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## The Seminary of Treguier in the Seventeenth Century

by

G. Minois

Translated by

Stafford Poole, C.M.\*

*Life in an early French Vincentian seminary*

Among the many histories of the Catholic Reformation of the seventeenth century, one aspect seems to have attracted relatively little attention from researchers: the founding of seminaries. Of course, the importance of the role played by these institutions in the renewal of the clergy has been emphasized but the seminary itself--its origins, its foundation, its problems, its functioning, its relations with church authorities--has often been left in the shadows ever since the work of Antoine Degert, which is now out of date.<sup>1</sup> Among the seminaries of lower Brittany, that of Tréguier has drawn almost no attention, in spite of the existence of very extensive documentation in the Côtes-du-Nord Archives.<sup>2</sup> As is often the case, these documents deal more with the finances of the establishment than with its internal organization or its total picture. Still, they do clarify certain important aspects of its life.

### Establishment

The first of these is the date of its foundation. The seminary

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<sup>1</sup> *Histoire des séminaires français jusqu'à la Révolution*, (Paris, 1912). Among the monographs, we should point out that of Blouet on the seminaries of Coutances and Avranches; of Cimetier on the seminary of Le Mans; of Peyron on the seminaries of Quimper and Léon; of Dauphin on the seminaries of Rennes and Dol (Rennes, 1910); of Bonnenfant on the seminaries of Normandy from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries (Paris, 1915). Important information on the seminaries of Boulogne, La Rochelle, and Saint-Pol-de-Leon can also be found in Arlette Playoust-Chaussis, *La Vie religieuse dans le diocèse de Boulogne au XVIIIe siècle* (Arras, 1976); L. Perouas, *Le Diocèse de La Rochelle de 1648 a 1724* (SEVPEN, 1964); L. Kerbiriou, *Jean-François de la Marche, évêque comte de Léon* (Quimper-Paris, 1924). Finally, some important ideas about the kind of culture diffused by the seminaries appears in J. Queniat, *Culture et société urbaine dans la France de l'Ouest au XVIIIe siècle* (typewritten thesis, 1,600 pages, 1975; brief summary of the defense in the *Revue Historique*, oct.-dec., 1976, n. 520).

<sup>2</sup> In the absence of any classification of series G, the very existence of these documents seems to have been more or less unknown.

was older than has been thought up to now.<sup>3</sup> It was, in fact, on 13 August 1649 that the cathedral chapter accepted the proposal of the bishop to create a seminary in his see city. On 16 August the city council gave its approval and in October the letters patent of Louis XIV arrived, confirming this foundation.<sup>4</sup> This date makes the seminary of Tréguier one of the oldest in Brittany, younger than that of Saint-Malo, which received royal confirmation in 1646, but older than those of Rennes (1662), Saint-Brieuc (1664) or Dol (1697).<sup>5</sup> The initiative for the foundation belonged to two remarkable men: Balthazar Grangier, the bishop of Tréguier, and one of his canons, Michel Thépaut, Sieur de Rumelin. Thanks to their piety, their tenacity, and their material generosity, the seminary was born and survived the grave crises of its early years.

Balthazar Grangier, son of the Sieur de Liverdis, had been chaplain to Louis XIII and commendatory abbot of Saint-Barthélemy de Noyon.<sup>6</sup> He received the bishopric of Tréguier in February 1646 and held it for thirty-three years. He was an outstanding figure in the religious renaissance of Brittany. Concerned with the formation of his clergy and his faithful, he frequently had Father Maunoir and his catechists come to Trégor. He was in contact with Father Huby, Father Martin, and Madame du Houxe. He established the Ursulines at Guingamp and Lannion and the Hospitallers and the Daughters of the Cross at Tréguier.

His wish to found a seminary was actively supported by Michel

<sup>3</sup> The authors who have mentioned the seminary have reproduced erroneous dates. Thus A. Guillou in his *Essai historique sur Tréguier par un Trégorrois* (Saint-Brieuc, 1913), and then F.M. Henry, *Dom Maudez Le Cozannet* (Saint-Brieuc, 1924) give the year 1654.

<sup>4</sup> These letters are preserved in the third box of the seminary papers. Arch(ive) départemental des C(ôtes)-du-N(ord), G. (Hereinafter cited as ADCN, trans.)

<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, these establishments come a century after the decree *De Reformatione*, session 23, of the Council of Trent (15 July 1563). Some seminaries existed in Germany, Italy, and Spain after 1570. In France, the oldest are those of Reims (1567), Toulouse (1590), Metz (1608), and Rouen (1612). Did the delay in Brittany in this regard come from the lesser need for reform of the clergy in an area that was little affected by Protestantism, or from the material difficulties of endowing the new establishments?

<sup>6</sup> Information relative to this prelate can be found in Dom Lobineau, *Les Vies des saints de Bretagne* (Rennes, 1725), 505; H. Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* (Paris, 1923), vol. 5; B.A. Pocquet du Haut Jusse, "Les Evêques de Bretagne dans la Renaissance religieuse du XVIIe siècle," *Annales de Bretagne* 54 (1947: 30-59; R. Couffon, "Un Catalogue des évêques de Tréguier," *Bulletin de la Société d'émulation des Côtes-du-Nord* 61 (1929): 33-149.

Thépaut, who had held the post of canon at least since 1635, the year in which he founded a Confraternity of the Rosary in the cathedral. Then he became Grand Penitentiary [a priest who granted special dispensations], a position he held until 1677. A large number of letters show that he was very soon in correspondence with Vincent de Paul and that he took the initiative in having some Vincentians come to Tréguier in order to augment the number of missions in the diocese. Thus on 7 June 1649 Vincent de Paul sent him

a little word of thanks for a great number of kindnesses that our missionaries in Tréguier continually receive from you, Monsieur, for lodging, alms, advice, and the protection that you give them...Monsieur Tholard [one of the Vincentians in Tréguier] could not contain the feelings that he has as a result of this. He has spread the word to us so that our thanks may accompany his and our prayers which he offers for your greater sanctification...For my part, Monsieur, I offer you my obedience with all the humility of which I am capable, imploring you most humbly to make use of it whenever necessary and to continue your fatherly protection to the aforesaid Monsieur Tholard and his confrere so that they may respond to the holy intentions of His Excellency the bishop and not be without benefit to souls, the zeal for which makes you contribute so much to their salvation.<sup>7</sup>

From these contacts between Vincent de Paul and Michel Thépaut arose, therefore, the idea of summoning the Vincentians to direct the new seminary, during whose existence the Grand Penitentiary was to play a primary role until his death. Numerous letters testify to this.<sup>8</sup> Lively thanks came from Vincent de Paul on 6 August 1659 and 18 February 1660, then from his successor as head of the Congregation of the Mission [René Almérás] in 1660, August and October of 1661, 1662, 1663, and 1664. Almérás insisted on "the singular goodness that you [Thépaut] daily show our congregation in the person of our poor

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<sup>7</sup> ADCN, G: séminaire, third box.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

missionaries, supporting them in their failings, protecting them in their activities, helping them in their needs, supporting them in their works and, finally, lodging them comfortably." (31 January 1663).

Sometimes there were conflicts, as shown by a letter of apology in 1661. "You have had reason to complain about the conduct of one of our men. Monsieur, I am very distressed about this." The canon was so bound to the Congregation that he even thought of retiring to the motherhouse in Paris in 1665. He asked the advice of the superior general, who replied on 10 June 1665.

