Parti Démocrate Populaire*, Jean Courtarvel, who considered Piou to have "one of the most eloquent voices which will honor the tribune of the Parliament and defend, with a prestigious brilliance, the great causes, religious and national . . . a man who played a leading role in French political life."

laws and the absolute secularity of the state, two positions Catholic groups could not accept. The impasse appeared unresolvable, until Jacques Piou proposed a simple but profound solution. "I hastily improvised a drafting, the words of which should be less frightening than our usual language although having basically the same meaning: 'The fact of the secularism of the state must be reconciled with respect for all beliefs.'" Four days later, the old anticlericalist Georges Clemenceau commented: "How could we not agree, as this is the principle of the Republican regime?"[548] This remarkable event illustrates how far politics had come since the open antagonism towards Catholicism of the *Bloc des gauches* and of Georges Clemenceau throughout his political career. This evolution certainly was due in part to the Radical Republic's success in passing the Separation Law, but it also was the result of the effort of Catholic Republicans to defend both the Republic and religious freedom.

Despite these accomplishments, Jacques Piou was not optimistic about the future. He viewed the *Bloc national* as fragile, and indeed it was unable to maintain a disciplined coalition past 1924. For this reason, he did not believe his vision of a truly sustainable Center-Right Tory party could be put into practice, a belief that also proved to be prescient because the *Federation républicaine* was unable to sustain a larger coalition of the Center-Right. But most troubling to Piou was the realization that in the wake of a catastrophic war, the political climate had changed so that parties and politicians were unwilling to do the hard work of constitutional revision. Piou observed: "As for revising the Constitution of 1875, which for 45 years had been the source of all abuses, they did not think about it."[549] For Piou, the Republic would continue to be

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[548] Jacques Piou, *D'une guerre à l'autre 1871-1914* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1932), 219, 221.

[549] Jacques Piou, *D'une guerre à l'autre 1871-1914* (Paris: *Éditions Spes*, 1932), 224. As he had since 1885, Piou listed the failings of the Constitution Laws as unlimited parliamentary power, a weak chief executive, and the lack of a Bill of Rights and judiciary to enforce it.

structurally unstable, producing volatile swings between governments unrestrained by constitutional limits or judicial oversight. It would only be in 1958 and the adoption of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic that Piou's vision of a government restrained by the separation of powers and judicial constitutional oversight would be instituted in France.

The third outcome that alters the narrative of decline was the continued work of young leaders who had joined *Action libérale populaire*'s campaigns in the early years after its founding, among them a significant group who went on to serve in the Chamber of Deputies or in regional or local governments. In 1924, many of these younger politicians left other political parties to form the *Parti démocrate populaire* (PDP, "Popular Democratic Party"), and although typically linked by historians to former *Sillonnistes*, fully two thirds of the PDP's founders were former members of either ALP, the ACJF, or both. The PDP adopted distinctly social Catholic priorities and an internationalist foreign policy, so it is usually considered the first truly Christian Democratic party in France. However, in its commitment to constitutional liberalism and common law, it retained much from its Catholic Republican roots in *Action libérale populaire*.[550] This new movement once again combined the differing visions of the cofounders of *Action libérale populaire*. It would be through the PDP that the legacy of *Action libérale populaire* would be maintained, as much as through the *Fédération républicaine*.[551]

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[550] Jean-Claude Delbreil, *Centrisme et démocratie-chrétienne en France: Le Parti Démocrate Populaire des origines au M.R.P. (1919-1944)* (Paris: *Publications de la Sorbonne*, 1990), 15.

[551] The PDP was founded in 1924 after the collapse of the *Bloc national*. Its founders were primarily Catholic Republicans and Catholic Democrats, although most considered themselves social Catholics and had been members of various groups. Among the founders were former *Sillonnistes* such as Robert Cornilleau, who by 1912 was aligned with moderate Republicans. Many party founders had been ACJF leaders such as Joseph Zamanski, Alfred Michelin, and Jean Lerolle. Lerolle was also an ALP deputy, and he led the Catholic Republican cadre along with former ALP deputies Charles Gallet and Auguste Durand. As such, the PDP had roots in the movements founded by Jacques Piou, Albert de Mun, and Marc Sangnier. For a complete presentation of the composition and policy

The fourth outcome that alters the narrative of decline was that the continuity between ALP and PDP shows the broader and more profound influence by the Catholic Republican movement on French politics after the ALP-FR merger in 1919. Catholic Republicans were key partners in the *Bloc national* of 1919-1924, the ruling Center-Right governments of 1926-1932, the conservative coalitions that opposed the leftist Popular Front in the late 1930s, and the reconstituted Center-Right coalitions after the Second World War. None of these coalitions formed the Tory party that Jacques Piou had envisioned in the 1880s, nor were they centered on Catholic morality as Albert de Mun had hoped would grow from the social Catholic movement. Nonetheless, the legacy of *Action libérale populaire* was the Center-Right's full acceptance of Catholic Republican commitments to conservative Catholicism, religious and educational freedom, constitutional liberalism, and social welfare reform. The elusive goal of constitutional reform was eventually realized, but only after the catastrophe of the Fall of France in 1940, the disastrous Vichy regime, and the failure of the unstable Fourth Republic that had been founded in 1946. In June 1958, following a coup attempt and subsequent political crisis, Charles de Gaulle was asked by President René Coty to assume leadership of the nation and propose a new constitution. The Constitution of the Fifth Republic, approved in October 1958, established what Jacques Piou had proposed as a young deputy in the 1880s—a strong chief executive and a supreme judicial council with the authority to determine the constitutionality of laws passed by the legislature.

In assessing the relative success or failure of *Action libérale populaire*, this study proposes a broader approach than the "one election" orientation that supports the narratives of

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approach of the PDP, see Jean-Claude Delbreil, *Centrisme et démocratie-chrétienne en France: Le Parti Démocrate Populaire des origines au M.R.P. (1919-1944)* (Paris: *Publications de la Sorbonne*, 1990).

failure and decline. In contrast, when measured against Jacques Piou's long-term vision and goals, *Action libérale populaire* succeeded—eventually. If the narrative of failure is measured based on achievements and outcomes well beyond the elections of 1906, then it becomes less convincing. Likewise, the narrative of decline loses its explanatory power when assessed in terms of the party's continued growth, its eventual merger into a Center-Right coalition in 1919, and the continued presence and influence of Catholic Republican priorities in coalitions of the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and beyond. As a key part of the rapprochement between secular Republicans and Catholics, and in time between the Republic and the Vatican, the party's significance transcends simple narratives. While acknowledging the work of other scholars, this study provides an assessment of *Action libérale populaire* that highlights the long term constitutional vision of Jacques Piou as well, and therefore arrives at a different conclusion regarding the party's accomplishments. In this light, *Action libérale populaire* assumes a more prominent and critical position in the effort by Catholic Republicans to ensure a fully accepted role for Catholicism both in French conservatism, and within the secular Republic in the twentieth century.

The Catholic Republican movement did not disappear with the passing of the social Catholic Albert de Mun nor with that of the constitutional liberal Jacques Piou. Questions remain concerning the extent of influence of *Action libérale populaire* and the Catholic Republicans on subsequent conservative movements, especially on those formed after the Second World War. Further study of connections and discontinuities between the Catholic Republicans of the early twentieth century and the moderate Christian Democrats of the mid-twentieth century would be helpful in providing a higher degree of clarity about the nature and evolution of French conservatism beyond *Action française* and the Rightist Leagues of the 1930s. These questions

are important because—as this study argues—the influence of *Action libérale populaire* on French conservatism did not end in 1906, 1914, or 1919. A broader view, at once more comprehensive and nuanced, would provide a clearer picture of these movements, the motivations of their founders, and their contribution to the larger narrative and French politics, government, and society.

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