

LOISY'S "MYSTICAL FAITH": LOISY, LEO XIII, AND SABATIER ON MORAL EDUCATION AND THE CHURCH

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[The author examines the response to educational reforms in France at the end of the 19th century by Pope Leo XIII, modernist Alfred Loisy, and liberal Protestant Auguste Sabatier. He argues that Loisy resembled Sabatier more than Leo in his specific reactions to these educational reforms, but that he also exhibited a "mystical faith" in the Church which clearly differentiated his thought from Sabatier's.]

IN 1908, POPE PIUS X identified and condemned "Modernism" as the "synthesis of all heresies."¹ According to Pius, this new heresy was essentially a form of rationalism, but one made more dangerous by the fact that it had reared its ugly head in the Church itself.² However, he acknowledged, Modernists did depart from their rationalist fellow travelers in their emphasis on God as known through personal experience. On this point, Pius claimed, Modernists owed more to Protestants.³ Later, Pius referred to the "Protestant masters" of the Modernists, and others have repeated Pius's charge that Modernists sought to make the Catholic Church more Protestant.⁴

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¹ Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, in *The Papal Encyclicals*, ed. by Claudia Carlen (Raleigh, North Carolina: Pierian, 1990) vol. 3.71–98, at 89.

² *Ibid.* 3.72.

³ *Ibid.* 3.76.

⁴ *Ibid.* 3.89. See, for example, Jean Rivière, *Le modernisme dans l'Église: Étude d'histoire religieuse contemporaine* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1929) 58–59. Marvin O'Connell recently described Rivière's work as "venerable" (*Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* [Washington: Catholic University of America, 1994] xii). In a more subtle way, Guglielmo Forni Rosa, *The "Essence of Christianity": The Hermeneutical Question in the Protestant and Modernist Debate (1897–1904)*, trans. Marisa Luciani and Jane Stevenson (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995) 73, 77, 88 says the same.

That Modernists wanted to make the Church more Protestant is not clear, however. Alfred Loisy (1857–1940), the so-called “father of Catholic Modernism” and one of the main targets of Pius’s condemnation, denied any particular influence of Protestantism on him, and he published his most important book, *L’Évangile et l’Église* (1902), against the liberal Protestantism of Adolf von Harnack. And yet, Loisy clearly drew on Protestant sources. Wendell Dietrich has demonstrated both Loisy’s debt to Protestant biblical scholarship and theology as well as his originality. Dietrich concludes that “contact [with Protestants] was one of the sources of vitality in [Loisy’s] position,” but also that “Loisy transferred these borrowings into a Catholic intellectual structure.”⁵

This article examines Loisy’s relationship to liberal Protestantism on the question of the Church’s role and authority by comparing and contrasting the reactions of Loisy, Pope Leo XIII, and the liberal Protestant Auguste Sabatier to changes in the French educational system at the end of the 19th century. Of the three, Sabatier is the least well known. Born in 1839, he was a member of the Protestant Theological Faculty at the Sorbonne from 1877 until his death in 1901. During this period, he wrote several influential works of liberal Protestant theology including *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* (1897) and *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit* (published posthumously in 1904). Articulate and influential proponents of their respective positions, Leo and Sabatier both reacted to the educational policies of the Third Republic (1870–1940) in ways that reflected their quite different theological commitments. In addition to his unpublished writings about the recent educational innovations, Loisy responded directly to Leo and to Sabatier. It is helpful to contrast Leo XIII, Sabatier, and Loisy on their responses to educational reform in France not only to see the practical implications of their respective theologies but also to clarify the relationship between Loisy and both traditional Catholicism and liberal Protestantism.

At issue in the debates over educational policy in France in the final decades of the 19th century was the relationship of autonomous science, moral education, and the modern individual. I describe first the anticlerical politicians and educators of the Third Republic who set out to reform the French educational system by more fully incorporating autonomous science, which they viewed as the foundation for a secular moral education that would replace Catholic moral education. Theological observers of the French scene responded by addressing the same set of issues on their own terms. I then describe Leo’s promotion of Thomism in order to locate science under the divine authority of the Church, the true, and truly au-

⁵ Wendell S. Dietrich, “Loisy and the Liberal Protestants,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses* 14 (1985) 303–11, at 311.

thoritative, moral educator of individual Christians. Next I show how Sabatier, by contrast, enthusiastically embraced the modern view of autonomous science and reinterpreted the Christian tradition in terms of individual autonomy. Then I indicate how Loisy agreed with Sabatier that moral education should promote individual autonomy and thus resembled Sabatier far more closely than he did Leo. However, in my final section I conclude that in fact Loisy did genuinely differ from Sabatier, and from Protestant individualism more generally, in the "mystical faith" that he retained in the Catholic Church.⁶

SECULAR MORAL EDUCATION

Under the Third Republic, agitation for greater corporate autonomy and less external control swept through the French university system. In a dramatic reorganization in 1808, Napoleon had gathered almost every educational institution of any level into a national *Université de France* under the direct supervision of the state, with the result that the *Université* had lost much of its intellectual autonomy. But by the 1870s, even Jules Ferry, the minister of education and one of the most important advocates for the state's right to set educational policy, adopted the rhetoric of educational autonomy.⁷ By 1896, the movement for decentralization finally led to the creation of autonomous university centers with their own budgets, replacing the single administrative structure of the *Université de France*.

The ideological backbone of this move to achieve greater autonomy for public education in France, and perhaps the single most significant characteristic of intellectual life in the last quarter of the 19th century was the growing appreciation for science. Secular scholars increasingly stressed the importance of scientific research in all fields and the valuable social function this research could serve. These scholars adopted the positivist maxim that "genuine knowledge must be of the scientific type, that is to say must be based upon observation and experiment."⁸ For example, Ernest Renan, the most prominent representative of the "independent" historical inter-

⁶ The term "mystical faith" comes from Henri Bremond. In his article on "Loisy's Faith: Landshift in Catholic Thought," *Journal of Religion* 60 (1980) 138–64, Ronald Burke noted that the character of Loisy's mystical faith needed more work, but that Loisy had at least a "Catholic kind of faith."

⁷ For example, Ferry defended the creation of a chair in the history of religions at the *Collège de France* in 1879 with the claim that the holder of the chair would not be a polemicist against religion subject to anticlerical political pressure, but rather an autonomous scholar. See Ferry, *Discours et opinions de Jules Ferry*, vol. 3: *Les Lois scolaires*, ed. Paul Robiquet (Paris: Armand Colin, 1895) 237.

