THE TRUTH ABOUT  
THE SECRET OF LA SALETTE

*Like the Third Secret of Fatima, the true Secret of La Salette has never been made public.  
Many Catholics sadly continue to be misled by the false and unapproved "secret" drawn up by an  
embittered Melanie Calvat in 1879, a gross distortion of the original version she wrote in 1851.  
Others, despite their good will, have simply felt unable to give it their credence – providentially it would seem.  
  
This article, taken from the July-August 1996 edition of the CRC, will inspire all those who love Our Lady  
by helping them to glimpse something of Her real Secret beneath Melanie Calvat's distortions.*



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  |
| --- |
| [Introductory Letter to the Phalange](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette1.htm)  [THE APPARITION OF OUR LADY OF LA SALETTE](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette2.htm) [La Salette is Catholic in its people, its saints, its hierarchy](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette2.htm#catholic)  [THE SECRETS OF LA SALETTE](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette3.htm) [Maximin’s Secret](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette3.htm#maximin) [Mélanie’s Secret](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette3.htm#melanie)  [MÉLANIE'S WRITINGS](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette4.htm) [I. The Childhood Gospel](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette4.htm) [II. The New Law: The Order of the Last Times](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette4.htm#new) [III. Mélanie’s Apocalypse](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette4.htm#apocalypse)  [La Salette, a figurative re-commencement of the history of the world](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette5.htm) |

**THE SECRET OF LA SALETTE AT FATIMA  
FROM 19 SEPTEMBER 1846 TO 13 OCTOBER 1996  
In all truth**

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| http://www.crc-internet.org/images/oldlogo.gif**LETTER TO THE PHALANGE No58**  13 May 1996  Our very dear friends,   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette2.jpg Maximin and Mélanie from a daguerreotype taken in 1846, the same year as the Apparition. |   Whence this impulse to make a detour via La Salette in Dauphiné, as we make our way to Fatima? From whom does it come and for what reason? Initially, I remained vexed on the subject. Because from 1946, the centenary year of the apparition to Mélanie and Maximin on 19 September 1846 – following a thinly disguised admission of doubt as to its reality expressed by our Superior of the seminary of Issy-les-Moulineaux, who was nevertheless a great devotee of the "divine Mary", whom he loved – I remained perplexed, and for very solid reasons: the mediocre behaviour of the two children, Mélanie’s inconceivable fabrications, Maximin’s odd behaviour and even his confession of having lied to the Curé d’Ars who ceased to believe in La Salette… before returning to it for good! *That’s enough, I have sufficient to believe in, to admire and learn from ten other encounters between Heaven and earth, all beautiful, pure and free from doubt… whereas here, as much as the Apparition is certain and the message signed, so the all too famous "Secret" is inadmissible, odious and unworthy of Our Lady! La Salette is not worthy of a detour…*  "Yes it is! (*Tais-toi!*) Be quiet, you are speaking blasphemy. Have you made a scientific study of the whole thing? the facts! the message! the Church’s acceptance? the miracles, the conversions, the immense stream of poor, humble, penitents beating their way to the foot of the Mountain, imploring, contrite and repentant as they make the tough climb to the top, where they are washed clean, pardoned and reconciled?  "What is this small set of bad priests compared with their bishop, stirred up moreover by the despicable Ernest Renan who lied about La Salette as he did about Lourdes, pretending to have read all the books and documents when he had got no further than their titles!  "And you, priest of the diocese of Grenoble *[the Abbé de Nantes is of course referring to himself – ed.]*, you, the timid pilgrim of La Salette on three occasions, are you planning to present yourself before this same "beautiful Lady", whom you spurn over there, by bothering Her with your presence at Fatima, Her other and exactly similar shrine?"  I never address myself using the familiar *"tu"*. So whence this voice? From Mamine, perhaps! Re-reading my previous Letter, on the secret of Lourdes, and the similarity of these "lost mountains", half way on our flight to Fatima, as a step towards conversion before our arrival, I understood in fact that Lourdes alone spoke of La Salette, and that its message of prayer and penance found a parallel echo in every line I wrote! On Mount Gargas too, *there was all the space needed to accommodate the crowds who would come in procession*, and at Grenoble there were successive bishops, holy priests, including the Curé d’Ars and Saint Julien Eymard, ardent promoter of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of La Salette, who established perpetual adoration in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of La Salette, *you know it! formerly the chapel of the White Penitents in the rue Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, now renamed the rue Voltaire through the malice of the masonic Municipality, yes, the "****rue Voltaire chapel****" where you were ordained priest on 27 March 1948, ungrateful and indifferent to the lesson, the spirit and the grace of this blessed place!*  "All because you were told lies, which you believed. That there were no miracles at La Salette? But Mgr Giray published two volumes of La Salette’s miracles in 1921! And absurd stories like those told by the late Jesuit Dhanis about Fatima! such as the ridiculous supposed adventure of a pious old lady of Grenoble accused of having set up the whole scenario in the mountains, for what shameful reason? an invention of unfrocked priests, of comfortable Gallicans, Voltarians and Liberals confronted by the supernatural incarnate in this "beautiful Lady" weeping heavy tears and speaking in patois to two uneducated children on this mountain of the Matheysine, and eager to ridicule these good country priests and peasants who were forthwith converted and who stopped blaspheming and working on Sunday, as though by chance, led by an ultramontane, legitimist bishop who had escaped from the prisons of the Terror!"  Whilst hearing this severe voice, another, gentler and more merciful voice – but I am imagining this! – predicted that during this study which I was required to undertake without delay, I would receive through pure chance the very book I needed, and another book that would reveal the falsehood… There is nothing unusual in this, but, furthermore, I thought I would discover in the false secret the echo of the true one and would thus be providentially led back from my Grenoble diversion to the direct and rapid route to Fatima. The two apparitions enlighten and support each other, as will be seen in the ultimate conversion of the Pope when, in the end, he reveals their two veritable secrets.  Finally – and this too I may be imagining – this gentle voice compelled me, as a penance for my straying so long, and to mark my gratitude for the graces of this pilgrimage, to ask Our Holy Father the Pope, through all our happy pilgrims and through all the Catholic faithful, to insert in its rightful place in the Creed, this dogma which would thereby be enhanced, guaranteeing its victory over hell at the end of this century:  "**I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. *Amen!***"  The books arrived, both the good and the bad… During our Chartres pilgrimage, I read to our friends, all keen to penetrate this mystery, the account of the Apparition as found reproduced in these pages, in all its charming originality and simplicity, and I began to demonstrate its capital importance. It remained for us to study La Salette, once and for all, in order to discover its entire truth… It fell just right: we had just enough time to learn of this mystery in order to prepare for a worthy celebration of the feast of Our Lady of La Salette, the Reconciler of sinners, in this her 150th anniversary, on 19 September 1996, before packing our bags to be in Fatima on the 13th October.  Let us begin by looking into the Apparition and the Message. Then we shall unravel the true Secret from the false. Then throughout this long study, as with the previous stages, contacts and similarities, we will show that in very different places and under quite similar forms, *"multifariam multisque modis"*, in the words of Saint Paul (Heb 1.1), it is the same and ever maternal Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception, who was thus preparing, "on numerous occasions and in many ways", her ultimate appeal and her promise of salvation for the world.  