1805

Extract from “Remarques sur le *Génie du Christianisme* de Monsieur de Chateaubriand.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

8:XIV in Oblate Writings

Why Eugene neglected to read it until 1805. Critical comments. The work’s beauty.

Notebook writing

Aix,

January 1805.

If I have delayed for so long the task of reading a work which, it is said, created quite a stir before my return,[[2]](#footnote-2) I must lay the blame on my readiness to trust a man keen of wit but whom I should have held suspect on account of the erroneous opinions he professes.[[3]](#footnote-3) The *Génie du Christianisme* according to him was the work of a philistine, likely to ruin the soundest palate by the unremittingly pompous style of its author, a biased work that in no way deserved the praises lavished on it by the literati who pride themselves on their defence of religion. This young man supported his judgment with a series of truly reprehensible passages. I believed without further inquiry that the work was typified by the sample that he showed me and I postponed a reading of it to a time when I would be less busy.

Some months later a worthy scholar,[[4]](#footnote-4) who is so kind from time to time as to keep in touch with my literary pursuits, asked if I had read the *Génie du Christianisme.* I answered out straight that I had not read it and did not expect to be doing so for sometime; I explained at the same time my reasons for neglecting to get to know this work. He answered simply that I ought to read it, and that I should tell him afterwards whether I persisted in this misunderstanding that he was quite right to describe as being at the least imprudent. He sent me the book and I read it attentively. Here now are my reflections. They will not be overlong as too many things escape one on the first reading of a book to excuse one from returning to it if one wishes to examine it thoroughly and in depth. This was not my intention, and so I contented myself with noting succinctly the impression it made on me and the opinion I have formed of it. I will add some remarks on the negative elements I noticed. I will offer few words of praise, as it would involve too much work to award praise to all that is deserving of it. I will bring out more of my criticisms as, these notes having no purpose other than to refine my taste, I must not neglect to identify and reject the faults of an author who deservedly enjoys a reputation and for that reason could become a bad example.

M. de Chateaubriand proposes to convert unbelievers by proving to them that the Christian religion is the most poetic, human, favourable to liberty, the arts and letters, of all the religions that have ever existed; he believes he must call on every imaginative art and everything that appeals to the heart in aid of this same religion against which these very things have once been used as weapons. He lays the basis of his work on these foundations, and his hope is to succeed. His intentions are doubtless very laudable, but I do not believe he can succeed with materials of this kind; he will perhaps get as far as arousing interest in a religion that is so attractive, but he must eventually establish her divine origin, that God wishes to be adored only in her bosom, and to the exclusion of every other, because she is the sole true religion, the only one emanating from him. When it is a matter of something so essential, one requires solid proofs, and not weak arguments relying on one’s sense of fitness; it follows that you will be able to open the way to conviction, and that is already a lot, but you will never convince with the weapons you have chosen M. Chateaubriand’s idiosyncrasy lies in this: he wants us to accept a religion on the grounds that it is poetic. The religion of J.C. is attractive, but this is in no wise due to the fact that, out of the ideas it gives us, we can compose verse of superior interest to those of antiquity. The large number of persons who have absolutely no room for poetry would lack the capacity to appreciate this religion in all the advantages that it offers us; however, as it is indispensably necessary for everyone, everyone must be able to discover its powerful attraction which brings them to embrace this state which must lead them to eternal life, the sole end that religion offers us. Now, I say that the poetic element in religion, not being able to be really appreciated by any but a very small number of persons, is not a means which God would wish to use to lead us to him. Furthermore, even as to the people who can enjoy this advantage, if indeed it is one, it would offer them no proof in favour of the religion. I maintain therefore that it is ridiculous to compose whole books and rely so heavily on a proof that can so easily be contested, or which, even if not contested, is not of such a nature as to lead absolutely everyone to acceptance of the religion. In a word, what does it matter to someone who is seeking conviction about hard truth, and who therefore must accept only solid and incontestable proofs, what does it matter to him, I say, whether one can make fine verses as a result of knowing the Scriptures. I am the first to admit that the author’s brilliant arguments, as proofs of what I oppose as errors, make not the slightest impression on me; even so I have a deep love of poetry, but I find that his pretended new proof adds nothing to my conviction, on the contrary I have the feeling that one could very much abuse the weird expressions used by M. de Chateaub[riand] for it would be possible to prove to him the superiority of polytheism in poetry and then, reversing the argument, cause considerable embarrassment to one who placed too much reliance on such a feeble proof. For the rest, none of the Fathers of the Church thought it appropriate for the defence of religion, none of the Apologists employed it, and this is for me a strong presumption for not taking it too seriously. Beauty and excellence in virtue, peace of heart, eternal happiness promised to those who faithful, these are the real attractions of the religion, these are the advantages that can be known, approved and felt by all without distinction. The gnawing worm of the conscience that torments the guilty, the troubling of his spirit, the disquietude of his soul, the pains with which he is threatened if he persists in crime, here we see the means employed by God to draw the sinner out of the quagmire in which he is immerse; from the moment he perceives that this unhappy state is a consequence of his infidelity, he will make the effort to extract himself from it, without any thought whether the religion he wishes to adopt, because he feels he will be happy in it, may be poetic. I will say no more to prove how defective is that mode of conviction that the author congratulates himself on having discovered. And so we arrive at the fourth part of the *Génie du Christianisme* that deals with worship. It is in my opinion the best part of the work ... One feels that the field was vast and that there were many fine things to be said on many subjects. The author has given expression to a large number of them. The book on missions is perhaps the most interesting of all in this section in that I failed to notice any blemishes mixed up with the beautiful things with which this work is so rich. My remarks on the book on the missions can be applied overall to this fourth part of the work. The author is here much wiser and more reserved. He might have insisted more on the services rendered to society by the monks, for history has more to tell us than he relates. He is very good on solemnities, but I am not afraid of being accused of over-severity for taking the author up on an expression which he carelessly comes out with. One cannot insist too much on precise terms when it is a question of a dogma that has to be clearly defined, which is why I would ask that M. de Chateaubriand not make use at all of the following word in his description of the procession which takes place throughout Christendom on Corpus Christi: “Lastly the celebration’s Pontiff makes his appearance alone in the distance, in his trembling hands the *image* of the radiant Eucharist.” If the author did not offer a better explanation on the following page when he announces that the “All Powerful has crossed the threshold of his temple,” and when he asks where “this redoubtable God whose majesty the earthly powers thus proclaim” is going, one might ask him what he means by “the image of the Eucharist”. For the rest it is only because of the extreme delicacy of the subject that one notices this small lapse in propriety. Even so, he gives a really good description and a just account of the imposing celebration of this day of joy for all Christians.

