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‘Fathers, Leaders, Kings’: Episcopacy and Episcopal Reform in the Seventeenth-Century French School

Summary

In their drive to ‘sanctify’ the clergy, seventeenth-century French clerical reformers developed highly sophisticated and influential theologies of both priesthood and episcopacy. This article traces the development of the French school’s theology of episcopacy by exploring the thought of two of its leading representatives, Pierre de Bérulle and Jean-Jacques Olier. These provided the most original contributions on episcopacy, and their ideas were transmitted through the work of other leading clergy, such as Vincent de Paul and Louis Tronson. The article also summarises the efforts of all of these reformers to implement their vision of episcopacy. Through instructive correspondence and publications as well as through interventions in appointments, all sought, with some success, to mould bishops that personified their episcopal ideal.

For the historian of the Catholic Reformation, perhaps its most striking feature was its concentration upon the reform of the clergy, an emphasis that can be traced in the decrees of the Council of Trent, through the establishment of new orders and through the efforts of bishops to discipline their clergy through provision of seminaries, synods and ecclesiastical conferences. Indeed, the Council’s decrees are a well-trodden path in historiography: the legislation formulated by Trent between 1545 and 1563 was founded upon the assumption that both bishops and parish priests should be the key players in the preservation of catholicism throughout Europe. Embedded in its decrees, as a result, were a series of regulations designed to produce a disciplined and educated clergy, capable of effective leadership of the faithful through sacramental administration, preaching and catechesis.¹ The Tridentine programme specifically singled out bishops as the ecclesiastical leaders who, in their capacity as diocesan governors, would assume responsibility for clerical discipline and ecclesiastical administration as well as for the spiritual and moral welfare of the faithful. These pivotal figures were to oversee a system of visitations, diocesan synods and regular preaching which would restore ecclesiastical order at regional levels.²

While Trent formulated the regulations, it was the task of reformers to translate its theory into successful practice. Amongst the many clerical reformers who rose to this challenge were French ecclesiastics active during the seventeenth century. As Trent had, these identified the success or failure of catholicism with clerical reform, a presumption that encouraged them towards profound and sustained reflection upon the nature of that reform and its mode of achievement. They embarked upon an examination of the entire concept of clerical ministry and, in doing so, developed a theology, not only of priesthood but also of episcopacy which, whilst drawing upon older thought, was recognisably original in its central features. The reformers’ ‘school’ produced an understanding of the clerical ministry that was widely diffused both within and outside France and its members gradually succeeded in implementing many of their aims for clerical renewal within the French church.³ Their efforts to reform the priesthood have been well documented: several historians have mined the abundant texts produced by them,⁴ while detailed (if rather hagiographic) histories of the congregations and their founders have also been produced since the seventeenth century.⁵ Yet, unfortunately, historians have almost invariably focused upon the reformers’ views of priesthood and upon their efforts to ‘sanctify’ the lower clergy of France, ignoring the fact that, fired by Trent’s lofty ambition, they also developed particularly strong theologies of episcopacy which they consistently aimed to put into practice. Equally, this glaring historiographical gap has not prevented scholars from vouching for the impact of the reformers upon the theology and practice of episcopacy within France. Despite the absence of detailed evidence, several studies have attempted to trace the means through which prominent reformers sought to influence the appointment of bishops in France and have referred to the ‘type’ of bishop which these clerics were keen to promote.⁶ But this is to put the proverbial cart before the horse, citing the influence of reformers upon bishops and appointments, without initially pinpointing exactly what their objective, personified in the good bishop, was. No study has yet tackled the key questions behind the assumption that the reformers sought to actualise their episcopal ideal: what was that ideal? From where did these men draw the material upon 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? It is only when these questions are answered that we may

begin to appreciate fully the objectives of French clerical reformers and indeed to conceive their impact upon the episcopate and, more broadly, upon the French church. Accordingly, this article will begin with a brief summary of the channels utilised by these ecclesiastics to shape the contemporary episcopate, before exploring the principal features of their episcopal ideal.

By 1600, the French episcopate was a disorientated and demoralised body, its members lacking a clear vision of their role within church and society, and suffering the after-effects of an extended civil war that, over the course of four decades, had caused acute material distress for many of them.⁷ Undoubtedly, the collective quality of its incumbents would not have met the reformers' ideal, for episcopal office had become a reward for political service to the crown or a means of securing and preserving order within provinces: Renaud de Beaune, archbishop of Bourges, was granted a transfer to the far wealthier see of Sens by Henri IV, in reward for his sustained support of the new king through the 1590s.⁸ The tendency of the crown to view bishoprics as means of promoting order and rewarding loyalty was accompanied and encouraged by, indeed relied upon, the compliance of its most prominent subjects. As the research of Péronnet and others demonstrates, the crown was, in several areas, actually dependent upon local support in its choice of candidates and it was often the wishes of local magnates that determined appointments.⁹

Heading the drive to transform these contemporary perceptions of episcopal status and function was Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), from whom all later writers on priesthood and reforming activists drew heavily. A leading figure within French reform circles until his death, Cardinal de Bérulle established the Congregation of the Oratory in 1611, a society of secular priests dedicated to the reinvigoration and sanctification of the French clergy. By 1702, its houses were dotted throughout France, and remained permeated with the Bérullian theological ethos.¹⁰ This was largely due to the energies of successive superior generals such as Charles de Condren (1629-41) and François Bourgoing (1641-62), both long-serving disciples of Bérulle who absorbed his theological structures and ideas into their own writings for priests and novices.¹¹ Bérulle's legacy was also actualised in the theologies and activities of other reformers, including Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), Jean Eudes (1601-80) and Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-57). Vincent de Paul founded the Congregation of the Mission (Lazarists) in 1625 and was a close associate of Bérulle and Condren while both Eudes and Olier were members of the Oratory before founding their respective sacerdotal congregations.¹² Following Bérulle's death, however, it was Jean-Jacques Olier who assumed theological leadership of the French school, absorbing and expanding the Cardinal's views on clerical reform and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Olier placed himself under the personal spiritual direction of Condren between 1635 and 1641, before establishing the Sulpician Congregation in 1645.¹³ Of all the new congregations that assumed the management of seminaries, the Sulpician was undoubtedly the most successful in attracting the future leaders of the French church: by the latter part of the eighteenth century, sixty per cent of French bishops had been trained in its Parisian seminary.¹⁴ Like Bérulle, Olier was succeeded by superiors who reinforced his sacerdotal and episcopal ideas; Louis Tronson (1622-1700), for example, Sulpician superior between 1671 and 1700, produced an edited edition of Olier's correspondence and 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.¹⁵

Each of these reformers was acutely sensitive to the fact that it was not enough simply to establish congregations and seminaries in the hope that over time these would channel their episcopal ideal to future generations of bishops. All endeavoured to use their connections, carefully cultivated over years, to disseminate their ideas amongst those upon which they might make the greatest and most rapid impact. Naturally, this led them to home in upon the two most pertinent targets, the episcopate itself and those responsible for appointments to that body. Although their influence upon these actually merits a complete article, we may provide here some examples of the contacts between reformers, bishops and the French crown to demonstrate the pervasive efforts of Bérulle *et al* to mould the episcopate according to their ideal image.

