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The most perfect state: French clerical reformers and episcopal status

As a general council of the church, Trent offered a framework within which a resurgent catholicism could take shape. To a man, its delegates took it for granted that the clergy would lead the laity, and that bishops would supervise and govern all the faithful. While the conciliar decrees were designed to respond, therefore, to the specific abuses and inadequacies of contemporary religion, they drew equally on what were assumed to be eternally applicable principles of hierarchy and authority. The church had always possessed its leaders and its followers; that was both a practical necessity and God's plan. Both had to be accommodated in permanent rules that would preserve the church until the end of time. While this projection of episcopal leadership was to provoke opposition from some quarters, many reformers rose to the challenges that it had identified by building on its platforms of hierarchy and reform. Leading theologians and reformers embarked on extended explorations of what 'reform' meant and how it could be achieved within a hierarchical church. Their imprint could be seen before the end of the sixteenth century, but no one was to have more impact than the French reformers of the seventeenth century.

This 'school of priesthood' developed a sacerdotal theology and training methods which were still standard sources for the formation of Catholic priests during the twentieth century; through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its members' understanding of the ministry was widely diffused both within and outside France and they gradually succeeded in implementing many of their aims for clerical renewal within the French church. Yet historians have tended to neglect the fact that they made equally strong contributions to episcopal ideals and behaviour.¹ When they do acknowledge it, they do not delve any deeper to identify precisely what type of bishop these influential ecclesiastics were so keen to see within episcopal ranks.² Yet behind the assumption that the reformers intended to actualise their episcopal ideal lie key, as yet untackled, questions. What was that ideal? From where did these men draw the material on which their vision of the good bishop was established? In what ways did

they use this material to formulate an adapted vision of episcopacy that was designed to respond to the needs of the seventeenth-century French church? In answering these questions, we may begin to appreciate fully the objectives of French clerical reformers and indeed to conceive their impact on the episcopate and, more broadly, on the French church.

Just a cursory examination of the extant correspondence of French reformers reveals the web of contacts between these like-minded individuals through the seventeenth century. Their informal exchanges of opinion mean that a significant degree of cross-fertilisation occurred in the development of their theologies, so that the work of each reformer can never be deemed exclusively influenced by one individual, but rather by a combination of complementary strands of thought. Their ranks include very well-known clerics like Vincent de Paul and Louis Tronson, energetic reformers singled out by historians as key figures in the French reform movement. Yet if any seventeenth-century figure may be termed the founder of the theology of priesthood, it is Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575–1629), on whom all later writers on priesthood and reforming activists drew heavily. His reflections culminated in the formation in 1611, of the Congregation of the Oratory, a company of dedicated secular priests who would correspond to their founder's notion of the clerical vocation. When Bérulle died in 1629, the Oratory numbered approximately four hundred members, housed in over sixty locations and overseeing many students training for the priesthood in regions including Rouen, Clermont, Nantes and Lyon. By 1702, the number of houses had risen to eighty-five, though the Congregation's members still hovered around 400.³ Its communities were by then dotted throughout France, and remained permeated with the Bérullian theological ethos. This was largely due to the energies of successive superior-generals such as Charles de Condren (tenure 1629–41) and François Bourgoing (tenure 1641–62), both long-time disciples of Bérulle who absorbed his theological structures and ideas into their own writings for priests and novices.⁴ Bourgoing also obtained official papal approval of the Congregation's statutes (1654), and it was under his generalate that the first edition of Bérulle's writings was published, complete with a long preface outlining the chief characteristics of the cardinal's teaching.⁵

Although Bérulle's thought developed throughout his life, it was deeply indebted to the theological genres to which he was exposed during his youth. The young priest visited his cousin, Barbe Acarie, in whose mystical circle abnegationist spirituality was dominant, daily for over six years in the 1590s.⁶ In general, excepting Brémond's indispensable study of its spiritual character, we know relatively little about this influential cluster of early *dévots*.⁷ It has been suggested that the coterie's origins lay in the years following the religious wars when the failure of the League and the crowning of a former heretic as king of

France contributed to an acute sense of ideological and religious uncertainty among sections of the nobility who had supported the Catholic League. The Acarie circle's spirituality may have been one of the many responses to that sense of uncertainty: a turn to more inward and personal spirituality in an effort to regain spiritual assurance, rather than to the formulaic religious practices popular during the League era.⁸ It is certain, however, that, within this tight network, Bérulle maintained regular contact with a number of important spiritual figures including the Capuchin Benoît de Canfeld and the Carthusian Dom Beaucousin.

This group's mystical spirituality borrowed from the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, who retained considerable popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was widely, though mistakenly, held in renown as the learned companion of Saint Paul and patron of France.⁹ His theology proved particularly suited to these early *dévots'* mystical mentality because of its emphasis on the hierarchical structure of divine and human relations and its predilection for a negative ascent to God by self-renunciation. Importantly too, in stressing the necessity of ecclesiastical hierarchy, this theology managed to counteract the more extreme and unorthodox possibilities of individualist mysticism. The mystical spirituality favoured by the Acarie circle focused on complete self-renunciation in order to achieve intimacy with God, so that it promoted obedience to the divine will as its fundamental spiritual principle. It incorporated a specifically hierarchical understanding of society in which the world was theocentric and thearchic, that is, hierarchically structured, with God at its summit. Only through divine illumination could one ascend to union with the transcendent and supreme Godhead. The most vital qualities of the Christian were, consequently, self-abnegation, complete trust in God and constant intensive prayer.¹⁰ Bérulle's youthful exposure to Dionysian theology meant that his own sacerdotal theory was also to draw heavily on Pseudo-Dionysius's hierarchical structures. Yet it should not be assumed that Pseudo-Dionysius was the sole influence on Bérulle's theology. Most particularly, he incorporated Augustinian doctrines into his thought, which enabled him to modify Dionysian hierarchy in a way that placed Jesus Christ, the God-man, at the core of mystical ascent.¹¹ This blending of traditions directly informed his conceptions of priesthood and episcopacy.

In 1611, Bérulle founded the Congregation of the Oratory hoping, as he put it in his 'Projet de l'érection de la Congrégation de l'Oratoire de Jésus', to re-establish 'virtue and perfection in the sacerdotal state'.¹² This aspiration was the product of his evolving theology of priesthood which was based, above all, on the innate and magnificent dignity of the sacerdotal order. It, in turn, was directly related to the Christocentric nature of his thought and to his adoption of a modified Dionysian hierarchical structure as the framework for this.¹³

Assuming, as Trent and countless other theologians had done, that the true order of the Catholic church was a divinely ordained hierarchy, Bérulle began by dividing the ecclesiastical hierarchy into three triads, then subdivided each triad into ranks (Figure 1). This structure imitated the divisions of the heavenly hierarchy: its highest triad was composed (in descending order) of seraphim, cherubim and thrones, the second of dominions, powers and authorities, and the third of principalities, archangels and angels. The three triads of the ecclesiastical hierarchy consisted of ‘the operations of the sacraments, the godlike dispensers of the sacred things and those guided by them (the dispensers) . . . towards the sacred’. The highest division housed baptism, the eucharist and unction while the third held monastic orders, initiates (or holy people) and catechumens (those not yet admitted to the sacraments). Most importantly for our purpose, Bérulle placed hierarchs or bishops, priests and deacons in the middle triad.¹⁴

Figure 1 Bérulle’s interpretation of the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchies

<i>The heavenly hierarchy</i>	
<i>Triad I</i>	seraphim cherubim thrones
<i>Triad II</i>	dominions powers authorities
<i>Triad III</i>	principalities archangels angels
<i>The ecclesiastical hierarchy</i>	
<i>Triad I</i> (operations of the sacraments)	baptism eucharist unction
<i>Triad II</i> (dispensers of the sacred things)	bishops priests deacons
<i>Triad III</i> (those guided by the dispensers)	monastic orders initiates catechumens