It has been some time now since you honored me with one of your dear letters and in answering one of mine, you had the kindness to propose to me your idea about coming to retire in Paris...It seems to me, Monsieur, that being as well known and honored in the province as you are, esteemed and highly regarded in the city and the diocese, and, in addition, being the dean of the canons and the cathedral, the founder of the seminary, the example of the clergy, the consolation of the afflicted, the author of a thousand good works, you cannot do better than to continue your services to God in the same place where his providence has placed you.

And so he remained in Tréguier and the exchange of letters continued. In 1669, Alméras praised his "goodness," his "admirable charity," his "inexhaustible charity." Thépaut appeared more and more as the irreplaceable support of the seminary. In 1671, he was absent for a while. On 14 February, the superior general wrote him about his relief on learning of his return. The priests of the seminary seemed disoriented when he was not there.

Having shared the worry and unhappiness of our priests in Tréguier over your long absence, I now rejoice with them at your happy and longed-for return. I thank God for it, as I do you, Monsieur, for the honor that you have done them in returning to your former lodging at the seminary, where they have the opportunity to

render you their duties of respect and obedience at all times...and also to receive your protection, advice, and help in their needs.

These praises, repeated in 1673, were justified by Michel Thépaut's extraordinary generosity to the seminary. He was the veritable pillar of the institution, which without him would undoubtedly have been a failure and would have succumbed to the many attacks that it suffered. It is well known that in the majority of cases the founding of seminaries encountered numerous difficulties: the hostility of chapters, which saw in them a blow to their interests; the hostility of the diocesan clergy, which had to bow to a stricter formation; the hostility of the colleges, for which the seminary was a rival. There were also financial difficulties arising from the endowment of the establishments.<sup>9</sup>

The history of the first years of the seminary of Tréguier illustrates these problems. Vincent de Paul himself was doubtful of its success. He made his excuses for this in a letter to Michel Thépaut (26 March 1656), who had been hurt by the lukewarmness that Saint Vincent showed.

I beg you to believe that the difficulties that have been found in the conditions of your foundation for the seminary have not in any way lessened my unqualified gratitude for it. If my heart were known to you, Monsieur, you would be totally persuaded that this gratitude is incapable of diminishing and although I may have allowed myself to have those difficulties made known to you, nevertheless it was with the respect and submission that I owe you.

The clergy of Tréguier protested vehemently against the establishment of the seminary. We find an echo of these complaints in a plea drawn up around 1666 at the time of a lawsuit between the seminary and Yves Labbé, the pastor of Pluzunet.<sup>10</sup> The lawyer for the Vincentians declared:

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<sup>9</sup> See Leopold Willaert, *La Restauration catholique* (Bloud et Gay, 1960), 85-90.

<sup>10</sup> *Bref exposé en faveur de l'Union de la chapellenie An Bellec au seminaire de Tréguier*. ADCN, G: seminaire.

Imagine, Messieurs, that a prelate undertakes the establishment of a seminary...Do you not see in the first place that he will make himself odious to all the clergy of his diocese; that he will be overwhelmed at once with slander; oppressed by contradiction; weighed down by an infinite number of appeals as well as abuse; and that everything will be thrown against him that previous centuries have devised in order to weaken the authority of bishops. From all sides they will take on the protection of vicious priests and of rebellious priests. They will call his holiness of life hypocrisy and the holiness of discipline cruelty of oppression.

And further on, "I am not ignorant that people who live in community, even ecclesiastics, are regarded as burdens on the public."

The chapter joined in these protests, principally for reasons of self-interest. "It would have been desirable to suggest that the funds for the endowment of the seminary be taken from the clergy in general and not from the chapter," it declared in 1659 when it was opposing the annexation of the chaplaincies of Sainte-Anne, Saint-Michel, and An Cerf to the seminary. Their obstructionist attitude led them in that same year to begin a lawsuit against the Vincentians in order to find out if these latter were obliged to pay the ordinary and extraordinary tithes and the crown levies [*dons gratuits*].

As for the citizens of Tréguier, they were not much more enthusiastic. The city council, in its deliberations of 16 August 1649, stated that "it did not require nor did it wish to contribute on its part to the establishment of any seminary in this city, whether by a Father of the Oratory or a Father of the Mission or any other." It pointed out that it was already 20,000 *livres* in debt. So a compromise was reached. The seminary was to be installed in the city's college, for which the bishop was to pay a rent of six *livres* a year. The Vincentians were to receive the revenues from the teaching prebend, but they would have no share in the other allotments from the chapter and they were to operate a school for the boys of the college.

This could be no more than a temporary solution. In addition,

in order to give the seminary its full independence, Michel Thépaut made a very important gift in 1654 that allowed the construction of the buildings to begin. He provided a location at the end of the rue Kersco, consisting of some houses, courtyards, gardens, and enclosures; 7,700 *livres* for construction; a contract in Pommerit-Jaudy that yielded seven loads of wheat, six *livres*, ten *sols*; two work levies [*corvées*], and two chickens; a revenue of twelve bushels of wheat from a contract in Pleudaniel; the chaplaincy of An Cerf in Hengoat, which yielded thirteen bushels of wheat and two capons. In return for all this, Thépaut, Sieur de Rumelin, and his descendants would have all rights and preeminence over the seminary in perpetuity: their arms would be set up in the most visible places; they would be buried in the choir of the church; and one mass a day and two solemn services a year would be celebrated for them.<sup>11</sup> On 9 July 1658, Bishop Grangier laid the first stone in the presence of the chapter, of Jean du Pont [the superior] and a large crowd that received forty days' indulgence for the occasion.

The donation of 1654, however, was only the beginning of a long series of gifts from Michel Thépaut to the seminary. In summarizing the canon's generosity one realizes to what extent he was its indispensable support. Just for the construction of the buildings, he added to his initial gift 3,858 *livres* in 1659, 946 more in 1660, 2,961 in 1662, 2,721 in 1664, 293 in 1669, 2,623 in 1672, 2,409 for the tabernacle and main altar, of a total of 23,511 *livres* between 1654 and 1672.<sup>12</sup> On 25 May 1669, the superior wrote to him with regard to the progress of the construction at the seminary: "all the stones that are placed here by your command are as so many precious stones to make up your crown of glory." In 1674, furthermore, Thépaut increased the revenues of the seminary by founding three missions--at Pleumeur-Bodou, Plougasnou, and Pleubian--to be given every four years by the Priests of the Mission. For that purpose he donated 1,920 *livres* in gold *louis*, to be invested at 16 *denier* (16.25%). Finally, in his will in 1677, he bequeathed to the seminary a cross and two

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<sup>11</sup> *Inventaires des titres et papiers de la Maison de la Congrégation de la Mission de Treguier, depuis son établissement audit lieu*, 1692. ADCN, G: seminaire.

<sup>12</sup> Details about the sums donated and their use is included in a "memoire des sommes que Monsieur de Romelin a donnees pour les bastiments du seminaire de Treguier," drawn up on 10 August 1674.



candlesticks of silver. Thus, during its first twenty-five years, the seminary of Tréguier was truly the work of one man, the canon Michel Thépaut, who was at one and the same time its material benefactor and its spiritual director.

