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Father Jules Renault and the French Catholic Mission to Early Meiji Japan

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本稿は1875年から1880年まで長崎に滞在した若きカトリック司祭（ルノー神父）の日記を資料とするものである。他のカトリックの宣教師同様、ルノー神父もフランス人であり、フランス流の教皇権至上主義的な性格を持つカトリック文化をもたらした。当時西洋との新たな関係を築きつつあった日本は、文化及び宗教の両面において目まぐるしい変化の時代を闊していた。この時期の日本カトリック教会の歴史は、宣教師たちが後にしてきた世界とそうして彼らが出会った日本との双方を理解しなければ当時の日本のカトリック教会の歴史を理解する事が出来ないことを示す好例である。

This article is based around the diary of a young Catholic priest (Father Renault) who was in Nagasaki from 1875 to 1880. As with the other Catholic missionaries, he was French and brought with him a Catholic culture that was strongly French and Ultramontane in character. Japan was going through a period of rapid cultural and religious change as it re-established contacts with the West. The history of the Catholic Church in Japan in this period illustrates the need to understand both the world the missionaries came from and the Japan they encountered.

Introduction

Japan was officially “opened up” to France with the signing in October 1858 of the Treaty between the representatives of the French Emperor Napoleon III and those of the recently installed (and last) Tokugawa Shogun¹. It was the fifth such Treaty signed between Japan and outside powers following those with the United States, the Netherlands, Russia, and the United Kingdom. The initial treaty with the United States signed in 1854 had been followed by subsequent “improvements” to it both of which had alerted the British and the French to their comparative disadvantage in their dealings with Japan. The treaty with Russia, which was signed against the backdrop of the Crimean War (1854-1856) between the United Kingdom and France on the one hand and Russia on the other, had provided additional impetus to the British and French. The British mission under Lord Elgin and that of France were meant to have arrived at the same time but the French ships were not prepared and Lord Elgin came and went with treaty in hand before the French Baron Gros was even ready to sail from Shanghai via Naha².

While the Anglo-Japanese Treaty was frequently consulted during French treaty negotiations, that of the United States was also used as a model. The interpreter for the French side during the treaty negotiations was Father Mermet de Cachon of the *société des missions étrangères de Paris* (MEP) who had been based at Naha in the Kingdom of the Ryukyus since 1855. Three other MEP priests from Naha were also attached to the mission. Unlike the Anglo-Japanese Treaty negotiated by Lord Elgin, the French negotiators insisted on religious rights as part of the Treaty. For them, perhaps unlike the British, there was a strong interest in freedom of worship for their own nationals and also in freedom to propagate their national ideas of religion in Japan. The religious policies of Napoleon III had evolved out of the relationship between the Catholic Church in France and successive French governments which had to deal with the ideological divisions of France following the upheavals of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic

period³. However, freedom of religion in Japan, considered of key significance to the MEP fathers and to Napoleon III, was not granted by the Shogun and there was little that the French negotiators could do to change his decision. The final treaty closely reflected those with the other powers and made no real concession to French religious concerns or conception of France's unique *mission civilisatrice*. Even the commercial aspects of the treaty were not really satisfactory; especially the institution of high tariffs on the import of French wine and liquors. France had certainly gained no more than the other powers and had to be (or appear to be) content with following in their footsteps. The relative practical unpreparedness of the French mission was reflected in the consequent delays in sending the first permanent French envoy to Japan.

From the side of the Shogunate, the negotiations with France could be seen as part of the wider range of difficulties that the government confronted both inside Japan and as a result of the forced intrusion of other powers. Concessions to foreign powers were at best regarded as unfortunate necessities and at worst as a frontal attack on Japanese society. Certainly they could be looked at as providing ammunition not only for a conservative reaction in Japan but also for a serious attempt to overthrow the Tokugawa Shogunate. While this applied *mutatis mutandis* to negotiations with all foreign powers, that with the French had highly individual characteristics. On the one hand, the tardiness and ill preparedness of the French mission perhaps allowed the negotiators for the Shogunate to take the French mission less seriously and to be firmer in its negotiating position with them. This was augmented by the lack of cohesion over policy goals demonstrated by France and the inability of the French to separate and prioritise the four key aspects of their mission (commercial, military, religious, and the pursuit of "national prestige"). On the other hand, the willingness of the government of Napoleon III to resort to military means to achieve its goals was apparent not only in Europe but also in China and Southeast Asia. In the latter at least, Napoleon III's perception of France as the defender of Catholicism and of Catholic missions had led to conquest and annexation and indicated a potentially serious threat behind the request for religious toleration in Japan.

The issue of religious toleration was a particularly acute one in the declining years of the Tokugawa Shogunate and especially with reference to Christianity and above all Catholicism. Japan's earlier contact with Catholicism, from the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in 1549 to the violent suppression of the Shimabara rebellion in 1637, was very far from forgotten and had left a permanent legacy⁴. Whatever may have been the intentions of the missionaries and however positively they may have been viewed by certain Japanese at various times, the end result of this first missionary period was that Catholicism was viewed not only as an alien belief system but also as a very dangerous threat to the peace and security of Japan⁵. Christianity was perceived as fundamentally undermining the social and political order, as being intolerant of other religions and thus disruptive of harmony, and as being a front for European aggression and possibly annexation. The Tokugawa Shogunate had early on made the distinction between Catholicism and Protestantism but this distinction was largely lost at the popular level. Christianity as a whole was considered alien and dangerous and was forcibly prohibited throughout Japan. The *Pax Tokugawa* established under the Shogunate involved many measures but the abolition of Christianity was symbolically central to it. The enforced registration of all Japanese

households at Buddhist temples had certainly created a strong vested interest among Buddhists in maintaining the ban on Christianity, but it went to a far deeper level than this. The embattled Shogunate could not concede religious toleration, which *de facto* meant permission for Christian proselytisation, without symbolically conceding the redundancy of the whole system by which they had ruled for more than 250 years.

