

LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

Part Two

The Making of the Modern World

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THE CHURCH BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

I have been in great battles without ever flinching at the roar of the cannon. But when I listen to you, I tremble from head to foot.

These words, wrung from a seasoned warrior, witnessed to the power of the preacher, Paolo Danei. Clad in a black habit, arms outstretched, one hand grasping a crucifix, Paolo Danei spoke movingly to vast crowds about the passion of Christ. From a platform, he acted out the events of Christ's suffering and death, even scourging himself until he bled. Though afflicted with **rheumatism**, Paolo painfully dragged himself to the center of the platform, where stood a large wooden cross. Embracing the cross, he intoned the Good Friday chant, *Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit*. ("Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world.")

rheumatism: a sickness characterized by swelling and pain in muscles or joints

Though such a dramatic style of preaching might seem odd to us today, it was most effective in mid-18th-century Italy. Not only the soldier but hundreds, thousands trembled at the words of Paolo Danei. Even hardened bandits (and in Italy there were many) were moved to tears and confessed their sins. For Paolo Danei was not playacting when he did such things as scourge himself. Thinking himself a great sinner, he was in earnest; he preached as much to himself as to the crowds around the platform.

Paolo was the eldest son of a businessman of Ovada, a town in Piedmont, a region of Italy that lay northwest of Genoa. Born January 3, 1694, he was only ten months older than Voltaire. But unlike the *philosophe*, who had learned impiety from his earliest years, Paolo Danei had been raised in a devout household. And unlike Voltaire—who from boyhood had mocked the Church—Paolo, from age 10, had meditated on the sufferings of Christ. It is told that in 1713, when he was 19, Paolo received a vision of hell. The place of torment opened before him, and he felt the terrors of the damned.

It may seem that with such a background, Paolo would have entered religious life; but he did not do so immediately. In 1714, he answered Pope Clement XI's call to join the army of Venice against the Turks, who had crossed the Danube to invade Europe. But Paolo remained in the army only a year. Returning home, he refused marriage and his family's inheritance. Instead, he followed a religious calling, but not as a member of a religious order or community. With his younger brother, Giovanni Battista (John Baptist), Paolo embraced a private life of prayer and contemplation.



Portrait of San Paolo della Croce,
St. Paul of the Cross

Paolo was soon rewarded for his generosity to God. On Good Friday 1715, Paolo experienced in his own flesh the sufferings of the crucified Christ, and then the joy of the union of his soul with God. He had come to understand, more deeply than ever before, that the path to life and joy passes only through the cross. This message of the cross would be Paolo Danei's lifelong theme, for which the Church remembers him as San Paolo della Croce—Saint Paul of the Cross.

Though Paolo Danei would not live to see it, the Catholic Church was about to suffer her own crucifixion—a revolution that would overrun France and then all of Europe. Would the Church survive? Many in the 18th century might have answered no. The Church of the 18th century seemed sick; she seemed to be growing ever weaker, while her enemies grew ever stronger. The philosophers had rejected her; science was ignoring her; and the rulers of Europe had broken her power. It seemed as if all the Church needed was just one more shock to topple her and then, on her broken foundations, build a new Europe based on reason and science, not faith and “superstition.”

The Popes against the Powers

“In 20 years, there will be nothing left of the Church.” This was Voltaire's prediction in 1773, when looking at the state of the Christian Faith in his time. Many others in the 18th century doubtlessly shared this opinion. Some, like Voltaire, of course hoped for the destruction of Christian “superstition,” as they called it. Others sorrowed over the loss of faith among many of their contemporaries. A Catholic who fully understood the Faith would not have feared that the Church would cease to exist, for Christ himself had said the gates of hell would not prevail against her. But a knowledgeable Catholic knew that Europe could be lost to the Faith and that the society of Christendom could cease to exist. Many signs pointed to the likelihood that Christian society in Europe was coming to an end.

One sign of the **demise** of Christendom in the 18th century was that the popes had come to have little power and influence in Europe. In many ways, not much had changed in the popes' status since the 16th century. The Successor of St. Peter was still acknowledged as the head of the Church and, in Catholic countries at least, as the supreme spiritual head of Christian society. He remained the supreme temporal lord of the Papal States, which stretched across central Italy, as well as the feudal lord of certain other states, such as the kingdom of Naples. Yet in the 18th century, papal authority in both Church and civil society was being seriously challenged, and not only by *philosophes*; Catholic monarchs and even Catholic bishops and clergy were seeking to throw off the pope's authority and make him only the figurehead of the Church.

Sometimes monarchs attacked both the temporal and the spiritual authority of the popes together. The “Sun King,” Louis XIV of France, was such a monarch. Though in many ways a defender of the Catholic Faith, Louis XIV was more interested in expanding his own power than in spreading the Gospel. A movement called **Gallicanism** flourished during his reign. Gallicans held that the king, not the pope, was in most matters the supreme head of the French Church. They attacked such

demise: death or an end to existence

Gallicanism: the idea that the king or secular head of government is in most matters the supreme head of the Church. This doctrine is called *Gallican* since it arose in France (in Latin, *Gallia*).

papal supremacy: the doctrine that the pope is the supreme or sovereign head of the Church; that no person or body (such as an ecumenical council) can exercise any power over the pope

teachings as **papal supremacy**, which the Council of Trent had taught, and **papal infallibility**, which had not yet been defined by the Church, though it was widely held to be true.

An example of Gallicanism was an edict Louis XIV issued in 1695. In this edict, the king admitted that the Church has authority over spiritual matters; however, he said, her secular possessions (lands, church buildings, schools, etc.) belonged to the king of France. But the edict gave the king power over the Church's spiritual authority as well, for it allowed the *Parlement* of Paris (France's supreme court) to pass judgment on any Church decisions having to do with spiritual matters. The Sun King was satisfied only if he had absolute control over the French Church.

Gallicanism continued to thrive under the reign of the Sun King's successor, Louis XV (r. 1715–1774.) In the French courts, called **parlements**, Gallicanism was very strong. Louis XV was perhaps less Gallican than was his grandfather, but he was weak and easily influenced. In 1766, the king's council said that the Church has the authority to “decide by itself what was to be believed and practiced”; but it also said the king's government had the power to keep the pope's decrees from being published in France until it was clear that the king agreed to them. In 1768, Louis XV ordered that no woman under the age of 18 and no man under the age of 21 was permitted to enter a monastery or convent.

Gallicanism was thus the French version of Josephism. Similar to both Gallicanism and Josephism were the ideas of Johann Nikolaus von Hontheim, the coadjutor (assistant) bishop of Trier in Germany. Von Hontheim, who wrote under the pen name Justinus Febronius, wanted to apply Locke and Rousseau's ideas of government to the Church. Febronius said that, just as governments receive their authority from the people, so bishops receive their right to rule from the Christian faithful. Since each bishop receives his authority from his own people, he is independent of the pope. Febronius thought the pope has no real authority over other bishops. Very powerful German bishops held and defended Febronianism, as the ideas of Febronius were called.

Gallicanism and Febronianism had the support of a powerful group of clergy and laymen called **Jansenists**, after Cornelius Janssens, a 17th-century bishop of the Belgian city of Ypres. In a work called *Augustinus*, Janssens taught that after the Fall, human nature had become so entirely corrupt that, without grace, even our most virtuous acts are in fact sins. Janssens won the support of the powerful Arnauld family in France. One member of this family was Jacqueline Arnauld (or Mother Angelica), who had reformed an abbey of Cistercian nuns at Port Royal, a few miles southwest of Paris. Port Royal became the center of the Jansenist movement, which emphasized austerity and strict penitential practices.

Though Pope Urban VIII condemned Jansenism, many in France continued to read Janssens' *Augustinus* and the community at Port Royal grew. Port Royal came under the leadership of Mother Angelica's brother, **Père** Antoine Arnauld, and began to include laymen as well as religious. Arnauld himself published a work, *On Frequent Communion*, in which he said only believers with perfect **contrition** should receive absolution in the Sacrament of Penance and take Communion. In other words, according to Arnauld, the vast majority of Catholics should receive Communion very infrequently—and really not at all, for most Catholics

papal infallibility: the doctrine that, when exercising his supreme authority in teaching on faith and morals, the pope can make no error

parlement: a French court of law; the *Parlement* of Paris was the supreme court of France.