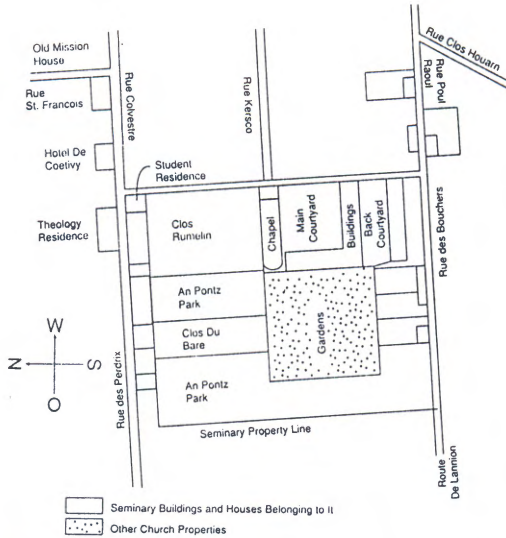
In a special way it was thanks to him that the construction was successfully concluded. Begun in 1658, it continued at least until 1672. The chapel, it seems was finished first, since work was being done on the framework as far back as 1660 and the roof was being put on early in 1662. The stained-glass windows, the doors, and the altar were put in place as early as 1664.

### **Buildings and Finances**

What did the first seminary of Tréguier, of which every trace has disappeared today, look like? It is possible to get an idea, even to attempt a ground-plan, from the official report of the auditors from the *chambre des comptes* [sovereign court for the examination, registration, and auditing of taxes] of Nantes, who drew up a description of the establishment in 1679.<sup>13</sup> The dimensions were rather imposing. The principal buildings formed two sides of a square courtyard, forty-five meters long, bounded on the north by the chapel, which was at least five and a half *ares* (550 square meters) in floor area. A rear courtyard with other buildings was to the south, while forty-two *ares* of gardens and 123 *ares* of meadow or cultivated lands divided into four enclosures gave the entire place the appearance of a massive rectangle of 150 meters by 130 meters, situated between the rue des Perdrix and the rue des Bouchers (or Lannion Road). The purchase of several

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<sup>13</sup> ADCN, G: seminaire. See the plan drawn up according to this description.



buildings along these two streets would eventually complete the seminary's control of the neighborhood. There is no way to judge the quality of the construction, but, nevertheless, it is disturbing to see that the chapel was threatened with ruin as early as 1680.<sup>14</sup> In addition, considering the size of the entire place in relation to a small diocese like Tréguier, the upkeep of the buildings was going to weigh heavily on the seminary budget—considerable repairs were made, beginning in 1672. From the start, then, the institution was very fragile. Its income was notoriously inadequate.

The superior complained repeatedly about the situation and sent an appeal to the bishop, who, on 28 June 1654, agreed to give an annuity of 2,000 *livres* until his death. But because the revenues of the diocese were themselves very small, this annuity was reduced to 750 *livres* in 1661, then to 650 *livres* from 1666 on.<sup>15</sup> Thus the seminary received a total of 26,200 *livres* from Bishop Grangier. He also granted it, in 1663, dispensation from the fees of indemnity and from the taxes levied on heritances that were sold; in 1663 and in 1668 dispensation from the acquisition fees. Again, in 1675, the situation was very precarious.

Some letters patent of Louis XIV declared that "the chapels and other goods of the aforesaid seminary have very little revenue and for several years the aforesaid Lord Bishop has

<sup>14</sup> Letter from the bishop to Nicolas de Monchy, the superior.

<sup>15</sup> According to a packet of receipts of the superior.

been obliged to contribute to the support of the aforesaid priests of the Congregation of the Mission who work in the seminary." Some years later, when the superior, Jacques Henin, sought exemption from all fees of amortization, he complained of the seminary's poverty. "Since the benefices of Tréguier ordinarily have too little revenue to impose taxes on them and since there are no simple benefices which can suitably be attached to the aforesaid seminary, nothing much can be expected from that quarter." The Vincentians

have received some donations and foundations from some people especially well disposed to the advancement of the ecclesiastical state, with certain sums of money that they have put into small inheritance funds [stocks] to relieve their [the Vincentians'] need and the great expenses inevitably connected with the operation of a seminary and their other functions. Nevertheless, they are still so deprived of what they need to exist that His Excellency, the bishop and Count of Tréguier, gives them six or seven hundred *livres* every year as a charitable allowance, in addition to what they receive from him for the construction and maintenance of the buildings and for the support of some of the poor clerics in the seminary. Furthermore, the aforesaid priests are obliged for the same reason to consolidate and to maintain for their use, as agreed, some small houses and plots of land near their building. These are necessary for their location, garden, and courtyards in order to have sufficient room so that the persons, both ecclesiastical and lay, who come to them to make their retreat exercises at the seminary are not inconvenienced because it is too small.

1681, an inquiry was made to learn if the seminary really needed to have the priory of Saint-Jean de la Roche-Derrien united to it in order to increase its revenues. The fourteen witnesses, including bourgeois, ecclesiastics, and even three canons, agreed in acknowledging its poverty.<sup>16</sup> Already, on 12 December

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<sup>16</sup> *Enquête du 24 mars 1681 à propos de l'union du prieuré Saint Jean de La Roche-Derrien au seminaire de Tréguier.* ADCN, G:seminaire.

1680, the superior, Nicolas de Monchy, was writing to the bishop to plead the Vincentians' cause, "saying that their revenue was not enough to support them or to maintain their church, which is threatened with ruin." He also emphasized how the loss of the annuity paid annually by Bishop Grangier (who died in 1679) had been cruelly felt.

The validity of these complaints is corroborated by an examination of numerous documents that allow us to reconstruct the development of the seminary's revenues. First of all, one thing stands out: the rarity of gifts and endowments. This can be explained by the poverty of the diocese and by a certain feeling of suspicion toward religious communities. This feeling, however, would very quickly give way before the positive results of the Vincentians' activities. About twenty years after the establishment, everyone was unanimous in acknowledging the merits of the seminary. "The public opinion of the people and of the clergy makes itself heard on that subject throughout the diocese."<sup>17</sup> "Public opinion admits that it is by this means that the ecclesiastical state has taken an entirely new turn...both with regard to piety and learning and as concerns conduct and discipline."<sup>18</sup> On 6 November 1674 the rector of Pommerit-Jaudy "acknowledges that the aforesaid Priests of the Mission are very useful, and even necessary, for the instruction and formation of the clergy of the entire diocese."<sup>19</sup> At the time of the inquiry of 24 March 1681, the governor of Tréguier, Louis de Leshildry, declared that "since their establishment in this city (the Vincentians) have borne much fruit in the countryside" and the thirteen other witnesses were unanimous on that point, even if they were not aware of the date of the foundation. Some of them thought that the seminary had existed for thirty years, others twenty, eighteen, twelve, or ten.

Be that as it may, gifts were rare. We have a complete list of them from 1654 to 1692 in the *Declaration of goods belonging to and dependent on the seminary of Tréguier and the house of the Congregation of the Mission*, drawn up on 27 November 1692, and in the *Inventory of titles and papers of the house of the Con-*

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<sup>17</sup> *Bref exposé...An Bellec, 1666.*