Within this hierarchy, the priest had a crucial role. He was the mediator of divine grace, whose duty it was to draw those below him in rank towards

union with God through administration of the sacraments, particularly the eucharist. The source of and the figure who instituted the sacramental priesthood was Jesus Christ, the eternal priest through his death, resurrection and ascension to Heaven; for Bérulle, the elevated dignity of the priestly vocation rested on this foundational link with Christ's priesthood. Through the sacrament of ordination Christ delegated his authority, enabling those legitimately ordained to continue his salvific work.¹⁵ Priests acted, therefore, 'like instruments in his hands'.¹⁶ They were particularly close to Christ because they acted as his visible representatives on earth, illuminating those below them in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and drawing them closer to union with God. They held 'a power so elevated' that even the angels in their state of glory were not worthy of it.¹⁷

The supreme dignity of priesthood, however, brought weighty obligations to those who were called to it. The priest's unique position required that he dedicate himself fully to the bond linking him to Christ, consistently striving to live according to the status and sanctity of his vocation. He could fulfil this obligation, however, only if he were entirely responsive to God. Self-renunciation was, therefore, essential in order that the priest could dwell in a state of utter receptivity to the divine will. Each priest had to depend entirely on the heavenly power in order 'to act only by him and for him'.¹⁸ Vows of servitude to Jesus and the Virgin Mary that Bérulle devised for Oratorian priests and for the Carmelites under his direction were understood as steps towards this goal, though he wished every priest to attain complete union with God, in correspondence with the nature of his vocation.¹⁹ The priest was a servant of God, a role involving his sacrificial oblation. As mediator between the divine and human, he was obliged to offer himself to God as victim for the sins of others, just as the Son offered himself in sacrifice to the Father for the redemption of mankind. This notion of sacrificial oblation was an element of Bérulle's theology, but was brought to maturity by Charles de Condren, who presented it as 'the most worthy way of adoring God'.²⁰ For Condren, it was the highest form of holiness since it ultimately brought the victim back to union with the Father.

Both Bérulle and Condren insisted that those called to the glory of priesthood had to be personally 'sanctified'. 'The priesthood is a state that is divine in its operation and ministry . . . the origin of all the holiness . . . in the Church.'²¹ By the sacrament of ordination, the priest was consecrated to a life of imitation of Jesus Christ.²² As Christ was holy, so too the priest must aspire, through constant mystical servitude and sacrifice, to internal as well as external sanctification.²³ Relating his theology to the practical demands of the seventeenth-century church, Bérulle urged that priests return to their inheritance of 'authority, holiness and light (doctrine)'. But, here, Bérulle modified Dionysius's doctrine, principally founding the priest's role as mediator on his authority, passed down

through history, rather than on his 'illumination' through wisdom. He continued to retain elements of Dionysian theology, however, emphasising that the hierarchical position of priests reflected their degree of 'divinisation' or intimacy with the divine and that their lives should in turn mirror this closeness. Indeed, it could not be expected that others would be drawn to holiness if those who led them were not first an example of sanctity.²⁴

By restoring a Christocentric element to hierarchical mediation, the cardinal adapted Dionysian hierarchy so that the office of priest was placed at the core of his theology. This assumption ensured that new developments in the understanding of priesthood were bound to affect those who coexisted with them in this framework, for priests did not exist in isolation but in reciprocal communication with other members of the church. Any emphasis on the dignity and character of the sacerdotal office would necessarily have implications for those both above and below them in hierarchical rank. Specifically, it exalted the status and power of bishops.

In stressing the dignity of the Catholic priesthood, Bérulle could not have been unaware of the possibility that others with differing motives would hijack the principle. If he needed any reminder of this risk, he had only to observe the contemporary *furor* surrounding Edmund Richer's *Libellus de ecclesiastica et politica potestate*,²⁵ published precisely at the time when Bérulle was formulating the core principles of his theology and planning the establishment of his Congregation.²⁶ Richerism's trenchant defence of the right of *curés* to share in ecclesiastical government could conceivably find Bérullian hierarchy extremely fruitful in justifying its claims. But Bérulle was certainly not a supporter of curial government within the church, and his conception of hierarchy was designed to guard against such democratisation of ecclesiastical discipline. As a result, from the beginning of his career as a reformer he concentrated on developing the notion of episcopal authority and dignity and in doing so, justified his claim that priests should render obedience to their bishops.

This principle was in place as early as 1610. Bérulle's 'Projet' for the establishment of the Oratory clearly enunciated the Congregation's reliance on the authority of bishops: '[The Oratory] will be joined to prelates by the vow of obedience, regarding the exercise and employment of ecclesiastical functions.' That principle was further underlined in the *Projet's* confirmation that no member of the Congregation would actively seek employment from bishops or anticipate their commands.²⁷ Bérulle consistently adhered to this policy throughout his tenure as superior of the Congregation and it was officially continued under his successors.²⁸ Displaying again the influence of Dionysian hierarchy, Bérulle consistently claimed that relationships between bishops and priests ought to mirror that which existed between archangels and angels in the celestial hierarchy. In

this analogy, priests were earthly angels acting as mediators 'of God's counsels'. Bishops, however, were in command of priests since they were the earthly manifestation of the archangels.²⁹ So although Bérulle heightened the status of priesthood within his hierarchical pattern, he was careful to elaborate a doctrine which placed bishops above them in authority and which called on episcopal authority to encourage clerical sanctification. By ensuring the maintenance of discipline among the Oratorians, the goal of the renewed sanctification of priesthood could be achieved.

Committing the ecclesiastical activities of Oratorians to episcopal jurisdiction no doubt influenced the decisions of prelates to permit the Congregation to operate in their dioceses, and Bérulle was surely conscious of this. But, besides the practical consideration of ecclesiastical discipline, on what grounds did Bérulle justify episcopal authority over priests? Just as he had legitimised the mediatory role of priests by reference to the authority transmitted to them through the church's history, he pointed to the example of the early church where bishops had governed perfectly devout lower clergy. This was the organisational ideal to which the seventeenth-century church should now return.³⁰ Returning to Dionysian theology, the cardinal also presented the bishop as the figure who, as *grand prêtre*, enjoyed the closest relations with God of anyone in the church. According to Pseudo-Dionysius, the bishops were the most enlightened and the most godlike of hierarchical members. They mediated their knowledge of divine truths to those inferior to them in rank, perfecting them through teaching and the administration of orders and confirmation.³¹ For this reason, Bérulle confirmed the right of bishops to govern their clergy since they possessed the greatest knowledge of God's will. Priests then were mediators of God's grace by virtue of the authority attributed to them by historical succession, but bishops, in Bérullian thought, were the supreme mediators whose authority could be traced to the early church. While priests illuminated those of the lower hierarchical grades, bishops drew them to perfection through revelation. Theirs was the most divinised rank of the ecclesiastical hierarchy since it contained within itself the grace of all the ranks beneath it and the clearest view of divine truths. The dignity of the episcopal office, therefore, was supreme within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The episcopal office thus completed and fulfilled the whole arrangement of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Its enlightened members were able to purify, illuminate *and* perfect. However, just as Bérulle believed the tremendous dignity and privileges of priesthood to carry onerous obligations of sanctity and servitude, so too he believed that the episcopal office demanded remarkable personal sanctity. In fact, the bishop's degree of holiness must be greater and more intense than that of any other hierarchical member in order to correspond to the sublime status of his office. Importantly too, the 'sanctified' bishop would act as

an example to his charges, actualising in his own life all that he taught to others to perfect them. The ecclesiastical hierarchy was one of both order and sanctity therefore, and because the episcopal state was situated at its summit, its members must live according to the character and obligations of that position.³² When Bérulle, consequently, wrote to Daniel de La Mothe-Houdancourt in the wake of the latter's appointment to the diocese of Mende, he pointed out that the honour paid to him by the king and the congratulations offered by well-wishers should be of far less value to him than the obligations to which he was now consecrated.³³ For Bérulle, worldly compliments meant little. His concern was that bishops fulfil their office in a manner worthy of its character.