The following chapter, the Rogations, is a charming eclogue, fresh in sentiment and smiling images; the author is no less interesting in the lugubrious scenes, such for example as the one he offers us in his chapter on funerals, but it is impossible not to notice the defect in the following sentence: “So when the urn of sorrows has been opened and has been filled with the tears of Kings and Queens, when great ashes and vast sorrows have engulfed their twofold vanity in a narrow coffin.” It is no more permissible to speak of great ashes than of vast unhappinesses, the former sins against the propriety of terms, the latter against the integrity of the idea; there is no longer anything of greatness in the tomb. The corpse, and especially the ashes which represent to us a dissolution even more complete, the ashes, I say, of the most powerful of monarchs are no greater than those of the least of his subjects; one can apply the idea of greatness and majesty to the soul, even after its separation from the body, because it is immortal, but never to the material part which has been but the vile instrument handed over to the worms after it has served its turn. “Their twofold vanity engulfed in a narrow coffin” presents us with a very defective antithesis which it is enough to draw attention to without further comment ...

I think I have mentioned practically everything that has struck me on a first reading of the *Génie du Christianisme.* I have by no means mentioned all the good points, certainly I have not highlighted all the defects; one can indeed form an accurate idea of those the author is guilty of by an attentive reading of these notes, but I agree that it would be impossible to appreciate its merits simply on the basis of what I have said up to now. To convey therefore just idea of this work, I will conclude with an evaluation.

If M. de Chateaubriand undertook his work with the aim of convicting incredulity of error, he has not perhaps relied sufficiently on the clear and abundant proofs that we can advance against the enemies of religion; these proofs are known, and in every age have been used with success against the sophists; such weapons are not blunted with usage, on the contrary they acquire a new degree of weight under the different points of view that one envisages them.

But the author of the *Génie due Christianisme* did not intend, as he himself says, to follow the plan which had been set out for him by the ancient apologists, he is less concerned to convince the mind than to touch the heart, in which perhaps he is not in error, for I am convinced that a large number of readers, those who are unbelievers only for want of reflection, unaccustomed to the dryness of abstract proofs, would simply pass by did they but glimpse the least trace of didactic reasoning, whereas they will always read with pleasure anything that touches on their feelings. As to the sophists who are enemies of God and of his Christ by system, it would be useless to try to lead them to the truth they have betrayed, for they themselves know the futility of their sophisms; they know better than anyone that hundreds and hundreds of times they have been annihilated, yet in no way does this deter them from doling them out, like the demons who believe in God, but know him only to hate him. It follows then from what I have said that it would be useless for M. de Chateaubriand to compose a work with a view to convincing the sophists, but it would not be an indifferent matter to present Christianity in the most attractive light, to give a lead to the abused masses, and begin by bringing them to respect and love that religion that has been despised for want of being known.

He has in this sense succeeded. His work, written with fire, nourished by an ardent and ingenious imagination, puts things before us in a non-prejudicial light, and brings us on to see them in an attractive shape; his style has a certain brilliant quality that occasionally makes us pass over, almost without our noticing them, some highly reprehensible defects; they are many, these defects, as I have mentioned in my notes, but it would be easy for the author to eliminate them from his work ...

To his father, in Palermo.[[5]](#footnote-5)

9:XIV in Oblate Writings

Death of the countess of Vintimille. Religious ignorance and atheism of the present generation. Eugene will be prudent and avoid the traps laid for young people in Paris and keep a diary of his travels.

Mazenod C.A. de

Aix,

May 24, 1805

The death of the poor countess of Vintimille[[6]](#footnote-6) having given me the occasion to write to the prince, I thought you would know through him that I was still at Aix and keeping well. I cannot tell you how much I was moved by the unexpected death of this fine woman. I was looking forward to seeing a lot of her at Paris[[7]](#footnote-7) and enjoying her charming conversation; but alas how often one is compelled to change one’s plans in this world below. You already know perhaps the circumstances of her illness; it is also possible that you do not; so here now is the account that arrived from Paris. The countess, as you know, suffered occasionally from depression. Feeling a little worse one day than usual, she sent for a Sister of Charity, called the Grey Sisters, who are established at Paris and do such a good job in looking after the sick. The Sister felt it necessary to apply leeches, but she was alarmed at the general swelling of the body of the poor countess and alerted the people with her to send urgently for a doctor and even for a confessor, for she judged her patient to be in danger. It was high time, for a few days later she died, without any seeming worsening of her illness, and she would unquestionably have died unprepared, had not the Grey Sister raised the alarm. In addition, she was spared the horrors of death, and received the sacraments without being aware that she was in any danger. You would not believe the effect it has on me when people of that generation die, although it was already degenerating compared with that which preceded it. I am really afraid that tradition and virtuous example are going to vanish from the scene altogether. I shudder at the very idea that we will one day be reduced just to our own, perverse generation which has imbibed nothing but the poison of every vice and has no understanding of virtue, which stagnates in such a depth of ignorance that there is every reason to fear that we will fall again into a state of barbarism even more wicked than that which prevailed in the sixth century, since at least in those unhappy times people did believe in God, while today there is an open profession of an appalling atheism.

I have already been made aware of all the traps that are laid at Paris to ensnare a young man.[[8]](#footnote-8) I know there are a lot of contemptible individuals who pin their hopes of a loathsome wage on the information they glean by their wiles; but I know too how to hold my tongue; and the only evidence these gentlemen will get from me will be that my tongue is made for ice cream, for I don’t believe they will catch me delaying any longer in a cafe than is needed to refresh myself with a delicious *sorbetto.*

If I had been luckier and my travel journal,[[9]](#footnote-9) which I can no longer find, had fallen into your hands, you would not have felt obliged to suggest I keep a record on my journeys of whatever would appear to merit remembering. And what use would travelling be, if one neglected to make thoughtful observations on the different objects of interest that so frequently present themselves. I cannot imagine what pleasure there can be in running around the world, bundled like a parcel from one carriage to another. If that is how one travels nowadays, it is not my way.

To his father, in Palermo.[[10]](#footnote-10)

10:XIV in Oblate Writings

State of educational establishments run by religious at Paris. Feast of the Assumption. Benefits of the 1802 concordat. Fortuné should come back to France and accept a bishopric.

Mazenod C.A. de

Paris,

August 16, 1805[[11]](#footnote-11)

I was doing it, but I had to break off to go to the bottom of Faubourg St. Germain to look for my cousin [Emile], who is in an excellent boarding establishment, governed and directed by several priests of the Congregation of St. Sulpice, who give their pupils a formation that is first rate in every respect. It took no little time to unearth this excellent college in Paris. This is not due to any shortage, for I know of a great number, but each worse than the last. Several have at their head priests who are married or living scandalously in concubinage. It follows that one can say of their establishments: *a fructibus eonum congnoscetis eos.*[[12]](#footnote-12)Over and above all the disorders flourishing there, the pupils are fed on principles so thoroughly bad that the other day a young man from one of these colleges blew his brains out, apparently because he was bored with life. Is not that deplorable? But what is even more so is that immorality, an inevitable consequence of this unhappy revolution which has destroyed so much, even the idea of a supreme judge, has made this frightful crime fashionable amongst the people, and that there are days when as many as three, four, five, even six suicides are committed in the city of Paris alone. Those who cannot afford to buy a weapon or gunpowder, simply throw themselves into the Seine

[August 14]

Tomorrow ... is the day of the Assumption, a big feast for many reasons. I will begin the day by going to the service at N[otre] D[ame], where the Cardinal Archbishop will preside; after that there will be the horse races; finally the illuminations and fireworks, for as well as the feast that the whole Church solemnly celebrates, there is Napoleon’s birthday. Thanks will be given to God too for the success of the concordat, and with good reason; any Catholic with an iota of zeal for the good of religion should join his thanksgivings to those of the Church in France. Religion had been given up for dead in this kingdom; and if the peace accorded to the Church had not enabled its ministers to preserve the young, I mean the *naissant* generation, from the contagion which had affected all age groups, but especially those we call the children of the revolution, all those of 18, 20 year’s of age would be ignorant of God’s very existence. I was going to expatiate and tell you the loveliest things in the world, but the sun is at the antipodes and dusk has passed. Goodbye.

[August 16]

Yesterday I was at the Metropolitan Cathedral. I had there a small session of some four hours. His Grace the Cardinal Archbishop presided like a young prelate.[[13]](#footnote-13) Today I will go and pay him my compliments at dinner time; it is my day, and I am faithful to my habits. Ever since I came to Paris, I have not missed a Friday to go and eat his soup and fish. He speaks often of you and always of my great uncle. I will say nothing of the celebrations that took place yesterday.

I leave them aside to reply, before my paper runs out, to a part of your letter that concerns Fortuné.[[14]](#footnote-14) There are two types of opinion: political on the one hand and religious on the other. Each person is free to think as he likes on the former; one may even hold one’s silence, when one’s thoughts differ from the ordinary, and that is what I do. But it is quite different with the second type. Once you are Catholic, you are no longer free to pick and choose. One must of necessity adopt the decisions of the one established to teach; and if there is schism, it is the party who is not with Peter who has gone astray. Such is my invariable manner of thought; I would not swerve from it, even were some decision handed down by this tribunal that goes against my own views. How much the more when I can tangibly see that everything that has been done was done for the best and has brought about the good. Believe me, someone who is far away does not see things as clearly as someone who is close up. The evil was so enormous, and the impending disasters were so hopeless, had the Head of the Church not hastened to make big sacrifices. It is better to lose a leg than one’s head or life itself, and I can assure you that there is an exact parallel between my comparison and the reality. That being the state of affair, it is mandatory for everyone and all the more for every ecclesiastic to cooperate with all one’s strength to back up the plans of the Sovereign Pontiff. What was his goal? To preserve the faith in France. And how were his hopes to be achieved, if bishops and priests obstinately demanded what was impossible to obtain? This is not the place for me to say if the bishops who did not hand in their resignations acted for good or evil. But I will say, without fear of being contradicted, that if their colleagues had done the same, incredulity and frightful schism would have prevailed throughout France; the consequence of both the one and the other would have been a general abandonment of all principle, for the wolf does not take the same care of his flock as the shepherd, and besides we know what schismatics teach and how even that small amount of moral instruction they might have given to the people would have gone unheeded. And so it follows from everything I have just said that in ten year’s’ time one would not have found in France even the bare notion of a religion. I will not press further along this path, which is unanswerable, and I will go on to say that I was right to suggest to Fortuné a place in the Church and an eminent place at that; and this for a quite simple reason, namely, that the higher one is in dignity and power, the better placed one is to do good, and that, recognizing in my uncle (along with all who know him) great virtues and qualities especially precious for the present times, I simply had to place before him, man of zeal that he is, the means of doing a lot of good. I know that they are looking for good men to fill the bishoprics of the kingdom. I know that the government wants to appoint none but workhorses, to coin a phrase, as it is serious in its intention of eradicating root and branch all the schisms and heresies spawned since the Revolution or which have increased ... Is that the difficulty that puts my uncle off?[[15]](#footnote-15) My goodness, when one wears the livery of Jesus Christ, ought one to fear anything, and should one not place one’s hope in him who strengthens us? Let us thoroughly go over the duties that our character as Christian and priest impose on us. After that, let us consult our conscience to find out whether it reproaches us for our excessive modesty, which degenerates into pusillanimity. Is it the fear of aspiring to an employment that he believes to be beyond his strength? And, heavens above, it is now two year’s that he has dug in his heels and is refusing an offer, which has been refused to many who ardently desire it.

Well that is enough for today. I must be really worked up, to have spoken with such force in all the hubbub made by four persons who are in the room where I am writing. For the rest, if we were in the position I would like, I would have enough influence to get Fortuné a diocese in the mould of the one given to the former bishop of Vence,[[16]](#footnote-16) I mean a diocese where there has not been a lot of trouble on account of schisms

To his father, in Palermo.[[17]](#footnote-17)

11:XIV in Oblate Writings

Eugene will leave Paris with his aunt. He is misunderstood. He is a good and affectionate son, genuinely so and not for ulterior motives.

Mazenod C.A. de

Paris,

September 3, [1805], completed September 4.

It is high time I think to answer your letter dated July 11, which I received the day after posting the last letter I wrote you. The first thing for me to do is to undeceive you and give you assurance as to the fear my mother raised that I no longer intend to return home.[[18]](#footnote-18) I cannot do it more effectively, I think, than by telling you that our departure is more or less settled for next week, not that I had not wanted to stay at Paris until the end of September, but it is not worth the effort even to mention my wish for the sake of such a short period of time. Is it possible that no one in the world understands me?[[19]](#footnote-19) Is it conceivable that my mother does not know how to appreciate me? Yes, I have the impudence to say it or rather I am forced to. In truth she makes me lose patience when I hear her cry wolf! She really ought (and it could end up with making me become bad enough to wish it on her) she really ought, I say, to have a son like many I see; then she would have something to complain about. And should I really have to sing my own praises here, or rather make my own defence? It is a sad day if my family does not share the opinion that others have of me and that I do deserve, in all truth, if the fulfilment of every duty, the setting aside of all distractions, and finally moderation on every occasion can be a title to obtain it. What more is expected of me? Really, I cannot imagine. My mother might thank God that the principles I act on are too solidly based for me ever to be able to throw them overboard, for she can be sure that if my good conduct was only a pretence there would have been no resisting the pleasure of letting her find out for herself the difference between a son such as I am and a son such as the one she would have forced me to be. But she can rest easy on this point. I cannot doubt that my mother loves me very much, and in that she does but fulfil the duty laid on her by nature and at the same time by gratitude since a son could not have more tender sentiments towards his mother than those I have towards mine; this perhaps is what is questioned, because this love is not exclusive of every other (let me explain: it is not claimed that I must love only my mother, but because I do love others as well as my mother, it is imagined, in the family I mean, that I love her the less for it, and one member of the family dares to make of it a matter of reproach. In justice to my mother I must say that she has never given me grounds for thinking that she harbours such thoughts.) It is nonetheless true that it gives me no satisfaction, that far from pandering to my self love, I am made to feel every so often that I shall have a say in things only after the death of her who gives the orders (at this price I would like to take a back seat all my life) and clearly it is not very pleasant for me to hear my mother say: “you may do as you like once I am dead.”