<sup>18</sup> *Requête pour la suppression de l'amortissement (1679).*

<sup>19</sup> *Enquête à propos de l'Union de la chapellenie de Pontrouzault (around 1680).*

gregation of Tréguier from the time of its establishment in the said place. In the seminary's first thirty-eight years, six endowments or gifts were made in its favor: a gift of the enclosure Parc An Pontec, in Tréguier, with a revenue of 42 *livres*, by the Seigneur de Kertgouanton on 14 March 1657; the Herlidou contract in Troguery, bringing thirty-three bushels of wheat and two chickens, donated by the canon Jean de Soulfour on 29 September 1669; a gift of 2,000 *livres* by the last will of Monsieur de Kerisac, 21 October 1678; thirty-nine *livres* of land rent by the Seigneur de Tefel in 1686; fifteen *livres* of rent by Mademoiselle Gaborit in 1688; and thirty-six *livres* by Catherine Huonie in 1692 (by the investment of 648 *livres* at 5.55%). The harvest was meager, even if the gifts of Bishop Grangier are added to it. The latter, in fact, granted the union of several chaplaincies and various benefices to the seminary: the chaplaincies of Saint-Michel (in 1660, with revenues of 144 *livres*, 2 *sols*, and 10 bushels of wheat<sup>20</sup>); Sainte-Anne (in 1660, bringing in five barrels of wheat that were put into the bishop's granary); Pontrousault (in 1667), leased out at 141 *livres*<sup>21</sup>; An Bellec (in 1672, paying 40 bushels of wheat<sup>22</sup>). The priory of Saint Jean de la Roche-Derrien would also be annexed in 1681 by Bishop Baglion de Saillant (it yielded 460 *livres* and some fees from the tithe on oats at la Roche-Derrien, Pommerit-Jaudy, and Plouguiel). Finally, by a will dated 15 February 1676, Bishop Grangier bequeathed the Kermorvan house in Tréguier, rented out at 158 *livres*; an abandoned house on the rue de Plouguiel; some silver plate for mass worth 2,000 *livres*; his cross; his library (660 volumes); and 250 *livres* in cash. The list is rather short but nonetheless complete.

All other goods came from purchases made by the seminary:

(1) 12 August 1665: a stable, half a courtyard, an enclosure, on the rue des Perdrix, in Tréguier, for 511 *livres*;

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<sup>20</sup> It consisted of a portion of tithe and a lot in Plougrescant; a house on the Martray; one on the rue Poulraoul; three lots in Le Minihi; two rents from the house of Sieur de Billo and from the property of Seigneur de Leshildry.

<sup>21</sup> A house, three pieces of land, and the right of passage across the Jaudy.

<sup>22</sup> Thirty-two of these taken from the bishop's granary and eight out of the Pen an Crech contract in Tredarzac.

(2) 3 January 1657: a house with enclosure, on the rue Poulraoul, in Tréguier, for 250 *livres*;

(3) 5 October 1661: a run-down house, on the rue des Perdrix, with attached land, for 672 *livres*;

(4) 25 February 1665: two run-down houses, on the rue des Perdrix, for 150 *livres*;

(5) 21 March 1665: a room and half-courtyard, on the rue des Perdrix, for 150 *livres*;

(6) 27 August 1667: two contracts in Langoat, two in Lanmerin, giving 9 *sommes*, 16 bushels of wheat, one sheep, 2 chickens, 45 *livres*, one day's labor at hauling, for 4,300 *livres*;

(7) 8 February 1669: a house, on the rue Poulraoul, for 1,000 *livres*;

(8) 19 January 1672: a house with courtyard and garden, rue Poulraoul, for 600 *livres*.

If we add to these acquisitions the various gifts made by Michel Thépaut, mentioned above, we have a complete picture of the goods and income of the seminary in 1692. The annual income amounted to 1,453 *livres*, 12 *sols*, and 204 bushels, 16 *sommes*, and 5 barrels of wheat, plus four chickens.<sup>23</sup>

The expenses are more difficult to ascertain with precision. First of all, there was the cost of supporting the seminary's personnel, which in 1680 amounted to ten persons--five priests, three brothers, one servant, and one gardener.<sup>24</sup> There were numerous works that occasioned a large number of expenses. The Vincentians "received clerics into their house for a year, during which they prepared to receive holy orders and to undertake the functions of ecclesiastics. They also received externs of every kind of condition to make retreats there. From time to time they

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<sup>23</sup> In 1659 this income was only six *livres*, 10 *sols*, and forty bushels of wheat; in 1672, 400 *livres* and twenty-eight bushels, nine barrels of wheat; in 1681, it was evaluated at 1,200 *livres*. Comparison with other seminaries makes clear the real poverty of that of Tréguier: in 1686 that of Saint-Malo, also directed by the Vincentians, had 4,900 *livres* income, which was considered very modest (Guillotin de Corson, *Fouille historique de l'archevêché de Rennes*, 1:473-74); that of Saint-Brieuc 4,199 *livres* (*Anciens évêchés de Bretagne*, 1:324-32); and that of Saint-Pol 4,997 *livres* (Kerbirou, *op. cit.*). The purchases of houses and lots made by the Vincentians in Tréguier were confined to the immediate neighborhood of the seminary. As the plan shows, the theology building, that of the scholasticate and a building for prebendaries were in the same neighborhood, almost entirely controlled by the ecclesiastics.

<sup>24</sup> Letter of Nicolas de Monchy, the superior, to the bishop, 12 December 1680.

gave missions in the country and they took on extern priests in order to relieve them."<sup>25</sup> The majority of seminarians and retreatants evidently paid for their lodging but "besides the alms given to the reticent poor and beggars, several poor clerics are maintained here free of charge in order that they may prepare themselves to receive holy orders. Several persons, both lay and ecclesiastic, are received for eight or ten days for retreat exercises without anything being asked of them."<sup>26</sup> From 1674 on there were twenty-five or thirty clerics each year who prepared themselves for the priesthood.

Nonetheless, the heaviest expenses came from the different fees and taxes that burdened the seminary's possessions. Thus, on 9 May 1692, the superior paid 3,251 *livres*, 9 *sols* in amortization, then on 20 December 3,370 *livres*, 4 *sols*, 2 *deniers* in new acquisition fees. A petition, submitted around 1675, had vainly sought exemption from these fees of amortization, claiming that the decree of 1666 which reestablished them did not include seminaries. Tithes on ecclesiastical revenue were not so much of a burden, but all the same in 1673 and 1674 they amounted to the sum of 17 *livres*, 5 *sols*, just for the chaplaincies of Sainte-Anne, Pontrouzault, Saint-Michel, and An Cerf. Ordinary and extraordinary tithes cost 200 *livres* a year. In 1680 they had to pay 103 *livres*, 8 *sols* for verification of letters patent in Nantes. Different charges burdened goods that had been purchased or donated: repairs of houses and chapels; rent of eight *ares* of oats to the bishop's temporal jurisdiction for the location of the seminary; 32 *sols* a year to the Hôtel-Dieu for the enclosure on the rue des Perdrix; eight *ares* of oats to the bishop for the Parc An Pontec; 48 *sols* to the Hôtel-Dieu and 32 *sols* to Monsieur du Billo for a house on the rue Poulraoul; 3 *livres*, 16 *sols* in different rents to the Hôtel-Dieu.<sup>27</sup> The chaplaincy of Pontrouzault often cost more than it brought in. It consisted of the right to collect ferry charges for crossing the Jaudy river between Tréguier

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<sup>25</sup> Deposition of Adrien Fleuret, treasurer of the cathedral, 24 March 1681.

<sup>26</sup> Argument against the rector of Pluzunet, 1675. It is in conformity with the spirit of the decisions of the Council of Trent. The paragraph "Cum adolescentium aetas" of chapter 18 of the decree *De Reformatione* foresaw that the formation of seminarists, who by preference were chosen from poor families, would be without charge. On this subject, see J. A. O'Donohoe, *Tridentine Seminary Legislation: its sources and its formation* (Louvain, 1957).

<sup>27</sup> These rents were scrupulously paid, as is witnessed by the receipts of the director of the Hôtel-Dieu, preserved from 1665 to 1688.

and la Roche-Derrien: three *deniers* for pedestrians, six *deniers* for those on horseback; and twelve *deniers* for carts,<sup>28</sup> but the ferry was not used often and the repairs of the boat and roadway were very burdensome. In 1700 the ferry service could be leased for only sixty *livres* and the lessee complained that "most of the time it is out of service and it is possible to cross on dry land when the tide is out."