Bérulle believed the announcement of God's word by bishops to be the most efficacious form of teaching, as he told one prelate with whom he corresponded.³⁴ But the bishop was obliged to ensure that he was fully receptive to the divine will and to the truths God communicated to him so that he could, without selfish interests, reveal them to those beneath him in hierarchical rank and thus draw them towards perfect union with their Creator. The only way for bishops to guarantee their correspondence with God's will and truths was, according to Bérulle, 'to strive for divine splendour itself and to keep their eyes fixed on it, as is proper to their sacred character'.³⁵ In conformity with the mystical spirit of Bérullian thought as a whole, complete self-renunciation was vital in order to destroy personal will, for God was to be 'the end and principle' of the bishop's work of enlightenment and perfection.³⁶ In some instances, Bérulle added, the hierarch might be unaware that he was acting under the infusion of divine knowledge, but what was crucial to his work was the fact that he actively aspired towards complete servitude of God and was consequently entirely receptive to and dependent on the revelation of his wishes.³⁷ Bérulle was capable of connecting theory to practice here, as when he suggested the appointment of Bernard Despruets to the diocese of Saintes in 1627. In a letter to Richelieu, the Oratorian noted Despruets's lack of personal ambition to be a bishop and indicated that this quality of worldly detachment was 'of great example' to others.³⁸ Those prelates who abandoned their own interests in selfless servitude of God would be truly 'divinised'.³⁹

The pervasive influence of Bérullian views of episcopacy in the writings and work of his successors and disciples is plain. Of course, this is not surprising if we consider the network of relations among those French clerics actively involved in clerical reform during the seventeenth century. Two leading reformers, Jean Eudes (1601–80) and Jean-Jacques Olier (1608–57), who both made original contributions to the theologies of priesthood and episcopacy, were members of the Oratory before founding their respective sacerdotal congregations. Jean Eudes was Oratorian superior at Caen before establishing the

Congregation of Jesus and Mary in 1643 and had benefited from the personal spiritual direction of both Bérulle and Condren.⁴⁰ Like them, he considered his life to be dedicated to the formation of worthy and devout priests through the establishment of seminaries⁴¹ and through the instructional texts that he published until his death in 1680.⁴² In his attitude to the priesthood, Eudes was of the Oratorian mould. Certainly the prime emphasis and the origin of his thought was the dignity of the priestly state, followed closely by the directly consequent requirement of sanctity for those called to it. The *Mémorial de la vie ecclésiastique*, a summary of Eudes's thought which was printed only posthumously but had been completed by the early 1670s,⁴³ expressed this belief in detail. Addressing priests directly, Eudes noted that they were greater than angels in power and authority, but that they should also be so in 'purity and sanctity'. Their grandeur was due, he then stated, to their being sacrificers, sanctifiers, mediators, judges and saviours, authorised by Jesus Christ to continue his work of redemption.⁴⁴ This was the classic vein of sacerdotal thought developed by Bérulle and Condren. Indeed, by asserting the superiority of priests over angels in power and authority, Eudes advanced further than either of his fore-runners. Bérulle had compared priests and bishops to angels and archangels respectively, but for Eudes the power and authority of priests surpassed that of the angels. It may be safely assumed that he considered bishops to surpass archangels in power and authority. Like Bérulle, in glorifying the status of priesthood he glorified that of bishops, but he did so to a more radical degree.

Eudes' understanding of episcopal superiority over priests was most manifestly illustrated in the authority that he wished bishops to have over the members of his Congregation working in dioceses. As Bérulle insisted for the Oratory, those members of the Eudist Congregation who engaged in ecclesiastical activities were under obedience to the local bishop. As a result, Eudes was able to assure the archbishop of Rouen, Harlay de Champvallon, that his priests were entirely at the episcopate's disposition, each of them making a profession to that end.⁴⁵ His acceptance of episcopal authority was consequent on his belief in the superior dignity of bishops. As the uppermost rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, bishops exercised paternal authority over the priests who were their children. Although Eudes regarded all priests as fathers of Christians because of their likeness to Christ, he believed that bishops were additionally the fathers of priests because they were 'God in a more eminent degree'.⁴⁶ The hierarchical theory of Pseudo-Dionysius, as adapted by Bérulle and by Condren, was intrinsic to Eudes's understanding of the episcopal state. Bishops were the most perfect rank of the hierarchy and held authority over priests as a result of their enlightened, 'divinised', intimacy with God. Eudes was, however, aware of the demands which such elevated status brought to appointees. In urging Claude Auvry to accept the vacant bishopric of Bayeux if it was offered to him, as Eudes

hoped, he stressed the opportunity for service in episcopal functions which were 'so beautiful, so noble, so holy and so divine'. These functions Eudes identified as those pertaining to the health of souls, though he did not detail them individually. Such work was 'the work of works, the most divine of the divine', and Auvry could engage in no worthier activity.⁴⁷ Yet Eudes, though acutely aware of the status of episcopacy and consistently formulating his thought in terms appropriate to it, was also conscious of the onerous obligations on bishops for the salvation of souls. Good bishops, he noted in a letter of 1648 to the queen mother, urging her to choose worthy episcopal candidates, would make good Christians.⁴⁸

Jean Eudes offered even greater authority and perfection to the office of bishop than his predecessor, Pierre de Bérulle. Among the leading clerical reformers of the period it was, however, Jean-Jacques Olier who provided the most defined and sophisticated description of episcopacy. Like Eudes, Olier was the product of Oratorian formation before establishing the Sulpician Congregation of priests in 1645, and was particularly influenced in his theology of priesthood by Charles de Condren, his spiritual director between 1635 and 1641.⁴⁹ Like earlier clerical reformers he was fundamentally concerned with the formation of priests worthy of their vocations and established the Sulpician seminaries to this end. Of all the new congregations which assumed the management of seminaries, the Sulpician was the most successful in attracting the future leaders of the French church; by the latter part of the eighteenth century, 60 per cent of French bishops had been trained, generally for a period of three years, in its Parisian seminary.⁵⁰ The Congregation also controlled important seminaries in other centres, such as Nantes, Viviers and Le Puy, from where it shipped forth its own members and non-affiliated diocesan clergy. Like Bérulle, Olier was succeeded by superiors who reinforced his sacerdotal and episcopal ideas: it was Louis Tronson (1622–1700), Sulpician superior between 1671 and 1700, who, after producing an edited edition of Olier's correspondence, published the *Traité des saints ordres par M. Olier* in 1676, a collection of miscellaneous observations on holy orders, culled from Olier's journal and other papers.⁵¹ He also produced several tracts designed to aid the formation of priests, all of which reiterated the theological, spiritual and organisational principles of his predecessor.⁵² Tronson's correspondence demonstrates that he continued to cultivate the close connections developed by Olier with members of the episcopate, providing spiritual counsel to renowned prelates like Fénelon, bishop of Cambrai, and the bishop of Limoges, Louis de Lascaris d'Urfé.⁵³ Fénelon was in persistent contact with Tronson from his time as a young priest in Paris during the 1670s until the Sulpician's death in 1700, and regarded Tronson as his 'father for ecclesiastical life'. He believed himself equally indebted to Jean-Jacques Olier, writing in

1706 that 'Although I never saw Monsieur Olier, nothing I heard of his conduct and maxims failed to make a profound impression.'⁵⁴

These maxims were fundamentally indebted to Olier's youthful career within the Oratorian Congregation. As a reformer within the Bérullian tradition, Olier considered the privilege of participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, whereby the ordained 'must be regarded as a living Jesus Christ', to be a tremendous honour but one to be assumed with extreme gravity. Through his holy ministerial office, the priest was both the sacrament and the victim of Jesus Christ, mediating divine grace to the faithful. Olier meant that the priest, as the living sacrament of Jesus, gave the body, spirit and sacrifice of the saviour to the church, chiefly by celebrating the eucharist.⁵⁵ He thus drew the faithful towards union with God, acting as the mediatory instrument through which illuminating grace was passed downwards from the divine. As victim, however, the priest reached his highest possible holiness and fulfilled his obligation to be 'a marvel of sanctity'. He should offer his whole self in servitude to God and, moreover, act as a victim for the sins of the world like Jesus on the cross.⁵⁶ Selfless servitude through sacrifice was both the privilege and the demand of the priestly state.