13 July 1996  Two months have passed, doubtless taken up with many other things, but in the persistent thought of the enigma of La Salette. It is now time to expound certitudes, which have long been disputed but today are recognised. And, as always and as usual, once the summit has been conquered, an immense scene appears before our eyes, linking the mountains together and guaranteeing their coherence, beauty and wisdom, which we call the overall orthodromy. It is breath taking. This is the explanation of our title, which announces the continuity of events, the connection between the messages, the future verification of the secrets, the one by the other. In these pages I hope to show *"The whole truth of the apparitions"*, of their messages and their secrets, *"from La Salette to Fatima"*.  It is understood that I am not claiming to impose any of this research and its different results on the minds of our friends and readers. Everything, as always, is subject to the judgement of the sovereign Magisterium of Holy Church, our Mother, which is Roman.  *Bibliographical note.*  To keep everything simple, I would recommend both adults and children, for whom it was conceived, to read the strip cartoon published by Fleurs, no76, ***Les Bergers de La Salette***. It is historical and makes no concession to either legend or modernism. It is accessible for children and sufficient for busy adults.  Providence first guided me towards a book by Louis Bassette, ***Le Fait de La Salette*** (1846-1854) published by Cerf (Paris 1955). The book is clear, supremely honest, written in good quality French and Catholic. Its demonstration is scholarly and classical; it is unbeatable.  The eighth and last chapter, *Depuis un siècle: La fin de l’opposition. Importantes décisions et grandes heures*, judiciously and discreetly opens onto our hopes. This book rescued me from all incertitude and saved me from fatal error.  Then, I discovered in our library, ***Les Secrets de La Salette*** by Max Le Hidec, published in 1969 by N.E.L which, in the wake of the Council, is not afraid of violating the prohibition of the Holy Office and reveals heaps of secrets accumulated over a century concerning the ins and outs of shady ecclesiastical business. It is a book to be handled with caution and no doubt to be followed almost to the end of its conclusions.  Whereupon, we received from Téqui an enormous 626 page pocket book given as the definitive work by Hyacinthe Guilhot, ***La vraie Mélanie de La Salette*** (Nov 1995). This work by fanatical "Mélanistes" will poison the public with its staggering falsehood. Under the appearances of exhaustive science, it is an apology for the seer Mélanie, presented as the greatest saint and the one most favoured with mystical graces of all time. This wonderful life as revealed by Mélanie, and based on her words, writings, visions and confidences alone, is an abuse of confidence on the part of the authors and publishers. It is not dear, it is true, but at 88 Francs, it is still robbery.  The naive (?) Father Triclot, doctor in theology *et cetera*, stands surety for this enormous pseudo-mystical bric-à-brac, stopping all opposition with this argument, which he says is unanswerable:  "*I immediately add that Mélanie never knew these texts*[of Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, on "the true apostles of the last times", which she is accused of having appropriated!]*for the Saint’s manuscript was still unknown at that time; it was still mouldering away in a chest, half eaten at the edges by mice. Its publication is quite recent. Mélanie, therefore, could not have been influenced by it.*" (preface, p. 14)  "Quite recent", really? The encyclopaedia *Catholicisme*, (Paris, 1975), specifically states that the Treatise on the True Devotion "discovered by chance in 1842, was published the following year; today, it has gone into over three hundred editions and into more than twenty languages." (art. *Louis-Marie*, col. 1130) Mélanie, therefore, could not but have known it, she who devoured this kind of literature, when she began to speak of these things in 1853, ten years later.  It made me ill to see the revival of what Le Hidec calls the "Mélaniste" clan, when "Les Enfants de Notre-Dame de La Salette et de Saint Grignion de Montfort" Association sent me a book by Mgr Antonio Galli, honoured with a letter of approval by Mgr Hnilica, dated 13 May 1996, which, coming from Rome in the name of John Paul II’s personal friend, brings encouragement to the devotees of La Salette and at the same time to those "of the statue of Our Lady of Medjugorje which wept tears of blood at Civita Vecchia". As though that were not enough, the cover shows an autograph of the prestigious theologian that was Garrigou-Lagrange, photocopied and stuck there, to impose his opinion on us, accompanied by his signature: "I am inclined to think that Mélanie kept up her mission until her death. f. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP" Its title? ***La Bergere de Notre-Dame de La Salette***. Its content? Ah! What a surprise! The Association’s charismatics are so convinced of the suffocating holiness of their Mélanie that they publish everything, absolutely everything, which the more cautious of this poor visionary’s followers, even *Téqui’s*, had hitherto hidden or wreathed in mists of glory.  It was this little book that sealed my conviction and brought me back to the surest and purest ecclesiastical tradition, that of the Missionaries of La Salette and of their review**MARIE**, which was so precious in its day, that of our bishops of Grenoble, down to the one who ordained me priest of the diocese of La Salette on 27 March 1948. And it this that I am going to apply myself to now. |

**ACCOUNT OF THE APPARITION  
OF OUR LADY OF LA SALETTE**

**BY THE ABBÉ GIRAY, MISSIONARY OF LA SALETTE**  
*(le mois de Marie de La Salette, pilgrim’s booklet, 1911)*

  
The Virgin in tears on the mountainside, *Marie*, vol V, no 1.

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| It was Saturday the 19th September 1846, last of the Ember Days and the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, at about three o’clock in the afternoon: there were no clouds in the sky, no mist in the air… At that moment – beneath a radiant sun making all illusion or trickery impossible – a wonder took place on the mountain of La Salette at an altitude of 1800 metres, in the presence of two little shepherds: a "beautiful Lady" suddenly appeared before the wondering eyes of Pierre-Maximin Giraud and of Françoise-Mélanie Calvat-Mathieu. The two children, one of whom was eleven and the other nearly fifteen years old, were born at Corps, having in common only their place of origin, their poverty, their ignorance and even their occupation. But they were of very different character: the little boy was as boisterous, fickle and outward-going as the little girl was sullen, melancholic and taciturn. On the other hand, they were both carefree. Thus Maximin would eat all his day’s provisions in the morning, sharing them with his dog; and if asked how he was going to eat for the rest of the day, he would say, "But I am not hungry!" As for Mélanie, she would sleep in the stable in rain soaked clothes, or even in the mountains on freezing nights.  Moreover, the two children scarcely knew each other; Mélanie, who was four years older than Maximin, had been "in service" since the age of seven or eight, and as a consequence Maximin did not even suspect her existence. After having stayed successively at Quet-en-Beaumont, at Sainte-Luce, at Saint Michel…, Mélanie had been with Baptiste Pra, a farmer at La Salette, the hamlet of Ablandens, since the month of March 1846. Maximin was also "in service" in the same village, with Pierre Selme, but he had only been there since Monday, 14 September 1846. The previous day, Pierre Selme had gone to Corps to "hire" a replacement for his professional shepherd who was absent owing to sickness and who was later inconsolable at not having been there on the day of the Apparition… The master, therefore, came to see the wheelwright Giraud to ask if he could temporarily "hire" his little boy to watch over his four cows. It was agreed, and Maximin became a casual shepherd.  He met Mélanie for the first time only on Thursday evening of 17 September. Pierre Selme, who was scything below Planeau de La Salette, saw them playing games together: they were busy placing stones one on top of the other to make "paradises", decorated with alpine flowers, and that is where we shall see the "beautiful Lady" sitting.  On the 19th, they met at the same place, that is, at the Mont-sous-les-Baisses, with their little flocks. At about midday, acting on the orders of Pierre Selme, and at the ringing of the *Angelus*, they drove their cows to drink at the *Fontaines des Bêtes*; they then went up the valley as far as the River Sézia, which is fed by the *Fontaine des Hommes*, situated higher up; and then near the *Petite Fontaine*, at that time dried up, they took their frugal meal, arranged their provisions, after which they separated and, contrary to their custom, they fell asleep on the grass at some distance from each other.  At about 2.30 pm, Mélanie woke up first and then roused Maximin. They both climbed to the plateau overlooking the ravine; and as soon as they had reached the *Collet*, they saw their cows resting on the slopes of the Gargas. Reassured, they were on their way down when Mélanie uttered a cry on seeing a globe of light which shone and lit up the whole valley… In the meanwhile, Maximin had caught up with her and, sensing the fear of his little companion who had dropped the stick she was holding, he said, "Keep hold of your stick… If *it* does us any harm, I shall *hit* it hard!"  