In addition, certain donations contained some hidden and disagreeable surprises. That was the case with the Kermorvan house, bequeathed by Bishop Grangier. The bishop's will mentioned nothing in particular. "Nevertheless, it was discovered that the aforesaid house had been given with a special mortgage of two rents, one at 87 *livres*, 10 *sols*, the other at 62 *livres*, 10 *sols*" in favor of the Hôtel-Dieu. It was, besides, "very run down and in poor repair." "In that regard, the seminary directors were in a quandary how to deal with the late bishop's heirs when it was a question of accepting the legacy of a house that was run down and in danger of collapse and that was burdened with a special mortgage that was as high as or higher than the income."<sup>29</sup> On 22 June 1679, three lawyers from Paris, who had been consulted, declared that the beneficiaries of the will and the direct heirs were jointly responsible for the payment of the mortgage rents. An arrangement was then made with the executor of the will, the Abbé de Saint-Barthélemy de Noyon. In addition to the house, 500 *livres* were given to the seminary to be used for the two rental payments. That did not end the suit for the Vincentians. As early as 1680, they settled the rent of 62 *livres*, 10 *sols* at a flat 1000 *livres*. They got rid of the rent of 87 *livres*, 10 *sols* in 1685 and 1691. The bishop's gift, then, had cost them 2,500 *livres*, in addition to the repairs on the house--100 *livres* a year until 1692.

Finally, to all these difficulties should be added the lawsuits with persons who considered themselves injured by the gifts made to the seminary. The most notable was the one brought in 1675 by the rector of Pluzunet, Yves Labbé, who coveted the chaplaincy of An Bellec. The bishop united it to the seminary at a time when it had become vacant during a month when the ap-

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<sup>28</sup> Judgment of the parlement of Brittany, 8 July 1637.

<sup>29</sup> Consultation sent to three lawyers in Paris to ask their advice on this matter.



pointment was reserved to the pope. This situation raised a point of law that Jacques Hénin, the superior, did his best to clarify in court in favor of the Vincentians in a plea that contained thirty-four closely written pages.<sup>30</sup> The case was decided on 22 October 1675 before the presidial court of Rennes "where, after a long and heavy discussion in writing, defenses, denials, summations, replies of the different parties, and third party measures by the Lord Bishop of Tréguier," the union with the seminary was upheld and confirmed by a verdict of 4 July 1676.

It is very difficult to give an exact total of all the ordinary and extraordinary expenses of the seminary. Still, it is quite likely that they equaled or exceeded the level of income, at least in certain years. Only one recourse was then possible: borrowing, in the form of setting up annuities. Both bourgeois and nobles advanced sums, often considerable ones, that revealed the critical situation of the Vincentians' house. As early as 18 January 1675,

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<sup>30</sup> Jacques Hénin first of all discusses the dates. The title of the chaplaincy had been abolished by the decrees of union of 12 August and 13 September 1672, whereas Yves Labbé did not receive his letters of appointment from Rome until 21 September, a date on which the chaplaincy no longer existed. He then appealed to the authorities. The Council of Trent had given bishops the right to unite simple benefices to their seminaries, no matter what month they fell vacant. "After that it is not easy to see what M. Labbé's defense can be. You have seen, gentlemen, to what extremity he has been reduced. You have seen that he has been compelled to resort to the answer that the Council of Trent has not been accepted in France. But this defense is weak!" He recalled the royal decisions of Blois, Tours, Moulins, the Ordinance of 1629, the exhortations of Henry IV in 1608 on following the council, the decision of Saint Louis in 1268 to return the rights of conferral of lesser benefices to the ordinary, then the Councils of Constance and Basel, the pragmatic sanction, the concordat of 1516, the decision of Henry II in 1551 forbidding suits at Rome for appointment, the edict of Charles IX in 1562, the letters patent of September 1654 and June 1665 authorizing all bishops to make use of the means permitted by the councils to provide for the increase of seminaries. Nevertheless, the edict of Henry II, 1549, made some reservations for Brittany. But the Lateran Council of 1215 fought these reservations, which were odious, and at any rate the parlement of Rennes never registered the edict of 1549. The provincial council of Tours, the ordinance of Blois in 1579, the edict of 1666, the works of the juriconsults all made the same point. And if Sieur Labbé tried to oppose this avalanche of texts, "Certainly, that would be to make war against the gods, like the giant in the fable!" This said, nothing remains except that there were some months reserved to the pope. A bit of eloquence will do away with those. "But, gentlemen, the council (of Trent) wanted all these rules to yield to the good of the Church as the most powerful law; when the great globe of light appears on the horizon it effaces, it causes to disappear in a moment all the other stars that were shining during the night. When it comes to the safety of the state, it is the height of weakness to stop at a common principle. The most certain maxims lose their names and effects if they are not in agreement with the first dogma of true policy: the safety of the people!" Then come the personal attacks. Sieur Labbé "not being a native of the diocese of Tréguier but of Léon, where he has, as we have said, a chaplaincy of twenty-four gold ducats, not being content with that, seeks in Rome a pastor's position in Tréguier, a very good one from the temporal point of view, and he obtained it. He is still not satisfied with two benefices. He again pounces on the vicarage called An Bellec."

François Le Barz, from Perros-Guirec, lent 1,920 *livres*, establishing for himself an annuity of 120 *livres*; on 9 October 1688, Jeanne Gaboris of Tréguier lent 270 *livres*, in exchange for an annuity of 15 *livres*; then on 12 June 1692, she again advanced 270 *livres*; on 14 March 1701, Jeanne Louise Le Cardinal, Demoiselle du Bré, lent 1,200 *livres* (annuity of 66 *livres*); on that same day Marie Petitbon of Loguivy lent 1,620 *livres* (annuity of 90 *livres*); on 17 October 1705, Demoiselle Marie Joseph Le Cardinal, Dame de Carnier, lent 4,000 *livres* at 18 denir (5.55%) (annuity of 222 *livres*); 4,000 *livres* were also advanced on 17 October 1722 by Jeanne Louise Le Cardinal (annuity of 160 *livres*), who specified that she did not want to be repaid in paper money; then Angelique Le Cardinal lent 2,000 *livres* on 15 February 1725 (annuity of 66 *livres*).

These loans, mostly at a modest interest of 5.5 percent, contributed to burdening the seminary's budget still more. We can say that it faced a very difficult situation, at least until the end of the eighteenth century. The precariousness of the situation, however, did not prevent it from playing a very important spiritual role.

### Seminary Life

The documentation on this point is, unfortunately, much less abundant than the receipts, titles for property or loans, and inventories of goods that sometimes crowd the archives of communities to an excessive degree. We would, in fact, like to know what life in the seminary was like, what was taught there, and how many priests were prepared each year. Unfortunately, we cannot give these questions anything more than partial answers.

A manuscript dated at Bégard, 1 May 1665, drawn up by Hervé du Tertre, abbot of Prières, visitor of the houses of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance in Brittany, presented a proposal for the arrangement of the daily schedule at the seminary, perhaps at the request of the superior. This proposal, directly inspired by the Cistercian rule, envisioned an almost monastic lifestyle for the boarders, with prayer, matins and lauds at two o'clock in the morning, prime at five-thirty, then spiritual reading and prayers. At eight o'clock "leaving at a signal from the superior, they will go two by two to the church with gravity and

modesty" for terce and High Mass. The rest of the morning was taken up with lunch, a walk in the garden, silence, study, an examination of conscience "not so much to see if they have made their exercises [of piety], (which were rarely missed), but to see if they have made them well." In the afternoon: study, meditation, manual labor, vespers, supper around five o'clock, then a walk in the garden, compline, prayer. At seven-thirty they will leave the church,

receiving holy water and the blessing of the superior as they leave. They will retire directly to the dormitory, then to their rooms, where after having attended to their needs, they will make their last examen and commending their souls into the hands of God as if they were going to die, they will go to bed in order to rest and to regain their strength in order to be able better to begin their day anew at two A.M., if God gives them the grace to see it.