Since Olier's conception of priesthood, with its dignity and attendant responsibilities, was so close to the Bérullian spirit, it is hardly surprising that he should share the latter's understanding of episcopacy. But although Olier was patently influenced by his Oratorian formation, he proved a good deal more expansive and precise upon this issue than any of the period's other leading clerical reformers. Indeed, because the Sulpician founder both adopted and augmented previous contributions in formulating his own distinctive convictions, his contribution may be considered the pinnacle and ultimate definition of the school's thought on episcopacy. His beliefs were set out most precisely in the 'Projet de l'établissement d'un séminaire dans un diocèse', which he presented to the Assembly of Clergy in 1651 and circulated to all French bishops.⁵⁷ This was not the only text through which Olier communicated his views but it provided the most coherent and detailed description of them and is, for this reason, an indispensable primary source.⁵⁸ In the letter accompanying his proposal, Olier confirmed that he offered the 'Projet' to the prelates of the Assembly in order to gain their public approval of the Sulpicians' seminary work and in order that the clergy involved in this work could be enlightened, animated and directed by the episcopate.⁵⁹

As for Bérulle, Condren, and indeed for the Council of Trent, the presence of a divinely ordained church hierarchy was a crucial assumption in Olier's episcopal and sacerdotal thought. He accepted the Dionysian format which situated bishops at the summit of this hierarchy in their 'holy grandeur' and delineated the characteristics of the episcopal office in relation to this system.⁶⁰

Within the framework of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, 'an intimate union' existed between bishops and priests, which established the latter in a state of reliance on the former, their hierarchical superiors. In the contemporary church, however, Olier believed this natural and divinely instituted union to have been ruptured with the result that 'One sees the principal ministers of Bishops, who are the Priests, living without dependence on their Leaders' and, worse still, with no 'respect for their sacred direction nor attachment of obedience'. He doubly regretted this since, in his opinion, the contemporary episcopate had found renewed zeal for its work, but found itself bereft of the necessary clerical support for its activities. It was essential, as a result, that unity between bishops and priests be restored to its original state if the church was to operate fruitfully.⁶¹ The most opportune means of achieving this was through the foundation of seminaries, directed by the bishop through delegated agents.⁶²

To express his idea of the natural relationship between bishops and priests, Olier adopted the three fundamental episcopal titles of father, leader (the word *chef* may equivalently be translated as 'head', with the same meaning as 'leader') and king. It is immediately obvious from his use of these titles that Olier considered the relationship between bishop and priest to be based on hierarchical rank, with the former functioning as the superior of the latter.⁶³ Of course, the image of the bishop as father was not a new concept, for it had originated with Saint Paul's advice to Timothy before being incorporated into the *Pastoral Rule* of Gregory the Great and the decrees of the Council of Trent.⁶⁴ Olier drew, therefore, on venerable tradition when he described his vision of episcopal parenthood. He believed the bishop to be, as father, the creator and nurturer of the children of faith, in the same way as the divine Father eternally created and nourished his Son. The zeal of prelates for this function was of far greater magnitude than that of priests since God dwelled in them to a greater degree: they were more godlike than other members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Bishops, Olier argued, were more fecund in their ability to nurture souls, a quality complemented by their intense ardour for the distribution of the nourishing divine word to their children. Their compassionate paternalism included, in addition to the provision of spiritual sustenance, 'tenderness to caress their children, mildness to suffer them in their weakness, strength to carry them in their frailty, wisdom to correct them in their faults, knowledge to light their darkness, joy to console them in their afflictions'. All of these, Olier concluded, were granted by God to bishops to enable them to guide their flock and 'to raise it to the perfection of Christian life'.⁶⁵

Jean Eudes, writing around the same time as Olier, also referred to the paternal quality of the episcopal office. It is particularly noteworthy, however, that Olier attributed such prominence to the specific quality of compassionate paternalism. Certainly it was not a conspicuous element of Bérulle's, or even

of Eudes's, episcopal reflections, which were principally concerned with obedience to the superior jurisdictional authority of bishops as a function of their supreme hierarchical rank. Moreover, despite devoting attention to the mediatory role of bishops in justifying their authority over priests, the cardinal did not describe the episcopal office in terms of pastoral paternalism. Olier's thinking thus ranged more widely than that of Bérulle, for it assigned more prominence to the pastoral role of the bishop and elaborated on the virtues of love, gentleness, strength, wisdom and joy that this responsibility entailed. The notion of the bishop as father did include an element of jurisdictional authority, but it was a role that simultaneously stressed the love of the father for his children and the mutual respect and affection that should exist between them. In a letter to Bishop Caulet, Olier highlighted this reciprocal bond of affection. Advising Caulet on the best way to achieve equilibrational relations with his chapter, Olier claimed that there was nothing in 'authority or pontifical rights which might be so essential that the way[s] of mildness and clemency do not prevail. Make it clear to them that you could have acted differently in respect of the wrong done . . . but that the feeling [entrails] of a Father and the charity of a spouse do not permit you to do so in this instance.'⁶⁶ A spirit of benevolence was to govern the relationship between the bishop and his canons, based on his fatherly fondness for them. Olier's vision was focused as much on the positive aspects of authority as on the constrictions and discipline which it entailed. The obedience of the faithful to their bishop was based on their goodwill towards and love for the father who guided them, as well as on the demand for submission to the authority that his superior hierarchical dignity demanded. Furthermore, by detailing the virtues of the paternal prelate Olier drew attention to the personal sanctity of bishops, a theme virtually untreated by Bérulle, Condren or Eudes. He listed piety, distrust of the world, frugality, honesty, zeal, hatred of sin and humility as essential virtues of the good bishop.⁶⁷ Bérulle had understood personal perfection as a function of the excellence of the hierarchical office but he did not detail the merits that comprised this form of perfection, and nor did Condren or Eudes. In this way too, Olier expanded on his predecessors, producing a more detailed and more thorough episcopal image through the development of a traditional episcopal theme.

In characterising bishops as leaders Olier confirmed, as through the title of father, the authority of their office over those beneath it in the hierarchy. Episcopal leadership did not, however, simply rest on jurisdictional authority, though this was certainly an aspect of it. Rather, Olier's understanding of the notion was primarily related to the issue of sacramental order, and it is here that the concept of leadership as 'headship' is demonstrated most effectively. According to his theology, bishops contained within themselves a plenitude of spirit which they transmitted to their clergy, animating them with the virtue

necessary to their state. Olier described the operation as a flowing of grace 'from the leader [head] into the members by his natural joints and by his ligaments, his veins and his nerves prepared for the distribution of spirits and for the communication of his life', evoking bodily analogies popular at his time of writing. Olier supposed this episcopal spirit to be intrinsic to the character of the office, asserting that 'The grace which will not be spread from the head in his members . . . will animate only half the holy members of this body.' So the bishop and his priests formed one body, with the bishop as head, animating his clergy by the grace that flowed through the appropriate connecting channels. The existence of bishops was thus absolutely essential to the structure of the church and to the functioning of the lower clergy.⁶⁸

In asserting the existence of a vivifying or perfecting spirit within the bishop which he communicated to priests, however, Olier identified a crucial distinction between the characters of the two states. He did not claim that the episcopate was a separate sacrament from the priesthood, but equally he did not support the contrary extreme which understood the episcopate as simply or merely an extension of it. In the latter case, the episcopate and the priesthood would be equal in all respects but that of jurisdiction. Sacramentally, there would be no difference between a bishop and a priest: both would have the power of eucharistic consecration, while the bishop's superiority would be just a result of the jurisdictional authority to which his office entitled him. Olier's view followed the later doctrine of Thomas Aquinas which proposed a distinction of order as well as of jurisdiction between priesthood and episcopate, while maintaining their sacramental unity. Of course, Aquinas was not the definitive voice of authority within the Catholic church; it was far more important that the Council of Trent had adopted just this view in its decree on orders. Olier was much more expansive than the Council, however, colouring in its bare sketch with a detailed theological image of the dynamic relationship between bishops and their priests. In fact, through his assertion of a specifically episcopal character, he reached the conclusion towards which the thought of Pierre de Bérulle had progressed but which it had not explicitly affirmed. Following Dionysian theology, Bérulle confirmed the perfecting power of bishops on those below them in hierarchical rank, but it was Jean-Jacques Olier who precisely identified this capability to be the product of a special grace which was unique to consecrated bishops and on which priests were dependent to attain full sanctity. They were not merely transmitters, but actual and essential sources of grace. Bishops differed from priests not only in terms of jurisdiction and in the more intense obligation for personal sanctity which their office demanded, but also in the very character of that office.

Olier's notion of a vitalising leadership also broadened the question of episcopacy from primarily one of authority and jurisdiction to one of pastoral

care. He was profoundly aware of the hazards risked by over-emphasising the disciplinary aspects of episcopal authority to the detriment of paternal guidance and benevolent animation. Too many bishops, he wrote to Étienne Caulet, merely exercised their functions of police and justice, 'being thus in suspension of the principal functions of the spirit which must vivify their diocese'. It was essential that the bishop inspire his clergy so that the latter 'are the signs of the life of the spirit and of the unction which lives in him and which he sends out of himself'. But he had to ensure that personal interests did not distort the operation of that spirit. Returning to the mystical spirituality which characterised his sacerdotal theology, Olier insisted on the necessity of Christ-like self-renunciation so that the episcopal spirit could operate with complete liberty. A bishop's authority was not, therefore, simply a matter of discipline and of obedience to precepts and ordinances but a positive animation and nourishment of his clergy by means of the supreme reserve of grace that derived from his consecration. Suitably vivified clergy would in turn spread the unction transmitted to them to those below them so that the 'spirit of the holy prelate releases sanctification in the people'.⁶⁹

Fatherhood and leadership revealed the pastoral element in Olier's thought while retaining their foundations in the hierarchical authority of the episcopate. His use of the theme of kingship was more purely concerned with matters of government and obedience, and it was under this banner that the grandeur of the episcopal office was particularly stressed. In his treatment of this theme Olier's opinion most closely resembled the contributions of other leading clerical reformers to episcopal theory. As king, the bishop inherited the grandeur of the supreme monarch, Jesus Christ, just as he inherited his headship. He was the earthly ruler of the 'divine realm', the supreme image of the glorified redeemer on earth, with power 'not only to rule . . . by his wisdom, and to conduct this holy Realm by [his] authority . . . it is also for [him] to create Ministers and Officers of [his] Realm'.⁷⁰

This potent vision of episcopal supremacy was again evoked in the *Traité des saints ordres*: the priest represented Jesus Christ as absolute king in his Resurrection: the bishop represented him as 'perfect king in his Ascension'.⁷¹ It is noteworthy that Olier chose the appellation 'king' to describe the status of the bishop, as he was the only member of the French school to do so during this era. His choice probably reflects the growth of the absolutist mentality within France by the mid-seventeenth century; in adopting the title 'absolute king', Olier could not have been unaware of its strong connotations of unrivalled leadership and government. His use of the term is almost certainly significant too, if we recall that he presented the 'Projet' during the Fronde, when the authority of the young Louis XIV was severely challenged by a temporary alliance of *parlementaires*, the nobility and common people.⁷² Indeed, like most

of his contemporaries in France, Olier was always a firm supporter of monarchical government in the secular realm as well as in the spiritual.⁷³ In any case, his use of 'absolute' and 'perfect' suggests an all-encompassing power of government and *de facto* jurisdiction on the part of the bishop through personal actions and through delegation of ministers deemed suitable by him. It is clear, therefore, that he wished to attribute far-ranging and thorough powers of jurisdiction to the episcopate and, in so doing, to stress the bishops' position at the summit of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The order of priests that he founded was premised on the principle of complete obedience to bishops in ecclesiastical activities, like the Oratorians, the Eudists and the Lazarists founded by Vincent de Paul (1581–1660). Olier consistently emphasised this fact in his relations with individual prelates, even removing Coudere, the superior of the Lodève seminary, in 1649 at the request of Bishop François Bosquet. Unfortunately, the correspondence does not reveal why though it appeared that Bosquet had lost confidence in his managerial abilities. In any case, Olier's letter to the bishop was couched in terms of the utmost reverence and obedience for, he wrote, the bishops of France could 'call and dismiss us when they want . . . We must not violate the respect due to them.'⁷⁴

Olier's submission to Bosquet's episcopal authority and his veneration of the bishop's episcopal status cannot have gone unnoticed by that particular prelate, and, as the century progressed, it is clear that the ideas of Bérulle and his disciples filtered into the ranks of the French episcopate. Indeed, their views came to have an impact on the type of men appointed to sees as well as on the outlook of bishops themselves. There were two ways in which reformers passed their ideas to the episcopate: through published writings, as has been seen, and through personal interaction. As for the second means, we have already noted the close links between Bérulle and La Mothe-Houdancourt, Eudes and Auvry, between Olier and Caulet, Tronson and Fénelon. All the major reformers were in direct and regular contact with bishops and did not hesitate to harness these connections to counsel them on the duties and character of their office. So Bérulle advised Philippe Cospeau, a fellow *dévo*t and a bishop renowned for his virtue and learning,⁷⁵ and also operated as a strong influence on Jean-Pierre Camus, bishop of Belley. The views that Camus expressed in his numerous publications, of which more will be said at later points, were heavily Bérullian, and concentrated, therefore, on the elevated rank of bishops within the ecclesiastical hierarchy and on the authority that they held over the clergy of their dioceses. Camus also stressed the perfecting role of prelates, carried out through a combination of preaching, sacramental administration and virtuous example.⁷⁶ It was Condren who persuaded Sébastien Zamet not to resign his bishopric when the bishop had a vocational crisis during the 1630s; in fact,

Zamet respected Condren to such a degree that he wished to join the Oratorians. Condren, however, advised him to remain faithful to his first vocation by serving the souls that Christ had committed to him. He could cultivate the strength do achieve this task through annual retreats, wrote Condren, just as Jesus had retired in solitude to pray to his Father.⁷⁷ Olier too made sure that his views were communicated to French bishops: writing to one bishop in 1651, at the same time that he presented his 'Projet' to the episcopate, he pledged the Sulpicians' obedience to the 'saintly . . . [and] holy prelates' of the church.⁷⁸ Writ of the specifically episcopal spirit upon which he had elaborated in his 'Projet' and, in fact, almost paraphrasing this text, he told the bishop of Viviers that 'the spirit with which God filled your person had to be their [Sulpicians'] life and virtue . . . Your spirit will animate them and render them capable of all that [is] most important and useful to the diocese.'⁷⁹

Leading reformers also adeptly harnessed their network of connections with the monarchy and its officials to sway the process of episcopal appointments, under royal control since the 1516 Concordat. Certainly the crown sometimes sought their advice, though they were not averse to offering their unsolicited opinions, especially when the crown looked like using bishoprics as political rewards. Before his split, in the late 1620s, with Richelieu over the minister's willingness to subordinate the interests of catholicism to those of the state,⁸⁰ Bérulle suggested candidates to him whom he considered to possess the necessary qualities for elevation to the episcopate. He believed Bernard Despruets to be ideal for Lyon when Charles Miron was thought to be dying: a candidate who would be a responsible and energetic pastor, who was virtuous, learned and a good preacher.⁸¹ Other reformers also encouraged the crown to choose individuals who approximated to this vision. The letters of both Charles de Condren and Jean Eudes contained similar instances of advice to the monarchy, urging that suitable prelates be appointed. When Condren succeeded Bérulle as Oratorian superior, Richelieu adopted his services, frequently requesting his frank opinion of possible episcopal candidates. This was naturally the kind of demand with which the reformers were only too happy to comply, and Condren was, as a result, able to ensure that Hugues Labatut, an ecclesiastic of his choice, succeeded Barthélemy de Donadieu in Comminges. To sway the crown's decision, he praised Labatut's vigour, strength, learning and piety, and presented him as the ideal choice because of his long experience of diocesan administration as Donadieu's vicar. Shortly after Condren wrote his letter to Richelieu, Labatut was appointed bishop of Comminges and was ultimately consecrated in 1640.⁸² Eudes too proposed the above qualities as essential to bishops, informing Anne of Austria that the only way to restore the church to its 'first splendour' was to promote good bishops. Only the truly holy should be appointed to such an important office, he emphasised, since the 'health of souls' depended on them.⁸³