At that moment, the mysterious light opened up and a "beautiful Lady" appeared, seated on the stones the children had placed one on top of the other; She looked as though she were in inconsolable grief, with Her head in her hands and Her elbows on Her knees… Soon, She rose from Her rustic seat; then, calling the little shepherds and making a few steps towards them, She said: *"Come, My children, do not be afraid: I am here to proclaim great news to you."*  Feeling reassured, they went down into the ravine and approached the vision, which they could contemplate at their ease. Her headdress shone with a diadem of rays and a crown of roses. A white shawl was thrown over Her shoulders and crossed around the waist, bordered with a garland of roses. The dress of light was pure white and flecked with specks of gold. On Her chest, or rather inside, there was a crucifix, with hammer and nails "which stayed in place without anything to attach them". But, to support the cross and its Christ, there was a little chain round the neck; then a second chain, like a braid but without rings, seemed to crush the shoulders beneath it by its great weight, as though to symbolise the burden of our sins. Finally, there was a golden yellow apron – the humble livery of "the handmaid of the Lord" – and white shoes with a gold buckle and a cluster of roses…  The face was divinely beautiful, but marked with a profound sadness. Maximin could only see the forehead and the chin; the rest was too dazzling for him to be able to distinguish anything, whereas Mélanie was able to contemplate the entire face.  "How is it", Maximin was asked later, "that you were unable to see the Blessed Virgin’s face when Mélanie could?" – "I don’t know; perhaps I was not good enough." – "So you were not so good as Mélanie?" – "God knows… Maybe Mélanie needed to be *converted*. I don’t know!" This inoffensive jest shows that Maximin was a little envious of Mélanie; she was more favoured than he was. He had, however, guessed, from the sad tone of the voice, that this was an afflicted soul, "a mother, beaten perhaps by her children, and who had fled to the mountains to weep at her ease!" Mélanie understood better still the whole Mystery of La Salette as she saw the tears which flowed from Her eyes, to vanish in the light like sparks. Furthermore, not only did she notice that the hands were crossed one over the other in her sleeves, but also that Her ears were hidden, as was Her hair, beneath a kind of headdress or headband…  The "beautiful Lady" began to speak, first of all in French and then in patois; and Her speech was a mixture of complaints, reproaches, warnings and threats. The heavenly Messenger deplores the corrupt practices of her rebellious people, who blaspheme, who profane the holy day of Sunday, who violate the law of abstinence, who no longer pray and who hardly ever go to Mass, who thus provoke the divine wrath, weighing down the avenging arm of her Son ready to strike us, and exposing themselves to every kind of scourge, both private and public… But let us hear the language of this Queen and Mother:  *"If My people are not willing to submit themselves, I am forced to let go of My Son’s arm. It is so heavy and weighs Me down so much that I can no longer hold it. For all this time I have suffered for you! If I do not wish My Son to abandon you, I must take it upon Myself to pray for this continually. And the rest of you think little of this! In vain will you pray, in vain will you act, you will never be able to make up for the trouble I have taken for you all!*  *"I gave you six days to work, I kept the seventh for Myself and no one wishes to grant Me that one day. This is what weighs down the arm of My Son so much. Those who drive carts cannot swear without adding My Son’s name. These are the two things which weigh down the arm of My Son so much.*  *"If the harvest is spoiled, it is only because of you others. I made you see this last year with the potatoes; you took little account of this. It was quite the opposite when you found bad potatoes; you swore oaths, and you included the name of My Son. They will continue to go bad; at Christmas there will be none left."*  At this point, Mélanie looked at Maximin as though to ask him what the "beautiful Lady’s" words meant. But the Blessed Virgin immediately said: *"Ah! You do not understand French, My children. I shall tell it to you another way."* She then repeated these last phrases in patois: *"If the harvest is spoiled…"*, and the rest. Then She continued talking in the same popular dialect: *"If you have corn, you must not sow it. The beasts will eat all that you sow. And all that grows will fall to dust when you thresh it. A great famine will come. Before the famine comes, children under the age of seven will begin to tremble and will die in the arms of those who hold them. The others will do penance through hunger. The nuts will go bad, the grapes will become rotten."*  After these words, the Blessed Virgin continued speaking; but whilst seeing Her lips move, Mélanie could not hear. Maximin received a secret. Shortly after, the Beautiful Lady also entrusted Mélanie with a secret, and now Maximin ceased hearing.  A few reflections are necessary at this point due to the deplorable propagation of more or less recent imaginings claiming to publish the authentic text of Mélanie’s Secret, with apocalyptic commentaries.  For five years, the two children maintained a total discretion on the subject of the mysterious message: despite every conceivable attempt to extort the secret or to catch them out in a half confidence, the children remained absolutely indomitable… In 1851, however, they finally decided to make their Secrets known to the Pope, and to him alone. They consigned them to writing, therefore, and the documentary letters were transmitted to the Holy Father by two accredited messengers, who were received in audience on 18 July 1851. On reading these letters, Pius IX was visibly moved… The next day, Cardinal Lambruschini, Secretary of State, declared that the Holy Father had communicated to him the Secrets of La Salette. Thereafter, they remain in the pontifical archives.  All sensational publications, therefore, produced to feed public curiosity with the supposed Secrets of La Salette and their fanciful interpretations, must be regarded as suspect. This rash diffusion of literature was condemned by the Holy Office in 1880. All pamphlets or reviews, books or memoirs, emanating from these obstinate visionaries, were successively banned by the competent authorities.  Instead of thus hoping to penetrate the arcana of the future by holding forth in all directions on the content and the meaning of the Secrets of La Salette, it is much better to stick to the Fact itself and refer to the public Message. The Blessed Virgin, in effect, continued speaking in such a way as to be understood by the two shepherds, saying: *"If they are converted, the stones and rocks will change into heaps of wheat, and potatoes will be found sown in the earth."*  *"Do you say your prayers properly, My children?"* the Lady then asked them, and they replied: *"No, Madame, not so much." – "Ah! my children, you must say them morning and evening. When you can do no more, say a****Pater****and an****Ave Maria****; and when you have the time to do better, you will say more."*  *"Only a few old women go to Mass; in the summer, the rest work all day Sunday and in the winter, when they do not know what to do, they only go to Mass to make fun of religion. During Lent, they go to the butcher’s like hungry dogs!"*  Then the Blessed Virgin added: *"Have you ever seen spoilt wheat, My children?"* They both answered: *"Oh! no, Madame."* Then, She said to Maximin: *"But you, My child, you must have seen some once near Coin, with your father. The farmer said to your father: ‘Come and see how my wheat has gone bad!’ You both went to see. Your father took two or three ears in his hand, rubbed them, and they fell to dust. Then, on your way back, when you were no more than half an hour away from Corps, your father gave you a piece of bread, and said: ‘Take it, eat while you can, my son, for I don’t know who will be eating anything next year if the wheat is spoiled like that.’"* And Maximin replied: *"That’s quite true, Madame; I didn’t remember."*  The Blessed Virgin ended Her speech with these words, spoken in French: *"And so, My children, you will pass this on to all My people."* Leaving the shepherds, She crossed the stream of the Sézia and without looking back to them, She said a second time: *"And so, My children, you will pass this on to all my people."* Then She walked towards the plateau from where She rose above the ground to regain the serene heights of the firmament and of Paradise… The water from the *petite Fontaine* began to flow! That evening, as the sun went down, Maximin and Mélanie hurried back with their flocks to the village of Ablandens to tell their masters all that they had seen and heard on the mountain.  And the account the little shepherds gave on that same day, 19 September 1846, was invariably repeated by them before a countless number of pilgrims as before the civil and religious authorities.  "I certify", wrote Mélanie on 4 November 1850, "I certify in order to testify to the Truth, and for the greater glory of God and the honour of the Blessed Virgin, that I have always told and shall always tell, without any variation, the truth concerning the Event of La Salette of 19 September 1846, and that if I had to swear an oath on what I then saw and heard, I would do so without fear of offending God or of committing perjury." Until the day of her death, 15 December 1904, she maintained her original account in its entirety – an account which she reiterated on the Holy Mountain at the time of her last visit on 28 July 1903.  Maximin likewise wrote the following note on 14 April 1847: "I declare in the presence of God that I saw the Blessed Virgin on the mountain of Dorcières, as radiant as the sun." He kept to the same words in his final testament: "After my death, let no one assure you or say that I was heard to deny the great Event of La Salette; for in lying to the whole world, such a one would be lying to himself." Again, before his death, on 1 March 1875, he wished to make a solemn renewal of his profession of faith: "The Holy Viaticum was there; also present were several people from the neighbourhood, summoned on behalf of the dying man. Then with a dying breath, he said: ‘I take God to my witness, my God whom I am about to receive, my God who will be my Judge, that I have never lied concerning the Apparition of La Salette: I have told what I saw and heard; this I swear on the salvation of my soul!’"  What more could one want? One of those present then took it into his head to cast doubt on the perpetuity of the salutary effects produced by the event or even on the future of La Salette itself: "Bah!" said one, "it may last another year, and then it will fall away!" – "***It will fall away***", answered Maximin, "***it will fall away when Religion falls away…*** You’ll see! The Blessed Virgin will never let anyone come along and wipe out Her Mountain." "You see", he added in the presence of attacks directed against the Apparition, at the beginning of the year 1851, "***the Miracle of La Salette is a flower now being dragged in the mud, but it will bear fruit in autumn and in spring it will re-blossom.***"  Mélanie gives the same assurance: "Have you", they asked her in 1854, "heard of all the lies now being uttered against La Salette by the enemies of the Apparition?" – "No", she answered; "***but, they can say what they like, La Salette will always triumph!***"  Yes, wise and upright minds will always bend before the evidence and will radiate their grateful enthusiasm, once enlightened by the light of the facts and reasoning. If there are, among our readers, some who at this point experience a painful perplexity, as did the Curé d’Ars himself, we hope that they will soon conclude as he did, once better informed and happy in the end to learn the consoling truth: "It would now be impossible for me not to believe in La Salette. I requested signs in order to believe in La Salette, and I obtained them: ***one can and one should believe in La Salette!***"    **LA SALETTE IS CATHOLIC IN ITS PEOPLE, ITS SAINTS, ITS HIERARCHY**  It is difficult to imagine a mystery more simple than that of La Salette. A single apparition, on 19 September 1846, to two shepherds, a brief message which they memorise faultlessly, half in French which they hear and retain without understanding a word, and half in patois. The message is for everybody: *"And so, my children, you will pass this on to all my people."* However, the "beautiful Lady" interrupted Her speech to give, first one and then the other, a secret. Each child has a secret which the other will not know, secrets which they will never tell for five years despite all sorts of ingratiating or brutal attempts to make them yield. Then, the Blessed Virgin, for it is She, since She speaks of Jesus as Her Son, ascends to Heaven, turning Her eyes towards Rome, as seen and understood by Mélanie. Thereafter the event is never repeated, and no heavenly enlightenment is given concerning this event, which is, therefore, sufficient in itself.  Because of this, the indefinitely repeated narration, always in exactly the same terms by the two children, will appear in countless books and studies on La Salette without any embellishment, with the danger that constant re-reading will end in boredom. But no, at every reading, thoughts and details are revealed which renew our interest and our emotion, generating a conversion of hearts and morals.  **THE DIVINE ORTHODROMY**  To discover the effect this apparition immediately had on the good Catholic people of France, I like to quote the testimony of the great Cardinal de Cabrières, Archbishop of Montpellier, disciple of Mgr Freppel and friend of Action Française, known for his support of the wine growers’ revolt in 1907, because it is touching, but also because further on we shall invoke his authorised testimony as Prince of the Church. Here, it is the adolescent who had the good fortune to be informed of the nearby and recent event. Later, it will be the venerable and holy Archbishop of Montpellier, who will record his youthful emotion and his immediate certitude. This is what he will write in 1915:  "It is at this moment – September 1846 – that the rumour of mysterious events at La Salette reached the family circle. Need I say how piously and eagerly such news was greeted by my mother, my sister and her two nieces?… *They remembered the Apparition of the Most Blessed Virgin in the chapel of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, in 1830; and for them it was comforting to learn that, sixteen years later, the Mother of God Herself again wished to give proof of Her care. They asked themselves whether this very recent manifestation did not herald some menacing crisis affecting the country’s tranquillity, to which Our Lady promised in advance to supply the remedy of Her powerful intercession.* How could I not thrill at the thought that not far from the place where I lived, the Blessed Virgin had shown Herself and had spoken and wept! Moreover, there was nothing lacking to the austere poetry of this apparition…" (Bassette, p. 30)  In fact, the de Cabrières family went to the heart of the matter in linking this event of 1846 with the apparitions of the Most Blessed Virgin at the rue du Bac in 1830, and in interpreting this further warning as the announcement of another chastisement – 1848 will bring back the same sad popular uprisings of the "*trois glorieuses*" of 1830 – but also of a renewed mercy. The "orthodromic" continuation of Our Lady’s great apparitions in the 19th century will confirm this constant two part lesson: the first, a warning and threats of chastisements for France, eldest daughter of the Church, the second, a promise of forgiveness and of renaissance…  **A MESSAGE OF CONVERSION**  There is nothing more simple or more accessible than the message addressed by the Blessed Virgin to the people and clergy of that period and of those poor and remote districts. This "pastoral" message was perfectly adapted, immediately understood and bore amazing fruits of conversion.  To quote only the early examples: the Parish Priest of La Salette himself who exclaimed in his naive faith (*sic*) on 20 September: *"Ah, my children, how happy you are! You have seen the Blessed Virgin! Ah, I said to my parishioners, you must not work on Sundays! What will become of us?"* And on that same day his sermon was pronounced with such feeling that, at the time, nobody understood a thing, but his flock were soon to be enlightened concerning the announced chastisements and God’s mercy to be gained. He himself will be the first to obey Our Lady (P. Laurent, Marie V, 1, p. 26).  And again this, which is more convincing than a hundred speeches, concerning the truth of the remarkable fact and of its immediate application… "The wheelwright Giraud, Maximin’s father, was indifferent but not godless… One day, it was the Friday following the Apparition, 25 September, exasperated by all that was being said about his son, he wanted to stop Maximin from telling his story in public and even beat him, but in tears the child said to him: ‘But, Father, the Lady also spoke to me about you.’ – ‘About me?’, answered Maximin’s father; ‘and what did She say about me?’ Maximin then related the episode of the land at Coin. The father was amazed to hear such a fact recalled – a fact he was sure of never having mentioned to anybody and which occurred without witnesses. ‘Ah! She told you that! That is something quite extraordinary… Well then, I shall also go up and have a look. But then I have asthma; if it is the Blessed Virgin who appeared to you and if She is willing to cure me, I shall believe in the Apparition and I promise to convert’"… And so it was done. Having drunk from the miraculous spring, he was suddenly cured and then he went to church. It was twenty years since he had last been to confession! He remained a good Christian until the end of his days and died an edifying death (*Les miracles de La Salette*, Giray, p. 235). The wonderful simplicity of heavenly things!  