It does not seem, however, that this order of the day was ever adopted. The more flexible schedule in force around 1665 is given to us according to the daily ringing of the bell.

- 4:00 A.M. First bell, for rising.
- 5:00 A.M. Fifteen rings for prayer.
- 5:30 A.M. Angelus.
- 7:00 A.M. Mass.
- 8:00 A.M. Thirty rings for breakfast.
- 9:00 A.M. Thirty rings for conference.
- 11:00 A.M. Dinner, then recreation, then chant.
- 1:45 P.M. Spiritual reading.
- 2:00 P.M. Fifteen rings for Vespers.
- 4:00 P.M. Thirty rings for conference.
- 5:30 P.M. Matins.
- 6:30 P.M. Supper.
- 8:15 P.M. General examen.
- 8:45 P.M. Thirty rings as the first signal for retiring.
- 9:00 P.M. Nine rings for retiring.

The rule has also come down to us in the form of printed pages that were intended to be posted in the rooms. In it we see that, just like everywhere else in that period, the formation of ecclesiastics was directed in great part toward the moral and practical aspects of their ministry. Rather than scholars, the Vincentians aimed at forming pious men of good morals, with sufficient knowledge of scripture, liturgy, and the manner of fulfilling their different duties. The age needed priests who knew their "craft," and there was scarcely any time to devote to theology. The daily order given above shows us that the strictly intellectual part of the formation took up scarcely three hours a day, the rest being devoted in a special way to duties.<sup>31</sup> "Sacred scripture the manner of administering the sacraments, plainchant, the ceremonies of the church, the method of teaching catechism, of preaching, of hearing confessions, and the means of doing this with piety and in the spirit of religion," this was the basis of instruction (article 1 of the rule). In contrast, great attention was paid to moral formation.

We strive to have them learn by practice the science of the saints--that is, the Christian and ecclesiastical virtues, especially true devotion, modesty, humility, mortification, and zeal for the salvation of souls. This is the aim of the conferences on piety, the meditations, the exhortations, the spiritual retreats, the reading of devotional books, and principally, the mutual good example. (Article 1).

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<sup>31</sup> At the seminary of Saint-Pol-de-Léon, also directed by the Vincentians, the works studied in the eighteenth century were *The Conduct of Confessors*, the *Pastoral Care* of Saint Gregory the Great, the *Summa* of Saint Thomas, *The City of God*, the works of Saint Jerome, Saint Charles Borromeo, Saint Francis de Sales, Fénelon, Fléchier, Bossuet, and the *Imitation of Christ* (Louis Kerbiriou, *Jean François de la Marché, évêque cômte de Léon* [Quimper, 1924].) The very secondary place held by theological studies can to a certain extent explain the total lack of doctrinal disputes in the diocese. The problem of Jansenism, for example, did not arise in Tregor. In 1665 Bishop Balthazar Grangier could write, "When we consider the troubles that have agitated several dioceses in this kingdom concerning the disputes that have arisen on the matter of grace, we thank the divine goodness a thousand times that he has preserved our diocese from them and has kept the spirit of our diocesan priests in all the peace and union we could wish." (R. Couffon, "Un Catalogue...", op. cit. 125). In 1714, again, the mother superior of the convent of Montbareil at Guingamp responded to Cardinal de Noailles concerning the troubles of the church in France, "Monseigneur, we come from a diocese where the new feelings on doctrine are not yet known." (Père Henry, *Dom Maudez le Cozennet*, 118).

All the details of common life were regulated to avoid temptations as much as possible. "They will take great care to preserve that purity so necessary for ecclesiastics. To that end they will avoid conversations with persons of the opposite sex, not speaking to them except in case of necessity, in a place where they can be seen and as briefly as possible" (article 12). They were to avoid particular friendships, and for that purpose were never to be just two or three together (article 17). When they wanted to see a companion, they had to speak to him at the door of his room and not enter. After having knocked, they were to wait until the other had answered "open" before opening the door (articles 21 and 22). They were not to leave their rooms without being completely dressed and having removed their nightcaps (article 20). The room had to be clean, in order, swept twice a week (article 21), and they were not to lock themselves in (article 22). "At recreation they will strive to join modesty to cheerfulness and to mingle in their conversations some words of piety as well as of doctrine, banishing from their conversations pointed jests, arguments, levity, unbecoming words, and worldly songs" (article 25). They should try not to become too fond of money because "it is the most common pitfall for ecclesiastics" (article 30). They were to do without complaint the small jobs given to one or the other, such as waiting on table, reading during the meals--very distinctly and "if [the reader] is corrected for some mispronunciation, he will correct himself, pronouncing it as it ought to be" (article 16). During conferences, from which no one should excuse himself, they should avoid playing the wit and criticizing or contradicting. "They will strive during it to give edification by their modesty, attention, docility, and silence, never speaking during the conferences except when asked and especially avoiding all contradiction" (article 10). They were not to be absent too often and never without the authorization of the superior (article 26). "They will have their tonsure reshaved every week on the eves of holydays or on Saturday by the ordinary house barber." An interview with the spiritual director was provided for once a month; confession twice a week and communion every Sunday and feast-day; meditation in common and mental prayer every day (articles 19, 11, 8, and 4). Special devotion was to be paid to the Blessed Sacrament. They were to impose small penances on

themselves in addition to fasting on Friday evenings (articles 5 and 13). Finally,

before leaving the seminary they will strive to fortify themselves by means of strong resolutions against the attacks that they will have to bear, principally from worldly and licentious spirits who will not fail to turn their piety to derision and who will try to inspire them with the corrupt maxims of the age. To this end they will draw up a rule of life,

as for example,

to make mental prayer each day, read a chapter of the New Testament while kneeling, give some time to spiritual reading, and, every year, make some days of retreat (article 32).

In short, the seminary was supposed to form a militia whose arms would be piety and virtue, if not learning. The separation from "the world," "the age," was stronger than ever. The priest was to be clearly distinguished from the laity in his exterior appearance (tonsure, modest clothing), but especially by his manner of life. He would symbolize in the eyes of all the realization of Christian values. He was truly supposed to be, as Jesus wished him, "the salt of the earth," "the light that gives light to the world." In order to achieve this result, the "old man" had to be broken by a strict life, discipline, austerities, and mortifications imposed by the seminary. Was this ideal too high? Certainly it would not have been attained by all, far from it, but we shall soon see that the quality of the clergy seems to have been very much better by the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. Elsewhere we have already cited several testimonies that emphasized the beneficial action of the seminary.

Nevertheless, the period of formation was very short: a year at the very most. The registers of clerical admissions allow us to follow the steps toward the priesthood. The young man entered the seminary around the feast of Saint Michael (29 September). He

received tonsure and minor orders at Christmas, the subdiaconate at the lenten ember days, the diaconate at Pentecost, and the priesthood during the September ember days. And still it was necessary to moderate the ardor of the clerics, very many of whom would have happily gone as quickly as possible from tonsure to priesthood. The rule made it even clearer: "they will do violence to themselves in order to repress the eagerness that many ecclesiastics manifest for the reception of holy orders, yielding in this regard to the judgment of their superiors" (article 31). It seems that this one year of accelerated formation was widespread, at least in western France.<sup>32</sup> But it was not unusual to see clerics wait two, three, or four years before advancing to the priesthood. Thus Dom Maudez le Cozannet, having entered the seminary of Tréguier on the feast of Saint Michael, 1689, was not ordained priest until Trinity Sunday, 1693.