In many ways, this brief review of the negotiations for the first treaty between France and Japan indicates clearly the main lines along which Franco-Japanese relations would develop in the next few decades and the framework within which missionaries such as Father Renault would operate when they were finally allowed to do so. The nature of the French position was determined by the complex history of church-state relations in France and of the nascent French Empire. While they attempted to apply their ideas to the situation they found in Japan, they had evolved elsewhere under different and quite distinct circumstances. To gain some understanding of the missionary work and self-perception of the Catholic Church in Japan in the early Meiji period, and of the *mentalités* of MEP missionaries such as Father Renault and those who supported them, it is necessary to understand the evolution and history of the French Catholic *milieux* from which they came.

However, while the script of the early missionaries may have been written in France under very particular circumstances, they acted it out in the equally particular circumstances of Japan in the 1870's. A more rounded view of the missionary endeavour is then only possible by gaining an understanding of the situation they encountered in Japan and what created it. The missionary impulse was formed and nurtured within the framework of French Catholicism but it strived to achieve its goals in the framework of Meiji Japan. In an effort to try to understand the totality of the world of Father Renault we have to look not at one world but at two: the one he left and the one he found. Both Meiji Japan and the variety of French Catholicism represented by Father Renault are clearly things of the past. Perhaps, however, the encounter between them, while important historically, is of more than historical interest. Meetings between cultures, ideas, value systems, and individuals who embody them are an ongoing process. An awareness of the historically conditioned nature of these cultures, as evidenced by the history of Father Renault, can deepen and enrich our understanding of them and of the complexity of encounters between them. It also raises the issues that are explicitly central to the missionary endeavour but perhaps implicit in all cross-cultural meetings of any depth: how do we separate the universal from the more culturally restricted? And are there universals at all? Clearly, Father Renault believed that there were.

The Two Worlds of Father Renault: The World He Left

Jules Alfred Renault was born in 1852 in Paris⁶. His father was a civil servant from Librécy in the northern French prefecture of the Ardennes while his mother was from Villé in Alsace. His father had joined the customs service and moved to Paris in 1837 at the age of 30 and had married Jules' mother ten years later. Jules was one of at least seven surviving children. When he was ten years old, the family had moved to Alsace where Jules spent his teenage years. In the aftermath of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the family (including the younger

children) had moved back from Alsace to the Ardennes in 1872. His father, who was then 65 years old, seems to have retired from government service at the same time⁷. Jules had anticipated the family move out of Alsace by moving to Paris in April 1871. This was not however in reaction to the Prussian occupation of Alsace; at the age of nineteen Jules was already firmly embarked on a clerical career in the Catholic Church.

Jules entered the *petit séminaire* at Strasbourg in 1865 and continued on to the *grand séminaire* (which he completed in July 1871) in the meantime being accepted as a candidate for the MEP in September 1869. On completion of his studies in Strasbourg, he moved on to the MEP seminary in Paris where he progressed through the levels of clerical training (sub-deacon in 1873; deacon and priest in 1874). In December of 1874 he left France for Japan arriving in Nagasaki early in 1875⁸. He was to serve as an MEP priest in Japan for just five years before he died of cholera in 1880 having been sent to the MEP hospital in Hong Kong for treatment⁹.

Father Renaut was born and lived his formative years in the Second Empire régime of Napoleon III. The Second Empire was in many respects a compromise government; many believed that "compromised" would be a more accurate word. The ambiguity with which this government was viewed is nowhere more clearly seen than in its relationship with the Catholic Church. Until the Revolution of 1789, the Catholic Church had enjoyed a unique relationship with the Bourbon government of France. As the "oldest daughter of the Church", France was viewed as a pre-eminently Catholic nation. Catholicism was the official religion of France and other religions were barely tolerated. The attack on Protestantism after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1684 had left the Protestant churches with little power. Judaism was not recognised and the increasing popularity of "free thinking" was the target of much clerical criticism, though without much vigour especially if such "free thinkers" conformed in most outward respects. The alliance between the throne and the altar was complete. In return for this unquestioning support of the state, the church in practical terms functioned as an office of the state and had evolved a philosophy (Gallicanism) which identified the French Catholic Church as a unique institution. France was a confessional state and the church served to reinforce its sacral nature¹⁰. This relationship was violently torn apart by the Revolution; one major strand of French Catholic history for the next 150 years was the attempt to rethink (or perhaps reconstitute) the relationship between church and state.

The Revolution had first established a Constitutional Church under the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which attracted the support of many French clerics, but the resistance to it was also substantial and increased over time with papal condemnation and with widespread violent attacks on church property and personnel. In 1795 the Constitutional Church was abolished and the Catholic Church struggled on against a state which had gone overnight from supportive to vociferously hostile¹¹. The Emperor Napoleon put a stop to this situation with the Concordat that he signed with Pope Pius VII in 1801. It was largely on the basis of this Concordat that church-state relations in France would be governed until its unilateral abolition by the French government in 1905¹². While the Concordat re-established church-state relations, it definitely fell short of reconstituting the confessional state. Catholic priests and bishops received salaries from the state and

had to swear loyalty to it, but Protestant ministers were also salaried and Jews received official recognition of their religion. The Concordat was seen by many Catholics as necessary protection following the violence of the Revolution, but as woefully inadequate compared with the days of the Bourbon monarchy.

The Concordat was also an agreement between the Papacy and the French government and as such it not only clarified church-state relations in France but also put them on a new footing. The old Gallican church had been symbiotically tied to the French State and had resisted many of the organisational and even doctrinal strictures of the papacy. Though unquestionably Catholic, it had also been a national church. In fact, for the Gallicans there had been no dissonance between the two in the French church. The Concordat recognised that in large measure that era was over and that Gallicanism was no longer a viable option. In the years following the Concordat and through the régime of Napoleon III, the Gallican clergy conducted a rearguard action against the increasing identification of the French Catholic Church and papal interests. It was a losing battle as, without the clear support of the state, it was probably bound to be. The Gallican clergy (including a dwindling number of bishops) were more and more isolated as the Catholic Church in France (as throughout the Catholic world) came to adopt a papal-centred Ultramontanism¹³.