It was in this sphere of the dissemination of ideas that Vincent de Paul was a central figure. As the founder of the Lazarist priests and a protégé of Bérulle, a member of the *Conseil de Conscience* and a close associate of a remarkable number of bishops, he provided an essential link in the transmission of ideas on episcopacy, channelling the reform school's vision to current and future bishops and priests. Like his sacerdotal beliefs, his notion of episcopacy was not original, being a combination of the dominant influences of the century: a mix of Bérullian concepts of hierarchy, mystical annihilation of the self in order to attain total receptivity to the divine will, and the desire to cultivate a 'sanctified' clergy, attuned to the character of their vocation. He too stressed the authority of bishops over priests and expected members of his own Congregation to obey their wishes within dioceses.⁸⁴ After he established the Congregation of the Mission in 1625 it immediately became a powerhouse of clerical reform, and rapidly involved itself in the administration of seminaries; by the time de Paul died in 1660, its priests controlled fourteen of these.⁸⁵

Because de Paul's theology was not original in itself, his contribution to the development of episcopal ideology has not been afforded a separate analysis here, but this in no way detracts from his prominence within the history of Catholic reform in seventeenth-century France or indeed from his role in the evolution of episcopal ideals. From a far lower social background than men like Bérulle and Olier, de Paul did not have natural access to the monarchy's powerbrokers. Yet through a combination of humility and canny networking he succeeded in earning the admiration and patronage of the cream of French society, including Madame de Gondi, Richelieu, Anne of Austria and, temporarily, Mazarin. These contacts opened doors for the reformer, and certainly helped in his elevation to a seat in the royal *Conseil de Conscience*. This was a rather loosely defined body, initially meeting in 1643, when de Paul joined it, and then becoming a fixture of government into Louis XIV's mature reign. Among the chief functions which came under its remit of 'ecclesiastical affairs' was the appointment of bishops. De Paul's access to this particular corridor of power for nine years offered him the perfect opportunity to press home his episcopal ideal. As a result, he was influential in the promotion to sees of several ecclesiastics with whom he was in contact and whom he considered to fulfil the reformers' criteria: men like Caulet, Nicolas Pavillon, Philibert de Brandon, François Perrochel and Nicolas Sévin. Moreover, Bishops Philippe Cospeau and Augustin Potier were both early members of the *Conseil* too, and were extremely close to the main French clerical reformers.⁸⁶

De Paul assiduously cultivated his links with the episcopal circle and used these relationships to spread the reformers' views of the episcopal office. His closest friendship was with Bishop Alain de Solminihac, and it was a source of

constant correspondence, mutual support and fruitful advice for both men for almost thirty years. De Paul persuaded an ageing Solminihac against resigning his diocese in 1652 when the bishop was struck down with an illness that sapped his formerly inexhaustible energy. The Apostles and Saint Paul had retained their charges despite great sufferings, he wrote to Solminihac, and so, therefore, should their successors.⁸⁷ These two churchmen also discussed current local, national and international ecclesiastical affairs, and exchanged information on persons and events, not least on the suitability of particular individuals for episcopal promotion. Solminihac's relations with de Paul, Olier and other *dévots* meant that he shared their ideas about the sort of 'apostolic men' who should be raised to the episcopate. De Paul worked tirelessly, and with some success, to ensure that such worthy appointments were made. His image of the good bishop was most clearly presented in his praise of prelates like Solminihac, Perrochel, Brandon, Augustin Potier and François Fouquet, all of whom he regarded not only as pious and virtuous but as excellent administrators and teachers who strove to draw the faithful towards salvation. In order to encourage other prelates, de Paul did not hesitate to use them as examples worthy of emulation, citing, for instance, Fouquet and Barthélemy de Donadieu to Louis Abelly, then vicar-general of Bayonne, as 'true bishops'.⁸⁸

Vincent de Paul was also a close associate of Nicolas Pavillon and Étienne Caulet during the 1640s and 1650s, though their relations cooled as both bishops drew close to the Jansenist camp in the late 1650s. From 1633, de Paul initiated a regular series of *conférences des mardis* at Saint-Lazare, attended by a long line of priests who were to become model bishops in later decades, including Antoine Godeau, Felix Vialart, Pavillon, Fouquet and Perrochel.⁸⁹ It was de Paul who persuaded Nicolas Pavillon to accept his nomination to Alet in the late 1630s, demonstrating the close relationship between the two and Pavillon's regard for de Paul's advice.⁹⁰ The conferences provided a forum for a subject dear to de Paul, the implementation of clerical reform, so that their emphasis lay on producing priests who recognised the sanctity of their vocation and who were able to live accordingly. Here, ordinands and priests discussed theological questions as well as learning about the practicalities of pastoral administration, methods of prayer, meditation and study. Equally, the conferences were the perfect opportunity to stress the hierarchical dignity and authority of bishops. De Paul utilised them actively to promote respect for prelates and to encourage awareness of the perfection and responsibilities of the episcopal office. At one conference, probably attended by Étienne Caulet, he used Alain de Solminihac's generosity to the Lazarist missionaries under his care as an example of perfect episcopal charity: de Paul's missionaries had written appreciatively of the corporal and spiritual 'refreshment' that they had received from the bishop when they stayed with him in Cahors. De Paul's 'good conference'

on the subject provides an important instance of the presentation of a contemporary bishop as a model for future prelates to follow.⁹¹

Through the seventeenth century, French clerical reformers produced important contributions to the related issues of the nature and functions of episcopacy and the character of French episcopal reform. From the widely held belief that the church was a hierarchy of ecclesiastical orders, they managed to formulate a unique theology which both upheld and enhanced that typical assumption. Because of their preoccupation with clerical sanctification, they principally concentrated on the hierarchical authority of bishops, and it was as a function of this that they treated the perfection of the episcopal state, its power to perfect and its obligation of personal sanctity. With the thought of Jean-Jacques Olier, however, the considerations of the priesthood school were brought to maturity. Olier continued to stress the supreme dignity and authority of the episcopal office. However, he advanced Bérullian theory by explicitly confirming the existence of a unique episcopal spirit upon which priests and laity were dependent for sanctification. In doing so, he firmly asserted the necessity of bishops within the church in order for it to function effectively and verified that episcopal distinctiveness was not solely a result of bishops' jurisdictional powers and obligation of supreme personal holiness. Additionally, his emphasis on the vivifying and nurturing qualities of bishops and their personal virtues introduced a fuller conception of episcopacy, drawing reflection far beyond obedience and discipline and granting it a more positive and pastoral tone. Again, Bérulle laid the foundations for this by noting the mediatory and perfecting qualities of bishops, but it was Olier who carried the process to conclusion. Ultimately, a definite and sophisticated image of episcopacy emerged within the circle of French clerical reformers, culminating in the thought of Olier: that of a strong, zealous and saintly episcopate, enlightened through intimacy with God, functioning with supreme, but benign, authority over the lower clergy and the faithful, and imparting a unique sanctifying grace to them to ensure their salvific union with God. With such emphatic and distinctive views, it is obvious why the reformers did not intend to remain isolated in theological contemplation. Instead, through intervention in the process of episcopal appointments and through instruction and advice to prelates and potential prelates, they actively sought to secure the appointment of bishops who would be fully aware of this image and who would strive to embody its characteristics.

Notes

- 1 Dagens, *Bérulle*; Dupuy, *Bérulle et sacerdoce*; Krumenacker, *L'Ecole*; Lemaître, 'Prêtre'; Walsh, 'Priesthood'.
- 2 Bergin, *Episcopate*, pp. 513–17; Blet, 'Vincent'; Broutin, *Réforme*, ii, pp. 252–7; Taveneaux, *Catholicisme*, i, pp. 111–13.

