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THE CHURCH IN THE NOVELS OF EMILE ZOLA

by

ROBERT GLENN ROBERTSON

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH AS SOCIAL INSTITUTION

INTRODUCTION

Even the most cursory perusal of Emile Zola's last novels will suffice to reveal the ardent anti-Catholic spirit with which they are imbued. The Quatre Evangiles and Trois Villes series seem often to be more exercises in excoriation than purely literary efforts. It is no doubt in part because of their tendentious nature, stemming as it does from Zola's anti-clerical parti pris, that the six completed novels in the series are considered by many critics to be by far inferior to the rest of his novelistic production.

This anti-Church spirit is not new in Zola's last novels, however. It can be traced throughout most of the Rougon-Macquart series of twenty novels published between 1871 and 1893 and which antedate the Utopian novels. Although it exists in a number of these books, it is most evident in La Fortune des Rougon, La Conquête de Plassans, La Faute de l'abbé Mouret, Pot-Bouille, Germinal and Le Docteur Pascal. Still, it is relatively muted and never raised to the multi-decibel pitch of denunciatory rhetoric which it later reaches. In fact, in such books as Son
Excellence Eugène Rougon, L'Oeuvre, La Bête humaine and La Débâcle religion plays no significant role. In the books in which it does appear, however, there are adumbrations of the full-scale attack which Zola will level at it toward the end of his life.

Zola was not the only critic of the Catholic Church, however, during the period immediately preceding the turn of the century. Its detractors were legion, including many Catholic writers such as Bloy, Huysmans and Drumont. Both they and their unbelieving counterparts often attacked the Church for the same reasons, despite the irreconcilable elements in their philosophies. In matters of religion, of course, the Catholics remained Catholics and the atheists remained atheists; it was rather on the social questions that they at times found themselves on common ground. For example, they castigated the Church's entente with bourgeois capitalist society and its resultant neglect of the poor. (The Reactionary Revolution, p. 238) Its excessive interest in money and its acceptance of the values of a materialist world were also repugnant to both groups. They made their criticisms known in scores of articles and books.

It would be fair to assume that the critics within the Church had more information concerning its state, whether in religion or in other areas, than did those who had either never come into the Faith or like Zola had left it. It is no doubt for this reason that their writings--with the
possible exception of Bloy's often frenetic diatribes—did not suffer from the terrible distortions which characterize the judgments which Zola made of the Church.\textsuperscript{2}

But why did Zola unleash such fury against the Church? Why did he tend to view it as the gravest danger to society?

The answer is no doubt a complex one, but there is ample evidence to suggest that his attacks were the result of more than a fervent conviction that the Church had failed in its duty toward the needy multitudes of society. Of course he was convinced that it had abdicated its responsibilities in the realm of social reform, had abandoned the first principles of primitive Christianity which were to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the broken-hearted, and had become more political in nature than spiritual. This is the negative side of things and Zola showed no diffidence in bringing his charges against it.

There remains another side of the Church which is positive in nature and which Zola saw as a serious menace to society and as a threat to himself as apostle to the poor and ill-used of that society. Certainly, much of his distaste came from the differences which exist between the Church's Weltanschauung and his own. He could not believe in the existence of God, particularly as the Christians present Him, nor in the dogmas which are built upon that belief.

Even less could he accept the use to which the Church was putting its doctrines. He viewed them as tools which
were at best opiates employed to dull the senses of men suffering from the hardships of life, and at worst the door by which the Church entered in its designs to bring to sub-
mission and obedience the masses upon which its fortunes would increasingly depend. Neither application was accept-
able. Both made it impossible for men to face reality or to use their reason to solve their problems and to break their chains.

All of this disgusted Zola and he said so. But there was also a difference in teleology which disturbed him. Both he and the Church look forward to a day when man will reach fulfillment. For the latter, this fulfillment will arrive for all Christians when the City of God descends from heaven and Christ becomes Lord over all. Death will be abolished, perfect felicity will exist; redeemed man will enter upon his inheritance. Until that moment the dead in the Faith will enter paradise where their faithfulness will be rewarded, and where they will be amply compensated for their sufferings here below. There they will await the sound of the trumpet of God signaling the return of Christ to the earth to claim his own. These events will terminate human history and will depend entirely upon the Providence of God who by His own counsel determines the times and the seasons. Theoretically, this entering upon the spiritual inheritance could take place at some incalculable number of eons in the future, certainly only after death for most men.
For Zola, this is precisely the problem. It is not in eternity but now that social abuses must be ended and the dream realized, or at least that the first steps toward it must be taken. It is not in heaven or some happy haven in the hereafter, but here upon this earth that the dream must be fulfilled. Mankind cannot wait for a relief reserved for the lendemain de la mort or kept for them in the New Jerusalem which Saint John the Divine saw in his vision on the Isle of Patmos. In reality, this hope held out by the Church to suffering humanity is nothing but a delusion, a scheme created by a politico-religious machine whose goal is not the physical or spiritual salvation of man, but the winning and wielding of political power in the tradition of the Caesars.

Zola was also disturbed by the very catholicity of the Church, by its almost ubiquitous nature. No part of the world seemed safe from its activities, no defenses seemed impervious to its relentless incursions. This indefatigable effort is personified by the physically unprepossessing Cardinal Sarno in Rome. His physical insignificance belies, however, the remarkable powers of concentration and control emanating from a cranium enclosing a carte immense upon which the Church's campaign of attack and occupation is drawn.

Primary in the Church's plan of attack are its activities in the home and in the school. It must win the
victory here if it is to build the base upon which the achievement of its goals depends. The key to the home is the wife and mother, for generally she is more religious and less sceptical than the husband. It is through her that the Church is able to wage its attack against the husband and to extend its influence into the home. Even her sexuality is used as a tool to coerce and capture the husband for the Church.

As important to its plan as control of the husband and wife, is the use of an educational system which in-stills Catholic doctrines and goals in the minds of the young. Through its parochial school system the Church molds the minds of its pupils, coloring their thinking with pro-Church propaganda. In this way it tries to insure its future for, as Zola would present the case, the results of such an education are largely indelible. Freedom later from the attitudes and beliefs inculcated in the youthful minds formed in Catholic schools is as difficult to achieve as it is rare. Some trace of the dogma, some symp-thacy for the Church will almost always survive.

Still, resistance to and escape from the Catholic domestic and educational influence is possible if the man of the home is sufficiently strong and free. In Marc Froment, the apostle of liberal and secular education, Zola creates such a man. Through strength of character, ample patience and rational thought he is able to lead at least some of
the captives to freedom. His success heralds the coming of a new day.

THE CHURCH AND THE HOME

The clash between Zola and the Church over the home is inevitable because the two antagonists view the prize as extremely important to their efforts to build a world conforming to their largely antithetical ideologies. In both, the wife and mother plays a pivotal role. She is an indispensable element without which neither one will be able to bring to fruition its plan for the future.

This is not to suggest that both Zola and the Church hold the same view of and attach the same value to women as human beings. On the contrary, their views are quite divergent. It will suffice here, however, to point out that both often invest women, individually and collectively, with great energy and considerable powers of persuasion. Individually, Zola often pictures them as stronger than their husbands and as dominant figures in their homes. Examples of these are Félicité Rougon in La Fortune des Rougon, Madame Josserand in Pot-Bouille and Lisa Quenu in Le Ventre de Paris. The collective portrayal is best seen in Germinal.

But whether strong or weak individually their position as wives and mothers gives them influence in the home which is coveted by those who can bend it to serve their own purposes. In La Conquête de Plassans, for
example, Félicité Rougon proffers a no doubt needless bit of advice to Abbé Faujas who has arrived in Plassans to conquer it for the Empire: "Rappelez-vous ce que j'ai dit... Plaisez aux femmes, si vous voulez que Plassans soit à vous."³

In Vérité, we see the priests gradually gain a prevailing influence over Madame Martineau, whom they use to win the support of her husband, the mayor of Jonville. Collectively, in the same book, women play an important role in the Church's battle against Marc Froment and the secular schools. As the young député Marcilly puts it,

Le rôle des femmes, dans l'affaire, fut en effet considérable: elles valaient une armée... (Vérité, p. 137).

As for the woman's role in Zola's own social philosophy, it is an exalted one. He elevates her, particularly in her domestic roles as wife and mother, to the position of goddess and emancipator in a religion of fruitfulness and life. She must first be freed from the chains that bind her, however. Marc Froment comes to understand this need through a kind of revelation:

Et brusquement, Marc vit éclater la vérité, la solution unique: instruire la femme, lui donner près de nous sa vraie place d'égale et de compagne, car, seule, la femme libérée peut libérer l'homme (Ibid., pp. 372-373).

Woman, is however, a volatile force which represents some risks to whoever would try to use her. Faujas says to his mother as he considers the headache that Marthe Mouret, now
"sa chose," has become to him as she tries in vain to find emotional and spiritual satisfaction in their relationship: "Mère, cette femme sera l'obstacle" (La Conquête de Plassans, p. 1103). Similarly, Luc Froment, the apostle of Travail and founder of the New City, becomes somewhat discouraged as he sees gossiping la Toupe and la Fauchard, the fractious wives of two of his newly acquired workers:

Sa belle humeur s'en trouva gâtée, car il n'ignorait pas tout le trouble que les femmes menaçaient de porter dans la future organisation de travail, de paix et de justice. Il les sentait toutes-puissantes, c'était par elles et pour elles qu'il aurait voulu fonder sa Cité, et son courage défaillait, quand il en rencontrait de mauvaises, hostiles ou simplement indifférentes, qui, au lieu d'être le secours attendu, pouvaient devenir l'obstacle, l'élément destructeur, capable de tout anéantir."

One must be careful then in managing this unpredictable force, but one must go on. This "going on" is important for both the Church and Zola. Zola's interest, at least initially, is primarily to free the woman from the Church and its designs on her.

The Church realizes that the final authority in the family is usually the husband. Its designs on the wife are executed, therefore, with a view toward gaining control of the husband and thereby of the entire home. As Zola sees it,

... la vaste entreprise était de reprendre l'homme par la femme, de reprendre surtout l'enfant sur le banc
To do this it capitalizes on the impact of Catholic education upon the mind of the young girl who, afterwards grown and married, remains far more susceptible than her husband to the various pressures brought to bear on the family by the priests. According to Zola, the catechized woman is quite likely to see in life's difficulties and disappointments holy wrath and vengeance for her supposed sins and errors. This tendency becomes the means by which her confessors hold over her the constant threat of God's displeasure with any aberrant step which she might be tempted to take. It is a weapon doubly repugnant to Zola because he considers the doctrine of divine retribution an absurd lie and because its tenacity makes it almost impossible to eliminate.

The case of Geneviève Froment will illustrate forcefully the Church's activities in the home. Geneviève, the wife of Marc who is a primary school teacher, has grown up in a predominantly Catholic environment and has received a Catholic education. Although she has ceased to practice her faith and has married an unbeliever, her early training returns to haunt her and her family. Its return, in fact, almost destroys a happy marriage.

Geneviève is displeased with Marc. At the bottom of her anger is his defense of the Jewish teacher, Simon, who has been convicted of murder. At stake in the affair,
in addition to Simon's life as a free man, is control of primary education in the district. As a result, Marc, the leading force in the free secular educational system, will become the target of the Church.

Already upset by Marc's removing from his classroom a large wall crucifix, Geneviève is so angered by his refusal to allow their young daughter, Louise, to take her first communion, that she leaves him and returns to the home of her mother and her grandmother, Madame Duparque. However, the separation has not happened spontaneously and without help. It is the dénouement of a carefully planned and orchestrated effort by the priests and Madame Duparque, a rigid and tormented religious fanatic. Geneviève has previously returned to Mass and has come increasingly under the influence of her grandmother, who pushes her to convert Marc to the Faith. This preparation of Geneviève is described thus:

Puis, on en vint à exprimer devant elle le vœu, d'abord à peine formulé . . . de la voir se consacrer à une œuvre admirable, la conversion du pécheur, le rachat divin de l'homme coupable qu'elle avait la faiblesse d'aimer toujours. Quelle joie et quelle gloire pour elle, si elle le ramenait à Dieu. . . . Pendant plusieurs mois, avec un art infini, elle fut de la sorte préparée, travaillée pour la besogne qu'on attendait d'elle, dans l'espoir évident de déterminer la rupture conjugale . . . et les événements voulus, inévitables, se produisirent.

(Vérité, pp. 297-298)

Marc, not susceptible to his wife's efforts to
convert him, is now viewed as an enemy and she attacks him over the real issue:

Non, tu t'es engagé dans cette monstrueuse erreur, cette ignoble affaire Simon, où ta haine de l'Eglise t'aveugle et te jette à la pire iniquité. Quand un homme comme toi en arrive au mépris de toute vérité, de toute justice, pour atteindre et salir les ministres de Dieu, il vaut mieux croire qu'il a perdu la tête.

(Ibid., p. 301)

When Marc takes her into his arms to reassure and comfort her, he recognizes the Church's aims. It seems to him that

... leur lente rupture partait de leur divergence sur ce point précis, cette question de vérité et de justice, où l'on avait réussi à lui empoisonner l'entendement, pour les briser l'un contre l'autre.

(Ibid., p. 302)

Geneviève, however, "s'arracha de son étreinte, elle éloigna son corps du sien, en lui tournant le dos... Elle se refusait..." (Vérité, pp. 302-303).

With her refusal the Church has succeeded in breaking a bond which, as long as it remains intact, provides a kind of safeguard against it. The priests know well that

Tant qu'elle aimerait son mari, tant qu'il n'y aurait pas rupture charnelle entre elle et lui, l'oeuvre de séparation totale ne serait pas accomplie, la femme ne serait pas complètement à eux... . . .

(Ibid., p. 305)

They have thus used to their own advantage a passion which they have not been able to destroy or asepticize:

Puis, voilà que l'Eglise avait compris
l'irrésistible toute-puissance sexuelle
de la femme sur l'homme, et malgré sa
répugnance et sa terreur du sexe, elle
avait fini par se servir du sexe pour
agir sur l'homme, le reconquérir et
l'enchaîner.  
(Ibid., p. 288)

While it has not succeeded in shackling Marc, the
Church has apparently killed the wife and lover in
Geneviève. She leaves Marc accompanied by Louise. As for
the home: "Le logis était mort, l'absente en avait
emporté la vie, la chaleur et la lumière" (Ibid., p. 384).

Fortunately, Geneviève is "au fond une bonne et
saine créature" (Vérité, p. 379) who, according to Marc's
prediction, will finally return to him. Although for
several years she tries to find satisfaction for her "soif
insatiable du bonheur divin" (Ibid., p. 477) she cannot;
Jesus is not sufficient to meet her needs.

She is aided in her return to life and to Marc by
Louise, who, as one of the first fruits of enlightened and
free education, is herself "libérée enfin, échappée à la
mainmise du prêtre sur la femme et sur l'enfant. . . ."
(Ibid., p. 551). The birth of her son, Clément, has also
been instrumental in her healing. When she at last under-
stands that the Church has framed Simon she comes back to
her husband. Marc, of course, greets her with open arms:

'- Ah! chère femme, si tu me reviens,
c'est donc que tu es guérie . . . et la
bonne nature, malgré tout, devait
éliminer le poison, le jour où tu te
sentirais de nouveau épouse et mère. . .
Oui, oui, tu as raison, c'est l'amour qui t'a délivrée, te voilà reconquise sur cette religion d'erreur et de mort..." (Ibid., p. 564)

In reality her healing, although substantial, will never be complete. "Chez moi," she says, "Je le sens, la tare est ineffaçable..." (Vérité, p. 565). She has sufficiently recovered, however, never again to fall prey to the Church.

Not so fortunate is Marthe Mouret of La Conquête de Plassans, whose home is totally destroyed by her involvement with the Church. Although Abbé Faujas does not espouse the political ideals of the ultramontane priests in Plassans, he is still a practicing priest who uses the principle of victory through control of the woman in his work for Eugène Rougon and the Empire. The result of this tactic is a tragic one and one which serves amply to illustrate Zola's conviction that when the Church controls the woman either the husband will come under the same control or the home will be destroyed.

It does not take long for Faujas, exploiting Marthe's spiritual and emotional hunger, to displace her husband, François, as head of the house in which he and his mother are roaming. Zola depicts the usurpation of Mouret's authority in an unforgettable scene in the Mouret dining room. Rose, the Mouret's cook, speaks to Marthe:

'Madame, donnez un filet à monsieur le curé, n'est-ce pas? Le plat est pour lui.'
Marthe servait. Elle insistait, avec des yeux suppliants, pour qu'il acceptât les bons morceaux... Rose poussait un coussin de tapisserie sous les pieds du prêtre.

(_La Conquête de Plassans_, p. 1085)

It is Madame Faujas, her son's formidable ally, who "présidait réellement le repas... veillant à ce que Marthe restât dans son rôle de servante..." (_Ibid._, p. 1086).

Faujas becomes increasingly scornful of his new servants as he becomes accustomed to seeing his least desires anticipated. No longer saying "Thank you," he reigns with disdain over Marthe and Rose. As for Mouret, sitting opposite his wife, he remains "oublié," and is served "le dernier, au hasard, maigrement" (_Ibid._). He is already on the way to the insanity which the disaffection and lies of his wife, now controlled by the Abbé, will cause.

If Marthe has become quite useful to Faujas, "dans certaines missions délicates," and if "Il... se servait d'elle comme d'une pure machine..." (_Ibid._, pp. 1104-1105), it is to Mouret's credit that he has recognized the sinister nature of his boarder almost from the beginning.

He murmurs:

'Il est comme les corbeaux, ce gaillard-là; il a un oeil rond qui semble guetter et attendre quelque chose. Je ne me fie pas à ses grands airs de désintéressement.'

(_Ibid._, p. 1000)

To his misfortune he is not strong enough simply to throw the scoundrels out. But unfortunately for the
Faujases also, his hate-fed insanity will bring the fires of judgment down upon their heads.

Zola observes in *Vérité* that it is far better for a man of reason (unbeliever) not to become involved with a woman from a religious background. The probability of her religious training causing extreme stress at some point in the union is great. It may, in fact, result in the disintegration of the relationship. In no case does he create a situation in which the husband becomes a genuine believer through the witness of the wife.

This fact is significant because of the importance which Zola ascribes to the family unit, the basic societal cell whose integrity must at all costs be preserved.

Toward the end of *Vérité* he writes:

"Votre paix n'est plus faite que de raison, de logique, de la vie qui veut le couple, pour être vécue pleinement, sainement." *(Vérité, p. 745)*

Life, nature itself desires the family. Zola had expressed this idea twenty years earlier in *Au Bonheur des Dames*. Octave Mouret has just decided to ask Denise to marry him and says to her:

"Ecoutez, nous étions stupides, avec cette superstition que le mariage devait nous couler. Est-ce qu'il n'est pas la santé nécessaire, la force et l'ordre mêmes de la vie!" *5*

The man and woman, compatible and happy, will produce the children who will build a more enlightened and
more just future. By their ever increasing numbers they will ensure the health and power of the nation. This is the essential theme of Fécondité in which we early find Mathieu Froment pondering the question of fruitfulness, which is "la question mère, celle qui décide de l'humanité et du monde." Even an excess of children is essential, for it is the excess which guarantees progress as it guarantees expansion throughout all the nations on the face of the earth (Ibid., p. 17).

This production of human life must go on unimpeded, free of every potentially restrictive force. On this point Zola, perhaps even uncomfortably, finds himself in partial agreement with the Church. Be that as it may, he creates his own ideal family in Fécondité. Mathieu and Marianne Froment, two eminently reasonable and healthy young people, produce a new Froment every two years until their seed, the good seed, is literally spreading out to enrich and replenish the earth.

Their large family is referred to as a royal family (Fécondité, p. 549), "une force nouvelle d'invincible avenir" (Ibid., p. 565), and they themselves as "la reine mère" and "le roi" (Ibid., p. 549). They are the near-perfect couple whose bond of love is strong enough to meet every challenge, and bring them to the end of their days in happiness and with a keen sense of accomplishment. In the following passage Zola eulogizes marriage and describes
the ideal union:

C'était le lien d'amour indissoluble, celui qui assure la vie entière, car il n'est de bonheur que dans l'éternel. Leur heureuse rencontre était d'avoir eu tous deux la puissance d'aimer, la volonté d'agir, le désir divin dont la flamme crée les mondes. Lui, dans l'adoration de sa femme, n'avait pas connu d'autre joie que cette passion de créer, regardant l'oeuvre à faire, l'oeuvre faite, comme son unique raison d'ètre, son devoir et sa récompense. Elle, dans l'adoration de son mari, s'était simplement efforcée d'être la compagne, l'épouse et la mère, bonne pondeuse, bonne éleveuse...douée d'un jugement délicat qui dénouait les difficultés... Ils étaient la raison, la santé, la force. (Fécondité, p. 731)

It is significant, and predictable, that in this union religion plays absolutely no role. Presumably such a marriage is not possible where the religious question is given any consideration. In the Froment family it is never mentioned. For them, religion is not a source of comfort when death and other difficulties strike, nor is it ever a possible substitute for hard work and rational thought. They are far too healthy, far too reasonable, far too loving to have need of this institution whose intervention in the family creates on the one hand the surrender of autonomy and integrity or on the other hand familial dissenion leading to disintegration.

What Zola writes of Thérese in Vérité applies equally to Marianne. She is "affranchie, exempte de tout baptême, de toute confession, et de toute communion..."
(Vérité, p. 744). She, who enjoys "un calme sacré de bonne déesse féconde" (Fécondité, p. 85), will fulfill her destiny which is chiefly to be a wife and mother, and will herself be fulfilled by that destiny.

In the women of the Quatre Evangiles series who are free of religious influence, Zola reaffirms his faith in the future. Geneviève of Vérité has been sorely tried by her disruptive relationship with the Church, but has been saved by love and logic. Josine of Travail, is saved by Luc, finding in him and in motherhood her justification. Marianne of Fécondité finds plenitude in the family. The last two, Josine and Marianne, are freer and healthier than Geneviève because they do not have to contend with the sometimes crippling vestiges of a deeply ingrained religion.

The goal of these liberated women is to create with their mates the new world in which the measure of a man's worth is his work and in which the happiness of the individual depends upon the happiness of all.

In their new world the Church will have no place. Not that it is to be outlawed, for Luc Froment states that anyone wishing to worship may do so. No one will want to, however, as man moves on to an increased self-sufficiency and strength based largely upon greater knowledge, greater reason and love. The Church will be killed by apathy and neglect. Its slow death will be complete when the domes of its churches literally collapse upon the heads of the
last priests, obstinately ministering to abandoned pews. In *Travail* the Church is replaced by an attractive little garden—a return to nature and the symbol of life.

Time has done what bombs could not, and without the great cost in innocent blood required by violent revolution. Woman has been liberated and the family exalted. The new world is emerging from the dust of the old.

**THE CHURCH AND EDUCATION**

While Zola sees "le peuple" of France as her future salvation and as the salvation of the entire world, he also believes that they are a messianic force or universal leaven still largely in embryonic form—a mass of possibilities, an enormous potential for good, but still without form. He refers to them as "La France, la grande foule pesante, inerte...une masse de plomb...incapable d'être libre, juste, heureuse..." (*Vérité*, p. 74). He shows us a "corps social" which "restait...dans l'enfance" (*Ibid.*, p. 63), and which needs desperately to be developed. Free secular education is the developmental tool.

The Church also is keenly aware of the importance of the people. Its hopes of remaining a powerful force in society and of eventually assuming the reins of power on a world-wide scale are based on the people. Its strategy, therefore, is "la conquête de l'avenir par l'enfant" (*Ibid.*, p. 188), a strategy which it no longer takes pains
to hide. Its interest in education is, of course, understandable. Both the Church and Zola know that the children of today will form the generations of tomorrow and for both, tomorrow represents the moment of final victory.

As Zola sees it, the task of the Catholic teacher is not to bring the children under him to the light of reasoned understanding. It is, rather, to obfuscate, to impede, to create a veil of darkness in the mind which is calculated to insure their servility. He knows that the real strength of the Church is made "de la bêtise du troupeau" (Vérité, p. 471). In teaching the dogmas of the Church, the Catholic teacher teaches superstitions and legends. He encourages racial prejudice in the form of anti-semitism. He employs every available means to discredit and defeat the forces of secular education which oppose him.

Calumny is a particularly favored tactic of the father-educator. This fact is graphically illustrated by the murder conviction of the innocent Jewish teacher, Simon, in Vérité. The anti-semitism here, however, is only a means to an end—that of mounting a major campaign against the secular schools for which he works. As Férrou, the anti-clerical teacher at le Moreux, correctly predicts, the Church uses the murder of Zéphirin and the conviction of Simon to "taper sur les écoles laïques" (Ibid., p. 33).
It thus protects the real murderer, Father Gorgias, and cripples its enemies at the same time.

What are the reasons for Zola's opposition to Catholic education? First, he believes that Catholic schools teach religious doctrines which cannot be verified by reason. Such doctrines do not merely fail to satisfy reason, they are in fact an insult to it. He refers to the birth of Christ, for example, as a "miracle imbécile" ([Ibid.], p. 288). Louise, the young daughter of Marc Froment is endowed, like her father, with a prominent forehead "en forme de tour" which indicates singular reasoning powers. She will, therefore, refuse to take her first communion because she has a "besoin inné de la logique et de la certitude" ([Vérité], p. 416), and because she has never understood "rien de rien au catéchisme" ([Ibid.], p. 417). She cannot believe in the Incarnation because it does not add up, it is not reasonable.

But the Church does not stop with simply propagating unreasonable doctrines; it goes much further and states that no truth can be apprehended outside of God. Characteristic of this belief are the words of Abbé Marle in Travail. In an after-dinner discussion with some friends, he says to Hermeline, a local teacher:

'Si vous n'obtenez rien de vos élèves ...c'est que vous avez chassé Dieu de votre école. Dieu est le maître des intelligences, on ne sait rien que par lui.'

(Travail, p. 179)
He adds that "En dehors du catholicisme, il n'y a que ténèbres..." (Ibid., p. 180). This belief comes, of course, from Rome, where the conviction is held that all "vérité est dans le passé," and needs only to be revealed to those who seek it through the divinely-ordained channels.

If the Church is anti-reason, then it is necessarily often anti-truth and anti-science. Still, it tries to create the impression that it is not anti-science and anti-progress. We see, for example, Monseigneur Martha in Paris who gives a series of lectures on the "esprit nouveau" which purport to reveal the Church as a modern institution which has reconciled science and the Faith and which is in step with the democratic and republican movement. Zola makes it clear that Martha's contention is specious and actually intended to hide the aggressive political program of Leo XIII of whom he is the chief representative in France. As for the claim of being able to reconcile science with the Christian faith, that is a conditional operation:

...c'est la science acceptée, mais remise en sa place, réconciliée avec la foi, du moment où elle ne prétendait plus empiéter sur le domaine de celle-ci... 

In actual practice the Church, according to Zola's presentation of it in Rome, is terribly afraid of science and through the Index condemns all science books "en bloc." They are dangerous by definition, since all truth must
come through the Church. The *in toto* proscription saves time.

For Zola, however, the idea is not to save time but men, and with them to build a better world, a free world founded on truth. Truth is discovered solely through the scientific method of inquiry. It is a method based on reason. The Church's truth, therefore, is not the Truth, for "toute vérité révélée est un mensonge..." (*Vérité*, p. 212). There can be only one Truth: "la vérité expérimen-
tale est seule vraie, une et entière, éternelle" (*Ibid.*). Because this is his conviction he must oppose "au catéchisme catholique le catéchisme scientifique, le monde et l'homme expliqués par la science..." (*Ibid.*).

Zola praises science because it makes possible the discovery of physical laws which when rightly applied make possible the inventions which he hopes will bless all mankind. The experiments of Jordan in *Travail* for example lead to the economical transmission of electrical power which makes electric furnaces a real boon to the steel industry. Similarly, the extremely powerful explosive developed by Guillaume Froment in *Paris* will be used to power small motors for bicycles rather than to wage war.

Such applications of science can free man from the back-breaking work which he has long had to perform and can also give him pleasure in the free time thus provided. But science creates knowledge which frees man in another
important way also. It sets his feet on a firm foundation and thereby brings a certain interior stability to his life. Pascal puts it best:

'-- Si, si! il faut savoir, savoir quand même, et ne rien cacher.... Aucun bonheur n'est possible dans l'ignorance, la certitude seule fait la vie calme.'

The beneficent use of science is the key to the future. Without it man cannot know the truth; without the truth he cannot grow; without growth he will either be subject to eternal servitude to religions and philosophies which exploit him, or he will die. The latter fate may be more desirable than the former, but Zola cannot be satisfied with either. His antipathy to both is pronounced.

Not only does Catholic education war against science and stultify the development of reason, its effect on the mind is indelible. This phenomenon is referred to in places by Zola as "les tares de la religion." They may show up years, perhaps even decades later in the form of a religious exaltation, for example, which causes "ravage... dans la cervelle de la femme, quand une éducation catholique y repousse" (Vérité, pp. 485-486). Such is the case with Geneviève Froment in Vérité, who, again under the influence of her youthful training, is described as having a "raison malade." Zola naturally ascribes part of the problem to heredity. Geneviève's ancestors had been terrorized by the Church.
The "tare ancienne" is always a problem, wherever it appears. In Geneviève's case it will for a time cause a schism between her and Marc, her husband, which will be healed when her powers of reason, aided by love, once again become dominant. In Clotilde of *Le Docteur Pascal* this atavistic religious experience almost destroys her relationship with Pascal whom she loves and whose child she will bear. In each case the religious training is so deep-rooted that it defies total extirpation, even though a substantially healthy and free mental condition is re-established when the victims are brought into contact with the light of truth and reason.

Another and equally serious objection to Catholic education, with particular reference to its religious content, is the disastrous effect which it has on the day to day activities which are characteristic of any viable community. The "Heureux les pauvres d'esprit" of the Gospels is a terrible affliction when applied as a general social code. It is an enervating code which will bring any society to a standstill and which will eventually even prove fatal to it. It is precisely the "pauvres d'esprit" who are susceptible to the cynical manipulation of forces which will entrap and exploit them. Acquiescence to these forces leads not only to mental slavery, it leads also to a passivity which brings rapid atrophy to the entire social organism. It creates a *laissez-faire* attitude which kills
initiative, sinks men into deep apathy and causes them to shift all responsibility for action to God or to the Church.

When such apathy occurs there is a tendency for people to ignore even the basic requirements of hygiene. This result is noticed by Marc when he returns to Jonville which has for some time been under the control of the local priests:

Ce qui le frappait, c'était la petite ville moins bien tenue, des signes déjà visibles d'abandon, de prospérité amoindrie. Et n'était-ce pas la loi, la misère intellectuelle n'engendre-t-elle pas la misère matérielle? La saleté et la vermine se sont mises dans tous les pays où le catholicisme a triomphé, partout il a passé comme un souffle de mort, frappant de stérilité la terre, jetant les hommes à la paresse et à l'imbécillité morne, car il est la négation même de la vie, il tue les nations modernes, ainsi qu'un poison lent et sûr. (Vérité, p. 229)

It is this impact of Catholicism that causes Marc to almost despair of seeing France fulfill her calling as "l'émancipatrice du monde" (Ibid., p. 715).

Finally, there are two other results of Catholic education which bother Zola. The first seems to be the antithesis of the preceding point. It is the inculcation of a militaristic spirit which sees the solution to problems in terms of war. The law of the survival of the fittest is instilled, with predictably disastrous results. To Marc Froment, this is a particularly odious element which he must try to overcome:
Marc, surtout, dès les premiers jours, voulut réagir contre l'éducation de violence, de terreur et de sottise donnée à l'enfant. On n'exaltait en lui, par le livre, par l'image, par les leçons de chaque heure, que le droit du plus fort, les massacres, les carnages, les villes dévastées, anéanties.... On enfiévrait les petits cerveaux d'un fracas d'armes....

(Ibid., p. 215)

This facet of Catholic education is distasteful to Zola especially since he views the solution to the world's problems in terms of evolution or of peaceful revolution. The considerable exaggeration in the passage clearly reveals his repugnance to the shedding of blood.

The final result of such teaching is a spirit of fear and submission designed to help keep the believers in the fold and in a state of readiness to defend the interests of the Church. Fear is a product of ignorance. It is also a useful tool for the Catholic educator. In his lessons

L'épouvante régnait, la peur de Dieu, la peur du diable, la peur basse et laide qui prenait l'homme dès l'enfance, le courbait jusqu'au tombeau, au travers de l'épaisse nuit de l'ignorance et du mensonge. On ne fabriquait ainsi que des esclaves...et de là venait la nécessité de cette éducation de foi aveugle, de perpétuelle extermination, afin d'avoir des soldats toujours prêts à défendre l'ordre des choses établies. (Vérité, p. 216)

If Zola views Catholic students as future soldiers in the struggle for men's minds, he also opposes to them his own future warriors. They are the graduates of the
secular schools, the products of enlightened education who will progress to the Ecole Normale and then take their places in the "bataillon sacré" (Ibid., p. 169) of teachers already being formed. They will be the missionaries of the new humanity, and the education which they will disseminate will accomplish its "tâche révolutionnaire" (Vérité, p. 716).

This revolutionary task will take time. It cannot be accomplished overnight, because of the profound ignorance of the people and because of the tenacious nature of Catholic education. In any case, even if the influence of religious education could be suddenly nullified, there would still remain a serious problem. Humanity suddenly deprived of a crutch upon which it has for so long depended would probably be crushed by the resulting disillusionment and emptiness. It is because of this danger, for example, that Abbé Pierre Froment in Lourdes chooses not to disabuse Marie de Guersaint of her belief that the Virgin has healed her of her self-induced paralysis. Without her faith, she would be destroyed. Far better, then, to leave the crutch for the moment and gradually prepare the future generations who will not need it.

There are other reasons why Zola prefers education and evolution to a revolution which would suddenly rid the world of its enemies. Examining them here will better help us to understand why he opts for the slower method of
renewal.

It is evident that, although he has flirted with the anarchist idea of purification by fire, of destruction by the bomb as the quickest way to end social injustices, he rejects it as too dangerous for the weak and the innocent and because it springs from a nihilistic philosophy which does not carry within itself the seeds necessary to produce tomorrow's harvest of Justice and Truth. It represents only the negative side of the coin and for that reason remains defective.

Zola's aversion to violence and his conviction that it is almost always counterproductive is seen in his treatment of Souvarine in _Germinal_. Souvarine, a Russian émigré, anarchist, and apostle of violence has a fatal flaw—he is powerless to produce anything positive, to create the life so necessary to Zola's social philosophy. Rightly seen, he is a violent force which strikes suddenly and destroys totally, but which leaves the miners in a more intolerable position than they were in prior to his intervention.

Even Etienne Lantier does not represent the real hope of the miners. A kind of inchoate and transient prophet, he recognizes that violence cannot solve the problem of capitalist exploitation of the worker. He will soon disappear from the Zolean drama as a force in the stream of history creeping on toward the dawn of the new
socialist day. But he will not leave before giving some proof of a comprehension, however incipient and vague, that rational, legal and non-violent revolution will be the aim of the future. We see him not long before he leaves Montsou for Paris at the end of the novel:

Et il songeait à présent que la violence peut-être ne hâtait pas les choses. Des câbles coupés, des rails arrachés, des lampes cassées, quelle inutile besogne! Cela valait bien la peine de galoper à trois mille, en une bande dévastatrice! Vaguement, il devinait que la légalité, un jour, pouvait être plus terrible. Sa raison mûrissait, il avait jeté la gourme de ses rancunes.  

It is at this point that the seed of Zola's social thought is cast into the furrow, but it is a seed which will not burst forth in renewal and power until the day when the foundations of the new Beauclair, the "Cité future," are laid in Travail, perhaps the principal work in the series which describes the fulfillment of Zola's prophetic dream.

At the end of Germinal the hope for the future does not lie in violence, but in the persistent pressure of the miners who chip away figuratively at the enormous block of capitalist power. Their efforts and time will one day cause the desired harvest to appear.

It is not only in Germinal that Zola sides with time and evolution. Two examples from Paris support this contention. Salvat, a usually unemployed worker who is exasperated over the state of mendicancy to which he and
his family have been reduced, strikes back at what he perceives to be the cause of their troubles—a surfeited and corrupt bourgeoisie personified by the multi-millionaire Baron Duvillard. The bomb which Salvat throws at Duvillard's mansion succeeds only in killing an errand girl unfortunate enough to be entering the house at that moment. Far from producing progress his act has killed one of those whom it was somehow intended to help. Moreover, Salvat makes himself a spectacle and source of pleasure to the more blood-thirsty members of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy who find in his execution a new kind of thrill. The episode ends in total irony when the worker's death is seen to abet the perpetuation of the hollow and hypocritical charity of his tormentors, who now provide sustenance for the bereaved widow and daughter. The bread Salvat's effort has reaped is bitter.

The most salient example in support of the point, however, is the drama played out in the lives of Guillaume and Pierre Froment toward the end of Paris. Guillaume, who has invented an explosive of almost incalculable power, has finally concluded that its most effective use would be in the destruction of the basilica of the Sacré-Coeur, now nearing completion. With this plan decided on he enters the basement of the church and readies his explosive for what he perceives to be its cleansing role. Pierre has followed him, fortunately, and after a physical struggle persuades him that his plan is ill-conceived.
This episode is important first because the edifice chosen for destruction has been selected through a process of elimination from among the Opera, the Stock Exchange, the Palace of Justice and the Arch of Triumph. The fact that Guillaume decides to strike the basilica (as an act of revenge for the death of Salvat), rather than one of the more traditional symbols of power underscores the fact that Zola views the Church as the greatest enemy of all. Again, Pierre foresees a terrible waste of life in the holocaust which the explosive will create. He reminds Guillaume that murder is wrong and tries to help him see the selfish motives of his act. It is only when Guillaume thinks that he has shed the innocent blood of his brother in their struggle that he comes to his senses and abandons his plan.

It is evident, therefore, that Zola does not rely on violence as the solution to the Church problem or social ills, which he sees as one problem (as he says in *Paris, "le problème social et religieux ne faisait qu'un ..."  [Paris, p. 16]). Yet he does recognize that at times violence is inevitable. But to admit its inevitable character is not to condone it, and the struggle for the people will take place not in the streets but largely in the schools.

Zola's acceptance of education rather than violent revolution as the chief agent for modifying society is evidence that he believes that changing men first will bring
about changes in their institutions. He believes too that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to change the adult mind substantially, particularly that mind upon which Catholic education has left its imprint. But the Catholic mind is not the only one susceptible to the allure of the Faith. Nor is it only the uneducated or minimally educated mind which believes. Others, among them numbers of intellectuals of the period, come to believe also. They do so for various reasons. Many are impatient with materialism, particularly with its inability to bring about a rapid amelioration of society's ills. Richard Griffiths confirms this fact in his chapter entitled "Escape from the Modern World" when he writes:

Materialist philosophy was responsible for a reaction in many people which led to their conversion.

(The Reactionary Revolution, p. 225)

For others, science seems crude, no longer in vogue. They come to the Church through dilettantism. Some because they are weak, try to escape reality and seek comfort in the hope of heaven. They flee from life. For them, Zola reserves his greatest scorn. Pierre discusses their case with his nephew François Froment:

... ici il était plein d'un mépris douloureux pour les jeunes cerveaux manquant de bravoure devant la connaissance, retournant à la consolation d'un spiritualisme mensonger, à la promesse d'une éternité de bonheur, dans la mort souhaitée, exaltée. N'était-ce pas l'assassinat même de la vie, la pensée lâche
de ne pas vouloir la vivre pour elle-même, pour le simple devoir d'être et de donner son effort? (Paris, p. 194)

It takes strength of character and intellectual integrity to accept life for what it is and to live it with enthusiasm. It takes honesty and fortitude to refuse to give up, to refuse to flee to the consolation of superstition and to place one's trust in the ability of science eventually to solve the problems of society and make the world a better place in which to live. This, at least, is how Zola sees it. He is upset by these defections among the ranks of those who especially should not succumb to an escapist philosophy.

This is not to suggest that he feels defeated by such setbacks. Far from becoming negative, he remains convinced of the long-range success of his educational ideas. He puts his hopes for the future not in today's adults, but in today's children and in succeeding generations. He says of Marc Froment, who is his ideal teacher:

Il s'efforçait tendrement de faire les enfants meilleurs que les pères, il ensemençait l'exécrable présent de l'heureux avenir. (Vérité, p. 271)

If Catholic education is so deleterious, what kind of education would Zola put in its place? What results does he foresee?

Marc's pedagogical method reveals Zola's emphasis on the development of judgment in the child in place of the
rote ingestion of facts or what may be presented as facts. It also reveals a pronounced influence by Montaigne and Rousseau. The following passage from Vérité sums it up well:

... la vérité expérimentale est seule vraie, une et entière, éternelle ... la science cessant d’être une lettre morte, devenant une source de vie.... Aussi, dans sa classe, laissait-il les livres de côté le plus possible, afin de forcer ses élèves à juger par eux-mêmes. Ils ne savaient bien que lorsqu’ils avaient touché les choses. Il ne leur demandait jamais de croire qu’après leur avoir prouvé expérimentalement la réalité d’un phénomène.... Voir ainsi par soi-même, se convaincre de ce qu’il faut croire, développer son raisonnement, son individualité, d’après les raisons qu’on a d’être et d’agir .... (Vérité, pp. 212-213)

Zola calls this method "la seule qui pût enfanter des hommes" (Ibid., p. 213).

Of course, ethics must be taught along with scientific knowledge and judgment. Such virtues as truth, justice, solidarity and love must be developed in the student. Justice and truth are cardinal virtues upon which Zola’s city of tomorrow will be built. Love is important because "apprendre à savoir ne suffisait pas, il fallait apprendre à aimer, la vérité ne pouvant être féconde que par l’amour" (Ibid., p. 714). The fear of God as a "police morale" is ended.

All of these lessons will be learned preferably in "écoles mixtes" where the boys and girls will learn to
understand each other, become accustomed to each other and
even begin to look for their life's mate. The little society
which they will form as seen in Travail will indeed be mar-
velous to behold.

Positive results from the schools Zola envisions are
inevitable. In fact, he indicates this in Vérité. We have
already seen how Louise Froment has been unable to accept
the dogmas of the Church because they are not reasonable to
her. The excellent education which she has received under
the liberated and dedicated Mlle Mazeline has been a bulwark
against superstition and has helped to make her capable of
truth and justice toward others. She will in turn have a
salutary influence on her mother, temporarily estranged from
Marc.

While Louise is the prototype and most outstanding
example of the new generation being formed in the secular
schools of the district, she is not the only one. Indeed,
it appears that most of the young people of Maillebois will
be capable of justice before the final page of the story is
written. This fact is laboriously underscored by Zola.

Simon, convicted of murder and exiled to prison, has
been pardoned and is now living in Spain with his family
and his brother, David. Back in Maillebois, the children
of those who so unfairly treated Simon have decided that
some form of reparation is necessary. They decide to build
a house for him and to recall him from his self-imposed exile
in Spain.

Upon his return, Simon finds a new house whose front bears this sign:

'La ville de Maillebois, à l'instituteur Simon, pour la vérité et la justice, en réparation de ses tortures.'

It is signed:

'Les petits-fils de ses bourreaux.'