Was this brief stay sufficient? To answer this question, evidence would be needed that would allow us to compare the situation of the clergy before and after the founding of the seminary, in order to be able to evaluate the role played by the latter.<sup>33</sup> Precise information is, alas, rare for the first half of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, the reports of pastoral visits and the notes of synodal witnesses of the diocese of Tréguier still exist for a number of years between 1702 and 1743--that is, at a period when all priests passed through the seminary.<sup>34</sup> These documents allow us to verify that ignorant priests had disappeared, that on the whole the offices were celebrated in a satisfactory way, that the sermons were given (except in eight parishes out of 104), as well as catechism lessons (although in sixteen cases the method left something to be desired), and that only ten ecclesiastics in forty years were suspected of concubinage. On the other hand, one problem was ineradicable:

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<sup>32</sup> In that same period, at the seminary in La Rochelle, only three months of isolation were imposed before subdiaconate, diaconate, and priesthood (Perouas, *op. cit.*, 256-64). In Boulogne, fifteen months were required before priesthood: nine for the subdiaconate, three for the diaconate and three for the priesthood (A. Playoust-Chaussis, *op. cit.*).

<sup>33</sup> In the diocese of La Rochelle, complaints against the clergy went from 10 to 25 percent in 1648 to 5 to 10 percent in 1669, according to the reports of the episcopal visitations (Perouas, *op. cit.*, 256-64.)

<sup>34</sup> We will explain in detail the results of these reports in "Les Visites épiscopales dans le diocèse de Tréguier dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle: quelques aspects de la vie religieuse," *Memoires de la Société d'émulation des Côtes-du-Nord* 106 (1978).

drunkenness. More than 120 priests were sentenced to three months in the seminary for drunkenness. Nevertheless, the results on the whole were positive, and the faithful acknowledged the virtues of their pastors, such as that of Quempervern in 1717.

The rector [pastor] acquits himself well of his parish duties. He is exact in celebrating high mass at the hour set by the statutes, and he is ready every day at any hour whatever to take the sacraments to those who ask for them. He teaches catechism regularly, and he has visited all the homes of the parish, and, besides, his conduct is very good.<sup>35</sup>

The numbers at the seminary for the period under consideration are difficult to ascertain. Precise lists indicating the number, origin, and birthdate of the seminarists have been preserved only for the years 1725-1732.<sup>36</sup> The average is twenty-one admissions a year (going from a minimum of twelve in 1727 to a maximum of thirty-one in 1731). Recruitment was strictly local. All of the 171 seminarists mentioned were natives of the diocese, and 61 percent of them came from the classes of philosophy at the college of Treguier, the others coming for the most part from Morlaix. The social composition was as follows: 80 percent were sons of farmers; 13 percent sons of bourgeois; and 7 percent sons of nobles, a very high proportion in comparison with other regions.<sup>37</sup> The nobility represented only about 2 percent of the Breton population, and entry into religion seems always to have been one of the traditional outlets for younger sons.

The composition by age was quite irregular. The new boarders were between nineteen and thirty years of age, the large majority, nevertheless, being between twenty-one and twenty-six years of age (84 percent). This diversity should not really be surprising. In the colleges of the old regime students from ten to twenty years of age were found together in the same classes, and, as Philippe Aries remarks, "this intermingling of ages is surprising

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<sup>35</sup> Notebook of synodal witnesses, 1717. ADCN, G:visites episcopales.

<sup>36</sup> A notebook of thirty-six pages, in poor condition, in which there are some accounts, titled *Cahier des retraites ecclésiastiques et laïques et des noms de Messieurs les séminaristes*. ADCN, G: séminaire.

<sup>37</sup> In Le Boulonnais area, there were almost no nobles among the priests.



to us today, if it does not shock us. Contemporaries were so little aware of it that they did not remark it as it amounted to something all too familiar. But could one be sensitive to the mixture of ages when one was so indifferent to the very fact of age?"<sup>38</sup>

There were three prerequisites for entering the seminary: to be a legitimate son (the extracts of the marriage registers of parents were scrupulously examined at the time of entrance); to pass an examination before the representatives of the bishop (of the 171 seminarists, only one entered without an examination, on 24 February 1732, with the special authorization of the vicars general); to possess a "clerical title," assuring an annual income of at least sixty *livres* (at La Rochelle the minimum was 100 *livres* and at Saint-Pol-de-Léon fifty *livres*). This income was most often based on endowments furnished by the parents, a fact that would seem to have excluded children from too poor a background. In fact, the clerical title was often furnished by other members of the family or by a noble or ecclesiastical patron. This endowment of a seminarist was considered a pious foundation that could advance the salvation of the donor's soul. The admissions records of the seminary furnish us with a few examples. In 1660, the parents of Maurice Jouhannet set him up with an income of sixty *livres*. In 1666, Yves de Tuonmelin, Sieur of Kerbiriou, established his ecclesiastical title himself, "as one does ordinarily in order to be assured of some heritage for one's support in case of illness, old age, or other chance bodily accidents."<sup>39</sup> In 1694, the brother-in-law of Jean Le Tinevez joined with his parents in setting up the title. That same year François Cariou received his from his uncle, a priest in Goudelin. In 1695, Marguerite Charlotin, a cloth merchant in Tréguier, established a title for her nephew, Pierre Mahe. In 1729, the entrance registers for the seminarists cited, in regard to Vincent Huet of Tremel: "His parents, not having any landed income, have asked a land-owning lord to provide him with some and have furnished said lord with a promissory note, stating that if the recipient attains his title, they will pay him the said sum."<sup>40</sup> In the 171 cases that are available to us, the clerical title always amounts to be-

<sup>38</sup> P. Aries, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Seuil, 1973), 163.

<sup>39</sup> ADCN, G: Registre d'insinuation, n. 18.

<sup>40</sup> Two registers cover the period from 1660 to 1670, but the letters of priesthood have not been inserted into them.

tween 60 and 105 *livres*, so that the differences among the seminarists are minimal. Some were even admitted without a title, and were maintained at the seminary's expense, such as Yves Guerniou of Louargat, who entered in 1727.

In the same way, the diet of the boarders involved only a few specific inequalities, such as that of drink: 54 percent drank a half-liter or a quarter-liter of cider; 25 percent the same amount of wine; and 21 percent the same amount of water (but this was also a mortification that some imposed on themselves). Very few left during the course of the year: three out of 171, and one more, who having left on 20 January 1729, returned on the 24th "at the solicitation of the ladies de Rays and his sister."