Ultramontanism dominated much of the thinking of the Catholic Church throughout the nineteenth century and, in many ways, until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). While it was a many faceted phenomenon, it essentially placed the Papacy at the doctrinal and organisational centre of the Catholic Church and used adherence to papal decrees and statements as the one and only measure of true catholicity¹⁴. The hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church was forcibly reasserted against other organisational views (such as Gallicanism) and the doctrinal views of the Papacy were reasserted against all others. The teaching *magisterium* of the Papacy was considered to be absolute and all those who opposed it, whether inside or outside the church, were manifestly in error. For those outside the church, the dominant teaching was that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*¹⁵ while virtually all ideas other than Catholicism were condemned by Pius IX in the "Syllabus of Errors" which he attached to the encyclical *Quanta cura* in 1864. It was further widely taught that "Error has no rights". If the "Syllabus of Errors" clearly differentiated the Catholic Church from the rapidly changing modern society, the capstone of the Ultramontane triumph was the passing of *Pastor aeternus* by the First Vatican Council in 1870 which proclaimed the Papacy to be infallible when formally pronouncing on all questions of faith and morals¹⁶.

The Ultramontane agenda was then a radically different one from that which had been followed during the *ancien régime* and which was still being advocated by the dwindling number of Gallican bishops in the French episcopate. In terms of church-state relations, the state was less a partner of the church than an organisation responsible for allowing the church to execute its mission, or at the very least not impeding its doing so. This view of church-state relations had a long pedigree dating back at least to the time of Gregory VII. However, it had been in abeyance for some time and the Catholic Church of the nineteenth century certainly lacked the power to enforce it. The major end results of the Ultramontane view in France were: 1) the acceptance of different French régimes "on sufferance" (i.e. in so far as they could be seen to support the church's mission); and 2) the further withdrawing of

the Catholic community in on itself as a community set apart. The latter was reinforced by the non-Catholic view that Ultramontanism indicated that the Catholic Church was radically out of step with the times. In addition, for non-Catholics the unquestioning loyalty of French Catholics to the Papacy, alongside their highly conditional loyalty to French governments, meant that they were somewhat less than good patriots. The French Catholic community increasingly saw itself as an embattled minority in combat with a host of enemies who did not share its goals. The specific identity of these enemies varied over time and from individual to individual: some favouring Liberalism, some Socialism, some Judaism, and some Freemasonry – some believing that all were involved in some measure¹⁷. Ultramontanism was very far however from being only negative. It also shaped a Catholic culture that was, in important respects, both strong and self-confident. It certainly provided the spiritual and theological underpinnings (and an understanding of historical continuity) which allowed Father Renaut and many others like him to go to distant overseas missions with a certainty of the rightness and indeed necessity of their cause.

Essential to the Ultramontane view of the Catholic Church was the necessity to maintain a disciplined, hierarchical order. The forcible demise of the confessional state had liberated the church from any real reason to temper this with the demands of the state. The Catholic Church could in many ways create a parallel social order. At the centre of this order was the creation of a priestly order which could instruct and keep discipline at the same time as being distinct from the secular world. The reforms that the Council of Trent had initiated in priestly training and which had been somewhat moderated by the confessional state could now be applied with full rigour. Priestly training involved the separation of young men (13 in the case of Jules Renaut) from their families and an education that was dedicated solely to making them knowledgeable and effective priests. While many of the priests (and especially those who were to become Bishops) under the confessional state were drawn from the middle and upper ranks of society, French priests in the Third Empire and afterwards were largely recruited from the peasantry or, like Father Renaut, from the *pétit bourgeois*. Their priestly training naturally tended to set them even further apart from the social *milieux* from which they came.

Seminary training was academically and spiritually rigorous; it was also remarkably uniform. The suitability of seminarians was constantly supervised (in Father Renaut's case during his training at the MEP seminary by Alexis Péan¹⁸) and successful completion of studies and subsequent ordination was a real accomplishment. Father Renaut's ordination to the diaconate¹⁹ for instance was not without opposition from those in the MEP who considered that he was not ready for it²⁰. The difficulty of the training was mediated not only by spiritual direction within the seminary and the, albeit distant, support of families who were strongly committed to Catholicism but also by membership in various religious societies which flourished in the seminaries and outside them. Father Renaut, for instance, joined the *congrégation de la Ste Vierge* in February 1867 and the Franciscan Third Order in March 1873²¹. These religious associations and sodalities had been an important part of Catholic life since the Tridentine period and had become even more so as Ultramontanism took the lead. They supported individuals and groups in their belief and practices and helped to spread them. They were an

important element in clerical culture and in spreading the ideas of this culture to a lay audience.

While uniformity of belief was inculcated in the seminaries and the wider Catholic world, this was supported by an efflorescence of religious practices and customs designed to spread the Catholic message and acceptance of the rigorous Ultramontane conception of the church. Membership in religious associations and sodalities involved not only attendance at ceremonies and communal practices but also compulsory private devotions and, frequently, material evidence of membership. Members were expected to identify themselves as such and often to wear a symbol of membership such as a badge, holy medal, or scapular. Catholicism was something that had to be publicly acknowledged especially in the face of the scepticism and hostility which Catholics might be expected to encounter in France as well as elsewhere. In fact this very hostility helped to reinforce French Catholics in their beliefs and also in their cultural milieu. Catholic priests, as befitted the leaders of this clerico-cultural world, were trained to take the lead in this public display of membership in the Catholic world. The Ultramontane church vigorously enforced clerical discipline in terms of belief but also in terms of dress and behaviour. French priests (except those from the Regular Orders who had their own habits for each order) were expected always and at all times to wear the clerical dress of cassock and soutane which would identify them in the public arena. The Ultramontane Popes, though they often disapproved of direct clerical participation in political life, favoured a strong clerical presence in public life. Processions to mark religious occasions were encouraged and many of these, such as processions bearing the Eucharist in a monstrance through the streets, became popular features of Catholic life demonstrating their confidence, faith, and separateness.

Of course, these externalities of Catholic behaviour centred around the centrality of the priest as the most accessible member of an hierarchical chain which stretched upwards to the Pope as Christ's Vicar on Earth at its head. Even the most isolated, poor, and embattled Catholic community could be aware that it was part of this great earthly (and indeed celestial) chain. The importance given to non-sacramental ceremonies such as Benediction and to the use of ornate vestments and incense provided tangible evidence of this exalted link between the church at parish level and the Vatican at the centre. The Ultramontane church set out to reinforce or create a complex set of ceremonies and symbols to represent its theology of the church.