(Vérité, p. 710)

The point is unmistakable. Progress has been made. The chains of ignorance and prejudice forged in the Catholic schools are being broken and the captives set free.

Free from the Catholic influence, the people's latent talents and energies will be fully developed. Their potential is unlimited. In considering it, Zola envisions a rather astonishing scene:

Et quel réveil en effet des énergies accumulées, endormies dans l'immense réservoir des campagnes et des villes industrielles! Toute une floraison intellectuelle en sortait, toute une génération neuve, capable de pensée et d'action, apportant et renouvelant la sève depuis si longtemps tarie chez les anciennes classes dirigeantes, épuisées par l'abus du pouvoir. Des génies sortaient journalement de cette fertile terre populaire enfin défrichée, une grande époque allait naître, comme une renaissance d'humanité ... le plus magnifique épanouissement de toutes les forces intellectuelles et morales qui doivent faire de la France la libératrice, l'émancipatrice du monde.

(Vérité, pp. 714-15)

Geniuses will abound, the arts will flourish. Solidarity and peace will reign. Man's energies turned to peaceful
pursuits will bestow innumerable blessings on the world. According to Zola, material benefits always follow moral and intellectual progress:

... c'était aussi une grande prospérité matérielle qui se déclarait, car la fortune, le bonheur d'un pays dépend uniquement de sa culture d'esprit et de sa moralité civique.  

(Verité, p. 624)

The results are conditional and are largely predicated upon two prerequisites: the removal of the Church from the field of education, and dropping the Christian code, "Heureux ceux qui savent, heureux les intelligents, les hommes de volonté et d'action, parce que le royaume de la terre leur appartiendra!" (Ibid., p. 192)

Not only will this code destroy ignorance, but it will also do the same to all its offspring:

Pauvreté, saleté, iniquité, superstition, mensonge, tyrannie, la femme exploité et méprisée, l'homme hété et dompté, tous les maux physiques et moraux ... les fruits de cette ignorance voulue, érigée en système politique gouvernementale et de police divine. La connaissance seule devait tuer les dogmes menteurs ....  

(Ibid., p. 749)

Knowledge through proper education is the key.

While Zola declares in Travail that all religions will disappear from the earth at some future point in its social evolution and shows the gradual demise of Catholicism, he leaves no doubt that at times the latter
must be given a push by its opponents.

The push will not come in the form of bombs, as we have seen in the episode of the Sacré-Coeur in Paris. It will come rather from the republican government itself and will be entirely legal. Zola foresees the passing of new laws which will exclude the Church from State financial support. He predicts the Act of 1905 when he writes:

Un coup terrible venait d'être porté à l'Eglise, la dernière Chambre avait enfin voté la séparation totale de l'Eglise et de l'Etat, et les millions, jadis donnés aux prêtres pour qu'ils entretinssent dans le peuple l'abêtissement séculaire du troupeau à tondre et la haine destructive de la République, allaient recevoir un meilleur emploi, en servant à doubler les traitements des instituteurs primaires.

(Vérité, pp. 656-57)

The diverting of these enormous funds from the Church to secular education is a prelude to the day when the Church will be forbidden to teach. Zola predicts that day and its consequences:

Le jour où il lui serait défendu d'enseigner, où elle verrait ses Ecoles se fermer et disparaître, serait le commencement de sa fin prochaine, de son anéantissement inévitable, au milieu du nouveau peuple libéré, grandi en dehors de son mensonge, dans un autre idéal de raison et d'humanité libre.

(Ibid., p. 473)

Along with the twilight of the Church will come greater educational opportunities for the have-nots. A further leveling of society will result. The privileged and the exploited will be eliminated and the divided country,
composed of two Frances receiving different educations, will at last reach reconciliation and peace.

CONCLUSION

If, in the stories of Geneviève Froment and Marthe Mouret, Zola shows us the perils of allowing the Church to gain ascendancy over the wife and mother, he makes it clear that the Church's power will be broken in the end (Vérité). Where there is a desire to know the truth and a will to resist the forces of deception and demagogy there remains the possibility of escape coupled with the challenge to spread the good news of enlightened secular education to those still bound by the Church. The educated and freed woman is ultimately the key, for with her freedom will come compatibility in the home and a singleness of purpose which are conducive to the realization of a brighter and happier future.

In the schools also the Church will be combatted and its influence eventually ended. Science will prove too strong for Catholic error, passivity created by an other-worldly attitude will be ended and militarism will no longer be taught. But these results will require time; they will not be achieved through violence. Patience and courage, perseverance and hard work will be needed if the job is to be done.

For Zola, the future looks bright for teachers like
Marc Froment in increasing numbers are already creating new minds for tomorrow's new men.
CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH AS POLITICAL INSTITUTION

INTRODUCTION

In a historical sketch given chiefly in Rome, Zola traces the development of the Church from its earliest origins to the Third Republic. Describing particularly its political aspirations and activities, he finds much to blame and little to praise. In spite of his invectives against the Roman Church, however, he presents a generally sympathetic picture of early Christendom and of its Judaic antecedents. A review of his main points will help us better to comprehend his view of the Church's role in politics and social reform in the modern era.

For Zola, the prophets of ancient Israel were men whose goals were more social than spiritual. They called for a leveling of society and a more equitable distribution of wealth. Their anathemas were aimed not at sinners in general but at the rich, whom they perceived to be the source of society's problems. He describes these prophets:

Jusqu'à Jésus, les prophètes ne sont que des révoltés, qui surgissent de la misère du peuple, qui disent ses souffrances, accablent les riches, auxquels ils prophétisent tous les maux, en punition de leur injustice et de leur dureté.

(Rome, p. 21)
Christ, the last prophet, continued the attack against the wealthy. He too embodied the rights and the claims of the poor. He was a non-violent revolutionary whose followers sold their possessions and had all things in common. There was, therefore, already a movement toward collectivization and economic equality during the early Christian period. For Zola, "chacque église a été un essai de communisme..." (Rome, pp. 21-22).

Unfortunately, this movement was ended by the persecution of the Christians by the Romans and by the birth of that Leviathan known since as the Roman Catholic Church from the union of venal Christians and the secular rich. For Christianity this prostitution was necessary:

Il y avait là pour le christianisme une nécessité politique de vie, il n'est devenu qu'à ce prix le catholicisme, l'universelle religion. Dès lors, la redoutable machine s'érige, l'arme de conquête et de gouvernement...

(Ibid., p. 22)

Zola thus sees the desire for money as a cause of the emergence of the Roman Church.

Since the advent of the Church the drive toward social and economic equality in the West has been for the most part shelved and at times almost eliminated. For more than a thousand years the ineluctable flow toward what Zola terms the "cité future" was completely damned up by the Church's machinations.

There were, nevertheless, eruptions along the way
which threatened to undermine the entire Catholic structure and bring about its collapse. The Renaissance, for example, brought into greater prominence man himself, his inherent value, his desire for freedom of expression and of action. It turned man's eyes inward upon himself and for the moment at least away from God and his surrogates on earth who so stridently declaimed the sinfulness of this world and the spiritual delights or torments of the next.

The cracking structure was further weakened by the Reformation, when men of good conscience and good sense revolted against an excessively immoral and doctrinaire body no longer capable of functioning as God's representative. Schism, the thing feared most by the Church, thus loosened its iron grip on mankind.

During this decline, however, the Church made no appreciable concessions. In religion the Reform was countered wherever it appeared; doctrinal "error" was condemned and where possible extirpated by the Inquisition, by the Council of Trent, by the Index. In the area of social reforms, its efforts were meager and always calculated to ensure progress in its quest for political power allied with spiritual authority—an aim achieved only by Caesar Augustus.

It is for the same reason that the Church cooperated with the Republic in France after having so ardently supported the Ancien Régime. It sought ways to accommodate
itself to the existing political system so that it might continue its slow but certain movement forward.

At the same time, to many both within the Church and outside it the Revolution appeared to resurrect, after so many centuries of dormancy and suppression, history's drive toward a new world order based on justice and truth. The Declaration of the Rights of Man seemed to point toward the death of the papacy and the early emancipation of the peasants and workers.

Such was not to be the case, however. Just as the aristocracy had robbed and otherwise mistreated the poor and had corrupted itself with its illegally acquired riches, so also the bourgeoisie, which had seemed to promise so much to the nation, continued the exploitation, denying to the workers their equal share of the wealth. Luc Froment reflects on this setback in *Travail*:

> La Révolution n'avait amené que la bourgeoisie au pouvoir, il fallait un siècle encore pour que l'évolution s'achevât, pour que tout le peuple eût sa part.  
> *(Travail, p. 175)*

Just as the aristocracy had also fallen to the swelling forces of the middle class, so this same middle class in its turn was descending the path of exploitation and corruption leading toward the bonfire of proletarian wrath and its own death. It was a worn-out institution which the forces of social change were going to eliminate.

The people's time had clearly arrived. The Church,
instinctively fearing for its own life with the rise of the workers to power, again tried to hitch its wagon to the ascending star. This becomes clear to Pierre Froment in the course of his audience with Leo XIII. The Pope

... avait ainsi la nette conscience de l'effroyable danger au milieu duquel il baignait, de cette mer montante de la démocratie, de cet océan sans bornes de la science, qui menaçait de submerger l'ilôt étroit où triomphait encore le dôme de Saint-Pierre...les voix du dehors traversaient les murs, lui apportaient le cri d'enfantement des sociétés nouvelles. Et toute sa politique partait de là, il n'avait jamais eu d'autre besogne que de vaincre pour régner. (Rome, p. 599)

If democracy was in the air, so was socialism, and it was gaining ground. Along with revolutionary socialism, Catholic socialism entered the struggle for the working class. The battle was sharp and the Church had its greatest successes in those countries in which a great propaganda effort was made and in which the people, for the most part, had not been won to Catholicism. In Protestant countries an extraordinarily energetic campaign was conducted by the bishops, who spoke the daring language of democracy. In Germany, Ketteler talked about laying heavy financial demands on the rich; in Switzerland, Mermillod fervently pleaded the cause of the poor; in England, Cardinal Manning won resounding victories for the workers. Especially in America, however, did Catholic socialism triumph. A new Church, a renewed Christianity, seemed about to be born.
These successes were not duplicated in those countries where the Faith had existed for a long time. In Spain and Italy the Catholic socialist movement had slowed or was dead. In France it consisted mainly in a war of ideas. There, the question turned on the organization of labor unions, some Catholics favoring open unions, while others preferred to see closed unions under State control. The Pope would not pronounce himself on the question.

We learn later in Rome that, paradoxically, the Church will withdraw from the contest for the workers in France. Religious considerations will prevent it from aiding those who have not come into the Faith. Nor can it accept labor unions operating solely under the control of the State. While it desires the State's protection of labor unions, it will refuse to accept its direction of them. This refusal is another proof for Zola that the Church is not primarily interested in the welfare of the worker for the worker's sake, but only for the benefits which the Church will derive from providing help for the obedient worker. As Zola sees it, this Church policy is completely out of step with the realities of the modern world. Its abdication in the field of labor reform will hasten its own demise.
POLITICS

While the catholicity of Rome's claims and activities disturbed Zola, its designs upon France herself bothered him most of all. For the Church, France was not simply a faithful daughter, a comfort to a Vatican which Zola described as gradually cracking. France was far more; she was the fille aînée, the one upon whom the Church's hopes for survival and universal domination were based:

La France était la dernière des grandes puissances catholiques; elle seule avait encore les hommes et l'argent nécessaires, la force qui pouvait imposer le catholicisme au monde; et, dès lors, il devenait logique que Rome l'eût choisie pour y livrer le suprême combat, dans son âpre désir de reconquérir le pouvoir temporel, qui seul lui permettrait de réaliser son rêve séculaire d'universelle domination.

Italy herself did not offer to the Church the moral support or financial resources it needed for the battle. Although it had unbounded aspirations, the Church was having no little difficulty in winning any major victories. It had lost Rome itself to the King and was relegated geographically in Italy to the confines of the Vatican. It enjoyed at best a state of bellicose co-existence with the Quirinal.

Since France alone could meet the Church's needs, it is not surprising that we see a Catholic infra structure in France working tirelessly to gain spiritual and political power. And it is here on the battlefield that is France that Zola chooses to meet the invader; for if France from
Rome's point of view is fated to play a decisive role in the campaign of conquest waged by the Church's royally-robed prelates, she is also destined to play, in Zola's own vision of a world freed from its bonds and forever resident in the Future City of utopian socialism, a messianic role. She will be the catalyst making possible the brotherhood of man. Marc Froment reflects on this role as conceived by Zola:

Quand la France entière saura et voudra, quand elle sera le peuple libéré, les empires les plus bardés de fer crouleront autour d'elle, envahis par son souffle de vérité et de justice, qui fera ce que ne feront jamais ses armées et ses canons. Les peuples éveillent les peuples, et le jour où les peuples, un à un, se lèveront, instruits par l'exemple, ce sera la victoire pacifique, la fin de la guerre. Marc ne concevait pas de plus beau rôle pour son pays, il mettait la grandeur de la patrie, dans ce rêve de fondre toutes les patries en une même patrie humaine. (Vérité, p. 217)

France will be the "émancipatrice du monde" (Ibid., p. 230), whose role, perhaps more clearly defined in Fécondité, will be grandiose and conferring universal blessings. It will not be realized, however, without a demanding struggle. For France, in fact, it is a matter of life and death.

Although Zola consistently contends that the primum mobile of the Church is its historical hunger for power, both spiritual and political, it has had a great deal more success in the former realm than in the latter. It is apparently much more difficult to apply the shackles to the
body politic than to the souls of individual men. In spite of the picture which he draws in La Terre and in Germinal of peasant and proletarian societies largely inured to the claims of the Church, Zola gives us numerous examples of people who are still wholly or partially under the influence of the Church as spiritual mentor and guide. The motives underlying these spiritual ties in particular cases will be looked at more closely in Chapter II. Suffice it to mention here several of the more outstanding examples: Marthe Mouret of La Conquête de Plassans, Angélique of Le Rêve, la comtesse d'Orviedo of L'Argent, Martine of Le Docteur Pascal, Benedetta of Rome, Marie de Guersaint and many others of Lourdes.

It is evident that as a spiritual force the Church is viewed by Zola as still quite potent—a force which has to be reckoned with. But it seems far more difficult for him to create a fictional world in which the Church has actually realized its political goals to any significant degree. His failure to do so seems to belie his contention that the Church is a quasi omnipresent and generally efficient organization whose grandiose dreams of world domination make it a constant threat to nations and to empires. What he actually shows us are several small victories in relatively minor skirmishes which in no wise might be construed to represent a danger to any national state.

In fact, Zola seems to have found himself in a
quandary over the question. To picture a Church which is regularly gaining appreciable political ground is at once to attribute to it a success which in the real world it does not know, and at the same time to weaken or destroy his contention that the structure and power of the Church are everywhere cracking—a degeneration signaling its coming disappearance.

On the other hand, for him to portray a Church which is totally without political influence would be to deprive himself of one of his primary premises, one upon which he bases so much of his last novelistic effort. A world without a politically powerful Church, or at least without a potentially powerful one, would have left Zola perhaps in the unusual position of a general who marshals his forces for battle only to march out and discover that there is no enemy. But in a real sense Zola needs the enemy, for it provides him with the necessary means to measure his own ideas and serves as an obstacle which, when overcome, will create at least the illusion of progress in a dynamic world in which all of life's benign forces are converging toward unity and a new order.

This is not to suggest that Zola's fears are not genuine, that he does not see in the Church an authentic threat to his personal utopian dream: no doubt he does. But the interpretation of the Church as a necessary evil does allow room for a rational view of the terrible
distortions regarding the Church's role which surface in Zola's works. For it is indeed a distortion to say that the Church's political ambitions represent a particularly virulent threat to France or to any other government when in reality the Vatican does not even control the city of Rome.

It is for this reason that Zola has to base his entire anti-clerical dialectic, politically speaking, on a potential danger and not on a real one. And although he often "protests too much" he still succeeds at least partially in creating the illusion of a sinister force which needs no slumber, which is never deflected from its course and which seems to be the monster at democracy's door.

Early in the Rougon-Macquart series we see the Church as it jockeys for an advantageous political position in Plassans, the provincial town which produced the Rougons and the Macquarts. Zola describes this effort:

Jusqu'en 1830, le peuple n'a pas compté. Encore aujourd'hui, on agit comme s'il n'était pas. Tout se passe entre le clergé, la noblesse et la bourgeoisie. Les prêtres, très nombreux, donnent le ton à la politique de l'endroit; ce sont des mines souterraines, des coups dans l'ombre, une tactique savante et peureuse qui permet à peine de faire un pas en avant ou en arrière tous les dix ans. Ces luttes secrètes d'hommes qui veulent avant tout éviter le bruit, demandent une finesse particulière, une aptitude aux petites choses, une patience de gens privés de passions. Et c'est ainsi que les lenteurs provinciales, dont on se moque volontiers à Paris, sont pleines de traîtrises,
d'égorgilements sournois, de défaites et de victoires cachées. Ces bonhommes, surtout quand leurs intérêts sont en jeu, tuent à domicile, à coup de chiquenaudes, comme nous tuons à coups de canon, en place publique.

For the most part this effort is hidden from public view, a fact which alone gives it a sinister character. And it is deadly even though the weapons employed are not the same as those used in conventional warfare.

Further details are given concerning the ebb and flow of the clergy's political fortunes at Plassans. After 1830

...un étrange revirement eut lieu; la foi s'en alla, la population ouvrière et bourgeoise, désertant la cause de la légitimité, se donna peu à peu au grand mouvement démocratique de notre époque. Lorsque la révolution de 1848 éclata, la noblesse et le clergé se trouvèrent seuls à travailler au triomphe d'Henri V. (La Fortune des Rougon, pp. 73-74)

The Republic, however, did not provide the stability desired by the bourgeoisie,

Aussi, lorsque la réaction cléricale de 1849 se déclara, presque toute la bourgeoisie de Plassans passa-t-elle au parti conservateur. (Ibid., p. 74)

The clergy, never despairing, had continued to work assiduously to keep alive the hopes of the nobles and to reconcile them where possible with the bourgeoisie. When the aristocrats were ready to call it quits the Church had moved on in pursuit of its goals, but with infinite
patience:

d...toute la politique de l'Eglise est
d'alor droit devant elle, quand même,
remettant la réussite de ses projets à
plusieurs siècles, s'il est nécessaire,
mais ne perdant pas une heure, se poussant
toujours en avant, d'un effort continu.
Ce fut donc le clergé qui, à Plassans,
mena la réaction. La noblesse devint son
prête-nom, rien de plus; il se cache
derrière elle...la dirigea, parvint même
à lui rendre une vie factice.

(La Fortune des Rougon, pp. 74-75)

Outwardly the Church was a strong supporter of the
Republic while covertly working for its downfall:

Il s'agissait uniquement de tuer la
République. Et la République
agonisait.

(Ibid., p. 75)

Success came when the clergy persuaded the nobles and the
bourgeoisie to join in common cause against the Republic.

The reactionaries both in and out of the Church felt
that they could use Louis-Napoleon to rid them of their
enemies prior to his own removal which would make way for
the return of the monarchy. When his coup d'état burst
over them they applauded because it had killed the Republic.
With the Bonapartists they crushed the last republicans.

Plassans, however, had apparently not been com-
pletely won over to the Empire. Or it could be that the
ultramontane clergy was already preparing the defeat of
the Emperor. In any case, the resistance to the Empire was
coming principally from Abbé Fenil and his coterie. The
Empire, for its part, enters the struggle with the Church
in Plassans. It gives the task of defeating Fenil to one Abbé Ovide Faujas whose story is told in *La Conquête de Plassans*.

The other occasion in Zola's novels where we see the Church succeeding in its political aims occurs in *Vérité*. We have already seen how Simon, the Jewish teacher, has been framed for a murder committed by Abbé Gorgias. Aided by innuendo and lies fed to the still largely ignorant townspeople by a sycophant press and by some timely tampering with the jury, the Church guarantees Simon's conviction and deportation to a penal colony.

The campaign against him is motivated chiefly by the desire to discredit and if possible kill the secular schools. It enjoys a certain measure of success. Simon spends years in prison and the non-Catholic schools lose students to the parish schools. Even in the secular schools the Church's minions move up in rank and in power. The entire system of free education seems on the verge of collapsing. A concomitant result for the Church is an increase in its influence over the town council of Jonville. The Church seems indeed to be on the road to total victory.

But victory is not achieved, because the unflagging efforts of those who know Simon to be innocent at last bear fruit. Simon is exonerated and the Church's influence dissipates like a morning mist before a summer sun. The truth has routed the malefactors and slain the demagogues.
This drama, set as it is in what might be accurately termed a "lost corner" of France, makes several points relevant to our study: first, the bedrock issue is the struggle for control of the people, i.e., for political power; second, the Church considers no village or hamlet too small for such an effort; third, its efforts are ultimately doomed because the truth, which will be made known by those free of the Romish error, will always slay the lie.

The threat to France seems slight indeed if measured by the Church's activities in Jonville and Maillebois. Multiplied by a thousand or by ten thousand it would no longer seem quite so inconsequential. But Zola does not show us the result of such an exponential increase in influence. It might be reasonably deduced that he doesn't desire to embellish the success of an institution which he spends so much time traducing.

Nevertheless, he does show the Church operating much nearer the seat of the nation's political power. The vision is a fleeting, albeit recurring one, which is never brought into sharp enough focus to permit determination of the influence exerted or of the results obtained, if any. This blurred glimpse of Monseigneur Martha of Paris working behind the scenes, slipping in and out of the President's office on behalf of the Pope, is not a flaw in Zola's novel. On the contrary, it creates the precise
reaction desired—that of collusion, and of mystery and illegality.

Indeed, the government is giving evidence of a profound moral decay which will have to be excised if the nation is to survive. It is plunged into a widespread scandal involving the "Chemins de fer africains" and some of the highest officials in the government. With the Church's blessings the government clamps the lid on the whole sordid affair. Monseigneur Martha gives his approbation to the exculpatory lies of Barroux before the Assembly. For the Church, moral protest is not a virtue and gross abuses are reduced to the dimensions of anodyne incidents. The Church has no conscience, it has only a goal.

SOCIAL REFORM

Labor

Germinal opens with the arrival of Etienne Lantier in the little coal-mining town of Montsou in Northern France. In a sense, however, he arrives in medias res because the drama which is about to be played out there will be the result of long years of exploitation which have left the miners hungry and sick, and with a growing sense of frustration. The paradigm of the miserable mining family is provided by the Maheus, with whom Etienne makes friends
and into whose home he will soon move.

This family is too big and underpaid and finds itself in dire straits just as do most of the other families in the coron; and this in spite of the fact that every able-bodied member of the family is working a grueling shift in the mine. The pay is simply not sufficient to provide food from payday to payday. And Maigrat, the proprietor of the general store, will usually allow credit only to those mothers who send their daughters along to encourage him. As a result, it is not uncommon to find some of the mothers going about the village trying to beg or borrow enough bread to see their families through.

La Maheude, in what has become almost a ritual, is out making her rounds from door to door when she meets the Curé of Montsou, Abbé Joire. Zola reports their meeting:

"Le curé de Montsou, l'abbé Joire, passait en retroussant sa soutane, avec des délicatesses de gros chat bien nourri, qui craint de mouiller sa robe. Il était doux, il affectait de ne s'occuper de rien, pour ne fâcher ni les ouvriers ni les patrons.

-- Bonjour, monsieur le curé. Il ne s'arrêta pas, sourit aux enfants, et la laissa plantée au milieu de la route. Elle n'avait point de religion, mais elle s'était imaginé brusquement que ce prêtre allait lui donner quelque chose.

(Germinale, pp. 1209-1210)

The salient points are obvious: 1) the clergy is well fed; 2) the clergy does not want to incur the displeasure of the bosses; 3) the clergy will therefore not
help the hungry miners; 4) in spite of her better judgment la Maheude has for a second imagined that Joire would help her. Joire's apparent choice of neutrality is in reality a Hobson's choice, for in not aiding the workers he does in fact side with the owners and adds, no doubt, to the already visible anti-clericalism of the workers.

In a subsequent scene we see la Maheude again as she looks for food and as she again meets Abbé Joire:

Comme elle passait devant l'église, elle vit une ombre filer rapidement. Un espoir la fit se hâter, car elle avait reconnu le curé de Montsou, l'abbé Joire... sans doute il sortait de la sacristie, où le règlement de quelque affaire l'avait appelé.... S'il avait fait sa course à la nuit, ce devait être pour ne pas se compromettre au milieu des mineurs. On disait du reste qu'il venait d'obtenir de l'avancement. Même, il s'était promené déjà avec son successeur, un abbé maigre, aux yeux de braise rouge.

-- Monsieur le curé, monsieur le curé, bégaya la Maheude. Mais il ne s'arrêta point.

-- Bonsoir, bonsoir, ma brave femme. Elle se retrouvait devant chez elle. Ses jambes ne la portaient plus, et elle rentra. (Germinal, pp. 1360-1361)

Father Joire definitely does not want to be seen with the miners outside the Church. On the inside he can avoid the pressing issue. He can, for example, talk about heaven and its future delights. In terms of real help to meet immediate needs, however, he offers nothing. He even travels at night in order to minimize the chances of meeting the miners who might compromise him.
This kind of behavior would of course be open to charges of dereliction of duty in an organization which genuinely cared for the workers. Joire, to the contrary, is promoted. He has apparently done his job well and the Church is pleased. Now comes the moment for a change of tactics. Joire's replacement has the eyes of a zealot and of a man of action. What has he brought for these rag-tag workers of the coal fields? Perhaps the time has come to throw them a scrap and put a little fear into the bourgeoisie at the same time.

It doesn't take Abbé Ranvier long to attract attention at Montsou. His effect upon the bourgeois who run the mine is immediate. He preaches a sermon in which he defends the miners. He goes even further and violently attacks the bourgeoisie and calls them responsible for the situation at Montsou. In his sermon the Church's bitter dispute with the bourgeoisie takes form:

C'était la bourgeoisie qui, en dépossédant l'Eglise de ses libertés antiques pour en mésuser elle-même, avait fait de ce monde un lieu maudit d'injustice et de souffrance; c'était elle qui prolongeait les malentendus, qui poussait à une catastrophe effroyable, par son athéisme, par son refus d'en revenir aux croyances, aux traditions fréternelles des premiers chrétiens.  
(Germinal, p. 1458)

He proceeds to threaten the rich, warning them that if they remain stubborn God will surely take sides with the poor. He will take their fortunes and distribute them to the
humble ones of the earth, for his own glory.

Ranvier's warning causes a stir among his listeners:

Les dévotes en tremblaient, le notaire déclarait qu'il y avait là du pire socialisme, tous voyaient le curé à la tête d'une bande, brandissant une croix, démolissant la société bourgeoise de 89, à grands coups.

(Loc. cit.)

In short, the skinny socialist priest with eyes of fire delivers himself of a Philippic worthy of any of the great socialist militants. To those bourgeois of the community who do not comprehend the Church, there does indeed seem to be a threatening cloud on the horizon.

For the reaction that counts, however, we must turn to Mr. Hennebeau, the mine's manager, who "averti, se contenta de dire, avec un haussement d'épaules":

-- S'il nous ennuie trop, l'évêque nous en débarrassera.

(Loc. cit.)

Since the nuisance can be suppressed at any time, however, he is left alone for the moment to go from one dying family to another with his imprecations against the rich and his social gospel for the poor. Like a dipteran darter he heightens the fever of discontent and despair and calls upon the afflicted to return to their only hope, the avenger of abuses and champion of the people, the Mother Church.

On one such trip he comes to the Maheu house where
little Alzire lies dying of starvation. The family, in helpless agony, is anxiously awaiting the arrival of the company doctor:

--- Enfin, le voilà! dit La Maheude. Une forme noire passait devant la fenêtre. La porte s'ouvrit. Mais ce n'était point le docteur Vanderhaghen, ils reconnaissent le nouveau curé, l'abbé Ranvier, qui ne parut pas surpris de tomber dans cette maison morte, sans lumière, sans feu, sans pain. Déjà, il sortait de trois autres maisons voisines, allant de famille en famille, racolant des hommes de bonne volonté...et, tout de suite, il s'expliqua de sa voix fiévreuse de sectaire.

--- Pourquoi n'êtes-vous pas venus à la messe dimanche, mes enfants? Vous avez tort, l'Eglise seule peut vous sauver...

Maheu, après l'avoir regardé, s'était remis en marche, pesamment, sans une parole. Ce fut la Maheude qui répondit.

--- A la messe, monsieur le curé, pour quoi faire? Est-ce que le bon Dieu ne se moque pas de nous?

( _Germinal_, p. 1472)

Undeterred by this less than enthusiastic reception, and ignoring the immediate needs of his listeners, Ranvier launches into a peroration on the necessity of submitting to the priests who, as God's spokesmen, represent their only means of deliverance:

Alors, debout, le prêtre parla longuement. Il exploitait la grève... Il disait que l'Eglise était avec les pauvres, qu'elle ferait un jour triompher la justice, en appelant la colère de Dieu sur les iniquités des riches.

( _Loc. cit._)

He points out that this day of retribution is not far off
because the rich have taken the place of God and are ruling without Him.

Once again the barb surfaces and the Church's true goal is seen:

Mais, si les ouvriers voulaient le juste partage des biens de la terre, ils devaient s'en remettre tout de suite aux mains des prêtres.... Quelle force aurait le pape, de quelle armée disposerait le clergé, lorsqu'il commanderait à la foule innombrable des travailleurs!

(Ibid., p. 1473)

The result would be the true reign of God, with each worker being rewarded according to his worth and with the law of labor determining universal happiness.

The principal effort is seen to be to persuade the errant sheep to return to the Church where help awaits. The problem is, of course, that the sheep need help now while outside the fold. Disaster will be the lot of many of them if help is not forthcoming. The Church's policy of conditional aid, however, is still operative. It is a quid pro quo proposition--justice and an equal sharing of the riches in return for themselves, the potential footsoldiers in the Pope's sacred legions.

It would be a misreading of the personality of Abbé Ranvier to think that he comes to the mining town consciously to mesmerize and mislead the miners. He is not a hypocrite personally: he believes that his message is the truth. In fact, he believes it so strongly that he is much
more the honest fanatic than the willful deceiver. This nuance would no doubt mean little to those people who, like la Maheude, have always mistrusted the "soutanes." Yet, it does serve to illustrate the Church's tactics.

We learn an interesting fact from la Maheude when she says to Ranvier:

Tous nos autres curés dinaient à la Direction, et nous menaçaient du diable, dès que nous demandions du pain.

(Loc. cit.)

The priests had apparently been for a long time in the camp of the capitalists, and had never given the miners anything other than the promise of wormwood with which to fill their stomachs. Something different is happening now, however. We see a priest who in his fanaticism dares to attack not only the capitalists but also his brothers in the priesthood. It would not add up, of course, if we didn't keep in mind the chameleonic nature of the Church and the duplicity which, according to Zola, is such an integral part of its make-up. At the moment it seems advantageous to the hidden will that has sent Ranvier to Montsou to seem to be pro-labor, a fellow soldier in the fight for justice.

And so, the socialist priest continues his harangue to the Maheu family:

Il recommença, il parla du déplorable malentendu entre l'Eglise et le peuple. Maintenant, en phrases voilées, il frappait sur les curés des villes, sur les évêques, sur le haut clergé, repu de jouissance, gorgé de domination, pratiquant avec la
bourgeoisie libérale, dans l'embêcillité
de son aveuglement, sans voir que c'était
cette bourgeoisie qui le dépossédait de
l'empire du monde. La délivrance viendrait
des prêtres de campagne, tous se lèveraient
pour rétablir le royaume du Christ, avec
l'aide des misérables...

(Loc. cit.)

Ranvier seems to see himself as the leader of this holy
band.

This portion of his fulminations is itself a mine of
enlightening details. Quite cognizant of the pronounced
antipathy of the miners for the Church, he speaks of the
chasm dividing them as a "misunderstanding" as if it could
be rather easily patched over by a re-arranging of words,
if only the facts were better understood. The deep
animosity is the result of a lack of comprehension and not
of a divergence of interests. All it will take to heal the
wound presumably is a bit of good will.

Again, Ranvier makes an acrimonious attack on those
corrupt priests whose pact with the bourgeoisie was cer-
tainly caused by their idiotic blindness. They didn't
understand that it was that same bourgeoisie which had
divested the Church of much of its power. As a result,
salvation will come from the country priests who, of all the
Church's servants, see the situation clearest, and so on.
He even has a paranoid vision of himself at the head of
these provincial phalanxes.

Ranvier's words here reveal that in his capacity as
a virtual non-entity, albeit a timely pawn in the hand of
the Church, he does not have a very clear understanding of its revanchist policy toward the middle-class. The Church's tryst with the bourgeoisie has not resulted from blindness, but rather from rare political acuity. It is a maneuver calculated to produce in the usurper a state of narcosis which will make the Church's work easier. There is definitely method in its madness, but the uninitiated Ranvier sees only the madness. He has failed to understand that one of the Church's strongest trumps is its patience and perseverance; that it has forever to accomplish its ends. It can, therefore, play the game day by day as it chooses, for it determines the rules.

Although it is certain that the Maheu family intuits little if any of these maneuverings, they do indeed comprehend what is essential to them. The normally reticent Maheu gets to the point:

-- Il n'y a pas besoin de tant de paroles, grogna brusquement Maheu, vous auriez mieux fait de commencer par nous apporter un pain.

(Germinal, p. 1473)

The logic of his statement is undeniable. It reminds us of the words of Christ who said that whoever has clothed the naked and fed the hungry (without qualification) has done it unto Himself. This essential ingredient of true religion is as overlooked by Ranvier as it was by his predecessors at Montsou. To Maheu's words he replies: "Venez dimanche à la messe... Dieu pourvoira à tout!"
(Germinal, p. 1473). In his blindness he continues to spread
the good news of God's provision for all:

Et il s'en alla, il entra catéchiser les
Levaque à leur tour, si haut dans son
rêve du triomphe final de l'Eglise, ayant
pour les faits un tel dédain, qu'il
courait ainsi les corons, sans aumônes,
les mains vides au travers de cette armée
mourante de faim, en pauvre diable lui-
même qui regardait la souffrance comme
l'aiguillon du salut.

(Ibid., pp. 1473-1474)

In the meantime little Alzire dies of hunger.

Following the massacre of the miners, Ranvier, with
a prophet's fury, calls down the wrath of God on the
assassins. He predicts the extermination of the bour-
geoisie. Clearly, the time has arrived to remove the
nuisance.

In some of his best satirical writing Zola records
the conversation in which the suppression of the priest is
revealed. The scene is a post-massacre dinner at the
Grégoiré's:

M. Hennebeau fut aussi très aimable. Son
air riant frappa les convives, le bruit
courait que, rentré en faveur près de la
Régie, il serait bientôt fait officier de
la Légion d'honneur, pour la façon
énergique dont il avait dompté la grève.
On évitait de parler des derniers événements,
mais il y avait du triomphe dans la joie
générale, le dîner tournait à la célébration
officielle d'une victoire. Enfin, on était
donc délivré, on recommençait à manger et
da dormir en paix! Une allusion fut
discrètement faite aux morts dont la boue
du Voreux avait à peine bu le sang: c'était
une leçon nécessaire, et tous s'attendrèrent,
quand les Grégoire ajoutèrent que, maintenant,
le devoir de chacun était d'aller panser les plaies, dans les corons... Au rôti, la victoire devint complète, lorsque M. Hennebeau lut une lettre de l'évêque, où celui-ci annonçait le déplacement de l'abbé Ranvier. Toute la bourgeoisie de la province commentait avec passion l'histoire de ce prêtre, qui traitait les soldats d'assassins. Et le notaire, comme le dessert paraissait, se posa très résolument en libre penseur.

(Germinal, p. 1522)

It is clear that Ranvier has served the purpose for which he was sent to Montsou. It is not clear whether the Church was prepared to lend any meaningful leadership to the miners if they had rallied en masse to the sign of the cross, or if the ploy of the socialist priest was merely a bit of fireworks meant to dazzle, a trompe-l'oeil calculated to hide the Church's collusion with the mine's owners. The superior strength of the owners makes the latter speculation the more credible. Moreover, the Church, unwilling to provide even a modicum of the miners' physical needs, was most probably not going to take on a responsibility which would cost it very much. Still, if we are to believe Zola, the mercurial character of the Church certainly could have allowed a siding with the miners if the odds of striking a lethal blow to the bourgeoisie were greatly in its favor. The advantages and disadvantages of such a possibility were no doubt carefully weighed not only in light of the local situation, or even of the regional situation of the Church at the moment, but also in light of its long-range policy
for the entire nation. If strings are being pulled, they are ultimately being pulled in Rome.

The Church is pictured, in fact, in Rome as a vast reticulum whose branches pick up and transmit pertinent data to the body's tirelessly functioning brain in the Vatican. On this point, however, Zola gives us once again a paradoxical picture of the Church. On the one hand it is an organization which is well-organized and rather efficient in its operations. As such, it is aware of local situations in which it has some interest. At the same time he wants to show an organization which does not always comprehend the true import of such local or even national issues. We see, for example, a Church which can strike mortal blows at its own aberrant priests such as Cardinal Bergerot in Vérité, Abbé Rose in Paris, or Faujas in La Conquête de Plassans. It can lead a vigorous battle for the schools of Jonville and Maillebois. And yet on a great social issue such as the trade union movement it may suffer from a visual defect which seems, to Pierre Froment of Rome at least, to seriously impair the pursuit of its avowed interests.

This dichotomous character of the Church again seems to pose a problem for Zola. In Rome he shows us a Pope who regularly reads foreign newspapers in order to stay informed on the issues, but he tells us later in what seems a rather strange addition, that the Pope does not always understand
what he is reading. This failure to understand the issues appears to be rather incompatible with the portrait of a pontiff endowed with a broad and incisive intelligence which he has painted.

Zola would have us believe that, as intelligent as the Pope may be, his isolation from the real world makes it impossible for him to comprehend the issues important to that world. Pierre reflects on this during his audience with the Pope:

Et, depuis dix-huit années, il se trouvait enfermé dans son Vatican, isolé du reste des hommes, ne communiquant avec les peuples que par son entourage, souvent le plus inintelligent, le plus menteur, le plus traître. En outre, il était prêtre italien, grand pontife, superstieux et despotique, lié par la tradition, soumis aux influences de race et de milieu, cédant au besoin d'argent, aux nécessités politiques...

_Rome_, p. 598

He is not a totally negative factor, however, for Zola endows him with a powerful compensator:

Mais l'intuition surtout paraissait prodigieuse, car n'était-ce pas elle, elle seule, qui lui faisait deviner, dans son emprisonnement volontaire, l'énorme évolution, au loin, de l'humanité d'aujourd'hui?

_Ibid._, p. 599

And so, after all, the Holy Father does have some light on the outside world, even if it is only the light of intuition. In fact, he seems quite cognizant of the state of labor at the moment.

Zola, of course, seems to want it both ways: a Pope
isolated in ignorance yet somehow able to understand the world's problems. It is much more likely that the Pope's lack of sympathy stems more from dedication to policy and the willful rejection of facts than from any mental myopia.

The vast weight of Zola's testimony about the Church lies on the side of this interpretation. Its policies are not the offspring of a purblind prelacy but rather of a prelacy whose aims and means are well-defined.

Perhaps, after all, the Church is only a human organization with all that this implies of weakness and inefficiency and which yet at times enjoys almost superhuman powers of comprehension and action. Perhaps, too, the secret of its power is neither God nor organizational genius, but only a singleness of purpose which cannot be destroyed and which cannot even be substantially modified.

Be that as it may, the Church which Pierre discovers in Rome is a Church which has abdicated its responsibilities to the workers. It is totally unresponsive to his dream of active Church involvement in the socialist labor movement in France, a dream which he shares with his friend, Viscount Philibert de la Choue. Unrealistically, they envision closed Catholic labor unions or "corporations" in France operating under the aegis of the State and regulated by new laws. Such unions would be both Catholic and mandatory in order to accomplish the dual goals which the dreamers have set: the rejuvenation of the Church in France, and some
real progress toward the realization of equitable treatment for the workers.

When Pierre asks Pope Leo for help for the socialist workers he receives this reply:

-- Mais je ne peux pax ... Comprenez donc, chez vous, qu'il est des questions de détail, de simple organisation en somme, dans lesquelles il m'est impossible de descendre, sous peine de leur donner une importance qu'elles n'ont pas, et de mécontenter violemment les uns, si je fais trop de plaisir aux autres.

(Rome, pp. 584-585)

He is unable to endorse a Catholic labor movement under the State because the question is not of sufficient importance to warrant his enormous support. There is another reason also -- the Church cannot condone a social program which it does not control. Socialism separated from Church control is atheistic and therefore unacceptable.

The Pope continues:

Nous sommes pour tous les progrès raisonnables, nous admettons toutes les formes sociales nouvelles qui aideront à la paix, à la fraternité ... Seulement, nous ne pouvons que condamner le socialisme qui commence par chasser Dieu pour assurer le bonheur des hommes...

(Ibid., p. 597)

It seems to him that Pierre has removed God from the scene in the socialist program which he outlines in his book. He takes him to task over the point:

... vous n'avez pas démontré qu'aucun progrès ne saurait avoir lieu en dehors de l'Eglise, qu'elle est en somme la seule initiatrice, la seule conductrice,
à laquelle il soit permis de s'abandonner sans crainte... il m'a semblé que vous mettiez Dieu à l'écart, que la religion demeurait uniquement pour vous un état d'âme, une floraison d'amour et de charité, où il suffisait de se trouver, pour faire son salut. Hérésie exécrable ...

(Loc. cit.)

He rejects Pierre's proposals not because he has not understood them, but because he has.

For Pierre this rejection is one more major indication that the Roman Catholic Church pays lip service to the cause of the oppressed while refusing to take any courageous action in their behalf. It is another example of the Church's selfish policy toward labor which we have already seen in Germinal. Pierre's hopes, bolstered by the encyclical Rerum Novarum of 1891 in which the Pope promised support for French workers who suffer unjustly, are dashed. The Pope's help is again seen as conditional, available only on his own terms, and those terms include adherence to the Church. It is now obvious to Pierre that the Pope's intrinsigence in the matter precludes any meaningful action by the Church. This understanding of the Church's stance on the issue clears the air considerably for him. He has taken another step toward the exit and freedom.

There remains, however, one last area to examine concerning labor and the Church -- that of the Church's involvement in labor as employer. We must return to Vérité for the details.
Once Abbé Cognasse has become the primary political force at Jonville, someone suggests that the town should be consecrated to the cult of the Sacré Cœur. Cognasse immediately seizes the proposals "mettant une grande gloire personnelle à être le premier curé de la contrée qui conquerrait ainsi toute une commune à Dieu" (Vérité, p. 277).

The suggestion is not without opposition; Bishop Bergerot himself is against it. Unfortunately, and for reasons not explained, he gives in to Cognasse, who leads the battle for acceptance among the people. The city council will not accede without knowing what is in it for the community. The answer comes from the pro-clerical teacher, Jauffre, who acts as go-between in the affair:

... d'abord, il annonça des cadeaux promis par des dames de Beaumont, un calice d'argent, une nappe d'autel, avec des vases de fleurs et une grande statue de Jésus, à l'énorme coeur flambant et saignant, peint sur la poitrine. Ensuite, on parlait de donner cinq cents francs de dot à la fille de la Vierge la plus méritoire, lorsqu'elle se marierait. Et ce qui parut surtout décider le conseil, ce fut la promesse d'établir dans le pays une succursale du Bon-Pasteur, où deux cents ouvrières travailleraient à de la lingerie fine, chemises, jupons et pantalons de femme, pour les grands magasins de Paris. Déjà les paysans voyaient leurs filles toutes placées chez les bonnes Soeurs, sans compter l'argent qu'un établissement pareil devait faire affluer dans la commune.