There were two ways in which reformers' ideas passed to the episcopate: through published writings and through personal interaction. All of the leading reformers were in direct and regular contact with bishops and did not hesitate to advise them upon the duties and character of their office, as their extant correspondence reveals. So, for example, Bérulle advised Philippe Cospeau, a fellow *dévot* and a bishop renowned for his virtue and learning,¹⁶ while Condren 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 actually wished to join the Oratorians. Adopting a classically Bérullian approach, however, Condren instead advised him to remain faithful to his first vocation by serving the souls whom Christ had committed to him. To cultivate the strength to achieve this task, he should undertake annual retreats, wrote Condren, just as Jesus had retired in solitude to pray to his Father.¹⁷ After all, the episcopate was a most dignified vocation, as Jean Eudes wrote to Claude Auvry, future bishop of Coutances, providing the opportunity for employment in 'functions which are so beautiful, so noble, so holy and so divine.' These functions he identified as those pertaining to the health of souls; such labour was 'the work of works, the most divine of the divine' and Auvry could engage in no worthier activity.¹⁸ De Paul managed to persuade Bishop Solminihac against resigning his diocese in 1652 when the prelate was struck down with an illness that sapped his formerly inexhaustible energy. The Apostles and Saint Paul had retained their charges despite great sufferings, de Paul wrote to Solminihac, and so, therefore, should their successors.¹⁹ Similarly, when Solminihac expressed his willingness to expose himself to illness and even death by personally ministering to the plague-ridden,²⁰ de Paul strongly counselled him against such an extreme sacrifice, and wrote that he should assume a supervisory role, organising and encouraging spiritual assistance as well as providing material aid, but avoiding direct exposure to the plague as much as possible.²¹ Solminihac's high regard for de Paul's opinion resulted in his adherence to this exhortation: 'I will follow your advice in all, I had been resolved to expose myself only in so much as I knew it was the will of God.'²² Olier likewise 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.²³ Olier's close connections with bishops were subsequently assiduously cultivated by his successor, Louis Tronson, who provided spiritual counsel to renowned prelates like Fénelon, bishop of Cambrai. The famous Fénelon, in fact, 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 he 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,' an observation which highlights both the preservation and dissemination of Olier's theological legacy within the French church.²⁴

Leading reformers also adeptly harnessed their network of connections with the monarchy and its officials to sway the actual process of episcopal appointments. Vincent de Paul's membership of the royal *Conseil de Conscience* from 1643 to 1652 is simply the most obvious example of this influence, for his access to this particular corridor of power offered him the perfect forum to press home his episcopal ideal;²⁵ 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.²⁶ But all of the leading reformers, as heads of respected religious congregations, had access to key officials like Richelieu and Mazarin and even to members of the royal family itself. Certainly the crown sometimes sought the reformers' advice, though they were not averse to offering unsolicited opinions, especially when the monarchy looked like using bishoprics as political rewards. Prior to Bérulle's split, shortly before his death, with Richelieu over the latter's willingness to subordinate the interests of catholicism to those of the state,²⁷ he suggested candidates to the minister 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.²⁸ Both Charles de Condren and Jean Eudes advised the monarchy, urging that suitable prelates be appointed. Condren intervened with Richelieu to ensure that Hugues Labatut succeeded Barthélemy de Donadieu in Comminges. To encourage the crown, he praised Labatut's vigour,

strength, learning and piety. In addition, he presented him as the ideal choice because of his long experience of diocesan administration as Donadieu's vicar. Labatut subsequently received the royal nomination to the see and was consecrated bishop in 1640.²⁹

Obviously, it suited the crown to promote men who were virtuous, mature and experienced administrators, since it was well aware that bishops of this calibre could be depended upon to promote religious and social order in their dioceses. They were, therefore, a valuable resource in an age when popular unrest was an ever-present possibility.³⁰ From Henri IV onwards, the crown proved progressively attuned to reformers' calls for worthy nominations to episcopal seats, utilising the basic criteria, from the 1516 Concordat, that appointees should be of mature age, in orders and men of virtue when choosing its prelates. Of course, new bishops did not always fulfil these criteria and the episcopate would continue to have many men upon whom reformers like Olier frowned. But the general result of the crown's efforts to measure its nominees against the set criteria was the emergence of a far more standardised episcopate by the mid-1600s.³¹ Yet the royal attitude was not entirely utilitarian and opportunistic since Louis XIII, Anne of Austria and indeed the young Louis XIV were swayed by the religious arguments of prominent reformers. Like the episcopate itself, the crown could not fail to be affected by the climate of reform prevalent in France and mediated by its religious advisors. With the royal family and ministers like Richelieu personally close to charismatic and dedicated reformers, appointments took on a personal significance for salvation and divine service, as well as being important means of extending monarchical power. 'Good bishops and good priests', Jean Eudes reminded Anne of Austria in 1648, 'will make good Christians' and would restore the church to its 'first splendour.' He went on to remind the queen regent repeatedly of her duty to provide the church with truly holy bishops, an obligation for which God would ultimately judge her.³² Richelieu, in fact, made the same point in his *Testament politique*.³³

Each of the reformers mentioned above played their part in the dissemination of the reformers' episcopal vision. But of all the major clerical reformers associated with the seventeenth-century French school of priesthood, Pierre de Bérulle and Jean-Jacques Olier stand out as the most formative influences upon its episcopal ideal. These provided the original contributions on episcopacy and their ideas were then propagated by other leading clergy exposed to them, such as Vincent de Paul and Louis Tronson. For this reason, it is appropriate to examine the views of both men since they are representative of the episcopal ideal proposed and disseminated by the movement as a whole. Furthermore, their thought amply demonstrates the progressive evolution of an episcopal ideal within the movement, with Olier's mature views building upon Bérullian foundations.

Although Bérulle's thought developed throughout his life, it was deeply indebted to the mysticism in which he became immersed during his youth. The young priest visited his cousin Barbe Acarie, in whose circle abnegationist spirituality was dominant, daily for over six years.³⁴ Within this tight network, Bérulle maintained regular links with a number of important spiritual figures including the Capuchin Benôit de Canfeld and the Carthusian Dom Beauconsin. In common with wider currents in France, the circle's mystical spirituality drew upon 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.³⁵ The theology of Pseudo-Dionysius proved particularly suited to the mystical mentality of the early *dévots* because of its emphasis upon the hierarchical structure of divine and human relations and its predilection for 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 upon complete self-renunciation in order to achieve intimacy with God, so that obedience to the divine will was its fundamental spiritual principle. In tandem with utter detachment from the flesh and separation from worldly existence, this spirituality incorporated a specifically hierarchical understanding of society in

which the world was theocentric and thearchic, that is, hierarchically structured with God, the supreme being, at its summit. It was only through divine illumination that one was able to ascend to union with the transcendent Godhead, but to receive that illumination, it was essential to be totally receptive to the will of God. The most vital qualities of the Christian were, consequently, self-abnegation, complete trust in God and constant intensive prayer.³⁶ Bérulle's youthful exposure to Dionysian theology meant that his own sacerdotal theory was also to draw heavily upon Pseudo-Dionysius' hierarchical structures.³⁷ Yet it should not be assumed that Pseudo-Dionysius was the sole influence upon him. Most particularly, several studies have emphasised the incorporation of Augustinian doctrines into his theology, enabling him to modify Dionysian hierarchy in a way that placed Jesus Christ, the God-man, at the core of mystical ascent.³⁸ This blending of traditions directly informed his conceptions of both priesthood and episcopacy.