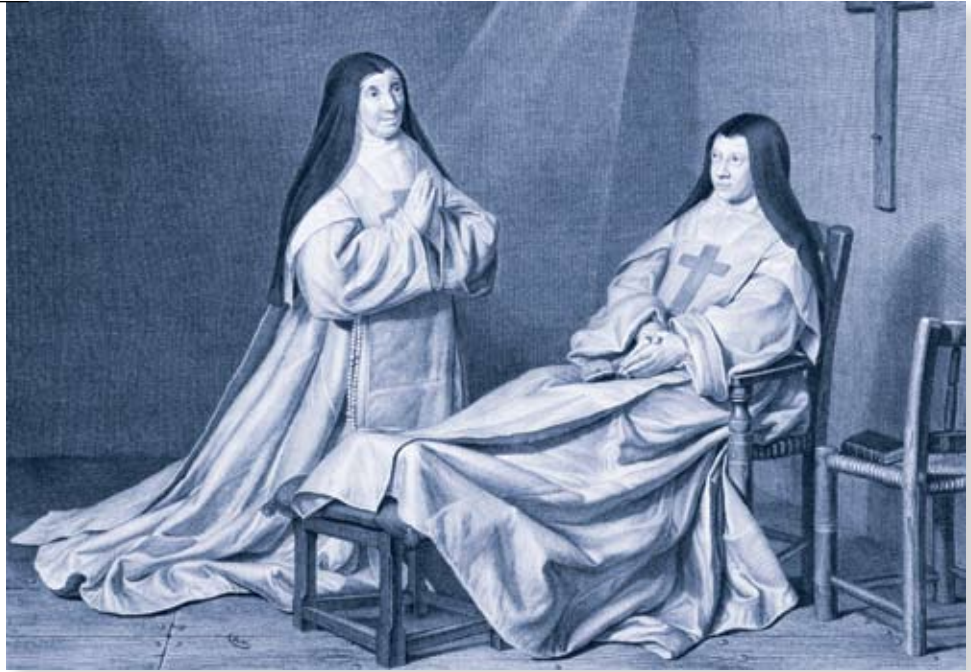
Jansenist: one who adheres to *Jansenism*, a heresy that taught that human nature was entirely corrupted by the Fall and that only those with perfect contrition should take Communion. Jansenists, like Gallicans, said the Church is subject to the king or government.

père: French word for father
contrition: sorrow for sin, not because one fears punishment but because sin offends God

Cornelius Janssens



Two Jansenist nuns in the seventeenth century, by Philippe Champaigne



were not capable of being perfectly contrite. The teachings of Port Royal thus grimly hid God's mercy by exaggerating his justice.

Jansenist influence in the French Church grew very powerful in the early 18th century. Jansenists joined forces with the Gallicans in calling for a national Church free from the authority of the pope.

So it was that in the 18th century, the popes faced powerful foes among the clergy and the Catholic monarchs. Inspired by Enlightenment and Protestant ideas, these foes wanted to break up the Catholic Church into national and regional Churches completely under the power of kings and princes. The Church, it appeared, could not long survive such attacks against her unity, and Christendom (the society that the Church had formed over a period of 1,300 years) seemed doomed to destruction.

The Popes Ignored

In many ways, the Church was not prepared to meet the challenges she faced in the 18th century. In part this was because many of the bishops were more loyal to their national sovereigns than to the pope, or they were more interested in power and luxury than in serving their flocks. Too many priests and religious lived lax and even immoral lives, or they abandoned their Catholic Faith for the ideas of the Enlightenment. But in addition to all this, the Church was weakened because of the men who were popes. For the most part, the popes who ruled the Church in the 18th century did not have the qualities necessary to confront the challenges they faced.

The popes of the 18th century were by no means bad men. Indeed, they were mostly good and even holy men who cared deeply about the spiritual good of the Church. The 18th-century popes did what they could to combat heresy, improve the spiritual and intellectual life of the clergy, and confront temporal rulers when they violated the liberty of the Church. The problem was that out of the eight popes who reigned between 1700 and 1800, really only one had the intellectual ability, the imagination, and the firmness of character to understand the times that he lived in and to respond to them effectively.

One reason inadequate men filled the papal office was that European kings had too much influence over the election of popes. The kings of France and Spain, as well as the Holy Roman emperor, could influence how the cardinals voted when they met in **conclave** to elect a pope. If one of these monarchs opposed a papal candidate, he had cardinals who would refuse to vote for the candidate. So it was that the men who were elected pope were the men the great powers thought would give them no serious opposition.

conclave: a gathering of cardinals that meets to elect a pope

Of course, popes in the 18th century did oppose monarchs when they attempted to take control of the Church in their domains or when they ignored the pope’s traditional rights. But the pope’s protests mostly fell on deaf ears. The great powers of Europe felt they did not have to listen to the pope.

An example of a pope who showed both strength and weakness was Innocent XIII. In 1722, the year after he was elected pope, Innocent granted Emperor Karl VI the kingdom of Sicily. Karl took an oath of allegiance to the pope as Sicily’s feudal lord, but a year later, Karl granted two duchies of the kingdom to Don Carlos of Spain. He did so without asking the pope’s permission—as he was supposed to do as the pope’s vassal. Innocent protested, but Karl ignored him. When the French king pressured Innocent to appoint an unworthy man as a cardinal, the pope granted the request (though afterward, he exhorted the new cardinal to change his ways.) Yet in 1721, when seven bishops of France petitioned Innocent to remove the condemnation of Jansenism, the pope firmly refused.

Innocent XIII’s successor, Benedict XIII, who became pope in 1724, was one of a number of cardinals who had vowed to let no worldly concerns influence them in selecting a pope. As pope, Benedict worked zealously to drive out all luxury and

Popes, Emperors, and French Kings of the 18th Century


Popes

- Clement XI (1700–21)
- Innocent XIII (1721–24)
- Benedict XIII (1724–30)
- Clement XII (1730–40)
- Benedict XIV (1740–58)
- Clement XIII (1758–69)
- Clement XIV (1769–74)
- Pius VI (1775–99)

Holy Roman Emperors

- Karl VI (1711–40)
- No emperor (1740–42)
[Maria Theresia, archduchess of Austria (1740–80)]
- Karl VII of Bavaria (1742–45)
- Franz I of Lorraine (1745–65)
with Maria Theresia
- Josef II (1765–80)
with Maria Theresia
- Josef II, sole ruler, (1780–90)
- Leopold II (1790–92)
- Franz II (1792–1835)

Kings of France

- Louis XIV (1643–1715)
- Louis XV (1715–74)
-  Louis XVI (1774–93)
- First Republic of France (1792–1804)



Pope Benedict XIII

worldliness from the College of Cardinals. He did not, however, always oppose rulers when they tried to seize rights that belonged to the Church alone. Unfortunately, one of the pope's friends, a cardinal, took advantage of him. Innocent did not know that this cardinal and several other officials were using their offices to become rich.

Yet all these men were punished when Clement XII became pope in 1730. Clement was quite old when he became pope; two years into his reign, he went totally blind and was eventually bedridden. Yet despite these infirmities, he worked diligently to bring prosperity to Rome and the Papal States, and he directed many building projects. Nor did he neglect his spiritual duties. He battled against the French Jansenists and was the first pope to condemn Freemasonry (see sidebar.) In political matters, Clement worked for harmony between the Church and the European monarchs.

When Clement XII died on February 6, 1740, the cardinals who gathered to elect his successor could not agree on a candidate. For six months they argued and fought, but by August they were no closer to an agreement. Finally, one of the "compromise" candidates, Archbishop Prospero Lorenzo Lambertini of Bologna, offered a bit of advice. Referring to himself and two other candidates, he said, half jokingly, "If you wish to elect a saint, choose Gotti; if you want a statesman, choose Aldobrandini; but if you want an honest fellow, elect me." The assembled cardinals cast their votes for the "honest fellow," and Lambertini was elected pope. He took on the name of Benedict XIV.

A Pope for the Times

Among all the popes of the 18th century, Benedict XIV alone was fully fit to deal with the spirit of his time. Not only did he have a strong faith and was pious, he was one of the greatest scholars ever to sit on the throne of St. Peter. He was a student of philosophy and theology as well as science and history. A lover of literature, he avidly read the works of the great Italian late medieval and Renaissance poets, including Dante Alighieri. Both as a bishop and as pope, Benedict surrounded himself with learned men and artists. He loved the opera, and as a bishop he had attended it frequently. He was merry and loved to talk; he was known for his sharp wit, which rivaled that of Voltaire himself. Benedict was a gracious man and a strong and wise ruler. And in his charity, he imitated Christ. He did not hide away in his palace, but visited the poor in their neighborhoods and the sick in the hospitals.