(Vérité, pp. 277-278)

The establishment of the "succursale" is the deciding factor; but there are benefits to be reaped other than the material ones. There will also be an improvement in the
moral climate. A propaganda campaign disseminates the good news:

Le beau monde clérical avait mené grand bruit de la prospérité qu'un tel établissement allait déterminer sans doute, toutes les filles des paysans placées devenues d'habiles ouvrières; une moralité plus grande, les paresseuses et les coureuses corrigées désormais; un mouvement d'affaires pouvant, à la longue, doter le pays d'une industrie.

(Ibid., p. 578)

Such blessings will not be refused, the factory is established.

Unfortunately, the shop turns out to be far more of a bane than a blessing. The work is something less than a pleasure. In fact,

... il n'y avait pas de corvées plus atroces, les longues heures d'immobilité, l'épuisement d'une application continue, l'estomac vide, la tête lourde, sans sommeil l'été, sans feu l'hiver.

(Ibid., p. 579)

The insalubrious effects are far-reaching:

... l'établissement semblait un gouffre où disparaissaient les dernières énergies de la contrée. Des rafles enlevaient les travaillleuses des fermes, les paysans ne gardaient plus leurs filles, séduites par le rêve d'être des demoiselles, de vivre assises, occupées à des travaux légers.

(Loc. cit.)

The disenchantment grows in Jonville as the situation worsens for the workers:

... des scandales éclataient, une fille presque morte de froid et de faim, une autre devenue à moitié folle, une autre jetée dehors sans un sou, après des années d'écrasante besogne ...

(Loc. cit.)
While the operation proves to be a liability for the people, it is not for the Church, whose program is not limited to one locale:

... ces deux cents petites lingères obscures n'étaient qu'une infime partie des tristes mercenaires exploitées, car l'ordre avait des maisons d'un bout à l'autre de la France, près de cinquante mille ouvrières travaillaient dans ses ateliers, lui rapportaient des millions ... (Loc. cit.)

Nor is the Church limited to the employment of garment workers. It is, in modern parlance, a well-diversified enterprise. Zola speaks of the tentacular nature of its commercial interests:

Elle se fait aujourd'hui fabricante, marchande, il n'y a pas un objet ou une denrée de consommation journalière qu'elle ne produise et qu'elle ne vende, depuis les vêtements jusqu'aux liqueurs de table. Des ordres nombreux sont de simples associations industrielles, travaillant au rabais, grâce à la main-d'œuvre presque gratuite.... (Vérité, p. 580)

One result of this diversification and use of cheap labor is "une concurrence déloyale aux petits producteurs de nos faubourgs, incapables de lutter" (Loc. cit.). The people's small businesses are destroyed.

Zola paints a Church involved in a large business enterprise which has adopted the worst of capitalist labor practices. (This portrait is, of course, consonant with those he has painted of the Church in other areas). It is impossible then for it to condemn in others what it condones
in itself. In fact, the Church condones the exploitative practice of big business by giving to it its blessing.

In Au Bonheur des Dames, Denise, department store employee and eventual wife of Octave Mouret, the store's owner, recalls her early days at the store in words reminiscent of the description which Zola gives of the succursale at Jonville. She thinks about

... son passage aux confections, les souffrances du début, les petites chambres malsaines, la mauvaise nourriture, la continuelle bataille des vendeurs...

(Au Bonheur des Dames, p. 570)

Like her counterparts in the shop at Jonville, she is exploited by big business. Unlike them, she has the good fortune to win the heart and hand of the owner. Presumably, things will improve considerably for her. Unfortunately for the other clerks there are not enough owners to go around. Their fortune does not take a sudden jump. That of Octave Mouret does, however, when he opens an enlarged and remodeled Bonheur. But his good fortune means the ruin of many small businesses in the area, a result which we have seen on a smaller scale in Jonville.

The Church is not averse to this exploitation of clerks in the larger stores of Paris. On the contrary, it lends a helping hand to the owners. Octave is upset that he hasn't thought to ask for it as he considers the experience of a colleague:
Puis, il (Octave) était surtout exaspéré de n'avoir pas eu une idée géniale de Bouthemont: ce bon vivant ne venait-il pas de faire béni ses magasins par le curé de la Madeleine, suivi de tout son clergé! une cérémonie étonnante, une pompe religieuse promenée de la soierie à la ganterie, Dieu tombé dans les pantalons de femme et dans les corsets; ce qui n'avait pas empêché le tout de brûler, mais ce qui valait un million d'annonces, tellement le coup était porté sur la clientèle mondaine. Mouret, depuis ce temps, rêvait d'avoir l'archevêque. (Ibid., p. 765)

It is easy to believe that he received the aid of the archbishop, for as Zola sees it at least, the Church and big business are inseparable. Both have a keen interest in money and both take advantage of labor to make their own profits as large as possible. And the Church's profits, which "alimentent la guerre d'extermination qui nous est faite" (Vérité, p. 580), according to the word of Marc, are of staggering proportions. Most of them will go into the war chest. The goal is unchanged. The battle continues.

Charity

Although the Church employs millions to retain its autonomy and enlarge its influence, it makes little provision for the poor, the starving, the ill-clothed and the ill-housed. This indifference is particularly important to Pierre Froment who has become a "porte-parole" for the poor to the Vatican. The young priest has given up his
faith in the dogmas of the Church and has come to believe that the only part of Christianity worth retaining is the element of love expressed in concern for the needy. At this point in his thinking Christian charity appears to him to be their only hope. In this conviction he falls on his knees before Pope Leo XIII in an impassioned plea for them:

'Oh! Saint-Père, je ne suis plus que leur ambassadeur, l'envoyé de ceux qui souffrent et qui s'agglutinent, l'humble délégue des humbles qui meurent de misère, sous l'exécrable dureté, l'effroyable injustice sociale. Et j'apporte à Votre Sainteté leurs larmes...et je lui fais entendre leur cri de détresse, comme un cri monté de l'abîme, demandant justice... Oh! soyez bon Saint-Père, soyez bon!'
(Rome, p. 590)

The Pope's reply is a shattering revelation:

'-- Vous faites appel au Saint-Père. Ah! certes, soyez convaincu que son coeur est plein de pitié et de tendresse pour les malheureux. Mais la question n'est pas là, il s'agit de notre sainte-religion...'
(Ibid., p. 594)

The pontiff's insouciance and intransigence give the lie to his averred interest in the plight of the needy. Pierre learns that Christian charity as practiced by the Church is purely fictitious in nature. He sees that it is only a palliative which cannot substantially allay the suffering of the poor. But this discovery of a contradictory reality behind the façade is one of the great lessons which Pierre learns while in Rome.
There is, to be sure, a strong charitable impulse in some of Zola's priests. Cases in point are Abbé Godard of La Terre, whose irascible and impatient exterior hides the heart of "un tendre," and Abbé Rose, seen chiefly in Paris, whose "grandé débauche" is his love for the poor. The case of Rose, however, sheds more light on the Church's attitude toward charity.

When we first meet him we see a shy and saintly man who is under great pressure from his superiors because of his zealous attention to the deprived of his parish. The problem is that one of his young charges has turned lodgings which he has provided into a mini-bordello, or so the Church believes. Certainly, the naive priest has been exploited. As a result, he is transferred to another parish and placed under virtual house arrest when his continuing missions of mercy are discovered. Closely watched, he expresses his fears to Pierre and solicits his help in continuing his work:

'Vous savez qu'on me surveille et qu'on me gronderait encore, si l'on me surprenait à donner ainsi, sans bien savoir à qui je donne. Il est vrai que, pour avoir ces trois francs, j'ai dû vendre quelque chose ... Je vous en supplie, mon cher enfant, rendez-mois ce service.'

(Paris, p. 8)

It is understandable and significant that at his death the good Abbé Rose wills his poor to Pierre, the apostate priest, and not to the Church.
If the Church prefers that the priests know to whom to give, it is also obvious that it requires that they know to whom not to give. To illustrate this policy of discrimination in the distribution of aid we have principally the example of Madame Férou in Vérité. Her husband, the primary school teacher at les Moreux, is anti-clerical and socialistic in his beliefs. When he is fired from his job he flees to Belgium in order to avoid military service which he opposes on principle. His family, left in an impossible situation by his flight, is refused help by the Church because of its anti-clericalism. The following conversation between Geneviève Froment, for the moment in a state of reversion to the Faith, and Madame Férou elucidates the situation. Geneviève says:

-- Il faut vous remettre entre les mains de Dieu ... Ne continuez pas à l'offenser, il vous punirait davantage.

Madame Férou eut un rire terrible.

-- Oh! le bon Dieu, il a trop à faire avec les riches, il ne s'occupe pas des pauvres ... C'est en son nom qu'on nous a réduits à notre malheur et qu'on va tuer mon pauvre homme.

Une brusque colère emporta Geneviève.

-- Vous blasphémez, vous ne méritez pas qu'on vienne à votre aide. Si vous aviez quelque religion, je connais des personnes qui vous auraient déjà secourue.

-- Mais, madame, je ne vous demande rien .... oui, je sais, on m'a refusé un secours, parce que je ne vais pas à confesse; et l'abbé Quandieu lui-même, si charitable,
n'ose pas m'avoir parmi ses pauvres...
(Vérité, p. 310)

Madame Férou's beliefs preclude any help for her from the Church. She will receive nothing from these men whom Zola describes elsewhere as scornful of those who suffer and without love.

Zola believes then that the charity administered by the Church in such a penurious and discriminatory fashion is not only not a panacea, it is a bankrupt policy. It is so limited that it could not meet the needs of suffering humanity even if applied energetically and wisely. The answer is not there. Relief will come only through the elimination of the problem's source. Until that time we will continue to see the vision of Gervaise Coupeau, who having perhaps reached the nadir of her abjection, stumbles along in the crowd, her stomach empty and her spirit crushed:

Perdue dans la cohue du large trottoir, le long des petits platanes, Gervaise se sentait seule et abandonnée. Ces échappées d'avenues, tout là-bas, lui vdaient l'estomac davantage; et dire que, parmi ce flot de monde, où il y avait pourtant des gens à leur aise, pas un chrétien ne devinait sa situation et ne lui glissait dix sous dans la main! 4

It is with the realization that charity is impotent before the demands of the task which confronts it that Abbé Pierre Froment makes his decision to leave the priesthood. Christian charity, insensitive to the cries of the sick and of the oppressed, will not, indeed cannot meet
their needs. The answer is democratic socialism, which entails the reorganization of labor and the redistribution of wealth. We have already seen, however, that the Church, given the conditions to which its intervention would be subject, refuses to assume an energetic role in the area of labor reform.

CONCLUSION

The acquisition and exercise of political power is the primary purpose of the Roman Catholic Church as seen from Zola's point of view. Its dedication to the achievement of its goal has enabled it to justify accommodation to and cooperation with political régimes which have at times been repressive and even corrupt. The rule of expediency has guided its actions as it has sought to gradually increase its influence within existing political structures and to bring nearer the day when temporal power would once again be allied with spiritual authority in the person of the Pope at Rome.

Social reform would seem to offer opportunities to the Church to increase its influence over the growing numbers of workers in the fast developing industrial age; and the Church does in fact proclaim itself on the side of the oppressed and the exploited whose ability to deal effectively with indifferent and selfish employers lies chiefly in their success in organizing into trade unions or
counter power blocks. In some countries the lead is indeed taken by Catholic reformers and with measurable success. In the older and more Catholicized countries such as Italy and France the Pope makes the Church's support conditional, the workers' fealty to the Christian religion being the prerequisite to any aid, moral or material, which the Church might supply.

Even worse, as Zola presents it, the Church, itself engaged in the manufacture and sale of products ranging from wines and liqueurs to clothing, treats its own workers as callously as the worst capitalists treat those whom they employ. Despite claims to the contrary, it is more interested in the accumulation of wealth to be used in its political programs than in the welfare of its workers. A second, but no less egregious fault of its commercial interests is the powerful and sometimes destructive competition which it creates for the small shop or plant owner. Its activities are, therefore, seen as bad for workers and owners alike.

One hope remains for Pierre Froment as he at last faces the impotency of the Church to deal with the real problems of the emerging industrialized world. That hope is Charity. He believes that surely the love which all men must feel before scenes of poverty, disease and unfathomable misery will cause them to supply the needs of the unfortunate victims. He thinks that the Church itself cannot
turn away from the sight of such compelling needs.

Pierre's hope, however, is to be disappointed, for he sees at last that the Church is unwilling to meet the needs, that it even discourages kindly priests such as Abbé Rose from engaging in charitable acts. Charity is helpless before the massive social sores which afflict so many. It can provide only a small bandage for a disease which is crippling the entire body. Other remedies must therefore be found. They will be found not in the Church, but rather in political and social reorganization leading to the creation of a new way of life in a new and happier world.
CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH AS SPIRITUAL INTERMEDIARY

INTRODUCTION

We have pointed out in our introduction to Chapter I that Zola's anticlericalism is not altogether a product of his thinking during the last eight or ten years of his life, or that period which might most accurately be called his socialist period. His antipathy for the Church springs as much from his objections to its doctrinal beliefs and practice as it does from its involvement in politics and its aim to recover temporal power and past glory. These two themes, these two antipathies, are seen throughout Zola's novels in which he deals with the Church, although they are built up to a crescendo of denunciation in the Evangiles and the Trois Villes. They are so interwoven that it would be difficult to determine which one, if either, receives more attention. It may not, in fact, be possible to do so or even advisable to try. We have separated the two themes in this study, however, for purposes of facility of composition and clarity of presentation. There are many points at which they overlap and alternate, but we do not see general chronology as a prime consideration in our study.
As we have investigated and presented Zola's conception of the Church as social and political institution in Chapters I and II, we will in this chapter endeavor to present a clear exposition of his conception of the Church as a spiritual body both in its internal operations and in its external ministry. Certainly, one cannot adequately comprehend the latter without first having some understanding of the former, for the internal life of the Church determines and defines to a very large extent its role among the people. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Zola takes us within an organization whose life is characterized by unbridled ambition and towering jealousies which issue in constant intramural warfare. He shows us numerous ecclesiastical warriors whose struggles are most often not for the advancement of the Faith or for the glory of God, but for whom power or influence of some kind is the unique goal.

PRIESTS: AMBITION AND FACTIONALISM

Swords

We have noted earlier how the arrival of Abbé Faujas in Plassans has eventuated in the disruption and destruction of the François Mouret family. Marthe, under Faujas' influence, drives her husband insane and the family unit is brought to disintegration. This result is probably Zola's most dramatic example of the negative impact of the
priest on the family. The fact that Marthe has a nervous disorder and is therefore susceptible to the enticements of religion in general and of Faujas in particular does not negate the point. It rather serves to support Zola's view that the Church preys on the weak, the ignorant, and the unstable and has no real strength other than that which it derives from their allegiance to it.

But while Faujas is manipulating those around him—especially the women of Plassans, whom he uses as tools to help him reach his political goals, his primary struggle is not with the bourgeois politicians of the town but with his brother in the cloth, the very clever Abbé Fenil. Moreover, as the result demonstrates, the internecine war which is waged between the two is probably far more cruel and devastating than a struggle with a purely political entity would have been. It is a struggle to the death which Faujas will lose and whose defeat will bring final catastrophe on the Mouret family.

Both Faujas and Fenil are portrayed as power-hungry madmen sent into the lines of battle to exterminate each other. We see Faujas on the evening of his arrival in Plassans:

Une dernière lueur rouge alluma ce crâne rude de soldat, où la tonsure était comme la cicatrice d'un coup de massue...  
(La Conquête de Plassans, p. 911)

Fenil is seen through the eyes of François Mouret, one of the eventual helpless victims of the fight that is shaping
up. He says to Faujas:

'Le vieux, que vous apercevez un peu en arrière, est un de nos grands vicaires, M. l'Abbé Penil. C'est lui qui dirige le séminaire. Un terrible homme, plat et pointu comme un sabre.'

(Prose de Plassans, p. 930)

Fenil is so terrible, in fact, that he makes Monseigneur Rousselot, his bishop, tremble under his iron will (Ibid., p. 987). Rousselot himself admits his fear of Fenil who has recently brought Abbé Compan to death after a vicious rivalry of some thirty years' duration. This same Fenil has sworn to Rousselot that he will prevent Faujas from conquering Plassans (Ibid., p. 1016).

As for Faujas, in his battle with Fenil he not only hopes to achieve success for Eugène Rougon, Louis Napoleon's Prime Minister; he hopes to achieve a personal end also. Unlike many of Zola's priests, Faujas is not the least interested in money; he is interested only in power. We are told that

'...il parlait de l'argent avec le dédain d'un homme fort, qui n'a que des besoins de puissance et de domination.'

(Ibid., p. 1068)

His need is to bring down his Church rivals and to bring the iron fist of power down on the citizens of Plassans. At least for a short time he succeeds in his goals.

In the meantime, Monseigneur Rousselot waits to see who will emerge victorious, Faujas or Fenil, and privately hopes that they will exterminate each other. As he remarks
to the young Abbé Surin:

'Je crois que Paris l'emportera et que Rome sera battue; mais je n'en suis pas assez sûr, je les laisse se détruire, en attendant.'

(Ibid., p. 1051)

The long fight is finally resolved when Fenil arranges for the now insane François Mouret to escape from the asylum at the Tulettes. Fenil, correctly calculating that Mouret will seek revenge against Faujas who has displaced him as master in his home, becomes the victor when Faujas, his mother and his odious in-laws are incinerated along with Mouret who sets fire to the house. Only the innocuous and insignificant Abbé Bourrette, robbed of his rectory by Faujas, weeps for the victims.

Zola opens his Trois Villes series with Lourdes in which he introduces a young priest, Abbé Pierre Froment, who is already well on the way to apostasy. He travels to Lourdes with the annual national pilgrimage in order to be with his childhood sweetheart, Marie de Guersaint, who is now paralyzed but who firmly believes that she will be miraculously healed by the Virgin. Pierre also intends to establish and then reveal the "truth" about Bernadette Soubirous and her visions which have created this center of illusion and exploitation. He also comes to Lourdes ostensibly, albeit unconvincingly, to seek a renewal of his faith and a rededication to his calling.

This plot then is the vehicle which Zola uses to
show us his Lourdes. He records what Pierre sees and learns. It is this use of the eyewitness report which is responsible for the book's limited success, because it allows Zola to concentrate on what he does best—the descriptions of the crowds, of the countless thousands of suffering pilgrims who have thronged to Lourdes from every corner of France in search of the Virgin's favor and consequent healing. This epic aspect of the book succeeds, fortunately, since Zola's portrayal of the priest's own spiritual struggle awakens little interest.

In Pierre's effort to "établir la vérité scientifique indiscutable" and to rid Christianity of "ce conte de fée,"¹ he has much to say about the prelates and priests who manage the Grotto, in charge of both its healing ministry and its commercial interests. The story is a continuation and amplification of that already seen in La Conquête de Plassans with the exception that the struggle here is over money and the favor which it subsequently earns in Rome.

Once it has been decreed by the Church that Bernadette's visions are authentic, the local church at Lourdes begins to reap a rich harvest of gold from the pilgrims visiting the Grotto. Gifts and alms flood the office of Abbé Peyramale in whose parish the shrine is located. He, however, decides to build a cathedral instead of the simple chapel which the Virgin has requested of Bernadette. At this point Monseigneur Laurence gives a helper to
Peyramale, one father Sempé, who is little more than a spy and subverter of Peyramale's plans. Since Sempé is "brûlé au fond de toutes les soifs de l'ambition" (Ibid., p. 329), he comprehends immediately what an enormous source of riches the Grotto is going to become. As a result, and no doubt with the help of his superiors, he succeeds in separating the Grotto from Peyramale's charge and himself receives the responsibility for its administration. Zola says that at this moment "La lutte commença, une de ces luttes sourdes, archarnées," and adds that "on allait se battre à coups de millions..." (Ibid., p. 329). More than ever Peyramale dreams now of an imposing church edifice which will vie with the Grotto for glory and riches. He concludes, therefore, an agreement with the "old city," which votes a large sum of money to aid in its construction. Gifts continue to pour in for the work.

Suddenly, however, the gifts and alms stop. They have been diverted to the Grotto by Peyramale's enemies. The old priest cannot make the payments on his church. The city reneges on its promise of funds and the partially built church dies for lack of funds to complete it. In order for the victory to be complete and so that Peyramale's church will pose no threat to the Grotto, the bishop decrees that no Masses may be performed within its roofless walls. Sempé has triumphed. In the author's satirical words, "Le père Sempé venait d'achever le triomphe de
Dieu..." (Ibid., p. 334). Peyramale, stricken by the disappointments and problems which he has experienced at the hands of his brothers in the Faith, dies and is buried in the crypt of his unfinished church. So that his tomb will offer no competition to the Grotto, it is formally forbidden for anyone to hold a religious service of any kind near it.

As bad as the picture is which Zola paints of the Church in Lourdes, it is only a preview of what he unveils in Rome, the work in which he expresses perhaps most fully his anti-Church vitriol. It is in Rome that the reader is taken into the inner sanctum of the Catholic Church, into the very presence of His Holiness the Pope, and it is in Rome that the ambitions and rivalries of the highest Church officials are described in detail and without the least discernible sympathy or attenuation.

Indeed, from start to finish, Zola presents a Kafkaesque drama of intrigue, bureaucratic mysteries and maneuverings, and of murderous rivalries. Again the Asmodée-like device is employed as Pierre is swallowed up in the labyrinthine chambers of an infinitely large organization whose functionaries usher him endlessly from one office to another, from one prelate to another, while continually assuring him that his next stop will certainly be the decisive one, the one which will give him understanding of his case and of the master's will concerning it. It
is only after long months of waiting that an audience with Leo XIII dispels the darkness. He comprehends that he has been worn down, exasperated, brought to submission by his superiors. He can only cry "guilty," renounce his work, and seek fresh air and freedom on the outside.

In the process of being ushered from one prelate to the next, however, he is allowed a telling glimpse into the inner workings of the Vatican. What he sees and what Zola reports is neither flattering to the Church nor reassuring to its flock. According to him, some of the prelates are not satisfied with their positions and yearn for advancement, some aspiring even to the papal throne itself, though advancement may well entail the assassination, either figurative or literal, of some rival to the same office. The author refers to this society as

...ce Vatican fermé où s'agit un tel pullulement de prélat de toutes sortes...cette famille pontificale, sans femmes, composée de vieux garçons portant la robe, que travaillent sourdement des ambitions démesurées, des luttes sourdes et abominables, des haines féroces qui, dit-on, vont encore parfois jusqu'au bon vieux poison des anciens temps! (Rome, p. 230)

It even appears that far more energy is expended by many of these "vieux garçons" in the effort to displace or destroy some enemy within the Church than in promoting its program and welfare.

The picture presented clearly expresses Zola's opinion that it is not only the Church's lower echelons
which are filled with self-seeking and self-serving men; its highest and most honored leaders, the Pope not excluded, are full of the same ambitions and selfish interests. He is saying that these supposedly God-like men are not only not better than the "natural" men which he has described in such works as La Terre and L'Assommoir, but that by virtue of their position as representatives of God, they are indeed worse than the peasant whose instinct it is to steal his brother's land and kill his own father for his money. Worse, because it is the hypocrisy above all that he is denouncing. It is the "whited sepulcre" aspect of the Church which he is pointing out. The outside may be attractive to the point of distraction and hypnosis, the pomp may create a frenetic enthusiasm in the most dispassionate observer, the cosmetically treated cross may make the most selfish communicant want to embrace it, but inside the structure there is nothing but dead men's bones.

The words of Victorine, the French-born servant of Cardinal Pio Boccanera, spoken to Pierre not long after his arrival in Rome, sets the tone for the revelations which are to follow. She, who has for years lived in Rome, observes:

'...une ville où il n'y avait que des curés ne pouvait pas être une bonne ville...les curés, voyez-vous, ce n'est pas mon affaire...j'en a trop vu, c'est fini...'

(Rome, p. 46)
Her words will be fully justified and Pierre also will have seen too much by the time he is ready to depart the unholy city on the banks of the Tiber.

Soon after his arrival at the now crumbling palace of the Boccaneras, a once illustrious family which has produced two popes, Pierre becomes aware of the war which is being waged between Cardinal Boccanera and Cardinal Sanguinetti, "préfet de la Congrégation de l'Index," for the seat of the elderly Pope Leo XIII. The former, possessed of a towering pride, and with an inflexible conviction that Leo's liberalism is destroying the Church, is seconded and indeed pushed by his sister, donna Serafina, in his claim to the succession. Sanguinetti, who has a "furieuse passion d'être le pape de demain" (Ibid., p. 90), commits the unpardonable error of displaying his ambition a bit too much. In the end they will have both been disqualified, their hopes destroyed by the silent machinations of Monseigneur Nani.

Before that dénouement, however, the struggle between the two becomes murderous. Not that Boccanera would admit to desiring the demise of his rival. In fact, he may not desire it. Certainly he would not himself do anything to bring it about. His Roman pride places him above such an action. Nor would Sanguinetti admit to wanting to see Boccanera removed from the scene by a fatal act. Papal candidates, however, have their own supporters, some
of whom are "capables des grandes vertus et des grands crimes" (Ibid., p. 443). Such a supporter is Abbé Santobono "Aujourd'hui...le client, la créature du cardinal Sanguinetti..." (Ibid, p. 442). This Santobono, in whose head "les contradictions, les imaginations folles se heurtaient...où les idées brûlaient" (Ibid., p. 443), has given himself to Sanguinetti without reserve because he sees in him the great Pope of tomorrow who is to make Rome the capital of all peoples.

This desire, perhaps even laudable in a Catholic priest, is not, however, without self-interest. Count Prada explains the case to Pierre:

'Et cela ne va pas, non plus, sans quelque ambition plus basse, celle, par exemple, de conquérir un titre de chanoine, ou celle encore de se faire aider dans les petits désagrément de l'existence...

(Loc. cit.)

In a way, Prada continues, one traditionally bets on a cardinal:

'...ainsi qu'on nourrit un terne à la lotterie : si le cardinal sort pape, on gagne une fortune....'

(Loc. cit.)

With each reported indisposition of the Pope all the hidden ambitions flare up with increasing intensity. This occurs again when Pope Leo XIII is reported ill. Santobono, convinced that he is acting at least on the tacit orders of Sanguinetti, carries a basket of poisoned figs to the cardinal's chief rival, Boccanera, who has enjoyed
some of the curé's fruits in the past. Santobono graciously leaves the basket with Victorine. The following day Boccanera's secretary, Abbé Paparelli, who is also the secret agent of Sanguinetti, carries the figs to the cardinal's table "avec une vraie dévotion, comme s'il portrait le saint sacrement..." (Ibid., p. 531).

Unfortunately, the attempt to kill the cardinal goes awry when his nephew, young Prince Dario, eats the figs instead and dies within hours. Although Boccanera knows quite well where the attempt has originated, the whole affair is covered up because he believes in the Church's inviolable policy of avoiding any public scandal. He expresses his attitude to the few intimate friends present at Dario's death:

— Messieurs, je n'ai pas besoin de vous demander d'être discrets.... Il est des scandales qu'il faut épargner à l'Englise, laquelle n'est pas, ne peut pas être coupable. Livrer un des nôtres aux tribunaux civils, s'il est criminel, c'est frapper l'Eglise entière.... Et notre seul devoir est de remettre le meurtrier aux mains de Dieu, qui saura le punir plus sûrement....

(Ibid., p. 543)

But this fight between two of the Titans of the Faith is only the most significant example of the subterranean struggles racking the Church hierarchy.

Another notable example of the ambitious priest is that of Monseigneur Fornaro, the chanoine of Sainte-Marie-Majeure, who wants to obtain the "canonicat à Saint Pierre,
et...d'être nommé un jour secrétaire de la Consistoriale..." (Ibid., p. 392). Like the others, Fornaro "brûlait d'ambition" (Loc. cit.).

Not everyone is disappointed in his ambitions. Some succeed with relative ease, knowing how to "play the game."

Zola tells us of Monseigneur Gamba del Zoppo who is loved by the Pope

pour ses flatteries continues, et pour les anecdotes qu'il en tirait sur tous les mondes, le noir et le blanc. (Ibid., p. 230)

This Gamba del Zoppo is

une véritable gazette vivante, au courant de tout, ne dédaignant pas les commérages des cuisines; de sorte qu'il s'acheminait tranquillement vers le cardinalat, certain d'avoir le chapeau, sans se donner d'autre peine que d'apporter les nouvelles, aux heures douces de la promenade. (Loc. cit.)

Flattery and gossip thus achieve what the physical removal of a rival might fail to achieve.

Rome, however, is not the only novel in which ambition is said to characterize the priest or prelate. With certain exceptions, the words priest and ambition could almost be considered synonymous in Zola. We see in Paris, for example, Monseigneur Martha (Leo's chief representative in Paris), who is described as "très intelligent, très ambitieux" and "d'une activité qui avait même commencé par inquiéter ses supérieurs" (Paris, p. 104). He disappears from the scene and after five years in Rome
returns to Paris where he serves the Pope as chief propagandist and spokesman for his policies.

Again, in *Vérité* we see Abbé Fulgence, director of the parish school, who is said to be détraqué de vanité et d'ambition, rêvant de rendre quelque éclatant service à l'Eglise, qui le ferait monter à la tête de son ordre.

(p. 348)

And Monseigneur Nani, "l'assesseur du Saint-Office" is described as admirablement discret et aimable, d'une modestie qui semble parfaite, sans qu'on puisse dire s'il ne marche point, de son pas si léger, à la plus haute ambition, à la tiare souveraine.

(Rome, pp. 110-111)

It is evident then that the ambition which characterizes so many of Zola's Church figures often causes conflicts between those who are vying for the same spoils. Characters are assassinated and careers ruined. But ambition is only one cause of conflicts in the Church. They also occur at times because of idealogical or theological differences or because of deviations from accepted policy. The results, though not directly created by ambition, are nevertheless unhappy for those unfortunate enough to be caught in the weaker position.

An important example of this type of conflict occurs in Rome where we witness the attack upon a cardinal of the French Church by enemies which he may not even suspect.
Cardinal Bergerot, a reform-minded prelate, favors a strong and quasi-independent Catholic Church in France. His enthusiasm for his proposed reforms leads him to author an approbative preface to Pierre Froment's book *La Rome Nouvelle*. In his book the young and equally enthusiastic priest calls for a renewal in Rome including a return to the principles of the primitive Christian community, an increased sense of charity, and an energetic involvement in the salient social questions of the hour such as the plight of the poor and the struggle for justice among the working classes. In addition, he solidly condemns the crass commercialism which he has witnessed at Lourdes and decries the Church's involvement in what he considers superstition, delusion and false miracles.

The priests at Lourdes, of course, do not share Cardinal Bergerot's unbridled enthusiasm for Pierre's book and it is not long before it is put on the Index. Called to Rome to defend his publication, Pierre eventually learns that he has not been the primary target of the condemnation at all. Rather, Cardinal Bergerot, whose ideas of reform are unpalatable to his powerful adversaries at Poitiers and Evreux, is the chief target. Through the attack upon Pierre he is being condemned, and Pierre now understands a veiled explanation of the matter given to him earlier by Boccanera's aide:

*Ainsi, don Vigilio avait dit vrai, les*
dénonciations des évêques de Poitiers et d'Evreux allaient atteindre, par-dessus sa tête, l'adversaire de leur intran-
sigeance ultramontaine, le doux et bon cardinal Bergerot, l'âme ouverte à toutes les misères, à toutes les souffrances des pauvres et des humbles.
(Ibid., p. 586)

The Pope makes his own opinion of the maverick Cardinal clear as he says to Pierre:

'Que monsieur le cardinal Bergerot le sache bien, nous le briserons, le jour où nous ne verrons plus en lui qu'un fils révolté... nous espérons qu'il se soumettra... l'obéissance, l'obéissance! la plus belle parrure des grands saints!'
(Ibid., p. 586)

Shadows

The fact that the origin of such attacks is seldom apparent to their intended victims or to observers is indicative of a most important facet of the Catholic Church as Zola views it--its almost pathological insistence on secrecy and silence regarding its activities. This predilection for secrecy is characteristic of many of the priests who people Zola's novels. His aim is to create the impression of an organization whose contours are hidden in shadows and whose movements and motives are blurred to a point admitting of little comprehension, if any, by the outsider. He wants to create an aura of mystery which serves as a powerful defensive weapon in the possession of a body with ample reasons to cloak its activities. The inescapable inference is, of course, that where the Catholic
Church is concerned the shadows are always sinister.

Several important examples will suffice to illustrate the point. In the opening novel of the Rougon-Macquart series it is evident that Zola already holds this view of the Church. He writes in his background explanation of the development of the political situation at Plassans:

Ce fut donc le clergé qui, à Plassans, mena la réaction. La noblesse devint son prête-nom, rien de plus, il se cacha derrière elle, il la gourmanda, la dirigea, parvint même à lui rendre une vie factice.

(La Fortune des Rougon, p. 75)

Later, in La Conquête de Plassans, the impression of Faujas as a sinister being is created in similar fashion. François Mouret reflects on priests whom he greatly distrusts: "Ces robes noires, ça se cache pour avaler un verre d'eau... on ne les entend pas même mettre leur clé dans la serrure" (La Conquête, p. 903). Try as he might, he can learn nothing of what is taking place in the apartment which he has rented to the Faujases. Mouret

...avait beau se mettre aux aguets, jamais il n'apercevait la main qui ouvrait et qui fermait; il n'entendait même pas le grincement de l'espagnollette. Aucun bruit humain ne descendait de l'appartement.

(Ibid., p. 920)

In Germinal as la Maheude passes in front of the Church on a Sunday night, "elle vit une ombre filer rapidement" (Germinal, p. 1360). The shadow is none other than Abbé Joire who, if he had done his errand at night,
"ce devait être pour ne pas se compromettre au milieu des mineurs" (Germinal, p. 1361).

At Lourdes, although the Fathers of the Immaculate Conception are the absolute masters, they deem it advisable to disappear at the time of the national pilgrimage:

Il n'y avait que le père Dargelès, petit et insinuant, qu'on rencontrait partout... Seulement, si les pères de l'Immaculée-Conception disparaissaient, on les sentait quand même derrière tout le vaste décor, ainsi que la force cachée et souveraine, qui battait monnaie, qui travaillait sans relâche à la prospérité triomphale de la maison. Ils utilisaient jusqu'à leur humilité.

(Lourdes, pp. 116-117)

In Rome we have noted that Pierre's problems are caused by "des ennemis cachés, le poursuivant dans l'ombre ..." (Rome, p. 105). The Vatican itself seems to him... comme un pays gardé par des dragons jaloux et trafers, un pays où l'on ne devait point franchir une porte, risquer un pas, hasarder un membre, sans s'être soigneusement assuré d'avance qu'on n'y laisserait pas le corps entier.

(Ibid., pp. 114-115)

The sinister atmosphere has its effect on him. In a moment of discouragement, he asks himself: "...pourquoi continuer cette lutte où les adversaires restaient ignorés, insaisissables?" (Ibid., p. 399).

As we have seen, his adversaries will eventually be revealed to him, but there is nothing that he can do against them. Their goals will have been effectively realized.
Cardinal Bergerot will be brought to task and Pierre brought to discouragement and renunciation of his book, although not to a repudiation of his ideas. Hidden forces have acted and the desired results have been obtained.

Zola's last novel, Vérité, is second only to Rome in the portrayal of the dark and sinister aspect of the activities of the clergy. In fact, the point is perhaps made most dramatically in this novel since it reveals the Dreyfus Affair as its most direct inspiration. That Affair, replete with charges of treason, conspiracy and political corruption was for years obscured by a penumbra of counter-charges and general confusion. This is not unlike what Zola creates in Vérité in which the Jewish teacher Simon is convicted of a murder which another has committed. In the novel the Church is substituted for the army in the Dreyfus case and from the beginning the clergy are seen as beings who prefer the darkness to the light "because their deeds are evil." On page five "deux ombres noires passent devant la fenêtre." They are fathers Philibin and Fulgence, who throughout much of the story seem to perform veritable miracles of dissimulation and deceit. Behind Fulgence "dans l'ombre" will be Philibin "qui lui-même était l'instrument du père Crabot...qui...espérait prendre le pays entier..." (Vérité, pp. 349, 350). By this time, however, the revelation only confirms what we already know.
The shadows are used to conceal the ongoing program of the Church as much as to hide the hand which wields the sword. The inference is still that there is something kept from view which cannot successfully withstand the light of day. Monseigneur Martha is an outstanding example of this point. He has a "tête-à-tête" with Monferrand, the corrupt and corrupting minister in Paris:

Maintenant, dans le ministère désert, il n'y avait plus que Monferrand et monseigneur Martha, enfermés, causant sans fin. On avait cru que le prélèt ambitionnait la députation. Mais il jouait un rôle plus utile, plus souverain, à gouverner dans l'ombre, à être l'âme directrice de la politique du Vatican en France.
(Paris, p. 306)

Like a puppeteer "il tient les ficelles qui font mouvoir...la plupart des catholiques ralliés au gouvernement républican" (Ibid., p. 335). Pierre has just seen Martha's "visage souriant et discret" and "le sentait puissant et agissant, bien qu'il ne bougeât pas..." (Ibid., pp. 335, 336).

While Zola does not overlook the Catholic Orders in his attacks upon the Church, he generally fails to present them convincingly as dark and threatening forces seen as organizations. In Rome he seems to want to create the impression of the Jesuits as an invisible and powerful body which achieves its often impenetrable goals in mysterious ways. But these very characteristics appear to pose a problem. He hides his villains so well that they do not
seem real. The one person, don Vigilio, who has the ability to identify a Jesuit is revealed to be suffering from such pernicious paranoia that he sees them everywhere. His credibility is thus destroyed, and along with it our own belief in the supposed threat posed by this quasi-ubiquitous and omnipotent order.

Zola even has some good things to say about some of the orders, particularly of their past historical roles. Pierre thinks of the Franciscans, whose humility it appears "les eût à la longue mis à l'écart..." and whose "rôle d'amis et de libérateurs du people a cessé" since the people have been liberating themselves through their political and social conquests (Rome, p. 424). The Carthusians, "vêtus de leur robe de drap blanc" are "les silenceux très saints et très purs, les contemplateurs qui se sauvent du monde..." (Loc. cit.). And the Benedictines are "les ouvriers passionnés des lettres et des sciences...aidant à l'instruction universelle par leurs immenses travaux d'histoire et de critique..." (Ibid., p. 425).

In the modern world, however, the Capuchins "sont des vendeurs du temple" (Vérité, p. 418) by their exploitation of the cult of Saint Anthony of Padua which consists most notably in the sale of favors and miracles to the poor and the ignorant (Vérité, p. 47). Except for their commercialism and the clandestine operations of the
Jesuits, the Catholic Orders are spared Zola's wrath. He
does, nevertheless, add a pejorative word about the
Corresponding feminine orders whose members, "tout ce
Peuple, derrière les façades muettes, bourdonnait, s'agitait,
intriguait, dans la continuelle lutte des intérêts et des
Passions" (Rome, p. 425).

He also sums up the deadly rivalry between the
Jesuits and the Freemasons:

Surtout, le heurt résultait de ce que les
deux sectes avaient la même ambition de
Souveraineté universelle, la même or-
ganisation internationale, le même coup
de filet jeté sur les peuples, des
Mystères, des dogmes, des rites. Dieu
contre Dieu, foi contre foi, conquête
contre conquête; et, dès lors...elles se
gênaient, l'une devait finir par tuer
l'autre.

(Ibid., p. 432)

The overwhelming impression created by Zola of the
relationships existing between the members of the clergy
is predictably a quite negative one. As we see them vying
with one another, destroying one another, each for his own
reasons trying to realize some personal profit from his
position in the priesthood, we may at times forget that
these men have a higher calling and a more noble occupation.

MONEY

In La Conquête de Plasasas, Zola observes that
Abbé Faujas

...parlait de l'argent avec le dédain d'un
homme fort, qui n'a que des besoins de
puissance et de domination.
(p. 1068)

His disdain for money makes him an exception to the rule
among his brothers in Zola's sacerdotal society. There are
other exceptions, of course, and they will be considered
later in our study of priests.

In spite of the exceptions, it remains generally
ture that one of the strongest forces motivating the
Church in Zola's works is the desire for money. The Pope
himself is not exempt from an inordinate interest in it.
He invests heavily in the stock market where, at least
once, he has lost his papal shirt. Zola seems to find ir-
resistible the irony implicit in the spectacle of a Pope
who, infallible in spiritual matters, is no wiser than
anyone else in financial matters. Ostensibly at least,
his potential gains are to go toward financing the Church's
programs. Zola makes it clear, however, that he is per-
sonally bitten by "la passion du jeu." He speaks of the
Pope's financial activities:

...il avait mis les millions dont il
disposait dans la terrible partie d'agio
qui se jouait à Rome, sous les fenêtres
de son Vatican, brûlé sûrement de la
passion du jeu, animé peut-être aussi du
sourd espoir de reconquérir par l'argent
cette ville que'on lui avait arrachée
par la force...
(Rome, p. 322)

This unnatural interest in money is one of the
things which serve to disillusion Pierre Froment, the young
priest who has come to Rome to defend his book, *La Rome nouvelle*, before the congregation of the Index. For him, it is impossible to reconcile the Pope's spiritual function—which he believes to be his only legitimate function—with the crass materialism evinced by his financial interests. His reaction to this revelation is recorded:

> Pierre avait écouté avec une surprise croissante, où s'était mêlée une sorte de terreur et de tristesse. Ces choses étaient bien naturelles, légitimes même; mais jamais il n'avait songé qu'elles fussent exister, dans son rêve d'un pasteur des âmes, très loin, très haut, dégagé de tous les soucis temporels. Eh quoi! ce pape, ce père spirituel des petits et des souffrants, avait spéculé sur des terrains, sur des valeurs de Bourse! Il avait joué, placé des fonds chez des banquiers juifs, pratiqué l'usure, fait suer à l'argent des intérêts, ce successeur de l'Apôtre, ce pontife du Christ, du Jésus de l'Évangile, l'ami divin des pauvres.²


But there are other princes of the Church susceptible to the lures of lucre. Indeed, some of them have apparently made a *modus operandi* of the practice of accepting pay-offs for services rendered. The venality of Monseigneur Palma of *Rome* is so pronounced that the Boccanera family is reduced almost to a state of indigence by the payment he accepts in return for his intervention in Benedetta's annulment proceeding. The expense is accepted by this illustrious family—the source of two Popes and a Cardinal—as though it were the most natural
and in fact, the only means to the desired end. The money paid to Palma will be used to buy the feckless husband of a beloved niece out of a scrape created by his penchant for cheating at cards.