- 3 *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 17 vols (Paris 1937–95), xi, col. 849.
- 4 Charles de Condren, *Oeuvres complètes du P. Charles de Condren*, ed. Louis-Marie Pin, 2 vols (Paris 1857–58); François Bourgoing, *Exercices d'une retraite spirituelle de dix jours* (Paris 1648).
- 5 Pierre de Bérulle, *Oeuvres complètes de Bérulle, cardinal de l'église romaine* (Paris 1644).
- 6 Dagens, *Bérulle*, p. 132.
- 7 Henri Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours*, 12 vols (Paris 1916–36), ii, pp. 193–262. Dated, though still valuable, biographies exist for two members of the circle, Barbe Acarie and Benoît de Canfield: Lancelot Sheppard, *Barbe Acarie, Wife and Mystic. A Biography* (London 1953); Optatus van Veghel, *Benoît de Canfield (1562–1610), sa vie, sa doctrine et son influence* (Rome 1949).
- 8 Philip Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge 1981), p. 196; Denis Richet 'Sociocultural Aspects of Religious Conflicts during the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century', in Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (eds), *Ritual, Religion and the Sacred* (Baltimore 1982), p. 204.
- 9 This belief persisted despite the suspicions voiced by Erasmus, Cajetan and others. Pseudo-Dionysius was in fact a sixth-century Syrian writer who adopted the pseudonym of Denis the Areopagite, Paul's companion in Acts 17:34. For the prevalence of Pseudo-Dionysian theology in medieval and early modern thought, see Wayne Hankey, 'Dionysian Hierarchy in St. Thomas Aquinas. Tradition and Transformation', in Ysabel de Andia (ed.), *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident. Actes du Colloque International Paris, 21–24 septembre 1994* (Paris 1997), pp. 405–38, and Wayne Hankey, 'Augustinian Immediacy and Dionysian Mediation in John Colet, Edmund Spenser, Richard Hooker and the Cardinal de Bérulle', in Dominique de Courcelles (ed.), *Augustinus in der Neuzeit. Colloque de la Herzog August Bibliothek de Wolfenbüttel, 14–17 octobre, 1996* (Turnhout 1998), pp. 125–60.
- 10 Dagens, *Bérulle*, pp. 118–32; Krumenacker, *L'Ecole*, pp. 113–18.
- 11 Dagens, *Bérulle*, p. 141; Hankey, 'Immediacy'.
- 12 The 'Projet de l'érection de la Congrégation de l'Oratoire de Jésus' is contained in *Bérulle, Correspondance*, i, p. 118.
- 13 Pseudo-Dionysius developed his teaching in the treatises *The Divine Names*, *The Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. For the purpose of this study I have used the following edition: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius. The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York 1987).
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 160–74, 201–35.
- 15 Pierre de Bérulle, *Oeuvres complètes du cardinal de Bérulle*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris 1856), col. 1271.
- 16 Cochois, 'Bérulle' (1961), 327.
- 17 Bérulle, *Oeuvres*, ed. Migne, col. 1270. See Louis Tronson's identical teaching in one of his regular letters to the bishop of Limoges: Raymond Darricau, 'La Correspondance de Louis de Lascaris d'Urfé, évêque de Limoges (1676–1696) et de M. Tronson, supérieur général de Saint-Sulpice', *Le Limousin au xviii^e siècle. Littérature, histoire, histoire religieuse. Colloque pluridisciplinaire Limoges, 9–10 octobre 1976* (Limoges 1979), p. 208.
- 18 Bérulle, *Oeuvres*, ed. Migne, col. 286.
- 19 Charles Williams, *The French Oratorians and Absolutism, 1611–1641* (New York 1989), pp. 121–9.
- 20 Charles de Condren, *L'Idée du sacerdoce et du sacrifice de Jesus-Christ donnée par le R. P. de Condren second superior general de l'Oratoire de Jesus avec quelques éclaircissements et une explication des prières de la messe par un prêtre de l'Oratoire* (Paris 1677), p. 106.
- 21 Bérulle, *Oeuvres*, ed. Migne, col. 1270: 'L'état de prêtrise . . . est un office divin en son usage et ministère . . . l'origine de toute la sainteté . . . en l'Église.'
- 22 *Ibid.*, col. 826.
- 23 Condren, *Sacerdoce*, pp. 135–8.
- 24 Bérulle, *Correspondance*, iii, pp. 617–18, Bérulle to a priest of the Oratory (n.d.).

- 25 Edmund Richer, *Libellus de ecclesiastica et politica potestate* (Paris 1611).
- 26 Richer's doctrines are discussed in Ch. 3.
- 27 Bérulle, *Correspondance*, i, p. 118: 'Celle-ci serait jonte aux prélats par le voeu d'obéissance, quant à l'exercice et emploi des fonctions ecclésiastiques.'
- 28 Charles de Condren, *Lettres du père Charles de Condren (1588–1641)*, ed. Paul Auvray and André Jouffrey (Paris 1943), p. 148; Williams, *Oratorians*, pp. 134–5.
- 29 Bérulle, *Correspondance*, iii, p. 413; Bérulle, *Oeuvres*, ed. Migne, col. 607.
- 30 Cochois, 'Bérulle' (1961), 348.
- 31 Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works* trans. Luibheid, pp. 236–8. Bishops retained powers of purification and illumination in addition to that of perfection, but the latter was their chief activity.
- 32 Cochois, 'Bérulle', 358–9; Vincent de Paul, *Saint Vincent de Paul. Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, ed. Pierre Coste, 14 vols (Paris 1920–25), ii, p. 3, Vincent de Paul to Louis Abelly, 14 January 1640.
- 33 Bérulle, *Correspondance*, iii, p. 308, letter to La Mothe-Houdancourt (n.d.). La Mothe-Houdancourt was appointed bishop of Mende in 1624.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 636, letter to an unnamed bishop (n.d.).
- 35 Quoted by Cochois, 'Bérulle' (1962), 370: 'Ils doivent tendre vers la Splendeur divine elle-même et garder les yeux fixés sur elle, comme il sied à leur caractère sacré'; Louis Tronson, *Correspondance de M. Louis Tronson, troisième supérieur général de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice*, 3 vols (Paris 1900), ii, p. 416, Tronson to Lascaris d'Urfé, 20 August 1678.
- 36 Bérulle, *Oeuvres*, ed. Migne, col. 813.
- 37 Cochois, 'Bérulle' (1961), 371.
- 38 Bérulle, *Correspondance*, iii, pp. 346–7, letter to Cardinal Richelieu, 3 December 1627. Despruets was not appointed bishop of Saintes. He became bishop of Saint-Papoul in 1636: Bergin, *Episcopate*, pp. 607–8.
- 39 Similarly, Condren advised Sebastien Zamet to give himself in his episcopal work 'au Fils de Dieu qui vous y appelle, et y travailler ainsi avec lui': Condren, *Lettres*, p. 152.
- 40 Pioger, *Orateur*, p. 436.
- 41 Eudes founded seminaries at Caen (1643), Coutances (1650), Lisieux (1653), Rouen (1658), Evreux (1667) and Rennes (1670), with the encouragement of the incumbent prelates: Jean Eudes, *Oeuvres complètes du bienheureux Jean Eudes*, 11 vols (Paris and Vannes 1905–9), iii, preface (unpaginated).
- 42 Eudes's published writings include *Advertissements aux confesseurs missionnaires* (Caen 1644), *Le Bon Confesseur* (Paris 1666), *Manuel pour une communauté d'ecclésiastiques* (Caen 1668), *Le Mémorial de la vie ecclésiastique* (Lisieux 1681) and *Le Prédicateur apostolique* (Caen 1685). He also composed 'Traité de l'office divin' and 'Saint sacrifice de la messe' but neither of these was printed and no manuscript copies remain.
- 43 Eudes, *Oeuvres*, iii, preface (unpaginated).
- 44 *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 17.
- 45 *Ibid.*, xi, p. 66, letter to François II de Harlay de Champvallon (c.1655).
- 46 *Ibid.*, iii, pp. 17–18.
- 47 *Ibid.*, xi, pp. 75–6, letter to Claude Auvry, 1 June 1659. Auvry was not in fact appointed to Bayeux.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 53, letter to the queen mother, 2 September 1648.
- 49 Faillon, *Olier*, i, p. 135.
- 50 This brought new pressures, which remain outside this study's chronological scope. As more aristocratic ordinands resided in the seminary, the austere disciplinary regimes implemented under Olier, Bretonvilliers and Tronson became more difficult to preserve: McManners, *Church*, i, pp. 230–1.
- 51 Jean-Jacques Olier, *Lettres spirituelles de M. Olier*, ed. Louis Tronson (Paris 1672); Jean-Jacques Olier, *Traité des saints ordres*, ed. Gilles Chaillot, Paul Cochois and Irénée Noye (Paris 1984).