Benedict XIV understood the times in which he lived. "The pope orders, the cardinals do not obey, and the people do as they please," he noted with his characteristic wit. He was firm in fighting false teachings in the Church, but he realized that condemning falsehoods was not enough; instead, they must be answered with understanding and intelligence. He insisted that in order to respond to the Jansenists and Gallicans as well as to the *philosophes*, Catholics had to be as well trained intellectually as their opponents were. It was Benedict XIV who began the practice of writing encyclical letters to communicate with the entire Church. During his reign of 18 years, he wrote over 40 of them.

Benedict so impressed his opponents that even Voltaire praised him. Indeed, Voltaire dedicated his poem, *Mahomet*,

Pope Benedict XIV



The Rise of Freemasonry

One of the most mysterious groups in European history is a secret society that takes its name from a medieval guild of craftsmen. It was named the Freemasons because the group actually arose from the medieval craft guild of masons (stonecutters). But how it developed from an association of craftsmen to a kind of club for freethinkers, *philosophes*, and Enlightenment statesmen makes for an interesting tale.

The Freemasons themselves told a fanciful story of their origins. They said their organization went back to workmen who built Solomon's Temple in the centuries before Christ. In reality, the Freemasons originated from a guild of journeymen builders of the Middle Ages. These medieval guildsmen formed themselves into smaller groupings, called lodges, and, like other medieval guilds, swore that they would be "faithful to God and the Church."

In England, the Freemasons became important when their members were enlisted to rebuild London after a great fire destroyed much of the city in 1666. In the latter part of the 17th century, they opposed the Stuart kings and began to attract members from the English nobility and the wealthy merchant class. By the beginning of the 18th century, Freemason lodges were no longer gatherings for workingmen but centers for introducing men to "philosophy." In 1721, a former Presbyterian drew up a rule that organized all the lodges under a Grand Lodge, controlled by members of the nobility. The symbols of the medieval guild (the set square, a trowel, and a workman's apron) were given mystical meanings, and members practiced mysterious rites that they swore to protect with absolute secrecy.

Freemasonry eventually split into English and Scottish **rites**, and lodges spread from the British Isles to cities in the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Germany. In 1732, an English-rite lodge, called Au Louis d'Argent, was founded in Paris. The Scottish-rite St. Thomas lodge soon followed. It was the Scotsman Michael Ramsey who reorganized the French Freemasons into an indepen-

dent lodge, controlled by what was called the Venerable Assembly "Grand Orient." The first grand master of French Freemasonry was Louis XVI's cousin, the duke of Chartres, Louis-Philippe d'Orléans.

But whether Scottish, English, or French, Freemasonry attracted members of the nobility as well as *philosophes*. Yet despite its Enlightenment leanings, Freemasonry was not at first clearly anti-Christian or anti-Catholic. Indeed, many Freemasons were Catholic priests and even bishops. The Cistercian monks of Clairvaux had a Masonic lodge within their monastery. One can find statements by 18th-century Freemasons showing devotion to the Mass, Our Lady, and the saints. Except for a kind of Freemasonry in Germany, called "Illuminism,"

Freemasonry hardly seemed anti-Catholic at all in the 18th century.

The Jesuits were the first religious order to forbid their members to be Freemasons. Bishops began to follow suit, and some forbade prominent Freemasons to be buried in consecrated ground. Finally, in 1738, Pope Clement XII condemned Freemasonry and forbade Catholics to have anything to do with

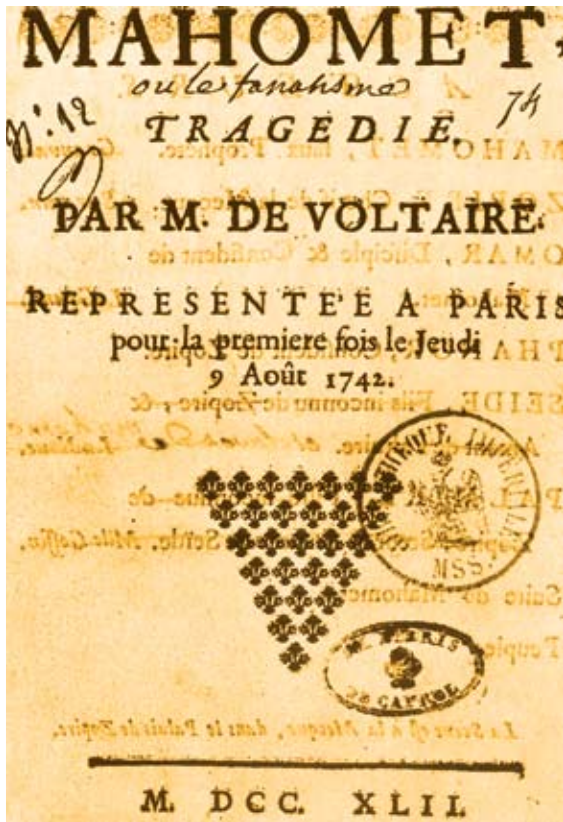


Masonic lodges. Pope Benedict XIV repeated this condemnation in 1751.

Why did the popes condemn Freemasonry? In part, they did so because its members were required to take oaths of secrecy. More important, said the popes, Freemasonry encouraged Deism and so undermined the Catholic Faith both in individual souls and in society at large. For the Freemasons, God is the Deist "Great Architect" of the universe, not the Holy Trinity who cares for all things with his loving providence.

The anti-Catholic character of Freemasonry is evident because it attracted prominent *philosophes*, including Voltaire himself. On August 7, 1778, Voltaire was formally received as a member of the Paris lodge. Entering the lodge arm in arm with Voltaire that day was an American scientist and statesman who had won the hearts of the Paris aristocracy by his learning and wit. This statesman's name was Benjamin Franklin.

rite: a solemn ceremony; also, a group that practices a certain set of solemn ceremonies



Title page from the play,
Mahomet, by Voltaire, 1742

to the pope. Voltaire said his play was “a satire on the errors and cruelty of a false prophet, to the Vicar of a God of truth and meekness.” After graciously acknowledging this dedication, Benedict, after careful study, condemned Voltaire’s works.

As ruler of the Papal States, Benedict worked to increase prosperity and end wasteful spending. He introduced improvements in farming, encouraged industry, and lowered taxes. In dealing with the grasping monarchs of his time, he did not insist too strongly on papal rights. To maintain peace, he allowed the Catholic rulers of Sardinia, Portugal, Naples, and Spain to nominate bishops. But Benedict was firm in protecting what was essential to the Catholic Faith and practice.

Pope Benedict XIV’s justice, charity, intelligence, and wit won him the praise of both Catholic and Protestant Europeans. Perhaps the greatest praise he earned during his pontificate came from the lips of an English lord, who said, “If [the pope] came to London, we should all turn papist.” Perhaps if Benedict XIV’s successors had been men like him, Catholic Europe might have witnessed a greater revival of the Faith. Instead, the Church would have to wait until the 19th century for a man of Benedict’s caliber to sit on the throne of St. Peter.

The Pope Loses His Right Hand

Friedrich the Great of Prussia called them the “advance guards of the court of Rome.” Other “enlightened” despots held the same opinion. The *philosophes* thought them their chief enemy. “Once we have destroyed the Jesuits,” said Voltaire, “we shall have the game in our hands.” And Jean d’Alembert, Diderot’s friend and collaborator on the *Encyclopedia*, said of other religious orders that they were “nothing but Cossacks and **Pandours**, who will never stand firm against our disciplined troops.”

Since the 16th century, the Society of Jesus had been the popes’ right arm in the Church’s struggle against Protestantism. Jesuit priests had almost single-handedly halted the spread of the “reformed” religion into Catholic lands and had recovered areas for the Faith that had gone Protestant. In the 17th century, the Jesuits had provided the Church with brilliant scholars and theologians as well as with missionaries who spread the Faith to Asia and North and South America. In the 18th century, the Jesuits had become stalwart champions in the battle against rationalism and irreligion. And it was for this that men like Voltaire, Diderot, and d’Alembert hated them.

By the middle of the 18th century, the Jesuits were a formidable spiritual army. With about 23,000 members, they had 800 residences, staffed 700 colleges and universities, and oversaw 300 missions. Jesuits served as confessors to Catholic rulers throughout Europe and often played an important role in the appointment of bishops and abbots. Jesuit schools not only educated the sons of nobles and of the growing middle class but also worked among the masses of European poor.

It is not surprising, given their success, that the Jesuits had many enemies. Besides the *philosophes*, Gallicans, Febronians, and Jansenists opposed the Jesuits because they were **Ultramontane**. And, unfortunately, members of other religious orders often criticized the Jesuits out of nothing more than envy.