This predilection for money over the more spiritual rewards of the priesthood is one of the chief themes of Lourdes, the chronicle of Pierre Froment's efforts to regain his faith and of the "miraculous" healing of his friend, Marie de Guersaint. According to Zola, who made his celebrated trips to Lourdes in 1891 and 1892, the Church was quick to realize that the visitation of Bernadette Soubirous by the Virgin Mary was a blessing whose value could be best determined by the number of francs which, if properly used, it might bring into the Church coffers. If the spring spouting forth its miraculous waters was to be of benefit to the afflicted millions who would troop to the Grotto for relief, then it could and would be an almost miraculous source of wealth for its administrators. After some preliminary reticence on the part of the Church regarding the validity of Bernadette's vision, and some resistance to the establishment of a shrine, the opposition is crushed and the holy place receives the blessings of Rome.

The financial potential of the Grotto, however, creates a struggle for control between the city and the religious orders, and even an intramural fight within the
orders. The orders prove too strong for the city and the holy fathers eventually prove too strong for the sisters. With their victory they begin to reap the astonishingly rich rewards.

It has been said that life is in the blood. For the Church, that blood is money, for it is the sine qua non of its life and vitality. It is also "l'arme invincible" in its struggle for power. Zola expresses this succinctly in Rome:

Sans argent, elle n'était plus qu'une vassale, à la merci des pouvoirs civils, du royaume d'Italie et des autres nations catholiques. (Ibid., p. 257)

The Church, of course, does not intend to be anyone's vassal.

The Spiritual Function

It is logical to wonder what purely spiritual ministry is taking place, or can take place, while the Church is torn internally by such divisive struggles. The answer is "very little." But then Zola's beliefs will not allow him to portray the priest primarily as a spiritual intermediary who represents the claims of God on his people and proclaims his blessings upon them. On the contrary, the priest is often shown to be a person who ignores the deeper spiritual needs of his sheep. It is not unusual for him to avoid altogether any talk about religion, although
the motives for his doing so may vary with the priest. He avoids it at times as though the mention of God, or more euphemistically perhaps, the mention of "religion," would somehow break the bond, the common interest, whatever it is which exists between him and his charge. A tacit understanding seems to exist that religion as a purely spiritual matter has no role to play in their relationship. It is better to keep it out of sight, out of mind, while the external rituals suffice to meet any requirement of the Church. We will note briefly several examples of this point.

Abbé Roustan of *Le Ventre de Paris* is "un bel homme...l'air souriant et bon." He is valued in his parish and perhaps particularly by the handsome Madame Quenu, with whom he has an easy and special relationship. He is to her a most valuable counselor concerning secular matters. She comes to see him about a special problem:

...Lisa expliqua ses scrupules à l'abbé Roustan. Jamais il n'était question entre eux de religion. Elle ne se confessait pas, elle le consultait simplement dans les cas difficiles, à titre d'homme discret et sage, qu'elle préférerait, disait-elle parfois, à ces hommes d'affaires louches qui sentent le bagne.

(*Loc. cit.*)

As for Roustan,

Lui, se montrait d'une complaisance inépuisable; il feuillétait le code pour elle, lui indiquait les bons placements d'argent, résolvait avec tact les difficultés morales, lui recommandait
des fournisseurs, avait une réponse prête à toutes les demandes... le tout naturellement, sans mettre Dieu de l'affaire, sans chercher à en tirer un bénéfice quelconque à son profit ou au profit de la religion. (Loc. cit.)

Unfortunately for Madame Quenu's harmless and somewhat pathetic brother-in-law Florent, now suspected of complicity in a ridiculous plot to overthrow the government, Abbé Roustan indicates to her that her duty is to stop evil—without mentioning names, of course. Armed with this wise advice, which is what she wants to hear, Madame Quenu delivers Florent to the police. He is again deported to prison, where he will die.

Zola points out in this episode the total spiritual indifference of Roustan, but he also underlines the fact that the priest can be much more than a negative or neutral factor in the spiritual realm. He can become an indirect but influential agent of injustice, when he steps out of his purely spiritual capacity.

The distaste which Abbé Faujas has for religion is pronounced. One suspects, and with good reason, that for him the "soutane" is merely a means to an end. It is no doubt in part for this reason that he usually studiously avoids talking with Marthe Mouret about the things of God. Zola tells us several times that "Dans leur tête-a-tête, il semblait que l'Abbé Faujas évitait soigneusement de causer religion avec Marthe" (La Conquête de Plassans, p.
Religion doesn't fit well into Faujas' plans. It seems to offend him, and he understands that it can easily offend others. When he forms a "cercle de la Jeunesse" at Plassans which someone suggests they call "le cercle de Jésus," Faujas reacts energetically to the suggestion:

'Éh non! finit par s'écrire le prêtre impatienté; vous n'aurez personne. Comprenez donc qu'il ne s'agit pas de mettre quand même la religion dans l'affaire; au contraire, je compte bien laisser la religion à la porte. Nous voulons distraire honnêtement la jeunesse, la gagner à notre cause, rien de plus.'

(Ibid., p. 1031)

This callousness is perhaps not too shocking in one such as Faujas. Even his name gives the impression of false coin. However, one of the most sympathetic priests whom Zola creates is equally chary of talking religion, though his reason may be different. He is the kind and gentle Abbé Jouve of Une Page d'Amour.

Hélène Grandjean is a widow. She is young, pretty, and the mother of a sickly daughter. One of her best friends is Abbé Jouve who, with his brother, comes weekly to have dinner with mother and daughter. She, whom one might consider a prime object for proselytizing by Jouve, is never approached on the subject of God. Their relationship, too, is a relaxed one:

Elle n'était guère dévote, même elle
There is one occasion in Zola's novels on which the avoidance of the subject of religion appears quite justified. It occurs in the case of Pierre Froment, who is about to leave the priesthood and who represents true intelligence, compassion and goodness for Zola. The passage describes his attitude toward his childhood sweetheart, Marie de Guersaint, who is now suffering from severe paralysis and who has turned to religion for help. Pierre will not disabuse her:

"Jamais il ne causait religion avec elle, ayant refusé non seulement de la confesser, mais de la diriger même dans ses petits scrupules de dévote. Il y avait là, en lui, une pudeur et une pitié, car il aurait souffert de lui mentir, à elle, et il se serait d'autre part regardé comme un criminel, s'il avait terni d'un souffle cette grande foi pure, qui la rendait forte contre la souffrance. (Lourdes, p. 37)"

It is Pierre's complete honesty which will not let him bring up a topic which he no longer believes in. If he speaks he will have to tell the truth, and so he chooses to remain silent through compassion.

At first glance it might appear strange, even contradictory, that Zola, who does not believe in a personal
God and who everywhere reveals his obvious distaste for the Church, implicitly, yet unmistakably, reproaches those priests who hide God or fail to include him in their conversation. It is important to remember, however, that he appears primarily interested in exposing their hypocrisy and indifference in spiritual matters. He denounces them for ostensibly standing for something which they no longer believe or consider relevant, or which might, if made a part of their daily conversation, prove to be an obstacle to certain relationships which they want to preserve.

This characteristic, although an important one in any composite description of the Zolean priest, is still chiefly a negative one. He makes a far more serious charge on the positive side. It is no longer a question of what the priest fails to do, but rather a question of what he does do. We will now consider his sins of commission.

**Indulgence**

The most serious indictment which Zola brings against the Church is its interest in temporal power. It is an interest which creates shady dealings, scheming and dissimulation. The hand of the one wielding the power, or of the one actively engaged in seeking power, is not always seen. It is rather axiomatic that it is not discernible except to those initiates who have a keen
understanding of the Church's goals and methods. In Rome and in Vérité, Zola particularly attacks this unspiritual propensity.

The trait which he criticizes most often in the individual priest, however, would seem to be not personal ambition of whatever kind, but an acceptance of sin which is completely out of character with his avowed purpose and function. In short, it is hypocrisy, but hypocrisy stemming from accepted Church practice and becoming policy for the priest. It is that mentality which says: "La religion tolérait bien des faiblesses, quand on gardait les convenances."5

Although Zola would evidently prefer a world in which priests no longer exist, and although he gives us a look at the day in which their disappearance seems assured (Paris, Travail), he must still try to deal concretely with what is and not solely with what will be. But while the absence of priests in society is the best situation, the genuinely honest, humble and self-sacrificing priest is far better than the indulgent one.

While such a statement may appear tautological, it is a correct evaluation of Zola's position which bears repeating, for with those priests who are humble and who love the poor and give themselves to charitable works, he shows more than tolerance, perhaps something verging on affection. He would even appear to excuse or forgive
their association with the Catholic Church, for they are generally found on the periphery and are often unintelligent, simple, ignorant, or without talents, though their hearts are in the right place. Such as Abbé Rose of Paris, Abbé Horteur of La Joie de Vivre and the irascible but good Abbé Godard of La Terre. These priests differ from each other in distinct ways, but they all share a charitable heart.

Zola cannot, however, condone the practices of those priests who habitually cover with the mantle of religion and respectability the scandals and vices of their parishioners. He does not savor, certainly, sermons on heaven and hell, but he dislikes even more the tacit complicity in evil which characterizes so many of his priests. And he abhors the reasons for their complicity—often the desire to shield the Church from public scandal and criticism, the more positive profit or advantages to be reaped by priest or Church, or the cynical acceptance of sin because it is after all part of the human condition, a condition which cannot be appreciably changed. In the case of Count Muffat, Nana's lover, for example, "son directeur lui ayant permis d'user sa passion," the Count obliges (Nana, p. 1448).

Certainly the most notable example of the sin-cloaking priest is Abbé Mauduit, who is the confessor, counselor and confidant of the decadent bourgeois presented
in Pot-Bouille. He is hardly more than the willing tool of those who would use him to give their practices and plots a respectable stamp of approval. Except for a moment of doubt just before the novel ends, he is a dependable collaborator in their evil. The revelation of this type of priestly hypocrisy seems to be the chief reason for the priest's appearance in the book. His appearance does, however, also reveal something about the flock as well as about their shepherd.

Early in the book, Zola shows Mauduit at the reception and concert given by the Duveyriers. While standing to the side of the room he reflects on the scene before him. His reflections reveal as much about himself as about those whom he contemplates:

Son visage gras et fin exprimait une tristesse. Lui qui confessait ces dames et ces demoiselles, les connaissait toutes dans leur chair, comme le docteur Juillerat, et il avait dû finir par ne plus veiller qu'aux apparences, en maître de cérémonie jetant sur cette bourgeoisie gâtée le manteau de la religion, tremblant devant la certitude d'une débâcle finale, le jour où le chancre se montrerait au plein soleil. Parfois, des révoltes le prenaient, dans sa foi ardue et sincère de prêtre. Mais son sourire reparut... et il redevenait l'homme du monde, réuni à exiger uniquement une bonne tenue de ces pénitentes, qui lui échappaient et qui auraient compromis Dieu.6

We must not be misled by his occasional "révoltes" and his "foi ardue et sincère de prêtre." At least we must not misinterpret what is meant, for it is evident
that his cloaking of their sins and his burning faith, as sincere as it may be, are not totally incompatible. They should be, of course, but they are not. His desire to spare the Church embarrassment overrules his "révoltes." They are a fleeting phenomenon and he invariably masters them.

Nor should we misread what is meant by the "dégâcle finale" which he feels is inevitable. A day of reckoning or a coming to calamitous judgment is not at all what concerns him. He is referring instead to a moment when the great suppurring sore of bourgeois morality may burst and spread its corruption and scandal upon the Church itself. Far better to keep it from the light, hidden away under a cloak of feigned decency, than to risk injury to the Church.

When Theophile Vabre publicly accuses Octave Mouret of being his wife's lover, Mauduit tells Theophile to forgive, and adds that God's designs are inscrutable. He is not, for all that, interested primarily in teaching the Golden Rule or the requirement to forgive others if one would himself be forgiven. He is trying to place a damper on the smoldering fire:

Encore une plaie vive, tout d'un coup saignante, sur laquelle il lui fallait jeter le manteau de la religion!

He wants above all "d'étouffer le scandale..." (Pot-Bouille, p. 150).
And when he praises the skinny Gasparine, Compardon's cousin and mistress, for being kind enough to move in with the Compardons in order to be of help to Rose, the ailing wife, Mauduit is quite "au courant" of her real reason for moving.

Finally, in his efforts to bring to reconciliation Auguste Vabre and his wife Berthe, whom he has caught in bed with Octave, Mauduit becomes the necessary go-between. His efforts are aided by the general sadness and sentimentality following Mr. Josserand's death, in which Mauduit sees the hand of God. In reference to Josserand's passing,

...il donna à entendre qu'il voyait là une circonstance cruelle, mais heureuse, pour réconcilier Auguste et Berthe. (Ibid., p. 352)

Auguste is pushed into taking back his unfaithful wife although he is still without the dowry which her parents have never paid. He is forced to give in, "au nom de la décence publique..." (Ibid., p. 343). Mauduit's chief desire has been to end "un scandale dont les ennemis de la religion auraient pu se réjouir" (Loc. cit.).

Obviously, Mauduit is incapable of serving as a conscience for his people. He does not condemn anyone for his sins, which he views as "les misères de l'existence."

In the case of Berthe, she can see her condition only through the words of the gossiping servants whom she
overhears. Perhaps even then her remorse is more from a fear that Octave has only used her. Be that as it may, it has taken the "gros mots dont les bonnes l'avaien éclaboussée" to make her feel "si triste, si abandonnée, si malpropre" that she returns for a moment to her childhood interest in religion (Ibid., p. 272).

The unwillingness to condemn and the acceptance of the immoral are seen also in Paris, where Monseigneur Martha brings Eve Duvillard to "conversion" from Judaism to Christianity. Eve, however, who is the mistress of Gérard de Quinsac, an unemployed aristocrat, has something other than spiritual purity in mind. Her conversion is a ploy to keep her young lover, the scion of a most respectable Catholic family. It bursts like thunder on her social world:

...Eve avait fait sa conquête par un acte qui venait de stupéfier le monde. Brusquement, on avait appris que monseigneur Martha l'avait convertie au catholicisme. Ce qu'elle n'avait pas accordé au mari légitime, elle venait de le faire, afin de s'assurer à jamais l'amour d'un amant.

(Paris, p. 38)

This conversion, called Martha's "plus beau triomphe" (Ibid., p. 105), is followed by a magnificent baptismal ceremony at which Gérard, "agenouillé, était ému aux larmes"; while Baron Duvillard "triumphait en bon mari, heureux de voir la religion établir enfin l'harmonie parfaite en son ménage" (Loc. cit.).
Martha has not been duped; on the contrary, he has been cooperative. The Church has gained a notable convert from one of the wealthiest and most influential families of France. This success can only enhance the Church's own influence in political circles.

This same type of arrangement is smiled upon again in Vérité, in which we find the "menage à trois" consisting of the Count de Sangleboeuf, his wife Lia, and his mistress the Marquise de Boise. Lia, who is Jewish, has allowed herself, under pressure from her opportunistic father, to be converted to Catholicism by the Marquise, a devout Catholic. Again, as in Paris, the subsequent baptism is a glory to the Church: "...on en parlait toujours comme d'un grand triomphe de l'Eglise" (Vérité, p. 99).

In Travail, Abbé Marle, who knows that the beautiful Léonore Gourier "vivait dans la faute" as the mistress of Châtelard, countenances the arrangement because "elle s'en confessait" (Travail, p. 112). The Abbé is tolerant also because of the attention which Léonore lavishes upon him. At dinner she is "occupée de lui seul, lui disant à demi-voix des mots gentils..." (Loc. cit.).

Finally, the Vatican itself is not exempt from practicing the same indulgence. The "avocat consistorial" Morano has been the "ami" of Donna Serafina for thirty years. Their liaison, "autrefois coupable," has become
after the death of his wife, "une liaison excusée, acceptée par tous, une sorte de ces vieux ménages naturels que la tolérance mondaine consacre" (Rome, p. 68). Besides, "Tous les deux, très dévots, s'étaient certainement assuré les indulgences nécessaires" (Loc. cit.).

Zola makes this cloaking of sin all-pervasive: it is found throughout the Church. But the acceptance and hiding of others' sins is only one aspect of the question of sin and the priesthood. That the priests in his books sin against each other, we have seen. But what about their transgressions toward those outside of the priesthood? Several examples of such sins should be noted.

We have already mentioned the fatal impact of Abbé Faujas on the Mouret household in La Conquête de Plassans, an impact which Jean Borie calls "...la prise, la désorganisation et le sac de la maison familiale des Mouret." He uses the Mourets strictly as a means to an end. We have also noted the fatal, albeit indirect, influence which Abbé Roustan exerts upon the fate of Florent (Le Ventre de Paris). Similarly, the indifference of Abbé Joire and of Abbé Ranvier in Germinal to the physical needs of the miners could only be considered a sin against them, for the care of the poor and needy is a strict Christian duty.

There are still, however, at least two cases in which Zola dares to push his indictment even further. Both
occur in *Vérité*, in which he vents his spleen against almost every corruption which he finds or imagines to be in the Catholic Church.

Father Philibin has caused the drowning death of young Gaston, grandson of the Countess de Quédéville. As a result, Father Crabot inherits the Countess' estate, called "Valmarie," upon her death. It is there that he establishes the "collège de Valmarie."

Unfortunately for the fathers, Georges Plumet, a friend of Gaston, has seen the murder. When, as Father Gorgias, he later sexually attacks and kills little Zéphirin, he blackmails the fathers into protecting him. This they do both because of their own sins and because of their belief that the Church should never wash its dirty linen in public.

It is not surprising that sex sins are mentioned only a few times in Zola's attacks upon the Church. This is no doubt in part because Zola considers most priests to be enuchs or "vieilles filles" rather than men. There are exceptions to the rule, however, such as Serge Mouret and his affair with Albine. Their "liaison," moreover, appears as a sin not to Zola, but only to Serge, who in the end returns to seek the forgiveness and haven provided by the Church. There is another exception also to the rule that the priests' sexual gratification, if it occurs at all, is only a vicarious experience resulting from close
association with his penitents' most secret confessions. That exception is the confessor of Madame Savin, "le père Théodore...un homme superbe et délicieux, dont rêvaient toutes les jeunes dévotes (Vérité, p. 259).

We do not know just how far the "delicious" priest is able to go with his pretty penitent, because "l'on ne sut jamais bien l'histoire...," although the rumor of a flagrant délit courait, le mari allant chercher un soir d'hiver sa femme à la Chapelle, la trouvant dans un coin de ténèbres, aux bras de son confesseur, en train tous les deux de se baiser goulûment, à pleine bouche. (Ibid., p. 438)

No doubt, Father Théodore cannot be satisfied with the titillation afforded by the whispered sins of his penitents. The result is a sign of Zola's conviction that the "voeu de chasteté peut conduire à toutes les curiosités, à toutes les aberrations sexuelles" (Ibid., p. 358). The incorrigible Théodore is later said to have fathered a child by another of his penitents.

Good Priests

Abbés Horteur and Godard have been cited as examples of priests for whom Zola has some sympathy. While his sympathy is evident, we should note that he is careful to point out their numerous limitations as ministers of God. We must remember, however, that a good priest with serious limitations is more desirable than a
bad priest who has talents and intelligence. The latter can be far more dangerous. At least the motives of the humble and less talented priests cannot be impugned. They serve their parishes out of a sincere conviction that in so doing they are serving God himself.

Horteur is hardly paid by the Church. He could not make ends meet if it were not for his vegetable garden. For all practical purposes he has been forgotten by his superiors. Still, he is faithful in performing what he perceives to be his duties to his flock. He gives his money away, but his charity does not extend to those whom he knows to be lying about their needs or who are living in sin. His only "débauche" is his pipe, a pleasure which he allows himself generally when no one can see him.

Horteur's theology is simple for he is a simple man:

...on mourait et on montait au ciel, rien n'était moins compliqué ni plus rassurant... l'idée fixe du salut avait suffi pour emplir son crâne étroit.

He doesn't worry or even think about death, since "Nous sommes tous dans la main de Dieu" (La Joie de Vivre, p. 991).

Abbé Horteur is an exasperated man. His twenty years of warnings to the vice-ridden fishermen in his parish have gone unheeded. He has called them "Gomorrhe et Sodome!" (Ibid., p. 900) and is convinced that "Dieu
les abandonne, décidément" (Ibid., p. 1116). The result is that he goes routinely about his business, taking care for the most part of his own salvation. From his parishioners he settles for the outward appearance of sanctity.

The situation of Abbé Godard in the little community of Rognes, described in La Terre, is quite similar to that of Abbé Horteur. He, too, is sensitive to the genuine needs of those who suffer in his parish. He will even borrow money to help them. As a result of such a charitable spirit, his robe is threadbare.

But Abbé Godard is exasperated also by his lack of eloquence in preaching: "il poussait les heu! heu! sans jamais pouvoir finir ses phrases...." This defect has caused his bishop to forget him in his country parish for twenty-five years. He is also exasperated by the hardiness and indifference of the peasants whom he serves. One result is that he hurries through his Masses and leaves as soon as possible afterwards. He and his parish stay in a constant state of war. Like Horteur, however, he is without corruption.

CONCLUSION

It is true then that Zola's presentation of prelates and priests is not an entirely negative one, although it is evident that most of them are hypocrites and sinners. There seems, in fact, to be some correlation between one's
elevation in the Church and the degree of evil. Those priests who possess some redeeming qualities are almost invariably to be found at the very bottom of the ecclesiastical scale. One might well conclude that sophistication and sin are usually to be found together, whereas ignorance and simplicity among priests imply a degree of goodness. It is true also that the good priests, those of sincere faith and who have no ulterior motives, are not shown to be closely associated with the mainstream of the Catholic program nor to be in any significant contact with the Church organization. On the contrary, they are "forgotten" priests, at least until their charities become so great that they create a scandal for the Church, as in the case of Abbé Rose (Paris). In Zola's terms this can only be an advantage to them and to their people, for once the Church enters the picture the result is invariably bad.

There is, then, a kind of partition between the Church as organization—-including all those prelates and priests in some way connected with its official political or social goals--and those priests who are primarily interested in performing their more spiritual priestly functions. Predictably, the latter are few, and in some way limited. Zola, after all, cannot paint a totally sympathetic and positive picture of even the best of the priests, for he considers the priesthood an anachronism
which the world would best be without. Yet he does try to balance the scale somewhat with the admission that somewhere in the Church, albeit at its last extremities, there is a degree of honesty and goodness. That admission, however, does not keep his "realism" from being one-sided and exaggerated.

It appears that what René Ternois says of Zola's portrayal of ecclesiastics in Rome is true of his portrayal of them throughout the Rougon-Macquart series also. According to Ternois, he creates "types" to illustrate the presuppositions which he will not give up even when contradicted by the facts, which he encounters both in his reading and on his visit to Rome; presuppositions which are almost completely negative.
CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH AS RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter III we have discussed some of the internal aspects of the Church as Zola presents them. Our study dealt chiefly with a priesthood and prelacy who are most often seen as consumed by personal ambition and torn by jealousies and factionalism. They spend more time waging war on each other than in ministering to the needs of their penitents. When revealed in their relationships with their flocks, priests are at times shown to be instruments which the Church uses to cloak the peoples' sins. The Church cannot allow the believer's transgressions to bring it into disrepute by publicly washing their linen. It tends to be indulgent so that it may retain what influence it does have among a decreasing number of believers. Chapter III reveals much about how the Church views the people.

In Chapter IV we shall see more clearly how the people—divided as they are into four primary socio-economic groups by Zola—view the Church and what it represents to them. The views of peasants and workers,
for example, reveal a great deal about the changes in the
perception of the Church which are taking place in both
field and factory. The distance between farmer and
laborer and the Church is seen to be widening. Their
alienation has been accelerated by the Church's inability
to present a doctrine which they consider relevant to their
needs in a world rapidly becoming better educated and
more industrialized. They view it as an anachronism, an
institution perhaps needed in the past, but irrelevant in
the present. The Church's unwillingness to adapt to
change and to become engaged in aiding the working class
contributes significantly to its decline among the peasants
and workers.

The bourgeoisie and the aristocracy do maintain,
however, a semblance of faith and practice. It is to
their social advantage to do so. Viewing the Church as
the guarantor of public morals and consequently as a
vital support for its social and economic position, the
middle class often lends vociferous lip-service to the
Faith while leading a life of decadence behind the walls
of its comfortable quarters.

The aristocracy, a dying breed, tenaciously holds
to the Church as one of the pillars of a society in which
it can at least continue the illusion of political power
and social influence. It is the Church's most steadfast
ally.
Still, on the individual level, there are people who do have a relationship with the Church which might best be called religious in nature. The Church, while moribund, still holds out a hope to them which they do not find elsewhere. Proselytizing does continue and the Church's converts do in fact find certain personal rewards for their faith. Believers are usually limited in intellect and talents although some are well-educated. They come to the Church for various reasons and they experience varying results. The religious experience is usually an unhappy experience and few are the people who find enduring peace in it.

In any discussion of the "religious experience" in the novels of Zola one must keep in mind that the word "experience" may and does have a very broad meaning. But religious experience, in the sense of a deep encounter with the God of righteousness, the God of the Jews and of the early Christian Church which results in a changed life and a more settled and happy existence, is virtually nonexistent in Zola. With the debatable exception of Serge Mouret, a changed life and happiness are to be found not in a religious experience but in escape from the religious experience. Pierre Froment, the apostate Abbé of the Trois Villes series, is the archetype of the liberated and happy person, although the process of liberation from superstition and instability to reason and confidence is
supposedly a lengthy and painful one. The fact that Zola does not succeed to any credible degree in creating the desired sense of pain and anguish does not obfuscate the point—the religious experience is bad; the escape from it is good.

The treatment of the religious experience in Zola's works, again with the exception of Serge Mouret, is usually superficial. Still, one might say that the treatment of it aptly fits the experience itself. Usually the experience is characterized by what the person or persons involved hope to gain from it. They want to relieve their fears or anxieties, escape judgment, or gain heaven. There is no concern with what God wants or with the underlying question of sin as a principle. The personal benefit to be derived from the experience is far more important, and the experience itself is a purely superficial one. For this reason it could usually be referred to simply as the relationship which exists between the person or group and the Church.

We have included, therefore, under the rubric "Religious Experience," the relationships which exist between peasants or workers and the Church in Zola's novels. These relationships are highly casual and shallow. The same can be said of the relationships existing between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy and the Church, although
they vary in some significant ways from the former. We will deal first with these collective "experiences" before examining those of an individual nature.

THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The Collective

Zola is convinced that the Church can no longer claim any serious hold on society. He believes that in reality, although much hypocrisy masks the fact, people from the bottom to the top of the social ladder have surrendered their faith and no longer see it as relevant to their daily lives. After all, life goes on pretty much as it always has. People are still being born and they still die. The rains still come, the sun still shines, harvests are good or bad as they always have been. Belief in God, or belief that he is interested in man, has not been proven to alter these natural phenomena. What good, therefore, is the belief in God? What profit is to be realized from it?

Peasants

This attitude largely characterizes the peasants in Zola's novels. It is already evident in those of La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, who are described as "assez indifférents en matière de religion." Except for a certain retention of the outward and traditional trappings of religion which
they still consider necessary—baptisms, first communions, weddings and funerals—there is little evidence of its influence upon their lives. The question of behavior is not one about which they seek counsel from the Church.

The peasants of Rognes illustrate this attitude best. Rognes, we are informed, "n'avait pas de curé depuis des années et ne paraissait pas se soucier d'en avoir un" (La Terre, p. 406). The truth is that they have lodged the "garde champêtre" in the Church, which is now falling apart. The annoyance of Abbé Godard, the curé of neighboring Bazoches-le-Doyen who serves them, is therefore understandable.

Not many people attend church regularly, and those who do are not usually altogether attentive. The "filles de la Vierge" in particular are guilty of inattention. Françoise, Berthe, Suzanne are all there and all are laughing "d'une façon inconvenante." The crowning insult to the Abbé, however, is the fact that "la pauvre Lise, grasse et ronde, la mine gaie, étalait le scandale de son ventre, en face de l'autel" (Ibid., p. 408).

This kind of effrontery, combined with the town council's refusal to repair the building, causes Godard to rush through his services without the least regard for their wounded feelings. When some of the women protest, he replies:
'Je le dis pour qui je dois le dire ...
Ça crève les yeux. Voyez-vous ça
avec des robes blanches! Je n'ai pas
une procession ici, sans qu'il y en ait
une d'enceinte... Non, non, vous lasseriez
le bon Dieu lui-même!'

(Ibid., p. 411)

There is a tendency among the peasants to blame God
for their misfortunes, although it is evident that those
misfortunes which they bring upon themselves and upon each
other are even more devastating. After a destructive
hail storm we see some of them in their fields:

Bien qu'il n'eût plus de terres, le vieux
Fouan voulait voir, se fâchant. Peu à
peu, tous s'emportaient: était-ce
possible de perdre, en un quart d'heure,
le fruit d'un an de travail? Qu'avaient-
ils fait pour être punis de la sorte?
Ni sécurité, ni justice, des fléaux sans
raison, des caprices qui tuaient le monde.
Brusquement, la Grande, furibonde,
ramassa des cailloux, les lança en l'air
pour crêver le ciel, qu'on ne distinguait
pas. Et elle gueulait:
'Sacré cochon, là-haut! Tu ne peux
donc pas nous foutre la paix?'

(Ibid., p. 462)

It is doubtful that la Grande has the slightest
conviction that this "act of God" can be anything but un-
justified. She sees it as a catastrophe striking a com-
munity which in no way deserves it. And yet, she is
beyond question one of the most wicked characters which
Zola has created. Her behavior seems somewhat strangely
staged by the author, for la Grande does not believe in
God—be he a God of love or a God of vengeance—any more
than do her neighbors.
On one occasion Godard finds it necessary to speak to her about Hilarion, her mentally retarded grandson, whom she mistreats because of a grudge still held against his late mother. Godard threatens her with hell—a standard threat in the admonitions of Zola's good priests. The verbal clash is as follows:

-- 'Eh bien! je vous ai assez prévenue, je vous répète, moi, que vous irez en enfer, si vous avez mauvais coeur... L'autre jour, sans ce que je lui ai donné, il serait mort de faim, et aujourd'hui j'ai été obligé d'inventer du travail.'

Au mot d'enfer, la Grande avait eu un mince sourire. Comme elle le disait, elle en savait trop, l'enfer était sur cette terre, pour le pauvre monde.

(Ibid., p. 595)

In desperation Godard lets loose his fury against the congregation—he's had enough slaps in the face. He'll tell the bishop about it. They will have to live without a priest, just like animals, and so on (La Terre, p. 597). Their reaction sums up perfectly Zola's opinion of the peasant and his religion:

Ils l'écoutaient tous, curieusement, avec la parfaite indifférence, au fond, de gens pratiques qui ne craignaient plus son Dieu de colère et de châtiment. A quoi bon trembler et s'aplatis, acheter le pardon, puisque l'idée du diable les faisait rire désormais, et qu'ils avaient cessé de croire le vent, la grêle, le tonnerre, aux mains d'un maître vengeur? C'était bien sûr du temps perdu, valait mieux garder son respect pour les gendarmes du gouvernement, qui étaient les plus forts.

(Loc. cit.)
The peasants at Rognes have a much easier time believing in what they can see and feel than in what they cannot. The real object of their love, respect and devotion is the earth, she by whom they live and to whom they will return. Anything that goes beyond this and the outward practice of religion is seen as a waste of time.

The people at Bonneville in *La Joie de Vivre* are rotting in their sins and are as hard as the flinty earth on which they live. Their very existence is threatened by a tireless sea which constantly eats away their coast and washes away their houses. Abbé Horteur sees this circumstance as a judgment of God upon them. For years he warned them and tried to frighten them out of their sinful ways, but his words have fallen on deaf ears. He has at last given up the fight and has settled for the outward show of religion. And on special religious days, at least, they do go to church, but it is "par un reste d'habitude, malgré le péché qui pourrissait le village" (*La Joie de Vivre*, p. 849).

**Proletariat**

In his notes on *Germinal*, Zola writes concerning the miners:

"Pas de religion, les prêtres ne vont guère dans les corons. On va seulement le chercher pour les agonies. La femme surtout y pense. Elle ne va pourtant guère à la messe."
Such is indeed the situation at Montsou where much of the action of *Germinal* takes place. There is no religious faith left because the miners lay the injustices which they suffer at the hands of the mine's bourgeois owners to the charge of an indifferent or even cruel God. After all, what is God good for if he doesn't redress grievances, repay evil, ransom his own from the afflictions of life including those created by man himself? Because he has not done these things, faith has disappeared and belief in his existence has died out among the mine workers. This leaves them without divine comfort in this life, but also without the comfort and fortitude provided by a belief in the life to come with its eternal riches.

As *La Maheude* wistfully puts it:

--- 'Encore si ce que les curés racontent était vrai, si les pauvres gens de ce monde étaient riches dans l'autre!'

(*Germinal*, p. 1277)

No one believes it, of course. Even the children, matured beyond their years by suffering, do not take such stories seriously. They have seen and experienced enough to know that religion is hollow and its promises infantile. They are convinced that what really counts is the here and now—the empty stomachs, the back-breaking and crippling labor exacted by callous employers. *La Maheude*'s words, therefore, strike them as amusing. One can hear

Un éclat de rire...les enfants eux-mêmes haussaient les épaules, tous
devenus incrédules au vent du dehors
gardant la peur secrète des revenants de
la fosse, mais s'égayant du ciel vide.
(Loc. cit.)

Understandably, their spirit-world is connected with the
terrors of the mine and is charged with a sense of fear. It
does not include a heaven which might serve to counter-
balance or overrule the mine's evils.

The Church, Zola is careful to point out, is to a
large extent responsible for its loss of influence and the
loss of faith among the workers. While they may be un-
educated, even illiterate in many cases, the miners are
keen enough to see the inconsistency and hypocrisy in the
Church's position. The logical question arises: "How can
God be a good God if his earthly representatives are not
good?" Goodness to them at the moment means the providing
of bread for their stomachs, some medical attention for
their sick, and moral encouragement in their struggle
against exploitation. Unfortunately, all they find in the
Church are priests who are indifferent to these basic needs
although full of rhetoric and nice promises for eternity.

Maheu expresses the miners' lucidity on the issue:

'Ah! ouiche, les curés! ... S'ils
croyaient ça, ils mangeraient moins et
ils travailleraient davantage, pour se
réserver là-haut une bonne place...'
(Loc. cit.)

If God will not aid them then, if indeed God is dead,
who will create a way for them out of their miseries?
Etienne Lantier supplies the answer, although his ideas on the subject are poorly digested and confused. With a prophet's exaltation, he proclaims to the miners a truth which follows naturally from Zola's conviction that help does not come from spirits:

'Est-ce que vous avez besoin d'un bon Dieu et de son paradis pour être heureux? est-ce que vous ne pouvez pas vous faire à vous-mêmes le bonheur sur la terre?' ... Puisque le bon Dieu était mort, la justice allait assurer le bonheur des hommes, en faisant régner l'égalité et la fraternité. (Ibid., p. 1278)

At Montsou, faith is dead and God is irrelevant. It is impossible to believe when one lives in a world of injustice and suffering.

If Zola shows us later (Vérité) a peasant community in which the Church still enjoys considerable success, it does not necessarily mean that at the end of the nineteenth century he believes there has been a spiritual revival in the provinces, although such a revival among the intellectuals of the period is of concern to him. Nor does it mean that he has abandoned his opinion that in large part the Church has lost its hold over worker and peasant alike. His aim in the book, however—the demonstration of the intellectual and moral regeneration and redemption of the individual through education—could not be achieved without his first positing the hold which the Church continues to exercise on their thinking. He is not retreating; he is
rather demonstrating in an artificial and didactic way his belief that education—primarily the development and proper use of reason—inevitably must, and in fact will, step in where God has been unable to tread. Education, freeing those in bondage, must assume the role vacated by a now moribund and anachronistic deity. Vérité is the demonstration of that conviction. In it Truth conquers Falsehood, facts dispel myth, and the mind replaces the spirit as Truth's repository.

It is significant that the tendency to blame God for misfortunes which is evident among many of Zola's other peasants and workers has disappeared in Vérité. This tendency, which might be called the Gervaise syndrome—"Mais qu'avait-elle donc fait au bon Dieu, pour être ainsi torturée jusqu'à la fin?" (L'Assommoir, p. 774)—has been replaced by the acceptance of responsibility by the people in the knowledge that justice depends upon themselves. They seem convinced that it is now up to them to build a world from which ignorance has been banished and in which all can live together without fear of intellectual or physical bondage. The back of their last great enemy—the Catholic Church and its indifferent God—has been broken. Educational experience replaces religious experience.
Bourgeoisie

The scorn with which Zola treats these priests who tolerate the vices of their parishioners is not attenuated in his treatment of the parishioners themselves. Zola is consistent in revealing hypocrisy wherever it is found. He cannot, however, charge the lower classes with any widespread hypocrisy, because if their lives are rife with all the sins to be found among the middle class, it can at least be said for them that they are not usually dissimulators among themselves.

At Rognes everyone knows that Suzanne is promiscuous and that Buteau is cruel and murderous. Although Buteau keeps the murder of Frangoise hidden as much as possible, it is chiefly because of fear of prosecution and not because he wants to appear to be better than he is. Everyone knows or suspects all the vices of the others and accepts them. It is their way of life.

The single exception at Rognes is that of the Charleses, who have finally become "petits bourgeois" by virtue of their thriving little brothel at Chartres. It is they who try to appear to be other than they are. Monsieur Charles--"respectueux de la religion" (La Terre, p. 527)--and Madame Charles--"d'une paix, d'une douceur de cloître, une chair de vieille religieuse ayant vécu à l'ombre" (Ibid., p. 403)--have even shown themselves to be quite concerned about the moral education of their daughter and of their
granddaughter, whom they place in turn at Châteaudun "chez les soeurs de la Visitation, pour y être élevée religieusement, selon les principes les plus stricts de la morale" (Ibid., p. 402). Both daughter and granddaughter, however, will follow in the footsteps of their respected parents and will, themselves, also mind the "store" at Chartres. The pleased parents will continue to go to Church after their retirement to Rognes, still "gravés et cossus, donnant le bon exemple" (Ibid., p. 410).

Madame Chanteau (La Joie de Vivre) fits the same mould as the Charleses. She attends Mass regularly while she is consumed by her "rage de l'argent." Her religion is part of her equipment as a member of the middle class. It is a "religion de convenance, qui faisait partie d'une bonne éducation, au même titre que le maintien" (La Joie de Vivre, p. 847). Her religion does not keep her from robbing Pauline of her inheritance, although she does it in a "respectable" middle-class way.

Among others of Zola's bourgeoisie we see a sophistication and refinement of attitude toward religion. It is no longer simply part of a good education, but it provides some very positive advantages to those who practice it, or, more correctly, to those who use it. This type of religion has at least three distinct functions, each one of which appears in several novels, but all three of which appear in Pot-Bouille, Zola's most scathing attack on the French
middle class. These three functions are: 1) the cloaking of sin and the maintenance of the "bon exemple"; 2) its exploitation for personal gain, as in business; 3) the maintenance of the social status-quo, which provides a stable base and security for the middle class.

We will not discuss at length religion used as a covering for sin, since we have already seen it in our treatment of Abbé Mauduit of Pot-Bouille. It will suffice to point out that, although the Abbé is a willing accomplice in the masking of their scandalous behavior, he usually does not initiate the cover-up. He remains ready, nevertheless, to do the bidding of the Vabres, the Josserands, the Duveyriers and the Compardons. But it is they, and not the priest, who are committing the primary sins. And although the priest does not escape his attack, it is they who must bear the brunt of Zola's outrage in Pot-Bouille. According to Jean Borie, "Zola...brûle de nous démontrer que leur pureté, leur abstinence n'est qu'un mensonge..." The walls of their apartments hide "les débauches les plus insidieuses, les plus étranges, les satisfactions les plus détournées et les plus répugnantes..." He adds that "Bien au chaud chez eux, les bourgeois couvent amoureusement leur ordure" (Zola et les Mythes, p. 149). It is the lie which is often aided by religion that Zola wishes to expose.

In the second place religion is used by the bourgeoisie to achieve some material benefit, to create a feeling of
emotional well-being, or to reinforce a sense of personal morality. In Pot-Bouille the architect Compardon defends the Church in order to "faire sa cour au prêtre, dont il attendait des travaux" (p. 86). This courting pays dividends for he does in fact become the architect of the diocese, a position whose advantages he describes in this manner:

"Et, voyez-vous, c'est beaucoup, quand on peut mettre sur ses cartes: architecte du gouvernement. Vous ne vous imaginez pas les travaux qua cela me procure dans la haute société."

(Ibid., p. 10)

He assures his listeners that the Church's favor which he enjoys goes a long way toward solving his business problems:

"Quand j'ai un évêque avec moi, je démolirais et je rebâtirais Notre-Dame, je me moque pas mal du gouvernement!"

(Ibid., pp. 274-275)

While profiting from the Church at the office, he can also profit from its indulgence at home where he enjoys the favors of his skinny mistress Gasparine.

The arrogant and irrepressible little Saccard of L'Argent shares Compardon's interest in religion and even has "la faculté heureuse de croire, dès que l'exigeait l'intérêt de ses plans". He uses a powerful argument to convince the vacillating Countess of Beauvilliers to invest her money in his Banque Universelle. He reassures her with his usual flare: "C'est Dieu lui-même qui vous inspire, madame, soyen-en certaine" (L'Argent, p. 238). Unfortunately for the bank's investors, Saccard's assurances have not
come from God, and they will lose everything.

A final example of using religion for mercenary reasons is found in Vérité. Madame Edouard, who is associated with her sister-in-law in a stationery store, "pratiquait, non pas qu'elle fût d'une foi solide, mais les nécessités de son commerce avant tout, elle avait une clientèle pieuse qu'elle ne pouvait mécontenter" (Vérité, p. 75).

There are other benefits to be reaped from religion, although they are perhaps less tangible. Madame Juzeur, for example, "était toujours si seule, si triste! Heureusement, la religion la consolait" (Pot-Bouille, p. 112). Certainly one of the best examples of this emotional exploitation of religion (among many in Zola's novels) is that of the pretty and very faddish Madame Deberle who is said to be "touched" by it:

La religion lui plaisait comme une émotion de bon goût. Donner des fleurs aux églises, avoir de petites affaires avec les prêtres, gens polis, discrets et sentant bon, venir en toilette à l'église, où elle affectait d'accorder une protection mondaine au Dieu des pauvres, lui procurait des joies particulières, d'autant plus que son mari ne pratiquait pas et que ses dévotions prenaient le goût du fruit défendu.

(Une Page d'Amour, p. 918)

It is she whose adulterous "liaison" with Malignon will be cut short by her lover's indecisiveness and by the untimely arrival of Hélène, who has solved the mystery of their tryst.
In a conversation in *Pot-Bouille* from which we have already quoted, the men agree that

*Jamais l'Eglise ne disparaîtrait, parce qu'elle était la base de la famille, comme elle était le soutien naturel des gouvernements.*

*(Op. cit., p. 95)*

This same reasoning, which characterizes our third point, is evident in *Germinal* in which the bourgeois justify the massacre of the miners on the ground that it was "une leçon nécessaire" (p. 1522). After this "lesson," they feel it their duty to go into the corons to heal their victims' wounds.