While the Catholic Church was, in many ways, on the defensive during this period suffering from very real disabilities and attacks on its property and social role, it was also fundamentally triumphalist in its self-perception. The loss of the Papal States as part of the process of Italian Unification is the primary indicator of both of these. Most Catholics, and certainly many French Catholics, believed in the 1860's that maintaining the Papal States was essential to maintaining the independence and integrity of the Papacy and thus of the Catholic Church as a whole. The prime actors in the movement towards Italian Unification were widely castigated, a view Father Renaut shared, and the withdrawal of Catholic support for Napoleon III was based on the emperor's vacillating support for the Pope²². Napoleon III had sent a garrison to Rome to protect the last vestiges of the Papal States but had been unwilling to do more. The final removal of these troops in September 1870, though a direct result of the Franco-Prussian controversy, was

closely followed by military defeat. For many Catholics, the defeat was a punishment for Napoleon III's weakness in defence of the Pope's rights²³.

The manifest physical and territorial defeat of the Papacy did not in any way weaken the Ultramontane stance; in fact, it had paradoxically entirely the opposite effect. Pius IX, who continued to reign as Pope until 1878, though he may have very publicly (and somewhat petulantly) withdrawn to be the first "Prisoner of the Vatican", did not abdicate his claims to total obedience and constantly worked towards both the acknowledgement of these claims and the stifling of all forms of resistance to them. Two noticeable characteristics of this Ultramontane triumphalism and self-confidence which were amply endorsed by Pius' successor Leo XIII who reigned from 1878 to 1903, were the spread of popular belief in Marian apparitions and the renewed salience given to missionary activity outside of Europe²⁴. In 1846, an apparition of the Virgin Mary was seen in La Salette in the French département of Isère which was widely reported in France and in the wider Catholic world. More famous than this was the apparition seen at Lourdes in the Pyrenees in 1858. Other apparitions, both recognised by Episcopal authorities and non-recognised, were to follow throughout the second half of the century in France, Germany, Italy, and Ireland. In all cases, these apparitions served to underline the embattled nature of Catholicism but also to highlight the celestial promise of its presumed ultimate victory. In addition, of course, they helped to bind Catholics together with the Ultramontane Papacy in a sense of common purpose conducted under the direct auspices of heaven and thus believed to be inevitably destined for success.

The apparent defeats suffered by the Catholic Church in Europe were recast in the light of the Marian apparitions as a series of temporary reverses *sub specie aeternitatis*, but the missionary field appeared to offer the opportunity of reversing these defeats in a somewhat more timely fashion. Throughout the Catholic zones of Europe from Ireland to Poland, young men and women set off as missionaries to Africa and Asia full of zeal to spread the ideas and practices of Ultramontane Catholicism. France was naturally a major source of missionary recruitment despite the problems of the Catholic Church in that country²⁵. The area of recruitment for French missionaries probably provides a good geographical image of the regional strengths of the French church at that time. In France and throughout Europe (even in traditionally Protestant England) new Catholic missionary orders were founded and old ones (such as the MEP which was founded in 1663) were given new life. The difficult, and ambivalent, relationship between the Catholic Church in France and successive French governments was reflected in the relationship between these governments and French Catholic missionary efforts. It was also reflected in the personal attitudes of the missionaries themselves. French Catholic missionaries in the Ultramontane period were above all dedicated to their faith and to its expansion, however they were also patriotic Frenchmen too²⁶. While they themselves, like Father Renaut, saw no inherent conflict between the two, there was a degree of confusion especially from the governments and peoples of the countries they entered as missionaries. This was certainly the case for early Meiji Japan.

The Two Worlds of Father Renaut: The World He Found

Father Renaut arrived in Nagasaki early in 1875. The building of the first Catholic Church in Meiji Nagasaki (at Oura) was begun by Father Furet in 1863 and was completed by Father Petitjean by early 1865²⁷. The port of Nagasaki had largely been created by the Jesuits in the early missionary period and Northwest Kyushu had been the strongest centre of Catholicism in this period. Despite two centuries of often violent suppression, the French missionaries were hopeful that they would find some remnants of the earlier Catholic population in the area. The Tokugawa authorities had become aware as late as the 1790's that such residual populations did indeed exist²⁸. The MEP missionaries in turn were not to be disappointed in their hopes and in March 1865 some representatives of the crypto-Christian community entered the new church and declared their unity of faith to Father Petitjean²⁹. It was very soon clear to Father Petitjean and Father Laucaigne (who had arrived in November 1864 to assist him) that there were some thousands of these crypto-Christians in the area of Nagasaki, especially in Urakami and the islands of the coast of Northwest Kyushu. While the presence of these crypto-Christians indicated that the MEP mission would meet with a high level of initial success, the next ten years were to underline the many obstacles which would confront the missionaries.

The movements, which led to the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the restoration of imperial power in 1868, were often conflicting in their goals. On the one hand, the enemies of the Tokugawas rejoiced in the seeming weakness of the Shogunate; on the other hand, it was this very weakness which was their chief source of criticism. This attitude was reflected in their approach to the issue of expanding links with the Western powers. Some believed that Japan would inevitably be open to the West and so had to manage that opening to its advantage in so far as it could; while others believed that opening Japan was both dangerous and a further indication of the frailty of the Shogunate. This division of opinion was reflected in approaches to religion as well. The Tokugawas (as noted above) had used Buddhism as a vehicle for social control and had made it central to their administration. Many of the principal advocates of imperial restoration were committed to putting an Emperor-centred version of Shinto at the centre of the official religious life of Japan³⁰. Once again, progressive Tokugawa enfeeblement in enforcing Buddhism, which permitted the growth of this more separatist and nationalist form of Shinto, could be looked at as a sign of flexibility or as an indicator of weakness. The appearance of a Christian community in the Nagasaki area, especially one ministered to and therefore perhaps protected by foreign priests, was significant to both Tokugawa loyalists and those actively working towards the overthrow of the Shogunate. The response of the Bakufu was to attempt to enforce the old anti-Christian legislation even as the Shogunate rapidly began to collapse.