The nearby town of Corps in Matheysine was also converted en bloc: they renounced their religious indifference; they found their way back to the Church and the practice of the sacraments to the amazement of the clergy of Grenoble. And shortly after, their parish priest, who had been barred for scandalous behaviour, repented and was reconciled to the Church in a most edifying manner through the grace of Our Lady of La Salette (Bassette, p. 286-287).  If the tears of the Queen of Heaven and the pleas of Her motherly Heart had the gift of touching hearts, Her grave words captured minds all the more in that they began to be fulfilled in the months following the apparition, freezing the smile on the lips of those who made fun of the "Peasant Virgin". The year 1847 was a year of famine, claiming more than a hundred thousand victims in France and a million in Europe. At Christmas, there were no more potatoes as Our Lady had predicted. At the same time, the vineyards were ravaged by vine-pest. Nuts – so important in Dauphiné – had become worth their weight in gold, for there were no more. As though that were not enough, an epidemic decimated the number of small children, who were seized by shivering, and France would be devastated by cholera on two occasions. According to witnesses, out of every five persons who went up to La Salette in 1856, three were in mourning.  **THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE SAINTS**  It is important to emphasise the fact that the whole region was making a journey, not only physically by going on pilgrimage to the very place of the Apparition, but also morally, through a moral conversion modelled on the "beautiful Lady’s" warnings. Thus, it was the first time in France since the Revolution that countless pilgrims came on pilgrimage without a declaration or order of command from the clergy. The pilgrimage of the first anniversary was impressive: a hundred thousand pilgrims beneath torrential rain. The published reports of this pilgrimage stunned the whole of France. The "Holy Man of Tours", the venerable Monsieur Dupont, came on foot and recounted the happy news to the Carmelites of Tours, among whom was the confidant of the Holy Face, Sister Marie de Saint-Pierre, mysteriously warned of the heavenly apparition, which she had greatly desired through her prayers. Inset here, is an account of these supernatural and most certain events:   |  | | --- | | **MYSTERIOUS CONVERGENCE**  "… Despite her insistence, Sister Marie de Saint-Pierre still bad not succeeded in having the Work of Reparation established as Our Lord seemed to want it. In 1845, having lost all hope of convincing Mgr Morlot, she understood that her only recourse would be prayer. And it is towards the Blessed Virgin that she deliberately turned. Every day, she recited the Rosary in order to obtain the establishment of the Work and France’s salvation. Before the imminence of a danger she felt coming, and the supernatural certitude she possessed of the efficacy of a remedy people refuse to apply, she cried out:*‘****Ah, how much I suffer in being the only guardian of something so important for the whole of France… Blessed Virgin, appear to someone in the world and impart to him what has been communicated to me concerning France.’***  "Nearly a year passed. But on the 1st September 1846, the Mother Prioress of the Carmel informed M. Dupont of what Sister Marie de Saint-Pierre had just related, and which had greatly impressed her. M. Dupont had noted the very terms related by the Prioress. Our Lord had just said:  *"****My Mother has just spoken to men of My anger. She has shown Me her bosom saying: ‘Allow Thyself to be moved by this bosom which suckled Thee and let blessings be poured over all My other children.’ And then, She came down to earth, full of mercy. We must all have great confidence in Her!****"* (Le message de soeur Marie de Saint-Pierre, Louis Van den Bossche, p. 164-165) |   A few days after this memorable first anniversary of the Apparition, M. Gérin, priest of the Cathedral of Grenoble, wrote an account of it for his friend, the Abbé des Genettes, Rector of Our Lady of Victories in Paris: "On 19 September, I went to the mountain of La Salette; it was one of the loveliest days of my life. The pathway was all muddy after the rain of the previous day, not to mention its natural ruggedness. When we finally reached the holy Mountain, we were thrilled to see a veritable Israelite camp, groups on all sides with their horses and donkeys. I have never seen such a sight…" (Bassette, p. 82) The divinely inspired devotions of the Church recall and support one another: at Our Lady of Victories, the most Blessed Virgin had offered Her most Holy and Immaculate Heart for sinners to take refuge; here, on the mountain of La Salette, She offered Herself as their "*Reconciler*", according to the term sprung spontaneously from popular devotion.  Miracles of all sorts and in large number occurred. One of them, the cure of Marguerite Guillot, took place beneath the eyes of the future Saint Julien Eymard, the apostle of the Eucharist, on 8 September 1848. Having been miraculously cured, she will go on to become the co-foundress of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. As for Father Eymard, he adhered to La Salette with all his faith and for good; he had the grace of celebrating his last Mass in the chapel of the Missionaries at Grenoble on 22 July 1868! Another saint will, in his turn, also come to La Salette a few years later: Don Bosco who, from 1846, marvelled to learn that the Blessed Virgin Mary had chosen for Her confidants two poor disinherited children, speaking the patois of the mountains, like those for whom he had just been inspired to consecrate his life and his work. He immediately became the apostle and propagandist of Her Message.  **THE CHURCH’S INQUIRY**  Before such an influx of pilgrims and such an abundance of graces, it was for the Church to pronounce on the truth of the Fact of La Salette in its three components: The apparition in itself, the public message and the secrets given to each of the two children. In his book **Le Fait de La Salette (1846-1854)**, Louis Bassette has decisively shown that the Church perfectly fulfilled her mission with wisdom, prudence and discretion, and that her conviction now rests on unshakeable foundations. The historian has retained all the facts and documents necessary to manifest the divine orthodromy, to satisfy the demands of historical science and to meet the needs of the heart and of the faithful’s devotion. He has discreetly mentioned the disturbing shadows – we shall come back to this –; but on the other hand, he has shown all the scandalous force of the opposition of unbelievers and their press campaigns in order to demonstrate their inanity and their odiousness and so highlight the divine Truth. Let us follow the main points of his demonstration:  The first information dates from the month of October 1846. Different ecclesiastics questioned the seers and then addressed reports to the Bishop of Grenoble, Mgr de Bruillard, who before long appointed Father Rousselot, his Vicar General, one of the best theologians of the diocese, as official investigator. In the course of his inquiry, the Vicar General passed from uncertainty to faith; he will become one of the most zealous and perspicacious defenders of La Salette. For the moment, he limited himself to seeing that all the statements were concordant, that the accounts were truthful – the children seemed to be incapable of deceiving or of being deceived – and that the facts could not be reduced to natural forces alone.  The fury of the anticlerical press did not prevent the Bishop from convening, in November 1847, a commission of inquiry in which he was careful to include opponents among the clergy of his diocese. Father Rousselot was the appointed reporter, whose answers to the twelve objections against the reality of the Apparition (Bassette, p. 135-147) won the near unanimity of his fellow priests. His report entitled "*The Truth about the event of La Salette*" was addressed to Pope Pius IX in the month of August 1848. The Pope found the time to reply on 20 September, when the revolution that was soon to drive him into exile was already grumbling: "It was especially pleasing for Us to learn what you relate of this numerous concourse of pilgrims who flock from all parts to honour the Blessed Virgin Mary, and it is particularly pleasing to learn that once there, these people implore the all powerful protection and the help of the Mother of God for Our humble Person. And so, we have the greatest desire that these people of whom you speak should be told that We impart to them Our apostolic blessing."  **THE TRIAL OF THE CURÉ D’ARS**  Mgr de Bruillard could have given his judgement at that time, as he was empowered to do and dearly wished to do, but he was prevented by two curious procedures on the part of his Metropolitan of Lyon, Cardinal de Bonald, who went as far as to support the clergy of Grenoble who had declared themselves against the reality of the Apparition. It is painful to read this account in Bassette (p. 148 sq), but this we know: from the beginning, La Salette was a sign of contradiction, not only on the part of outside enemies, but also among the clergy, as Fatima will be 70 years later.  