The most articulate statement of this position is found, however, in *Le Ventre de Paris*, in which Zola portrays the world of the "petit commerçant" or the "petite bourgeoisie." While Lisa Quenu doesn't practice religion, she considers herself honest and believes that that is good enough. And she does not like anyone to criticize religion in front of her because, for most people at least, she regards it as an absolute necessity. She thinks of it as "une police qui aidait à maintenir l'ordre, et sans laquelle il n'y avait pas de gouvernement possible" (p. 807). When Gavard says that the churches ought to be closed, she offers a classic summary of the middle-class ethic:

*Vous seriez bien avancé! ... On se massacrerait dans les rues, au bout d'un*
mois, et l'on se trouverait forcè
d'inventer un autre bon Dieu.
(Loc. cit.)

As for the priests, whom she doesn't care for herself,
"il en faut, parce qu'il en faut" (Loc. cit.).

Although the vast majority of Zola's bourgeois characters who are specifically associated to some extent with religion use it to their own advantage and ignore the moral demands which it would make upon them, there are two characters in this group who are exceptions, and who are exceptions for different reasons.

The first of these is Pot-Bouille's Théophile Vabre, who is, as far as we know, no more religious than his completely areligious father, now at the point of death. But Théophile, if not a practicing Christian, is also not a hypocrite, a rare quality in one who shares the same domicile with what is probably the greatest concentration of hypocrites in all of literature. When Abbé Mauduit insinuates that old Vabre should leave the world with the Church's blessings upon him, Théophile raises objections, and this in spite of the fact that the women in the family agree with the priest. The dissenter points out that not only did their father not practice Christianity, but that he had gone so far as to read Voltaire. He says that it would be better not to give him the Church's last rites if they can't ask him about it. It would be, he says, "comme si vous apportiez le bon Dieu à ce meuble" (Pot-
Bouille, p. 207). He sees both the hypocrisy and the futility of such a gesture. The women insist, however: "Quand ce ne serait que pour le quartier," says Clotilde (Ibid., p. 208).

Is there one genuine Christian among Zola's bourgeois whose religion is not shown to be a panacea, an escape, a covering or profitable accoutrement? There is at least one--Georges Hamelin of L'Argent. And although his faith stands him in good stead after the collapse of the Banque Universelle and his subsequent arrest, he does not practice his faith only because of what it does for him. He is a "croyant sincère" because he was reared in the strictest Catholicism and has not left his childhood faith. Zola says, "il pratiquait, très convaincu..." (L'Argent, p. 60). There is, however, another quite Zolean explanation for Hamelin's sincere faith and practice which takes some of the quality away from his experience: he sometimes reveals "une telle naïveté, qu'on l'aurait jugé un peu sot" (Ibid., pp. 59-60). His dream of enthroning the Pope at Jerusalem speaks adequately to the point, but although he is a bit foolish and very gullible he is not a hypocrite. This fact alone should be some indication that Hamelin doesn't totally displease Zola as a type. It is one thing to live in ignorance or to believe certain things because of an innate naïveté; it is quite another to know the difference between goodness
and corruption, to live a life of decadence while exhibiting to the world a veneer of decency and moral rectitude. This is the unforgivable sin for Zola. Ignorance can be corrected through education, but hypocrisy must be destroyed.

It is perhaps significant that it is upon the "peuple" that Zola builds his future world. Though full of vices, they are not generally hypocrites. Their sins are most often the result of ignorance and of social and economic inequality. Their crimes will disappear once they are educated. The bourgeoisie, on the contrary, is evil because of moral decay, the result of having too much. It will not survive as a class, but will be melded into the larger and more vibrant masses, "cette force nouvelle du peuple..." (Vérité, p. 119) which contains "les énergies de demain..." (Ibid., p. 191).

Aristocracy

The aristocrats who people Zola's fictional world and who are in some way related to the Church fare little better than the bourgeoisie. The impact of the indictment against them is somewhat muted, however, perhaps because they are less numerous. They are, of course, those scions of the great aristocratic fortunes of the past who are shown to be as decadent as the worst bourgeois of Pot-Bouille, Paris or Fécondité. Such is Princess Rosemonde of
Paris, who tastes all the vices including lesbianism, but she, like the others, shows no interest in religion. There remain, nevertheless, some aristocrats who do have some relationship with the Church.

One of the most important of these is Princess d'Orviedo (L'Argent), who has without love married a man whom she soon considers repugnant. Her husband amasses an enormous fortune which he leaves to his still young wife upon his death. But she, being of a religious turn of mind, cannot live with this money whose scandalous origin is revealed to her by an anonymous night-visitor. Henceforth, she "qui n'avait pas été amante et qui n'avait pu être mère," experiences a "véritable passion pour les pauvres, pour les faibles, les déshérités, les souffrants, ceux dont elle croyait détenir les millions volés..." (L'Argent, pp. 52-53).

Once she has returned this tainted money to those whom she believes to be its rightful owners, she feels a need to withdraw from the world and to rest. She reveals her plan to enter a convent "où elle avait depuis longtemps marqué sa place..." and where she will find "Le repos, l'éternel repos!" (Ibid., p. 363).

While Zola might well approve of the Princess' returning to the poor the money which has been stolen from them, he would doubtless consider her retreat to the convent an escape from reality and a waste of life. The Princess
does not, of course, desire life in entering the convent's walled confines. The reverse is true—she desires the peace of death. She also intends to do penance for allowing her house to be turned into the despicable Banque Universelle by Saccard. Of this motive she says, "Enfin, le mal est fait, la maison sera purifiée, et moi, oh! moi, je ne suis plus, Dieu me pardonnera" (Ibid., p. 365).

Such motives, however, are not those of the young Alice de Beauvilliers, daughter of the Countess, who has decided to retreat to the convent for less spiritual reasons. She, at the moment of being violently raped by Saccard's bastard son, Victor, is "sur le point de se donner à Dieu, ne pouvant avoir un mari, comme toutes les autres!" (Loc. cit.). The convent is seen as a refuge to which one may repair if hopes do not materialize and in which the stigma attached to the exclusion from the desired and respected role of wife and mother may be lessened and rendered more bearable. As the daughter and mother wonder if "cette rencontre imbécile et abominable" (Loc. cit.) has a meaning, Zola seems to be saying that life, the irrepressible force, will go on one way or another, and even through violence, regardless of whether certain young women cut themselves off from it or not. Victor, "lâché par le monde," will be sowing his wild seed throughout the city while the true flower will have retreated to a garden of death.
Besides the quite bourgeois and fantastically wealthy Baron Duvillard of Paris, whose ancestor, Grégoire Duvillard, had been made a Baron by Louis-Philippe, two other aristocrats should be mentioned. The first, Gérard de Quinsac, also of Paris, is from an old aristocratic, though now impoverished family. Gérard is, in short, a "fainéant" who marries Duvillard's deformed and homely daughter for her money. In fact, he marries his mistress' daughter. Although the very Catholic mother of Gérard has some scruples about this marriage which she considers beneath him, love of son and money are the determining factors. The mother, a somewhat marginal character, does not let her deep religious beliefs prevent the joining of her son with Duvillard's millions.

The same kind of arrangement occurs in Vérité in which the Count de Sangleboeuf, also impoverished, marries Lia Nathan, daughter of a wealthy Jewish banker, now a Baron and a Catholic. The Count wants Lia's ten millions and Nathan wants to have a son-in-law who is a Count of the "très vieille et authentique noblesse..." (p. 97). The arrangement is therefore mutually advantageous.

The now Catholic Baron Nathan has even become anti-semitic, so great is his desire to be a

...prince de la fortune, salué, honoré, adoré, surtout délivré de la crainte obsédante des coups de pied et des crachats.

(Loc. cit.)
This religious "conversion" means that he will now be one of the "marchands d'argent catholiques" *(Loc. cit.)*, and that he will share his son-in-law's devotion to the royalist cause and above all to the army. Indeed, Nathan, "devenu royaliste intransigeant, se trouva beaucoup plus royaliste que son gendre..." *(Ibid., p. 99).* He feels a "besoin du prêtre et du soldat, pour lui garder son bien mal aquis" *(Ibid., p. 465).*

In the person of Sangleboeuf, Zola attacks in particular that combination of convictions which he possibly dislikes as much as hypocrisy—an inflexible belief in and devotion to the Church and to the army. Although Sangleboeuf

...n'avait servi que dans les garnisons
...il se vantait d'avoir mis à son chevet deux ém블èmes, toute sa religion, le crucifix et le drapeau, son drapeau, pour lequel il n'était malheureusement pas mort.

*(Vérité, p. 103)*

He represents the Church-Army coalition which feels that the effort to exonerate Simon/Dreyfus is a direct attack on France herself which jeopardizes her very existence. He represents what might be called a military Faith which incorporates an attitude expressed by Richard Griffiths:

...the army is seen by many people not only as defending France and the faith against outside influences and enlarging the reign of Christ on earth, but also as being the symbol and the keeper of that political order on which the Christian religion is founded.

*(The Reactionary Revolution, p. 231)*
In short, he is a proponent of the belief that France, as the "fille aînée" of the Church, is a protector and guarantor of the rights and claims of the Church, which in turn champions and supports the Army, which protects France. It is a closed circle of belief whose proponents want to ensure that "les sans-Dieu, les sans-patrie, les insulteurs de l'armée" (Op. cit., p. 103) will be continually defeated. This concern is the extent of Count Sangleboeuf's religion, which is both reactionary and immoral. Zola accepts neither the crucifix, nor the flag representative of chauvinistic immorality.

The religion of the nobility is therefore as shallow as that of the peasants and as ego-centric as that of the bourgeoisie. It is something which one defends because it defends the nation and helps to provide stability for the political and social order. From Zola's point of view, however, this position is ultimately indefensible: the privileged, like the Countess de Beauvilliers, a "croyante des jours d'autrefois, en lutte contre son siècle," (L'Argent, p. 366) will be swept away by his new utopian order (Vérité, p. 662).

The Individual

In our study of social classes and religion in Zola's novels we have seen that there are two primary attitudes toward God and the Christian faith held by them.
Either God and religion are seen as less and less relevant to man in the modern world, in which science seems at least to make man progressively the master of his fate, or faith in them is maintained outwardly as a means to some non-spiritual end. While several of the Rougon-Macquart novels provide some important illustrations of the first point—the case of the miners at Montsou, for example, who see at last that God and the Church are either unwilling or unable to help them and that their own efforts will be the answer to their dilemma; the farmers of La Terre who believe that the production of their crops depends on their hard work and favorable weather—the point is most cogently made in Le Docteur Pascal, the last of that series, and in the utopian and scientifically oriented novels of Zola's last years.

The second point, the continued outward practice of a religion which is no longer believed but maintained to conceal immorality or to underpin the government or a cherished social status, is described chiefly in such novels as Pot-Bouille, Le Ventre de Paris, and Paris. In them the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy use religion to conserve the status quo. In each of these cases religion is shown to be empty and passé and without redeeming features. Its continued existence can find little if any justification, and Zola makes it clear that he looks forward to the day when it will no longer be a part of liberated man's life.
Zola, however, has not overlooked the individual religious experience in his treatment of the collective. To be sure, some of the cases most revealing of class or group attitudes are individual in nature. In addition to these, however, there remain a number of examples of individual faith which should be considered if our study is to be complete. In this section we will see what kinds of people believe (or do not believe), what some of their reasons for believing are, and some of the effects of their belief on their lives. Our study will include some of Zola's objections to the Faith which have not already been discussed.

Believers

Although Zola admits that some cases of religious belief are found among well-educated and intellectual people, he almost invariably presents such believers in the abstract and without individual identity. Such is the case, for example, in *La Joie de Vivre* in which Doctor Cazenove tries to explain to Lazare why some of the educated young men of the day have given up their faith in science as a cure-all and have turned to religion for solutions. He speaks of

'...nos jeunes gens d'aujourd'hui, qui ont mordu aux sciences, et qui en sont malades, parce qu'ils n'ont pu y satisfaire les vieilles idées d'absolu, sucrées avec le lait de leurs nourrices.'

(*La Joie de Vivre*, p. 993)

He believes that the main difficulty of these young
disillusioned ones is their impatience:

"Vous voudriez trouver dans les sciences, d'un coup et en bloc, toutes les vérités, lorsque nous les déchiffrons à peine, lorsqu'elle ne seront sans doute jamais qu'une éternelle enquête. Alors, vous les niez, vous vous rejetez dans la foi qui ne veut plus de vous, et vous tombez, au pessimisme..."

(Loc. cit.)

Lazare tempted himself to adopt the same remedy for his own existential malaise, and believing himself "parfois près de rentrer dans l'heureux âge d'ignorance, où l'on n'a plus peur" (Ibid., p. 992), resists the temptation, even though it means in his own particular case a continuing and torturing preoccupation with the questions of death and life.

One notable example of an educated individual adopting the Christian faith is Doctor Chassaigne (Lourdes), who abandons his trust in science because he recognizes its inability to explain every physical phenomenon and particularly because he desires to see his recently departed wife and daughter in heaven.

The overwhelming majority of thinking people who appear in Zola's books reject the Christian faith and adopt other philosophies of life. Many of them seem unable to accept anything which they cannot fully understand. Pauline Quenu falls into this category. She, who is described as "docile et intelligente," learns willingly, "même quand les matières la rebutaient" (La Joie de Vivre, p.
847). However, "Un seul livre l'ennuyait, le catéchisme ... Les idées abstraites n'entraient que très difficilement dans son cerveau..." (Loc. cit.).

When Madame Caroline discovers the infidelities of Saccard who is her lover, she falls into a terrible depression. She would like to be able to find strength in a religious faith as her brother Hamelin does. She compares herself with him who is "heureux de croire...de puiser une sereine force dans sa foi...si droit, si tranquille, sans une révolte, sans une lutte même" (L'Argent, p. 205). She thinks of herself "qui depuis deux mois, luttait et souffrait, elle qui ne croyait plus, brûlée de lectures, dévastée de raisonnements..." (Loc. cit.), and wishes she had remained as simple and naive as he. But she cannot believe, and in the end surrenders her effort to comprehend the reason for things, including life itself, and allows herself to be carried along by the irresistible current of life which creates a certain gaiety within her:

...elle n'était plus qu'une créature heureuse du beau ciel et de l'air doux, goûtant l'unique jouissance de se bien porter... Ah! la joie d'être, est-ce qu'au fond il en existe une autre? (Ibid., p. 397)

She, like others among Zola's characters who come face to face with the religious question, rejects belief because she wants "to live." The same is true of Pauline who loves "la santé" (La Joie de Vivre, p. 854) and "la vie" (Ibid., pp. 856-857). "Elle voulait vivre...faire de la vie, elle
qui aimait la vie!" (Ibid., p. 104). Similarly, Félicien, who has refused to enter religious orders contrary to his father's will says: "Ah! vivre, vivre, que c'est bon! Vivre pour aimer et être aimé!"

Doctor Pascal is, of course, Zola's "raisonneur par excellence," who is never tempted to adopt the religious solution to his own problems and in fact saves Clotilde from her mystical inclinations. And, like Pauline Quenu, he appears far more moral, far more capable of self-sacrifice and love than most of those characters who believe. He is, as his religiously fanatical housekeeper Martine puts it, a "saint homme... Un vrai coeur d'or, qui s'ôterait les morceaux de la bouche...et toujours gai, une vraie bénédiction!" (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 923).

If most of Zola's thinkers reject religion, it is equally true that many of those people who do believe are depicted as ignorant, simple or naive. Like Abbé Horteur (La Joie de Vivre), they are of limited intellect and imagination although they may have other redeeming qualities. Hamelin is, for example, naive and gullible, but of a pure heart. Martine is uneducated and superstitious. This is not to imply, however, that all ignorant or uneducated people are believers. Quite to the contrary. Our study of the religion of social classes has revealed that such is not the case. Perhaps the most remarkable individual proof of this fact is the French servant, Victorine Bosquet, in
Rome, a woman of "bel équilibre et de tranquille activité" (p. 338), who is the only person to keep her head when tragedy strikes the household of Cardinal Boccanera. Victorine sees no need to believe, either as a comfort in this life or as a preparation for death.

Other believers are presented as emotionally disturbed. Serge Mouret, whose story is told in La Faute de l'abbé Mouret, is early described as a young man "d'un tempérament si nerveux qu'il avait, à la moindre imprudence, des indispositions de fille..." (La Conquete de Plassans, p. 1037). He was also "d'esprit religieux, très tendre et très grave" (Loc. cit.). An "accident nerveux de sa race" (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1011) has caused him to enter the priesthood. His nervous and sensitive disposition has no doubt been inherited from his mother, Marthe, who is shown to have occasional "crises nerveuses" (La Conquete de Plassans, p. 1103).

Among these disturbed believers is one whom Zola does not create, but takes rather from real life. She is Bernadette Soubirous, the mystic of Lourdes, who is responsible for the development of Lourdes as a holy place whose healing ministry has become well-known throughout the world. Pierre Froment, Zola's protagonist in Lourdes, seems fascinated by the person and impact of Bernadette. He tries to understand and explain the apparent miraculous cures experienced by many of the sick who visit the Grotto.
That such "miracles" occur he has no doubt, but concludes that they are miracles only in the sense that science has not yet succeeded in explaining them satisfactorily. The day will come, of course, when their causes will be better understood. The seemingly "inexplicable" is in reality only the "inexpliqué."

Bernadette's visions of the Virgin must also stand the scrutiny of reason. Here again, Zola does not deny that they occurred or that the shepherd girl's religious experiences are real to her. He does conclude, and not too surprisingly, that she and her visions are a product of her heredity and environment. The following lines help to describe Bernadette and her case:

Bernadette "avait un asthme nerveux... était toujours malade." She was "retardée dans son esprit... une bonne petite fille... très sage," who "ne fut guère intelligente..." who "préférait les livres pieux."

With her "imagination frappée" she sometimes "avait... de la peine à s'endormir." "Elle était très superstitieuse" (Lourdes, pp. 93-95). As for her surroundings, "Toute la contrée, d'ailleurs, dévote et simple d'esprit, était comme peuplée de mystères... Et quelle richesse de contes terrifiants!" She hears "les aventures des loups-garous..." (Ibid., p. 95). She also hears stories of the saints and of the Virgin and sees them depicted in brightly colored pictures. Hadn't she heard the story of the
...Vierge qui s'était montrée à Mélanie et à Maximin... pour leur confier un grand secret....? ... Sans doute, cette histoire admirable, Bernadette l'avait écoutée passionnément... puis l'avait emportée au désert de feuilles où elle passait les jours, pour la revivre...

(Ibid., p. 98)

Pierre's conclusion "Selon le mot brutal d'un médecin," is that

...cette fillette de quatorze ans, tourmentée dans sa puberté tardive, déjà ravagée par un asthme, n'était en somme qu'une irrégulière de l'hystérie."

(Ibid., p. 105)

albeit without violent physical crises such as the stiffening of the body's muscles. Her case is a "cas spécial," therefore, but here again, "l'inexpliqué seul constitue le miracle..." (Loc. cit.).

Some Reasons for Belief

Zola, in his obvious desire to explain every case of individual faith which appears in his novels, does not limit himself to categorizing believers as disillusioned intellectuals, as the ignorant or the emotionally ill. He gives the reasons why particular persons or groups are attracted to the Faith. In most cases these reasons are not new, but they do serve to point out where Zola places the emphasis as he strives to comprehend the causes of religious belief and to help us see a more complete picture of "physiological and social man" as he views him.

Certainly the chief characteristic of the believers
who crowd into Lourdes is the desire to be healed or to see loved ones healed. Their motive is perhaps the most common of all those which Zola catalogues, particularly in the light of the descriptions of the sufferers which he gives. They are an "affreux défilé" who have

Des têtes mangées par l'eczéma...des nez et des bouches dont l'éléphantiasis avait fait des groins informes...des hydropiques, gonflées comme des outres...des phtisiques, tremblant la fièvre, épuisées de dysenterie...les dîfformités des contractures...les cœurs plantés de travers, les pauvres êtres cassés et broyés...

(Lourdes, pp. 366-367)

There is nothing more naturally human than to desire relief from such afflictions. Zola sees the search for such relief, however, as a powerful incentive to continue believing in an unreasonable religion whose God seems to be totally capricious in his selection of those whom he cures. Still, though perhaps ninety percent of those who seek the Virgin's favor do not receive it, they continue to believe that if only they pray long enough or give enough or in some other way please her they will be healed—perhaps the following year. Faith based on the desire to find physical healing is indeed tenacious.

Faith is seen also as a solution for other problems common to man or simply for consolation. Pot-Bouille's Marie Pichon, involved in an affair with Octave which creates within her emotions which she cannot fully
understand, goes to Mass at Saint-Roch where she cries for a long time. She finds that "la religion remplaçait tout" (p. 75). Madame Juzeur and Berthe of the same book seek the same kind of consolation in religion. Marthe Mouret for a time finds a kind of emotional fulfillment and physical repose in her visits to Saint-Saturnin (La Conquête de Plassans, p. 1010).

Doctor Pascal comments on this aspect of religious faith to Clotilde, who is still largely under its influence:

'Certes, au simple point de vue du bonheur, la foi est un solide bâton de voyage, et la marche devient aisée et paisible, quand on a la chance de la posséder.

(Le Docteur Pascal, p. 992)

Another prominent reason for belief is the desire to see once again those loved ones whom death has taken. This motive is so powerful that Doctor Chassaigne of Lourdes becomes a Christian toward the end of his life after years of atheism. The same desire tempts Lazare to come to the Faith in order to see his mother again. Although he does not succumb to the temptation, he is none the happier for his victory.

The fear of death and hell also drives some of Zola's characters to the Christian faith. It is no doubt one of the chief reasons for Martine's faith, for she uses it as a tool in her effort to reconvert the now unbelieving
yet beloved Clotilde. Martine cannot understand
Clotilde's lack of fear: "Ne tremblait-elle plus, à
l'idée d'aller en enfer bouillir éternellement?" (Le
Docteur Pascal, p. 1080). Clotilde cannot repress a
smile at the maid's naïveté.

Zola is also quick to recognize that man simply
has a pronounced need to believe in something which is
above and beyond him. Clotilde confesses to Pascal that
if she went to church "c'était qu'il me manquait quelque
chose et que je le cherchais" (Ibid., p. 1062). It is a
"besoin d'au-delà, une certitude que le vaste monde ne
s'arrête point à la sensation, qu'il y a tout un autre
monde inconnu, dont il faut tenir compte" (Ibid., p. 932).
For Pascal this search is yet another proof of man's in-
herent need for illusion and deception. Pierre explains
the believers' rush toward the Pope in the same way:
they "need" to believe (Rome, p. 250). At that novel's
end he concludes that only the eternal battle of science
against the unknown will gradually reduce man's thirst for
the divine (Ibid., p. 701).

Many people are attracted to Catholicism by its
pomp and its spectacle. This reason for faith is the tar-
get of particular scorn. As Zola sees it, the pageantry
and pomp of Catholic masses and festivals are cleverly
used by the Church to mesmerize believers into a total
surrender of themselves and of their possessions. Most
revealing of this phenomenon is the audience with the Pope of the International Pilgrimage of the Denier de Saint-Pierre which Pierre Froment witnesses. During the ceremony he experiences "cette toute-puissance, cette contagion irrésistible de la foi" (Rome, p. 247) which grips this "foule d'effrénée passion" (Ibid., p. 245). It is a crowd "gaie...comme si elle se fût trouvée dans quelque théâtre divin..." (Ibid., p. 264). The papal audience is a magnificent spectacle (Ibid., pp. 265, 268) during which a rain of gifts falls upon the Pontiff and women try to kiss his footprints or eat the gilded arms of his chair (Ibid., pp. 251-252). All of this shocks Pierre's reason, of course. Zola sums up his feelings about such scenes when he states that

...la religion n'est ainsi que l'hommage public qu'ils (i.e., Le clergé) lui rendent (à Dieu), avec l'apparat, la magnificence qui gagne les foules, dans l'unique but de la faire régner sur l'humanité ravie et conquise, ou plutôt de régner en son lieu et place...
(Ibid., p. 601)

One of the chief criticisms of Christianity and of the Catholic Church which Zola makes is directed toward what he perceives to be a pronounced emphasis placed on escape from the flesh and from the world. This desire incorporates a particular distaste for the physical side of life which encourages the believer to seek relief and release in the spiritual realm. It is a tendency with
which Zola has no patience, for he is convinced that man must accept life as he meets it, with its ugliness as well as its beauty, with its pain as well as its pleasure, if he is to find fulfillment and happiness in his experience—at least if he is to find "la sérénité, sinon le bonheur ..." (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 953). One must for this reason come to grips with life, determine to make the most of it and even try to ameliorate it. Christianity, on the contrary, leads to hatred of the flesh and the physical world. People who fear life and feel uncomfortable wherever it is strongly manifested often tend, therefore, to become believers as a way of escape and safety.

This inclination toward the mortification of self is strongest among the clergy, but it also occurs among lay believers. In the case of the clergy, one of Zola's most potent attacks against the tendency is in Le Rêve. In La Légende dorée of Jacques de Voragine which Angélique reads avidly, she finds that the saints despised prosperity and health and believed that "la joie commence aux privations qui tuent le corps" (Le Rêve, p. 832). She discovers among the martyrs "Un dédain, un dégoût de la chair, de la loque humaine" which "aiguise la douleur d'une volupté céleste" (Ibid., p. 835). Women especially present a great temptation to the clergy which must be overcome and even totally destroyed if possible. Monseigneur d'Hautecoeur has entered holy orders after the untimely
death of his wife in order to seek escape from his sorrow and death for his persistent passion. Nothing, however, has proved efficacious for him: "L'âge, vingt années de prières, Dieu descendu en lui, rien n'avait tué l'homme ancien" (Ibid., p. 940). In his moments of crisis

Il se frappait la poitrine du poing, il sanglotait dans la pénitence inefficace, criant qu'on devrait interdire le sacrédoce à ceux qui ont goûté à la femme, qui ont gardé d'elle des liens de sang.

(Loc. cit.)

It is only after spending entire nights on his knees, "la peau écorchée d'un cilice," during which "il s'efforçait de chasser le fantôme de la femme regrettée" and in fighting his "revolte contre Dieu, qui la lui avait prise" (Loc. cit.) that he succeeds in calming himself "au petit jour, épuisé, dans le mépris de lui-même et le dégoût du monde" (Loc. cit.). He considers his passion "la bête mauvaise, qu'il aurait voulu écraser, pour retomber à la paix anéantie de l'amour divin!" (Ibid., p. 941). If he cannot destroy it in himself, he determines to destroy it in his son, whom he hopes to force into the priesthood (Loc. cit.). Happily, the son, who wants to "live," will refuse to follow his father's orders.

Probably the most important statement which Zola makes concerning the attempt by a priest to escape life is the story of Serge Mouret whose idyll with Albine is ended by his fear of liberation. Although surrounded by a
Nature bursting with life which even invades his church—the sanctuary in which he seeks safety—and although "la nature complice" does serve to aid Albine in her role as temptress and potential savior, Serge also succeeds in mortifying his sexual appetite, and rededicates himself to what Zola often calls "une religion de la mort." Serge's fear of life and his disgust for himself are stated repeatedly throughout the novel. Toward the book's end, as his struggle reaches its climax, he beseeches Jesus to show Albine that "nous sommes poussière, ordure, damnation!" (La Faute de l'abbé Mouret, p. 1473). He desires to remain at Jesus' feet "immobile, jusqu'à ce que la mort me pourrisse" (Loc. cit.). He wants to see, to feel, to hear nothing which will disturb his adoration of the Savior (Loc. cit.). To Albine he says:

\[
\text{Tu avais raison, c'est la mort qui est ici, c'est la mort que je veux, la mort qui délivre, qui sauve de toutes les pourritures...} \\
\text{(Loc. cit.)}
\]

At the moment of their final rupture he says

\[
'J'ai de l'encens jusque dans le dernier pli de mes organes. C'est cet embaumement qui fait ma sérénité, la mort tranquille de ma chair, la paix que je goûte à ne pas vivre... Ah! que rien ne me dérange de mon immobilité!' \\
\text{(Ibid., p. 1506)}
\]

Of Serge's refusal to leave his "tomb" for good, Doctor Pascal says that he is "repris ensuite par l'Eglise, l'éternelle guerre à la vie, luttant pour la mort de son
sexe..." (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1011).

If this "revolt" of the senses in the life of Abbé Mouret has been put down at great cost to Albine and to himself, such will not be the case with Abbé Pierre Froment, whose story is in one way that of a slow and evolutionary freeing of himself and of his sexual desires from the control which his religion has exercised over them. His story is in a real sense that of the rebirth of a past servant of the Church who has come to see that the Church, like a vulture, derives its life from death and possesses no means within itself to impart life. Pierre's awakening and gradual liberation are chronicled in the Trois Villes novels in which his exposure to Lourdes and the sensual Madame Volmar, to Rome and the vibrant Benedetta and to Paris and the healthy and reasonable Marie progressively creates within him the desire to know love and to become at last a man. Indeed, after his departure from the Church, when Marie suggests that he change his robe for conventional clothes, he is fearful of finding that his manhood has been withered by his previous vocation. His removal of the "soutane" signals his return to life and virility and allows him to eventually become the father of the messiahs—"cette nichée d'évangélistes"—who appear in the later utopian novels. He will henceforth accept and live life with a positive and courageous attitude.
Some Results of Belief

What one might term the "successful" religious experience is almost non-existent in Zola's works. Certainly, if we mean by "successful" something which a healthy person experiences and which leads to happiness and tranquillity made evident by a calm and positive acceptance of and commitment to life, then it is a rare occurrence indeed. By definition the healthy and well-adjusted people in society do not need nor do they desire a theistic philosophy of life. They can cope adequately with its vicissitudes without reliance on supernatural help or a belief that such help is available. On the contrary, the believer is the weak person (most often the woman), and one who, despite a characteristic tenacity of belief, most often encounters great disappointment involving physical and emotional stress resulting from the religious experience itself. Marthe Mouret, for example, often "rentrait brisée" from her religious practices. Again, Zola tells us that "La religion la brisait" (La Conquête de Plassans, p. 1010), and that it exacerbates her growing insanity: "La nuit suivante, Marthe eut une crise épouvantable. Elle avait assisté, le matin, à une longue cérémonie religieuse..." (Ibid., p. 1134). Pascal notes similar symptoms in Clotilde, who "ne sortait plus de l'église, rentrait brisée..." (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 983). Even Martine, whose devotion "finit par tourner à la manie" (Ibid., p.
1080), is not exempt from the experience. She spends her free time in the Church where "elle...restait abîmée ..." (Loc. cit.). Likewise in Le Rêve, Zola speaks of "le soupir oppressé des fidèles" (p. 827), and of the crowds in the cathedral "qui avaient espéré et désespéré devant ses autels" (Ibid., p. 863).

The most notable and most terrible example of the results of the religious experience is that of Bernadette Soubirous. The following passage ends Zola's Lourdes and expresses our point most adequately.

Ah! tristes hommes, pauvre humanité malade, affamée d'illusion, qui, dans la lassitude de ce siècle finissant, éperdue et meurtrie d'avoir acquis goulûment trop de science, se croit abandonnée des médecins de l'âme et du corps, en grand danger de succomber au mal incurable, et retourne en arrière, et demande le miracle de sa guérison aux Lourdes mystiques d'un passé mort à jamais! Là-bas, Bernadette, le nouveau Messie de la souffrance, si touchante dans sa réalité humaine, est la leçon terrible, l'holocauste retranché du monde, la victime condamnée à l'abandon, à la solitude et à la mort, frappée de la déchéance de n'avoir pas été femme, ni épouse ni mère, parce qu'elle avait vu la sainte Vierge. (Lourdes, pp. 380-381)

Certainly, Georges Hamelin and Marie de Guersaint would have to be considered the happiest believers to appear in Zola's novels. Georges is not described as emotionally ill, but he is unconsciously naive and gullible. Even though Marie does have serious psychological problems, she apparently finds happiness following
her cure at Lourdes. It should be noted, however, that her happiness involves a promise to the Virgin that she will remain unmarried and chaste. Such a fate, as Zola presents it, is a terrible price to pay for a felicity which is in reality based only on illusion and man's profound need to believe. The religious experience is almost always negative in Emile Zola's novels.

CONCLUSION

In the collective, Zola's characters tend to view their relationship with the Church (what we have referred to as the "religious experience") in ways which derive from their own social group experiences and aspirations. In every case it is seen as something to be used to advantage if possible and rejected whenever it does not contribute to the satisfying of group needs. It is never seen as an experience which transforms the group into a servant to be used by God for his own ends.

The peasant and laboring communities which are presented in La Terre, La Faute de l'abbé Mouret and Germinal have for the most part ceased to be seriously concerned with the spiritual question at all. After all, it is evident that God does not hold back the destructive hail or the ruinous drought. Nor does his Church energetically support the oppressed and disadvantaged of the mines and factories. What, therefore, is to be gained by
adherence to beliefs and hopes which seem to be contra-
dicted by everyday experience? For the peasants it is
sufficient to call in the Church for the traditional ceremo-
monies of baptism, marriage and death. Such ceremonies
are merely the last vestige of the once powerful influence
which religious practice held over them. In *Germinal*, how-
ever, the miners are in large part no longer even interest-
ed in these ceremonies.

The bourgeoisie remains less free of religious in-
fluence because it continues to feel a need to hide its
corrupt practices behind a façade of decency and decorum.
It is not that God plays a very important role in their
lives, for in fact he does not. It cannot often be said
that morality figures at all in their deliberations and
actions. But the appearance of morality, the front which
masks the deeper corruption is an important and necessary
element in the middle-class life style as Zola sees it.
The Church, in its desire to maintain a solid relationship
with the middle class provides the required shield which
cloaks whenever possible their sins from public scrutiny.
The bourgeoisie is therefore able to continue to enjoy
its still socially proscribed pleasures. When exposure,
embarrassment and hurt do occur, solace is found in the
Church's function as comforter and counselor to its flock.

In addition, the middle class finds a strong ally
in the Church as it seeks to maintain the social and
economic status quo. Its privileges and pleasures depend upon a political and social structure safe from attack and modification. The Church, at least outwardly, teaches a faith which militates against violence and social revolution. Its reactionary policies are seen as beneficial to both parishioner and priest.

Perhaps the aristocracy is much less inclined to maintain the façade of decency, but it is no less concerned with exploiting its alliance with the Church. It too is interested in maintaining the status quo. Its fidelity is, therefore, to Church and to Army, the two institutions through which it has traditionally exercised its greatest influence. It fears its demise if ever the bonds tying it to religion and the military are weakened or severed. As a result, it continues to practice at least ceremonially the Catholic religion and supports the Church's position whenever called upon to do so. Its ultimate disappearance is as certain as that of the Church, however. Both are seen to crumble in Travail and Vérité.

There does remain in individual men, nevertheless, a deep and almost insatiable thirst for the knowledge and experience of the divine. Generally speaking, the desire is there because man as an individual is a weak and frightened creature who finds himself in an inexplicable situation, without understanding of where he comes from or where he is going. In addition, he is the unfortunate
victim of physical and mental afflictions which often
make his earthly existence unbearable. Seeking relief, he
turns to whatever hope is held out to him, most often that
spurious yet calming hope offered by the Church. In his
effort to lessen his suffering he accepts it and thereby
becomes a slave to a system which uses his need to entrap
and control him.

Most often the persistent believers which Zola
presents are either unintelligent or quite limited in some
way. Such is not always the case, however. Even some in-
tellectuals are seen as succumbing to the allure of the
Faith either because materialism and science have not
satisfied their hunger for certainties or because they
desire to be re-united with deceased loved ones or need
other things which they hope to secure through prayer.

In general, the religious experience in Zola's
novels is not a happy experience. It provides a kind of
relief to those who need to be deceived, while others,
such as Bernadette, are caused to suffer deep anxiety and
even physical pain by their involvement with it. The cost
in terms of suffering and in wasted lives remains too
great to pay for the illusion that all is well in this
world and in the next for the believing soul.
CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH AS SEXUAL SURROGATE

INTRODUCTION

In his provocative book on the Rougon-Macquart, Henri Guillemin speaks of Zola and the "Deux problèmes qui le hantent..." -- two problems which are expressed in interrogative form: "Qu'est-ce que c'est, au vrai, l'appétit sexuel?"; "Et le christianisme, Dieu, les curés, que faut-il penser de tout cela?" (Présentation des Rougon-Macquart, p. 65). For Zola, these two questions, these two themes are inextricably bound together. He sees both the sexual drive and the religious drive or need as springing from deep within man, perhaps from the same tenebrous source. This association is clearly seen in the experience of Count Muffat, one of Nana's lovers:

Ses désirs d'homme, ses besoins d'une âme, se confondaient, semblaient monter, du fond obscur de son être, ainsi qu'un seul épanouissement du tronc de la vie. Il s'abandonnait à la force de l'amour et de la foi, dont le double levier soulève le monde.

(Nana, p. 1459)

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the sexual experience and the spiritual experience have much in common as Zola views them. In some cases they even seem
completely identical. Because of their identity in Zola's mind, he often describes the religious experience in emotional and sexual terms or employs religious metaphor to describe certain aspects of the sexual experience. Such descriptions reveal at least in part his conceptions of the character and function of both experiences.

Jean Borie has correctly pointed out that the Church as structure symbolizes for Zola two contradictory experiences. On the one hand its "caverne" represents burial, while on the other its "flèche" speaks of the rise toward ecstasy (Zola et les Mythes, p. 216). To these should be added the "nef" or "dôme" which speak of the Church's interior and represent the Church as both womb or place of refuge and which Zola also depicts as "alcôve" or place in which sexual needs are vicariously met. Although Borie's interpretation places the emphasis upon the psychological and mythical aspects of the experiences associated with these structural elements, we believe that they may also be properly viewed as religious experiences. However they are viewed, the sexual-religious relationship is clearly apparent and is important for our understanding of what we have referred to as the "individual religious experience."

The "'conversion' de pulsions sexuelles refoulées" (Ibid., p. 210 footnote) into religious experience plays an important role in Zola's conception of that experience, for the lack of sexual satisfaction drives the believer to
seek compensatory satisfaction in religion. It is also axiomatic that at the outset, the person thus driven into religion is unaware of the psyche's effort to substitute the one for the other. It comes as a kind of revelation to Hélène Mouret Grandjean, for example, when she, experiencing a simultaneous "besoin de foi, d'amour" (*Une Page d'Amour*, p. 968), hears the explanation of her condition offered by Abbé Jouve when he tells her: "Vous aimez, ma fille" (*Loc. cit.*). Jouve is far less surprised than she to recognize the symptoms. He continues:

'...j'ai vu souvent des femmes qui venaient à nous, avec des larmes, des prières, un besoin de croire et de s'agenouiller. Aussi ne puis-je guère me tromper aujourd'hui. Ces femmes, qui semblent chercher Dieu si ardemment, ne sont que de pauvres coeurs troublés par la passion. C'est un homme qu'elles adorent dans nos églises... (*Ibid.*, p. 969)

Hélène dares not protest, for she recognizes that she has sought to satisfy vicariously a passion for Doctor Deberle which she cannot conscientiously accept as legitimate.

Zola explains the religious fanaticism of Madame Duparque in the same way (*Vérité*). Having not been satisfied sexually by her late husband, and being now unable to accept a sexual relationship outside of marriage, she seeks relief in her devotion to the Savior. Because her daughter has known love and sexual satisfaction in her own marriage, she is unable to accept totally the strict religious faith and practices of her tyrannical mother. Sexual satisfaction
and faith may be interchangeable as they meet the deepest needs of the human animal, but they are not compatible and cannot exist together. One may displace and substitute for the other, but they remain mutually exclusive.

The example of Marthe Mouret is primary in any study of the religious and sexual themes in Zola. In her we find one of the fullest expressions of the conversion of the sexual drive into the religious drive. Faujas, the priest, becomes the object of her drive for fulfillment. And although Marthe does not seem to be lucid at first about her motives as she becomes progressively involved with him, Faujas has no illusions on the question. At last exasperated by her importunate religious practices, he says to Félicité Rougon: "...votre fille est folle, elle m'assomme, je ne veux plus m'occuper d'elle... Je payerais cher le garçon qui m'en débarrasserait." (La Conquête de Plassans, p. 1170).

Faujas refuses, however, to meet Marthe's sexual needs because of his conviction that chastity equals strength. The woman, as a result, represents "la tentation d'en bas, la lâcheté, la chute finale" for him (Ibid., p. 1176). His refusal also signals the total spiritual disillusionment of Marthe and parallels God's refusal to hear her prayers and to meet what she conceives to be her spiritual needs. Near hysteria results when she realizes that she will not be possessed by Faujas (nor by God) and
that despair will be the fruit of her quest. In her panic she tries vainly to find help in the substitution of God and the religious experience as a way to meet her needs. She implores Faujas to help her:

'Il y a autre chose, dites-moi qu'il y a autre chose...'  
...'Il n'y a rien, il n'y a rien!' continuit-elle...avec emportement; 'alors vous m'avez trompée....'

(Ibid., p. 1173)

She will not find the satisfaction she requires.

The Church and the Alcôve

Although the search for complete satisfaction of physical and emotional needs of a non-religious nature in religious faith and practice is ultimately unsuccessful, the Church often substitutes well enough as an "alcôve" in which the seeker's needs are temporarily met. This parallel between the Church and the alcôve has already been noted by others. Several passages will illustrate the point. While Lisa Quenu waits for a conference with Abbé Roustan, she passes the time strolling in Saint-Eustache Cathedral:

Elle alla au fond. Derrière le maître-autel, dans l'ombre de la double rangée des piliers, la chapelle de la Vierge est toute moite de silence et d'obscurité. Les vitraux, très sombres ne détachent que des robes de saints, à larges pans rouges et violets, brûlant comme des flammes d'amour mystique dans le recueillement, l'adoration muette des ténèbres. C'est un coin de
mystère, un enfoncement crépusculaire du paradis... Entre les piliers, des femmes sont toujours là, pâmées sur des chaises retournées, abîmées dans cette volupté noire.

Lisa, debout, regardait, très tranquillement. Elle n'était point nerveuse. Elle trouvait qu'on avait tort de ne pas allumer les lustres... Même il y avait une indécence dans cette ombre, un jour et un souffle d'alcôve, qui lui semblaient peu convenables...

Et, dans le frisson religieux de la chapelle, dans cette pâmoison muette d'amour, elle entendait très bien le roulement des flacons qui débouchaient de la rue Montmartre, derrière les saints rouges et violets des vitraux.

(Le Ventre de Paris, p. 809)

Lisa, it should be noted, needing to find neither religious nor sexual fulfillment in the Church is calm in this "chapelle-alcôve" and even finds it rather indecent.

The same is not true of Claire Méhudin, who enters the Church in obvious distress while Lisa is still there:

Là, se croyant cachée, elle agonisa, elle pleura à chaudes larmes, avec des ardeurs de prières qui la pliaient comme sous un grand vent, avec tout un emportement de femme qui se livre.

(Loc. cit.)

Claire is a woman who usually speaks of religion and priests "d'une façon à faire dresser les cheveux sur la tête" (Loc. cit.).

We have already mentioned that the Church plays an important role in the emotional life of Hélène Grandjean as she gradually falls in love with Henri Deberle, the husband of a cherished friend. It seems both to calm her and to encourage her passion at the same time. It provides
a vicarious satisfaction up to the point that she is made
to see her love by Abbé Jouve.