In July 1867 the soldiers of the shogunal representative in Nagasaki launched a surprise raid on the Christian settlements at Urakami. The Christians had been increasingly reluctant to continue to hide their religious beliefs and the MEP priests had encouraged them in this. A number of villagers were arrested and Father Petitjean requested the help of the French Minister in Edo (Léon Roches) in obtaining their release. However, further arrests were subsequently made in Omura. Of these, more than twenty recanted and were released in September. Finally, the

Shogunate agreed to the release of all the prisoners (following more French pressure on their behalf) but only with the assurance that the MEP priests would not be allowed to communicate with them. The Shogun even wrote to Napoleon III requesting an end to missionary propaganda. The whole incident indicated the entanglement of French and Catholic interests, in the minds of French missionaries and government alike. The Shogunate had conceded to French demands but this did not indicate any lessening of the perception that Christianity was an alien and dangerous set of beliefs. In fact, French intervention undoubtedly encouraged this perception. The Shogun's willingness to release the prisoners was viewed very negatively by the advocates of imperial restoration who were particularly strong in Kyushu.

Remnant Tokugawa loyalists and others resisted the Meiji Restoration of 1868 in the Boshin Civil War. This resistance was assisted by French officers who, while acting without the approval of their government, did little to improve the situation for the MEP missionaries³¹. The Meiji government immediately reissued the proscription against Christianity and in June 1868 ordered the deportation of the Urakami Christians. While only 120 were deported at that time, a further 3,300 were deported early in 1870 to various parts of Japan. Of those who were exiled, a total of 660 died in prison while others died during the persecutions which occurred in Omura and the Goto islands at the same time³². The Meiji government initially tried to foster Shinto and to separate Buddhism and Shinto. Buddhism, the vehicle of the Tokugawa administration, suffered a number of attacks on its temples, artworks, and personnel. The varying efforts of the new government to establish Shinto as the state religion independent of Buddhism between 1868 and 1873 largely failed and by 1875 were abandoned³³. Buddhism re-emerged as in many ways a stronger religious force because it was now more purely religious in nature. In addition, the period in which Buddhism was discredited led to a strong surge of support from Japanese Buddhists to reassert their national and patriotic credentials.

The Iwakura mission to the West (1871-1873) underlined the importance attached to religious freedom by foreign powers, and it also clarified for the Japanese government the differences between Protestantism and Ultramontane Catholicism. The Meiji government had been slowly moving away from policies of state control of religion and towards more toleration. In 1873, they removed the proscription on Christianity and began to let the Urakami exiles return home. Legal freedom of religious belief in Japan was however not finally granted until 1889 under article 28 of the Meiji Constitution.

When Father Renaut arrived in Nagasaki in 1875, the period of persecution was over and the exiles had returned to form an important element of the Catholic Church in Kyushu. A new regime of religious tolerance seemed to be in place and the MEP missionaries had to confront a new situation. It was a situation of considerable complexity. The role of France in the end of the Shogunate, along with the disappearance of the Third Empire in France following Napoleon III's military defeat, had not done much for French prestige internationally nor in its role as the sole Catholic state to have treaty relations with Japan. The Meiji government's withdrawal from direct religious interventions left many of the Buddhist sects and many followers of Shinto in a position to actively propagate their views. They now had the freedom to oppose Catholicism on both religious and national terms. Toleration also allowed Protestant missionaries (largely from the United Kingdom

and the United States) to work more freely in Japan. The prestige of these two countries had increased at the same time as that of France had declined and Protestant missionaries, who the MEP missionaries believed to be well funded, were free to build on this prestige as well as on the clear links between Protestantism and modernisation which Catholicism seemed to lack. Increasing knowledge of the West also led many Japanese to a perception that religion and the modern West were not necessarily linked at all and that agnosticism and scepticism were also options. Toleration or religious freedom thus brought many obstacles to the MEP mission in its train. Clearly such a policy of neutral toleration was not the type of religious regime which Ultramontane Catholicism had favoured in Europe. In addition, there were unexpected problems in dealing with the crypto-Christians who were to have formed the nucleus of the Catholic Church which the MEP missionaries hoped to create in Kyushu.

The crypto-Christians had survived as an underground, and often persecuted, religion for more than two hundred years³⁴. During that time they had passed on their religious traditions orally which meant that they had progressively mutated over time. Their traditions were a composite of things remembered from the teachings of the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries and things acquired from Shinto and Buddhism during the years of concealment. A sense of group solidarity within the individual crypto-Christian community had been essential and many of these communities had not only kept separate from the outside world but also from each other. The practices of the different crypto-Christian communities were not uniform. The initial confidence with which the MEP missionaries had viewed their task of re-admitting the crypto-Christians to the Catholic Church had given way to a less optimistic view. The first claim of the crypto-Christians to Father Petitjean that "our heart is the same as yours" was now viewed more guardedly.

Initially, Father Petitjean had tried to use as much of the crypto-Christian tradition as he could to facilitate their re-entry into the Church. The old Iberian based terminology had been incorporated into Catholic texts used in Nagasaki and both Father Petitjean and Father Laucaigne (assisted by Father Renaut) advocated using the language used in the community. Other MEP missionaries (such as Father Mounicou who was active in northern Japan especially in Hakodate) believed that a more literary Chinese-style catechism should be used, no doubt believing that it would attract more converts from the non crypto-Christian population of Japan. Father Petitjean refused to distribute this catechism in Nagasaki. Petitjean, who had been a Bishop since 1866, secured the support of the superior of the MEP (Father Albrand) which resulted in the administrative division of the Catholic Church in Japan into two Vicariates. The Vicariate of Northern Japan used Father Mounicou's catechism while the Vicariate of Southern Japan (with Bishop Petitjean as Vicar Apostolic) continued to use publications that incorporated crypto-Christian terminology³⁵.