I know my family too well to be mistaken in all this, while being conscious especially of the spirit of friendship that surrounds me. Mother certainly means well, but she is wrong to try to apply a general rule to a particular case that merits exception. She wants to make me feel that I am dependent on her, so as to secure my good behaviour. You know me fairly well, do you think that this precaution is necessary, do you think that it would even be prudent to rely so much on such means? Really, if my heart was not in the right place, and I was not constantly concerned about the pleasing or painful impact of my decisions on my family, of the way I could go, it must be clear that I could make very short shrift of claiming my independence. Dear God! I repeat, I am little understood. They are relying on weapons that I could easily defy while the assurance they want is safe in my own heart.

For the rest you must not imagine that I am unhappy. That could not be, as in the middle of it all I detect my mother’s real feeling which is one of tender love for me, although it may be spoiled by weakness, and as my grandmother loves me as her son and besides takes on herself little attentions which it is not in the character of her daughter to do for her children, although, I repeat, she loves them as much as it is possible to love them, and finally as I am assured of your love and that of your brothers whom I love as I do yourself, that is to say with all the capacity of my heart, soul, and all my faculties. The only thing lacking to my happiness is to be reunited with you.

I have the feeling that I have dwelt a little too much on this last point; it has used up the space for a few more things that I wanted to tell you, but I am not sorry to have taken the opportunity to explode, it calms me down; I beg you to keep it to yourself as my feelings could be misunderstood, and I have not perhaps gone into them enough in the heat of first reactions

Eugene to his father, in Palermo.[[20]](#footnote-20)

12:XIV in Oblate Writings

Fortuné ought to write to the superioress of the Carmelites. Items of religious news from Aix.

Mazenod C.A. de

Aix,

November 1, 1805

Why does not my uncle write to Mother Saint Hylarion? I do not commend his silence, *in hoc non laudo,*[[21]](#footnote-21)These good and holy daughters of Saint Therese have purchased what remained of the Oratory where they now number 17. Eight more are asking to enter; the superioress would not ask for better, but she has no more room as I understand it. Every time I go to see her she speaks of her dear father and, let it be said between ourselves, her dear father little deserves to be so well remembered, for he seems to me to have completely forgotten her; this does not prevent her praying to the Lord each day for him.

A fairly large number of Ursulines have come together too, they have resumed their former work as schoolmistresses, but to the shame of the people of Aix, I believe that they are all foreigners. My aunt[[22]](#footnote-22) heads up this community. I have rarely seen women of such great virtue and modesty. Have I told you that good Father Miollis has been named Bishop of Digne, he should be consecrated about this very time.[[23]](#footnote-23) I am delighted to have at Saint Laurent a pastor such as he, he is a real apostle. Old Father de Callian[[24]](#footnote-24) is back from Paris, he has a lot to say about everything. Our seminary is surviving, there are at present some fifty fine entrants. How are the Jesuits, let me have some news, I am their great admirer and still more ardent defender.

Diary of a Stay in Paris (June 14 - September 23, 1805)

Vol XVI in Oblate Writings

Diary of the stay in Paris in 1805

Aix,

November 28, 1805[[25]](#footnote-25)

I arrived in Paris on June 14 towards 11:00 a.m. and got down at the Hotel de France, Rue Montmartre, only to make an immediate exit and go running to Notre Dame. So I began my Paris sightseeing by paying an act of homage to God in France’s first city. I am not impressed by this church. Vast as it is, it bears no comparison with the common run of Italian churches. It is gothic in style like most French cathedrals and in my view was deprived of some of its merit when it was white-washed. It is putting a modern style of dress on an aged body, while a gothic temple must of necessity be smoke‑begrimed, all those marks of antiquity inspire respect. Isn’t it a pleasure in the times we are living in to be able to pretend and, in the presence of Him who always had existence, try and imagine that we are still living in the centuries when respect and love for religion had such beautiful monuments raised up to God? Now a layer of whitewash spoils this pleasing reverie I used sometimes so to look forward to.[[26]](#footnote-26)

This church, founded by Etienne de Sully, Bishop of Paris, who laid the first stone in the year 522, was reconstructed in 1171 during the reign of Louis the Younger. Sacked and pillaged in 1790 and 1791, re-furbished after the Concordat, I think at the time of Bonaparte’s coronation. He took the opportunity to make it large gifts of silverware and ornaments. A noteworthy feature of its construction is its daring elevation, it is 60 toises[[27]](#footnote-27) long, 24 wide, 17 high, its towers are 347 high. 120 pillars support its weight overall. It is built on piles, and I am told one could pass beneath it in a boat.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Among the Capital’s treasures, I must not overlook the Cardinal Archbishop.[[29]](#footnote-29) He is phenomenal. 97 years of age, he is not subject to any kind of infirmity. He zealously fulfils all the functions of his ministry, and would err by excess were he not restrained by his entourage. He is abstemious, drinks only white wine, and never omits to get some exercise, it is good for him. His preference for his walks is the Botanical Gardens[[30]](#footnote-30) of which he does a circuit. That is where I saw him for the first time. Once my name was mentioned, he welcomed me most warmly, introduced me to the people around him as the grand-nephew of his dearest friend and he has never seen me since without speaking of that incomparable man whom we mourn all the more every day.[[31]](#footnote-31) He invited me to dine and I have been there every Friday of my stay in Paris.

Through him I made the acquaintance of Mr. Hauy,[[32]](#footnote-32) professor of natural history, a man as courteous and upright as he is learned and modest. In a most gracious manner he offered me tickets affording entry even at times designated for study. I gratefully accepted and returned on July 15 to make use of this privilege.

I entered directly into the natural history section where I passed fairly quickly through the room containing mineralogical specimens. Very ignorant in this area, I could enjoy only the display. I gave a little more attention to the examination of the animals, although on a first visit one cannot go much into details. On view in an unusual display brought together in these galleries and beautifully exhibited are everything from humming-birds to ostriches, scarabs to elephants. This poor creature had lived for a long time in the zoo at Versailles along with a dear female companion who is ill-supporting her grief, all that she has since the death of her spouse. She loved him all the more as his love for her was chaste, and nothing savouring of carnality ever intermingled with his gentle caresses. They followed to the letter Plato’s counsel and were such faithful followers of his precepts, over the period of several years they lived together, that this example would of itself be enough to convince me they can be followed.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Among the remarkable animals this section holds, I observed the giraffe, a quadruped larger than the horse, endowed with a neck longer again than its body at whose extremity is a quite small head. It greatly resembles the dromedary in its bodily shape and physiognomy. Mr. de Buffon had not had a thorough acquaintance of this animal. It was donated only a few years ago by a traveller who claims to have killed it in Africa. I won’t say anything about the other animals that everyone is familiar with and are displayed for the most part in every natural history collection.

I would really like to have visited as well the comparative anatomy section, but two o’clock struck and the doors closed as it were on the dot and simultaneously. So I had to go on to the zoo, where I paid my respects for a moment to that most serene of elephants I mentioned above. She conversed for some moments of her deep grief, which remained unabated even with the passage of time.[[34]](#footnote-34) She wanted to know if I had admired her husband’s fine figure. Her trunk was towards me, her mouth agape, in my mind’s eye I saw it as my grave if I gave the lady displeasure, so I spoke highly of her dead husband. She seemed satisfied and swallowed at a gulp a full bucket of water to restore her spirits, cast down by the baleful memory of someone she had so loved. You are doubtless familiar with the way these animals tackle their food. Since they have no neck, and their huge head cannot get down to ground level to take the foods that are necessary to them, the Creator has provided them with a long trunk with which they seize by a sucking action everything they want, even very heavy things. Then they bring this instrument up to the level of a hole that serves as their mouth, into which they violently hurl what needs to be chewed up. For water, they suck it in and then let it fall all together into their mouth. Its capacity must be remarkable for the noise the water makes as it falls resounds as in a vat. You can imagine I did not get close enough to the widow to investigate at close quarters, so I am relying here on my conjectures.

Next I went through the other houses in the zoo and visited with interest the goats and Asiatic cattle, dromedaries, deer, monkeys and so to the birds. All the different dwellings are picturesquely situated, some on a height, others in a dip, others in a little valley, the whole forming a vast English garden in which the little wooden bridge has not been overlooked.

The savage beasts will soon be placed in the middle of the zoo in carefully constructed houses circular in shape. At present they are found towards the gate of the Botanical Gardens. The lion, tiger, leopard, the dog bred from a wolf, and some other animals attract attention by their ferocious mien. I felt sorry for an unfortunate white bear that for several years had done nothing but move its head from right to left and left to right like a pendulum. Perhaps the boredom of a harsh and over-long captivity has weakened this poor animal’s brain, it could then be called “the mad bear”.

I was very shocked that they leave exposed to the public gaze, including many young ladies and girls, a Lascar monkey that is continuously engaged in highly indecent contortions and gestures especially on the approach of a lady. I noted, not without some surprise, that it is precisely in front of the cage where this little libertine makes a show of himself that our curious mistresses flock in crowds. Draw your own conclusions, I must speak the truth.

It was still quite early when we had gone through all there was to see in the garden created, so to speak, by the celebrated Buffon. We wanted to make good use of the rest of the day and after taking a snack we went to Gobelins[[35]](#footnote-35) Such is the fame of this factory that I could not but be eager to go and carefully investigate how they make those precious tapestries that can well be compared to the most beautiful pictures sprung from the brushes of the greatest painter. The location is infamous. As one enters the workshops it is hard to imagine that it is from a den like this so many masterpieces emerge. They are dimly-lit, damp, low-ceilinged and narrow. The looms on top of each other, the workers work in silence and scarcely reply when you question them. The picture that serves as their model is placed behind the one who has to copy it, so that he has to look behind to examine the colours and their shades. Then he uses wools that should produce the same effect in the copy, but the surprising thing is that the worker works from the back, without seeing therefore the whole of his work.

After spending several hours following the wonderful work of these marvellous artists, I ascended to a gallery where many of their pictures are exhibited. How can I describe the beauty of these amazing productions, these artistic masterpieces? Is it credible someone could imitate so perfectly in wool the transparency of a veil as in the picture of Xeusis,[[36]](#footnote-36) in which among the women being presented to him to model his famous statue, you can see some who cover their nakedness with a veil through which you may see very distinctly their comely figure and the colouring of their skin. Nothing could be more imposing than the picture that shows the scene of Joash being acknowledged as king in the presence of Atholiah frothing with rage in the temple of Jerusalem. What more perfect imitation of nature than Narcissus leaping into the pool that shows him his reflection. I would never end if I wanted to list all the pictures before which I stood in ecstasy. Be satisfied with the little I have said, and above all don’t be afraid of forming an exaggerated idea, it will always fall short of the reality.

A visitor cannot stay long in Paris without going to visit the superb collection of paintings located in the great gallery of the Louvre.[[37]](#footnote-37) There you can see gathered together the works of the greatest masters of the famous schools. Italy has provided a large part of the beauties one admires there. I recognized some masterpieces I had seen elsewhere, such as the Wedding Feast of Cana by Paolo Veronese, the Cenacle, Saint Jerome, the Descent from the Cross, the Transfiguration and a hundred others. I will refrain from delivering myself of the many reflections this topic gives rise to, I will simply put the question whether “St. Jerome dying in the arms of Religion” was not better housed in a venerated temple of which it was the chief ornament than in a profane gallery between Venus and Love? Another reflection that occurred to me as I went through this immense gallery added a sour note to the pleasure I felt at finding myself among so many beautiful objects. A single person, I told myself, could destroy for ever the precious collection, one barbarian of the many engendered by the Revolution would suffice to set the blaze alight and the work of so many famous men would disappear without trace. Even supposing no one is daring enough to commit such an atrocity, could not a thunderbolt reduce to dust what has been assembled with such care? It follows from what I have just said that, everything considered, it would be better for the arts that these works be dispersed.

Not only have pains been taken to place in a single locale all the masterpieces of painting, those of sculpture likewise have been assembled, ancient statues from another collection no less precious and very interesting. They are situated in the rooms beneath the great gallery. That’s where one finds today the famous group of Laocoon, the Belvedere Apollo, the Medici Venus[[38]](#footnote-38) and an endless number of other statues or busts, less precious but no less famous.