During her attendance at masses in honor of the
Virgin, Hélène "se grisait dans ce mystère d'amour et de
pureté..." (Une Page d'Amour, p. 922). She

...laissait entrer la dévotion dans son
cœur grand ouvert. Jamais elle n'aurait
cru qu'il fût si bon d'aimer...
l'épanouissement d'amour qu'elle portait
en elle...pouvait enfin monter de sa
poitrine, s'élargir en des prières...

(Loc. cit.)

The little church, with its quiet rustling of robes, with
its repetition of prayers, its smell of burning incense
and its glimmer of candles has become a place where her
flickering passion bursts into full flame:

La petite église semblait être venue
comme pour calmer et préparer la passion.
Hélène s'était tranquillisée d'abord,
heureuse de ce refuge de la religion où
elle croyait pouvoir aimer sans honte;
mais le travail sourd avait continué, et
quand elle s'éveillait de son
engourdissement dévêt, elle se sentait
envahie, liée par des liens qui auraient
arraché la chair, si elle avait voulu
les rompre.

(Ibid., p. 925)

Her ostensible love for Mary has been a subconsciously
acceptable substitute for her real love for Henri. She is
made anxious by this realization, but she now "chérissait
son mal," and "tremblait que le prêtre ne réussît à la
guérir" (Ibid., p. 926).¹

Marthe Mouret's experience in this "alcôve" is quite
similar but even more acutely erotic than that of Hélène. As with Hélène, she at first finds repose and escape from her emotional problem in the cathedral. Already in love with Faujas, and while alone with him on several occasions "elle avait de nouveau éclaté en sanglots nerveux, sans savoir pourquoi, ayant du bonheur à pleurer ainsi" (La Conquête de Plassans, pp. 1009–1010). Although still somewhat afraid of the Church,

Elle se trouvait bien, dans la vaste nef de Saint-Saturnin; elle y goûtait plus parfaitement ce repos tout physique qu'elle cherchait. Quand elle était là, elle oubliait tout...

(Ibid., p. 1010)

She experiences a positive sexual fulfillment as she prays in the Church, where "il lui fallait venir prendre la nourriture de sa passion" and where she can "s'évanouir dans le spasme de la communion" (Ibid., p. 1102). During this vicarious experience "elle ne sentait plus rien, son corps ne lui faisait plus mal. Elle était ravie à la terre, agonisant sans souffrance, devenant une pure flamme qui se consumait d'amour" (Loc. cit.).

Muffat's experience in the Church is no less explicit. Once his physical union with Nana is terminated, "Muffat retomba dans les stricts devoirs de la religion" (Nana, p. 1464). While Marthe has again failed to find relief in her religious experience after Faujas' scornful rejection of her, Muffat seeks and finds in the Church the
same sensations which he has found in Nana's arms:

C'était un prolongement religieux des voluptés de Nana, avec les balbutiements, les prières et les désespairs, les humilités d'une créature maudite écrasée sous la boue de son origine. Au fond des églises, les genoux glacés par les dalles, il retrouvait ses jouissances d'autrefois, les spasmes de ses muscles et les ébranlements délicieux de son intelligence, dans une même satisfaction des obscurs besoins de son être.

(Ibid., p. 1465)

If Zola sees the Church at times in terms of the "alcôve," the reverse is also true. The bedroom is often transformed by religious metaphor into a church. This occurs because Zola believes that what takes place within its walls parallels that which takes place within the church. The similarities of the erotic and religious experiences are again underlined.

This is not to suggest, however, that every bedroom in Zola's novels can be interpreted as a place of metaphorical religious rites, for there is a difference between the "chambre," which is essentially chaste, and the "alcôve," which "introduit dans la chambre et la femme et la sexualité" (Zola et les Mythes, p. 193). There are certain characteristics of the "chambre" become "alcôve" which signal the transformation.

The most important part of these characteristics is the presence of a bed which is of extraordinary dimensions or which figuratively represents the woman herself or an
an altar in religious terms. As Jean Borie expresses it,

Chaque fois que, dans la chambre, le
lit prend une importance considérable,
et avec lui le corps féminin et sa
lubricité, la chaste retraite se
transforme en alcôve.
(Loc. cit.)

The alcôve-church parallel is seen in Au Bonheur
des Dames without reference to a specific woman. It appears
rather in reference to women in general. In Octave
Mouret's Bonheur is a display described as a "tente faite de
rideaux blancs, qui descendaient du vitrage," and which
"tenait du tabernacle et de l'alcôve" (p. 769). It is a
"décoration géante" which one might call "un grand lit
blanc, dont l'énormité virginales attendait, comme dans les
légendes, la princesse blanche..." (Loc. cit.). The tent is
also called "l'autel de cette religion du blanc" (Loc. cit.).

Seen as tabernacle and alcôve it speaks both of a place of
religious fervor and practice and of the satisfaction of
sexual needs. The bed, which is of gigantic proportions,
is referred to as the "altar" of this "religion" of the
retail sale. As such, it speaks of worship and of devotion,
but also of sacrifice. It is in the sense of "sacrifice"
that the image is most significant, for it is in the sac-
ifice of themselves to the Bonheur that the women who
are attracted to it are themselves possessed by it and its
owner. The alcôve and the tabernacle are both places of
possession, exploitation and destruction.
In the bedroom of Renée Saccard is "Un grand lit gris et rose" which "emplissait toute une moitié de la chambre avec son flot de draperies..." It speaks forcefully of the woman who occupies it:

On aurait dit une toilette de femme, arrondie, découpée, accompagnée de poufs, de noeuds, de volants; et ce large rideau qui se gonflait, pareil à une jupe, faisait rêver à quelque grande amoureuse penchée, se pâmant, près de choir sur les oreillers. (La Curée, p. 477)

Its function as the place of sexual possession and gratification is clear. But behind its curtains, "c'était un sanctuaire" containing "toutes sortes de choses délicates et transparentes, qui se noyaient dans un demi-jour religieux" (Loc. cit.). It is a "monument dont l'ampeur dévote rappelait une chapelle ornée pour quelque fête" and beside which "les autres meubles disparaissaient..." (Loc. cit.). "Il semblait que le lit se continuât, que la pièce entière fût un lit immense..." (Ibid., p. 478).

It is interesting that although the interchangeable character of alcôve and church is easily seen, the bed which fills the room is not referred to as an "autel." The fact is perhaps significant in the case of Maxime since Renée's possession of him occurs not in her bed, but in the greenhouse. The notion of safety and refuge created by the words "sanctuaire" and "chapelle" is nevertheless illusory, for it is clear that Renée is another of Zola's monsters which possess and destroy.
In the case of Nana, the bedroom in her new mansion is of particular importance for our study since it also is to be filled almost entirely by the bed: "Mais la chambre, d'ailleurs, était simplement faite pour servir de cadre au lit, un prodige, un éblouissement" (Nana, p. 1434). As for the bed itself: "Nana rêvait un lit comme il n'en existait pas, un trône, un autel, où Paris viendrait adorer sa nudité souveraine" (Loc. cit.). It will cost fifty thousand francs, and "Muffat devait le lui donner pour ses étrennes" (Loc. cit.). Comfortably ensconced in her new quarters, Nana enjoys the "luxe royal" of her bedroom whose chief feature is the bed described thus:

Puis, en face, c'était le lit d'or et d'argent qui rayonnait avec l'éclat neuf de ses ciselures, un trône assez large pour que Nana pût y étendre la royauté de ses membres nus, un autel d'une richesse byzantine, digne de la toute-puissance de son sexe, et où elle l'étalait à cette heure même, découvert, dans une religieuse impudeur d'idole redoutée. (Ibid., p. 1462)

Here again the bedroom encloses an altar, and Nana, the devouring courtesan, is the deity reigning over it. Upon it will be sacrificed the lives and fortunes of those who fall under her spell and devote themselves to her worship. Ironically perhaps, one of the victims provides the altar upon which he is to give himself up to humiliation, possession and destruction.

Similarly, the alcôve-church image is employed by
Pagerolles to describe Irma Bécot's "hôtel." It is a "cathédrale,"¹ "une demeure princière, d'un luxe magnifique ...une grande alcôve de femme sensuelle, un grand lit d'amour qui commençait aux tapis du vestibule..." *L'Oeuvre*, p. 250). Her bed is "colossal, drapé de broderies anciennes, pareil à un trône" (Ibid., p. 251). Irma's "cathédrale" must be considered as another example of what Borie calls the "chambre qui tue" (*Zola et les Mythes*, p. 199).

Zola continues to use the same imagery in *Paris* published in 1897. Pierre Froment comes to the home of Silviane, courtesan and current mistress of Baron Duvillard, to seek her help in a charitable work. What he sees and feels reminds us of the "hôtels" already cited:

> Ce qui le frappait, c'était le recueillement presque religieux de cette entrée, les lourdes draperies, les clartés mystiques des vitraux, les meubles anciens baignant dans une ombre de chapelle, aux parfums épars de myrrhe et d'encens.  
  (Pp. 91-92)

As for Silviane herself, she does not escape the same descriptive treatment. We are later told that "Avec sa figure candide de vierge...elle avait l'air d'une vierge de missel, chargée des offrandes de toute la chrétienté, la vierge reine" (Ibid., p. 264).

That Pierre, still in the priesthood, should see Silviane's quarters in this way is altogether natural; but the fact that the same image appears several times elsewhere relative to the courtesan in scenes unrelated to the
clergy lends further support to our belief that Zola consistently creates the metaphorical association of church and bedroom for reasons other than artistic effect. He tends to view the activities which take place in each as being of the same order. They are characterized variously by guilt and the pleasure of masochism experienced by the seeker or victim on the one hand, and by seduction, sadistic humiliation, emptying and destruction provided by the object sought on the other. The Church as tenant of the cathedral is like the courtesan who is tenant of the "hôtel."

THE CHURCH AND THE WOMB

While the Church and the religious experience offer the prospect of the fulfillment of sexual needs—"la montée vers l'extase" (Zola et les Mythes, p. 216) symbolized by the "flèche"—to the woman in love or to the woman who has not found sexual gratification in love, complete satisfaction is impossible and illusory. The Church, while virile and positive in appearance, carries within itself no seed which can meet the needs of those who come to it for fulfillment. The phallus, the positive element, is specious. Like the stick which Archangias offers to Albine—"Tiens! couche avec! Voilà le gaillard qui te contentera"—it cannot satisfy because it is not alive and cannot reproduce, the only function of the male member which
Zola can accept without reservation. And, too, the Church is not essentially male, but feminine in character. While one finds within it the masculine symbol of Christ, it is always the crucified man who is portrayed: "Seul, au milieu de cette vie montante, le grand Christ, resté dans l'ombre, mettait la mort..." (La Faute de l'abbé Mouret, p. 1222). Resurrection, the symbol of virility, is absent. The dominant figure is Mary, the virgin mother, who remains by her very nature unable to supply the fulfillment sought by the female seeker.

The Church is also feminine because it is peopled by figures whom Zola often refers to as "vieilles filles," men who are "enjuponnés." The robe which they wear does not cover dormant virility, it covers only the idea of virility since the clergy have been emotionally and psychologically castrated by the Church. Faujas, the only virile priest of any significance in Zola's novels, is a maverick, a rebel whose masculinity is channeled into the quest for power. He esteems chastity because he perceives it as an aid to reach a personal non-spiritual goal. There is no indication that his devotion to the principle is an evasion or a concession to any inferiority complex or fear of rejection. His misogyny stems from the conviction that woman is a trap and a hindrance to personal fulfillment.

If the Church steeple considered as phallus represents a temporary vicarious emotional and sexual
fulfillment for the woman, then the Church's interior considered as womb represents a place of temporary refuge. In *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*, Zola presents most clearly his conception of the Church and the experience it provides as the womb to which one may revert if the effort to achieve freedom and self-realization is abortive.

As in the case of those women whose unsatisfied love is turned toward God in its search for self-expression and satisfaction, Serge Mouret turns his love towards the Church particularly as symbolized by the Virgin Mary. His devotion to her is extreme even for a priest. Archangias warns him that his love is misplaced and that he should not over-feminize his faith. But Serge cannot modify his fervor because it is as sexual in origin as is Marthe's interest in God. His devotion reveals an attempt at sexual gratification of which he is himself at first unaware. Filled with a distaste for life (which Zola seems to view as synonymous with priesthood), Serge has graduated from the seminary where

...il avait rêvé un désert d'ermité, quelque trou dans une montagne, où rien de la vie, ni être, ni plante, ni eau, ne le viendrait distraire de la contem- plation de Dieu. C'était un élan d'amour pur, une horreur de la sensation physique.  
(*La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*, p. 1232)

He had wanted to become a priest "pour satisfaire ce besoin d'affection surhumaine qui faisait son seul tourment... Il contentait là son être...ses premiers désirs d'homme"
But if Serge has entered the priesthood to escape the demands of the life which he has felt stirring within and without, and submits to emasculation by the Church ("On avait tué l'homme en lui, il le sentait, il était heureux de se savoir à part, créature châtée...") (Loc. cit.), he will find an outlet for his nascent sexual desires and for his spiritual hunger in his devotion to the Virgin. Refuge and vicarious sexual fulfillment are together the unconscious object of his seeking. For this reason the feminine figure of Mary attracts him more than the crucified Christ who is "barbouillé de sang." Even as a child

...il se plaisait à penser qu'une belle dame le protégeait... Il avait grandi sous cette caresse de femme... Et jamais il n'était tenté par les Jésus portant l'agneau, les Christ en croix, les Dieu le Père...il revenait toujours aux tendres images de Marie...

(Ibid., p. 1287)

The sexual role of Mary is evident in the following passage in which Serge is still a seminarian:

Il la nommait: 'Ma chère maîtresse', manquant de mots, arrivant à un babillage d'enfant et d'amant, n'ayant plus que le souffle entrecoupé de sa passion.

(Ibid., p. 1289)

The "Aves" which he endlessly intones become a confession of love: "Ce murmure monotone, cette parole sans cesse la même qui revenait" is like the "'Je t'aime' des amants" (Ibid., p. 1292). In underscoring this spiritual-physical
love parallel, Zola says that "La passion n'a qu'un mot"
(Loc. cit.).

Likewise, her role as the possessor of the protective
womb is evident. In Serge's contemplation of her he
imagines that he

...habitait le bel intérieur de Marie,
s'y appuyant, s'y cachant, s'y perdant
sans réserve, buvant le lait d'amour
infini qui tombait goutte à goutte de ce
sein virginal.
(Ibid., p. 1289)

The womb which Serge desires is a virginal one; therefore,
one which offers protection from the threat of life whose
intrusion he cannot tolerate.

This combination of Mary as mistress and virgin
womb is one which temporarily meets all of Serge's uncon-
scious needs. He is not attracted by her maternity ("La
maternité de Marie... l'inquiétait...") (Ibid., p. 1295)
since it connotes life:

L'Immaculée-Conception, sur la commode
de noyer, souriait tendrement...
Celle-là ne l'avait jamais troublé.
Elle n'était pas mère encore... sa taille
ne prenait point les lignes rondes de la
fécondité.
(Ibid., pp. 1311-1312)

Only in the virgin womb can he safely hide and find the
hoped for annihilation of himself. Indeed, his relationship
with Mary as mistress with whom he has psychological and
emotional intercourse through the ritual is itself made
possible by her virginity and the feeling of purity and
power which it implies. The very word "virgin" is one "auquel il joignait des idées de puissance, de bonté, de fidélité..." (Ibid., p. 1293). "Où aurait-il jamais trouvé une maîtresse si désirable?" (Loc. cit.). In return for her protection he is ready to offer up his manhood. "Je voudrais n'être jamais qu'un enfant marchant à l'ombre de votre robe," he says (Ibid., p. 1313). "Prenez mes sens, prenez ma virilité" (Ibid., p. 1314).

In fact, Serge perceives the giving up of his manhood as the condition upon which the Virgin's protection is offered. Its surrender makes possible the consummation of the spiritual union with the Virgin which he desires.

Psychological castration is the indispensable requirement of the union. It allows him to vicariously experience the satisfaction of love, of sexual union without the physical act: "Oh! multiplier, enfanter, sans la nécessité abominable du sexe, sous la seule approche d'un baiser céleste!" (Ibid., p. 1313). His desexing will allow the Virgin to surrender herself to him in a sinless union and without the possibility that life will be created.

Serge's prayer at the chapter's end is to the point:

'O Marie, Vase d'élection, châtrez en moi l'humanité, faites-moi eunuque parmi les hommes, afin de me livrer sans peur le trésor de votre virginité!' (Ibid., p. 1315)

In the ensuing chapters of Serge's story it becomes evident that this spiritual union and the vicarious sexual
fulfillment which it affords are not enough to satisfy permanently the dormant but now stirring man within him. In the allegory of the Paradou, of his "new creation" and his involvement with Albine, it is amply clear that he has not found the complete gratification which his being demands and which it has sought in the Church. In his surrender to Albine he comes to life for a few moments only to be drawn again inexorably to the womb from which he has temporarily emerged. The sound of the evening Angelus ringing from the Church signals his return to the security and relative death from which Albine has tried to save him.

The psychological drama which unfolds within Serge is skillfully described by Zola. Ill and experiencing nightmares, Serge dreams what must certainly be a fairly accurate description of his own mental and emotional state, although for the moment at least the dream's meaning seems to remain an enigma to him. He recounts the dream to Albine:

'C'est cela, je me souviens. Toujours le même cauchemar me faisait ramper, le long d'un souterrain interminable. A certaines grosses douleurs, le souterrain, brusquement, se murait; un amas de cailloux tombait de la voûte, les parois se resserraient, je restais haletant, pris de la rage de vouloir passer outre; et j'entrais dans l'obstacle, je travaillais des pieds, des poings, du crâne, en désespérant de pouvoir jamais traverser cet éboulement de plus en plus considérable ... Puis, souvent, il me suffisait de le toucher du doigt; tout s'évanouissait, je marchais librement, dans la galerie
élargie, n'ayant plus que la lassitude
de la crise.'

... 'Le plus drôle, dans mon souterrain,
c'est que je n'avais pas la moindre
idée de retourner en arrière; je
m'entêtais, tout en pensant qu'il me
faudrait des milliers d'années pour
déblayer un seul des éboulements.
C'était une tâche fatale, que je devais
accomplir sous peine des plus grands
malheurs. Les genoux meurtris, le
front heurtant le roc, je mettais une
conscience pleine d'angoisse à
travailler de toutes mes forces, pour
arriver le plus vite possible. Arriver
où? ... je ne sais pas, je ne sais
pas...'

(Ibid., p. 1319)

Further reflection on this prenatal stage will reveal his
ambivalence at the prospect of emerging into vibrant life,
for which he has both a natural and a Church-induced
antipathy, and his desire to remain in the womb:

'C'est étrange, avant d'être né, on
rêve de naître... J'étais enterré
quelque part. J'avais froid. J'entendais
s'agiter au-dessus de moi la vie du
déhors. Mais je me bouchais les oreilles,
désespéré, habitué à mon trou de ténèbres,
y goûtant des joies terribles, ne
cherchant même plus à me dégager du tas
de terre qui pesait sur ma poitrine...
Où étais-je donc? Qui donc m'a mis
enfin à la lumière?'

(Ibid., pp. 1343-1344)

Although Serge thinks that he has come to birth, that he has
emerged completely from the subterranean cavern which held
him, it will become increasingly evident that the umbilical
cord which has tied him to the Church remains intact and
that it will draw him back into the sanctuary from which he
has come.

Obviously, Serge's rejection of Albine and his return to the Church is marked by the same ambivalence which characterizes his entire spiritual-sexual drama. There is a certain relief from the life which has impinged upon his self-mortification, but he does not experience complete relief from the massive guilt feelings which have helped drive him from the Paradou. He doubts, in fact, that God can forgive his sin; most certainly because he cannot forgive himself. He will henceforth try to pay his imagined debt to God by indulging in self-flagellation and masochism developing eventually into a fatalism which results in his refusal of any promotion and even of medical aid for his increasingly serious illness.

It is significant that while the sound of the Angelus has summoned him to return to the peace and safety of the Virgin Mother's womb—"cette voix de l'église, qui sans cesse s'était élevée à ses oreilles, pareille à une voix de mère grave et douce" (Ibid., p. 1415)—and while his subsequent repairs on the Church offer him "un prétexte pour ne plus sortir" (Ibid., p. 1435), he cannot return to his devotion to the Virgin because his newly awakened virility is now perceived as a threat to her. In fact, his sin has already completely altered their relationship. "Sa faute avait tué la virginité de Marie" (Ibid., p. 1480). As
a result, her virginity now offers him no protection against his desire to violate her or to sleep with Albine. He now clearly realizes the link between her sexuality and his own and is disturbed by it: "Marie le troublait trop... Le péché... se servait d'elle pour le tenter" (Ibid., p. 1479). He turns to Jesus as the means of conquering his temptation:

...il chassait la femme de la religion, il se réfugiait dans Jésus... Il lui fallait un Dieu jaloux, un Dieu implacable... (Ibid., p. 1480)

To his subconscious mind he is now in danger of soiling his mother and of becoming a rival to his father, a "maître omnipotent" to whom he must now submit as a way of escape. It is at this point that his definitive feminization begins. God the Father will now castrate him rendering him totally passive:

Il sentait la main de ce Dieu lui écraser les reins, le tenir à sa merci, dans l'espace et dans le temps... N'être rien, être damné, rêver l'enfer, se débattre stérilement contre les monstres de la tentation, cela était bon. (Loc. cit.)

Although Serge will experience a powerful revolt of his moribund senses to the death which he has determined to embrace, although under terrible temptation he will return to the Paradou to see Albine, his fate is already decided, for upon his return to the Church he has once again marked himself with the tonsure which is at once the sign
of his spiritual return and of his feminization. Albine comes to him in the Church. She is shocked, for

Maintenant, au milieu de ses cheveux coupés, elle apercevait une tache blême, la tonsure, qui l'inquiétait comme un mal inconnu, quelque plaie mauvaise...

(Ibid., p. 1464)

He is marked by God's seal, physical and spiritual, by

...ce sceau redoutable, plein de délices, qui met un homme hors des hommes, et dont l'empreinte est si ineffaçable, qu'elle reparaît tôt ou tard, même sur les membres coupables!

(Ibid., p. 1510)

It is the sign of his emasculation. Serge now views himself as essentially feminine and passive as his prayer reveals:

'Vous avez voulu qu'il n'y eût plus que des ruines en moi, pour y descendre en sécurité. Je suis une maison vide où vous pouvez habiter... Soyez béni, ô mon Dieu!'

(Loc. cit.)

His submission brings him a supernatural though limited peace.

Death, however, is the final outcome for Serge, for to recapture fetal felicity, as Zola views it, is impossible after the appearance of one's virility. The effort to revert to the womb is therefore a failure because it is an attempt to thwart nature, which demands life, growth and maturity. Every attempt to recover the security and innocence of the embryonic child is fated to end in miscarriage and death. This is true of Serge. Unable to return to the mother because of his sin, he submits to the
death of his masculinity and individuality and allows himself to be transformed into a vessel into which God, the male, will descend. It will remain for Pierre Froment in Les Trois Villes to emerge definitively from the spiritual and psychological womb provided by the Church.

Although total freedom will not be achieved until later, the fissure in the Church which will lead to its ultimate decline and conquest by nature (natural historical processes) is already to be seen in La Faute de l'abbé Mouret. Once again the dream is used by Zola to portray what he considers to be inevitable. The Church will one day yield to the ravages of life. And true to his conception of the Church and the spiritual experience which it provides as a womb which must be opened if life is to enter, the little church which Serge pastors is attacked by the irresistible vegetation which surrounds it and against which he has had to constantly struggle. In his dream he sees the familiar mountain-ash or "sorbier" as it penetrates his sanctuary:

Alors, l'abbé Mouret vit les plantes rudes du plateau se mettre à l'oeuvre, ces terribles plantes durcies dans la sécheresse des rocs, noueuses comme des serpents, d'un bois dur, bossué de muscles ... Et jusqu'aux herbes elles-mêmes... dont les brins séchés passaient sous la grand-porte, qui se roidissaient comme des piques d'acier, éventrant la grand-porte, s'avançant dans la nef... C'était l'émeute victorieuse, la nature révolutionnaire dressant des barricades avec
des autels renversés, démolissant l'église qui lui jetait trop d'ombre depuis des siècles... Puis, brusquement, ce fut la fin. Le sorbier, dont les hautes branches pénétraient déjà sous la voûte, par les carreaux cassés, entra violemment, d'un jet de verdure formidable. Il se planta au milieu de la nef. Là, il grandit démesurément; son tronc devint colossal, au point de faire éclater l'église... les débris de l'église, trouée comme un crible, volèrent en éclats, en semant aux quatre coins du ciel une cendre fine. Maintenant, l'arbre géant touchait aux étoiles... Le grand Christ... fut emporté... L'arbre de vie venait de crever le ciel. Et il dépassait les étoiles.

(Ibid., pp. 1489-90)

The sexual image presented by the tumescent sorbier is unmistakable. The womb which has been impervious to the implantation of life's seed has to be destroyed by the very force which it has resisted. The Church, which can produce only still-born or defective children incapable of reproducing healthy offspring, will at last succumb to life's inevitable forward movement. One of the greatest impediments to life's triumph will have been removed. The experience of Serge Mouret will no longer be possible.

The Church and the Zolean Monster

In describing his "monsters," Zola often uses religious imagery. Such words as "cathédrale," "chapelle," "autel," "nef," and "dieu" are at times employed. The mine in Germinal is such a monster, for like the others it
is a predator. Rachelle Rosenberg has referred to it also as a type of the terrible, devouring mother in Zola's work. Whatever else it may represent, it most certainly represents the stripping, swallowing, devouring and destroying of those who are forced to descend into it. The miners' labor and lives provide its daily sustenance. It is significant then that Zola describes the mine's vast chamber as "pareille à une nef d'église," which "se noyait, peuplée de grandes ombres flottantes" (Germinal, pp. 1151-1152). Again, "Une charpente de fer, pareille à la haute charpente d'un clocher, portait les molettes" (Ibid., p. 1152). The mine is also the visible expression and the instrument of a god in absentia whose description reinforces the predator image. As such, the god resides in an inaccessible place, but continues to exploit for his own profit. Etienne Lantier has spoken of him to the listening miners and holds out his hand to indicate in a vague way the location of the god which he describes as "là-bas":

Où était-ce, là-bas? Paris dans doute.
Mais ils ne le savaient pas au juste,
cela se reculait dans un lointain terrifiant, dans une contrée inaccessible et religieuse, où trônait le dieu inconnu, accroupi au fond de son tabernacle. Jamais ils ne le verrait, ils le sentaient seulement comme une force qui, de loin, pesait sur les dix mille charbonniers de Montsou.

(Germinal, p. 1324)

The malign image of the "alambic" in L'Assommoir is well known. It is
...la machine à souler, fonctionnant
sous le vitrage de l'étroite cour, avec
la trépidation profonde de sa cuisine
d'enfer.

(p. 704)

and

Une jolie source de poison, une
opération qu'on aurait dû enterrer
dans une cave, tant elle était
effrontée et abominable!
(Ibid., p. 706)

Its shadow

...contre la muraille du fond, dessinait
des abominations, des figures avec des
queues, des monstres ouvrant leurs
mâchoires comme pour avaler le monde
(Ibid., p. 704)

Significantly, this machine which devours the workers is
situated in the Assommoir which is described in religious
terms:

On faisait queue devant l'Assommoir du
père Colombe, allumé comme une cathédrale
pour une grand' messe; et, nom de Dieu!
on aurait dit une vraie cérémonie, car
les bons zigis chantaient là-dedans avec
des mines de chantres au lutrin, les
joues enflées, le bedon arrondi. On
célébrait la sainte Touche, quoi!
(Ibid., p. 769)

The apparent levity and good humor of the scene brings a
note of pathos to a subject which Zola always treats
seriously—the slow degeneration of the working class,
adults and children alike, through their endemic alcoholism.
That Zola associates the murderous apparatus with the Church
through religious imagery is yet another indication of his
conception of the Church as itself a monster preying on society. It also underscores the high seriousness of one of the workers' problems, and of their almost religious relationship to the thing which is consuming them.

The most extended image of this type, however, is to be found in his *Au Bonheur des Dames*, in which the monster described in religious language is the Bonheur itself. One might even say that the Bonheur is not simply "like" a cathedral, but that it "is" a cathedral in appearance, tactics and goals.

Denise, in order to avoid a possible encounter with the owner, Octave Mouret, crosses the store one night in the darkness in search of another way to her room, located with the other employees' quarters in the store building. Zola describes the scene in the following passage:

Pas un bec de gaz ne brûlait, il n'y avait que des lampes à huile...et ces clartés éparse...ressemblaient aux lanternes pendues dans des mines. De grandes ombres flottaient... Pourtant elle s'orienta... Elle se jeta vite dans le hall, que le vitrage éclairait d'une lumière crépusculaire; il semblait agrandi; plein de l'effroi nocturne des églises, avec l'immobilité de ses casiers et les silhouettes de ses grands mètres, qui dessinaient des croix renversées.

(Au Bonheur des Dames, p. 532)

In this passage the store and its great hall are pictured as both mine and cathedral, a correlation which we have already noted in *Germinal*. Again in the store, Denise sees "des comptoirs, pareils à des chapelles, où l'ombre
dort, après la dernière messe" (Ibid., p. 540). More explicitly, the new Bonheur erected by Octave is "la cathédrale du commerce moderne, solide et légère, faite pour un peuple de clientes..." (Ibid., p. 612).

If the Bonheur is like a cathedral in appearance, it is also like one in intent and function. Like the Church, Octave seeks to attract and then despoil the women upon whom his livelihood depends. And, once despoiled, they are for him beneath his contempt. The humiliation and emptying descriptive of the religious experience are also characteristic of the relationship between the client and the store and its owner:

Sous la grâce même de sa galanterie, Mouret laissait ainsi passer la brutalité d'un juif vendant de la femme à la livre: il lui élevait un temple, la faisait encenser par une légion de commis, créait le rite d'un culte nouveau; il ne pensait qu'à elle, cherchait sans relâche à imaginer des séductions plus grandes; et, derrière elle, quand il lui avait vidé la poche et détraqué les nerfs, il était plein du secret mépris de l'homme auquel une maîtresse vient de faire la bêtise de se donner... Toutes lui appartaient, étaient sa chose, et il n'était à aucune. (Ibid., p. 461)

The comparison of Mouret with the Zolean priest is inescapable. As in Vérité, where Zola shows the Church's effort to capture the household to be based on the capture of the wife and mother, so also in the Bonheur the same tactic is employed by Mouret. His only passion is to
"vaincre la femme," to whom "il...avait bâti ce temple, pour l'y tenir à sa merci" (Ibid., p. 612). His plan is to "la griser d'attentions galantes et trafiquer de ses désirs, exploiter sa fièvre" (Loc. cit.).

His efforts are successful for he conquers woman and crushes his competition at the same time. After his first great sale,

...la clientèle, dépouillée, violée, s'en allait à moitié défaite, avec la volupté assouvie et la sourde honte d'un désir contenté au fond d'un hôtel louche.

(Ibid., p. 797)

Mouret has captured the mothers "dont le caprice ruinait des ménages" (Loc. cit.). They transfer to the Bonheur the religious zeal which they once expressed in the Church.

Mouret's

...création apportait une religion nouvelle, les églises que désertait peu à peu la foi chancelante étaient remplacées par son bazar..."

(Loc. cit.)

The woman's emotional needs are now met in the department store:

La femme venait passer chez lui les heures vides, les heures frissonnantes et inquiètes qu'elle vivait jadis au fond des chapelles: dépense nécessaire de passion nerveuse, lutte renaissante d'un dieu contre le mari...

(Loc. cit.)

The Bonheur's grip on her is so strong that if Mouret were to close its doors there would be a riot on the sidewalk
in protest against the removal of her confessional and altar.

As for Mouret's competition, he who had created

...cette mécanique à écraser le monde
...avait semé le quartier de ruines,
dépouillé les uns, tué les autres

(Ibid., p. 761)

His "besogne du monstre" has been quickly accomplished (Loc. cit.).

That Nana is one of Zola's monsters there can be no doubt. She is the archetype of his "mangeuse d'hommes" (Nana, p. 1118), who desires to "tout avoir pour tout détruire" (Ibid., p. 1375). Zola tells us that

Elle demeurait seule debout...avec un peuple d'hommes abattus à ses pieds.
Comme ces monstres antiques dont le domaine redouté était couvert d'ossements, elle posait les pieds sur des crânes...

(Ibid., p. 1470)

Indeed, her appetite seems omnivorous. Chantal Jennings puts it well when she writes:

L'appétit féroce de Nana s'étend aux biens, au travail des ouvriers et à la nature même qu'elle engloutit en monstre jamais repu...

It is for her that the miners exhaust themselves for little pay, for one of her lovers is associated with a mine in Alsace. Night and day the miners

...raidissaient leurs muscles et entendaient craquer leurs os, pour suffire aux plaisirs de Nana. Elle
dévoraient tout comme un grand feu,
les vols de l'agio, les gains du travail.

(Op. cit., p. 1455)

In quick succession Nana empties, finishes Steiner and la Faloise:

Nana passait, pareille à une invasion,
à une de ces nuées de sauterelles dont
le vol de flamme rase une province.
Elle brûlait la terre où elle posait
son petit pied.

(Loc. cit.)

Life is a contradiction to Nana's fatal function. Nature—
more specifically maternity—exasperates her (Ibid., p. 1412).

The relationship which Muffat has with her is the
physical counterpart of that which the penitent has with
his God. We have noted that Nana's bed is described as
throne and altar, words which speak of domination, humiliation
and sacrifice. The bedroom itself "le frappait de folie,"
and in it

...il disparaissait en grelottant
dans la toute puissance du sexe,
comme il s'évanouissait devant
l'inconnu du vaste ciel.

(Ibid., p. 1459)

He is controlled and possessed by her:

La femme le possédait avec le
despotisme jaloux d'un Dieu de colère,
le terrifiant, lui donnant des
secondes de joies aiguës comme des
spasmes, pour des heures d'affreux
tourments, des visions d'enfer et
d'éternels supplices.

(Loc. cit.)
Nana, as monster and as a symbol of the Church, is a destructive force in society. And like the Church, she will eventually die not a violent death, but one caused by the essential unnaturalness of her existence, by the excesses of a rapacious appetite for more conquests and more power.

As we have seen, Renée Saccard's bed is described as sanctuary and chapel. It displays an "ampleur dévote" (La Curée, p. 477). Renée is the goddess of this chapel and by extension must also be viewed as another image of the Church as monster. After Maxime and Renée have made love in the greenhouse, he looks up and sees her

...agenouillée, penchée, avec des yeux fixes, une attitude brutale qui lui fit peur. Les cheveux tombés, les épaules nues, elle s'appuyait sur ses poings, l'échine allongée, pareille à une grande chatte aux yeux phosphorescents. (Ibid., p. 485)

Maxime "couché sur le dos," looks over her shoulder and sees "Le sphinx de marbre" whose appearance Renée has assumed in her cruelty:

Renée avait la pose et le sourire du monstre à tête de femme, et, dans ses jupons dénoués, elle semblait la sœur blanche de ce dieu noir. (Loc. cit.)

She enjoys her control over and use of Maxime:

...dans sa pose de grande chatte accroupie, l'échine allongée, les poignets tendus... Elle guettait Maxime, cette proie renversée sous
elle, qui s'abandonnait, qu'elle
possédait tout entière.

(Ibid., pp. 488-489)

In the same way, the Church, while presenting itself as provider of comfort and satisfaction is itself a monster which possesses and devours. The similarity of the following passage to the preceding description of Renée is not, therefore, fortuitous. In it, Claude is introducing Christine to the Paris which he knows so well:

Comme ils arrivaient au pont Saint-Louis, il dut lui nommer Notre-Dame qu'elle ne reconnaissait pas, vue ainsi du chevet, colossale et accroupie entre ses arcs-boutants, pareils à des pattes au repos, dominée par la double tête de ses tours, au dessus de sa longue échine de monstre.

(L'OEuvre, p. 101)

In a more peaceful context, the cathedral at Beaumont - L'Eglise in Le Rêve, quietly but persistently swallows and digests the fruits of the town's labors:

La cathédrale explique tout, a tout enfanté et conserve tout. Elle est la mère, la reine, énorme au milieu du petit tas des maisons basses, pareilles à une couvée abritée frileusement sous ses ailes de pierre. On n'y habite que pour elle et par elle; les industries ne travaillent, les boutiques ne vendent que pour la nourrir, la vêtir, l'entretenir, elle et son clergé... Elle bat au centre, chaque rue est une de ses veines, la ville n'a d'autre souffle que le sien.

(La Rêve, p. 826)

Since the association of town and cathedral is a symbiotic one, they will disappear together as the people become
progressively free of the Church and as the new town not
dependent on the manufacture of religious articles develops.
Already in the old town the remaining bourgeois "sont les
derniers fidèles des foules disparues" (Loc. cit.) and
"cette âme d'un autre âge" (Loc. cit.) which the Church
embodies is certain to die.

In Germinal the mine is descriptively associated
with the Church. The association speaks both of the
"colossal" characteristics of both, but also of their
function as they reflect each other in Zola's thought. The
reverse is also true in that the little church at Montsou
is metaphorically associated at least indirectly with the
miners' operation as we see in the following lines:

Une église, également en briques, ressemblait
à un nouveau modèlde haut fourneau, avec
son clocher carré, sali déjà par les
poussières volantes du charbon.
(Germinal, p. 1207)

In this passage, the little church is like a furnace
fueled by the mine. Symbolically, the Church is a parasite
which consumes and which is dependent upon the exploitation
of believers for its own existence.

The Church and the Ideal

One of the most important themes in Zola's L'Oeuvre
is Claude Lantier's effort to achieve the artistic ideal
in his painting of Christine. It is an ideal which he will
never achieve and one which in the end will drive him to despair and self-annihilation. Both his quest and his fate illustrate on a broader plane Zola's conviction that man's concern with certain questions, a concern which seems to arise out of his very nature, is not only futile but positively dangerous to his health, his happiness and his individual survival when it is allowed to become an obsession.

There are indications in Zola's books that such obsessions are often the product of some hereditary weakness or sickness which milieu and experience have aggravated. We learn from Doctor Pascal, for example, that Serge Mouret is "affiné et mystique, glissé à la prêtrise par un accident nerveux de sa race..." (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1011). His congenital nervous disorder, and a childhood in which he is thought of as more feminine than masculine by his parents, have combined to create in him a distaste for life including a desire to escape the natural masculine role, and a preoccupation with God and the Church as a possible solution to his emotional needs. He becomes, as a result, involved in a quest for God, the Absolute, who will satisfy his desires.

Bernadette Soubirous' preoccupation with God (Lourdes) is traceable to similar causes: she is a victim of hysteria by birth and of the deep ignorance and
superstition which characterize her environment. Her naturally quiet and passive nature is acted upon force-
fully by heredity and environment to produce in her the sick mysticism from which Zola says she suffers.

In the case of Claude Lantier's emotional in-
stability, "il est dû au lien héréditaire qui le rattache à la famille imaginaire des Rougon-Macquart..."8 More specifically, "ce qui le rend impuissant à se satisfaire" are "sa physiologie, sa race, la lésion de son œil."

(Rougon-Macquart, La Pléiade, Vol. IV, p. 1353) As for the influence of his environment, his sickness "est dû aussi à la crise psychologique et esthétique qui a secoué l'ensemble de la génération de 1860..." (Loc. cit.).

In the experiences of Serge and Claude there are certain similarities, certain common elements which make clear the association of the preoccupation with the Absolute (God) and with the Ideal (Art) in Zola's mind. A complete comparison is impossible to establish however. Be that as it may, the similarities lend strong support to our conclusions concerning Zola's attitude toward the Church and the religious experience as revealed in his novels.

Claude's last painting of Christine is a "symbole du désir insatiable..." (L'Oeuvre, p. 347). It represents his quest for the artistic Ideal. His fascination and
interest are so strong, in fact, that his seeking takes
on a kind of spiritual quality. As Claude expresses it,

'Moi, je n'ai pas d'autre religion, je
me collerais à genoux là devant, pour
toute l'existence.'
(L'Oeuvre, p. 241)

On this point Patrick Brady writes:

L'idée de la religion s'introduit, et
sa passion de l'idéal commence à le
faire dérailler...ce qui le hante,
c'est bien l'idée d'une réalité
idéale.9

He becomes so absorbed by his search for this "ideal
reality" that he can no longer maintain his conjugal
union with Christine. Reminiscent of Faujas, he endlessly
repeats to Christine the theory that "le génie devait
être chaste, il fallait ne coucher qu'avec son oeuvre"
(L'Oeuvre, p. 347). For this reason, he transfers his
virility from her to the image of her which he labors to
complete. Christine, "condamnée à en souffrir les con-
séquences" and "délaissée dans son lit froid" (Op. cit.,
p. 394) is forced to acquiesce.

Claude's transfer of his virility to his painting
is more than a case of applying his physical energies else-
where. The work itself becomes an erotic exercise from
which he is able to derive a certain amount of vicarious
satisfaction. Professor Brady has noted this added
dimension. He observes that
...la nature du plaisir... que lui procure la peinture du nu féminin devient de moins en moins purement esthétique et de plus en plus franchement sexuelle. (Ibid., p. 393)

As such, his experience parallels that of Serge Mouret whose preoccupation with the Virgin Mary supplies him sexual gratification for a time also.

But like Albine in La Faute de l'abbé Mouret and Marie in Paris, Christine tries to save the man she loves from his fatal preoccupation. She urges him to renounce his search in favor of acceptance of life on a more physical and less mystical plane:

'Si tu ne peux être un grand peinture, la vie nous reste, ah! la vie, la vie ... La terre nous prendra assez tôt, va! tâchons d'avoir un peu chaud, de vivre, de nous aimer.'

(L’OEuvre, p. 345)

The call to life is similar to that given to Serge Mouret and Pierre Froment and to which only the latter will successfully respond. As wife and mother, Christine theoretically at least represents Claude's salvation. Were Claude not obsessed by his search for the artistic absolute he would find in the physical possession of Christine and in the creation of human life satisfaction and a salvation from his hereditary emotional problems. His heredity could be modified, controlled, rendered innocuous by his deliberate and energetic assumption of a different role.
Unfortunately for both of them, he will not permanently respond to Christine's efforts to save him, although she will enjoy a temporary success. For a moment, at least, he is able to turn his attention to her and re-assume their conjugal relationship. He even seems ready to surrender to her completely as he says:

'Eh bien! sauve-moi, oui! prends-moi, si tu ne veux pas que je me tue...
Endors-moi, anéantis-moi, que je devienne ta chose, assez esclave, assez petit, pour me loger sous tes pieds, dans tes pantoufles... Ah! ... t'obéir comme un chien, manger, t'avoir et dormir, si je pouvais, si je pouvais!'

(L'Oeuvre, p. 350)

Like Albine, Christine assumes an aggressive role. She forces Claude to recant, to

...blasphémer ensuite, provocante, dominatrice, avec un rire d'orgueil sensuel. 'Dis que ta peinture est imbécile--Dis que tu ne travailleras plus.-- Et dis qu'il n'y a que moi... que tu craches sur l'autre, cette gueuse que tu as peinte. Crache, crache donc, que je t'entende! -- Tiens! je crache, il n'y a que toi!'
Et elle le serrait à l'étouffer, c'était elle qui le possédait.