Especially as this veiled and ill-intentioned opposition was added to by what is called the "Ars incident". On 24 and 25 September 1850, Maximin visited Ars, where he met the holy Curé, who had been in favour of La Salette the day before, preaching its Message, distributing medals, exhorting his penitents to go there on pilgrimage, but then after this interview he became painfully reticent on the subject. Here again, Bassette says all there is to be known about the circumstances of this painful event, which was "the most cruel thorn in the crown" of this holy priest (p. 186-205). He did not return to his previous belief until eight years later, after having obtained from Heaven the three signs he had requested in order to be free of this persistent doubt.  Another saint, Father Eymard, found that on this occasion too much credit had been given to the judgement of the Curé d’Ars, for whom he nevertheless felt the most ardent veneration and affection. "In perspective, too much weight is given to the opinion of the Curé d’Ars. Here, it is very ordinary, as far as judgement is concerned (*!*)…" he wrote to his great friend from Grenoble, the Abbé Rousselot. And to the same priest, he wrote this letter dated 29 January 1851:  "*Monsieur le Vicaire général et bon Père,*  "I thank you with all my heart for your two letters; they only confirm me in my original conviction concerning the truth of the apparition of La Salette. I have professed my conviction despite all its enemies, and the incredible thing is that through wanting to be prudent, the ecclesiastical scholars become incredulous! What harm they have done to weak souls and to the indifferent! I particularly like these words of Mgr the Bishop of Belley (Mgr Devie) to one of my friends: *‘What has happened at Ars is no more than a trial, a storm mused by the devil; the fact of La Salette will emerge from that all the more brilliant.’* Those who speak against La Salette were content to be able to justify their incredulity and paid no attention to avoid a woman’s credulity, as they call it, and they fell into a strange contradiction in basing their judgement on an event that is ridiculous in the eyes of reason and common sense, such as occurred at Ars, without proof, without examination, and without dignity. Today, they are beginning to fall silent and to say: the truth will come to light…" (Bassette, p. 204)  **THE TRANSMISSION OF THE SECRETS**  The public’s curiosity and the interest of the clergy soon focused on the famous secrets. Every means were used to extort the secrets from the seers, who proved to be of an invincible constancy and never consented to divulge them to anyone. The Abbé Dupanloup learned this to his cost… The children invariably repeated: "The Lady has forbidden us to say it." And in answer to the question put to Maximin, "What if you had to tell your secret or die?" he categorically replied: "*I would die…* I would not tell it."  When Cardinal de Bonald ,in his turn, wanted to know the secrets, in March 1851, he argued that he was "the Pope’s advisor" and that he had to be given the secrets so that he could "transmit them to His Holiness", who could then finally settle this quarrelsome problem. It was a crude trap, and was bound to succeed. The seers wrote their text separately. Maximin wrote his on the 2nd July and Mélanie on the 6th. But Mélanie was categorically opposed to her secret being transmitted to the Pope by any intermediary other than her own bishop. Mgr de Bruillard, therefore, sealed the two envelopes himself, after having read their contents, and his two envoys, MM. Rousselot and Gérin placed them in Pope Pius IX’s own hand on 18 July. What took place at the papal audience is known to us through a letter Father Rousselot wrote to his bishop:  "His Holiness unsealed the three letters in our presence, read them, and commenting on Maximin’s he said: *‘This has the candour and simplicity of a child.’* We replied that these children were little mountain dwellers, who, for some months had been in an educational institute.  "In order to read these two letters more easily, His Holiness stood up and went towards the window to open the shutter. We followed him. After reading Mélanie’s letter, His Holiness said to us: *‘I must re-read this with a calm head.’* While re-reading Mélanie’s letter, the Holy Father showed a certain emotion in his cheeks. His lips contracted and his cheeks swelled.  "When he had finished reading, the Holy Father said to us:  *‘****France is threatened with scourges.****She is not the only culpable one. Germany, Italy and the whole of Europe are culpable and deserve to be chastised.****I have less to fear from Proudhon than from religious indifference and human respect.****Your soldiers* (the French army, which, after its victory of 29 June 1849 over the troops of Mazzini and Garibaldi, made it possible for Pius IX to return to Rome, which he did on the following 12 April, whilst the French occupied the eternal City until 1866),*your soldiers kneel when they see me, but only after looking left and right to make sure they are not seen.****It is not for nothing that the Church is called militant and that you see here the Captain*** (bringing his right hand up to his chest)… *I have had your book examined by Mgr Frattini, promoter of the faith, and he told me that it was all right, he was pleased with it and that it radiated the truth.*"  "Furthermore, His Holiness told us that he would reply to Your Excellency in a way to make you forget the vexations caused you by the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons. It is impossible, my Lord, to tell you how good, affable and kind the Pope is. It is also impossible for us to describe our happiness as we emerged from this audience, especially when thinking of the happiness you would experience at seeing the work of La Salette crowned with the happiest success and having obtained the most decisive approval…  "The next day, we saw H.E. Cardinal Fornari, to whom I paid homage in my writings on La Salette. The Cardinal had known of this fact during his time as Nuncio in France. He told us that he would read my work with pleasure: *‘Besides’*, he added, *‘I am alarmed by such wonders. We have in our religion all that is necessary for the conversion of sinners, and****when Heaven employs such means, the evil must be very grave****’.*"  In his report, M. Gérin added this most important point:  *"Simply from the few crumbs of these secrets which have reached us, we think that Maximin foretells****mercy and the rehabilitation of all things****, and that Mélanie announces****great chastisements****."* (Bassette, p. 229) The Pope also had the secrets read by Cardinal Lambruschini, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites. As neither the Pope nor the Cardinal could find fault with the contents of the message that had been transmitted to them, Pius IX encouraged Mgr de Bruillard to recognize the supernatural facts of La Salette, by virtue of his competence as Ordinary of the place. The Church would at last pronounce through the authorised voice of her pastors.  The Pope’s fatherly kindness and the speed with which the decision was reached made Father Rousselot conclude: "Finally, my Lord, I think that the calumnies of the press, the story of Ars and the ill will of the opposition, which are the prime reasons for our visit to Rome, will have contributed to the clearest, swiftest and most decisive solution of all the difficulties. Thus will be verified for the Fact of La Salette the words *Salutem ex inimicis nostris*."  **THE OFFICIAL APPROVAL OF 1851**  Mgr de Bruillard did not have to be begged to do what he regarded as a sacred duty. On 19 September 1851, he published a pastoral letter for the fifth anniversary of the Apparition in which he affirmed that the Apparition "has within itself all the characteristics of the truth, and that ***the faithful are justified in believing it beyond doubt and for certain***" (art. 1). "Hence, in order to bear our warmest gratitude to God and to the glorious Virgin Mary, ***we authorise the devotion to Our Lady of La Salette***. We allow the clergy to preach on this great Event and to draw the practical and moral consequences arising from it." (art. 3) "We expressly forbid the faithful and the clergy of our diocese ever to speak or write against the Event which we proclaim this day and which, henceforth, demands the respect of all." (art. 5)  He concluded by saying: "We entreat you, our dear brethren, for the sake of your heavenly and even earthly interests, seriously to examine yourselves, to do penance for your sins, and particularly for those committed against the second and third commandments of God. (*A confraternity of reparation for blasphemies and profanations of Sundays will soon be raised to the rank of archconfraternity, under the name of Our Reconciling Lady of La Salette, by the Pope himself and enriched with numerous indulgences.*) We entreat you, our dearly beloved brethren: ***make yourselves docile to the voice of Mary who calls you to penance, and who, on behalf of Her Son, threatens you with spiritual and temporal ills if, remaining insensitive to Her maternal warnings, you harden your hearts.***"  It was not by chance that the Blessed Virgin chose to manifest Herself in the diocese of such a pious and deserving bishop, just as we have seen Her favouring with Her visit priests according to Her Heart: good priests like Father Guérin at Pontmain, Father Peyramale at Lourdes and Father des Genettes at Paris! Mgr de Bruillard had been one of the seven "guillotine chaplains" under the Terror, and under the Restoration he was "the model of Parisian parish priests", according to the Duchess of Angoulême. Appointed to the see of Grenoble in 1826, he did considerable good there despite the persecutions he had to suffer under Louis-Philippe’s government for his legitimist convictions: three hundred churches were built or enlarged, a hundred parishes erected, a great number of religious communities established, countless works of charity achieved…   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette5.jpg *The shrine of La Salette*, built near the place of the Apparition (in the foreground, the valley of the Sézia) at the centre of an imposing mountain ring formed by the Gargas and the Chamoux. The first stone was blessed by Mgr de Bruillard in 1852; the completed basilica was consecrated in 1879. |   A year had not passed since his doctrinal judgement before he announced, in a further pastoral letter of 1 May 1852, the erection of a shrine on the mountain of the Apparition and the institution of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, commissioned to serve the shrine. It was the venerable prelate’s *Nunc dimittis* which allowed his joy to spill over into an act of thanksgiving towards "Her who came from above to our mountains to plant there something of a rallying sign, a sign of salvation, a radiant beacon, a bronze serpent to which pious souls have raised their eyes to divert the heavenly wrath and to heal us of incurable wounds!" And he concluded with these magnificent words:  "It had to be thus, our Very Dear Brethren. It is not in vain that the Mother of Mercy deigned to visit the children of men. It is not in vain that at the sight of disorders which rouse the anger of Her Son, She came as though to take refuge in our mountains, to shed tears, to warn us of the chastisements that were reserved for us if we did not convert; to remind us of the fear of God, respect for His Holy Name, the sanctification of the Sunday and observation of all the commandments of God and of His Church. Words come down from such a height should have an immense echo and should be heard by every nation, just as the place where She showed Herself had to be, so it seems, high enough to be seen by all peoples. Go back to the origin of this great event: you see its almost unknown birth, its prompt and rapid diffusion throughout France and Europe, its soaring to the four corners of the world, and finally its providential arrival in the capital of the Christian world. To God alone be the honour and glory! We have merely been the feeble instrument of His adorable will. This amazing and wonderful success is due to the August Virgin of La Salette: She alone has arranged everything to bring about this unhoped for result; She alone has triumphed over every obstacle, answered every objection and dissolved every difficulty; She alone has prepared the success; She alone will know how to crown Her work. For our part, we have only to thank her a thousand times for the purely gratuitous choice She has made of us to be the herald of Her glory and of the merciful protection with which She is ever willing to cover our beloved diocese, our dear country and the whole world."  The following 25 May, he wanted, despite his age – he was 86! – to ascend his "dear mountain" on horseback in order to bless the first stone of the future shrine. Despite the persistent rain, whole parishes climbed the mountain in long processions (one should read the account of this magnificent and holy ceremony in Bassette, p. 284-285). Mgr de Bruillard then tended his resignation.  **APPROVAL CONFIRMED IN 1854**  It fell to Mgr Ginoulhiac, appointed bishop of Grenoble in May 1853, to consolidate his predecessor’s work. It was not easy, for the opposition had reared its head. Taking advantage of the new bishop’s liberal attitudes, the opposition multiplied infamous articles and pamphlets against La Salette. A lost priest even claimed to have discovered a certain demoiselle de Lamerlière who supposedly passed herself off in the mountains as the Blessed Virgin. It was grotesque! Even more serious: a memorandum addressed to the Pope against the judgement of 1851 was published in Grenoble. Pius IX then urged Mgr Ginoulhiac to intervene. The Bishop then re-examined the dossier, studying it scrupulously, and in a pastoral letter dated 4 November 1854, he not only condemned the memorandum in question but renewed his predecessor’s doctrinal judgement in a more explicit and this time definitive way. The following 8 December, the Bishop of Grenoble went to Rome to hear Pius IX proclaim the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which was wonderfully confirmed four years later by the Immaculate Virgin herself at Lourdes. Thus, from one mountain to another, the thread of Marian orthodromy is unbroken.  At La Salette, the Church will now continue her work in an impeccable manner: the work of the pilgrimages will never stop, supported by all the bishops of Grenoble without exception, nor will that of the Missionaries whose main aim will be to spread the devotion to *"Mary, Mediatrix, help of mankind"* (Mgr Ginoulhiac), all powerful and supplicating, turning away from sinful mankind the scourges of God’s wrath, on condition that we respond to Her appeal and obey Her… As for the seers, Mgr Ginhoulhiac declared on 19 September 1855: *"****The mission of the shepherds is ended; that of the Church begins.****They can move away, become dispersed in the world, even unfaithful to the great grace received, but****the Apparition of Mary will not thereby be shaken; for it is certain and nothing coming after can act against it.****"*  **THE FIRST NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE**  To end, let us relate a little known episode of the history of La Salette – an episode that could serve as a figurative for our last months of ascent towards Fatima. I find this episode related in the review *Marie*, written by the Assumptionist father, Émile Gabel (p. 66-69).  I quote: "Father d’Alzon had the idea, from the time of the First Vatican Council, of forming a Catholic league for the defence of the Church. The plan, mentioned in a letter addressed to Fathers Picard and Bailly, on 10 February 1870, was grandiose…" It took shape in 1872 under the form of a crusade of national pilgrimages. The goal of the first of these was La Salette. One by one, the obstacles were overcome and the pilgrims who left from Paris, on 18 August 1872, numbered **seven hundred**, soon to be joined by other groups from Dijon, Ars and Lyons. "Pilgrims!… that they were through and through. Neither human respect nor fear of exhaustion moderated their ardour… Neither silly jokes nor insults could wear down the zeal of the pilgrims, encouraged on all sides by the sympathy of other fellow countrymen. At Grenoble, however, matters grew more serious and the pious procession was spared little by way of contempt: they were jeered, spat upon and showered with mud and stones. It was, as the biographer of Father Picard magnificenfly wrote, *‘The consecration of this new crusade’*. The pilgrims felt no fear, no bitterness, no hatred and no regrets: they were content to answer those insulting them with: ‘We shall pray for you at La Salette.’  "On 21 August, our pilgrims finally arrived within sight of the mountain of the Apparition, some by coach, some on mule, some on foot. A group from Marseilles and several from Grenoble were already there, around their bishop, Mgr Paulinier, an old friend of Father d’Alzon’s from their youth.  "History has preserved the theme of the sermon given by Father Picard once the pilgrimage had gathered. Overflowing with faith and enthusiasm, he commented on the words of scripture with which the Bishop of Grenoble had greeted the pilgrims: *‘Vadam ad montem myrrhae et ad collem thuris’*. Yes, truly on this day of splendour among all days, La Salette became ‘the mountain of myrrh and the hill of incense’. The prayer of the pilgrims, weeping over their sins and those of France, could not fail to be heard by Heaven. Two whole days were filled with ceremonies, processions and pious exercises."  On 22 August, a general Council of pilgrimages was established – a Council which would give an extraordinary momentum to this renaissance of faith and piety, to be greeted by holy Pope Pius IX as the dawn of a "new era". The whole of France was shaken, and it would not have taken much for the long awaited "restoration of all things" to have come about in the following year… Tomorrow, it will come to pass, through the grace of Fatima and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary!  http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette6.jpg *Pilgrimage to La Salette* on the anniversary day of the Apparition, according to an engraving from the end of the 19th century, Marie V. p. 18. |

**ACCOUNT OF THE APPARITION  
OF OUR LADY OF LA SALETTE**

**BY THE ABBÉ GIRAY, MISSIONARY OF LA SALETTE**  
*(le mois de Marie de La Salette, pilgrim’s booklet, 1911)*

  
The Virgin in tears on the mountainside, *Marie*, vol V, no 1.