Some criticisms of the Jesuits were just. Jesuit moral theologians at times came up with clever arguments to justify lax behavior among Catholics; and Jesuit priests engaged in large business ventures and were at times involved in dishonest political

Pandours: infantry from Croatia in the Austrian military, known for their brutality
Ultramontane: the name given to those who favored strong papal control over national churches (from *ultra*, meaning “beyond” or “on the other side,” and *mons, montis*, meaning “mountains”—“on the other side of the mountains” or the Alps)

The Reductions of Paraguay

The Indian republics or “Reductions” founded by the Jesuits were a network of six large villages of about five thousand persons each. Under the direction of three Jesuits, the Indians in the Reductions lived a life separated from Spanish colonists. The Jesuits hoped, in this way, to keep the Indians from the example of bad Christians and protect them from injustice and slavery.

In harmony with traditional native ways, the Indians on a Reduction held and farmed their lands in common, though each family had its own house and garden. Indian leaders, elected by their communities, helped to govern the villages. To protect the villagers from raids made by other Indians and by Portuguese slavers from Brazil, the Jesuits oversaw the military training of the village men. The Reductions became quite prosperous between 1650



and 1720 and presented such a unique and humane way of colonization that they even earned the praise of non-Catholics in Europe.

dealings. So large a religious order was bound to have bad members who justified using dishonest means to achieve good ends. Still, the Jesuits were not criticized mostly because of their bad members, but because they were successful in advancing the cause of Christ and his Church.

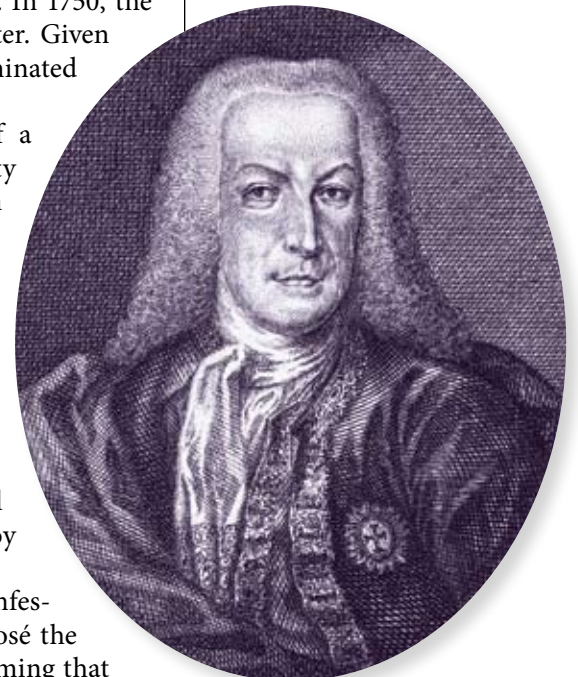
Many in the 18th century wanted to destroy the Society of Jesus. One of its chief enemies was Sebastião de Carvalho e Mello, the marquis of Pombal in Portugal. Pombal, a disciple of the *philosophes*, was a zealous advocate of “enlightened” despotism and saw the Church as the chief obstacle to kingly power. In 1750, the new king of Portugal, José I, appointed Pombal as his prime minister. Given Pombal’s learning and talent, it was not long before he completely dominated the weak king.

Pombal came into conflict with the Jesuits as the result of a treaty Portugal had signed with Spain in January 1750. The treaty granted Portugal seven districts of the Spanish realm of Paraguay in South America in return for the Portuguese colony of San Sacramento. In Paraguay in the early 1600s, the Jesuits had organized what was an almost independent group of Indian republics, called “Reductions,” under the authority of the Spanish king. The Jesuits hoped that the Reductions could continue to flourish under Portuguese rule.

But the “enlightened” Pombal was not interested in preserving the Reductions in the lands Portugal received from Spain. When the Portuguese government ordered the 30,000 or so Indians on the Reductions to abandon their lands, many rebelled. Pombal blamed this rebellion on the Jesuits and began a campaign to destroy the order.

In 1757, Pombal succeeded in having the royal family’s Jesuit confessors dismissed from the court. But an attempt to assassinate King José the following year gave Pombal the opportunity he was looking for. Claiming that

The Marquis de Pombal



the Jesuits were behind the assassination plot, Pombal asked Pope Benedict XIV to investigate the Society. But Pombal would not wait for the pope's decision before taking action. In 1758, he forbade the Jesuits to work in Lisbon. The following year, Pombal seized all Jesuit property in Portugal and rounded up all the Jesuits working in Portugal and its colonies.

Pombal showed special cruelty to foreign Jesuits. These he had imprisoned. The Portuguese Jesuits, however, he sent by ship to Civitavecchia, a port in the Papal States. Pombal called these captives "a present to the pope." But Pombal was not content with these measures. He placed several Jesuit superiors and missionaries in prison, where for 18 years they suffered greatly. Pombal held an 80-year-old Jesuit, Father Gabriel Malagrida, in prison on charges of treason. As a priest, Malagrida could be condemned only by the Inquisition, so Pombal accused him of heresy based on some works the priest was said to have written in prison. In 1761, the inquisitors (handpicked by Pombal) condemned Malagrida to death. He was publicly strangled and his body burnt.

Clement XIII, who succeeded Benedict XIV as pope in 1758, received the exiled Jesuits with great kindness and gave them aid. But Clement's support for the Jesuits cost him dearly. In 1760, Pombal broke off all diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

Besides exiling, imprisoning, and killing the Jesuits, Pombal carried on a propaganda campaign against them. In one slanderous publication, Pombal accused the Jesuits of having set up an independent kingdom in South America where, he said, they enslaved the Indians and grew rich off their labor. (Voltaire repeated such stories in his novel, *Candide*, published in 1759.) Pombal's actions and **libelous** publications inspired other governments to take active measures against the Jesuits.

In France, the Jansenist and Gallican-controlled *Parlement* of Paris called for an investigation of the Jesuits. Not surprisingly, the *parlement* decided that members of the Society were guilty of undermining the authority of government and corrupting Christian morality. The *parlement* then ordered all Jesuit students and novices to leave the order's French houses by October 1, 1761.

After hearing of the *parlement's* ruling, King Louis XV tried to defend the Jesuits, but to no avail. In July 1762 the *parlement* took the final step and ordered the **suppression** of the Society of Jesus in France. Louis XV still could have stepped in to save the order, but the weak king followed the advice of the Gallicans, Jansenists, and *philosophes* who surrounded him. Louis's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, also hated the Jesuits because some of them had condemned her immoral conduct. So it was that, after several delays, in November 1764 King Louis XV issued an "irrevocable decree" making the Society of Jesus illegal in France.

Pope Clement XIII had tried to save the Jesuits in France, and in January, 1765, he issued a bull protesting against the suppression of the order in France. But soon other Catholic monarchs joined in the attack on the Society. Convinced by his "enlightened" chief minister that the Jesuits were stirring up rebellion, King Carlos III banished all Jesuits from Spain and the Spanish realms overseas. On the night of April 2, 1767, about six thousand Jesuits were arrested throughout the Spanish dominions. After being treated with great cruelty, the Jesuits were sent to the Papal States. Carlos III's son, King Fernando IV of Naples, followed his father's lead and suppressed the Society in his domains on November 20, 1767. Even the pope's vassal, the duke of Parma, who was influenced by an "enlightened" chief minister, expelled the Jesuits from his lands.

Pope Clement XIII protested against all these actions, but it did no good. Instead, Fernando IV of Naples called on his father, Carlos III of Spain, and on Louis XV to join with Portugal in demanding that the pope utterly suppress the Society of Jesus

libelous: something that contains a *libel*—a written statement that unjustly harms the reputation of another

suppression: a legal act that forcibly ends the existence of an entity

everywhere in the Church. France and Naples seized papal lands to force Clement to suppress the order, but the pope refused to give in to their demands.

After the death of Clement XIII on February 2, 1769, the Bourbon powers (Spain, Naples, and France) tried to force the cardinals to elect a pope who would agree to destroy the Jesuits. The Bourbon-backed cardinals found a candidate to their liking, Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli. A Franciscan, Ganganelli was a good and pious man; but before his election, he had said the pope could legally suppress the Society of Jesus. This was good enough for the Bourbon cardinals, and on May 18, 1769, Ganganelli was elected pope.

But the new pope, who took the name Clement XIV, was not entirely willing to suppress the Society of Jesus. He stalled, trying to appease the monarchs by carrying out only minor actions against the Jesuits. But when the Spanish ambassador told him that “only one thing will satisfy us, and that is, complete suppression,” Clement XIV weakly gave in. Emperor Josef II also demanded that the pope destroy the Society of Jesus, and Clement feared that if he did not give in, the monarchs would take their churches into schism. Thus, on July 21, 1773, Clement XIV suppressed the Society of Jesus. “The Church,” wrote the pope, “could not enjoy true and lasting peace so long as the Society remained in existence.”