(Ibid., pp. 350-351)

As in Serge's experience with Albine, this surrender will prove to be only temporary, and the physical ecstasy which Claude experiences in Christine's arms--"Lui-même poussait des cris, loin de sa misère, oubliant, renaissant à une vie de félicité" (Ibid., p. 350)--is to be short-lived.
His denial is as hollow as his sexual satisfaction is transitory. He can no longer truly return to his wife because he is now totally possessed by his Ideal. He cannot because "l'habitude de la sublimation l'a rendu incapable d'une satisfaction normale" (L'Oeuvre d'Emile Zola, Roman sur Les arts, p. 393), and because he is now "accoutumé à l'érotisme idéal de ses rêves" (Ibid., p. 394). Henceforth, "la banale réalité ne pourra plus jamais lui suffire" (Loc. cit.).

Zola further emphasizes the similarities between the religious and the esthetic experiences by again employing religious metaphor. In L'Oeuvre, the painting which so fatally attracts Claude, the physical representation of the Ideal which possesses him, is described as though it were a cathedral. In a moment of reverie Claude looks up at his work:

Qui donc venait de peindre cette idole d'une religion inconnue? qui l'avait faite de métaux, de marbres et de gemmes, épanouissant la rose mystique de son sexe, entre les colonnes précieuses des cuisses, sous la voûte sacrée du ventre? Etait-ce lui...? (L'Oeuvre, p. 347)

As such, the portrait of Christine is the symbol of both the artistic Ideal and the religious Absolute. The woman's body is the guardian of the sacred and inaccessible mysteries which attach to both. In Claude's work the rose window speaks of the idealistic and mystical character
of art, religion and sex at one and the same time. The
idealization of the vagina in Zola's description rep-
sents the appealing and compelling nature of an exterior
which belies its role as possessor and emasculator of the
male. The genital orifice which does not lead to fer-
tility and creativity is seen as a threat by Zola. At
least until the successful sexual liberation of Pierre
Froment and the subsequent fecundity of his progeny, Jean
Borie's remark that for Zola "Une angoisse de castration
s'attache indissolublement à toute activité sexuelle"
(Ibid., p. 184) remains true. Thereafter its positive
and creative role is stressed.

Both Christine and Albine are presented as im-
placable enemies of the search for the Ideal and the
Absolute which destroys their lovers. They both provide
for the obsessed ones momentary salvation, or at least
potential salvation, a way back to sanity and health.
The salvation, however, will not be accepted by the vic-
tims, as we have seen.

Just as Serge has heard and responded to the
Angelus sounding from the Church steeple, so, too, Claude
responds to the imperious call of "la Femme au sexe fleuri
d'une rose mystique" (L'Oeuvre, p. 352), and toward whom
his face will be turned in death. He will be destroyed by
"la souveraineté farouche de l'art..." (Ibid., p. 353).
Despite Christine's best efforts, "la peinture triomphait..." (Loc. cit.). And despite the efforts of Albine in the Paradou, Serge will also succumb to the attraction of and eventual destruction by an illusion. If Claude has fought with the Angel in his effort to become God and has been defeated, so, too, Serge, his passive counterpart, has shown that willing submission to the Angel is equally disastrous. They will both be suicides in the end.

CONCLUSION

The sexual and the religious drives within man appear to spring from a common source. One result of this fact is a striking similarity in the experiences which result from efforts to satisfy sexual and spiritual needs. They are so similar in fact that the seeker can at times satisfy the one vicariously while consciously seeking to satisfy the other.

This similarity of experience is reflected by Zola's use of figurative language in describing the two experiences. At times, for example, the Church is described as an alcôve, a bedroom in which the more sensual needs of the seeker are met. Conversely, the bedroom is described by religious metaphor and is presented as a place in which one's more spiritual needs are satisfied.
The satisfying of each of these inherent needs is usually only partial and temporary, for if the Church and the bedroom are the temples of man's quest for deep and permanent satisfaction of his spiritual and sexual needs, they are nevertheless revealed to be arenas in which he finds no lasting satisfaction and in which he becomes consumed by the object of his search.

The Church is seen also as a womb which offers refuge, and even a kind of death to Serge Mouret who conceives of sex as sin and of life in all of its manifestations as a nauseating phenomenon. The priesthood offers him a haven within the Mother Church which removes him from and insulates him against the teeming life around and even within him which he cannot accept. He reverts, consequently, to the surrogate womb which the Church provides.

The term "monster" is a much used word to describe some of Zola's more impressive creations which swallow, devour and destroy their victims. Nana must be included with the Assommoir and the Voreux as a monster in Zola's work. Significantly, both she and they are described by religious metaphor since their function and that of the Church are often equated. All are seen as negative and destructive forces.

Claude Lantier's desire to reach artistic perfection, to achieve the Ideal is not unlike Serge Mouret's
effort to find God the Absolute and the spiritual perfection which he believes is required of him. It is not possible for either Claude or Serge to possess the object of his seeking. Such is the human condition Zola seems to say. Man, who is finite, cannot create or even discover the infinite, the perfect. His failure to come to terms with this inflexible fact of the human condition leads him ultimately to disillusionment, to morbid fatalism and death. The complete satisfaction of his sexual, spiritual and esthetic desires is not possible. In the end man is consumed by his dream.
CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCH AND SOME RELIGIOUS AND
PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

We have stated in our general introduction to this study that Zola's disagreement with the Church is not limited to its goals and its methods of achieving them, but is also doctrinal and theoretical. We did not, however, elaborate on the doctrinal or philosophical differences except to point out a divergence of belief on eschatology. It will be our purpose in this section to expand on the more important differences between Zolean philosophy and Christian theology.

Our purpose is not to judge the degree of Zola's faith in or commitment to the ideas or theories which he expresses in his novels. There are evident contradictions among scholars concerning some of them. We are not, therefore, primarily interested in the degree of his sincerity, but rather in the criticisms of the Church and of the Christian religion which he makes in his novels, together with those beliefs which he presents as a replacement for Christian doctrinal assertions. It is apparent
that he does endeavor to present plausible and chiefly positivist alternatives to these assertions in many of his novels. Henri Guillemin comments on this fact:

Ses 'conclusions', pourtant, sur pas mal de choses sérieuses, il les a laissé déjà entrevoir, et de plus en plus nettement, dans les Rougon-Macquart; bien davantage encore dans les Trois Villes; et elles explosent dans ses Quatre Évangiles.¹

Zola's objection to Catholic dogma are many. It is difficult, in fact, to find any substantial agreement with it, at least insofar as his own sometimes erroneous opinion of what Catholic doctrine says is concerned. This opinion, for example, that the Church views women as a demonic trap for men and as something unclean is an obvious case of distortion and error. Some of his objections are based nevertheless on more balanced thinking and are stated in a more rational manner.

God

The question of God is perhaps the most logical place to begin our study, since in Christian doctrine all things originate in Him and exist for Him. The acceptance or rejection of the Christian God, therefore, determines in large part one's attitude toward the other doctrines.

On the 15th of June, 1860, Zola wrote a letter to
his friend Baille in which he revealed his plan to write a poem dealing with the "genèse de l'univers," which was most certainly inspired by Hugo's "La Légende des Siècles," and which would end by a poem entitled "La Chaîne des Etres," in which, like Sandoz in L'Oeuvre, he proposed to trace the history of man from his birth to his end in the distant reaches of the future. While we shall later allude to his view of mankind as stated in this project, we are at present more concerned with several lines dealing with God which are found in the eight lines which he is known to have written. In these lines, called "La Naissance du Monde," God is addressed as:

Principe créateur, seule Force première,
Qui d'un souffle vivant souleva la matière.
Toi qui vis, ignorant la naissance et la mort,
...
Je monterai vers toi, par ton souffle emporté,
T'offrir ce chant mortel de l'immortalité.

(R-M, La Pléiade, Vol. IV, p. 1417)

God is here a kind of mixture incorporating both personal and impersonal characteristics. He is the "principe créateur" and "seule Force première," which are totally impersonal qualities, but he is also one who breathes life into matter. This hybrid God, the expression of the young Zola of 1860, belies somewhat, however, his "profession de foi" contained also in a letter to Baille and dated almost two months later. He writes:

Je crois en un Dieu tout-puissant, bon et juste. Je crois que ce Dieu m'a créé,
qu'il me dirige ici-bas et qu'il m'attend dans les cieux. Mon âme est immortelle et, en me donnant le libre arbitre, le Maître s'est réservé le droit des peines et des récompenses. (Quoted in Zola, Légende et Vérité, p. 54)

This statement of belief in a good and personal God, both creator and judge, may be most accurately viewed as the still glowing embers of a dying and atavistic Christian faith, for Zola cannot state that he still believes in the divinity of Jesus Christ. What he believes rather, "de toute son âme," is that "ce Jésus, en tout cas, était 'marqué du doigt de Dieu', 'parlant véritablement en son nom' et 'reel prêtre infaillible'." He will later state that he adores the God "'que le Christ nous révéla'." (Loc. cit.)

This waning belief will have disappeared altogether, however, by the time he publishes Le Roman expérimental of 1880, in which, writing about the God of "les mythologies," he states categorically: "Nous nions leur bon Dieu; nous vidons leur ciel" (Ibid., p. 63).

It is this latter position vis-à-vis the Christian God which is evident in the vast majority of references to Him in the novels we have studied. These references often contain hints as to why he has rejected the God of his youth. The reasons become increasingly numerous and are stated in an increasingly stentorian manner, "exploding" as Guillemin might say, in the Quatre
Evangiles.

In *La Joie de Vivre* we see Pauline Quenu—that Zolean repository of most of the Christian, or rather of the best human virtues—who, after some effort to believe the catechism, fails. In its place she must substitute an idea of God which is more nearly consonant with her reason:

Dans sa jeune tête raisonnée, elle avait fini par concevoir de Dieu l'idée d'un maître très puissant, très savant, qui dirigeait tout, de façon à ce que tout marchât sur la terre selon la justice...

(*La Joie de Vivre*, p. 849)

It is evident that Pauline has created a conception which hardly corresponds to her own experience, for she finds little more than greed, depression, jealousy, drunkenness, morbidity, sexual immorality and suicide in the world around her. God is quite obviously not directing things in a very intelligent, compassionate, or just manner. In Coupeau's words: "S'il y a un bon Dieu, il arrange drôlement les choses" (*L'Assommoir*, p. 488). The inescapable conclusion from this is that God does not in fact exist.

In *Le Rêve*, Zola will state plainly that "l'homme créait Dieu pour sauver l'homme..." (p. 868). Man produces God to meet his own needs:

Le désir de guérir guérissait, la soif du miracle faisait le miracle. Un Dieu
de pitié et d'espoir sortait de la souffrance de l'homme, de ce besoin d'illusion consolatrice, qui, à tous les âges de l'humanité, a créé les merveilleux paradis de l'au-delà...
(Lourdes, p. 223)

In reality, however, the God who reveals himself in life as it is, in all its ugliness and suffering, is more nearly a "Dieu de tyrannie et de néant" (Travail, p. 172). Significantly, perhaps, Zola decries the Catholic God most stridently in his last novel, Vérité, which was post-humously published in 1903. In this novel Father Gorgias' God is described variously as a "Dieu de colère et d'extermination" who is "terrible aux infidèles" (p. 142); as a "maître farouche," a "maître de la foudre" (p. 157); "un Dieu d'ironie et d'iniquité" (p. 180); a "Dieu de caprice et de méchanceté" (p. 189); "un maître absolu, roi de colère et de châtiment" who reigns over the weak man (p. 346); a God who kills initiative, action and interest (pp. 575-576); a "Dieu d'absolu et d'extermination" (p. 649). Altogether, it is a less than approbative treatment of God. Isn't it obvious, after all, that if there were "un Dieu de bonté," he would be "charitable à tous" as Marc Froment expresses it? (p. 311).

Such epithets are hardly more than academic and meaningless rhetoric of course when seen solely as the pronouncements of one (Zola) who does not believe in the
existence of a personal God, be He good or evil. Still
one can never be completely sure that he did not retain
some vestige of belief at least, some fear perhaps that
Christianity was true and which issued in his anti-God
invectives. Surely one may tilt at windmills, but it is
not certain that one would spend a life-time tilting at
windmills which are no longer mistaken for giants. Cer-
tainly Zola recognizes a profound temptation of belief in
God when he writes that the idea of God working within us
is a comforting one which brings a "paix suprême" and a
"joie profonde" (Mes Haines, p. 132, quoted in Zola,
Légende et Vérité, p. 65). The temptation is not belief,
however, and he reaffirms his faith in Science as
sufficient:

Tout en elle. Rien hors d'elle. Ce
qu'elle ne sait pas, elle le saura, et
cel qu'elle ne saura pas, nous
tâcherons que cela reste de l'inconnu,
sans devenir de l'erreur.
(Nouvelle Campagne, 58; quoted in
Zola, Légende et Vérité, p. 66)

Still, this was written by a man who allowed his
daughter to receive her first communion and on whose desk
were an ivory Christ, a chalice, a eucharistic wafer box
and a large rosary brought back from Lourdes. But while
Zola's actions may admit of some speculation on his re-
ligious beliefs, his works clearly do not. They reveal
the mind of one without a belief in the Christian God.
Jesus Christ

It logically follows that Jesus Christ fares no better in Zola's philosophy. Jesus, whose birth from a virgin is a "miracle imbécile" (Vérité, p. 288), has failed in his mission to earth. The evidence is overwhelming that he "n'a rien racheté," that "la souffrance de l'humanité est restée aussi grande, aussi injuste" (Paris, p. 398). In addition, he has made "tant de pauvres détraquées" (Vérité, p. 741); he is an "amant divin" (Vérité, p. 89) who not surprisingly cannot satisfy his spouses (Ibid., p. 477), and who kills the wife's love for her husband.

An even greater indictment is his chastity, which Santerre of Fécondité says supposedly represented the "état parfait" (p. 49). Nothing, of course, could be more repulsive to Zola, who expatiates at length on "le culte de la femme" which he preaches in his last novels, Fécondité in particular, and who constantly attacks the effeminacy and chastity (as an ideal) of ecclesiastics. Jesus is also the destroyer "de tout ordre, de tout travail, de toute vie" (Paris, p. 399). He denied women, the earth, eternal nature, the fecundity of things and beings (Loc. cit.). In summary, Jesus is a failure whose one redeeming quality was that he attacked the rich and espoused the cause of the poor and the abused.
The Gospel

Jesus' Gospel, which gives man to the devil from birth and condemns him to a life-long struggle against his natural inclinations in an impossible and absurd fight, which makes of earth a sin, a hell of temptation and suffering which one must get through in order to merit heaven, is no better than an admirable police tool, a tool of despotism, a tool of a religion of death (Paris, pp. 398, 399). Christianity, which has hampered man's march toward truth and justice for 1800 years, will not continue to evolve until the Gospel is placed among the "livres des sages" and is no longer viewed as the "code absolu et définitif" (Paris, p. 400).

Indeed, science, which "achevait de faire brèche" (Travail, p. 565), will sweep away what remains of the Gospel of Jesus, "un code social caduc," from which can be retained only "quelques maximes morales" (Paris, p. 574), bits and pieces seen as symbols which in some way can be made to agree with newly acquired scientific certainties which alone are eternal (Rome, pp. 696-697). At that time the world will be delivered from the "noir pessimisme de la Bible" (Vérité, p. 192), and the new gospel of "Heureux ceux qui savent...parce que le royaume de la terre leur appartiendra" (Ibid., p. 192) will have been established.
Man and Sin

Zola's rejection of the Bible as the Word of God—"Toute vérité révélée est un mensonge" (Vérité, p. 212)—and of the God which it proclaims indicates that he also rejects man as the creation of that God together with the definition of man given in the Scriptures. Surprisingly, perhaps, one of the primary reasons for which he refuses the Judaeo-Christian postulates concerning man is one which his contemporary detractors might not have guessed—the Scriptural definition is too negative, too black, too pessimistic. For a man who was accused of seeing life too much "en noir," who could discern very little to be praised in the human animal, who seemed to concentrate on man's immorality, such a reason for disagreement may seem implausible. But Zola does not see man as a sinner in the Christian sense. He denies "farouchement le péché" and adds that original sin is "imbécile" (Travail, p. 544). The very concept of sin is repugnant to him. The doctrine of the fall of Adam and of the entire human race in Adam is fatalistic, pessimistic and debasing. It is fatalistic, because according to this doctrine all humans without exception are born tainted by Adam's transgression (which was not, perhaps, as Zola symbolically portrays it in La Faute de l'Abbe Mouret, a
question of sex, but rather one of the rejection of God the Creator as Lord and Sovereign in favor of human personal autonomy); pessimistic in that it allows no melioration by man's own efforts, but requires instead an action of God as its cure; debasing because it dooms man to a conception of self which emphasizes his depravity and sets him at variance with himself, creating a struggle between his lower nature and his conscience which is destructive of positive action. Metaphysical man may indeed be dead for Zola, but what is left—physiological and natural man—is still elevated above scriptural man.

The removal of sin as an explanation of man's bent toward evil does not imply that this bent is an illusion. Zola's natural man is obviously far from perfect. In fact, he often appears to have few if any redeeming qualities. But in the place of sin Zola puts what he considers to be a scientific and of course far more accurate explanation for man's evil penchant. Zolean original sin is Heredity. Although the equation is first expressed explicitly in Le Rêve, in which Angélique "l'entendait gronder au fond d'elle, le démon du mal héréditaire" (Le Rêve, p. 868), it is not restricted to that novel as a statement of Zola's concept of sin. It recurs in Paris in which he states that "Le péché originel, c'est l'hérédité terrible, renaissante chez chaque
créature..." (p. 399).

This does not mean, however, that man is not recoverable. There is a way of grace, a means of correction in Zola's philosophy which is as definite as that contained in the Bible. Man has not one but two authors—heredity and milieu. The first produces a proclivity for evil, evil's germ as it were, just as it produces in the physical realm, for example, the lungs susceptible to tuberculosis in Valentin of Le Docteur Pascal (p. 1082) or the weakness for drink in Gervaise. The milieu, on the other hand, produces either the soil in which the germ grows and flourishes or soil which will negate and nullify the natural germ. The milieu is then seen as playing the role of grace in Zolian thought. Zola asks the question concerning Angélique: "Qui sait ce qu'elle serait devenue, dans le sol natal? une mauvaise fille sans doute..." (Le Réve, p. 868). She will, on the contrary, grow up to be "gaie, et saine, une beauté rare...où fleurissaient la chair innocente et l'âme chaste" (Ibid., p. 841). It is, of course, "la grâce, ce milieu fait des contes..." (Ibid., p. 868) which has created the difference, which has saved her from the terrible Rougon heredity.

As for the correctives which the milieu provides, they may be strictly natural and physical as in the case
of Sophie, who does not share the fate of her brother because Pascal has transferred to the country where she can breathe clean, fresh, healing air (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1082); or they may be the correctives of education, formal or informal. Angélique is changed by her association with her adoptive parents, the Huberts, and by her reading of the Légende dorée of Jacques de Voragine. In a more formal way, the children of the hamlets of Vérité are brought from darkness to light, from evil to good, from sin to grace by educators who themselves have experienced this transformation.

There is hope, then, but it is a hope supplied by men who understand the origin of the evil and who know how to supply the necessary grace. As Zola expresses it: If we can identify the gangrenous branch and discover the causes of the gangrene, we can modify heredity by changing circumstances so that the disease will be eliminated. Society will thereby be made healthier and happier. Pascal expresses this dream in these words:

...si l'on avait pu la connaître (heredity), la capter pour disposer d'elle, on aurait fait le monde à son gré... Lorsque tous seraient sains, forts, intelligents, il n'y aurait plus qu'un peuple supérieur, infiniment sage et heureux.

(Le Docteur Pascal, pp. 947-948)

The elimination of an objective value structure originating in God and of the concept of free will makes
man a creature more passive than active, a victim, a being not responsible for his state or for his actions. Man's evil is not of his own choosing.

Il n'y a pas de principes; il n'y a que des lois; nous n'acceptons pas de libre arbitre; l'homme n'est pour nous qu'une machine animale agissant sous l'influence de l'héritéité et du milieu.  

Zola often expresses this point of view in his novels. If little Victor Saccard is full of vice at the age of twelve and is a "petit monstre échappé, galopant, semant par les routes le ferment de pourriture..." (L'Argent, p. 396); if Jeanlin is a terrible little "chef de bande" who murders the guard, Jules, in cold blood and without an adequate reason (Germinal, p. 1492); if the band of blood-thirsty delinquents robs and kills Madame Angelin (Fécondité, p. 639) it is because Zola has come to the conclusion that "dans la civilisation moderne, l'homme conserve les instincts de la brute primitive"7 and because society has caused them to do so. Zola remains true to his concept of heredity and environment. He tells us that man has returned to animality, to what he is through his heredity, because he hasn't the necessities of life (Rome, p. 9). His indigence is the source of his anti-social behavior. Crimes—"le vol et la prostitution"—are caused by "le travail déshonoré, exécré, maudit..." (Travail, p. 30). The wage system, "le salariat," for example, created "la lutte des classes" and an "état
social basé sur l'iniquité" (Ibid., p. 70). "Au bout de la misère et de la faim, il y avait forcément le crime..." (Ibid., p. 168), etc. Ignorance must also share the blame, for it too is "à la base de tant de douleur, d'iniquité, d'ignominie..." (Vérité, p. 175).

Although heredity and milieu may combine to create a moral monster, still no one is totally devoid of goodness. Caroline expresses this opinion in L'Argent as she reflects on the nasty business which life in general and her association with Saccard in particular have now apparently turned out to be. She thinks of Saccard's work for the orphans of "L'Oeuvre du Travail," and sees it as a positive good and as a proof that

il n'y a point d'homme condamnable, qui, au milieu de tout le mal qu'il a pu faire, n'ait encore fait beaucoup de bien.

(L'Argent, p. 377)

There is, it appears, a kind of balance between good and evil in the world. We see Clotilde "devant cette somme...des méchants et des bons" for whom she has only "une indulgence sans bornes, une infinie pitié et une charité ardente" (Le Docteur Pascal, pp. 1212-1213). Victorine expresses Zola's conclusion to the question when she asks:

Est-ce que le bien et le mal ne sont pas dans chacun, à ce point mêlés, que le mieux serait encore d'acquitter tout le monde?

(Rome, p. 620)
Obviously it would be better to acquit him, particularly since man is not responsible for his acts. He is only a "machine animale."

Fortunately, however, everyone can be redeemed eventually through the proper education, and one can look forward to the day when, in the new order which is coming—the new world of equitable treatment and material plenty—there will be no need for courts or prisons because the bases, chiefly physiological and economic, of crime will have been destroyed by education and by improved environment (Travail, pp. 640-641, 744).

The Passions and Correctives

Zolean education does not consist, however, of destroying man's passions or the use of his physical senses. On the contrary, for him a man whose passions have been destroyed is not a man at all—"Privé d'une passion, l'homme serait mutilé," (Travail, p. 172), and "Mutiler l'homme d'une passion, c'est comme si on lui coupait un membre: il n'est plus entier..." (Ibid., p. 543). It is on this question that so much of his disagreement with the Church is based, for following the thought of Fourier he says that Catholicism's disastrous error was wanting to destroy the passions, to "détruire l'homme dans l'homme..." (Ibid., p. 172). It is indeed a
wondrous thing, he states, that humanity has been able to live at all under those religions of death which are so assiduous in their efforts to kill the man in man (Ibid., p. 544).

Zola, of course, is not imagining things in this respect, for the Church has long seen the human body as a source of sin and evil. Paul the Apostle writes that he keeps his body "under" and warns against the dangers of a life lived under the control of the flesh. Does not Christ himself say that the hand and the eye may lead us into sin which can bring us down to hell? (Matthew 18:9). Presumably the hairshirts and self-flagellations of numerous believers down through the centuries have served either to kill or to keep under control those very passions which Zola considers the essential motor force of the human machine—"...la flamme vivante du monde, le levier qui met...la vie en marche..." (Travail, p. 543). It is not surprising, therefore, that he would rebel in horror against any effort to remove from man those very drives which most serve to make him man.

Zola sums up his beliefs on the subject in Travail, in which he states that "il n'y a pas de passion mauvaise dans l'être humain, il n'y a que des énergies, car les passions sont toutes des forces admirables..." (p. 543). (Zola thus finds himself in agreement with an outstanding
Anglican Christian, C. S. Lewis, who will later express the same belief.) The solution to the problem of passions which have gone out of control and which cause so much pain and suffering is not extermination or extirpation, but rather correct utilization—"...il s'agit uniquement de les utiliser pour le bonheur des individus et de la communauté" (Loc. cit.). We must realize that:

Il n'y a pas d'homme colère, d'homme avare, d'homme menteur, gourmand, paresseux, envieux, orgueilleux, il n'y a que des hommes dont on n'a pas su diriger les forces intérieures, les énergies dérégélées, les besoins d'action, de lutte et de victoire.

(Loc. cit.)

Such men must not be given up. Indeed, they are the very ones from whom will come people of rare and admirable qualities:

Avec un avaré, on fait un prudent, un économe. Avec un emporté, un envieux, un orgueilleux, on fait un héros, se donnant tout entier pour un peu de gloire.

(Loc. cit.)

Zola is less sanguine, however, concerning the education or re-education of adults than he is concerning the education of children and the correct utilization of their "passions naissantes" (Ibid., p. 544). It is apparent that he cannot surrender totally to the optimism of Fourier and cannot completely divest himself of his negative thinking regarding the possibility of redeeming a
creature which as an adult appears impervious to efforts at correction. At the end of Vérité, the last of his novels, he admits that the passions will always have a tendency to get out of hand and to cause hurt to others. He reiterates that passion (in this case lust) must be controlled by reason (p. 720), and that about all one can hope for is that "la femme affranchie...y apporterait un peu de calme dignité" (Vérité, p. 741) when her libidinous husband goes astray. Still, this check on his optimism admits of no compromise with the idea held by many Christians that the passions are in themselves evil. It is only a concession to the determining power of heredity and environment—a power which must be reduced or transformed through education. The conclusion is not crucifixion. It is the conviction that

Le bonheur légitime était dans le développement, dans l'éducation des cinq sens et du sens d'amour, car tout l'homme devait jouir...

(Travail, p. 641)

Suffering

It is far easier for Zola to deal with and develop a positive philosophy of the passions and how they might be utilized than it is for him to deal with the problem of human suffering. As far as he is concerned, the Christian concept of suffering as a result of man's fall is particularly insufficient, for it does not offer an adequate
explanation for unmerited suffering, although it does prescribe its own proper attitude toward it. For him, suffering remains a scandal.

When faced with what C. S. Lewis has called "the problem of pain," Zola reveals indignation and even anger and exasperation. Suffering is an unpleasant fact which he must face, but which defies every effort of his reason to explain it. Yet, he must still try to integrate it into the whole of human experience in a rational manner. His whole being seems to revolt against what he calls in L'Argent "toute l'effroyable souffrance de l'espèce" (p. 359) and which for his Doctor Pascal and for himself remains something "abominable et stupide" (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1088), and before which he can say only: "Mais souffrir, pourquoi?" (Loc. cit.).

This same lack of comprehension is apparent in Germinal, where the Maheu family is at a total loss to explain the unmerited suffering and death of Alzire—

Tenez! qu'est-ce que lui a fait ma petite, qui est là, à trembler la fièvre? Nous n'avions pas assez de misère, n'est-ce pas? (Germinal, p. 1472)

What has she done to offend God? And what has the dead child of Madame Vincent—this woman who is now "toute à sa révolte contre l'injuste souffrance qui frappait si durement un petit être si faible, si pur..."—what has she,
"incapable encore d'avoir péché" (Lourdes, pp. 314-315), done to merit suffering and death? How has she sinned against God? The answer is not easy, but the question reveals in Zola an abiding anger at the unnecessary pain of those who suffer in spite of their innocence. Madame Vincent's revolt will be permanent, there will be no reversal. The suffering of the departed always leaves in the survivors a bitterness against sickness and evil (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1106).

And Zola's revolt will remain also, in spite of his own attempts to rationalize the problem. He may say through Gervaise when she ponders the fate of the tiny and fragile Lalie at the hands of her murderous father: "Ah bien! on rencontre des êtres qui sont nés pour souffrir" (L'Assommoir, p. 615), but that statement does not express his refusal to accept suffering as a positive element in the human condition. It is precisely the attitude which accepts suffering as though it were good or would eventually produce good that Zola at first vociferates against in his novels. It is, of course, his conception of the Christian attitude which he attacks.

The Bible states that in the world Christians will have tribulations, but that Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33). Christians are taught that all things work together for the good of those who love God, and are
called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). They are told that God chastens his sons and that if there is no chastisement they are not true children but bastards (Hebrews 12:8). Suffering, therefore, of whatever kind, has traditionally been seen by sincere Christians as part of the human condition which is inescapable in this life and which may be used by God to realize a positive good. It is even a proof of salvation to some, for the elect are called to suffer for their Lord. Huysmans even believed, for example, that Christians can voluntarily accept and experience the physical sufferings of others in a substitutionary way.

Nothing exasperates Zola more than this passive acceptance of suffering which turns it into a good. Germinal's Abbé Ranvier is a "pauvre diable lui-même qui regardait la souffrance comme l'aiguillon du salut" (p. 1474). Similarly, for Hamelin in L'Argent,

Dès qu'on se met dans la main de Dieu, il n'y a plus de révolte, toute souffrance imméritée est un gage de salut.

(p. 378)

According to Zola, such an attitude creates a lack of zeal in any effort to alleviate suffering. He minimizes the power of the Gospel injunction to Christians to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and comfort the suffering as unto Christ himself. This is called, in fact, "pure
religion and undefiled" by James (James 1:27).

Zola's frustration is nowhere more apparent than when he faces the passive and even serene acceptance of suffering by Bernadette Soubirous, whose story he relates in Lourdes. He is baffled by the fact that although Bernadette's vision and the subsequent establishment of a healing shrine at Lourdes have resulted in the apparent healing of thousands, she herself has not been healed of her physical suffering:

Seigneur, roi tout-puissant, pourquoi donc la guérison des autres et pas la sienne? Pour sauver son âme?... Quel choix inexplicable, quelle nécessité absurde des tortures de ce pauvre être, dans l'évolution éternelle des mondes! (Lourdes, p. 566)

With resignation, however, Bernadette accepts a fate which God spares others, for she believes that "Le ciel est au bout..." (Loc. cit.). Abbé Pierre Froment finds repeated here the attitude of Ranvier and of Hamelin:

C'était toujours l'idée que la souffrance est le creuset, qu'il faut souffrir sur la terre pour triompher ailleurs, que souffrir est indispensable, enviable et béní. (Loc. cit.)

In her last agony Bernadette murmurs: "Oh! que je souffre...mais je suis si heureuse de souffrir!" (Loc. cit.). For Pierre, "Il n'est pas de parole plus effroyable, d'un pessimisme plus noir" (Loc. cit.). Happy to suffer! And why "Ô Seigneur!...et dans quel but ignoré
et imbécile?" (Loc. cit.). What good is this

...inutile cruauté, cette révoltante
 glorification de la souffrance, lorsqu'il
 ne monte de l'humanité entière qu'un
désir éperdu de santé et de bonheur?
(Ibid., pp. 566-567)

This is a question which Zola will not be able to
answer adequately and with which he will still be
struggling at the close of Vérité. In the meantime, how-
ever, he has made a valiant effort to believe that, in
spite of its apparent evil, suffering is working for the
realization of the goal of human existence. At the end of
La Terre we see Jean Macquart as he reflects on his ex-
perience at Rognes and on life and the role which suffering
plays in it:

Il y avait aussi la douleur, le sang,
les larmes, tout ce qu'on souffre et
tout ce qui révolte. Françoise tuée,
Fouan tué, les coquins triomphants, la
vermine sanguinaire et puante des
villages dés honorant et rongeant la
terre. Seulement, est-ce qu'on sait?
de même que la gâlée qui brûle les
moissons, la grêle qui les hache, la
foudre qui les verse, sont nécessaires
peut-être, il est possible qu'il faille
du sang et des larmes pour que le
monde marche. Qu'est-ce que notre
malheur pèse, dans la grande mécanique
des étoiles et du soleil? Il se moque
bien de nous, le bon Dieu!
(La Terre, p. 811)

The experience of Doctor Pascal is that of Zola.
Suffering at first appears to him stupid and abominable.
It makes no sense. He can accept death better because it
is "dans l'ordre" but suffering escapes any rational explanation. And yet, even though a scandal, suffering while coming to grips with the world, while accepting life, is far better than an existence such as that of his neighbor, Monsieur Bellombre, who "tirait tout son égoïste bonheur de la joie de vivre en dehors de la vie" (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1165). Bellombre is afraid of life with its struggles and pains. For Pascal/Zola it is much better to be like the miserable and pain-wrecked Chanteau, "ce lamentable reste d'homme dont le peu de vie n'était plus qu'un hurlement de douleur," and who cries out in furious indignation when told of Véronique's suicide: "Faut-il être bête pour se tuer!" (La Joie de Vivre, p. 1130).

Pascal cannot be content with his revolt against suffering. He, like Zola, must go on to an interpretation of it which will allow him to incorporate it into the scheme of things as a positive factor. He makes such progress in his quest for understanding and in his faith in the goodness of life that toward the end he can view things from a position of serenity and acceptance. If suffering has exasperated him in the past "comme une cruauté monstrueuse et inutile" (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1174), he now resigns himself to it and can no longer find "la révolte que soulevait en lui, autrefois, le seul spectacle de la douleur physique" (Loc. cit.). He has thus climbed another step "dans sa foi en la vie...d'où la vie apparaît
totalement bonne, même avec la fatale condition de la souffrance..." (Ibid., pp. 1174-1175). In fact, he now considers the possibility that suffering is a mainspring of life. Through this acceptance he experiences a kind of release, a joy, a peace resulting from the knowledge that he can live all of life, "la vivre et la souffrir toute, sans rébellion, sans croire qu'on la rendrait meilleure en la rendant indolore..." (Ibid., p. 1175).

This attitude is now for him "le grand courage et la grande sagesse" (Loc. cit.).

And yet, he cannot really accept it without reservations or qualifications. He immediately endeavors to discover a way to utilize suffering, to put it to some positive use. He muses:

Si l'homme, à mesure qu'il s'élève dans la civilisation, sent la douleur davantage, il est très certain qu'il y devient aussi plus fort, plus armé, plus résistant.

(Loc. cit.)

This "toughening" process is only a side effect, however, a concomitant benefit. Couldn't one go even further and...

...faire le rêve d'une humanité où la somme du travail équivalrait si bien à la somme des sensations, que la souffrance s'y trouverait elle-même employée et comme supprimée?

(Loc. cit.)

Toward the end of the novel Clotilde echoes the same philosophy. She who is now "la pondérée, la
raisonnable, acceptant de vivre l'existence comme il fallait la vivre," *(Ibid, p. 1209)* is also hoping that "la somme du travail humain libérerait un jour le monde du mal et de la douleur" *(Loc. cit.)*. In the meantime

le travail voulu et réglé suffisait
à la bonne santé de tous. Peut-être la souffrance serait-elle utilisée un jour
*(Ibid., p. 1212)*

The book ends on a positive note. Suffering has its role to play in the human drama.

Zola's concern over the problem of pain is not limited to *La Terre* and *Le Docteur Pascal*. In *Vérité* he admits that there is no final solution. Suffering will not end. Thérèse, who has been made to suffer by the infidelity of her husband, says to Marc, her father-in-law:

Ah! la souffrance, avouons qu'elle sera éternelle. Elle est en nous, sans doute pour une des besognes ignorées de la vie.
*(Vérité, pp. 746-747)*

The best we can do under the circumstances is to make sure that "la souffrance ne nous rende ni aveugles ni méchants" *(Ibid., p. 747)*.

And so it is that Zola has so often in his novels "heurté du front ce mystère de la souffrance dont son esprit se scandalise!" *(Zola, Légende et Vérité, p. 76).* That he has not resolved the question in any definitive manner is apparent. Suffering remains our lot for "une
des besognes ignorées de la vie." The search for an answer meets with failure. Only faith can see it as a positive force, something eventuating in a plus and not in a minus. What is our suffering after all, he forces himself to say, when compared with the overall plan that is being realized? But there again the frustration continues because the end is eternally "le but ignoré."

It is paradoxical that Zola ends his inquiry on this note, for it is apparent that he ends up at the same place as the Christian. He tells us through Pascal that we should not rebel in the face of suffering and that it too is playing a constructive role in the mysterious process of universal becoming, whatever that may entail. When seen from above, from a highly objective point of view, suffering can be seen or at least be believed to fit in at the right place and way. It still remains a question of faith and not of verifiable fact. Zola thus allows to his liberated men and women an acceptance of the inevitable which he will not extend to the Christian. For the latter it is cowardly and debasing to humble oneself under the blows of fate, accepting them as from the hand of God. For the Zolean man it is a badge of courage, the mark of having faced reality and of having adopted the most reasonable attitude toward its mysteries. Even for Zola it appears that perhaps "le coeur a ses raisons que la
raison ne connaît point." In the case of suffering, the most reasonable thing is simply to have a bit of faith. And perhaps, somewhat like Camus' Sisyphus, we must imagine that man, in spite of his suffering, is happy or that at least he will one day be so.

Death

Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil the Lord God said to Adam: "...on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die." Paul the Apostle writes by way of extension:

It was through one man that sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death pervaded the whole human race, inasmuch as all men have sinned. (Romans 5:12,13)

Through Adam's wrongdoing, he states "death established its reign..." (Ibid., 5:17). Men, therefore, return to the dust from which they came.

So it is that all men die; an indisputable fact to Christian and non-Christian alike. For the non-Christian who has not developed or accepted another philosophy concerning it, death must remain an impenetrable mystery. In rejecting the Bible doctrine of sin's appearance and of death as its consequence, they also forfeit the hope which the Bible offers to Christians when it states that Christ has removed the sting of death for them and that he
has provided a resurrection which will bring them into eternal life.

It is at this point that Emile Zola begins his criticism of the Christian doctrine of death. As he views the matter, the Church has so focused its attention on the problem of death and on its cure that it has largely overlooked the more pressing problems of terrestrial life. Being unable to avoid death or to spare the human race its inevitable fate, it has tried to cushion the blow and remove the sting by stating that death is only a passing from this existence to a spiritual one which is far better and greatly to be preferred because there will be no sorrow, no pain, no tears on the other side of the grave. It has gone so far in this direction that it not only accepts death but even glorifies it. It preaches a "religion de la mort" which actually favors death over life (Paris, p. 416).

Such an approach, Zola believes, when coupled with the Christian doctrine that the whole universe is somehow under the curse of fallen man, wrongfully depreciates the value of human life in the here and now. It presents an illusory means of escape from an ineluctable end to those who, through present suffering or fear of a possible hell in the hereafter, are comforted by the promise of a beautiful heaven. As he sees it, such hopes are based on
an illusion which serves as the tool of a system that is primarily interested in controlling man by preying on his inherent fear of the unknown and of his own dissolution.

Although the Christian concept of death is unacceptable to Zola as a viable option when one confronts death, death, "l'imbécile mort" (Rome, p. 624), has of course not disappeared. For him it remains an everlasting fact with which thinking man must deal. Though baffled and at times even frightened by it, he makes a valiant effort to face and to explain, or at least to accept, the fact of death.

The theme of death pervades Zola's novels. This man, "obsédé par la pensée de la mort..." (Zola et Son Temps, p. 36), seems as fascinated by it as a moth is fascinated by a light against which it endlessly flies. There is great attraction to it, but there is also great uncertainty and uneasiness in its presence. His uneasiness is so great, in fact, that in order to cope with the mystery of death he draws it to his bosom much like one who dares not let his mortal enemy out of sight for fear that he will be struck down unexpectedly and while unprepared. In a sense, the novels of Zola represent the saga of his morbid fascination with death and his efforts to incorporate it into an understandable whole.

When Jeanne Grandjean dies in Une Page d'Amour,
Hélène, her bereaved mother, experiences "l'angoisse, l'arrachement de l'éternelle séparation" (P. 1080). It should be noted that the expression is a virile one which beautifully translates Zola's attitude toward death. The word "arrachement" expresses death's power, its active quality, while "l'éternelle séparation" expresses the state of death or its result. Death is something which is active, irresistible, and irreparable. Maheu's "quand on est mort, on est mort" (Germinal, p. 1277) repeats Zola's conviction that whatever death is it precludes the hope of a resurrection in which loved ones will be reunited, another Christian hope which he rejects.

But death for the author of the Rougon-Macquart is not limited to the fact of man's termination as an individual. It is a far more pervasive fact which is perhaps most adequately described by the word "decomposition." Decomposition attacks all things. It is the fate of men, of inanimate things, of relationships. As Nana passes before her mirror, her attention is drawn to her body and to the idea of its death. She says to Muffat: "On est laid, quand on est mort..." (Nana, p. 1410). The idea fascinates her at the same time that it fills her with horror:

Et elle se serrait les joues, elle s'agrandissait les yeux, s'enfonçait la mâchoire pour voir comment elle serait. Puis, se tournant vers le
comte, ainsi défigurée: "Regarde donc, j'aurai la tête toute petite, moi."

(Loc. cit.)

The Count, angered by her contemplation of such a disagreeable subject, is nevertheless unable to chase it from his own mind. He continues the scene in his imagination: "Il la voyait dans une fosse, avec le décharnement d'un siècle de sommeil..." (Ibid., p. 1411). He is so disturbed by this vision that he mutters a prayer. He feels helpless before the awful and unavoidable void which Nana's death represents and before his sin which the idea of death has brought to mind.

In Au Bonheur des Dames, Zola makes an effort to see the positive side of decomposition. The result is one of the novel's serious flaws, for it expresses a belief which Zola cannot honestly espouse. Denise, the author's spokesman, decides, after no little mental and moral agony, that the destruction of the small shop owners by Octave Mouret's Bonheur is not after all a negative factor in the overall movement of history. It is inevitable, it is good, it is progress. The power of capital is exerted for the benefit of society in the long run. She formulates this conclusion during a sleepless night:

Jusqu'au bout, il lui fallait assister à l'oeuvre invincible de la vie, qui veut la mort pour continuelle semence...elle acceptait cette loi de la lutte; mais son âme de femme s'emplissait
d'une bonté en pleurs, d'une tendresse fraternelle, à l'idée de l'humanité souffrante. Depuis des années, elle-même était prise entre les rouages de la machine. N'y avait-elle pas saigné? ... Et la force qui balayait tout, l'emportait à son tour, elle dont la venue devait être une revanche. Mouret avait inventé cette mécanique à écraser le monde... il avait semé le quartier de ruines, dépouillé les uns, tué les autres; et elle l'aimait quand même pour la grandeur de son oeuvre, elle l'aimait davantage à chacun des excès de son pouvoir, malgré le flot de larmes qui la soulevait, devant la misère sacrée des vaincus.

(Au Bonheur des Dames, pp. 760-761)

Zola comes to this conclusion not because his heart is in it at the time but because he is determined not to end his book on a pessimistic note (Présentation des Rougon-Macquart, p. 206). He wants to counterbalance the negativism of Pot-Bouille, his preceding novel. His greatest error in doing so is to express this philosophy through Denise, for whom it is rather out of character. Henri Guillaume comments on this weakness:

Sa belle petite âme, éprise de bienfaisance, achèvera de décorer d'un badigeon paternaliste le capitalisme triomphant. Eh! oui. On doit s'y faire. Zola n'a pas réfléchi beaucoup aux problèmes qu'imprudemment plusieurs de ses livres soulèvent.