⁸ See D. G. Charlton, *Secular Religions in France, 1815–1870* (London: Oxford University, 1963) 38–64, esp. 42.

pretation of the Bible and an important influence on Loisy, exulted: "Science contains the future of humanity; it alone can tell humanity the word of our destiny and teach us the manner of attaining our end. . . . TO ORGANIZE HUMANITY SCIENTIFICALLY is the last word of modern science. . . . and after having organized humanity, IT WILL ORGANIZE GOD."⁹ In the view of Renan and others, science was the foundation of modern intellectual life and therefore should be the foundation of any modern educational system.

As part of this growing emphasis on science, some partisans of educational reform attacked Catholic education and theology. A law passed in 1875 had legalized the establishment of private universities, and five Catholic universities opened almost immediately. However, the rapid establishment of these universities worried republican politicians and contributed to an anticlerical reaction. In 1877, Léon Gambetta uttered the famous cry, "Le cléricalisme? Voilà l'ennemi," and later politicians clearly identified clericalism with Catholic education.¹⁰ With each election, Parliament moved a little more to the left, until republican leaders had enough votes to curtail the rights of private universities. An 1880 law on higher education forbade Catholic schools to call themselves universities and increased the amount of state supervision over them. Still more damaging, the 1880 law made the successful completion of state examinations a requirement for many professional careers. Institutional autonomy was important to the advocates of this law, but only within institutions where scientific autonomy could be genuine.

As part of the same effort, the "scientific" history of religions began to supplant Catholic theology in the secular university. Over objections that it would serve as a forum for anti-Catholic ideas, Parliament endowed a chair in the history of religions at the Collège de France in 1879. With this chair, argued Jules Ferry, the sponsor of the bill, France could take its rightful place "at the head of the new science."¹¹ Even more tellingly, Parliament suppressed the state faculties of Catholic theology in 1885 and replaced them with a section of religious sciences at the École pratique des Hautes-

⁹ Ernest Renan, *L'avenir de la science*, in *Œuvres complètes de Ernest Renan*, ed. Henriette Psichari, 10 vols. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947–1961) 3.756–57, emphasis in the original.

¹⁰ René Rémond, *L'anticléricalisme en France, de 1815 à nos jours* (Brussels: Éditions complexe, 1985) 185. See also Paul Bert, *Discours parlementaires: Assemblée nationale—Chambre des députés 1872–1881* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1882) 153; Ferry, *Discours et opinions* 3.96, 98–99, 198.

¹¹ Ferry, *Discours et opinions* 3.236. For the opposing positions on this initiative, see Florian Desprez et al., "Exposé de la situation faite à l'Église en France et Déclaration des Ém. Cardinaux," *Le Correspondant* n.s. 130 (1892) and Ferry, *Discours et opinions* 3.232–41.

Études that was associated with the new chair in the history of religions at the Collège.¹² The objective and historical investigation of religion at the secular university would, it was hoped, offer a corrective to the less scientific work done by theologians at Catholic institutions of higher learning.

At the same time, French politicians sought to replace Catholic religious and moral instruction in the primary schools with secular moral instruction. The state had the obligation, Ferry insisted, to remain neutral in religious as in scientific questions.¹³ But it could not be indifferent to the moral formation of French citizens, to what he called "the moral *patrie*," those values issuing from the French Revolution.¹⁴ Thus he claimed: "Our fathers fought for a long time to obtain these great things which constitute a secularized society, a free State, master of itself; freedom of conscience, the highest good in the world; the validity of civil marriage; the freedom of association depending on civil law." Because many clerical teachers attacked these freedoms in the name of Ultramontane and absolutist doctrines of papal authority, Ferry concluded that the state should promote only those (public) schools which reinforced the values of the Third Republic, and close those (Catholic) schools which did not.¹⁵ Ferry's allies added that teachers could best illustrate the meaning of modern freedoms with material drawn from civil history,¹⁶ and historians eagerly assumed this burden. They supported the new government of the Third Republic

¹² Jacques Gadille, *La pensée et l'action politiques des évêques français au début de la III^e République, 1870/1883*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1967) 2.134–136; William R. Keylor, *Academy and Community: The Foundation of the French Historical Profession* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1975) 259; George Weisz, *The Emergence of Modern Universities in France, 1863–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1983) 295. Pope Leo XIII had already refused to authorize the state faculties of Catholic theology for fear that they would spread Gallican ideas.

¹³ Ferry, *Discours et opinions* 3.271–72.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 3.66–67.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 3.99. See also *ibid.* 3.298–301, 121–22; Bréal, "L'Enseignement en 1878," *Revue des deux mondes* 30 (1878) 740–41; Renan, "Lettre sur la liberté de l'enseignement supérieur," in *Œuvres complètes* 2.704; Bert, *Discours parlementaires* 105–6, 344. This promotion of secular public schools took very tangible form. Led by Ferry, Parliament declared public primary schools free and mandatory, while prohibiting "sectarian education" in the public schools and forbidding clerics from teaching. See Evelyn Acomb, *The French Laic Laws (1879–1899): The First Anti-Clerical Campaign of the Third French Republic*, Studies in History, Economic, and Public Law no. 486 (New York: Columbia University, 1941) 163–82; Joseph Moody, *French Education Since Napoleon* (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1978) 96–97; Gadille, *La pensée et l'action* 2.158–59, 195–249.

¹⁶ See, for example, Bert, *Discours parlementaires* 371–72; Léon Bourgeois, *L'Éducation de la démocratie française: Discours prononcés de 1890 à 1896* (Paris: Édouard Cornély, 1897) 132; Émile Beaussire, *La liberté d'enseignement et l'université sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Hachette, 1884) 110; Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociol-*

and leapt into the debates on primary education. In William Keylor's words, these historians set out "to deduce general maxims of right conduct from the great book of the past just as the curé before [them] discovered such prescriptions in the gospels and the writings of the church fathers."¹⁷ Their historical science thus served as the foundation for a secular moral instruction that could foster individual freedoms better than could the more authoritarian Catholic moral education.

THE LIMITATIONS OF MODERN AUTONOMY

The growing emphasis on autonomous science in secular France exercised a significant influence on French Catholicism, but when this emphasis took the form of a direct challenge to the Church, as it did in the educational policies of the Third Republic, the Catholic hierarchy reacted negatively. In a joint letter dated 1892, the five cardinals of France complained that the republican government had adopted "a doctrine and program in absolute opposition to the Catholic faith. . . . Practical atheism had become the rule of action for everyone in France who had an official title, and the law for everything done in the name of the State." They especially emphasized their hostility to the recent educational reforms.¹⁸

Although generally more supportive of the Third Republic than the French cardinals, Pope Leo XIII supported their criticisms of the educational policies of the French government by criticizing the French emphasis on individual liberty and autonomy. Anticlerical attacks on Church authority stemmed, he argued, from a tendency to "substitute for true liberty what is sheer and most foolish license,"¹⁹ a tendency, that is, to emphasize individual liberties to the point that they compromised the social order. This mistake went back at least to the Protestant Reformation, he said, when a "passion for innovation" had swept over Europe, undermining religious order and stability.²⁰ Philosophy had soon fallen prey to these perfidious tendencies, and philosophical disorders had quickly spread to all classes of society. The resulting "unbridled license" (as distinguished from true liberty) in turn caused the "terrible upheavals of the last century"—presumably the wave of revolutions in the name of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* that Ferry considered the basis for the Republican government

ogy of Education, trans. E. K. Wilson and H. Schnurer (New York: Free, 1961) 275–77.

¹⁷ Keylor, *Academy and Community* 90–96, esp. 93.

¹⁸ Desprez et al., "Exposé de la situation" 416–18.

¹⁹ Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum*, in *The Papal Encyclicals*, ed. Claudia Carlen 2.169–82, at 173. See also *Immortale Dei* in *ibid.* 2.107–20, at 113–14.

²⁰ For this and for what follows, see Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* 2.112–114. For a similar account, see also *Aeterni Patris* in *ibid.* 2.17–28, at 17–18.

and the moral *patrie*. The quite literally revolutionary principle that "that each one is so far his [or her] own master as to be in no sense under the rule of any other individual" reduced government to "the will of the people," Leo complained, and showed "no regard . . . to the laws of the Church."

The educational policies of the Third Republic reflected this exaggerated emphasis on individual liberties, and Leo countered by reaffirming both the divine authority of the Church and its God-given right to teach. Leo rejected the position of those who alleged "that it does not belong to [the Church] to legislate, to judge, or to punish, but only to exhort, to advise, and to rule her subjects in accordance with their own consent and will." Their position "pervert[ed] the nature of this divine society, and attenuate[d] and narrow[ed] its authority, its office of teacher, and its whole efficiency."²¹ Unfortunately the educational reformers in France went even further, to the point that the Church "who, by the order and commission of Jesus Christ, has the duty of teaching all nations, finds herself forbidden to take part in the instruction of the people." This exclusion of the Church from the public educational system was "a grave and fatal error,"²² particularly for moral education since "in faith and in the teaching of morality, God Himself made the Church a partaker of His divine authority, and through His heavenly gift she cannot be deceived."²³ "The Church of Christ is the true and sole teacher of virtue and the guardian of morals," he added elsewhere.²⁴

In place of the secular moral education based on historical scholarship and offered by public schools, Leo preferred that the Church offer moral education grounded in Thomistic philosophy and theology. Shortly after his election as pope, Leo issued his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (August 4, 1879) that instructed Catholics to return to the thought of Thomas Aquinas, and he explicitly applied this promotion of Thomism to Catholic education. Society would, he explained, "enjoy a far more peaceful and secure existence if a more wholesome doctrine were taught in the universities and high schools—one more in conformity with the teaching of the Church, such as is contained in the works of Thomas Aquinas."²⁵ Although Catholic education was, he conceded elsewhere, "to a certain extent

²¹ Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum* 2.179–80.

²² Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* 2.114.

²³ Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum* 2.177.

²⁴ Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* 2.114.

²⁵ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris* 2.25. On the encyclical, see Gerald McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University, 1989) 228–36 and *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University, 1989) 5–15; Pierre Thibault, *Savoir et pouvoir: Philosophie thomiste et politique cléricale au XIX^e siècle* (Quebec: Université Laval, 1972) 141–49.

obliged to reckon with the State program," he still insisted that "the studies of aspirants to the priesthood must remain faithful to the traditional methods of past ages." He therefore encouraged teachers to "furnish to studious youth a generous and copious supply of those purest streams of wisdom flowing inexhaustibly from the precious fountainhead of the Angelic Doctor."²⁶

Among other reasons for preferring Thomism, it countered modern license precisely by clarifying the limits to scientific autonomy, limits that Ferry and his allies transgressed in their efforts to establish a secular moral education based on historical and other sciences. Within their own limited sphere, Leo explained, reason and the sciences were fully autonomous and trustworthy. The highest truths of faith, however, depended on revelation (although these, too, were perfectly in harmony with the truths of reason). Therefore, Leo insisted, "there is no reason why genuine liberty should grow indignant, or true science feel aggrieved, at having to bear the just and necessary restraint of laws by which, in the judgment of the Church and of reason itself, human teaching has to be controlled."²⁷

Leo's comments on the appropriate method for studying history, the favorite discipline of many who promoted secular moral education in France, illustrated his understanding of the genuine, but limited, autonomy of academic work. Inflamed by anticlerical passions, Leo said, many historians combed the records of the past for any scrap of evidence that discredited the Church, to the point that "the art of the historian has become a conspiracy against truth."²⁸ The autonomous historical science that served as the foundation for secular moral education in France was an example of this conspiracy. Against this conception of history as an autonomous science, Leo insisted that "history contains a body of dogmatic facts which none may call into question." When historians renounced their conspiracy against truth and accepted these facts on faith, "the history of the Church could serve as a magnificent and conclusive demonstration of the truth and divinity of Christianity."²⁹ Within certain limits, then, history had a real autonomy, but it was not finally an autonomous science so much as an ancillary discipline assigned the task of defending Catholic theology under the authority of the Church.

²⁶ Leo XIII, *Depuis le jour*, in *The Papal Encyclicals* 2.455–64, at 457–58.

²⁷ Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum* 2.177. See also Régis Ladous, "Le magistère catholique au défi de la modernité, ou l'impossible distinction des sciences (1870–1920)," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 95 (2000) 651–77.

²⁸ Leo XIII, "Letter on Historical Studies," in *Readings in Church History*, ed. Colman J. Barry, vol. 3: *The Modern Era: 1789 to the Present* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1965) 87–88. For Leo's analogous comments on philosophy, see Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris* 20. See also McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism* 5–11.

²⁹ Leo XIII, *Depuis le jour* 2.459.

Leo thus defended traditional Catholicism over against the anticlerical educational policies of the French state by challenging the anticlerical understanding of science, moral education, and individual liberties. Leo did not reject moral and scientific autonomy, but he insisted on qualifying autonomy by reference to the authority of the Church in those matters which touched on Christian doctrine. The Church should exercise its authority particularly in education, including moral education, in order to remind its adherents that freedom of conscience and the other liberties of the "moral patrie" were not absolute, but were rather subject to the Church in important ways. Only by acknowledging the authority of the Church, he argued, could France stave off the individualist license and anarchy besetting it and preserve its traditional social order.

THE MODERN DILEMMA

Not surprisingly, Auguste Sabatier differed from Leo on virtually every point. In fact, his most famous writings all revolved around his criticism of "religions of authority" such as Roman Catholicism. For example, in a speech delivered to the Religious Sciences Conference in Stockholm in 1897, Sabatier identified the "unity of principle which covers all the general manifestations and tendencies of the modern spirit. . . . A single word expresses it: the word autonomy."³⁰ By contrast, he continued, the reign of "heteronomy" and opposition to autonomy characterized religions of authority.³¹ Sabatier offered several examples of Catholic heteronomy, including Loisy's recent dismissal from the Institut catholique de Paris. The conflict between authoritarian (heteronomous) religion as represented by Catholicism and modern secular autonomy as represented by the politicians of the Third Republic was particularly clear, he claimed, in the struggles over the educational policies of the Third Republic.³²

Sabatier's initial allegiances on this point were clear: along with anticlerical politicians, he advocated modern autonomy. Modern philosophy, he claimed, began with Descartes's assertion of philosophical autonomy. By the time of Kant, ethics too had become autonomous. Progress in the physical sciences and historical criticism similarly represented "the triumph

³⁰ Sabatier, "Religion and Modern Culture," trans. by Victor Leuliette (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904) 169. In *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, trans. T. A. Seed (New York: James Pott, 1916), Sabatier spoke similarly of "this new age of autonomy, of firm possession of self, and of internal self-government" (220).

³¹ Sabatier, "Religion and Modern Culture" 177, 182, 184. On the "religions of authority," see Sabatier's posthumous *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904). See also Bernard Reymond, *Auguste Sabatier et le procès théologique de l'autorité* (Paris: Symbolon, 1976) 109-22.

³² Sabatier, "Religion and Modern Culture," 188.

of the principle of autonomy.” But “this principle of autonomy [stood] out still more clearly in the political and social sphere” as society evolved “more and more towards self-government,” especially with “the advent of democracy.”³³ Most important of all, he claimed that “to speak of morality . . . is to stipulate autonomy.”³⁴ Like Ferry, then, Sabatier supported intellectual and scientific autonomy and argued from them to the political liberties of constitutional democracy.

Unlike Ferry, however, Sabatier denied that France could form morally autonomous citizens by promoting science through the schools. Science could not “engender an acknowledged morality,” he insisted.³⁵ Worse still, science actually undermined traditional moral education. Sabatier’s 1897 *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion based on Psychology and History* identified “two great passions” of the 19th century: “the scientific method and the moral ideal.” Sabatier added, “so far from being able to unite [science and morality] [the 19th century] has pushed them to a point where they seem to contradict and exclude each other.”³⁶

The problem for Sabatier was that modern science presumed autonomy while morality was so often associated with an authoritarian religion that undermined autonomy. “Our young people,” he said at the end of the preface of his *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, “are pushing bravely forward, marching between two high walls: on the one side modern science . . . on the other the dogmas and the customs of the religious institutions in which they were reared.” Leo had resolved this dilemma by identifying limits to scientific and moral autonomy. Sabatier, by contrast, hoped to offer a way out of this impasse through “a renovated conception of religion,” one more compatible with modern science and especially modern morality.³⁷

The centerpiece to Sabatier’s “renovated conception of religion” which could incorporate modern autonomy was his understanding of religious faith. Faith, he explained, “rests upon a feeling inherent in every conscious individual, the feeling of dependence which every man experiences with respect to universal being.”³⁸ All religions stemmed from this psychological

³³ Ibid. 169–174.

³⁴ Ibid. 208. Cf *ibid.* 173.

³⁵ Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 20.

³⁶ Ibid. xii; see also Rosa, *The “Essence of Christianity”* 6–7.

³⁷ Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* xiv–xv, xii; see also *ibid.* 164–65, 168. In “L’École de Paris,” Bernard Reymond argues that Sabatier and the other theologians of the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Paris sought this reconciliation in their “symbolo-fidéisme” (*Études théologiques et religieuses* 52 [1977] 373, 383). On this point, see also Richard Penaskovic, “Critical Symbolism: The Thought of L. Auguste Sabatier,” *Melita Theologica* 39 (1987) 94–104.

³⁸ Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 21–22. See also Sabatier, “Religion and Modern Culture” 207–8.

experience, he continued, including Christianity. Christian faith was distinctive primarily in that it traced its ancestry back to Jesus. It began with "the experience of filial piety wrought in the soul of Christ," and contemporary Christians experienced the same piety in their own lives.³⁹

Religion promoted autonomy when religious people understood that God related to them through these personal experiences of faith rather than through any external authority. "God," he said, "not having phenomenal existence, can only reveal Himself to spirit, and in the piety that He Himself inspires."⁴⁰ Sabatier's emphasis on God's relationship to the human spirit and in human piety allowed him to reconcile the apparent contradiction between his commitment to individual autonomy and his assertion that religion stemmed from a feeling of dependence. "To obey the will of God" who speaks within human beings was, he argued, "to obey our own law, and the theonomy of piety becomes a truly moral autonomy."⁴¹

Sabatier therefore criticized any effort to identify an external religious authority. Both Catholics and orthodox Protestants fell into this trap, he argued,⁴² but he reserved his harshest criticisms for Catholicism. The "generating principle" of Catholicism was, he claimed, "the dogma of the Church, of its infallibility and traditional continuity, of its divine origin and supernatural powers." The genius of Christ had been to join "the religious element," the feeling of dependence on God, with "the moral element," moral autonomy. Insisting on the external authority of the Church ruptured "the organic union" of these two elements by emphasizing dependence and submission at the expense of morality, with the result that "the autonomy of the individual consciousness [was] compromised."⁴³

However, Sabatier did not deny that religion transcended the individual in some way. After all, he asked, if religion remained purely personal and subjective, "how will it be made an educative, saving power?"⁴⁴ His answer was that religion had its origin in the personal experience of the individual but did not end there. Rather, "the moral and religious life is not only individual, it is collective. It is preeminently a social and historical fact. . . . It is impossible to insist too much upon the organic and indissoluble bond which thus attaches individual experience to historic and collective expe-

³⁹ Sabatier, "Religion and Modern Culture" 204–5; *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 148–49; see also Rosa, *The "Essence of Christianity"* 15–17.

⁴⁰ Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 54.

⁴¹ Sabatier, "Religion and Modern Culture" 210; see also Donald A. Neilsen, "Auguste Sabatier and the Durkheimians on the Scientific Study of Religion," *Sociological Analysis* 47 (1987) 285–86.

⁴² Sabatier, *Religions of Authority* 183–87.

⁴³ Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 200–3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 58.

rience.”⁴⁵ For Sabatier this was a philosophical claim about the nature of religion in general. Religion took external form in the life of the individual and joined individuals together into a larger whole. In the case of Christianity specifically, Jesus’ “filial piety became a fraternal piety . . . This paternal presence of God in all human souls creates in them not only a link but a substantial and moral unity which makes them members of one body.”⁴⁶

The key question for Sabatier was therefore how to define the relationship of the body of believers (the Church) to individual Christians in a way that avoided creating an external authority capable of compromising individual autonomy. His answer was to define authority in strictly pedagogical terms. “Authority,” he insisted, “has its roots in the organic conditions of the life of the species, and its end in the formation of the individual. This essentially pedagogical mission at once justifies and limits it. Like every good teacher, authority should labour to render itself useless.”⁴⁷ Sabatier said essentially the same thing in several places. Religious authority compromised moral autonomy if it functioned as an external authority imposed on individual Christians. But religious authority conceived as pedagogical could foster moral autonomy in individual Christians and therefore stand between scientific autonomy and traditional religion, drawing on the resources of the religious tradition, appropriately modernized, and sharing the presupposition of autonomy with modern science.⁴⁸

Sabatier could thus accept much of Ferry’s program, both its implementation and its goals, and he did support Ferry politically in his campaign against “clerical” education.⁴⁹ Sabatier too espoused a fully autonomous science unconstrained by the dogmatic authority of the Church and in fact defined over against it. And he believed that moral education should cultivate a sense of moral autonomy on the part of modern French citizens. However he departed from Ferry in arguing that modern autonomy depended on religious piety more than on autonomous sciences like history, and that the Christian Church could inculcate it. This move toward Leo did not translate into a defense of traditional religious authority so much as into a reform program for it—the Church had to renounce its pretensions to any kind of external authority and concentrate instead on its pedagogical authority and role. The Church, that is, should be a moral educator with a

⁴⁵ Sabatier, *Religions of Authority* 351–52; see also Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 58–59, 91–95.

⁴⁶ Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 157–58.

⁴⁷ Sabatier, *Religions of Authority* xxiv, xxvii. See also *ibid.* xxxiii. On Sabatier and the Church, see Reymond, *Auguste Sabatier* 206–21.

⁴⁸ Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 218–20, 242–43. On Sabatier’s individualism, see Rosa, *The “Essence of Christianity”* 7–9.

⁴⁹ Reymond, *Auguste Sabatier* 212.

purely pedagogical authority and with the mission of fostering the autonomy of individuals who would then be in a position to make moral decisions independent of Church pronouncements.

THE MODERN DILEMMA REVISITED

Although Catholic, Loisy agreed with Sabatier more than with Leo in his comments on the nature of science, modern moral education, and individual autonomy. Loisy responded most explicitly to the debates on educational policy in the Third Republic in two unpublished works of the late 1890s, the "Dialogue des morts" and "La crise de la foi dans le temps présent: Essais d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses" (the "Essais"). The "Dialogue des morts" took the form of a series of dialogues between recently deceased people such as Ernest Renan (d. 1892) and Jules Ferry (d. 1893) about religion and culture in France. The "Essais," the major source for Loisy's later Modernist publications, was his effort to offer, among other things, "a synthesis of what is substantial, vital, and permanent in the Catholic tradition with that which is consistent, positive, and really true in critical science."⁵⁰ His language here was more irenic than Sabatier's, but he shared Sabatier's sense that modern Christians had to march between the high walls of science on one side and the dogmas and customs of the Catholic Church on the other, as well as Sabatier's mission to offer a way out of the impasse.

On the question of the autonomy of science, specifically the historical study of religion, Loisy was always absolutely clear. Theological considerations should not enter into historical work, and the Church had no authority over scholars as such. "The first condition of scientific work," he explained in 1903, "is liberty. The first duty of a scholar, Catholic or not, is sincerity."⁵¹ Given his commitment to the autonomy of science, Loisy supported the general outlines of Ferry's program to secularize the public schools.⁵² Modern intellectuals appropriately refused to look to the Church for insights or approval on strictly scientific questions, he insisted. The failure of the electorate effectively to support religious education bore

⁵⁰ Loisy, "L'avant-propos," in "Essais d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses," 3.7/8. This is part of the Papiers Loisy of the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris. As here, I cite the individual chapters of the "Essais," give the volume number of the Loisy collection, Loisy's own page number, and finally the page number of the Bibliothèque nationale. I cite the "Dialogue des morts," part of the same collection, similarly.

⁵¹ Loisy, *Autour d'un petit livre*, 2d ed. (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1903) ×; see also Loisy, *Simple réflexions sur le Décret du Saint-Office, Lamentabili Sane Exitu et sur l'Encyclique, Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 2d ed. (Ceffonds: Chez l'auteur, 1908) 44.

⁵² Loisy, "La religion et la vie" in "Essais" 5.1043/350.

witness to the inroads that secularization had made even among many Catholics.⁵³ With the “laic laws” secularizing education, the republican government had simply given institutional form to this intellectual and political reality.⁵⁴

However, like Leo and Sabatier, Loisy insisted that the Church still had a vital role to play in moral education. In notes written in 1886, he said that “the domain of religious teaching,” including moral formation, “no more pertained to the masters of science than the domain of science pertained to the Church.”⁵⁵ Only the Church, he continued, “has amassed the principles of order, of devotion, and of virtue which guarantee the happiness of the family and the peace of society. To want to found something in the moral order outside of Christ and the Church would be utopian,” would be impossible.⁵⁶ And by stressing its role in moral education, Loisy claimed in the “Dialogue de Morts” a decade later, the Church could reclaim the ground it was losing in modern society. Even obstinate anticlericals had to admit that the Church alone considered “the religious and moral education of all people” to be its “raison d’être.” The Church had “created this function . . . and . . . performed it during the long centuries. . . . To take from the Church the moral formation of individuals is to renounce . . . the fraternity of peoples and the union of humanity.”⁵⁷ In the “Dialogue des morts,” “Jules Ferry” admitted as much. At least in theory, Loisy’s fictionalized Ferry conceded, the Church could benefit France by developing the religious and moral instincts of French citizens.⁵⁸

Loisy therefore proposed various ways in which secular scientific education and religious moral education could be combined. For the public schools, he advocated the suppression of religious teaching in the regular curriculum, with allowances made for special instruction of individual stu-

⁵³ Ibid. 5.1031–32/338–39, partly quoted in Loisy, *Choses passées* (Paris: Émile Nourry, 1913) 196.

⁵⁴ Loisy gave his own suggestions about the particular questions at issue at some length in *ibid.* 5.1028–56/335–63. See also Harvey Hill, “The Politics of Loisy’s Modernist Theology,” in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity*, ed. Darrell Jodock (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000) 169–90, at 176–79.

⁵⁵ Loisy, “La religion et la vie,” in “Essais” 5.1006–41/348. See also *ibid.* 988/295, 994–1006/301–13, partially quoted in Loisy, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire religieuse de notre temps*, 3 vols. (Paris: Émile Nourry, 1930–1931) 1.474.

⁵⁶ Loisy, Notes, November, 1886, quoted in *Mémoires* 1.150–53 and *Choses passées* 76–77. The original of these notes is in volume ten of the *Papiers Loisy*, 45–46; see also Hill, “The Politics of Loisy’s Modernist Theology” 179–81.

⁵⁷ Loisy, “La religion et la vie” in “Essais” 5.994–96/301–3; see also *ibid.* 5.988/295, 992–1005/299–312, 1032–38/339–45, and 1044–48/351–55, partly quoted in *Mémoires* 1.475; “Dialogue des morts” 9.9–10/15–16.

⁵⁸ Loisy, “Dialogue des morts” 9.7–8/13–14. Even after his excommunication, Loisy continued to assert the necessary connection of religion and morality and the failure of efforts to teach a secular morality. See, for example, *Mémoires* 3.181.

dents by ministers of the different religions if desired by the child's parents. As other possible models, he suggested the Collège Stanislas, which had ecclesiastical directors and lay teachers, or the Collèges Bossuet, Fénelon, and Gerson, Catholic schools that allowed their pupils to take courses at nearby public institutions.⁵⁹ The point was to include both scientific instruction unhindered by theological considerations and moral education that was genuinely religious.

However, Loisy did not want simply to combine the secular scholarship of the public schools and the moral education offered by the contemporary Catholic Church any more than Sabatier did. Although Loisy wholeheartedly adopted autonomous science, he found Leo's Thomistic moral education wanting. Like Sabatier, Loisy insisted that a properly modern moral education should promote "personal autonomy in the religious and moral order," which he called "the perfect realization of Christianity."⁶⁰ Thomism did not, and, as "Renan" explained in the "Dialogue des morts," Thomism therefore no longer suited modern tastes. A "Jesuit" agreed. He explained that Thomistic philosophy and theology had been fine in past centuries, but that it now needed reinterpretation. The Jesuit ended by returning to the main issue: "how difficult," he lamented, "is the moral education of humanity!"⁶¹ His meaning was clear. To be effective in modern France, Catholics had to abandon Thomistic moral education.

Loisy thus faced the same dilemma as Sabatier. Science should be fully autonomous, but could not cultivate a genuine morality. However, science and the progress of culture more generally had made traditional Catholic moral education anachronistic. The dilemma for the Church was therefore how "to find the just equilibrium of tutelary direction and liberty which encourages the subject to achieve the maximum possible development of which he [or she] is capable."⁶² How, that is, could the Church best foster personal autonomy, and so best realize Christianity, in the modern period?

Sharpening this dilemma was the fact that the most important voices in France presumed that its resolution was impossible within the Catholic Church. Leo denied that the Church "rule[d] her subjects in accordance with their own consent and will," thus emphasizing "tutelary direction" at the expense of "liberty." Sabatier, along with Ferry and his anticlerical allies, condemned Catholicism as a "religion of authority" that stressed heteronomy, and they therefore looked elsewhere for moral education. But Loisy wanted to combine Leo's institution with Sabatier's conception of

⁵⁹ Loisy, "La religion et la vie," in "Essais" 5.1048–49/355–56, partially quoted in *Mémoires* 1. 475.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 5.1006–7/313–14.

⁶¹ Loisy, "Dialogue des morts" 9.20–25/26–31.

⁶² Loisy, "La religion et la vie," in "Essais" 5.1011–12/318–19.

moral education promoting moral autonomy so that the Catholic Church could effectively complement the “scientific” instruction French citizens received in public schools.

Loisy, too, recognized how sharp this dilemma was. At the beginning of the “Essais,” he acknowledged, with citations to Sabatier, the justice of those who reproached Catholicism “for holding humanity in a state of perpetual childhood, for undermining the autonomy of the individual conscience by the principle of absolute submission to the authority of the Church; the autonomy of science and reason by its irrational and contradictory dogmas.”⁶³ After seven chapters of philosophy and history, the eighth chapter on “Le régime intellectuel de l’Église catholique” opened with a repetition of Sabatier’s accusation that “Catholics languish . . . in a state of perpetual childhood.”⁶⁴ The first section of the chapter quoted various Vatican pronouncements which showed that the Church rejected the autonomous historical criticism of the Bible, thus creating a “malaise” in its more enlightened adherents.⁶⁵ The second section of the chapter attributed this malaise more specifically to the failure of the Catholic educational system, where teachers treated students as “perpetual children.” With this education, Loisy asked, how could Catholics be expected to arrive at the “liberty of Christian maturity?”⁶⁶ After chapters on “Le dogme et la science” and “La raison et la foi,” Loisy again returned to Sabatier’s contention that “Catholicism, being the negation of autonomy, works directly against the modern spirit.” The Church, Loisy admitted “excites” Sabatier’s reproaches “by the fashion in which it treats the theses most dear to our contemporaries. Mention the autonomy of reason, and the Church immediately protests in the name of the faith. Mention the autonomy of conscience, and the Church protests in the name of the revealed law and of its own authority, which is divine.”⁶⁷ Loisy thus structured the “Essais” significantly around the problem of integrating the modern appreciation for autonomy into the greatest of the religions of authority.

To resolve this dilemma, Loisy called on the Church “to decentralize the action, to let the collective autonomies of particular Churches grow within the solidly established unity [of the whole], and in these Churches the

⁶³ Loisy, “L’avant-propos,” in “Essais” 3.17/18, quoted in *Mémoires* 1.447.

⁶⁴ Loisy, “Le régime intellectuelle de l’Église catholique,” in “Essais” 5.693–95/1–3, quoted in *Mémoires* 1.465–66.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 5.696–732/4–39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 5.750–54/57–61.

⁶⁷ Loisy, “La religion et la vie,” in “Essais” 5.1006–7/313–14, 1009–10/316–17. Loisy cited, but did not quote, Sabatier’s lecture to the Religious Science Conference of 1897. See Sabatier, “Religion and Modern Culture” esp. 190–92.

autonomy of individuals and families."⁶⁸ This call for greater local and individual autonomy echoed the argument made by partisans of educational reform and reflected Loisy's agreement with Sabatier that the modern Church should not be "the external government of souls."

As his contribution to redefining Church authority so as to preserve its "solidly established unity" while allowing for greater autonomy, Loisy followed Sabatier's lead in describing the Church in exclusively pedagogical terms. For example, he described the Church as the "educator of all humanity, religious tutor of families and of peoples."⁶⁹ And he insisted that the Church was "an educator before being a dominator; it instructs before directing, and the one who obeys it does so only according to his [or her] own conscience and in order to obey God."⁷⁰ Despite Leo's claim to the contrary, the Church had authority only to teach its adherents, not to dictate to them. The problem lay not with those like Ferry or Sabatier who, in Leo's words, "attenuate[d] and narrow[ed] [the Church's] authority, its office of teacher, and its whole efficiency," but rather with those like Leo himself who insisted that the Church did have the authority "to legislate, to judge, or to punish."⁷¹

Loisy thus shared a great deal with Sabatier over against Leo. Both insisted on the autonomy of science and therefore supported Ferry's program to secularize the schools. Both believed, nonetheless, that science could not offer a real moral education, for which they turned to religion. Both feared that the authoritarian tradition of the Church compromised its ability to offer a moral education promoting the all-important modern value of moral autonomy. Both responded to this dilemma by arguing that the Church (Catholic for Loisy and Protestant for Sabatier) could only foster moral education if the institutional leadership would recognize that the Church had no more than a pedagogical authority.

LOISY AND SABATIER?

Given these similarities, can one differentiate Loisy's position from liberal Protestantism? Despite his many agreements with Sabatier, Loisy tried to distinguish himself, especially in an article on "The Individualist Theory of Religion" drawn from the "Essais" and published in 1899. In this article,

⁶⁸ Ibid. 5.1098/405.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 5.1012/319. Loisy later summarized his point in this chapter as follows: "I easily conciliated the authority of the Church with the relative autonomy of the individual conscience in attributing to this authority a pedagogical character" (*Mémoires*, 1.473). See also Harvey Hill, *The Politics of Modernism* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2002) 154–59.

⁷⁰ Loisy, *L'Évangile et l'Église*, 3rd ed. (Bellevue: Chez l'auteur, 1904) 166–67.

⁷¹ Leo, *Libertas praestantissimum* 2.179–80.

Loisy treated Sabatier as the primary exponent of religious individualism in France and called him one of “the most perfect Protestants that has ever been seen.” In so doing, Loisy met Sabatier’s accusation that the “generating principle” of Catholicism was heteronomy with the counter-accusation that Protestantism was only fully realized in religious individualism, and he repudiated this individualism.⁷²

Because Sabatier limited religion to the personal experience of God within the soul, Loisy claimed, he implicitly denied the connection that religious individuals had with each other. Sabatier therefore missed the “social” and “objective” character of religion and substituted for it “religious anarchy,” to which Loisy contrasted the Catholic Church, the “school of virtue,” which took more seriously the need for a “socialization of individual forces.”⁷³ On this point, however, Loisy caricatured Sabatier, who, as we have seen, said that he could not “insist too much upon the organic and indissoluble bond which thus attaches individual experience to historic and collective experience.” Despite Loisy’s claim, both he and Sabatier tried to hold together personal and collective religious experience.

Because Sabatier, according to Loisy, did not adequately acknowledge the social dimension of religion, he also denied that the Church, the community of faith, had the authority over its individual members necessary to offer an effective moral education. Sabatier was wrong to believe that “individualist religion would realize moral autonomy,” Loisy began. Religious authority was necessary for moral education, even a moral education that sought to foster moral autonomy. In fact, people could only become “virtuous, morally autonomous . . . if the moral sense is first awakened in them, then guided, and finally perpetually sustained by a sort of exterior and general conscience, the Christian conscience.”⁷⁴ After all, “the moral atmosphere that one breathes is the regular condition of moral autonomy,

⁷² A. Firmin [Loisy], “La théorie individualiste de la religion,” *Revue du clergé français* (January 1, 1899) 202–14, at 202–3. The respective assessments of the two traditions owed much to the different rhetorical strategies of the two authors. When Sabatier attacked (and over-emphasized) the authoritarianism of the Catholic Church, he also implicitly attacked authoritarianism among orthodox Protestants as a “Catholic” tendency (see Reymond, *Auguste Sabatier* 116–17, 245). When Loisy attacked Sabatier’s individualism (and overemphasized the point), he constituted himself the defender of Catholicism even as he challenged its contemporary form. For Loisy’s similar strategy with regard to Harnack, see Hill, *The Politics of Modernism* 121 and the works cited in *ibid.* n. 8.

⁷³ Loisy, “La théorie individualiste” 203, 208, 215; see also “Les théories générales de la religion,” in “Essais” 3.80/88, 91/99; “La religion et la vie,” in “Essais” 5.1006/313 ; see also Émile Poulat, “Critique historique et théologie dans la crise moderniste” *Recherches de science religieuse* 58 (1970) 538; Reymond, *Auguste Sabatier* 245; Rosa, *The “Essence of Christianity”* 59–60.

⁷⁴ Loisy, “La religion et la vie,” in “Essais” 5.1022/329, quoted in *Mémoires* 1.475.

of its conservation and progress in individuals."⁷⁵ But here again, Loisy actually differed from Sabatier less than he suggested. Sabatier denied neither the social character of religion nor the necessity of a religious institution which had the pedagogical authority to form morally autonomous individuals. When Loisy described the authority he thought the Church should exercise, he used very similar language. Both made essentially the same comments about the nature and limits of Church authority; it should be pedagogical authority aimed at forming morally autonomous individuals.

However, Loisy did differ from Sabatier in that Loisy was more of a historicist. Both Loisy and Sabatier recognized that religious institutions evolved through history. But Sabatier assumed that genuine faith, the personal relationship that Christians had with God the Father, remained constant beneath the shifting ways in which it was articulated and manifest. He called this relationship "the Christian principle, which, brought back to consciousness, always disengages itself from the relative and fleeting expressions in which it has clothed itself by the way."⁷⁶ Loisy explicitly rejected this idea in his 1902 attack on the liberal Protestantism of Adolf Harnack. Harnack, according to Loisy, and he could have said the same of Sabatier with more justice, "put the essence of Christianity in a sentiment: filial confidence in God, the merciful Father. There would be all of religion and all of Christianity. The identity of this sentiment in Jesus and in Christians would be the continuity of the religion and the immutability of its essence." Loisy responded that this sentiment could not be immutable. "Sentiment," he wrote, "is not independent of the idea [of God]; if the idea changes, the form of the sentiment will change also." Christianity had no such simple, immutable essence.⁷⁷

Perhaps ironically, Loisy combined his more thorough historicism with faith in the dogmatic authority of the Church. He insisted that dogma, the institutional structure of the Church, and the Church's manner of exercising authority could and should change. But on questions of religious dogma, Loisy accepted the infallibility of the Church. His point here was subtle. Dogma was an effort on the part of the Christian community to articulate its faith. Because this articulation was necessarily social, the institution had finally to ratify some particular expression as binding on the entire community of faith. Dogma could and did change over the course of history, he continued, but the fact of historical change need not compro-

⁷⁵ Ibid. 5.1024/331, quoted in *Choses passées* 191 and *Mémoires* 1.473.

⁷⁶ Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* 164–168. See also Rosa, *The "Essence of Christianity"* 17, 21–22, 24.

⁷⁷ Loisy, *L'Évangile et l'Église* xxiv–xxv; see also Hill, *The Politics of Modernism* 128–32.

mise its authority for some particular historical moment. "Legitimate development," he claimed, therefore "needs to be guaranteed by an infallible authority. Authority and revelation are correlative terms."⁷⁸ Later he added that "the Church alone can maintain the equilibrium between the tradition, which conserves the heritage of acquired truth, and the incessant work of human reason to adapt the ancient truth to the new states of thought and science."⁷⁹

It is here that the Catholic spirit of Loisy's "mystical faith" becomes most visible. Like Sabatier, he believed that the Church had a necessary role to play in moral education, but that the Church had a merely pedagogical authority dedicated to cultivating moral autonomy in its adherents. But Loisy parted company with Sabatier and moved toward (not all the way to!) Leo in his greater faith in the Church.⁸⁰ Sabatier was finally a religious individualist who also believed in the social dimension of Christianity. Loisy was more genuinely committed to, and therefore stressed more, the social character of religion and the importance of religious authority, even if Sabatier made many of the same points that Loisy did. Because Loisy was so committed to the social character of Christianity, he accorded the Church pedagogical authority in moral education and infallible, if historically relative, authority in theological questions. Loisy did not fully develop his ideas on the relationship between these two modes of authority. He did believe that dogma, too, had a pedagogical function, and his subsequent Catholic career suggests that he ultimately subordinated the theological authority of the Church to its pedagogical mission fostering intellectual and moral autonomy. Still, he could celebrate ecclesiastical authority in some

⁷⁸ Loisy, "Les théories générales de la religion," in "Essais" 3.98/114 and "Le développement chrétien" 8–9. See also Rosa, *The "Essence of Christianity"* 71–74. Loisy added that even the most solemn dogmatic decisions of the Church could not end the process of historical development (Loisy, Notes, 1892, quoted in *Mémoires* 1.214, "Les théories générales de la religion," in "Essais" 3.103/135 and "Le développement chrétien" 14).

⁷⁹ Loisy, *L'Évangile et l'Église* 216 ; see also *ibid.* 30–31; Émile Poulat, *Histoire, dogme et critique dans la crise moderniste* (Paris: Casterman, 1962) 269, 316–92 and "Critique historique et théologie dans la crise moderniste" 540–43; Reymond, *Auguste Sabatier* 178–79; Hill, *The Politics of Modernism* 112–16. Rosa downplays these claims (*The "Essence of Christianity"* 80–82), but I see no reason to question Loisy's sincerity on this point.

⁸⁰ Reymond makes this point in various ways in different places. See *Auguste Sabatier* 112, 178–79, 245. Loisy also demonstrated his mystical faith in his accusation that Sabatier paid inadequate attention to God's transcendence ("La théorie individualiste" 206; "Les theories générales de la religion," in "Essais" 3.78/86). Since Loisy more often stressed God's immanence than God's transcendence, his assertions of divine transcendence here are noteworthy. See Gabriel Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980) 52–67.

limited ways to a degree that Sabatier never could have done. And because Loisy believed that the Catholic Church alone had the authority of God to define Christian truth for modern France and thus to offer an effective, modern moral education to French citizens, his mystical faith had a distinctly Catholic cast to it at least through the publication of *L'Évangile et l'Église* in 1902.

CONCLUSION

The most important efforts to reform the educational system in France under the Third Republic drew on the values of autonomous science and promoted secular moral education. Leo XIII, Sabatier, and Loisy all responded to these reform efforts in terms that reflected their different understandings of the nature and role of the Christian Church in the modern period. Against those who promoted secular moral education, they all argued that moral education was necessarily religious. For Leo, moral education took place under the authority of the Church and should be based on Thomistic philosophy rather than autonomous science. Both Sabatier and Loisy placed more value on autonomous science and on the goal of fostering moral autonomy in individuals. For both, therefore, the Church exercised a merely pedagogical authority. When compared with Sabatier, Loisy thus appeared to espouse a version of liberal Protestantism. However, Loisy retained a "mystical faith" in the Church that gave his reflections a Catholic tone even when he and Sabatier appeared substantially to agree about the mission of the Church and the limits of its authority in modern France.

This "conversation" sheds light on Loisy's career as a whole, especially on the dramatic confrontation between Loisy and Leo's successor, Pope Pius X, in 1907 and 1908. When Pius demanded that Loisy retract some of his historical claims in the first years of the new century, Loisy interpreted Pius's actions as a rejection of intellectual autonomy. Worse yet, Pius demonstrated his rejection of Loisy's moral autonomy when he refused to take seriously Loisy's qualified submission to the judgment against his works. Loisy claims to have lost much of his mystical faith in the Church at this point, when he realized the Church would not embrace the strictly pedagogical mission that he believed justified its existence.⁸¹ Pius, on the other hand, shared Leo's view that the Church was commissioned by God to provide moral education which included teaching its adherents to defer to appropriate authorities. From his perspective, Loisy's refusal on the grounds of his scientific and moral autonomy looked less like faithful Catholicism than like the liberal Protestantism of Sabatier or even the anti-

⁸¹ Loisy, *Mémoires* 2.361–64. See also Hill, *The Politics of Modernism* 164–72.

clericalism of Ferry and other proponents of secular moral education. Appeals to a mystical faith in the Church did not suffice to offset this appearance, and Pius would therefore accept nothing less than an unqualified submission as evidence of Loisy's Catholic commitment. Subsequent political events were the necessary catalyst for Loisy's excommunication and the full anti-Modernist reaction, but the principles that governed the respective actions of Loisy and Pius were thus already visible in the 1890s when Leo, Loisy, and Sabatier articulated their competing conceptions of the Church and moral education.