The effects of the suppression were devastating. Jesuit schools and colleges were left without teachers. Many apostolates in Europe, as well as missions in foreign lands, were abandoned. The *philosophes* rejoiced, for they thought the suppression was the beginning of the final overthrow of their enemy, the Church. Voltaire himself chirped, “in 20 years there will be nothing left of the Church.”

Yet the Society of Jesus did not utterly cease to exist. Strangely enough, two “enlightened” despots saved it. Katerina the Great of Russia refused to allow the pope’s order to be published in her domains; and so, with the pope’s silent approval, the Jesuits continued as an order in White Russia. Friedrich the Great of Prussia, who had come to value the work of the Jesuits in Silesia, also refused to publish the pope’s order. Members of the Society thus continued to teach in schools in the lands of Voltaire’s friend.

The friends of the Church were dismayed by the suppression of the Jesuits. “Poor pope!” said St. Alphonsus di Liguori. “What could he do in the circumstances in which he was placed, with all the Sovereigns conspiring to demand this suppression? As for ourselves, we must keep silence, respect the secret judgment of God, and hold ourselves in peace.” But, it is said, Pope Clement XIV could find no peace; he deeply regretted his decision. Not long before his death on September 22, 1774, Clement is reported to have said of the loss of the Jesuits, “I have cut off my right hand.”

The Last Pope Before the Revolution

The conclave that met to elect Pope Clement XIV’s successor in 1774 stretched on for four months. Once again, Spain, France, and Portugal pressured the cardinals to elect a pope who would not give the kings much trouble. Among the cardinals the monarchs opposed (because he was friendly toward the Jesuits) was Cardinal Giovanni Angelico Braschi. But Braschi was able to gain the support of the anti-Jesuits in the conclave by **tacitly** agreeing not to reinstate the Jesuits. And he received the support of those who favored the Jesuits because they thought him a



Pope Clement XIII. Detail from a contemporary medallion.

tacitly: quietly, done without words or outward deeds

Pietists and Methodists

Like Catholics, Protestants recognized the dangers the Enlightenment posed for religion. Indeed, the Enlightenment made more progress among Protestant ministers than it did among Catholic religious and priests. To fight the libertines and *philosophes*, some Protestant ministers and thinkers took up the pen to defend religion; but other Protestants followed another course and chose simply to withdraw from the intellectual struggle and seek a more personal relationship with God.

Such a movement was Pietism, which began in the late 17th century among German Lutherans in reaction to the struggles between Catholics and Protestants in Germany. Pietists tended to think dogma was not important. Instead, they stressed pious feelings, **mysticism**, and the reform of one's life to become more Christlike.

In 17th-century England, the son of a well-off weaver prepared another haven for religious people who objected to both the Enlightenment and organized religion. George Fox's (1624–1691) Society of Friends rejected clergy and all external religious observances. Because its members were seeking the "inner light," the Friends' religious services were usually characterized by silence—but at times the silence was accompanied by agitated trembling of the body, for which the Friends were nicknamed "Quakers." Faced with the brutal and futile wars of Europe, Fox and his Quakers taught a gospel of peace and were complete **pacifists**.

Like many state churches, the Church of England had by the 18th century lost its Christian fervor and become a convenient tool of the state. Confronted with the Anglican clergy's lack of zeal for their religion, young students at Oxford University in the late 1720s sought to recover the Christian spirit. After forming what was called the "Holy Club," they worked out a method of achieving sanctity. The method included abstaining from frivolous amusements and cultivating religious fervor, piety, and charity. On account of their "method," the members of Holy Club became known as Methodists.

The leader of this group, John Wesley (1703–1791), eventually went on to serve as an Anglican missionary in the English colony of Georgia in North America. There, in 1738, he met a group of German Pietists and underwent what he called a "conversion." "I felt my heart strangely warmed," he wrote of the event. "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."



John Wesley, by Nathaniel Hone

Returning to England, Wesley became an **itinerant** preacher, traveling 5,000 miles a year throughout England and proclaiming to all that they needed to undergo an inner conversion. Wesley lived what he preached, rising early in the morning, eating and drinking in moderation, and living frugally. In his lifetime, Wesley preached about 40,000 sermons and composed many hymns with his brother, Charles. Though Wesley was an Anglican until death, his many followers (called Wesleyans or Methodists) eventually separated from the Church of England. They spread to North America, where they became one of the largest denominations of Protestant Christians in a new nation called the United States of America.

mysticism: the sense or knowledge that the world contains mysteries that cannot be grasped by the senses or by reason alone

pacifist: someone who thinks all warfare is wrong

itinerant: traveling from place to place

friend of the Jesuits. Thus on February 15, 1775, Braschi was elected pope and took the name of Pius VI.

Pope Pius VI was something of a throwback to the Renaissance. Unlike the last pope named Pius (St. Pius V), Pius VI was not an ascetic. He loved pompous ceremonies and elaborate processions. Because he was a strikingly handsome man, women would cry out *Come sei bello!* (“How handsome you are!”) as he and his **entourage** passed through the streets of Rome. A patron of the arts, Pius VI purchased beautiful paintings and sculpture for his collection in the Vatican. He carried out civic works in Rome—draining marshes and restoring the ancient Roman road, the Via Appia, for use as a thoroughfare. None of this displeased the people of Rome; as lovers of pageantry, they welcomed a pope who could put on a good show.

Unfortunately, other characteristics of the Renaissance could be found in Rome during Pius VI’s reign. The clergy surrounding the pope were more interested in gaining new offices for themselves and their favorites than they were in serving the Church. The pope himself practiced **nepotism**, seeking places for his relatives in the Church’s government. Though in many ways he was a good man, Pius VI did not have the spiritual character to lead the Church through the dark times that she was passing into.

Still, this pope did not entirely neglect his duties as the shepherd and teacher of the Church. He permitted the Jesuits in Silesia and Russia to continue their work and even admit new members. It was Pius VI who traveled to Vienna to urge Emperor Josef II not to carry out his reforms of the Church; and in 1783, Pius threatened to excommunicate the emperor when he appointed a bishop to the archdiocese of Milan without the pope’s permission. But, fearing that Josef might take the Church in his lands into schism, Pius in the end granted him the right to nominate bishops in the Habsburg domains of Milan and Mantua.

In 1786, Pius VI came into conflict with another member of the Habsburg family—the emperor’s brother, Leopold II, the duke of Tuscany in Italy. An “enlightened” despot like his brother, Leopold wanted to establish a church that would be independent of Rome and subject only to himself. To aid him in his program of “reform,” Leopold had the help of Scipio Ricci, the bishop of Pistoia and Prato, who was also a zealous Jansenist and Gallican.

Faced with Josef II’s Church reform in Austria and another reform by King Fernando IV of Naples, Pope Pius VI was powerless to stop Leopold in Tuscany. But after Leopold became Holy Roman emperor in 1790, the people of Tuscany rose up against Bishop Ricci; and the new Habsburg duke, Ferdinand III, deposed him. In 1794, after the fall of Ricci, Pius condemned the reforms Bishop Ricci had attempted to make in Tuscany.

By 1794, however, Pius VI was engaged in another struggle, this time not against “enlightened” despots, but against a revolution that, like a great and destructive flood, threatened to sweep away the Church and all Christendom. This would be the pope’s main fight for the remainder of his reign. It would give the pleasure-loving pontiff the opportunity to imitate the sufferings of the first of the popes. Pius VI was about to relive in his own flesh the prophecy Christ made to St. Peter: “When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go” (John 21:18).

entourage: attendants or associates

nepotism: favoritism shown to relatives, especially in granting appointments to offices or jobs (from the Latin *nepos*, meaning “nephew”)

Pope Pius VI



tonsure: the shaving of a portion of the head as a sign that one has entered the religious life or the clergy

abbé: French word for *abbot*; also, a title given to a member of the clergy in France

minor orders: In the Latin Church, before the Second Vatican Council, a term referring to orders or offices of the clergy below the order of deacon. The minor orders were acolyte, exorcist, lector, porter, and subdeacon.

subdeacon: The last minor order before one is ordained deacon. In the Extraordinary Rite (Tridentine) Mass, the subdeacon may carry the chalice with wine to the altar for the Offertory, prepare the gifts for the Eucharist, and read the Epistle lesson to the people.

The Church on the Eve of Revolution

I am an old man, and I would like to die without witnessing the revolution that threatens the clergy and religion itself.