- 52 Tronson's *Manuel du séminariste* and *Traité de l'obéissance* became standard reading material in Sulpician seminaries. They are printed in Louis Tronson, *Oeuvres complètes de M. Tronson*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 2 vols (Paris 1857), i, cols 301–47, 349–562.
- 53 Lascaris kept Tronson's epistolary counsels close to hand, by keeping a summary of his teaching in his personal copy of the New Testament: Tronson, *Correspondance*, ii, pp. 439–40.
- 54 François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon, *Correspondance de Fénelon*, ed. Jean Orcibal, Jacques Le Brun and Irénée Noye, 17 vols (Geneva 1972–99), xii, p. 226, letter to François Leschas-sier, 22 March 1706: 'Quoique je n'aie jamais vu M. Olier, je n'ai rien ouï dire de sa conduite et de ses maximes, qui ne m'ait fait une profonde impression.' See also vol. ii, pp. 9, 48, 128, and see vol. i, pp. 143–50, for a summary of Fénelon's frequent meetings with Tronson during the 1670s and his links with the Saint-Sulpice seminary.
- 55 Olier, *Traité*, pp. 183–98. Tellingly, Olier entitled this chapter 'De la suprême dignité du sacerdoce'.
- 56 *Ibid.*, pp. 223–5.
- 57 Jean-Jacques Olier, 'Projet de l'établissement d'un séminaire dans un diocèse' (1651). A copy of this is printed in Faillon, *Olier*, iii, pp. 551–78.
- 58 Olier's *Traité* and his letters are also useful indicators of his episcopal thought. In particular, see his letters from the late 1640s to Étienne Caulet, bishop of Pamiers: Jean-Jacques Olier, *Quatre lettres inédites de M. Olier*, ed. Louis Blazy (Foix 1931).
- 59 Jean-Jacques Olier, *Lettres de M. Olier*, 2 vols (Paris 1885) i, pp. 555–6.
- 60 Olier, 'Projet', in Faillon, *Olier*, iii, p. 571.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 554: 'On voit les principaux ministres des Évêques, qui sont les Prêtres, vivre sans dépendance de leurs chefs, n'ayant aucun respect pour leur sacrée direction ni attache à leur obéissance.'
- 62 *Ibid.*, p. 562.
- 63 In Sulpician seminaries, the superiors were understood by Olier to operate as agents of the diocesan bishop: *ibid.*, p. 556.
- 64 1 Tim. 5:4–5; *A Select Library*, trans. Lett Feltoe, xii, pp. 9–71.
- 65 Olier, 'Projet', in Faillon, *Olier*, iii, p. 573: 'Dieu leur en done la tendresse pour caresser leurs enfants, la douceur pour les souffrir en leur infirmité, la force pour les porter en leur faiblesse, la sagesse pour les reprendre en leurs défauts, la lumière pour les éclairer en leurs ténèbres, la joie pour les consoler en leurs afflictions.'
- 66 Olier, *Quatre*, p. 14, letter to Caulet, January 1648: 'n'y ayant rien de l'autorité et drois pontificaus qui soit si fort interesse que la voye de douceur et de clemence ne prevaille. Leur temoignant . . . que vous pourriez en user autrement sur le tort . . . mais que les entrailles de Père et la Charité d'un epous ne vous le permettent pas en ce rencontre.'
- 67 Olier, *Lettres de M. Olier*, ii, p. 520, Olier to an unnamed correspondent (n.d.).
- 68 Olier, 'Projet', in Faillon, *Olier*, iii, pp. 574–5: 'cette grâce capitale et cet esprit de chef . . . doit écouler du chef dans les membres par ses jointures naturelles et par ses ligaments, ses veines et ses nerfs préparés à la distribution des esprits et à la communication de sa vie. La grace qui ne se répandra pas du chef dans ses membres . . . n'animerà jamais qu'à demi tous les membres sacrés de ce corps.'
- 69 Olier, *Quatre*, p. 11, letter to Caulet, 29 December 1646: '[Les prêtres] sont autant de signes de la vie de l'esprit et de l'onction qui habite dans [l'évêque] et qu'il reprend hors de luy même . . . l'esprit du saint prelat dessert la sanctification dans les peuples.'
- 70 Olier, 'Projet', in Faillon, *Olier*, iii, p. 577: 'C'est à eux qu'il appartient, non seulement de régler . . . par leur sagesse, et de conduire ce saint Royaume par leur autorité . . . c'est encore à eux à créer les Ministres et les Officiers de leur Royaume.'
- 71 Oliver, *Traité*, pp. 27–8.
- 72 On the Fronde, see Geoffrey Treasure, *Mazarin. The Crisis of Absolutism in France* (London 1995), pp. 103–229. See also Orest Ranum, *The Fronde. A French Revolution, 1648–1652* (New York and London 1993). Robert Knecht, *The Fronde* (London 1975), offers a general overview and analysis of events.

- 73 Paul Klevgard, 'Society and Politics in Counter-Reformation France. A Study of Bérulle, Vincent de Paul, Olier and Bossuet' (PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, Illinois 1971), p. 168.
- 74 Faillon, *Olier*, iii, pp. 259–63.
- 75 Émile Jacques, *Philippe Cospeau, un ami-ennemi de Richelieu 1571–1646* (Paris 1989), p. 63.
- 76 Jean-Pierre Camus, *De l'unité de la hiérarchie* (Douai 1634); Jean-Pierre Camus, *Considérations hiérarchiques* (Paris 1642); Jean-Pierre Camus, *Hiérarque*.
- 77 Condren, *Lettres*, pp. 150–2, letter to Zamet, October 1634.
- 78 Olier, *Lettres de M. Olier*, i, pp. 557–8, letter to unnamed prelate, March 1651.
- 79 *Ibid.*, ii, p. 10, letter to Louis-François La Baume de Suze, 1651: 'L'esprit dont Dieu remplit votre personne devait être leur vie et leur vertu . . . Votre esprit les animera et les rendra capables de tout ce [qui est] plus important et plus utile au diocèse.'
- 80 The *dévoit* party opposed Richelieu's anti-Habsburg foreign policy, which allied France with Protestant regimes: William Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State* (Princeton 1972), pp. 201–7; Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France* (Princeton 1980), pp. 191–2.
- 81 Bérulle, *Correspondance*, iii, p. 344, letter to Richelieu, 3 December 1627.
- 82 Condren, *Lettres*, pp. 227–30, letter to Richelieu, September/October 1637; Bergin, *Episcopate*, pp. 644–5.
- 83 Eudes, *Oeuvres*, xi, p. 53, letter to queen mother, 2 September 1648; *ibid.*, memoir to same, p. 60, c.1648; *ibid.*, letter to same, p. 64, 1653.
- 84 De Paul, *Correspondance*, i, p. 112, letter to François Du Coudray, 1631; *ibid.*, iv, p. 166, letter to Philibert de Brandon (bishop of Périgueux), 1 April 1651; *ibid.*, p. 314, letter to Balthazar Grangier de Liverdis (bishop of Tréguier), 28 January 1652.
- 85 One hundred years later, the order managed one third (sixty) of France's diocesan seminaries. The Eudists ran thirteen, the Oratorians fourteen and the Sulpicians twenty: McManners, *Church*, i, p. 201.
- 86 Blet, 'Vincent'.
- 87 Solminihac, *Lettres*, p. 470, de Paul to Solminihac, 1651 or 1652.
- 88 De Paul, *Correspondance*, ii, pp. 2–3, letter to Louis Abelly, 14 January 1640. Abelly was nominated bishop of Rodez in 1662, but he was forced to abandon his appointment when struck with paralysis in 1665.
- 89 *Ibid.*, i, p. 413, letter to Jean de Fonteneil, 8 January 1638; Blet, 'Vincent', 104–9.
- 90 De Paul, *Correspondance*, i, 413n, letter to Jean de Fonteneil, 8 January 1638.
- 91 *Ibid.*, p. 207, letter to Solminihac, 23 August 1633.