However, more than terminology was required. Crypto-Christians were required to give up their old practices (i.e. by burning Buddhist or Shinto artefacts) which represented a virtually complete break from the past³⁶. Their reluctance to do so was treated as being an indication of their lack of understanding of the fundamentals of Catholicism and their "attachment to externals"³⁷. This reluctance was quite widespread and became slowly obvious to the fathers of the MEP mission. The statistics submitted by the MEP to their headquarters at the time of Father

Renaut's arrival indicated that there were 15,000 Catholics in Northwest Kyushu (17,200 for the Vicariate of Southern Japan as a whole including Kobe and Osaka) and 25,000 hanarés or crypto-Christians. This latter figure was revised upwards to 30,000 in the figures for 1877 as more crypto-Christians were "discovered" by the MEP missionaries. Interestingly, from 1879 no further reference was made to hanarés in the MEP statistics³⁸. Certainly, by this time it was clear that the crypto-Christians remaining outside the Church would by and large continue to do so and the number of crypto-Christians who became Catholics had slowed to a trickle. Some crypto-Christians could see little difference between their beliefs and those of the Catholics and thus saw no need to convert³⁹. For the majority however, the over-riding questions were perhaps more practical, most noticeably problems attached to regularising marriages (and second marriages) which had been contracted outside of the Catholic Church⁴⁰. It was succinctly stated by Bishop Petitjean that the major obstacle for the Japanese in general was the sixth commandment⁴¹. In these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that Father Renaut's efforts to use catechists to distribute religious medals to hanarés in Hirado and Kurosaki met with little success⁴². Though Father Renaut refers to hanarés as "bad Catholics" in 1875, this designation was replaced with the label "schismatics" (also applied to the Orthodox in Hokkaido) which indicated a realisation of their probable permanent separateness⁴³.

If the hanarés' resistance to the Catholic missionary effort was frustrating for the MEP priests, it was at least by and large passive. Casual insults towards Christians were still common when Father Renaut began his mission and Catholic catechists could still be imprisoned on vague charges⁴⁴. Buddhists, especially Buddhist monks, were constantly seen to be conspiring against the spread of Catholicism⁴⁵. While this was noted for Nagasaki, it was even more the case for Kyoto where Father Villion (who was transferred to Kyoto during Father Renaut's stay in Nagasaki) described the active opposition of the faithful of the Honganji Temple and the formation of an anti-Christian Buddhist alliance⁴⁶. There was also resistance on the part of Shinto believers in Kyushu (referred to as "pagans" by Father Renaut and other MEP missionaries) based on tradition, faith in the Emperor, and even a knowledge of Shinto creation stories⁴⁷.

Of equal and sometimes of greater concern to Father Renaut was the rapid spread of Protestantism and other non-Catholic Western ideas. Many students were already acquainted with Protestant books and others had some knowledge of Protestantism from visits to other cities such as Yedo (Tokyo)⁴⁸. Father Renaut also notes the foundation of Protestant schools in Kyushu, such as that at Higo (Kumamoto) founded in July 1876. Indeed, Protestantism came even closer to the MEP mission geographically with the opening of a school in Nagasaki in September 1875 where an American minister was to teach religion and English⁴⁹. An additional problem noted by Father Renaut and Father Petitjean was the rise of indifferentism which the latter believed to be caused by contact with Europeans⁵⁰. A later MEP father was to identify this spreading indifference to religion as a global phenomenon though he, like Father Renaut, was totally bemused at this idea that civilisation and Christianity could be separated⁵¹. Father Renaut, as a good Ultramontane, had been trained to believe that the chief errors of the modern world (such as Liberalism) stemmed from replacing the sovereignty of God with the

sovereignty of man. The catalogue of imported intellectual “vices” listed by the later MEP missionary was already present in Father Renaut’s day in embryonic form. Always present in the minds of these French missionaries were the horrors of the French Revolution for the Church and the anti-Catholic and anticlerical actions of subsequent French governments including that of the Third Republic which followed the downfall of Napoleon III. Even in the year of Father Renaut’s death (1880), anti-clerical actions by the French government would lead to the disruption of religious life at some of the monasteries in France. In time, this would have a direct effect on the Catholic Church in Japan as well⁵². In such a climate, Father Renaut believed that it was necessary to develop different tactics of catechesis to deal with the different types of potential converts. He himself seemed to believe that, as the conversion of hanarés in substantial numbers was a thing of the past, he should concentrate on “pagans” (usually referring to followers of Shinto rather than Buddhists) as his special charge⁵³.

A final element in the mission of Father Renaut, and of the other MEP missionaries, was dealing with the small number of European and American Catholics who could be found for different reasons in Nagasaki. From the beginning of his stay in Nagasaki, Father Renaut had been made welcome by some of the foreign community but most of the members of this community were non-Catholics and there is no evidence that the MEP missionaries were interested in converting them⁵⁴. As most of them were non-French as well, it was probably not even considered as an option by the MEP missionaries. While he notes the presence of various westerners, as in his account of a German ship party where he notes that he has forgotten a lot of his German, the mention of foreigners for most of these missionaries is very limited. Foreigners were mostly seen as dangers to the Catholic mission (because they were Protestants or Agnostics) rather than as allies of it. Even those who were Catholic could provide something less than an edifying example as far as the missionaries were concerned. Father Renaut notes the death in April 1876 of M. Prunier who had made “an edifying end” after years of estrangement due to his cohabitation with a Japanese woman. It would seem that the sixth commandment was not just a problem for the hanarés⁵⁵.

Conclusion: Between Two Worlds

Father Renaut was very clearly the product of a particular education and culture. He was a French Ultramontane Catholic with all that that implies. His view of the world had been exclusively created within the seminaries of Strasbourg and Paris with the enthusiastic support of his family. The training was rigorous and very thorough; the result was a corps of men and women of unquestioned and unquestioning faith. Though Father Renaut died very young (he was not yet 28 years old) there is very little doubt from the evidence of the other MEP missionaries that he would have continued resolutely to propagate the truths and practices of Ultramontanism as he had learned them. The French Ultramontane world that he came from had been shaped by very particular historic circumstances. With the collapse of the confessional state and the triumph of anti-Catholic Republicanism, the Catholic Church had been badly shaken. The result was the virtually total eclipse of Gallicanism and its replacement by a complete reliance on a centralised Papacy in all matters religious. Politically, the Catholic Church in France went

through a variety of experiments in dealing with the state but the underlying theme was always the radical subordination of the interests of the state to those of the church (in theory though never in practice). Even if the state could no longer be relied upon to automatically protect the interests of the Church, it should be encouraged to allow the Church to operate without overt state intervention. In addition, there should be tight controls on all forms of religious expression that ran counter to Catholicism. If the aim of the Ultramontanes was not a return to the confessional state because that was "tainted" by Gallicanism, it was most certainly not the advocacy of a neutral state which allowed all forms of religious expression equal status.

The Ultramontane Church was increasingly a sub-culture with a whole range of customs and practices that set the devout apart from the rest of civil society. The associations, fraternities, and sodalities; the medals, benedictions, and processions; all helped to foster and protect a sense of purpose and uniqueness. Though frequently embattled in practice, the Ultramontane Church was decidedly triumphalist in ideology. The seal was put on Ultramontanism in a temporal sense by the decisions of the First Vatican Council and especially by the declaration of the Pope's infallibility which, though very restricted in fact, was widely construed in a very broad sense indeed by many priests and faithful. This was reinforced by the celestial approbation given by the many appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Europe, often in those very areas of Europe where Catholicism felt itself to be most threatened. Father Renaut's experience of being a member of the Church, in a secular atmosphere that varied between critical and hostile, buoyed up by its overwhelming sense of the divinely approved rightness of its purpose was perhaps the ideal preparation for his mission in Japan.

Early Meiji Japan had some similarities to France of the same period, but of course it was in most respects markedly different. The Japanese elite had seen Christianity as an alien and threatening religion for over 200 years. This view did not change easily with the restoration of imperial power, in fact many of the leading advocates of this restoration were active in the movement to restore Shinto to sole national prominence and had no sympathy whatsoever for Catholicism. The proscriptions against Christianity were continued after the restoration and were only slowly relaxed. Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan had largely replicated the role that Catholicism had played in the confessional state in France. The attempt to separate Buddhism from Shinto and foster the latter was not a success and was abandoned by the mid-1870's. In such a religious situation, the most that the Catholic missionaries could hope for was toleration, even though this was a system for which they had little instinctive sympathy.

Toleration brought in its wake not only a frequently militant Buddhism intent on recapturing some of its former power but also a more unified Shinto with a stronger sense of identity and purpose. It also meant that Protestantism would be given equal footing with Catholicism and that there would be the same toleration for a lack of religious belief as well. Though the sense of competition with Protestants was strong for the MEP mission, the spread of indifference to religion was perhaps even more of a threat, reflecting the situation the Church was confronting in France. Indifference for the MEP fathers was associated with the spread of Western ideas of Liberalism so that opposition to it was just an extension of the struggle of Ultramontane Church in Europe. This opposition between

Catholicism and the "modern" world put the MEP in a somewhat weak position with those Japanese who were interested in Christianity because it was associated with Western and thus "modern" ideas. It was not a conflict with which the Protestant missionaries had to be concerned. The sponsorship of the Catholic mission by France, though often shaky under the Third Republic, was also something of a liability due to French support of the Tokugawas and the relatively lower standing of France as a result of both the Franco-Prussian War and the obvious economic and military superiority of the United Kingdom and the United States at this period. The completely French character of the MEP mission made it what it was but also militated against its success in making converts from the elite.

A final crucial dilemma for the MEP mission was the question of the crypto-Christians. While the MEP mission in Nagasaki (and especially Bishop Petitjean) had managed to keep elements of the crypto-Christian vocabulary for catechetical texts, which had helped to encourage the initial wave of (re)conversions, the problems of the remaining hanarés were insoluble within the Ultramontane frame of reference. The MEP fathers were inflexible when it came to rejecting all non-orthodox elements of crypto-Christian belief or practice. There was no way in which these things, or the organisational structure that had sustained the crypto-Christians through the years of persecution, could be integrated into Ultramontane Catholicism. In many vital respects the crypto-Christians had to reject the things that made them what they were. It is really not surprising that so many refused to do so. Of course, the inflexibility of Ultramontane Canon Law (on such issues as irregular marriages) was the major point at issue for a number of the hanarés. Flexibility and enculturation were not part of the Ultramontane *mentalité*. The very things that gave strength to Ultramontanism in the context of France cost the Catholic mission very dearly in the context of Meiji Japan.

The MEP faced a number of major difficulties in attempting to fulfil their mission in Meiji Japan. These difficulties stemmed in part from the cultural, political, and social context in which they were operating and in part from their own training and background which, in certain vital respects, made their mission even more problematic than it would otherwise have been. After their initial successes with part of the crypto-Christian population, the MEP mission made very slow progress: by the end of the period of MEP dominance of the Japanese Catholic Church in 1930 only some 0.15% of the population of Japan was Catholic, rising to 0.72% for Kyushu⁵⁶. However, low though these numbers were, the MEP did have one important thing in their training and beliefs that could accommodate these figures. The Ultramontane Church was sure of the essential rightness of its faith, of its divine inspiration, of its universality, and of its hierarchy of discipline and teaching. It was a faith that inspired self-confidence and perseverance in times of adversity⁵⁷. Even though the very origins of the MEP mission in French Catholicism and Ultramontanism may have doomed it to limited success; these same origins allowed it to survive and continue secure in its faith and thus its presumed eventual victory. It has fallen to the post-Ultramontane Catholic Church in Japan to try to enculturate Catholicism into Japan and to try to overcome the weaknesses of the MEP mission; they will require strengths at least as great as those of the MEP missionaries like Father Renaut to achieve their goals.

Notes

- ¹ For detailed studies of French policy towards Japan in this period see: Meron Medzini *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime* (Harvard, 1971) and Richard Sims *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan 1854-1895* (Richmond, 1998).
- ² Medzini, p.6.
- ³ See: Norman Ravitch *The Catholic Church and the French Nation 1589-1989* (London,1990) especially chapter three.
- ⁴ There are a number of studies of the first Catholic missions in Japan. A good overall description is: Neil S. Fujita *Japan's Encounter with Christianity: The Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan* (New York, 1991).
- ⁵ See: George Elison *Deus Destroyed* (Harvard, 1991).
- ⁶ A brief notice on Father Renaut can be found in: Société des Missions-étrangères de Paris *Nécrologe de la société des Mission-étrangères de Paris 1659-1930* (Hongkong, 1932). There is also a reference to him in: Joesph van Hecken *The Catholic Church in Japan Since 1859* (Tokyo, 1963) p. 36. The source of all other information is the unpublished diary of Father Renaut which is found in the library of the Catholic Seminary in Fukuoka. This diary will be referred to as FRD in subsequent notes.
- ⁷ Reconstructed from references to family matters in FRD.
- ⁸ The first entry in FRD for Japan is February 18th 1875 when Father Renaut visited the martyrdom site in Nagasaki.
- ⁹ Noted in *Nécrologe* 1880.
- ¹⁰ On France as a confessional state see: Ravitch p.28ff et passim.
- ¹¹ For a study of this period of Catholic Church history in France, though published some years ago, see: André Latreille *L'église catholique et la Révolution française. Le pontificat de Pie VI et la crise française (1775-1799)* (Paris, 1946).
- ¹² A copy of this concordat translated into English can be found in: E.E.Y. Hales *Revolution and Papacy* (Notre Dame, 1966).
- ¹³ See: Austin Gough *Paris and Rome. The Gallican Church and the Ultramontane Campaign 1848-1853* (Oxford, 1986).
- ¹⁴ See: *Varieties of Ultramontanism* J. von Arx [ed] (Washington, 1998) for an overview of the range of Ultramontanism. Chapter three, a study of Cardinal Louis-Edouard-Désiré Pie by John Padberg is particularly relevant to Ultramontanism in France.
- ¹⁵ Literally that there is no salvation outside the Church. First propounded at the Council of Florence in 1442 this idea was to prove controversial in later years even leading to doctrinal disputes in the United States in the 1950's.
- ¹⁶ For a succinct analysis of these events and documents see: Frank J. Coppa *The Modern Papacy Since 1789* (London, 1998) especially chapters six and seven.