These words were written by a man who knew not only the dangers threatening the Church in his homeland, but the evils that had helped create them. François-Joachim-Pierre de Bernis had been born into a noble but poor French family. Like many youngest sons of the French nobility, he was dedicated to the Church at a young age; and like many of those dedicated to the Church, he did not take his calling seriously. Though he received the **tonsure** and was called **abbé**, he was not ordained a priest, or even a deacon, for many years. His interest was not religion but accumulating wealth and the power that went with it.

As a young man, De Bernis's flair as a writer and his gallantry won him the notice and, finally, the patronage of Madame de Pompadour. The powerful Pompadour gave De Bernis a salary, and through her influence he became France's ambassador to Venice. At Venice, he finally took **minor orders** and was ordained a **subdeacon**, largely because he hoped this would help him further his career in the Church. His skill at diplomacy won him many friends, including Pope Benedict XIV. In 1756, Louis XV appointed De Bernis as France's minister of foreign affairs.

Unfortunately for De Bernis, France was fighting the Seven Years War, and he was unjustly blamed for his country's defeat in that struggle. Having earned the disfavor of Louis XV, and more important, of Madame de Pompadour, De Bernis resigned as minister. In 1758, the king forced him to live in a monastery in Soissons. The only one who showed De Bernis any kindness during this period was Pope Clement XIII, who made him a cardinal.

During his six years in Soissons, De Bernis was ordained a deacon and then a priest. The king and Pompadour eventually forgot their resentment against him and, in 1764, Louis appointed him archbishop of Albi. Five years later, the king sent him as his ambassador to Rome. As ambassador of the powerful French king, Cardinal de Bernis was able to influence papal elections. It was he who helped convince the cardinals to elect Clement XIV and Pius VI. Even though he represented Louis XIV, De Bernis opposed suppressing the Jesuits. But as the servant of Louis XV, De Bernis was partly to blame for the cutting off of the pope's "right hand."

Eventually, Cardinal de Bernis became a more serious and devout churchman. Looking back over his past life, he could see the evils in the Church that would lead to revolution. He himself had been one of those "courtier *abbés*," clergymen who wanted only to achieve status and wealth. Like the indolent lay nobles, these *abbés* joined the glittering entourages of great men or of the king himself and neglected their Church duties. Too many of these *abbés* lived openly immoral lives or had adopted anti-Christian, Enlightenment ideas. One particularly bad example was the Abbé de Bouffleurs, who had publicly announced that he was an atheist. Fortunately, he was removed from the priesthood for doing so.

The courtier *abbés* were found not only in France, but in all of Catholic Europe. Even so, they were not the only evil afflicting the Church. Worse were the bishops who lived in luxury and paid more attention to wealth getting and politics than they did to their flocks. Since kings and emperors appointed bishops, many prelates either were undistinguished in learning or virtue or simply neglected their duties as bishops.

Madame de Pompadour



Pluralism (the holding of more than one benefice) was again a problem, even though the Council of Trent had condemned it. One French cardinal controlled five archbishoprics and two priories. Another, the Cardinal de Rohan, was the archbishop of Strasbourg as well as the head of four monasteries. This same Rohan was also very rich; he had a palace that could fit 700 visitors at any time, he owned 180 horses, and his yearly income was over a thousand times greater than what the poorest of his priests made.

Too many bishops spent too much time at court. The court of Louis XV had as many as 30 bishops in attendance at any one time. Even the pious Maria Theresia in Vienna had her bishop courtiers. Because they attended court so often, many bishops spent little time in their dioceses. One bishop, Cardinal de Polignac, was bishop of Auch in France for 18 years and never once visited his diocese. More dangerous yet were the bishops who adopted Enlightenment ideas and became Deists. One such bishop was Archbishop Lom  rie de Brienne of Toulouse, who some thought would make a fine archbishop of Paris. This never happened, for as King Louis XVI said, “The archbishop of Paris must at least believe in God.”

The 18th century saw a growing rift between the bishops and the priests who served under them. In France, only nobles could become bishops; in Germany and Austria, bishops came almost entirely from the nobility. The bishops’ income and lavish lifestyles were often quite different from those of parish priests. Pastors of parishes could make decent incomes, but the priests (called *cur  s* in France) who served under these parish priests made less. Under the *cur  s* were other priests who lived in great poverty. Such conditions led to ill feeling and disputes between the upper and lower clergy.

Though many seminaries for the training of priests had been built since the late 16th century, candidates for the priesthood were not always required to attend them. Seminaries differed in quality. Some were quite good, while others were full of luxury and worldliness. Though the 18th century had a large number of priests, many of them did no pastoral work but only sang in choir or performed other liturgical duties. Saint-Sulpice in Paris, for instance, had 300 priests; but only three or four actually performed priestly duties, such as administering the Sacraments or hearing confessions.

Worldliness and luxury also affected houses of religious orders and monasteries. In late 18th-century France, the number of monks fell to 16,000 monks from 26,000 earlier in the century. At the same time, one could find many good religious houses and monasteries. Female religious were better off. France had about 8,000 cloistered nuns, about 10,000 religious sisters who worked in hospitals, and 15,000 who worked in schools. Even men like Voltaire and Diderot praised the good conduct of the French religious sisters.

Not All Was Darkness

Though the 18th-century Church showed many signs of sickness, it also showed many signs of health. Despite the *philosophes* and libertines, the Catholic Faith remained the center of life for most of the common people of Catholic Europe. Eighteenth-century France gives many examples of the truth of this statement.

It is hard for us who live in a secular society to imagine a culture in which the Faith influences all of life. In the 18th century, towns and cities in France bristled with church spires. Even small towns had extraordinary numbers of churches and chapels. But churches and chapels were not the only outward signs of the Faith in France. Streets in the cities and roads in the countryside had a multitude of wayside shrines. Crossroads were actually marked by crosses.

pluralism: the holding by one man of more than one Church benefice or office at once



Cardinal de Bernis

Madame Elizabeth



In our own time, we mark the year with holidays that commemorate events and persons our society thinks important. Most of these holidays have no religious meaning, but this was not so in 18th-century France. Then, holidays were *holy* days. They commemorated mysteries of the Faith or the lives of saints. All of life followed the Church's liturgical calendar, which in those days had a good number of feast days; these were days of rest, like Sunday. Though labor could be very hard and long in the 18th century, workers then had more days off than do workers of today.

Just as in the Middle Ages, the Church in the 18th century provided all of what we call "social services." Religious orders directed numerous hospitals, hospices, and

orphanages; and laity thought the "corporal deeds of mercy" were a necessary part of the Christian life. Young ladies in noble families were expected to perform acts of mercy, and many took this duty quite seriously. Even so lofty a lady as Madame Elizabeth, King Louis XV's granddaughter, studied nursing in order to help the sick. When her brother, King Louis XVI, denied her wish to enter a convent, Madame Elizabeth opened up her château of Montreuil to aid the needy.

Education, too, was the responsibility of the Church in France. At least 25,000 of France's 37,000 parishes provided elementary schools, which were open to all. The great universities, of course, were staffed by churchmen. The religious orders operated "colleges," or high schools, of which France had about 900 in the mid-18th century. Some of these colleges had very large student bodies. The college at Billou in Auvergne, for instance, had two thousand students.

Besides education and care for the sick, the Church provided relief to the unemployed, kept reserves of food for times of famine, and even offered fire insurance. Capuchin priests and brothers served as firemen in several villages. While the Church in France—as in the rest of Catholic Europe—levied a tax of about 10 percent on the people, much of the money collected went to charity and education.

We have spoken of the many lax and worldly bishops, but they do not tell the full story. Though France had many unworthy bishops, it had more worthy ones. It has been said that, of the 135 French bishops in the mid-18th century, over 100 of them took their duties seriously. Some boldly pointed out the sins of the king's court. They did not join the king's entourage at Versailles, but stayed in their dioceses. Some, the bishops of poor dioceses, refused to be transferred to more wealthy ones where they could get a higher income.

Some bishops did remarkable things. During a bitter plague, the bishop of Marseilles in southern France opened his palace to the sick and spent all his funds on medical aid for the suffering. Another prelate, the bishop of Bayonne, invited all the city's poor to dine with him on feast days. By his death, he had spent nearly all of his wealth on the needy. A bishop of Auch once ran into a burning building

and risked his life to save a woman and her child. And even the worldly Cardinal de Bernis spent all his wealth and went into great debt to aid the homeless. In 1794, the once wealthy Cardinal de Bernis died a poor man.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau once said, “I know nothing finer than a parish priest.” Many were the unworthy priests, to be sure; but more numerous were the good priests, who cared for the spiritual and material needs of their people like true fathers. The parishes these men oversaw were not just centers of worship but true communities where laymen participated in building and sustaining the Christian life.