According to his *Projet de l'érection de la Congrégation de l'Oratoire de Jésus*, Bérulle aimed to re-establish 'virtue and perfection in the sacerdotal state.'³⁹ This aspiration was the product of his theology of priesthood which was based, above all, upon the innate and magnificent dignity of the sacerdotal order. Bérulle's emphasis upon sacerdotal dignity was, in turn, directly related to the christocentric nature of his thought and to his adoption of a modified Dionysian hierarchical structure as the framework for this. He assumed the permanent existence of hierarchy within the Catholic church, dividing the ecclesiastical hierarchy into three triads, 'the operations of the sacraments, the godlike dispensers of the sacred things and those guided by them (the dispensers)...towards the sacred.'⁴⁰ These mirrored the divisions of the heavenly hierarchy. Again following Pseudo-Dionysius, Bérullian theology accepted that the ecclesiastical triads were further subdivided into ranks imitating the heavenly.⁴¹ In the middle triad he placed ordained hierarchs or bishops, priests and deacons.⁴²

The source of and the figure who instituted the sacramental priesthood was Jesus Christ who through his death, resurrection and ascension to Heaven was the eternal and unique priest, who had offered himself on the cross for the salvation of mankind. However, by means of the sacrament of ordination he delegated his authority, enabling those legitimately ordained to continue his salvific work through the mediation of divine grace to souls.⁴³ Priests acted therefore 'like instruments in his hands.'⁴⁴ The elevated dignity of the priestly vocation rested, for Bérulle, upon the participation of its members in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Priests acted as Christ's visible representatives on earth, illuminating those below them in the ecclesiastical hierarchy through the mediation of grace, and thus drawing them closer to union with God. For Bérulle, the priestly office was the source of holiness within the church and its members were entitled to possess a special and direct connection with Jesus Christ. It also granted 'a power so elevated that even the angels in their state of glory are not worthy of it.'⁴⁵

In consequence of their unique position, priests were required to dedicate themselves fully to the bond linking them to Christ, consistently striving to strengthen it and to live according to the status and sanctity of their vocation. Fulfilment of this obligation was possible only if they were entirely receptive to God. Accordingly, each priest must be dependent on the divine 'power which encloses, governs and blesses all other power, in order to submit himself and to act only by him and for him.'⁴⁶ In this way, he would imitate the total abnegation personified by Christ on the cross when he had surrendered his humanity and become one with the person of the Divine Word.⁴⁷ Vows of servitude to Jesus and the Virgin Mary devised by Cardinal Bérulle 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.⁴⁸

Servitude also involved the notion of oblation. By this, the priest, as mediator between the divine and human, 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 was, in the words of Charles de Condren, 'the most perfect, and the most holy, and the most

worthy way of adoring God, a way which embraces the entire practice of true religion.⁴⁹ Willingness to offer oneself to God signified complete mystical renunciation of the self and of worldly trappings. Thus, it was the highest form of holiness since it ultimately brought the victim back to union with the Father.

In view of the elevated nature of the ministerial vocation, Bérulle insisted upon the necessity of clerical sanctity: priesthood 'is an office that is divine in its operation and in its ministry; and it is, moreover, the origin of all the holiness which must be in the church of God.'⁵⁰ There were a number of reasons why sanctity was demanded, the most fundamental being the need for participants to glorify the office that they were so privileged to share through their spirituality and the holiness of their lives. As Christ was holy, so too the priest must aspire, through constant mystical servitude and sacrifice, to internal as well as external sanctification.⁵¹ Moreover, the rank of priests within the ecclesiastical hierarchy established them as the 'divinisers'⁵² of others, that is, those who drew those below them to holiness and perfect union with God. Here, Bérulle modified Dionysius' doctrine, principally founding the priest's role as mediator upon his authority, passed down through history, rather than upon his 'illumination' through wisdom. But he continued to retain elements of Dionysian theology, 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 examples of sanctity.⁵³

Bérulle's overriding practical aim was to produce priests whose degree of sanctity was worthy of the elevated vocation to which they were consecrated. 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 co-existed with them in this framework since priests did not exist in isolation but in reciprocal communication with other members of the church. The emphasis upon the dignity and character of the sacerdotal office would necessarily have implications for those both above and below them in hierarchical rank. Specifically, they brought the status and power of bishops into focus.

In stressing the dignity of the Catholic priesthood, Bérulle could not have been unaware of the possibility that this would be hijacked by those with differing motives. If he needed any reminder of this risk, he had only to observe the contemporary furore surrounding Edmund Richer's *Libellus de Ecclesiastica et Politica Potestate*, published precisely at the time when Bérulle was formulating the core principles of his theology and planning the establishment of his Congregation.⁵⁴ Richerism's trenchant defence of the right of *curés* to share in the government of the church 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 upon 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. His *Projet* for the establishment of the Oratory clearly enunciated the reliance that would be placed upon the authority of bishops: '[The Oratory] will be joined to prelates by the vow of obedience, regarding the exercise and employment of ecclesiastical functions...by this means the vow made in the consecration of priests will be renewed, it (the vow) seems essential to the state of priesthood.' This character of obedience was further underlined in the *Projet's* confirmation that no member of the Congregation would actively seek employment from bishops or anticipate their commands.⁵⁵ The Oratorian founder consistently adhered to this policy of acquiescence to the wishes of diocesan bishops throughout his tenure as superior of the Congregation, and it was officially continued under his successors.⁵⁶ Displaying again the influence of Dionysian hierarchy, Bérulle consistently claimed that relationships between bishops and priests should mirror that existing between archangels and angels in the celestial hierarchy. In this analogy, priests were earthly angels acting as

‘mediators on earth of God’s counsels on his souls and works.’ Bishops, however, in correspondence to the relationship which existed between the heavenly archangels and angels, were in command of priests since they were the earthly manifestation of the archangels.⁵⁷ 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 upon episcopal authority to encourage clerical sanctification. By ensuring the preservation of discipline in the Oratorians’ work, the goal of the renewed sanctification of priesthood could be achieved.

Committing the ecclesiastical activities of the Oratorians to episcopal jurisdiction no doubt aided the decisions of prelates to permit the Congregation to operate within 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 the lower clergy. This was the organisational ideal to which the seventeenth-century church should now return, whereby perfectly devout priests would submit to the authority of their bishops.⁵⁸ Returning to Dionysian theology, the Cardinal also presented the bishop as the figure who, as *grand-prêtre*, enjoyed the closest relations with God of any group within the church. According to Pseudo-Dionysius, the hierarchs were the most enlightened and the most godlike of hierarchical members. Consequently, 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.⁵⁹ For this reason, Bérulle affirmed 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. The dignity of their office was, therefore, supreme within the ecclesiastical hierarchy: the episcopate 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 insight into divine truths.⁶⁰

The episcopal office thus completed and fulfilled the whole arrangement of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Its members were able to purify and illuminate as well as perfect. However, just as Bérulle believed the tremendous dignity and privileges of priesthood to carry onerous obligations of piety and servitude, so too he believed that the episcopal office demanded supreme 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 status of his office.⁶¹ 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.⁶² For Bérulle, worldly compliments meant little. His concern was the fulfilment of the office one was called to, in a manner worthy of its character.

To live according to the nature of the episcopal state, it was essential to be thoroughly regulated by the spirit of God. The office of bishop granted its participants the greatest understanding of the divine mysteries in order that they might impart them to those under their charge. Indeed, because of their enlightenment, 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.⁶³ In order to govern and guide souls, however, the enlightener was obliged to ensure that he was receptive to the divine will and to the truths communicated by God 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. ‘Hierarchs must therefore use their hierarchical power only in the measure that they are moved by the Thearchy...for it would be sacrilege for holy initiators...to act even once against the sacred

ordinances of the One who is the principle of their own initiation.’ In conformity with the mystical spirit of Bérullian thought as a whole, complete self-renunciation, following the example of Christ, was vital in order to destroy personal will and serve God alone. It was he who was to be ‘the end and principle’ of the hierarch’s work,⁶⁴ so that he strove ‘for divine Splendour itself and [kept his] eyes fixed on it, as is proper to [his] sacred character.’⁶⁵ In some instances, Bérulle added, the hierarch might even 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 upon the revelation of his wishes.⁶⁶ Bérulle was capable of connecting theory to practice here, as for example, when he suggested the appointment of Bernard Despruets to the diocese of Saintes in 1627. In a letter to Richelieu, the Oratorian noted Despruets’ lack of personal ambition for a bishopric and indicated that this quality of worldly detachment was ‘of great example’ to others.⁶⁷

For a bishop to correspond in perfection to the status of the office he held, Bérulle therefore stipulated personal ‘divinisation’ and selfless servitude.⁶⁸ The office of ‘high-priest’ placed bishops in a privileged position within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but its unrivalled perfection demanded a level of personal sanctity above that of any other member. A fundamental manifestation of a bishop’s sanctity would be the exact fulfilment of all that he taught to others to perfect them. In this way, he would act as an example to his charges, actively teaching them through his own lifestyle. Like their predecessors of the early church, bishops were to possess supreme levels of ‘authority, holiness and light’, but to a far greater and more intense degree than any other members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

We turn now to the development of episcopal theory in the thought of Jean-Jacques Olier, the most influential and prominent figure to succeed Bérulle in the field of clerical formation. As a reformer within the Bérullian tradition, Olier regarded the privilege of participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, whereby the ordained ‘must be regarded as a living Jesus-Christ’, as a tremendous honour but one to be assumed with extreme gravity.⁶⁹ Through his holy ministerial office, the priest was both the sacrament and victim of Jesus Christ, mediating divine grace to the faithful. As the living sacrament of Jesus, Olier meant that the priest gave the body, spirit and sacrifice of the Saviour to the church, chiefly through celebrating the Eucharist.⁷⁰ He thus drew the faithful towards union with God, acting as the mediatory instrument by 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’.⁷¹ He had to offer his whole self in servitude to God and, moreover, act as victim for the sins of the world as Jesus had done on the cross.⁷² 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 Cardinal’s understanding of episcopacy. Yet although Olier was patently influenced by his Oratorian formation in his episcopal theory, as he was in that of his sacerdotal ideas, he proved a good deal more expansive and precise upon the issue of episcopacy than any of the other leading French clerical reformers of this period. Indeed, his contribution may be considered the pinnacle and ultimate definition of their thought, since the Sulpician founder both adopted and augmented previous contributions in formulating his own distinctive convictions.

While Olier’s theory of episcopacy was strongly motivated and coloured by his keen interest in clerical reform, discussion of the episcopal office assumed a far more prominent position within his writings than in those of Bérulle. This was a significant shift since it means, in fact, that his *Projet de l’établissement d’un séminaire dans un diocèse* is as much a discussion of the episcopate as it is of the lower clergy. In common with Bérulle, he approached the subject from the basis of his primary concern for the formation of appropriately holy clergy, but devoted far more attention to the episcopal office and

dwelt in detail upon its character. The question of episcopal authority and hierarchical rank in relation to the lower clergy remained, therefore, fundamentally important, but Olier succeeded in presenting a broader image of the character and function of episcopacy. His ideas were set out most precisely in the *Projet* which he presented to the Assembly of Clergy in 1651 and circulated to all French bishops.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ In the letter accompanying his proposal, Olier confirmed that he offered the *Projet* to the Assembly's prelates 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.⁷⁵

The existence of a divinely ordained hierarchy within the church was a crucial assumption of the structure of 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.⁷⁶ Within the framework of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, 'an intimate union' existed between bishops and priests, which established the latter in a state of dependence upon the members of the episcopate, their hierarchical superiors, and in which those beneath them revered the grandeur of bishops. In the contemporary church however, Olier believed this natural and divinely-ordained 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, without respect for their sacred direction nor attachment of obedience.' He doubly regretted this since, in his opinion, the contemporary episcopate had undergone a renewal of zeal 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.⁷⁷ The most opportune method to achieve this was by the foundation of seminaries, directed by the bishop through delegated agents.⁷⁸

To express his idea of the natural relationship that should exist 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 obvious from his use of these titles that Olier considered the relationship between bishop and priest to be based upon hierarchical rank, with the former functioning as the superior of the latter.⁷⁹ It was much more than just a question of jurisdictional authority, however, and whereas Bérulle had dwelt principally upon this aspect Olier provided a fuller, more rounded treatment.

The image of the bishop as father was not a new concept, but one that had been adopted by many reformers to describe the role of prelates in their dioceses, and indeed by the Council of Trent. Olier's understanding of the bishop as father was based upon this older tradition. He believed the bishop to be, as father, the creator and nurturer of the children of faith, in the same way that 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 complimented by their intense ardour for the distribution of the divine word to their children. The quality of compassionate paternalism included, as well as the provision of spiritual sustenance through preaching and teaching, '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.'⁸⁰

In ascribing the title of father to bishops, Olier drew upon venerable episcopal tradition originating with Saint Paul's advice to Timothy and evident in the *Pastoral Rule* of Gregory the Great.⁸¹ It is particularly noteworthy, however, that he

attributed such prominence to the specific quality of compassionate paternalism. Certainly it was not a conspicuous element of Bérulle's episcopal reflections, which were principally concerned with obedience to the superior jurisdictional authority of bishops. In fact, despite devoting attention to the mediatory role of bishops in justifying their authority over priests, the Cardinal did not even describe the episcopal office in terms of pastoral paternalism. Olier's thinking, however, assigned a prominent place to the pastoral role of the bishop and elaborated upon the virtues of love, gentleness, strength, wisdom and joy which this entailed. Of course, the notion of the bishop as father did include an element of jurisdictional authority, but it was a construction 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 Étienne Caulet, bishop of Pamiers, Olier highlighted this reciprocal bond of affection. Advising Caulet upon the best way to attain good relations with his chapter, Olier claimed that there was nothing in 'authority or pontifical rights which might be so essential that the way 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.'⁸² A spirit of benevolence was to govern relations between the bishop and his canons, based upon his fatherly fondness for them. Olier's vision was focused as much upon the positive aspects of authority as upon the constrictions and discipline which it entailed. Obedience was based upon children's goodwill towards and love for the father who guided them as well as upon their submission to his hierarchical authority. Olier, therefore, formulated a more wide-ranging elaboration of the episcopal role than his predecessor. Furthermore, by detailing the virtues of the paternal bishop, Olier drew attention to the personal sanctity of bishops, a theme which had not been treated in depth by Bérulle. It was a recurring topic in Olier's thought and he listed piety, distrust of the world, frugality, honesty, zeal, hatred of sin and humility as essential virtues of the good bishop.⁸³ Bérulle had understood personal perfection as a function of the excellence of the hierarchical office but he had not detailed the merits of which it was comprised. In this way too, Olier expanded upon the Oratorian founder, producing a more detailed and more complete episcopal image through the development of a traditional episcopal theme.

Olier also characterised the bishop as both leader (or head) and king of his clergy and it was in his elaboration of these concepts that he carried the episcopal theory of the French school of clerical reform to its logical conclusion. In presenting bishops as leaders he confirmed, as he had by adopting the title of father, the authority of the episcopal office over those beneath them in the hierarchical ranks. This leadership did not, however, simply rest upon 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. Evoking bodily analogies popular at his time of writing, 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.' The episcopal spirit within the bishop was that of leader, and Olier supposed it to be intrinsic to the character of the office. In fact, he asserted that 'The grace which will not be spread from the head in his members...will only animate half the holy members of this body; the natural diffusion of life demands channels prepared and adjusted to the mouth of their source.' So, the bishop and his priests formed one body, with the bishop as head, animating his clergy by the grace which flowed through the appropriate connecting channels. Bishops were thus absolutely essential to the structure of the church and to the functioning of the lower clergy. The greatest source of the priest's grace emanated from his leader and it was this transmission that drew him towards perfect sanctity.⁸⁴ In asserting the existence of a vivifying or perfecting spirit within the bishop, however, Olier identified a crucial distinction between the characters of the episcopal and sacerdotal 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 bishop and the priest would be equal in all respects but that of jurisdiction. Sacramentally, there would be no

difference since both shared the power of eucharistic consecration, while the superiority of the bishop 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, whilst maintaining their sacramental unity.⁸⁵ But, 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 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 had not explicitly affirmed. Following Dionysian theology, Bérulle confirmed the perfecting power of bishops upon those below them in hierarchical rank, but it was Jean-Jacques Olier who precisely identified this ability to be the result of a special grace unique to consecrated bishops and upon which priests were dependent to attain full sanctity. Bishops were not merely transmitters, but actual and vital sources of grace.

Olier was profoundly aware of the hazards involved in 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 episcopate inspire its 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 the bishop must ensure that personal interests did not distort the operation of that spirit. Returning to the mystical spirituality that permeated his sacerdotal theology, Olier insisted on the necessity of Christ-like self-renunciation so that the episcopal spirit could operate with complete liberty. Episcopal authority was not, therefore, simply a matter of discipline and of obedience to precepts and ordinances but a positive vitalisation of the clergy by means of the supreme reserve of grace which the bishop held as a result of his consecration. Suitably vivified clergy would in turn spread the unction transmitted to them by their prelate to those below them so that the 'spirit of the holy prelate releases sanctification in the people.'⁸⁶

Fatherhood and leadership revealed the pastoral element in Olier's thought whilst 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 Olier particularly stressed the grandeur of the episcopal office. It was, therefore, also in his treatment of this theme that Olier's episcopal theory most closely resembled the contributions of Bérulle to episcopal ideology. 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 the people by his wisdom, and to conduct this holy Realm by [his] authority...but it is also for [him] to create Ministers and Officers of [his] Realm.'⁸⁷ This potent vision of episcopal supremacy was again evoked in the *Traité des saints ordres*: 'The priest represents Jesus Christ as absolute king in his Resurrection: and the Bishop represents him as perfect king in his Ascension.'⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that Olier chose the appellation 'king' to describe the bishop's status, for 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; the title had strong connotations by the mid-seventeenth-century and, in adopting it, Olier could not have been unaware of this. His use of the term 'absolute king' 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*, nobility and common people.⁸⁹ Indeed, Olier was a firm supporter of monarchical government in the secular realm as well as in the spiritual.⁹⁰ In any case, his usage of 'absolute' and 'perfect' suggests an all-encompassing power of government and *de facto* jurisdiction on the part of the bishop through personal operation and through his delegation of suitable ministers. It is apparent, therefore, that Olier 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 Olier founded was premised upon the principle of complete obedience to bishops in ecclesiastical activities, like the Oratorians, the Eudists and the Lazarists. Olier consistently emphasised this fact in his relations with individual prelates, even removing the superior of the Lodève seminary in 1649 at the request of Bishop François Bosquet and pleading his Congregation's profound respect for episcopal dignity in his letters to the bishop.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. In stressing the dignity of priests, leading reformers automatically emphasised the dignity of bishops within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Because of their overriding aim of clerical sanctification, they principally concentrated upon the hierarchical authority of bishops, and it was as a function of this aspect that they treated the perfection of their state, their power to perfect and their obligation to 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 this body to function effectively and verified that episcopal distinctiveness was not solely a result of their jurisdictional powers and obligation of supreme personal holiness. Additionally, his emphasis upon the vivifying and nurturing qualities of bishops and their personal virtues introduced a fuller conception of episcopacy, bringing 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 brought 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 hierarchy, 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 in order 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 that image and who would strive to personify its characteristics.

¹ *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, ed. H. J. Schroeder, (Saint Louis and London, 1941), Sess. VI, ch. II, p. 48-9; *ibid.*, Sess. XXIII, ch. VI-XVIII, p. 168-79; *ibid.*, Sess. XXIV, ch. II-VII, p. 192-8. See Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism Between Luther and Voltaire*, (London, 1977), p. 15-23, 179-88, and René Taveneaux, *Le Catholicisme dans la France classique*, 2 vols (Paris, 1980), I, 123-44, for the poor standard of the lower clergy (measured according to the Tridentine scale) at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

² *Canons and Decrees*, ed. Schroeder, Sess. VI, ch. I, p. 47-8 and Sess. XXIV, chs. II and III, p. 192-3.

³ Michel Dupuy, *Bérulle et le sacerdoce. Étude historique et doctrinale. Textes inédits*, (Paris, 1969), p. 7.

⁴ P. Cochois, 'Bérulle, Hiérarque Dionysien', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, XXXVII (1961), p. 314-53; XXXVIII (1962), p. 355-75; J. Choné, 'La Spiritualité sacerdotale', *XVII^e Siècle*, LXII-III (1964), p. 112-32; Jean Dagens, *Bérulle et les origines de la restauration catholique (1575-1611)* (Bruges, 1952); Dupuy, *Bérulle et le sacerdoce*; Yves Krumenacker, *L'École française de spiritualité*, (Paris, 1998); Nicole Lemaître, 'Le Prêtre mis à part ou le triomphe d'une idéologie sacerdotale au xvi^e siècle', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France*, LXXXV (1999), p. 275-89; Eugene Walsh, *The Priesthood in the Writings of the French School: Bérulle, De Condren, Olier*, (unpubl. PhD diss., Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., 1949).

⁵ For example, Étienne-Michel Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier fondateur du séminaire de Saint-Sulpice*, 4th edition (Paris, 1873); Luigi Mezzadri, *Vincent de Paul (1581-1660)*, trans. Jean-Pierre Bagot (Paris, 1985); André Pioger's *Un Orateur de l'école française. Saint Jean Eudes (1601-80)*, (Paris, 1940).

- ⁶ Joseph Bergin, *The Making of the French Episcopate*, (New Haven, Conn. and London, 1996), p. 513-7; Pierre Blet, 'Vincent de Paul et l'épiscopat français', *Vincent de Paul. Actes du Colloque International d'Études Vincentiennes*, (Rome 1983), p. 81-114; Paul Broutin, *La Réforme pastorale en France au xvii^e siècle*, 2 vols (Paris and Tournai, 1956), II, 252-7; Taveneaux, *Le Catholicisme dans la France*, I, 111-3.
- ⁷ Bergin, *French Episcopate*, p. 340; Olivier Christin, *Une Révolution symbolique. L'Iconoclisme huguenot et la reconstruction catholique*, (Paris, 1991). For an older but still valuable study, see Victore Carrière, 'Les Epreuves de l'église de France au xvi^e siècle', in his *Introduction aux études d'histoire ecclésiastique locale*, 3 vols (Paris 1936), III.
- ⁸ It was de Beaune who lifted the papal excommunication from the newly-converted Henri in 1593. See Frederic Baumgartner, 'Renaud de Beaune, Politique Prelate', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, IX (1978), p. 108-11.
- ⁹ Mark Greengrass, 'Aristocracy and Episcopacy at the End of the Wars of Religion in France: The Duke of Montmorency and the Bishoprics of Languedoc', *Miscellanea Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, VIII, ed. Bernard Vogler, (Brussels and Louvain, 1987), p. 356-63; Nicole Lemaître, *Le Rouergue flamboyant: Le Clergé et les fidèles du diocèse de Rodez 1417-1563*, (Paris, 1988), p. 223; Michel Péronnet, *Les Évêques de l'ancienne France*, 2 vols (Paris, 1977), 485-94.
- ¹⁰ The Congregation had eighty-five houses by 1702. *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 17 vols (Paris, 1937-95), XI, col. 849.
- ¹¹ For example, Charles de Condren's *L'Idée du sacerdoce et du sacrifice de Jesus-Christ*, first published in 1677, with several subsequent printings: *Oeuvres complètes du P. Charles de Condren*, ed. Louis-Marie Pin, 2 vols (Paris 1857-8), II; François Bourgoing, *Instituto spiritualis ordinandorum, triplicis vitae, purgativae, illuminativae atque perfectivae exercitationes, ad susceptionem sacrorum ordinum, necnon ad usum susceptorum peritiles, cum romani pontificalis explicatione complectens*, (Paris, 1639); *id.*, *Exercices d'une retraite spirituelle de dix jours*, (Paris, 1648). A second edition was published in 1654. The first edition of Bérulle's writings was published under Bourgoing's generalate: *Oeuvres complètes de Bérulle, cardinal de l'Église romaine*, (Paris, 1644).
- ¹² By the time de Paul died in 1660, his priests controlled fourteen seminaries. 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. See Blet, 'Vincent de Paul', *Vincent de Paul*, p. 81-114, and John McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1998), I, 201. Eudes established the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (Eudists) in 1643. Within his lifetime, he founded seminaries at Caen (1643), Coutances (1650), Lisieux (1653), Rouen (1658), Evreux (1667) and Rennes (1670). His writings are published in *Oeuvres complètes du vénérable Jean Eudes*, 11 vols (Paris and Vannes, 1905-9), III, preface (unpaginated). An outdated but still valuable biography on Eudes is Pioger's *Un Orateur de l'école française*.
- ¹³ Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, 135.
- ¹⁴ This brought new pressures, which remain outside the chronological scope of this study; as more aristocratic ordinands resided in the seminary, the austere disciplinary regimes implemented under Olier, Bretonvilliers and Tronson became more difficult to preserve. See McManners, *Church and Society*, I, 230-1.
- ¹⁵ *Lettres spirituelles de M. Olier*, ed. Louis Tronson, (Paris, 1672); Jean-Jacque Olier, *Traité des saints ordres*, Gilles Chaillot, Paul Cochois and Irénée Noye, eds., (Paris, 1984). Tronson also produced several tracts designed to aid the formation of priests, all of which reiterated the theological, spiritual and organisational principles of his predecessor. The most important of these were the *Manuel du séminariste* and the *Traité de l'obéissance*, both of which became standard reading material in Sulpician seminaries. They are printed in *Oeuvres complètes de M. Tronson*, ed. J. P. Migne, 2 vols (Paris, 1857), I, col. 301-47, 349-562.
- ¹⁶ Émile Jacques, *Philippe Cospeau, Un ami-ennemi de Richelieu 1571-1646*, (Paris, 1989), p. 63.
- ¹⁷ *Lettres du Père Charles de Condren (1588-1641)*, Paul Auvray and André Jouffrey, eds., (Paris, 1943), p. 150-52, letter to Zamet, October 1634.

- ¹⁸ *Oeuvres du Jean Eudes*, XI, 75-6, letter to Claude Auvry, Caen, 1 June 1659: ‘...vous employer dans les fonctions épiscopales, qui sont si belles, si nobles, si saintes et si divines...l’oeuvre des oeuvres, *omnium divinorum divinissimum*.
- ¹⁹ *Alain de Solminihac. Lettres et documents*, ed. Eugène Sol, (Cahors, 1930), p. 470, de Paul to Solminihac, 1651/52.
- ²⁰ *Saint Vincent de Paul. Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, ed. Pierre Coste, 14 vols (Paris, 1920-25), IV, 495-6, Solminihac to de Paul, 17 October 1652.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 520-2, de Paul to Solminihac, November 1652.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 528, Solminihac to de Paul, 21 November 1652: ‘Je suivray vos avis en tout, je ne m’estois resolu de m’exposer qu’en tant que je connus que c’estoit la volonté de Dieu.’
- ²³ *Lettres de M. Olier*, 2 vols (Paris 1885), I, 557-8, letter to unnamed prelate, March 1651.
- ²⁴ *Correspondance de M. Tronson*, ed. L. Bertrand, 3 vols (Paris, 1904); *Correspondance de Fénelon*, Jean Orcibal, Jacques Le Brun and Irénée Noye, eds., 17 vols (Geneva, 1972-99), XII, 226, letter to François Leschassier, 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’; *ibid.*, II, 9, 48-9, 128. For details of Fénelon’s frequent meetings with Tronson during the 1670s and his links with the Saint-Sulpice seminary, see *ibid.*, I, 143-50.
- ²⁵ The *Conseil de Conscience* was a rather loosely defined body, though the appointment of bishops was amongst the chief functions to come under its banner of ‘ecclesiastical affairs.’ Appointments were under royal control according to the terms of the 1516 Concordat of Bologna. See Frederic Baumgartner, *Change and Continuity in the French Church. The Bishops and the Wars of Religion*, (Durham, N. C., 1986), p. 12, and Bergin, *French Episcopate*, p. 32, 48-52, 505-12.
- ²⁶ Blet, ‘Vincent de Paul’, *Vincent de Paul*, p. 104-14.
- ²⁷ The *dévo*t party opposed Richelieu’s anti-Habsburg foreign policy, which allied France with Protestant regimes. See W. F. Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State*, (Princeton, 1972), p. 201-7, and Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*, (Princeton, 1980), p. 191-2.
- ²⁸ *Correspondance du Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle*, ed. Jean Dagens, 3 vols (Paris and Louvain 1937-9), III, 344, letter to Cardinal Richelieu, 3 December 1627.
- ²⁹ *Lettres de Condren*, Auvray and Jouffrey, eds., p. 227-30, letter to Cardinal Richelieu, September/October 1637; Bergin, *French Episcopate*, p. 644-5.
- ³⁰ Philip Hoffman, *Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon 1500-1789*, (New Haven, Conn. and London, 1984), p. 86-97, 133-4; Keith Luria, *Territories of Grace: Cultural Change in the Seventeenth-Century Diocese of Grenoble*, (Berkeley and Oxford, 1991), p. 53-105; Bernard Peyrous, *La Réforme catholique à Bordeaux (1600-1719)*, 2 vols (Bordeaux, 1995), I, 120-200.
- ³¹ Bergin, *French Episcopate*, p. 248-53.
- ³² *Oeuvres du Jean Eudes*, XI, 53, letter to queen mother, 2 September 1648: ‘...car les bons Évêques et les bons prêtres feraient de bons chrétiens, et par ce moyen, dans peu de temps, l’Église de France changerait de face, et reprendrait sa première splendeur.’; *ibid.*, 60, memoir to same, c.1648; *ibid.*, 64, letter to same, 1653.
- ³³ *Testament politique de Richelieu*, ed. Françoise Hildesheimer (Paris, 1995), p. 130-5.
- ³⁴ 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, 193-262; Dagens, *Bérulle*, p. 132. 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).
- ³⁵ 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.
- ³⁶ Dagens, *Bérulle*, p. 118-32; Krumenacker, *L’École française de spiritualité*, p. 113-18.

- ³⁷ The teaching of Pseudo-Dionysius was developed in his 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, The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, (New York, 1987).
- ³⁸ Dagens, *Bérulle*, p. 141; Wayne Hankey, 'Augustinian Immediacy and Dionysian Mediation in John Colet, Edmund Spenser, Richard Hooker and the Cardinal de Bérulle', *Augustinus in der Neuzeit, Colloque de la Herzog August Bibliothek de Wolfenbüttel, 14-17 octobre, 1996*, ed. Dominique de Courcelles, (Turnhout, 1998), p. 125-60.
- ³⁹ The *Projet de l'érection de la Congrégation de l'Oratoire de Jésus* is contained in *Correspondance de Bérulle*, ed. Dagens, I, 118: '...rétablissement de vertu et perfection en l'état de prêtrise.'
- ⁴⁰ *Pseudo-Dionysius*, trans. Luibheid, p. 235.
- ⁴¹ The highest rank of the heavenly hierarchy was composed (in descending order) of seraphim, cherubim and thrones. The second consisted of dominions, powers and authorities and the third of principalities, archangels and angels. *Ibid.*, p. 160-74.
- ⁴² The first division was subdivided into baptism, the eucharist and unction and the third into monastic orders, initiates (or holy people) and catechumens (those not yet admitted to the sacraments). *Ibid.*, p. 201-32.
- ⁴³ *Oeuvres complètes du Cardinal de Bérulle*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, (Paris, 1856), col. 1271.
- ⁴⁴ P. Cochois, 'Bérulle, Hiérarque', *Revue d'Ascétique*, p. 327.
- ⁴⁵ *Oeuvres de Bérulle*, ed. Migne, col. 1270: '...un pouvoir si élevé qu'il ne convient pas même aux anges en l'état de la gloire.'
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, col. 286: '...pouvoir qui enclôt, qui régit, qui bénit toute autre puissance, pour s'y soumettre et pour n'agir que par lui et pour lui.'
- ⁴⁷ Hankey, 'Augustinian Immediacy and Dionysian Mediation', *Augustinus in der Neuzeit*, ed. de Courcelles, p. 150-60.
- ⁴⁸ Charles Williams, *The French Oratorians and Absolutism, 1611-1641* (New York, 1989), p. 121-9.
- ⁴⁹ Condren, *L'Idée du sacerdoce*, p. 106: '...la manière d'adorer la plus parfaite, la plus sainte et la plus digne de Dieu, et qu'il renferme tout le culte de la religion véritable.' This notion of sacrifice had enormous consequences for the theology of the Eucharist developed by the French School. See J. Galy, *Le Sacrifice dans l'école française*, (Paris, 1951).
- ⁵⁰ *Oeuvres de Bérulle*, ed. Migne, col. 1270: 'L'état de prêtrise...est un office divin en son usage et ministère et c'est même l'origine de toute la sainteté qui doit être en l'Église de Dieu.'
- ⁵¹ Condren, *L'Idée du sacerdoce*, p. 135-8.
- ⁵² This phrase originated with Pseudo-Dionysius. See *Pseudo-Dionysius*, trans. Luibheid, p. 198.
- ⁵³ *Correspondance de Bérulle*, III, ed. Dagens, 617-8, Bérulle to a priest of the Oratory, (n. d.).
- ⁵⁴ Edmund Richer, *Libellus de Ecclesiastica et Politica Potestate*, (Paris 1611). Richer, a canonist and syndic of the Sorbonne, continued to propound his views and was deposed from his position in 1612. His *Libellus* was condemned by the provincial councils of Aix and Sens in the same year. He then fought a long battle with ultramontanes, led by André Duval, over his denial that the church could intervene in the temporal realm and over his endorsement of ecclesiastical conciliarism. I intend to examine the long-term impact of Richerist ideas upon the French church in a future article, but for introductions to the subject see Victor Martin, *Le Gallicanisme politique et le clergé de France*, (Paris 1929), p. 125; *id.*, *Le Gallicanisme et la réforme catholique*, (Paris 1919), p. 360-4; Edmond Puyol, *Edmond Richer. Étude historique et critique sur la Rénovation du gallicanisme au commencement du xvii^e siècle*, 2 vols (Paris 1876), I, 160ff.
- ⁵⁵ *Correspondance de Bérulle*, I, ed. Dagens, 118: '...celle-ci serait jointe aux prélats par le voeu d'obéissance, quant à l'exercice et emploi des fonctions ecclésiastiques...et par ce moyen, on renouvellerait l'usage du voeu qui se fait en la consécration des prêtres, et qui semble être essentiel à l'état de prêtrise.'