You know I have always had a weakness for books. An admirer of the fine arts, I have never felt in myself more than a *venerando rispetto*[[39]](#footnote-39)for them, and I have always felt unworthy to penetrate their sanctuary. Little endowed by nature, I felt no inclination to imitate the masters who have left us models in this genre. Besides, I have always found there was something arid about them, much to please and little instruction. It is not like that with the sciences. In the school of the great men who have cultivated them, every day one learns something new. These are acquaintances who not only satisfy one’s taste but also one’s mind. When one chooses one’s models well one learns to become better as well as wiser, and I find a sweet satisfaction in growing so to speak each day in knowledge and goodness. Stop, stop, stop... What a preamble to tell you I went to the Library![[40]](#footnote-40) Heavens above, where did I go astray? Anyway, to punish myself for the prolixity, I will not say a word about the books it contains. It owed its humble beginnings to King John who had scarcely 20 volumes; Charles V added 900 tomes. The Duke of Bedford, regent of the realm, bought it after the death of Charles VI for 1200, about a half of the evaluation. This sum went to the contractor of the mausoleum of Charles VI and Isabeau of Bavaria, and the books were taken to London. However some of these tomes were recovered. Francis I and Louis XIII built it up considerably and it is during the reigns of Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI that it was brought to the pitch of magnificence which makes it today one of the finest libraries in existence. It holds more than a hundred thousand volumes. It further contains a quantity of precious manuscripts some of which have been brought from Italy. It was high time, after admiring so many ancient things of beauty, for me to go and see a product of our age, the beautiful church of St. Genevieve.[[41]](#footnote-41) I have my doubts this superb building will be finished for a long time yet, not that much remains to be done really in comparison with what has been done already. But a temple today, however beautiful it may be, is looked on as the seat of superstition and there is little hurry to put the finishing touches to it. However. St. Genevieve would be Paris’s finest building. It was drawn up according to the plans of Germain Soufflot. Construction began in 1747. In plan it is in the shape of a Greek cross. Its length including the porch is 339 feet,[[42]](#footnote-42) its width measured in the middle of the cross is 253 feet 9 inches. The porch based on that of Rome’s Pantheon is formed of 22 columns, each 5 foot 2 inches in diameter and 53 feet 3 inches in height, includ­ing the bases and capitals which are decorated with acanthus leaves. The porch consists of three doors; 130 columns decorate the interior. They are each 3 feet 6 inches in diameter and 27 feet 8 inches high. As to the exterior, the dome is shaped as a wide circle made up of 32 pillars. The over-all height of this temple is 282 feet. It is claimed that the altar situated in the middle of the church would have been on a level with the height of the towers of Notre Dame. The Vandals of the 18th century commenced their degradation of this superb monument by having the *fleurs de lys* sculptured in the vault and throughout the temple’s interior destroyed. Then they made ready to profane it even before it was consecrated by placing there remains of Voltaire, Rousseau, Marat, Mirabeau, and many other similar monsters. I remark in passing that this kind of cult that they decree to the philosophers, who like Voltaire and Rousseau died before our disasters befell us, is proof along with their evil works that it is to them we owe this horrible Revolution which has turned the whole world upside down. They only give them first place in their profane den because they have always taken them as masters and in gratitude for the surprising effects that resulted from merely acting on their principles. And while I am on the subject, I cannot allow myself to refrain from citing what the diarists of that ilk were saying about it at the beginning of the Revolution while speaking about Voltaire: “He did not see all he did,” they said, “but he did all we see.” Add to that affirmation those of the sophist Condorcet both in the Assembly and in his writings, when he saw the triumph of his hateful sect, and you will get a just idea of what we owe these coryphées of the philosophy that was so humoured in a time of madness. I was curious to go down below ground level where they have placed these saints of a new alloy. I must say that approaching the icy ashes of the Patriarch of Ferney,[[43]](#footnote-43) I felt a feeling of horror, an involuntary fear that made me shiver. All the evil this ambitious atheist did, or counselled to be done, came back to memory, and at the sight of that dust once animated by a soul so black, I could not contain my indignation and gave vocal expression to the sovereign contempt that one who profaned so deplorably the gifts the Creator had so to speak lavished on him so prodigally has always inspired in me. I did not find myself in good enough company to stay long in that underground place now rendered unclean. I came out but shortly after entering to purify myself in the fresh air of the impurities I had contracted in the presence of that host of enemies of God and his Christ.[[44]](#footnote-44)

To Emmanuel Gaultier de Claubry.[[45]](#footnote-45)

13:XIV in Oblate Writings

Encouragement to remain strong in witnessing to his faith, despite the sarcasm of the officers in the regiment.

Emmanuel Gaultier de Claubry

Aix,

November 1805

Your letter of October 13, my dear and good friend, filled my heart with bitterness. I had a lively sense of all the snubs you endured during that wretched meal and I would like to tell you that the matter will end there, but these first trials that every newcomer whoever he may be is made to undergo, will be followed by others to which those who do not profess faith in Jesus Christ would not be submitted. It is when they have found out that you are a Christian that they will shower you with sarcasms, insults and scorn, it is then that the children of darkness will bend all their efforts to pervert the child of light and it is then too, my dear friend, that you will need to call upon all the strength you received with the seal of regeneration and through the imposition of hands. But as anything that I might say to reaffirm your faith and awaken your hope will have little effect as coming from my mouth, I have gathered together below some words of consolation that I have been careful to draw from the pure wellspring, in the book of life, that admirable code where all needs are foreseen, and remedies laid by. So it is by no means Eugene, it is Jesus Christ, it is Peter, Paul, John, etc., who send you this wholesome food which when received with that spirit of faith of which you are capable will certainly not be without effect.[[46]](#footnote-46)

To his father, in Palermo.[[47]](#footnote-47)

14:XIV in Oblate Writings

Qualities and virtues of his mother and of his uncle Roze Joannis.

Mazenod C.A. de

Aix,

December 26, 1805

What you say in reply to the emotional and ill-considered letter I wrote you from Paris with regard to some trivial reproaches expressed by my mother, fills me with shame and confusion.[[48]](#footnote-48) I search within myself for some explanation of what I was drawn to say in a fit of ill humour but it quite escapes me, and this does not surprise me as my heart was not at all in these ill founded and much exaggerated complaints. How could I for a single instant have failed to recognize the love that that excellent mother has for me? In truth I am tempted to believe that some wicked spirit got hold of my pen. My mother is an adorable being, possessed of every virtue, there is not a single fault one can impute to her except for an extreme frankness which, at times when she is caught up in some idea that takes hold of her imagination, prevents her from measuring her language and she very often says more than she intended. She has a heart of gold and adores her children, mother, husband, and the whole family, she is forgetful of none save herself whose needs unfortunately she does not pay enough attention to. My mother is in a word the most perfect woman I know. Do not put this picture I have just drawn down to filial affection. You might fear that without my being aware of it I have allowed myself to err in partiality that, after all, would be rather excusable but you will better appreciate my testimony when you realize that it is in line with the opinion of everyone who really knows my mother.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Her reserve towards me over quite a lengthy period, with regard to business matters, has a very natural explanation. She was used to seeing round about her many very disturbed young people, she had personal knowledge of some who have even employed cunning to deceive her relatives, she did not yet know me and she was being careful; she needed more time than you did to build up trust in me, but eventually she does pay me in particular this due, a thing that she never denied me in public, but which she had not thought prudent until now to give me fully. This way of treating me is readily understood and there is nothing wrong with it.

You will at the same time understand how she came to place her trust in her cousin, when you know that he is the only man who possesses mine, and without a doubt he deserves it, and I had to have strong proofs of his attachment to me for me to accord him my friendship notwithstanding the gulf dividing our religious views, for you know that my dear uncle is, worse luck for him, the most obstinate Jansenist in Christendom. I only hope that the austere life he leads and his generosity to all kinds of poor people will merit him the grace of entering the sheepfold that he and his confreres claim they have never left. And really it is a great pity that he clings to that error for apart from this he is the most perfect and enlightened Christian I know[[50]](#footnote-50). I will refrain from listing all we owe him, as there are still a lot of other things I have to tell you.

1. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM 115, 17 pages. We publish some extracts from these Notes in which we can recognize Eugene’s good judgment and in particular be astonished at his interest in and knowledge of Christianity, apologetics, etc. We know little of his activities at Aix. He had studied French literature with the Duchess of Cannizzaro in Sicily; at Aix he seems to deepen his religious knowledge. The text of a conversation that he sent to his father in June 1804 permits us to suppose that his studies were constant and methodical and that he was a member of a group that met for this purpose; but there is no mention of this in his letters. In his *Discours sur l’Etude*, he writes for example: “It is not enough for fruitful study to allow oneself to be carried away by a foolish enthusiasm which, being but a feeling, cannot last long. One must study with method, moderate the first transport and, imitating the wise and provident farmer who deliberately restrains the coupled oxen overeager at the plough, one must discipline one’s mental powers, so they may progress at a measure pace. Assiduity and perseverance alone are of help in overcoming the many difficulties that study presents We know that in 1803 he was studying Greek literature. He wrote to his father on March 6: “I grumble over my hefty Plutarch as I send him out for a walk occasionally along with his indecipherable translator.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Viscount François René de Chateaubriand (17681848) published *Le Génie du Christianisme* in 1802. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Although lower down Eugene speaks of a “young man”, he seems to be referring to the Jansenist François Joseph Roze Joannis, Madame de Mazenod’s relative and counsellor, born about 1752. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Eugene writes in the margin: “M. De Noy”. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes. papiers Boisgelins. B. 69. We omit pages 2 and 3 of this letter in which Eugene replies to those dated April 4 and 25 concerning the de Mazenod’s’ town house and the Joannis’ house at Aix. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The princess’ mother. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Eugene was accompanying his aunt Alexandrine Joannis to Paris where the latter was going to look for a boarding establishment for her son Emile Dedons de Pierrefeu. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. His father replied on July 11: “Since you know about the traps the tricksters there lay for young and inexperienced people, I am at peace. Besides, I have always held as high a regard for your prudence as for your wisdom. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This refers no doubt to the notes of his travels in Italy, the original of which is today lost. The Founder completed them in the course of his lifetime and they were published in *Missions OMI*. in 1866. Mr, de Mazenod replied on July 11: “Why did you not tell me sooner that you forgot your account of your earlier travels? Perhaps I could have recovered it, but after three year’s there is nothing can be done. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin. B. 69. Reply to his father’s letter of June 13. On pages 1, 2v, and 4, which we omit, Eugene speaks of the wedding plans for Eugenie, the debts due from M. D. Demandolx to the Mazenods, of Eugene’s impotent desire to pay his father’s debts, of the plan to go and see the Vintimille family at La Ferté. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Letter dated August 16, but begun 15 days earlier. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mt. 7,16. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Born 1709, and so already an old man, Archbishop J.B. de Belloy, Archbishop of Paris from 1802 to 1808, had been bishop of Marseilles from 1755 to 1791. Thus he knew the Mazenods well, especially Charles Auguste André, at that time vicar general of Marseilles. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. One of the reasons for making the trip to Paris was to meet some government Ministers for the purpose of obtaining pensions or positions for President de Mazenod and his brothers so as to hasten their return to France. The President had already however written on June 13 that, as a matter of principle, Fortuné would not accept any position in the Church of the concordat: “The benefices you wish to obtain for him would accord neither with his own principles or your own”. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. At the end of the President’s letter of March 21, 1805. Fortuné had written that he would not accept episcopal consecration: “The more I think about it, the more I fear the duties and responsibility it imposes.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Charles F.J. Pisani de La Gaude, born at Aix-en-Provence in 1743, Bishop of Namur from 1804 to 1826. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin. B. 69. Reply to the letter of July 11. We omit the beginning and end of this letter in which Eugene declares that he has come back from La Ferté where he visited the Talleyrand family; he also spoke of the difficulty of finding a husband for his sister. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Madame de Mazenod had written to M. de Mazenod on June 13. She was afraid that Eugene did not want to come back from Paris as soon as his aunt whom he was accompanying: she asked her husband to intervene. The President wrote on July 11: “So I beg you, in the name of all your tenderness for me. not to persist in such a plan, supposing you ever had such an intention.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The President replied to this question on October 31: “I think I was a little too hasty to praise what you say, for I come up against one expression which is neither praiseworthy nor just, and would most likely make me really angry, if I made no allowance for what you say later on. Is it possible, you say, that no one in the whole world understands me? When someone says ‘no one he makes no exceptions and I think that your father and uncles do deserve to be excepted from this general proposition, for they understand you perfectly ... You love your father and mother with all your heart, you in your turn are loved by them, but as each one’s feelings are influenced by his character, my love is more demonstrative and more confiding, your mother’s is more reserved and cautious. Each is equally lively, equally tender. I know that, although she is quite convinced of all your merit and all your virtues, she does not approve however of my extolling them, as she is afraid that it will spoil you. The truth is, as you yourself put it so well, she does not know how to move from the general hypothesis to the particular case, as she makes no allowances for differences in people and she has no inkling that what would spoil a child who was quite different from you serves in your case only to encourage and inspire you to fresh desires to do good. She has heard the general proposition: ‘Children must always be kept under control. And making (if you will excuse the expression) of this principle a saddle for every horse, she maps out a course of action which would not have been without its dangers in the case of a son less enlightened, less wise and less prudent than yourself.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelins, B.69. Reply to the letter of October 3. In the first three pages that we omit, Eugene says that he cannot go and see his relatives at Palermo, for want of a passport, but he speaks of the itinerary he would have followed through Italy; he explains the behaviour of his mother towards the de Mazenods and suggests his father should write a book on Marie Caroline, Queen of Naples and benefactress of the de Mazenods. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 1 Cor. 2, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Sister Marie Victor, née Amyot, distant aunt of Eugene on his mother’s side. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Bishop Bienvenu de Miollis, Bishop of Digne from 1805 to 1838, whom Father de Mazenod will often be meeting after the Congregation’s foundation. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. A member of a noble family of Provence, the Mourgues de Callian, related to the Mazenods. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. This Diary takes up a few pages of the letter dated “November 1805”. Acknowledging his son’s letter the President, on January 23, 1806, wrote: “My dear and good son, another of your letters has arrived. Praise the Lord. I am unable to cite you the date as you forgot it and put only the month, but I presume it is November 28, as it arrived along with those from France of that date and the previous last I received from you was dated the 1st of that month.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The President comments on the reflections contained in the first paragraph on January 23, 1806: “The longer the run from Rue Montmartre to the Church of Notre Dame, the greater my praise for your initiative at the outset of making a start by paying homage to the sovereign master of heaven and earth; My thoughts on the whitewashing of gothic basilicas are like your own, it is a kind of cosmetic that, far from beautifying, degrades them. St. Sauveur’s, in Aix, lost much of its attraction by a like treatment.” [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. An old French measurement of length, equal to 1.949 meters. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. On January 23, 1806, the President corrects several of these assertions: “I am obliged, to straighten out some of your ideas, to point out some historical errors that have crept into your narrative. There was never a Bishop of Paris called Etienne de Sully. The Bishop of Paris did not found Notre Dame in 522; he rebuilt it in the 12th century and it was not he who laid the first stone. These are the true facts that I derive from my old notes.” M. de Mazenod goes on in a long paragraph to give some details on the history of the church of Notre Dame. His “old notes” were thus quite extensive and it is surprising he managed to hang on to them in his movements from Aix to Palermo. That the President knew Paris well one can indeed believe; he spent several months there just before his exile in 1790, Cf. J. Leflon, 1, pp. 59ff. Fortuné could help him in a pinch as he studied for eight years in the seminary of St. Sulpice and the Sorbonne, from 1768-1776. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Archbishop J.B. de Belloy, Archbishop of Paris from 1802‑1808, was born in 1709. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Botanical Gardens, given the name National Museum of Natural History in 1793. It has among others the section of natural history with a zoology gallery (stuffed animals) and a Zoological Gardens (Zoo). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Archbishop de Belloy had been Bishop of Marseille from 1755-1791. So he knew the Mazenod family, in particular Charles Auguste André who was one of his vicar generals. The President makes the following comment: “I was as moved by the way you came to meet the Cardinal as edified by the welcome you received and touched by the tender remembrance he retained for the memory of our venerated uncle. Quite certainly he never had or would have had any friend more faithful or colleague more worthy. The prelate who was ten years older than his vicar general will survive him by perhaps thirty years. I know it is given to few individuals to become centenarians but that will never make me cease regretting the mistakes of this old Israelite of Venice but for which we might still have had for many years this saintly uncle who was the source of our happiness and consolation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Father René Just Hauy, mineralogist (1743‑1822). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. These reflections of Eugene gave rise to a number of philosophical and spiritual thoughts on the part of his father: “I follow your steps to the Botanical Garden, the Natural History Display and the Zoo simply to join you in wonder at the omnipotence of a God who is the creator and conservator of so many substances and beings so different from and disproportionate to each other, but I cannot let it pass without comment that that platonic love of the elephant for its mate, that so enchanted you and seemed so easy of imitation, is neither natural not decreed by Providence which said to every living creature: increase and multiply. It is true that man, who makes ill-use of all God’s gifts, has interpreted this license or command under the influence of the disordered desires of his corrupt heart, while the beasts, held bound by their instinct to the Creator’s original intention, require for embarking on the process of multiplication a degree of heat that is proper temperature in the climate to which they were brought and could not achieve consummation in the flames of love. They were limited to the feelings of friendship that their common captivity enhanced still more, but their chastity which resulted solely from their impotence could not be a virtue like that of a chaste human being in whom it is the effect of a free and meditated decision, which by the help of divine grace leads him to dedicate himself to privations to attain a higher perfection.” [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Italian expression: “with the passage of time”. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Gobelins: an establishment on Faubourg St. Marcel to which, in the 1711 century, Flemish tapestry-workers were invited. Later on there were workers representing all the arts. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Famous Greek painter (464-398 BC). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The Louvre: one-time royal residence in Paris. Completed under Napoleon III (emperor from 1852-1870), it has become one of the richest museums in the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Famous sculptures from the Vatican Museum, carried off to Paris by Napoleon’s soldiers. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. “Respectful veneration” (Italian). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The reference is to the National Library that, in Napoleon’s time, was called the Imperial Library. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The Church of St. Genevieve was in construction from 1764-1780. During the French Revolutionary period it became a temple designated to receive the ashes of the great: the Pantheon. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. An ancient measure of length equivalent to about 33 cms. The French foot was a little longer than the present English foot. The inch, a twelfth of a foot, was equivalent to 27.07 mm. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. 19 Voltaire, born in Paris in 1694, lived at Ferney from 1759 to his death in 1778. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. With regard to this last paragraph, the President replies: “What you tell me about the Imperial Library is fine, one must add merely that its first seat in Charles V’s time was in one of the towers of the Louvre which for this reason was called the Library Tower. I endorse all your ideas and reflections concerning St. Genevieve’s Church or the Pantheon, and I mention it only to rejoice in the fact that our friend Chevalier\* got the place of Keeper of this library. It could not have fallen into better hands and while we are on the subject I will tell you that I got hold of his works on the Propontide and the Troade. The first I found somewhat dry, succinct in detail, and really useful only for the learned and well‑versed in the art. I got a lot more out of the second and it brought back pleasant memories of our trip to Istria and Dalmatia, just as your uncle was reminded of various trips he made in the archipelago. That concludes all my observations on the first part of your Diary whose sequel I am awaiting with impatience.” [\* Mr. Lechevalier- whom M. de Mazenod always refers to as “The Savant” ‑ was an erudite traveller who became under the Empire the Keeper of the Library. A friend of the de Mazenods, Eugene often sought his advice in Paris.] [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Copy in Rey, *Mgr de Mazenod.* I, 70. In the compartment of the carriage that was bringing him towards Lyon, at the end of September 1805, Eugene found himself opposite this young military surgeon who was rejoining his regiment in Italy. Their friendship lasted until Emmanuel’s death in 1855. cf. Rey, *Ibid.,* I. 68-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Rey only copied this extract and left out the 3 pages of Holy Scripture transcribed by Eugene. He adds, however: “We do not know of a more complete and striking collection of texts adapted to fortify Christian courage.” [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin. B. 69. We are omitting pages 1, 3 and 4 of this letter in which Eugene speaks of Orleans which he visited in the course of his trip to Paris; he promises to send money to his father if Queen Marie Caroline stops her grant to the Mazenods and he makes some remarks on his father’s letters of October 31 and November 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Cf. letter of 3 September 1805 to his father, and the relevant footnotes. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The President replied June 24, 1806: “I have just read a passage that brought me tears of joy, the part where you describe for me with so much sincerity and passion your feelings towards your mother. I know too, and you have given me ample proof of it, the full extent of those which move you in my regard, so that if you have to thank the Lord for having given you a tender father and a good mother, we for our part owe him no less thanks for having given us the best of sons: your filial piety will not fail to bring you heaven’s blessings, and your happiness and your virtues both will always be what most alleviate my sufferings or, to speak with more justice, will make them vanish entirely.” [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. With regard to Roze Joannis, Mr. de Mazenod replied on June 24, 1806: “I would be only too happy to be able to share your opinion of your uncle the Jansenist, I like to think that he is at present what you say he is, indeed I do not doubt it in the light of what you say. But there was a time when he made himself very difficult towards me and did me some ill turns, I forgive him for it now wholeheartedly both because it is God’s command and for the sake of the attachment you say he has towards you. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)