Given all the good done by churchmen and the Catholic faithful before 1789, why, at the end of the century, did so many turn against the Church? Perhaps the chief reason was that the Church was so tied up with the state. Because of Gallicanism, many began to think that the Church was just a part of the state. Thus, when people turned against the state, they turned against the Church as well. Too often, churchmen supported the king’s policies when they should have opposed them.

The Church, too, was tremendously rich. It owned vast amounts of land while many people were suffering from want and poverty. The battles between Gallicans, Jansenists, and Ultramontanes like the Jesuits made the Church look foolish in the eyes of many. More and more people, too, came to accept the exaggerations and lies that *philosophes* told about the Church.

The Church in France was strong. But it was not strong enough to withstand the coming storm that was about to devastate first France, and then all of Europe.

The Church Outside of France

What we have said of France was also true of the rest of Catholic Europe. Many were the evils afflicting the Church; but many, too, were the signs of spiritual health. Kings and princes had too much control of the Church in their lands, and they used it to enhance their power. At the same time, as in France, the Church in Catholic Europe was the mainstay of life. The liturgical life of the Church directed daily life in society, while Church institutions provided education and charity to the masses.

Even kings who otherwise sought to weaken the authority of the pope showed a zeal for religion. Though he had fought to destroy the Jesuits, King Carlos III of Spain was a **third-order** Franciscan who heard Mass daily and frequently received Communion (which was not the general custom of the time). What’s more, he dedicated his domains to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Spanish Bourbon kings called themselves the “**Viceroy**s of God” and saw it as their duty to work for the greater glory and progress of the Catholic Faith. They spent tremendous amounts of money on the foreign missions in America, and they drained their treasuries to maintain colonies there only because progress was being made in converting the heathen.

Unlike France, Spain was not affected very much by the Enlightenment. And with a far smaller population than France, Spain had more clergy—about 70,000 **secular priests** and 80,000 religious. Unlike France, too, Spain had many bishops who had come from the lower classes. In the late 18th

third orders: a term that refers to lay members of religious orders who do not necessarily live in a religious community but participate in some degree in its prayer life and charitable works

viceroy: a governor who rules in the name of a king

secular priest: a priest who is not part of a religious order; a diocesan priest. A secular priest pledges obedience to his bishop and takes a vow of celibacy, but he does not take a vow of poverty. He thus can own property.

King Carlos III of Spain



century, Spain went through a Church reform movement in which bishops founded seminaries and priests conducted missions to deepen the faith of the people.

Many of the ills that afflicted the French Church could also be found in central Europe. In southern Germany and Austria, bishops were powerful temporal lords who exercised great influence in the Holy Roman Empire. According to a papal nuncio who visited these lands in the 18th century, the German and Austrian Church and clergy had reached the “summit of human grandeur.” Bishops were the lords of “vast areas of the fairest and most fertile land,” and very wealthy. A large number of the clergy lived luxurious and comfortable lives, and the Enlightenment had influenced a good number of them.

Still, the common people in the Germanys, like the common people in France, showed profound devotion to their religion. As in France, cities and towns were rich with churches and convents; wayside crosses and shrines dotted the landscape. The Catholic people had bishops and priests who worked zealously to spread the Gospel among them; strongly Catholic universities at Innsbruck, Mainz, Fulda, Vienna, Würzburg, and Münster provided the Church with scholars. Some of the religious orders worked to educate the clergy while others operated schools. About 2,000 monasteries and convents in Germany housed 65,000 male and female religious. All was not well in the German Church, but all was not ill, either. There were many signs of life.

Even regions such as Bohemia and Hungary, which had lost many Catholics to Protestantism, grew more Catholic in the middle to late 18th century. In Hungary, at first, force was used to crush Calvinism, which had spread among both the nobility and the people. But by the end of the 17th century, preaching and teaching replaced persecution and thousands of Calvinists willingly returned to the Church. Force had also been used in Bohemia to stamp out Protestantism, but more effective were the zealous priests who preached the love of Christ and spread Czech translations of the Bible and devotional works among the people. By the middle of the 18th century, the Catholic Faith was strong in Bohemia.

Three Saints of Italy

Eighteenth-century Italy experienced a reform movement that brought people closer to the Church and her Faith. The land of the popes had some good bishops, such as Archbishop Galiani of Taranto, who traveled throughout his diocese, teaching and ministering to the faithful. There was also Bishop Borgia of Aversa, who was called “My Lord Wallet” because he was often seen carrying a large satchel on his back to collect alms for the poor. Bishops were active in establishing seminaries, while groups formed to unite the clergy and the laity in various ministries.

The founding of new religious congregations showed the health of the Church in the 18th century. One founder was Paolo Danei. In November 1720, Paolo, though still a layman, received permission from the bishop of Alessandria in Italy to don a black habit and preach the passion of Christ. A month later, he felt inspired by Christ to write a rule of life for a new order whose sole purpose would be to preach Christ’s passion. “I began to write this holy rule on the second of December in the year 1720,” he later wrote, “and I finished it on the seventh of the same month. And be it known that when I was writing, I went on as quickly as if somebody in a professor’s chair were there dictating to me. I felt the words come from my heart.”

Less than five years later, Pope Benedict XIII gave Paolo and his brother, Giovanni Battista, permission to start a congregation based on the rule Paolo had written. Ordained priests in 1727, the brothers retired to a hermitage on Mount Argentario where, living a life as austere as that of the early Desert Fathers, they formed the nucleus of the order that would come to be known as

the Passionists. After Pope Benedict XIV formally approved the order in 1746, these priests and brothers, dedicated to spreading devotion to Christ's passion, increased in number. By 1775, there were about 200 Passionists living in 12 houses.

Another Paolo shared the same inspiration as the founders of the Passionists. He was Paolo Girolamo Casanova, born in 1676 in Porto Maurizio on the Italian Riviera. After studying under the Jesuits at Rome, Paolo Casanova joined the Reformed branch of the Franciscans. In 1697, he received the habit and took on the religious name of Leonardo (Leonard). Leonardo had hoped that he could go as a missionary to China, but sickness prevented him. After his convalescence, he began preaching missions in the region of Porto Maurizio and then in Tuscany. Many were the conversions that followed from his preaching and that of his companions. With them, he founded a monastery at Icontra, on a peak in the mountains four miles from Florence. There he and his companions could live a life of prayer and penance (they fasted all but five days of the year.) Many penitents came from Florence to the monastery to make the Stations of the Cross, a devotion strongly encouraged by Father Leonardo.

Writing to Pope Clement XI, Father Leonardo declared, "The world is crumbling beneath the weight of its crimes. The honor of God, trodden underfoot by the malice of men, demands reparation, which only the penance of religious can provide." Reparation was not the only result of the penitential life of Father Leonardo and his fellow friars; the powerful preaching of missions was its most conspicuous fruit. In 1730, Father Leonardo went forth into Tuscany and beyond into central and southern Italy, preaching repentance and spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Stations of the Cross. "Dust! Life is but dust!" Father Leonardo would cry out to those gathered to hear him preach. "Young man, where is your childhood? Gone, vanished into dust! Grown man, where is your youth? Gone, vanished into dust!" The only answer to the sadness of human existence was penance and conversion, said Father Leonardo. And many answered his call and repented of their sins.

Father Leonardo founded no new religious order, but everywhere he went he encouraged the practice of the Stations of the Cross, perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and devotion to the Immaculate Conception of Mary. It was he who set up the Stations of the Cross in Rome's Colosseum, which remain there to this day. He founded confraternities and pious societies. Popes and bishops consulted him on many matters. We remember him today as Saint Leonard of Port Maurice.

The call of Christ to a more serious life of devotion was answered by a brilliant young man of Naples. This young man, Alphonsus de Liguori, was a talented lawyer who loved the pleasures that life offered. He loved them so much that, though a reasonably devout youth, he began to neglect the prayers and devotions that he had formerly practiced. One day in 1723, when he was 26, he was greatly humiliated in court because the lawyer opposing him pointed out that Alphonsus had misinterpreted a legal document.



Saint Alphonsus Liguori (1676–1787). Italian Catholic bishop, theologian, and founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After vowing never again to practice law, Alphonsus fell into a depression that lifted only when he realized that God had sent this humiliation to him. Alphonsus began seeking to know what God was asking of him in this trial, and he soon received his answer. One day in August of 1723, while visiting the sick in a hospital, he heard a mysterious voice saying, “Leave the world and give yourself to me.” Nearly three months later, he joined a society of missionary priests. In 1726, Alphonsus was ordained a priest.