- ⁵⁶ Williams, *French Oratorians*, p. 134-5, for further declarations of Oratorian submission to episcopal authority. See also *Lettres de Condren*, Auvray and Jouffrey, eds., p. 148, where Condren wrote of the ‘filial submission’ of the Oratory to Sebastien Zamet, bishop of Langres.
- ⁵⁷ *Oeuvres de Bérulle*, ed. Migne, col. 607: ‘ils sont les médiateurs en la terre des conseils de Dieu sur ses âmes et sur ses oeuvres...’ See also the Cardinal’s *Correspondance*, III, ed. Dagens, 413, for a letter reiterating the angelic character of priesthood.
- ⁵⁸ Cochois, ‘Bérulle, Hiérarque’, *Revue d’Ascétique*, p. 348.
- ⁵⁹ *Pseudo-Dionysius*, trans. Luibheid, p. 236-8: ‘...the founding source of all invisible and visible order quite properly arranges for the rays of divine activity to be granted first to the more godlike beings, since theirs are the more discerning minds...it is through their mediation that this source transmits enlightenment and reveals itself to inferior beings in proportion to capacity.’ Bishops retained powers of purification and illumination in addition to that of perfection, but the latter was their chief activity.
- ⁶⁰ Cochois, ‘Bérulle, Hiérarque’, *Revue d’Ascétique*, p. 358.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 358-9.
- ⁶² *Correspondance de Bérulle*, III, ed. Dagens, 308, letter to La Mothe-Houdancourt, (n. d.). La Mothe-Houdancourt was appointed bishop of Mende in 1624.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 636, letter to an unnamed bishop (n. d.).
- ⁶⁴ *Oeuvres de Bérulle*, ed. Migne, col. 813.
- ⁶⁵ Cited by Cochois, ‘Bérulle, Hiérarque’, *Revue d’Ascétique*, p. 370: ‘...il serait sacrilège pour les saints initiateurs...d’agir, ne fût-ce qu’une fois, contre les saintes ordonnances de Celui qui est le principe même de leur propre initiation...ils doivent tendre vers la Splendeur divine elle-même et garder les yeux fixés sur elle, comme il sied à leur caractère sacré.’
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 371.
- ⁶⁷ *Correspondance de Bérulle*, III, ed. Dagens, 346-7, letter to Cardinal Richelieu, 3 December 1627.
- ⁶⁸ Similarly, Condren advised Sebastien Zamet to give himself in his episcopal work ‘to the Son of God who calls you, work with him, and in his spirit.’ *Lettres de Condren*, Auvray and Jouffrey, eds., p. 152.
- ⁶⁹ *Traité*, Chaillot, Cochois and Noye, eds., p. 193.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 183-98. Tellingly, Olier entitled this chapter ‘De la suprême dignité du sacerdoce’.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 225.
- ⁷³ Jean-Jacques Olier, *Projet de l’établissement d’un séminaire dans un diocèse*, (1651), subsequently cited as *Projet*. A copy of this is printed in Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, p. 551-78.
- ⁷⁴ Olier’s *Traité* and a number of 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 in *Quatre lettres inédites de M. Olier*, ed. Louis Blazy, (Foix, 1931).
- ⁷⁵ *Lettres de M. Olier*, I, 555-6.
- ⁷⁶ *Projet*, 571.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 554: ‘...maintenant avec douleur 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; de là vient qu’en ce temps où Messeigneurs les Prélats se renouvellent dans le zèle de l’Église, désirant de la servir, ils se voient destitués de leurs aides; et pour cela il est besoin de leur rejoindre et de leur réunir des sujets détachés de tout autre engagement, et unis intimement à eux.’
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 562.
- ⁷⁹ In Sulpician seminaries, the superiors were understood by Olier to operate as agents of the diocesan bishop. *Ibid.*, 556.

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- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 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; enfin Dieu les enrichit de tous les dons nécessaires pour conduire leur troupeau et l’élever à la perfection de la vie chrétienne.’
- ⁸¹ 1Tim5:4-5. Gregory’s *Pastoral Rule* can be found in *A select library of Nicene and post-Nicene fathers of the Christian church*, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe, 12 vols (Oxford and New York, 1895), XII, 9-71.
- ⁸² *Quatre lettres*, ed. Blazy, 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.’
- ⁸³ Olier to an unnamed disciple of Saint-Sulpice, (n.d.), *Lettres de M. Olier*, II, 520.
- ⁸⁴ *Projet*, 574-5.
- ⁸⁵ Joseph Lécuyer, ‘Les Étapes de l’enseignement thomiste sur l’épiscopat’, *Revue Thomiste*, LVII (1957), p. 29-52.
- ⁸⁶ *Quatre lettres*, p. 11, letter to Caulet, 29 December 1646: ‘L’esprit du saint prelat dessert la sanctification dans les peuples.’
- ⁸⁷ *Projet*, 577: ‘C’est à eux qu’il appartient, non seulement de régler les peuples par leur sagesse, et de conduire ce saint Royaume par leur autorité...mais c’est encore à eux à créer les Ministres et les Officiers de leur Royaume.’
- ⁸⁸ *Traité*, Chaillot, Cochois and Noye, eds., p. 27-8: ‘Le Prêtre représente Jesus-Christ comme Roi absolu en sa Résurrection: Et l’Évêque le figure comme Roi parfait en son Ascension.’
- ⁸⁹ The most recent study of the Fronde is Geoffrey Treasure, *Mazarin. The Crisis of Absolutism in France*, (London 1995), p. 103-229. Robert Knecht, *The Fronde*, (London 1975) offers a general overview and analysis of events. For the clergy’s involvement, see Richard Golden, *The Godly Rebellion: Parisian Curés and the Religious Fronde 1652-1662*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1981).
- ⁹⁰ Paul Klevgard, *Society and Politics in Counter-Reformation France: A study of Bérulle, Vincent de Paul, Olier and Bossuet*, (unpubl. PhD diss. Northwestern University, Illinois, 1971), p. 168.
- ⁹¹ Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, p. 259-63.