¹⁷ The various conspiracy theories which are represented here came to wider attention at the time of the Dreyfus Trial. See: Michael Burns *Dreyfus A Family Affair* (New York, 1992).

¹⁸ Father Alexis Péan was Director of the *missions-étrangères* seminary in Paris. He was born in Laval (in the Auvergne) in 1838.

¹⁹ There are traditionally six levels of ordination in the Catholic Church prior to becoming a priest (Doorkeeper, Reader, Exorcist, Acolyte, Sub-Deacon, and Deacon). In the nineteenth century an aspirant was usually ordained to the Diaconate not long before his ordination the priesthood.

²⁰ FRD 21/4/1874.

²¹ FRD 4/3/1873.

²² FRD 20/1/1871 for Father Renaut's opinion of Garibaldi.

²³ See for instance: A. Villion *Cinquante ans d'apostolat au Japon* (Hongkong, 1923) where Father Villion MEP notes in August 1870: "God then struck down the government of Napoleon which had abandoned the Christian cause in the first months of this year ... the justice of God strikes here and there whoever has sinned".

²⁴ For a detailed study of one of these apparitions and a general overview of the phenomenon see: David Blackburn *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth Century German Village* (New York, 1995).

²⁵ I am currently working on a study of the geographical origins of French missionaries and the "geography of devotion" which can be mapped in France using the embarkation information in *Les missions catholiques* (Lyon, 1897-1905).

²⁶ See for instance FRD 2/5/1875.

²⁷ Though quite old, by far the best study of the French missions is still: Francisque Marnas *La "Religion de Jésus" ressuscitée au Japon [2 volumes]* (Paris, 1931).

²⁸ See: John Breen 'Heretics in Nagasaki: 1790-1796' in Nish, I [ed] *Contemporary European Writing on Japan* (Tenterden, 1988).

²⁹ This incident is recorded in FRD 13/9/1875.

³⁰ See: Thomas Burkman 'The Urakami Incidents and the Struggle for Religious Toleration in Early Meiji Japan' *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (Nagoya, 1974).

³¹ See: Sims (1998) p.78ff.

³² See: Marnas (1931) [vol 2] p. 276ff. For an interesting sidelight on the deportations see also: Diego Pacheco *Tsuwano: el valle de la virgen* (Bilbao, 1957).

³³ See: Helen Hardacre *Shinto and the State 1868-1988* (Princeton, 1989).

³⁴ For a good introduction to the crypto-Christians and the Kakure Kirishitan see: Ann Harrington *Japan's Hidden Christians* (Chicago, 1993).

³⁵ See George Mueller *The Catechetical Problem in Japan 1549-1965* (Tokyo, 1967) for more discussion of this difference of opinion.

³⁶ FRD 8/8/1875.

³⁷ FRD 29/8/1875.

- 38 For these statistics see: *Missions-étrangères de Paris Comptes-rendus* (Paris, 1874-1880).
- 39 FRD 29/3/1876.
- 40 FRD 1/12/1875.
- 41 FRD 11/9/1875. The Ten Commandments are the basic text of Mosaic and Old Testament Laws, as such they have been incorporated into Christian ethical teaching. The text of the Ten Commandments can be found in the Old Testament books of *Exodus* (20:1-17) and *Deuteronomy* (5:6-22). Their continuing centrality for Catholicism is underlined in the latest *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican, 1994).
- 42 FRD 30/4/1876 & 2/5/1876.
- 43 FRD 1/8/1875.
- 44 FRD 12/6/1876 & 21/6/1876.
- 45 FRD 14/5/1876.
- 46 Villion, January 1882.
- 47 FRD 18/9/1875 & 27/6/1876.
- 48 FRD 4/10/1875.
- 49 FRD 8/9/1875.
- 50 FRD 11/9/1875. In the Catholic theological texts of the time (and of the present) "Indifference" is defined as a denial of the power of God. In nineteenth century usage, indifference was considered as the basis of an ideology (hence "Indifferentism") which encompassed both agnosticism and atheism.
- 51 *Diocèse de Nagasaki* (Hongkong, 1930). While the author's name is not given, it is clear that he was a French MEP priest who had been in Japan for some time.
- 52 See: Louis Lekai *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent, 1977). One of the Abbeys which was closed in 1880 was Doubs. The cellarer of this monastery (Father Favre) went on to be the founder of the first Cistercian monastery in Japan (The Abbey of the Phare in Hokkaido). Some of his correspondence is still kept by the abbey. I am currently working on a study of the history of Catholic male contemplative foundations in Japan which will utilise some of this material.
- 53 FRD 28/8/1875 and 3/10/1875.
- 54 FRD 25/2/1875.
- 55 FRD 6/4/1876.
- 56 Calculations based on census data given in Marnas.
- 57 For an impressive example of this see: Edouard Fournier *L'origine du vicaire général et des autres membres de la curie diocésaine* (Paris, 1940). This 400 page work in French and Latin on ecclesiastical history was produced while the author was an active missionary as he wrote: "Far from my pupils, far from libraries, far from the peace and quiet which is appropriate for intellectual work, I could still undertake with confidence a work which I hope will be of benefit to my soul, my country, the Catholic Church".