For six years after his ordination, Alphonsus preached to the poor in the countryside around Naples. Alphonsus’s heart was moved at their plight—for too long they had been left without the aid and ministry of the Church. When Alphonsus told Bishop Falcoza of Castellamare of the sad state of the rural poor, the bishop urged him to form a body of men to minister to them. On Sunday, November 9, 1732, Alphonsus and five companions knelt in the cathedral at Scala and vowed to form a new society of preachers. This was the beginning of the religious institute called the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, or the Redemptorists.

The new society was not an immediate success. Opposed by members of his own institute, Alphonsus was left in 1733 with only one companion. But the Redemptorists grew in numbers and by 1746 had four houses. Three years later, Pope Benedict XIV approved the rule for the male branch of the Redemptorists, and in 1750, he approved the rule for the Redemptorist sisters.

Yet the Redemptorists had their enemies. The Bourbon king of Naples opposed them, and after many years it appeared that even the pope had turned against Alphonsus. In 1781, Pope Pius VI refused to recognize the Redemptorist houses in the kingdom of Naples and did not recognize Alphonsus as the head of the institute he had founded.

This was not Alphonsus’s only suffering. In 1752, bad health forced him to cut back on the missions of preaching that he had carried for over 25 years. In 1762, Pope Clement XIII ordered him to become bishop of Sant’Agatha dei Goti in central Italy, a small and very poor diocese. Despite his increasingly bad health, Alphonsus worked diligently, in weeping and prayer, to inspire the many corrupt clergy of the diocese to better things, to teach the thousands of uninstructed faithful, to feed the poor, and to reform monasteries and convents. For many years he was so sickly that he could not leave his room. There, in addition to his other work, he composed works of devotion, defenses of the Faith, and works of moral and dogmatic theology—for which the Church has given him the title of “Doctor of the Church.”

When, in 1775, Pope Pius VI allowed him to retire from his see, Alphonsus prepared himself to die. He was 79 years old and suffering great infirmities—a bout of rheumatic fever had left him partially paralyzed in 1769. Yet he lingered on for 12 more years.

The greatness of St. Alphonsus de Liguori can be seen in his abundant charity and abandonment to God’s will. In the face of all the sufferings of his life, his constant prayer was, “Lord, I wish all that you wish, I desire only what you desire.” In that desire he died, on August 1, 1787, at the age of 91.

The Church of the 18th century reveals the truth of what St. Paul had written 1,800 years before—“Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20). Many were the sins of Catholic clergy, rulers, nobility, and the common laity; but many too were the signs of spiritual health and renewal. The Church would soon be tested by a great revolution, but she would not be destroyed by it. If anything, she would purified by her time of trial and emerge from it prepared to take on the challenges of the new era that lay before her.

Chapter 3 Review

Summary

- In the 18th century, the Catholic Church lost much of her power and influence in Europe.
- Gallicanism was an influential movement in France during the 17th and 18th centuries. Gallicans held that the king, not the pope, was in most matters the supreme head of the French Church.
- Another influential movement was Jansenism, a heresy that taught that human nature was entirely corrupted by the Fall and that only those with perfect contrition should take Communion. Jansenists, like Gallicans, said the Church is subject to the king or government.
- The movement called Freemasonry attracted many *philosophes* in the 18th century. It encouraged Deism and so undermined the Catholic Faith.
- Pope Benedict XIV was a unique pope in the 18th century. Firm in fighting false teaching, he was respected even by *philosophes* for his intelligence and his wit.
- Philosophes and enlightened monarchs throughout Europe wanted to destroy the Society of Jesus. Pressured by monarchs, Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Society in 1773.
- Though the 18th-century Church had good clergy, many bishops and priests were weak and even corrupt. The Faith, however, remained the center of life for most of the common people.
- The 18th century saw the formation of new religious orders, such as the Passionists and the Redemptorists.

Key Concepts

Gallicanism: the doctrine, originating in France, that the secular head of government is the supreme head of the Church

Febronianism: the teaching of Johann Nikolaus von Hontheim (Febronius), who said that the pope has no authority over other bishops because local bishops receive the right to rule from the Christian faithful

Jansenism: the belief that human nature was completely corrupted by the Fall and that only those with perfect contrition should receive Holy Communion

Freemasonry: a secret society for freethinkers, philosophers, and enlightenment statesmen that practiced mystical rites. Freemasons encouraged Deism. They saw God as the “Great Architect” and rejected Jesus Christ as savior, thus undermining the Catholic Faith.

Pietism: a movement, begun among German Lutherans, that stressed piety, mysticism, and living a Christ-like life

Ultramontane: the name given to those who favored strong papal control over national churches

Dates to Remember

1695: King Louis XIV issues an edict declaring that the Church’s temporal possessions in France belonged to the king and that the *Parlement of Paris* could pass judgment on Church decisions having to do with spiritual matters.

1738: Pope Clement XII condemns Freemasonry, forbidding Catholics to have anything to do with Masonic rites and lodges.

1773: Pope Clement XIV suppresses the Society of Jesus.

Central Characters

Paolo Danei (St. Paul of the Cross, 1694–1775): an Italian preacher who proclaimed the Passion of Christ. He and his brother founded the Passionists.

Pope Benedict XIV (1675–1758): Perhaps the greatest pope of the 18th century, Benedict realized that in order to deal effectively with the Enlightenment, Catholics had to be as well trained intellectually as their opponents, the secular philosophers, were. Benedict was the first pope to use encyclical letters as a means of communicating with the entire Church.

St. Alphonsus de Liguori (1696–1787): Italian bishop, founder of the Redemptorists, and a doctor of the Church

Sebastião de Carvalho e Mello, Marquis of Pombal (1699–1782): prime minister to King José I of Portugal and an advocate of the Enlightenment who saw the Church as the main obstacle to kingly power. He imprisoned foreign Jesuits and exiled Portuguese Jesuits.

Chapter 3 Review (continued)

Johann Nikolaus von Hontheim (1701–1790): a German coadjutor bishop who taught that bishops receive their right to rule from the Christian faithful and thus the pope has no authority over other bishops. Because he wrote under the penname Febronius, his teachings have been called Febronianism.

John Wesley (1703–1791): The leader of the Methodists, Wesley had a conversion experience and became an itinerant preacher who proclaimed that everyone needed to experience an inner conversion.

Pope Clement XIV (1705–1774): The pope, who, under pressure from European monarchs, suppressed the Society of Jesus

Pope Pius VI (1717–1799): As pope, he hoped to restore renaissance grandeur to Rome and engaged in great building projects. Though he combated Josephism and Jansenism, Pius did not deal effectively with the threats against the Church in his time.

Questions for Review

1. Give two reasons why many people in the 18th century thought the Christian Faith was doomed.
2. Who were the Freemasons, and how did their society begin?
3. Why did Pombal want to destroy the Jesuits?
4. What evils afflicted the Church in the 18th century?
5. What were the signs of health in the 18th-century Church?
6. Why was Spain less affected by the Enlightenment than France and other European countries?

Ideas in Action

1. Research the religious orders begun in the 18th century. Divide research on the orders among the students, and give verbal reports on the religious orders. Describe what they did then and, if they are still in existence today, what they do now.
2. Discuss the political and social situation that exists in our present world, and consider what sort of new religious orders might best serve the mission of the Church today.
3. Research the hymns written by John Wesley, including both their words and melodies.

4. Listen to the music of some of the composers (Catholic and others) of this period. (Examples: Johann Sebastian Bach, Josef Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Giuseppe Tartini, and Georg Friedrich Handel.) What similarities and differences can you find between the music of these composers?

5. Make illustrated drawings of the various religious habits worn by different orders of this period. Give details explaining why each particular part of the habit may have been chosen.

6. Write a fictional story of a character (man, woman, or child, either Catholic or Protestant) who lived in 18th-century France or England and was preparing to emigrate to the New World to escape religious persecution.

Highways and Byways

A Strange Rifle

One of the strangest weapons of the 18th century was the “wind rifle” or Girandoni air rifle—named after its Italian inventor, Bartholomaeus Girandoni. The rifle could fire 20 to 30 shots in a minute but was silent and smokeless when it fired. This was because it used compressed air, not gunpowder, to shoot bullets.

First used in Austria in 1779, the Girandoni rifle was the first rapid repeater gun to be invented. Despite the novelty of this weapon, it did not catch on in military service. The main problem was that a rifleman had to learn how to use the intricate weapon, and this was not simple. For one thing, the gun required 1,500 pumps to refill its air cartridge, which was made from hammered sheet iron held together with rivets and sealing. The smallest crack in the air reserve cartridge would make the rifle useless.

The Girandoni air rifle was used militarily for only 35 years. However, it was not long before another rapid-fire rifle was invented. In the 1850s, an American named Benjamin Tyler Henry came up with the Henry rifle, an effective firearm with a revolving repeat-fire cartridge.