### **Seminary Population, Mission Work**

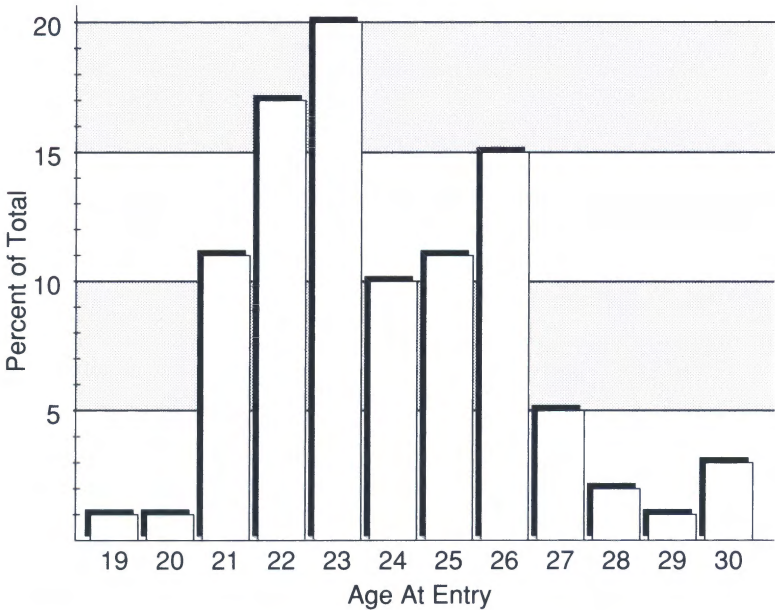
About twenty seminarists, five priests, three brothers, a gardener, and a servant--such was the permanent population of the seminary. But to this must be added an important transient population, composed especially of retreatants. Retreats took place from May to November and generally lasted one or two weeks each. They were, in principle, reserved to ecclesiastics, who were summoned by the bishop and were numerous enough. Thus, the book of retreats for 1726 indicates the following numbers of participants:

Retreat of 5 May: 15  
 First retreat in June: 14  
 Second retreat in June: 41  
 Third retreat in June: 27  
 First retreat in July: 38  
 Second retreat in July: 42  
 First retreat in August: 21  
 Second retreat in August: 37  
 Retreat in November: 24

The total was 259 people, representing at least half the clergy of the diocese. To these should be added some clerics or lay people (eighteen in 1726) who came voluntarily. Each participant paid eight *livres*, ten *sols*. From time to time priests, about ten a year, also came to undergo three months' punishment for

drunkenness or different scandals.

The number of ordinations following the conclusion of the seminary course can be researched, from 1693 on, in the registers of clerical admissions. For the last years of the seventeenth century, the total number of letters of ordination recorded is the following.



(Table I)

This table calls for several comments. First of all, the proportion of clerics from dioceses other than Tréguier is high, which seems to contradict what we have been able to ascertain concerning the recruitment of the seminarists. As a matter of fact, the majority of these clerics were from the bishoprics of Léon or Saint-Brieuc and came to be ordained in Tréguier when the episcopal sees of their own dioceses were vacant. Among them is also found a certain number of Premonstratensians from Beauport, an abbey near Tréguier but dependent on the diocese of Saint-Brieuc. The rest consisted of some Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Recollects, Cistercians, and occasional clerics from Quimper, Dol, or Saint-Malo.

The second comment concerns the nobility. It represented no less than 8.49 percent of those tonsured, an enormous proportion, again far above that which we find for the seminarists of 1725-1732. Since the social status of new priests was not always indicated, we have unfortunately not been able to verify if this proportion was the same when they left the seminary. Still, it is reasonable to say that it was less, because a certain number of young men stopped at the first stage. Since tonsure was the necessary condition for obtaining an ecclesiastical benefice, without being to any extent a definitive commitment for the future, it was considered by some, especially the nobles, only as a means of assuring themselves a good income. Out of this arose some abuses. In 1695, Jean Jacques Bizien, a noble of Bourbriac, thirteen years of age, received his letters of tonsure, and on the same day his uncle, Henri Jean Bizien, resigned his prebend and his canonry of Saint-Aubin in Guerande in his nephew's favor! Equally clear was the maneuver of Paul Bernard, a noble of Plouec, who received a chaplaincy in Runan at the same time as his letters of tonsure (1693). In 1669 Jean Claude de Bourblanc, also a noble, received a chaplaincy shortly after his entrance into the seminary. In addition, several of these tonsured clerics got married after some years and then resigned their benefices. That was the case in 1668 with regard to a chaplaincy in Ploubezré and one in Pleumeur-Gautier; in 1669 at Langoat and at Nôtre-Dame de Guingamp; in 1696, at Brelevenez, where the "very noble Seigneur Malo de Nevet" held a family benefice. Others gave up the tonsure for a military career, like Philippe de Rosmar in 1693, who gave up his chaplaincy in Guenezan.

But perhaps the most important result highlighted by the table is the very large number of ordinations: 296 in eight years (in 1694, the diocese was vacant), or an average of thirty-seven per year! Even if we considered only the clerics from Tréguier, the average is still 22.1, while in the diocese of Boulogne, three times the size of Tréguier, the average barely exceeded twenty at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The ecclesiastical career, whether motivated by an authentic vocation or not, seems always to have been attractive to the young men of lower Brittany.

Finally, we should point out the missionary activity of the seminary of Tréguier. It is one of the aspects that made the

deepest impression and contributed to its popularity.<sup>41</sup> We have already seen that Michel Thépaut founded three missions. The fragments of a seminary register of funds refer to others, which show the great activity of the Vincentians in that domain.

(1) The mission of Pleumeur-Bodou, from 21 June to 21 July 1693. "God showered his blessings on it in abundance. Since the time of year was the most convenient for the people, no one ever saw such great dedication to attending the exercises of the mission, and at the end it was necessary to have twenty-two confessors, who were still overworked. There were 4,000 communicants."

(2) The mission in Plougasnou, in April and May 1695. "A great deal of good was done there. There could not have been a greater fervor in attending the instructions. A little bit of negligence in coming to confession on time was noted. There were twenty-five workers...if there had been thirty confessors, they would have been busy. There were 6,000 communicants."

(3) The mission in Tréguier, June-July 1695. "The missionaries lived at the seminary. The mission was very famous. Good beyond description was done there. One sees in it sufficient reason why it is always better to follow only one rule."

(4) The mission in Pontmelvez, June-July 1698, "which Monsieur Charles Thos, perpetual vicar of the said parish, arranged at his own expense, which amounted to almost 100 *écus*, without counting some small gifts that were given to him. God gave this mission very great success. There were only twelve confessors, all well chosen from the rectors of the region and one religious from Beauport...It was noted that there was only one parishioner who did not go to confession."

## Conclusion

If we hold to the essential facts of those first years of the seminary of Tréguier, the impression that emerges up to the end of the seventeenth century is one of great precariousness in the material sphere together with a notable brilliance, at the diocesan level, in the spiritual sphere. The formation of numerous seminarists together with retreats and missions as-

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<sup>41</sup> On the organization of the missions in the west at that time, see the series of articles in the *Annales de Bretagne* 81 (1974), no. 3; and H. Brémond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux en France*, 5.

sured the reputation of the establishment. It was, without any doubt, a great success that contributed to bettering the quality of the clergy of Tréguier. The contrast is all the more striking in relation to the meagerness of its income and the gifts given to the seminary. This was apparently a temporary situation because eighteenth-century documents permit a glimpse of a considerable enrichment as the result of a policy of judicious purchases and good administration, to the point that in 1790 the seminary of Tréguier was the richest educational institution in what is now the department of Côtes-du-Nord.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Leon Dubreuil, *La Vente des biens nationaux dans le département des Côtes-du-Nord* (Paris, 1912).

*Do your best to supply them with good bread and good food, and do not sell the best wine in order to give them what is worse, or expose the community to the danger of complaining that they are being treated in a miserly fashion.*

*Saint Vincent de Paul*



*I know, as I am bound to know, that nothing must be done that is not according to justice and right order.*

*Saint Vincent de Paul*



*As long as a man is able to work, the tools of his trade and craft should be purchased for him. Alms are not intended for people able to work, but for poor, weak, sick people, poor orphans or poor old people.*

*Saint Vincent de Paul*