(Ibid., p. 211)

Zola will never truly believe that the crushing of the weak by the strong is good. He is still faced with an inevitable negative fact which he continues to try to deal
with in a positive manner.

In *L'OEuvre*, he expresses through Sandoz a renewed sense of futility arising from the knowledge that even at the end of a productive life of hard work death waits. This awareness lessens his potential for happiness now.

Like Zola, for whom work is an escape, he says:

'Je travaille, eh! sans doute, je travaille! je travaille comme je vis, parce que je suis né pour ça; mais, va, je n'en suis pas plus gai, jamais je ne me contente, et il y a toujours la grande culbute au bout!'

(*L'OEuvre*, p. 191)

Not only is there the "grande culbute" at the end, life is changing, decomposing now, and its decomposition frustrates man's desire for permanency and order. Claude Lantier is absorbed by this thought as he spends another evening with his friends:

Et Claude, pénétré par cette bonne-homie heureuse...les regardait tous, se demandait s'il les avait quittées la veille... Ils étaient autres pourtant, il les sentait changés... Sans doute, leurs visages avaient vieilli un peu, à l'usure de l'existence; mais ce n'était pas cela seulement, des vides paraissaient se faire entre eux, il les voyait à part, étrangers, bien qu'ils fussent coude à coude...


Not long afterwards the same impression recurs. Everything seems to be crumbling:

Alors, Claude sentit nettement quelque chose se rompre. La vie avait-elle donc emporté déjà les soirées d'autrefois
...? La fissure était là, la fente à peine visible, qui avait fêlé les vieilles amitiés jurées, et qui devaient les faire craquer, un jour, en mille pièces.  
(Ibid., p. 198)

The same fatality extends to their work, which will also perish. Sandoz and Claude talk of the transient nature of art forms and of the artist's fame. Sandoz says:

'Et s'il n'y avait pas plus de paradis pour l'artiste que pour le catholique, si les générations futures se trompaient comme les contemporains...préféraient aux oeuvres fortes les petites bêtises aimables!... Ah! quelle duperie, hein? quelle existence de forçat...pour une chimère!'

(Ibid., p. 320)

Claude, who has listened to him "de son air d'accablement," replies:

--'Bah! qu'est-ce que ça fiche? il n'y a rien... Quand la terre claquera dans l'espace comme une noix sèche, nos œuvres n'ajouteront pas un atome à sa poussière.

(Ibid., p. 321)

Sandoz:

--'Ça, c'est bien vrai... A quoi bon vouloir combler le néant?... Et dire que nous le savons, et que notre orgueil s'acharne!'

(Loc. cit.)

In this last excerpt, the dual nature of Zola's reaction to decomposition is evident: "What good is it to try to do the impossible, to fill up the cracks, to overcome the inevitable?" And yet one must work! Sandoz
restates it at the novel's end when he says in the cemetery: "allons travailler" (Ibid., p. 363).

*La Joie de Vivre* amply illustrates this duality. In one sense, the title itself is undeniably ironic because there is surely very little joy in the lives of most of the novel's characters. It is rather a novel of blackness, of brooding, of preoccupation with the reality of death and of the debilitating effect which such a preoccupation can have on one's life. That this concern is autobiographical in nature is well-known, because Zola has not yet found his equilibrium after the death of his mother in 1880. Lazare, who is so totally absorbed in the contemplation of death after the passing of his own mother that his life becomes a misery, is unquestionably in part Emile Zola. The agony and death of Madame Chanteau is similar to that of Madame Zola. Lazare's heartache and distress are Emile's. The way of Christian faith, however, with the consolation which it affords, is open neither to the one nor to the other, although the temptation to embark upon it is present. René Ternois comments on the temptation to faith which he believes presented itself to Lazare and on his reaction to it:

> Après la mort de sa mère, dans sa douleur et son effroi, il voudrait croire qu'on retrouve un jour dans un autre monde ceux qu'on a aimés; mais cette consolation lui manque, sa raison refuse 'le mensonge charitable des religions,
dont la pitié cache aux faibles la vérité terrible'.
(Zola et Son Temps, p. 40)

Although he disagrees on the strength of the temptation's appeal, Henri Guillemin adds that for once in his life Lazare has made a virile decision in his refusal to accept religion's lie (Présentation des Rougon-Macquart, p. 232).

Still, Lazare remains unable to integrate death into an overall life-view which will utilize it as a necessary part of a universal process. Even Pauline, who represents Zola's effort to deal with the problem in a mature way, does not philosophize on it beyond her conviction that one must get used to the idea of death, a lesson which a serious illness has taught her. In a sentence reminiscent of Montaigne, Zola says that Pauline "était pénétrée de la douceur de vivre, après avoir eu le courage de s'habiter à la mort" (La Joie de Vivre, p. 925).

Pauline learns the lesson well, for she is, without doubt, the only "joie" in the novel. She suffers, she sacrifices, she works, she lives totally for others. She hasn't time to think about the meaning of death. She refuses to capitulate in Lazare-like fashion to the supposed horrors of this experience, which he finds even at the bottom of his sexual relationship with Louise. We
can conclude that the positive reaction to death is already present in Zola's novels, but that, with the exception of the false step taken in Au Bonheur des Dames, the philosophical or more verbal expression of it will come later.

This verbalization begins to appear more clearly in Germinal's hopeful ending. It appears also in the positive note struck at the end of L'Oeuvre and is amplified in La Terre in the following passage:

Françoise tuée, Fouan tué, etc... il est possible qu'il faille du sang et des larmes pour que le monde marche. (La Terre, p. 811)

The famous scene of the sowers in the fields at the book's conclusion symbolizes a recall to life which in spite of decomposition is triumphant. The scene's positive message is another example of Zola's effort to force himself to adopt an optimistic point of view in spite of what Patrick Brady calls his natural tendency to paint everything in black ("L'Oeuvre," d'Emile Zola, Roman sur les Arts, pp. 268, 270, 276). Or, put another way, "pessimisme pour le moment présent, optimisme pour l'avenir" (Ibid., p. 276).

While L'Argent ends in the same kind of faith in life and the hope that somehow humanity is continuing on its march toward "un but obscur et lointain, quelque chose de supérieur, de bon, de juste, de définitif" (p. 398) -- albeit without knowing it -- the reference, however, is not
specifically to Caroline's reaction to death, but rather a question of general suffering. Such, however, is not the case in La Dégâcle, in which we see a clear statement of the author's now more positive, though still tentative, view of death as a necessary phenomenon. Maurice reflects on life and on the role of war in it.

Est-ce que la vie n'est pas une guerre de chaque seconde? est-ce que la condition même de la nature n'est pas le combat continu, la victoire du plus digne, la force entretenue et renouvelée par l'action, la vie renaissant toujours jeune de la mort?¹⁰

Almost five hundred pages later he is still considering the same question. To Jean's statement that war is a dirty business, he replies: "C'est peut-être nécessaire, cette saignée. La guerre, c'est la vie qui ne peut pas être sans la mort" (La Dégâcle, p. 903). And in a truly heroic act of faith in this conviction he justifies his own death at Jean's hands by referring to himself as "le membre gâté que tu as abattu..." (Ibid., p. 907). He thus demonstrates a total acceptance of death. In the book's final pages we see Jean once again as he walks away from a disaster, "marchant à l'avenir, à la grande et rude besogne de toute une France à refaire" (Ibid., p. 912). He again moves from disappointment to hope, from death to life.

The attitude of Maurice prefigures that of Doctor Pascal, who is more nearly Zola himself. Pascal is also
more articulate, more rational perhaps in his consideration of the question of death, since he is the family's most cerebral and also most dissimilar offspring. The problem of death has caused him serious concern, but at last he can accept it more easily than he can accept unmerited suffering because it appears to be "dans l'ordre" (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1088). His orientation is finally completely toward life, which he says is endlessly removing what he refers to as "les corps nuisibles" and which

'refait de la chair, pour boucher les blessures, qui marche quand même à la santé, un renouvellement continu parmi les impuretés et la mort.'

(Ibid., p. 999)

If he is optimistic, he is also lucid for he recognizes that "la mort resterait l'inévitable, la souveraine" (Ibid., p. 1082).

Generally in the Trois Villes and the Quatre Evangiles this attitude will remain firm. But there remains in these novels a kind of smoldering protest against death which indicates that the author is not yet totally free of "le scandale" which it has been to him.

Lourdes is by no means a novel of life. On the contrary, it is a work in which one finds death and more death. Madame Vetu dies; Father Isidore dies; Madame Chaise dies; Madame Vincent's daughter dies; the "commandeur" dies. Others die. Of course, Zola is debunking
the miracles which the Church claims are a common occurrence at the Grotto. He is pointing out that the human condition hasn't changed despite claims to the contrary. Unfortunately, people still die, and just when many of them have the greatest hopes of living. Death is not seen in Lourdes as the anodyne or even positive occurrence which it later becomes.

Zola, in fact, cannot suppress a residual anger against death. His duality surfaces again in Rome. Victorine, representing the kind of simplicity and serenity which Pierre/Zola desires, states the case, which for her is without complications:

'S'Que voulez-vous donc qu'il y ait après la mort? On a bien mérité de dormir, c'est encore ce qu'il y a de plus désirable et de plus consolant.'

(Rome, p. 619)

Hers is a simple formula for a simple problem. Nevertheless, within five pages we see Celia standing before the bodies of Benedetta and Dario, sweethearts cut off in the prime of life. She is not serene, not resigned:

Une protestation furieuse montait de son jeune coeur, ouvert à la vie, avide de joie et de soleil, en révolte contre l'imbécile mort. Et cette colère, cet effroi, cette douleur en face du néant, où toute passion se glace, se lisait sur son visage ingénu de lis candide et fermé.

(Ibid., p. 624)

Total acceptance and peace? Impossible. Pierre
thinks about Victorine's simple solution to the problem, about her courage in the face of death, about her zest for life: "Ah! Être comme elle, faire sa tâche et se coucher pour l'éternel sommeil..." (Ibid., p. 689). He will reach this desired state in Paris where he will be aided by his marriage to Marie after he has left the priesthood.

Fécondité is perhaps pivotal in Zola's effort to deal with death. Paradoxical in that it shows death as often particularly anachronistic and unexpected, calling it "un coup de foudre" (p. 461), "un coup de massue" (p. 472), "un coup de hache" (p. 476), "la brusque cassure" (p. 561), and something which "avait brusquement passé" (p. 468), it reveals death nevertheless as an event to which his "personnages à these" become resigned and whose prospect even gives them a certain peace. For Marc and Marianne "Cette pensée était sans tristesse..." (p. 748). They are a proof of Nicolai Berdyaev's statement that

If man were only a natural and finite being, there would be nothing tragic about death—only the death is tragic of a deathless being, striving toward infinity.11

In a sense, however, they will continue to live, "vivant toujours par leurs enfants, unis à jamais, immortels dans leur race" (Fécondité, p. 749).

Travail tells the same story. Death has become the "bonne ouvrière de l'éternelle vie" (Travail, p. 622),
"on revit dans les autres, on reste immortel" (Ibid., p. 637). The workers are "sans terreur sur le lendemain de la mort, certains du grand calme où les bons ouvriers s'endortment" (Loc. cit.).

In these last novels there is an emphasis on the immortality which is achieved by each person as he dies and passes into the eternal current of life. Eternal life flows on through the endless progenies which follow the fruitful couple. It becomes an ever broadening and ever more vigorous stream. It is in fact indomitable because of its increase. It is society that will triumph and not the individual, however, for only society can continue to fill the "brèche" constantly created by death. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Zola moves toward philosophical marxism in his last years. He sees the individual as important only as he contributes to the whole, and the future of the whole guaranteed and secured only by an unending reproductivity. It is only in this way that death, so often pictured as an untimely catastrophe, a formidable grim reaper, a "souveraine" which no one can withstand, will itself be swallowed up by an over-abundance of life.

Death, then, becomes something to which one should be totally reconciled, but not through the acceptance of Christian doctrinal assertions concerning it. It is
unacceptable to the educated man to state that man has brought death upon himself through sin and that God has patched up the fault by overcoming death for him. The doctrine of individual eternal life is, when viewed realistically, only a human attempt to continue an existence which he does not want to give up. It is perhaps natural that he should create such religious beliefs, but they remain no more than the product of man's own mind. They are illusions which hinder man from taking a truly positive and productive attitude toward life and death, a stance which he must assume if he is to be happy in this world.

In his own way, then, Zola is as assiduous as are the Christians in finding an explanation of death which will give to their existence some sense of meaning and value. Although he asserts that in death all ends "for" the individual, he cannot assert that all ends "with" the individual. There is still a satisfaction experienced by the heroes of his last novels which derives from the conviction that, in spite of the dark curtain of death which falls over the drama of their lives, they will not end. The psychological effect upon them is after all certainly not unlike that of the Christians' hope of immortality. Everyone hopes, and perhaps particularly Emile Zola.
Justice

Zola states that his novels depict life as it really is, and it is on this basis that he includes in them what many critics have considered a terribly pessimistic exaggeration of life's dark side. Be that as it may, it is undeniable that "life as it is" in the Zolean formula is more accurately life as Emile Zola sees it. This fact, which we think beyond controversy, is important if we are to recognize that the recurring themes of his books are good indicators of those issues in which he takes a particular interest and which he considers of particular importance.

One of these recurring issues is the question of justice, or, perhaps more accurately stated, the fact of the existence of injustice in the world. The theme stretches like an unbroken ribbon from one end of his works to the other. And in the world which he creates there is little justice to be found. Indeed, one of the primary motivating forces in the lives of many of the Zolean heroes is the quest for justice and the establishment of a society in which one class or group is not subjugating another or one individual exploiting another. For this reason, many of those characters for whom Zola seems to have a special attachment are those who have a strong sense of justice, a sense of what is right and wrong. Etienne Lantier, La
Maheude, Jean Macquart, Mère Grand, the Froment family would all have to be classified in this group.

But justice does not exist in the world to any appreciable degree. Jesus Christ did not bring it, and in fact Christianity has for centuries impeded man's march toward truth and justice. Nor is it to be found in nature—a fact which is troublesome to Clotilde who comments on it to Pascal:

Si encore l'égalité et la justice existaient dans la nature. Mais tu le reconnais toi-même, la vie est au plus fort...

(Le Docteur Pascal, p. 993)

Pierre Froment considers the same question and wonders why man demands equality and justice "lorsque ces choses semblaient absentes de l'impassible nature" (Lourdes, p. 576). "L'homme," he concludes, "les avait mises dans l'inconnu du mystère, dans le surnaturel des paradis religieux..." (Loc. cit.). Man seeks a kind of redressing of life's inequities and injustices by looking forward to a moment when in another world God makes it up to him.

This solution is, of course, a specious one for Zola. Even if justice is absent from nature and from man it is within man's province and power to create it. Not that justice will be easy to achieve; it will indeed be slow to arrive (L'Argent, p. 285), but "l'ère...de la justice" will come (Paris, p. 530). To ensure this result
Zola creates the leaders who will give a powerful impetus to the establishment of the city of justice which he envisions. The "armée d'hommes qui rétabliraient la justice" (Germinal, p. 1277) foreseen by Etienne will not be a militarized army, however, but a "beau bataillon" of teachers, who will destroy ignorance, prejudice and injustice. It is they who will remold "la grande foule pesante, inerte...incapable d'être libre, juste, heureuse" (Vérité, p. 74).

Even if God is not a God of justice and does not fit the young Pauline's image of an all-powerful and wise being who directs all in such a way that "tout marché sur la terre selon la justice," (La Joie de Vivre, p. 849), even if nature herself is impassive and unresponsive to man's call for justice, even if too often it is "les coquins triomphants" (La Terre, p. 811) which one sees in life, nevertheless Zola cannot resist the impulse to portray a kind of retributive justice in his fictional world. It appears indeed that not all of the "coquins" will escape just punishment, although the punishment may come from an equally opprobrious source.

Nana, for example, becomes an instrument of justice punishing the sundry decadent aristocrats and bourgeois with whom she consorts:

Son oeuvre de ruine et de mort était faite, la mouche envolée de l'ordure
des faubourgs, apportant le ferment des pourritures sociales, avait em-poisonné ces hommes... C'était bien, c'était juste, elle avait vengé son monde, les gueux et les abandonnés. (Nana, p. 1470)

Her "work" is, of course, unconscious. She, the instrument of whatever it is that uses her to punish the exploiters and the corrupt, is "ignorante de sa besogne, bonne fille toujours" (Loc. cit.). Similarly, in Paris, Duvillard's mistress, Silviane, is to him

...le commencement de la justice et du châtiment, reprenant à mains pleines l'or amassé, vengeant par ses cruautés ceux qui avaient froid et faim. (Paris, p. 89)

She is his "tare vengeresse, sa pourriture, à lui le pourrisseur..." (Ibid., p. 292).

The fate of Maigrat of Germinal speaks equally to the point, as does that of Doctor Gaude, who after mutilating countless women is "foudroyé par une mort subite" (Fécondité, pp. 692-693) which is rumored to have been caused by castration at the hands of his hapless victims, those whom he has "freed" from the fear of pregnancy and maternity. The murder of Gorgias, the pederast priest of Vérité, guilty himself of murdering Zéphirin, and the killing of Alexandre-Honoré of Fécondité also illustrate the point. He who lives by the sword often dies by the sword in Zola's works, although there remain some
important exceptions to this fact.

Strictly speaking, "oughts" and "should nots" have no place in the work of a scientist, for pure science may observe, describe and analyze, but must abstain from making moralistic judgments. Zola's responsibility as a naturalistic writer with strong scientific claims is therefore to report what "does" happen while avoiding stating his opinion on what "should" happen.

Nevertheless, the moral imperative exists throughout Zola's novels either in explicit or implicit form. There can be no doubt, for example, that he is defending the miners and workers against exploitation, and that he believes that the bourgeoisie should not take much and give little in return. It is equally obvious that Coupeau should not drink to excess and that one should work for a living. It is clear also that Lalie should not have to suffer at the hands of her father, that war is a terrible scourge and that the Church should stay out of politics.

If the moral imperative is found in some form throughout the Rougon-Macquart novels, it seems to thunder out most powerfully in the Quatre Evangiles and the Trois Villes, as though the author were tired of restraining his ire and of not pronouncing judgment upon the evils he reports. In these books there is a strong sense of moral outrage. Such outrage reveals the writer's acceptance of
an objective value structure relative to human life which he can in no way discover through scientific observation. For while his observations may help to identify the gangrenous branches in society, they cannot lead to the conclusion that gangrene is bad any more than the doctor's observations can lead to the conclusion that cancer is immoral. Zola cannot discover that life is either good or bad through his "scientific" observations.

Much of Zola's quarrel with God is based therefore on the presupposition that justice and injustice do indeed exist. His conclusion is that injustice should not coexist with a good God. Since injustice does exist, however, God does not. God and injustice are for him mutually exclusive, although he gives ample evidence of believing that most of the world's injustice is caused by man himself.

The sum of moral conclusions which Zola brings to his work, therefore, enables him to pass judgment both on life's injustices and on those of his characters who commit them.

**Teleology and Eschatology**

Les temps viendront où ce royaume de Dieu sera sur la terre, et que l'autre paradis menteur soit donc fermé...

*Paris, pp. 576-577*
For our study the significance of Zola's utopian dream is not primarily its implications or ramifications as they compare with the Biblical "Kingdom of God" which is prophesied to occur either in reference to the millenial reign of Christ or to the more familiar concept of heaven. The significance of his vision lies rather in his constant conception of it as the replacement for the prophetic kingdom--a conception which underscores the fact that Zola has viewed the Christian Church as the chief impediment to the actualization of his own dream. 

He is convinced, however, that the rival doctrine is now bankrupt and that the way lies open to his own prophets and saviors to lay the foundations of that glorious "cité future" about which he has so much to say in his *Trois Villes* and *Quatre Evangiles*. Early in *Paris* he expresses it in this way:

*C'était le jeune espoir, arrivant historiquement à son heure, ce rêve du paradis chrétien, ouvrant l'autre vie, avec ses compensations. Aujourd'hui que dix-huit siècles ont épuisé cet espoir, que la longue expérience est faite...l'ouvrier fait le nouveau rêve de remettre le bonheur sur cette terre, puisque la science lui prouve chaque jour davantage que le bonheur dans l'au-delà est un mensonge.*

*(Ibid., p. 223)*

It is not clear how science is progressively revealing the supposed happiness of paradise to be a lie. But even if Zola makes a statement in this case which is
not supported by scientific data, the essential point is
made—happiness is to be experienced on this earth by
flesh and blood people and not in Heaven by disembodied
spirits. It is toward that happiness on earth that man is
inexorably, albeit slowly, moving.

The achievement of happiness by man is not, however,
to be considered the goal toward which all life is moving.
In Zolean eschatology that goal remains inscrutable and is
repeatedly referred to as the "but inconnu" or "ignoré"
(L'Argent, p. 74; La Terre, p. 811; Le Docteur Pascal, pp.
961, 1084, etc.). For this reason it is perhaps more
accurate to speak only of the progressive aspect of life,
only of penultimate events rather than of an apprehended
goal. Still, if the reason for life is hidden in darkness,
Zola formulates some idea of life's movement and of the
state of life on earth at some point in the future—
probably millenia away—where Justice and Truth will be to
a large degree achieved, demographic and economic equili-
brium will be reached and relative happiness attained.

Zolean cosmography begins with a "point de l'éther qui
s'est condensé pour créer le monde" (Paris, p. 576). At
some undetermined point in the past the "divin soleil...
après avoir tiré les êtres du limon" has nurtured them
(Travail, p. 626), after which evolution, "la loi unique
de vie" (Op. cit., p. 576), has moved all life toward the
unknown goal. Both the past and the future remain shrouded in shadows. Life goes on, however, led by "la loi des forces qui mènent le monde" (La Dédâcle, p. 453) by "cette force qui pousse tout à la vie..." (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 952). It moves toward its unknown goal and is itself "Dieu, le grand moteur, l'âme de l'univers" (Ibid., p. 947), whose only instrument is heredity.

Incorporated in human life is a natural drive toward unity which will once again bring families, peoples and races progressively into one immortal humanity (Rome, pp. 709-710) which will live without geographic divisions and which will know war no more. Mankind will reach this state after civilization has traveled several times around the globe east to west, repeatedly decaying and repeatedly being regenerated (Loc. cit.). The era of equilibrium and serenity will at last begin, although no one can predict what disasters and suffering may precede that day (Fécondité, p. 55).

The mental creation of a utopian society is not, however, the major problem which Zola encounters in his contemplation of life and its movement. The far greater problem is that one which would also face Christian man deprived of his teleological view of life. He would want to understand what life is all about and would undoubtedly seek some reason to continue his existence without being
able to come to definite conclusions regarding its goals.

The problem is one of motivation. Deprived of a sufficiently full view of life and its goal, thinking man must find some personal reason for being, some other justification for his existence. It is at this point that Zola supplies an incentive which appears at once totally insufficient and yet the only possible solution to the dilemma.

The most cogent presentation of his solution is found in Le Docteur Pascal in which Pascal, Zola's ideal intellectual, has to face the issue squarely. He asks himself why man should hold so tenaciously to his life when all around him he sees evil and suffering and when he has no light on the goal toward which life is moving. He tries to face the question as scientist and realist:

Certes, il était un savant, un clair-voyant, il ne croyait pas à une humanité d'idylle vivant dans une nature de lait, il voyait au contraire les maux et les tares, les étalait, les fouillait, les cataloguait depuis trente ans...

(Le Docteur Pascal, p. 961)

What he sees in the particular and in the short run is not encouraging. For this reason he concludes that one must adopt a more objective view of life which will accept the presence of evil as a factor not totally negative and admit of some hope for the future. Clotilde recalls this part of Pascal's credo:
...l'humanité apparaissait, de très haut, comme un immense mécanisme en fonction, travaillant au perpétuel devenir.

(Ibid., p. 1210)

The emphasis is put on the "becoming" and not on the goal itself. One should not, in fact, worry too much about life's goal. Pascal says to Clotilde: "C'est ma passion de la vie qui triomphe, jusqu'à ne pas la chicaner sur son but..." (Ibid., p. 1085). He adds that "Elle seule est souveraine, elle seule sait ce qu'elle fait et où elle va ..." (Loc. cit.).

This transfer of focus is presumably to absorb man in his daily task even if he cannot see how his daily task fits into the whole:

Pourquoi l'ouvrier qui disparaissait, ayant terminé sa journée, aurait-il maudit l'oeuvre parce qu'il ne pouvait en voir ni en juger la fin?

(Ibid., p. 1210)

It is sufficiently satisfying to love the effort alone. Living is itself the end and work appears as a kind of redeemer or answer to the dysteleological emptiness which man faces:

Il faut vivre pour l'effort de vivre, pour la pierre apportée à l'oeuvre lointaine et mystérieuse, et la seule paix possible, sur cette terre, est dans la joie de cet effort accompli.

(Ibid., p. 1024)

Doctor Casenove expresses the same idea in his conversation with Lazare: "Mais vivez, est-ce que vivre ne suffit pas?
La joie est dans l'action" (La Joie de Vivre, p. 994).

This function of work is probably the greatest reason for the glorification which it enjoys in Zola's novels. It is an absorbing activity which not only adds building blocks to the amorphous structure which time and humanity are erecting but which also pacifies the mind tormented by existential considerations. In Travail work reaches its apotheosis when Jordan composes a hymn to it:

'Ah! travail sacré, travail créateur
et sauveur, qui est ma vie, mon unique raison de vivre!

(Travail, p. 326)

Work is his "raison d'être," the purpose and goal of his life.

If this philosophy seems to be characterized by a certain intellectual paucity and seems to be a kind of hope against hope that life is indeed worthwhile, one must still submit to it and give up his revolt. Therein lies the only possibility of arriving at a positive attitude and at a state of peace. Clotilde at last arrives at this stage as she ponders the prospect of her child and of all children continuing the "tâche de la vie qu'on leur transmet, qu'ils transmettront à leur tour" (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 1210). From that moment on she experiences "la résignation vaillante au grand labeur commun, sans la révolte du moi qui exige un bonheur à lui, absolu" (Loc. cit.). Still, there is a stubborn vestige of sadness which
comes from her failure to comprehend the ultimate goal. She asks herself: "Que venait-on faire sur la terre? quel était le sens de cette existence exécrable...? (Loc. cit.). She takes refuge in her conviction that giving life to her child is the work which justifies her own existence and contributes to the common effort of all mankind. Her son is "son oeuvre vivante."

As Zola sees it and presents it in his novels the limitations of man's concern to the physical world and to the daily task saves man from a danger which has characterized his existence through the centuries of Christian influence. That danger is the "soif de l'au-delà," the need to experience the beyond, the ultimate. In other terms it is man's desire to possess the absolute. There is in Pascal a desire to "tout savoir," to "tout prévoir," but he has to conclude that total knowledge is not susceptible to acquisition and that his efforts must be to learn continually as the horizon of scientific mysteries is progressively pushed back by acquired knowledge. This desire is even greater in Clotilde, but she comes to terms with it and succeeds in limiting her vision to that which may be gradually possessed.

This conviction creates an important theme in Zola's novels. Man's persistence in seeking the absolute always ends in tragedy. Claude Lantier is destroyed by his quest
for the artistic ideal; Serge Mouret is destroyed by his desire to possess God; Faujas is destroyed by his quest for total power; Saccard is brought down by his desire to be the ultimate financier.

Wisdom dictates that it is not the possession which counts—and which is impossible in any case—it is rather the effort which is important. It is not in knowing that one finds the value of the quest for knowledge, but in the quest itself. Pascal expresses it well when he says: 
"...l'unique intérêt à vivre est la conquête sans fin sur l'inconnu, l'éternel effort pour savoir davantage..." (Le Docteur Pascal, p. 992).

This is no doubt one reason why Zola cannot present his "future city" and his "golden age" as totally perfected and possessed. In Travail his Crêcherie is still in the process of becoming, and in Vérité there even seems to be a step backwards, a new beginning antedating the vision of Travail's last pages. As Travail ends there is still bloody war raging between neighboring states. He reemphasizes, thereby, his belief that progress on the road to wherever life is leading is slow and unpredictable and that there is still much work to be done.

It is significant and paradoxical that, while Zola attacks what he considers the illusory aspect of Christianity—its Heaven to come—as a goal which no one
has proven conclusively to exist, his own ambiguous goal is no less closed to scientific scrutiny. It is obvious that while science may explain the "how" of life, it is not within its power to provide the "why." Zola's efforts to find a viable substitute for Christian teleology and eschatology require, therefore, as much faith as do the Christian doctrines which he seeks to replace. In allowing "life" in the abstract to run the risk of producing monsters and of harboring apparent evil and suffering, while asking for patient submission to its impenetrable designs, he is extending once again an indulgence to impersonal life which he cannot extend to the Christian God.

CONCLUSION

The Catholic Church plays an important role in Emile Zola's novels. Because of its impact on France's historical development and its prominence in contemporary French life, Zola could not possibly overlook it as a subject to be included in his works—particularly the Rougon-Macquart series, designed as it was to present a realistic picture of French society in the nineteenth century.

In the second place, the Church provides one of the salient themes in Zola's novels because he tended to view it as the most sinister and imposing obstruction to the achievement of a new kind of world order that seemed to be
inevitable. For this reason, the Church's negative impact and role are stressed even to the point of considerable distortion. Whatever redeeming features it may possess are rarely mentioned. It remains consistently the monster at the door which must be repelled and which in the process of natural historical development will eventually die from its adherence to anachronistic beliefs and goals which are incompatible with those of the modern world—an emerging world which is being founded on the fruits of scientific discovery and material and technological achievement made possible through the liberation and use of man's inherent powers of reason. The truth as revealed by the scientific method of inquiry will gradually undermine Christian doctrines and one day bring about the collapse of the Church which has taught them. The Church's days, therefore, are numbered, and its end, or the beginning of its end, is foreshadowed in Zola's last novels, the *Trois Villes* and *Quatre Evangiles* series.

This portrayal of the Church's role and its eventual fate is not without some inconsistency, however, for Zola is faced with the dual task of presenting at once an institution which poses a serious threat to existing governments while it is said to be corrupt and moribund. But Zola needs a still powerful yet vulnerable Church in much the same way that a general needs the enemy—he is
necessary if glory is to be won. A strong enemy provides a test for one's courage, while a degenerate and defeated enemy provides the measure of one's superiority.

The picture of the Church as a formidable body emerges almost immediately in the novels which we have studied. Its historical role in the politics of Plassans is revealed in La Fortune des Rougon, the opening work of Rougon-Macquart. Its politics of collusion and accommodation are shown in that novel and in others such as the much later Paris, Rome and Vérité. Its goal is consistently portrayed as the regaining of the political power which it at times enjoyed in the Roman Empire and to a lesser degree in Western Europe up to the time of the Reformation and even as late as the Revolution in France. Its policies are overtly, therefore, policies of cooperation with the centers of existing political power while covertly they are the subversion of those same powers when it deems such action to be in its best interest.

While cooperating with the Republic, for example, the Church is actively engaged in a campaign of attacks upon the home designed to give it control of the entire family. Control of the family when multiplied exponentially translates into both spiritual and temporal power. If successfully achieved, such a pervasive influence would mean the reestablishment of the Pope as political as well
spiritual ruler. Such is the goal of the Church, at least as Zola presents it.

Again, education, the forming of young minds by the Church in its parish schools, is an indispensable tool to the Church's effort. The religious and anti-scientific training which the young receive in Catholic schools makes an indelible imprint on their minds. They are henceforth faithful servants of an organization which vies with the State for power. The Catholic influence in education must be, and eventually will be, ended, so that tomorrow's adults will be free to think for themselves and to build a world order based on Truth and Justice.

The Church, however, appears to be inconsistent in its policy in the area of social reform. Rather than exploit to its advantage the social unrest among the workers in France, it leaves labor reform to those who are outside the Church. Not only does it refuse to help in the organizing of labor unions which are non-Catholic in nature, it even exploits labor in its own factories in a way not unlike that of the selfish and decadent bourgeois capitalists of the Western world. What charitable works it does promote are inadequate and ineffectual in dealing with the problems of the proletariat.

The picture of the Church as spiritual entity is also drawn by Zola. Here again its role is seen as less
than admirable, for it is most often subservient to policies dictated by the Church's political goals. In addition, its spiritual function is marred and weakened by a body of prelates and priests who are often more interested in achieving some selfish goal—perhaps advancement in the Church's hierarchy—than in ministering to the spiritually and materially needy souls entrusted to them. Rome is the primary novel in which personal ambition and factionalism, including fratricidal conflicts, are seen best. Lourdes and La Conquête de Plassans also present aspects of these intramural struggles. Money as a goal and as a tool is also examined in Rome and Lourdes.

Generally, the purely spiritual function of the priest is only occasionally seen in Zola's novels. In fact, spiritual questions seem most often to be ignored in favor of the dispensing of worldly advice and counsel. Religion is usually not discussed between penitent and priest. This tendency is carried to the extreme in the cases of Abbé Rouston of La Ventre de Paris and of Abbé Maudit of Pot-Bouille, where injustice and sexual immorality are abetted by the priest's indifference or by his overriding desire to protect the Church from public scandal.

Still, there are a few simple-minded and limited priests who are interested in the spiritual well-being of their flock. Abbé Godard and Abbé Horteur of La Terre and
La Joie de Vivre respectively preach the gospel, even if it is largely characterized by admonitions to escape judgment and the hell to come. The kindly Abbé Jouve of Une Page d'Amour is revealed also to have his parishioners' best interests at heart.

Zola does not fail to present a sketch of the Church as it is seen by the various social classes in his novels. His peasants and workers, for example, tend almost without exception to see the Church and the religious experience as something which is outmoded and irrelevant to them. The peasants of La Faute de l'abbé Mouret and of La Terre continue to attend Mass, not because they believe in the God about whom Catholic dogma speaks, but because it is traditional for the Church to perform their marriages, their baptisms and their funerals. In the case of Germinal's miners, however, these functions are not revealed to retain their former importance because of the Church's refusal to lend moral and material support to the miners' cause.

While the peasants and the workers are indifferent to the Church and religion, the bourgeois and the aristocrats use them for their own benefit. The Church exhibits a broad tolerance for their sins and lends strong support to their desire to maintain the social and political status quo. Religion also provides a balm for their wounded egos
and a salve for their emotional scars.

Individual cases of religious belief are also portrayed. Believers are often shown to be of limited intellect or talents, although there do occur some notable exceptions. Some highly educated people, such as Lourdes' Doctor Chassaingne, decide that science is unable to explain enough physical phenomena (such as miracles) to exclude the possibility of faith as an answer. But such a case remains the exception to the general rule.

Some people believe because they are afraid of life. They seek escape. Others believe because faith provides a comfort in times of trouble or the hope of healing of their physical afflictions. Some are afraid of the coming hell. Still others are of a mystical bent because of some hereditary weakness or environmental influence. Serge Mouret and Bernadette Soubirous fall into this category. Georges Hamelin and Marie de Guersaint are the two lay believers who come closest to a happy and satisfying religious experience. The first has serious personality flaws and the latter serious psychological problems. The religious experience is most often an unhappy one, however. Serge Mouret's experience leads to tragedy both for himself and for Albine. His mother, Marthe, unsatisfied by her spiritual quest dies insane. Bernadette dies sick of mind and body for having seen the Virgin. The results of faith
are almost invariably negative.

Zola believes that the sexual and religious drives in man stem from the same source within him. And the experiences which these drives create are similar to the degree that at times they seem interchangeable. Temporary vicarious satisfaction for one of these needs is at times experienced in satisfying the other. The experiences of Marthe and Serge Mouret and of Count Muffat illustrate the point.

Because Zola so closely associates the sexual and religious experiences, his images often reflect their similarities. The Church is described as an "alcôve" where sexual needs are met and the alcôve is described as a church in which spiritual needs are satisfied. The Church is also a womb which protects Serge Mouret from the life which he inherently fears and which he sees encroaching upon him.

Since the religious experience is seen as usually a negative one, Zola associates some of his "monsters" with it through the use of religious metaphor. The Voreux, the Assommoir and Nana are among his devouring creations which are thus described. Even Claude's quest for the artistic Ideal as portrayed in L'Oeuvre has many similarities to the search for the Absolute which destroys Serge. To possess God is impossible. To be possessed by Him is
disastrous.

In Chapter VI we have discussed some of the more important religious and existential questions which Zola deals with in his novels. While it is impossible to measure accurately Zola's personal commitment to some of the ideas which we have traced, it seems logical to assume that in some cases the ideas expressed derive from his own beliefs. Our discussion of Death in his novels in particular falls into this category. Zola's struggle with the problem of death and decomposition has been well documented. In his novels, at least, he seems to arrive at an acceptance of death which views it in ultimately positive terms as a natural, if not pleasant, part of a cycle or process which he believes to be eternal. We believe that our discussion of the other questions is an accurate, if partial, treatment of these themes as they are seen to recur in his novels.

In summary, the Church plays an important role in Emile Zola's novels. Its role is almost invariably viewed as a negative one both in its impact on society and on the individual. Because its interests are selfish and largely inimical to the best interests of society and the individual, it will become progressively irrelevant to men in the modern world freed from the religious yoke and committed to the search for rational solutions to their
problems and to the creation of a new age for the societies of tomorrow.
NOTES

CHAPTER I:


2All first references to works cited will appear in footnotes as in note 1 above. Thereafter, reference to works already identified in notes will appear in parentheses in the text of this study. We should keep in mind that our study is primarily thematic and descriptive in nature and its validity does not depend upon the force of or upon Zola's personal commitment to the ideas expressed in his novels. We believe, however, that many of the ideas which we have treated (most particularly those found in Chapter VI) indeed express his own convictions. We believe that certain attitudes attributable to Zola's personal philosophy emerge rather clearly from the approximately 11,000 pages which we have read. In addition, the work of various Zola scholars often supports our interpretation of what Zola himself believed. Nevertheless, the validity of our work depends chiefly upon the accurate presentation of the ideas discussed as they appear in Zola's books and does not require our insistence that such ideas invariably represent the author's own conviction.


Hereinafter, all quotations from the novels in the Rougon-Macquart series are from the Pléiade edition and are referred to in the Notes as R-M. The Pléiade edition is published in five volumes as follows:

Volume I: 1960
La Fortune des Rougon (1871), pp. 3-316.
La Curée (1872), pp. 317-600.
Le Ventre de Paris (1873), pp. 601-896.
La Conquête de Plassans (1875), pp. 897-1212.
La Faute de l'abbé Mouret (1875), pp. 1213-1528.
Volume II:  
1961  
Son Excellence Eugène Rougon (1876), pp. 11-370.  
L'Assommoir (1877), pp. 371-796.  
Une Page d'Amour (1878), pp. 797-1092.  
Nana (1880), pp. 1093-1486.

Volume III:  
1964  
Pot-Bouille (1882), pp. 1-386.  
Au Bonheur des Dames (1883), pp. 387-804.  
La Joie de Vivre (1884), pp. 805-1130.  
Germinal (1885), pp. 1131-1592.

Volume IV:  
1966  
L'Oeuvre (1886), pp. 9-366.  
La Terre (1887), pp. 367-812.  
La Bête Humaine (1890), pp. 995-1332.

Volume V:  
1967  
L'Argent (1891), pp. 9-400.  
La Débâcle (1892), pp. 401-912.  
Le Docteur Pascal (1893), pp. 913-1220.


CHAPTER II:

1Paradoxically, Zola refers to the Roman Church in approbative terms, calling it in Vérité a "machine puissante de civilisation" early in its development. The specifics are not clear, but he is possibly referring to its role as educator. Such statements are rare and their positive content is negated by his otherwise relentless attacks upon the Church.


CHAPTER III:


2Apparently heavy market investment has for some time been the policy of the Catholic Church. Time Magazine reports that: "Even the Vatican has put perhaps 15 percent of its estimated portfolio of two billion dollars in U.S. blue chips." Time, December 16, 1974, p. 37.


CHAPTER IV:


5. Zola's words about Christ found in his commentary on Renan's Vie de Jésus and quoted by Pierre Cogny give further evidence that he tends personally to see the power of Christianity over the human mind in terms of a pathological response to the religious need inherent in man. Of Jesus Christ he writes:


Writing about mystical ideas in general, including those not necessarily religious, William James says that in any one of many textbooks on insanity "'mystical ideas' are cited as characteristic symptoms of enfeebled oruddled states of mind." William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Collier Books, 1972), p. 334.

Significantly, Doctor Pascal refers to his "terrible ascendance" and of the family's heredity:
"D'autres avaient vu la névrose, la lésion originelle, se tourner en vice ou en vertu, etc..." (Le Docteur Pascal, R-M, p. 1164). He is thinking of Serge in the latter case, who, with others of the Rougon-Macquart family, such as Maxime Saccard, must be considered a "fin de race" through hereditary degeneration.


7 Zola writes that at its inception the Christian religion was "surtout faite par les femmes et les enfants." (Quoted by Pierre Cogny, "Zola devant le problème de Jésus Christ" Studi Francesi, maggio-agosto, 1964, Vol. 23, p. 263.)

CHAPTER V:

1 One of France's best known mystics, Madame Guyon, describes a similar experience in her autobiography. She relates that upon receiving the admonition of a holy person of the order of St. Francis to seek God in her heart, his words "were to me like the stroke of a dart, which penetrated through my heart. I felt at this instant a very deep wound, a wound so delightful that I desired not to be cured." (Madame Guyon, Autobiography, Translated by Edward Jones [Chicago: Christian Witness Co., 18803, p. 59.)

2 In his chapter on "Mysticism," William James speaks of this type of religious experience:

The deliciousness of some of these states seems to be beyond anything known in ordinary consciousness. It evidently involves organic sensibilities, for it is spoken of as something too extreme to be borne, and as verging on bodily pain. But it is too subtle and piercing a delight for ordinary words to denote. God's touches, the wounds of his spear, references to ebbriety and to nuptial union have to figure in the phraseology by which it is shadowed forth. Intellect
and senses both swoon away in these highest states of ecstasy. (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 323.)

Interestingly and perhaps paradoxically, Madame Guyon has warned against the dangers inherent in such ecstatic states. She writes:

> Ecstasies arise from a sensible relish, and may be termed a kind of spiritual sensuality, wherein the soul letting itself go too far, by reason of the sweetness it finds in them, falls imperceptibly into decay. The crafty enemy presents such sort of interior elevations and raptures, for baits to entrap the soul; to render it sensual, to fill it with vanity and self-love...


8 Emile Zola, R-M, Vol. IV, Notes, p. 1353.


10 Jean Borie has elsewhere noted this relationship between the vagina and the church. Quoting from *La Terre*, in which Zola refers to the body of Lise as she gives
birth—"Une vraie cathédrale où le mari devait loger tout entier"—he writes: "Si le vagin est une cathédrale ...la cathédrale est...un vagin..." (Zola et les Mythes, p. 217).

CHAPTER VI:


6Emile Zola, "Le Voltaire" le 17 mai 1879 and re-stated in Le Roman Expérimental, p. 27.


LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED
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Works by Emile Zola:


Other Works Consulted:


