

Champagnat, Dancing and Young People

The problem of secular celebrations for the Institute in the 19th Century

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While I was discussing the early years of the Institute with a confrère, the following question sprung to mind: Why did Champagnat recruit so few disciples from La Valla, a large parish of around 2,500 inhabitants? In fact, of the ten Brothers before 1822 whose names have been retained by the Institute, only five of them were natives of the parish: the two Audras (Brothers Louis and Laurent), Antoine Couturier, Barthélemy Badard and Gabriel Rivat. The numbers remained very modest thereafter.

The opposition of the Parish Priest to his curate and the attacks from different sources can be held responsible. However, we know that Champagnat's influence was not negligible and that the attacks did not last. It is appropriate therefore, to ask a somewhat disturbing question: what were Champagnat's relationships with young people in La Valla and elsewhere?

The concept of youth in Champagnat's time

Before carrying on, we should define what the word "youth" meant around 1820. The period of childhood ended with first communion, in principle, during the thirteenth year; youth stretched from this rite of passage to marriage, which tipped one over into adult age. This intermediate time was, for the majority, the moment to choose a trade, and, for a minority, the choice of studies in a college, a seminary, or a Congregation's novitiate.

The period of youth was seen to be particularly dangerous, because it was the time of passions, of instability, even of delinquency, which worried parents, pastors and civil authorities. It was the time for dances, fights, noisy demonstrations, more or less ritualised courting. In every village, young people constituted a social group recognised by society with realism or fatalism: "Youth must pass". Civil authorities, charged with public order, were quite lax. However, parish priests and curates considered themselves to be the guardians of public morals and were less indulgent and they sought to discipline, not only the turbulent youth, but also adults little inclined to practise and have respect for a rigorous Christian morality. Since feast-days, albeit of Christian origin, were occasions for doing business, for getting drunk and for dancing, parish priests had fought since the 17th Century against inns and dances, at the risk of alienating themselves from their parishioners,

particularly the men. The Revolution had weakened the authority of the Church, favouring transgressive behaviour; it allowed civil society to strengthen its autonomy on this point, as on many others. From 1815, the clergy tried to restore its former authority. This was the situation Champagnat was going to find in La Valla in 1816.

Legislation on “fêtes baladoires” and inns

In his memoirs on La Valla during the Revolution and the Empire, J. C. Barge alluded several times to youth and dancing at the “fêtes baladoires” or “vogues” (a regional word) [1], which are the means by which the village community welded its identity and possibly defended itself against an aggressor. At the time Barge was writing, the legislation of the ancien-régime still applied. Its foundation was a ban by the Paris Parliament in 1779 on “the “fêtes baladoires”, on crowds and illicit assemblies in the parishes [...] around Paris” The document states:

“That during weddings and baptisms [...] the inhabitants assemble riotously, armed with rifles and pistols; they have rockets and firecrackers and light fires in different parts of the parishes; around Carnival-time the boys of the parishes go around finding girls in the areas where they assemble, with drums, fifes and cornets [2], running around everywhere in the villages during the night with the girls masked and in disguise [...] that the inhabitants [...] assemble in inns where they compose and write defamatory libels which they then have distributed.”

Inns, then, could not open during church services and had to close at eight o’clock in the evening in winter and ten o’clock in the summer, on pain of heavy fines. The regulations of the Parliament of Paris were extended to the whole of France and, certainly, more or less observed.

Although J. C. Barge considered the words “fête baladoire” and “vogue” to be equivalent in his memoirs about La Valla, their origins are very different. The “vogue” in the South of France was the patronal feast-day, with High Mass and procession. However, the major liturgical feasts (Ascension, Pentecost...) and so many other feasts which the Christian calendar offers were, at the same time, occasions for doing business, for drinking and dancing. During Carnival and from Easter to autumn dozens of patronal feasts took place in villages that the “party-animals” from round about could get to on foot. Parish priests and mayors were busy keeping order, the one moral, the other public. The true “fête baladoire” was a private initiative and was often held in inns. In the countryside, there was no lack of barns for clandestine dances.

Communal Identity and the “fête baladoire” under the Revolution

J. C. Barge shows us in his memoirs that the “fête” was one of the chief means of local defence from the attacks of the authorities. This was how the parish (XXVIII - The bells) defended its bells that the Jacobin dictatorship wanted to be taken down by three masons during the winter of 1793 - 94. Two of them were quickly convinced, with the help of wine, not to carry on. The third

was proving more difficult to convince, “we brought some girls with Girodet, the violinist, and begged them to help us with our plans. Dancing and the bottle had the effect we wanted.”

Finally, an agreement was reached: the people of La Valla promised to bring down the bells themselves. “We took care the following morning to put them (the masons) in the same state as they had been the previous evening. They left for Tarentaise. We accompanied them as far as Combette (a hamlet) with violins and the bottle. With this scene over, we dreamed only of saving our bells.”

We have there the ingredients of the “fête baladoire”: the inn, wine, dancing, and even a sort of secular procession. The scenario would be a little different later on (XXXV - The décadi [3] and Sunday) when the revolutionaries wanted to ban the “fête baladoire” from being held on a Sunday. J. C. Barge succeeded in getting a member of the delegation drunk “and had him dance the first dance”. “This was the signal for all the young people to start dancing. The other delegates were angry and tied up their insensible colleague, throwing him into prison in Saint-Chamond”. In 1800 the same party ended badly: the police [4] killed a man coming back from the “vogue” and broke up the party. However, the aim was to quickly seize those avoiding military service: “They pursued some young people. Seeing themselves about to be taken, they [*ie the young people*] turned around and threw stones from a height. Forcing the troop to return to the village.”

The re-establishment of worship (XLV - Worship in November 1800) was the occasion of a celebration, at one and the same time civic and religious, on 15th November 1801, with Mass and Te Deum: Tissot, the new mayor “broke out the boxes” (fireworks and firecrackers) at the chapel of Etrat “where all the people, especially the young, were gathered”. Barge did not say it, but the celebration certainly finished with a dance.

Rebod, the Parish Priest, the “fête baladoire” and political power

With the Second Restoration in 1815, the atmosphere was completely different because Rebod, the Parish Priest, took advantage of the favourable political circumstances and demanded that the authorities apply the legislation on inns and “fêtes baladoires”. According to Barge, “he wouldn’t suffer contradiction in any way; he was greedy for property and honours [...] ceaselessly using his authority [over] his sacristan and bell-ringers.” Hence, the “fête baladoire” organised in response to his authoritarianism.

“Sometime later, there had been a ”vogue” at Jean Cluzel’s, the innkeeper. This Parish Priest and his curate charged me with breaking up the assembly, in the absence of the Mayor. I did this at eight o’clock in the evening [5]. However, I told the hurdy-gurdy [6] player to go to the Widow Matricon’s house where Master Vincent, the notary, Matricon des Saignes, the Mayor and others were; several lads from the “vogue” went along with girls and women who could dance well. We locked the doors and danced very happily for part of the night. The Parish Priest’s spies did not fail to report to him the following day and he dashed off to Saint Etienne, to the Sub-Prefect’s, who told me about it on my first journey there, saying, “It’s not the mayor who governs La Valla” [7]

The ambitious Parish Priest collided with the alliance of civil authorities and young people of the commune who were having a party in a private house. As the law had not been broken, the Parish Priest could not force the departmental authorities to intervene in his favour and his authority had been seriously and lastingly affected. This was some months before the arrival of Marcellin Champagnat, who did not make light of the dancing, but, it seems, was more tactful.

We can also wonder if this business was not the cause of his arrival, because the curate, Artaud, was moved. It is possible that Fesch's Vicars General [8], brought up-to-date about the conflict, let the parishioners know that they had been in the right by sacrificing the curate. In any case, his replacement had a delicate task: to avoid weakening still further the Parish Priest's authority and re-establish unity while exercising his ministry with zeal. The Life of Champagnat tells us that Rebon was not liked by his parishioners, that he had "a language defect", which might just have been an annoying tendency to be verbally aggressive to those with whom he was speaking [9] and tried to dominate the commune. The dispute was not going to end there as Archbishop de Pins' Council in 1824 (*Origines Maristes* 1/103) would speak of successive petitions against Rebon, to the point that it finally had to fire him, shortly before his death.

Father Champagnat and the clandestine dances

Father Champagnat was born at the same time as the French Revolution and, while still a child, he saw the parades of the revolutionary celebrations in which, moreover, his father had taken part while the Church had been condemned to a clandestine life. He certainly participated in the "vogues" in Marlhes and the surrounding areas (Jonzieux) before becoming a seminarian, even if his biography tells us that he and his brothers led a quiet life. During his years at the junior seminary (1805 - 1813) we know that, for a certain time, he led the life of a joyful college-student before finally resolving not to frequent inns and to teach catechism. Chapter 3 of his Life reminds us that, during his holidays in Marlhes as a senior seminarian, (1813 - 1816) he had already acquired the bearing of a zealous cleric: "It wasn't only the children who held Marcellin in respect: his presence led young men and women to assume modesty and reserve in their words and deportment. One day when he was known to be away, they met in a barn for a dance, having carefully closed the door so that they would not be observed. Marcellin returned sooner than was expected, learnt what was happening and went immediately to the farm where the dance had been organised. He climbed to the barn and burst out with the remark on entering: "Ha! This is a fine way for Christians to behave! Let me see now if you can answer your catechism as well as you can dance!" In the twinkling of an eye, they were all gone - some dashing through the door, others hiding in the hay or jumping from the window. There was only one old servant left. She began to close the barn and was administered a sharp rebuke."

This story gives us clear evidence of the distance between young people and the ecclesiastical world. Even respectable young people did not necessarily follow the advice of the clergy in matters of morals. Clandestine dances, in whatever farm they were held, could not have taken place without the tacit complicity of the owners, who kept an eye on this since it was a question of a clandestine

celebration, and therefore illegal [10]. So, the dancers fled or hid themselves, to avoid gossip about their behaviour, especially the girls. We find similar scenarios when Brother Jean-Baptiste relates for us in Chapter 5 of the Life the apostolic exploits of the curate of La Valla: “His zeal suggested a very efficacious way to put a stop to the unhealthy assemblies and dances [11] which were held at certain times of the year in most hamlets. This was to conduct a catechism class there, on the very day those gatherings were customary. On hearing of the date of such an intended assembly, (and he did have his scouts), he used to announce from the pulpit that on that same day he would be taking catechism in that hamlet. These announcements were usually enough to quash the idea, for he was very much feared and respected.”

Champagnat’s authority could only establish itself little by little and his intelligence network had holes in it, or else he had a lot to do at certain times of the year: “He had been informed, while returning from the church, that several hamlets were to hold dances, it being Carnival time. In the first hamlet, in fact, quite a large throng was taken by surprise. Singing and dancing were in full swing.”

His silent presence set off a general flight. “He turned his attention then to other hamlets, in one of which he found a dance under way and it broke up like the first.” Another expedition was less successful: the Brother accompanying him had a fall, which kept them back and “At short distance from the hamlet, some people who caught sight of us, along with the barking of dogs, alerted the company which had assembled, and they scattered posthaste.”

Brother Jean-Baptiste assures us that, “He attacked these abuses so strongly from the pulpit and made so many approaches on the issue, to the young people and to their parents, that he eventually succeeded in stamping out entirely those nocturnal gatherings.”. We accept that. Yet we can wonder whether the young people of La Valla were not like those of Marlhes and were imbued, with regard to him, with more of a respectful fear than spontaneity and whether many dances did not take place unbeknown to Champagnat.

As for drunkenness, which concerned the adults more, Champagnat also had his victories there. “The inns were often packed to the doors, before he arrived at La Valla. Now they were deserted and people were ashamed to be seen in them even on business during the day.” We accept this statement where it concerns evenings. However, we can be certain that these places of masculine social life were not deserted during the day even if the inopportune organising of “vogues” by the innkeepers was somewhat hindered.. So, between Rebod and Champagnat, there was no basic difference about dancing. Yet it seems that there was an apparent difference of strategy: the first wanted to dominate the communal authorities, while the second remained on the pastoral level, battling by preaching and “the pedagogy of presence”. We have an indirect example, where the owner of a barn where there had been a dance tried to make excuses to him: he did not threaten him with justice or the law, but contented himself with a warning, “is this simply the first time you have been caught?” (Life Ch 5 p 74 English Bicentenary edition). In clear language he was saying let’s leave there, but don’t do it again. Moreover, the majority of the inhabitants of La Valla, in contact with a curate capable of intransigence, but also of diplomacy, realised that he was only doing his duty in correcting their morals in his own way. After so many years, then, of trouble,

there was the hope of a return to order. Nevertheless, we can consider that not everyone, still less a large number of young people, stuck to this fairly repressive pastoral approach [12].

A zealous curate, but also the founder of a Congregation

Champagnat, then, was quite typical of the clergy who looked on parties, (and, in particular, dancing) with suspicion. However, as the founder of a Congregation, he went beyond simple moral considerations. The second part of the Life begins with a chapter condemning sadness, which kills piety, nourishes temptations, divides the spirits and scandalises the neighbour. It recommends “holy joy”. This is why, adds Brother Jean-Baptiste, he allowed the Brothers “to participate in games during recreation” and “He took part himself sometimes in games with the Brothers. However, [...] he was always dignified, reserved and temperate, though cheerful and affable.” Brother Jean-Baptiste goes on to recount the story of Brother Sylvestre playing with his wheelbarrow, to the great displeasure of the Brothers of his community, but with Father Champagnat’s approval. The same Brother Sylvestre reminds us that, at L’Hermitage, young and old (Sylvestre, p 305) played at boules, the losers carrying the bags of boules at the end of recreation.

However, games are not parties. They must take place with moderation, of which Champagnat gives an example. At La Valla, Champagnat, finding that the Brothers were making too much noise during their recreations, had already asked them to recreate like Religious. (Life Ch 6 P 92 English Bicentenary edition) For him, this was not just a formal question. Brother Jean-Baptiste cites for us several very old statements (Life Part 1 Ch 10 P 127 English Bicentenary edition) exalting the happiness of Religious Life and fulminating against life in the world: “Why is it that seculars resort so much to noise in the midst of their pleasures and profane joys? It is because they cannot succeed in stifling completely the remorse which haunts them; because their happiness is merely apparent, and so their heart is not at rest and finds only bitterness in sensual gratification.”[13]. “His disciples did not hesitate to imitate him, as at St Sauveur-en-Rue in 1825.” (Annals 1825 no 8). “One day, the young lads made a bonfire in the public square and began to dance with some young girls or women. The two Brothers arrived with indignation to put a stop to this disorder. Brother Jean-Baptiste, holding a crucifix in his hand, threw it to the ground and told the dancers to tramp on it if they dared. Brother Augustin called the girls “Rags from the inn”. [14] The dancers dispersed.” A similar incident took place in L’Hermitage itself, as Brother Sylvestre relates for us [15]. During one of the recreations, Brother François and he noticed a big fire in the alley of plane-trees above the Hermitage garden and, “at the same time we saw Brothers jumping over the fire shouting gleefully, like heathens [16] in their “fêtes baladoires” [...] Some scatterbrains thought they were at the Carnival, imitating the country-people.”... Brother François put a stop to this spontaneous party. The following day, Father Champagnat sent away the one who was chiefly responsible and gave a warning to the others who were guilty. Brother Sylvestre approved: this revelry was far too reminiscent of “the ignoble celebrations of the pagan world”...

However, if every secular feast, even if consecrated by tradition, is immediately considered to be pagan, it very much makes demands, even on Religious, to experience celebrations only within the bosom of the liturgical practices in the Christian calendar and in recreations and games of boules which allow a relaxation compatible with religious gravity. On the topic of celebration, Father Champagnat was a moderate rigorist, but a rigorist nonetheless.

A paradoxical attitude towards youth

This rigorism is all the more strange in that it included the young people upon whom Champagnat wanted to build his educational project. This apparent contradiction, which partially caused the difficulties in recruitment, merits an attempt at clarification.

In Chapter 13 of the Life (Part 2 Page 434 English Bicentenary edition) we are told that, obliged to enter a tavern with another ecclesiastic, he shouted at “a group of young free-thinkers” who, in their presence, allow themselves “a decidedly licentious and blasphemous conversation”, telling them to be quiet or to leave. [17] However, in Chapter 20 (P 514 English Bicentenary edition) “He went past a group of workers one day, all of them young men about 20 years old.” He cried out: “Oh, what excellent novices they would make if they came to us! [...] What a pity, if they remained in the world [18] [...] “The happiness of Religious Life seems to me to be so great [...] that whenever I meet young men [...] I beg God to call them to that beautiful vocation.”

Fundamentally, Champagnat was imbued with the spirit of missionaries of a new Christendom who have Christianity refreshed by the conversion of each individual, rather than by worship. Moreover, the Revolution showed just how fragile was a religious consensus, if it was not strongly anchored in conscience. In post-Revolutionary Christendom there was no place for attitudes and practices judged to be pagan, much less tainted with paganism. Moreover, who else but young people could be approached to build this new Christianity? Adults were already settled in life and were too marked by a questionable past. So, Champagnat bet on finding disciples among young people. His optimism was balanced by a large amount of realism: he did not want young people who compromised with the world.; the aspirants that he admitted had to prove that they were ready to enter a spiritual combat, or leave. His intransigence was due less to the rigorist tradition of the clergy than his desire to build, within the measure of his means and by dint of young people, the forward-moving wing of a renewed Church.

However, such an attitude is not exempt from ambiguity or wishful-thinking. In wanting to separate a layman, too rapidly judged pagan, from a willingly austere Religious, is the risk not run of putting them into opposition and ending with alienation rather than rechristianisation? This is the problem which the Institute had to confront after Champagnat’s time and of which Brother Avit gave us sight in his *Annales des maisons*, edited around 1880 - 1890.

Brother Avit and the “fêtes baladoires”

Avit recounted twenty-seven cases of these famous celebrations, linking them largely with the current of secularisation and politicisation of society. Nevertheless, he is able to make distinctions. In the Province of Aubenas, the people of Berrias, where $\frac{2}{3}$ of the men and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the women fulfilled their Easter duties, “there was a “fête baladoire” and a few dances in the hamlets, but no great disorder. Nevertheless, religion is not winning since the Republic is embracing it.” [19] It is more serious with the people of Joyeuse, which well-deserves its name [20] “because it loves pleasure, dances, “fêtes baladoires”. The fiddlers and acrobats are quite numerous here. On the other hand, church services are seldom frequented, particularly Evening Prayer, except for three or four of the major feasts of the year.” He praised Cheylard, where “dances, “fêtes baladoires” are still unknown here, which is rare in the Midi”

In the Province of Notre Dame de L’Hermitage, at St Pierre de Boeuf beside the Rhône the people who live on the river traffic “are neither irreligious nor very warm on religion. [...] They live more for material possessions, for “fêtes baladoires”, either in their own homes, or at the neighbours”. It was the same in Roches de Condrieu, a commune on the Rhône peopled by bargees where “the young people disappear when they leave school and only reappear on the occasion of a “fête baladoire”, which proudly carries on for three days; the Rochois [...] think they are born only for dancing, singing, drinking and eating” The scenario is similar at Bois d’Oingt, in the north of Lyon: “Solemn celebrations and missions pass over the people like water off a duck’s back. In contrast with this, it is a great lover of pleasure and “fêtes baladoires”. There are five or six “vogues” a year.” Of L’Arbresle, a small town to the west of Lyon, Brother Avit, as a visitor, had a very precise memory: “The “fête baladoire” (at Carnival-time?) kept us here for three days; classrooms were deserted. The Brelois have always been lovers of this type of celebration, plenty of money for the celebrations and there is never a lack of disturbances.”

Even if he often had a tendency to link tepid Catholicism and secular celebrations, Brother Avit remained quite indulgent and even proved to be diplomatic, as at Digoin, where he was Director of the boarding-school around 1855: “During the “fête baladoire”, on the third day when there was no one left, we compensated our pupils by leading them around on wooden horses; the teachers kept an eye on them.” The Parish Priest (“a good chap”), however, found that immoral, but Brother Avit had a response for everything: “So, what do you think of Father Lapalus, your Curate, who, on the same day as the “vogue” brought up all the girls of his confraternity? Were they more moral than our children, with their vast crinolines on those horses? [21] The good Parish Priest, who had not known about this, was absolutely stunned. He withdrew saying, “If priests and Religious do these things, it’s no wonder that the Revolution happened..”

We have there a good example of the difference between an old cleric who was a real rigorist about celebrations (there was no question here of dancing) and clergy - but also educators - in the middle of the century who were inclined to bend a little. However, Brother Avit’s judgement is much more severe when the celebration completely loses its religious character and becomes political. So, in the Province of Bourbonnais the population of the industrial town of Montceau-les-Mines: “This population of workers from every country in the world, tainted by secret societies, [22] the

evil newspapers which abound here, ruined by the charlatans, acrobats, actors, sellers of bric-a-brac who pollute every part, can still find money for the multitude of “fêtes baladoires” established in every area of Montceau, Blanzy and St Vallier.”

Even at Jonzieux, the neighbouring parish to Marlhes, the “vogue” became a political battle-ground. “The parish church possesses a large part of the true cross. In the old days, this precious relic attracted a large number of pilgrims on the 3rd May and 14th September. The republicans, having had a relative triumph in 1881 [23], wanted to transform this pilgrimage into a “fête baladoire”. Also, “Father Manin, the Parish Priest, consulted Brother Agéricus and, together, they resolved to close the church after the first Mass. This measure has considerably diminished the pilgrimage, but the “fête baladoire” has stopped.” This is a beautiful example of an agreed pastoral approach prioritising the separation of the secular from the religious, even if the latter is affected. From now on, politics is substituted for morality as the discriminating element.

The society of young people, the “fête baladoire” and politico-religious confrontation

The politicisation of celebrations might be very old as “vogues” were sometimes organised by real societies of young people [24] fighting against civil and religious authorities. We find two examples of them in the annals. The most characteristic is in the Province of St Paul, at Bargemont, a rural commune of 16500 inhabitants, situated at the foot of the Lower Alps, where our Brothers arrived in 1846. Brother Avit states that “during a “fête baladoire” several young men made themselves notable by running through the streets stark naked, and the crowd, in which were many young girls, laughed and cheered on these evil descendants of Adam. [25] A judge from Draguignan, finding himself there by chance, wanted to bring some order to the place. He found the Parish Priest barricaded in his house, with the shutters firmly closed. The Mayor claimed he could do nothing. The judge had those to blame arrested and taken off to Draguignan, where they were condemned to a month in prison.”

Brother Avit himself tells us that, in 1845 at Bougé-Chambalud in the Dauphiné, he foiled an attempt at celebration by young people led by “a village lawyer”, to the relief of the Mayor and the Parish Priest [26]. This was at the end of the July Monarchy, which had become very conservative and the beginning of the liberal unrest which brought about the regime three years later.

The “fête baladoire” and school celebrations

The “fête baladoire”, then, tended to become secularised and politicised but, with schools becoming more widespread, prize-givings and end-of-year parties multiplied, and the Superiors regarded these with suspicion. It was the Mayor of Saint Paul-en-Jarret, very near L’Hermitage,

who, in 1867, protested in the name of public order against the cancellation of the end-of-year-party where the pupils were putting on a play. [27]

“That day, the “fête baladoire” of the Rive-de-Gier [28] took place and I found a way of keeping the whole of our population in the village, thereby certainly avoiding many regrets, misfortunes etc. etc.”

Whether you like it or not, and despite its tradition of rigorism, the Institute had to integrate secular celebrations with the education it was giving. But that is a subject in itself and I cannot elaborate on that here.

The utopia of new Christianity and rigorism

Although Champagnat, a young priest of the Restoration, had a rigorist attitude towards secular celebrations, there is never a trace on his part of opposition to the “vogue”, the mixture of religious feast and secular rejoicing. What he was fighting against was unauthorised celebration, where young people were delivered up to it at night in remote places. When he recommended to his Brothers the strictest vigilance over the children he was transposing to the school his ideal of the pastor responsible for a people in danger of becoming lost if it was not watched over and firmly guided.

His apostolate, like that of every zealous pastor, rested on three axes: catechising children; rechristianising the morals of young people and adults; helping the sick and the dying. If he founded catechist-Brothers, it was for good primary education ending in a fervent first communion and strengthening the young people against the passions which would besiege them and a lack of belief which would tempt them. Basically, his ideal state would make the battle against dances not worthwhile since educated young people would know how to live in a Christian manner and civil authorities and parents would exercise vigilance. It is the ideal of the good Christian and virtuous citizen.

Although this formula distinguishes between, and clearly links, the spiritual and temporal, its practice proved difficult to embody, notably in the question of celebrations, perhaps because the ideal which underpins it has been badly disengaged from its augustinian, rigorist matrix: secular celebration was the occasion of sin and every other consideration weighed little in the face of the imperative to avoid this evil. [29] On the other hand, society, in particular that of men, was, not unreasonably, suspicious of a Church which wanted to transform it into an immense congregation under clerical leadership. Celebrating was for society the occasion of affirming its autonomy in spite of theologians, pastors, political powers and even of educators who, even if lay, could appear to be helpers of the civil and religious authorities.

*Translator’s Note: Quotations from the Jean-Baptiste Life are taken from the standard Bicentenary English-language version. Quotations from all other works cited were translated from the French of the original Paper and not from any official translation.

Notes

[1] [Translator's Note] It is almost impossible to find appropriate English translations for the frequently-used terms “fête baladoire” and “vogue”. As Brother André explains what they mean, I have left the terms in the original French.

[2] Fifes and cornets are musical wind instruments.

[3] [Translator's Note] The décadi was the tenth day of the ten-day week of the French Revolutionary Calendar, adopted in October 1793

[4] From St Chamond. They wanted to arrest those avoiding military service who had come to the celebration.

[5] i.e. at the official winter closing time for inns.

[6] A type of stringed musical instrument.

[7] An ambiguous statement which seems to disapprove of Rebot's intemperate zeal.

[8] They governed the diocese, the Cardinal being exiled in Rome.

[9] Champagnat himself was not spared. The Life gives two examples of Rebot's public rudeness. To the mayor who advised moderation on the subject of dancing, Rebot replied, “I don't need you or your advice.” (Barge)

[10] The right of assembly did not exist. Every gathering of more than 20 people fell under the strictures of the law.

[11] The clergy weren't the sole opponents of the waltz. The Journal de Paris wrote on July 8th, 1807: "Husbands and wives, mothers and all people of good sense have been protesting against the waltz. J.J. Rousseau said that he would never allow his daughter or his wife to waltz. No other dance, indeed, is more likely to make a woman lose her head and to inflame her every sense". Clearly, Father Champagnat shared the views of his time. He campaigned against dances at La Valla (Cf. P. Zind, *Sur les traces de M. Champagnat*, Vol. 1, p. 59).

[12] The [French-language academic] literature on this topic is immense. Brother André cites the Paper by Ralph Gibson: “Le catholicisme et les femmes en France au XIX^e siècle” [“Catholicism and Women in France during the 19th Century”] in the *Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise de France*,

Vol LXXIX, n° 202, January-June 1993, p. 63-93. He notes that the title of the Paper is somewhat reductive as it also deals with relations between men and the clergy.

[13] See *F. Sylvestre* Rome 1992 p 305 which gives a slightly different version of this teaching.

[14] [Translator's Note] The French word translated as "Rags" can also mean "dish-towels", "cloths used to wipe down surfaces" etc. Whatever the translation, the term was highly insulting to the girls and women.

[15] . *F. Sylvestre raconte Marcellin Champagnat*, Rome, 1992, p. 302-303.

[16] This custom took place on 24th June for the Feast of St John. Brother Sylvestre believed that it took place during Carnival-time. [Translator's Note: In the original French, Brother Sylvestre says that they were jumping over the fire and shouting out "comme les mandarins" i.e. like Chinese mandarins. Brother André notes that this was to emphasise the pagan character of the incident.]

[17] It seems that Champagnat and his companion were being taunted by this behaviour.

[18] [Translator's Note] This sentence does not appear in the English translation of the Life.

[19] This was after 1880.

[20] [Translator's Note] The French word "joyeuse" means happy, joyful, delighted etc..

[21] [Translator's Note] : Brother André says that the point of this question is that the girls would be exposing their legs when they were riding the wooden horses. For a female to be doing this was seen to be highly immoral.

[22] In fact, socialism, trade unionism and anarchism.

[23] At the legislative elections.

[24] Sometimes named "Youth Abbeys" because they named at their head an "Abbot" or "Abbess".

[25] Brother Avit is undoubtedly exaggerating. The term "stark naked" could simply mean "improperly dressed".

[26] He had posters made by his pupils falsely announcing that the celebration had been postponed.

[27] Brother François was particularly opposed to these school celebrations. We need an overall study of the attitude of the Superiors to this topic.

[28] The nearby town.

[29] The horror of sin was one of the principal themes of Champagnat's teaching.