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| It was Saturday the 19th September 1846, last of the Ember Days and the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, at about three o’clock in the afternoon: there were no clouds in the sky, no mist in the air… At that moment – beneath a radiant sun making all illusion or trickery impossible – a wonder took place on the mountain of La Salette at an altitude of 1800 metres, in the presence of two little shepherds: a "beautiful Lady" suddenly appeared before the wondering eyes of Pierre-Maximin Giraud and of Françoise-Mélanie Calvat-Mathieu. The two children, one of whom was eleven and the other nearly fifteen years old, were born at Corps, having in common only their place of origin, their poverty, their ignorance and even their occupation. But they were of very different character: the little boy was as boisterous, fickle and outward-going as the little girl was sullen, melancholic and taciturn. On the other hand, they were both carefree. Thus Maximin would eat all his day’s provisions in the morning, sharing them with his dog; and if asked how he was going to eat for the rest of the day, he would say, "But I am not hungry!" As for Mélanie, she would sleep in the stable in rain soaked clothes, or even in the mountains on freezing nights.  Moreover, the two children scarcely knew each other; Mélanie, who was four years older than Maximin, had been "in service" since the age of seven or eight, and as a consequence Maximin did not even suspect her existence. After having stayed successively at Quet-en-Beaumont, at Sainte-Luce, at Saint Michel…, Mélanie had been with Baptiste Pra, a farmer at La Salette, the hamlet of Ablandens, since the month of March 1846. Maximin was also "in service" in the same village, with Pierre Selme, but he had only been there since Monday, 14 September 1846. The previous day, Pierre Selme had gone to Corps to "hire" a replacement for his professional shepherd who was absent owing to sickness and who was later inconsolable at not having been there on the day of the Apparition… The master, therefore, came to see the wheelwright Giraud to ask if he could temporarily "hire" his little boy to watch over his four cows. It was agreed, and Maximin became a casual shepherd.  He met Mélanie for the first time only on Thursday evening of 17 September. Pierre Selme, who was scything below Planeau de La Salette, saw them playing games together: they were busy placing stones one on top of the other to make "paradises", decorated with alpine flowers, and that is where we shall see the "beautiful Lady" sitting.  On the 19th, they met at the same place, that is, at the Mont-sous-les-Baisses, with their little flocks. At about midday, acting on the orders of Pierre Selme, and at the ringing of the *Angelus*, they drove their cows to drink at the *Fontaines des Bêtes*; they then went up the valley as far as the River Sézia, which is fed by the *Fontaine des Hommes*, situated higher up; and then near the *Petite Fontaine*, at that time dried up, they took their frugal meal, arranged their provisions, after which they separated and, contrary to their custom, they fell asleep on the grass at some distance from each other.  At about 2.30 pm, Mélanie woke up first and then roused Maximin. They both climbed to the plateau overlooking the ravine; and as soon as they had reached the *Collet*, they saw their cows resting on the slopes of the Gargas. Reassured, they were on their way down when Mélanie uttered a cry on seeing a globe of light which shone and lit up the whole valley… In the meanwhile, Maximin had caught up with her and, sensing the fear of his little companion who had dropped the stick she was holding, he said, "Keep hold of your stick… If *it* does us any harm, I shall *hit* it hard!"  At that moment, the mysterious light opened up and a "beautiful Lady" appeared, seated on the stones the children had placed one on top of the other; She looked as though she were in inconsolable grief, with Her head in her hands and Her elbows on Her knees… Soon, She rose from Her rustic seat; then, calling the little shepherds and making a few steps towards them, She said: *"Come, My children, do not be afraid: I am here to proclaim great news to you."*  Feeling reassured, they went down into the ravine and approached the vision, which they could contemplate at their ease. Her headdress shone with a diadem of rays and a crown of roses. A white shawl was thrown over Her shoulders and crossed around the waist, bordered with a garland of roses. The dress of light was pure white and flecked with specks of gold. On Her chest, or rather inside, there was a crucifix, with hammer and nails "which stayed in place without anything to attach them". But, to support the cross and its Christ, there was a little chain round the neck; then a second chain, like a braid but without rings, seemed to crush the shoulders beneath it by its great weight, as though to symbolise the burden of our sins. Finally, there was a golden yellow apron – the humble livery of "the handmaid of the Lord" – and white shoes with a gold buckle and a cluster of roses…  The face was divinely beautiful, but marked with a profound sadness. Maximin could only see the forehead and the chin; the rest was too dazzling for him to be able to distinguish anything, whereas Mélanie was able to contemplate the entire face.  "How is it", Maximin was asked later, "that you were unable to see the Blessed Virgin’s face when Mélanie could?" – "I don’t know; perhaps I was not good enough." – "So you were not so good as Mélanie?" – "God knows… Maybe Mélanie needed to be *converted*. I don’t know!" This inoffensive jest shows that Maximin was a little envious of Mélanie; she was more favoured than he was. He had, however, guessed, from the sad tone of the voice, that this was an afflicted soul, "a mother, beaten perhaps by her children, and who had fled to the mountains to weep at her ease!" Mélanie understood better still the whole Mystery of La Salette as she saw the tears which flowed from Her eyes, to vanish in the light like sparks. Furthermore, not only did she notice that the hands were crossed one over the other in her sleeves, but also that Her ears were hidden, as was Her hair, beneath a kind of headdress or headband…  The "beautiful Lady" began to speak, first of all in French and then in patois; and Her speech was a mixture of complaints, reproaches, warnings and threats. The heavenly Messenger deplores the corrupt practices of her rebellious people, who blaspheme, who profane the holy day of Sunday, who violate the law of abstinence, who no longer pray and who hardly ever go to Mass, who thus provoke the divine wrath, weighing down the avenging arm of her Son ready to strike us, and exposing themselves to every kind of scourge, both private and public… But let us hear the language of this Queen and Mother:  *"If My people are not willing to submit themselves, I am forced to let go of My Son’s arm. It is so heavy and weighs Me down so much that I can no longer hold it. For all this time I have suffered for you! If I do not wish My Son to abandon you, I must take it upon Myself to pray for this continually. And the rest of you think little of this! In vain will you pray, in vain will you act, you will never be able to make up for the trouble I have taken for you all!*  *"I gave you six days to work, I kept the seventh for Myself and no one wishes to grant Me that one day. This is what weighs down the arm of My Son so much. Those who drive carts cannot swear without adding My Son’s name. These are the two things which weigh down the arm of My Son so much.*  *"If the harvest is spoiled, it is only because of you others. I made you see this last year with the potatoes; you took little account of this. It was quite the opposite when you found bad potatoes; you swore oaths, and you included the name of My Son. They will continue to go bad; at Christmas there will be none left."*  At this point, Mélanie looked at Maximin as though to ask him what the "beautiful Lady’s" words meant. But the Blessed Virgin immediately said: *"Ah! You do not understand French, My children. I shall tell it to you another way."* She then repeated these last phrases in patois: *"If the harvest is spoiled…"*, and the rest. Then She continued talking in the same popular dialect: *"If you have corn, you must not sow it. The beasts will eat all that you sow. And all that grows will fall to dust when you thresh it. A great famine will come. Before the famine comes, children under the age of seven will begin to tremble and will die in the arms of those who hold them. The others will do penance through hunger. The nuts will go bad, the grapes will become rotten."*  After these words, the Blessed Virgin continued speaking; but whilst seeing Her lips move, Mélanie could not hear. Maximin received a secret. Shortly after, the Beautiful Lady also entrusted Mélanie with a secret, and now Maximin ceased hearing.  A few reflections are necessary at this point due to the deplorable propagation of more or less recent imaginings claiming to publish the authentic text of Mélanie’s Secret, with apocalyptic commentaries.  For five years, the two children maintained a total discretion on the subject of the mysterious message: despite every conceivable attempt to extort the secret or to catch them out in a half confidence, the children remained absolutely indomitable… In 1851, however, they finally decided to make their Secrets known to the Pope, and to him alone. They consigned them to writing, therefore, and the documentary letters were transmitted to the Holy Father by two accredited messengers, who were received in audience on 18 July 1851. On reading these letters, Pius IX was visibly moved… The next day, Cardinal Lambruschini, Secretary of State, declared that the Holy Father had communicated to him the Secrets of La Salette. Thereafter, they remain in the pontifical archives.  All sensational publications, therefore, produced to feed public curiosity with the supposed Secrets of La Salette and their fanciful interpretations, must be regarded as suspect. This rash diffusion of literature was condemned by the Holy Office in 1880. All pamphlets or reviews, books or memoirs, emanating from these obstinate visionaries, were successively banned by the competent authorities.  Instead of thus hoping to penetrate the arcana of the future by holding forth in all directions on the content and the meaning of the Secrets of La Salette, it is much better to stick to the Fact itself and refer to the public Message. The Blessed Virgin, in effect, continued speaking in such a way as to be understood by the two shepherds, saying: *"If they are converted, the stones and rocks will change into heaps of wheat, and potatoes will be found sown in the earth."*  *"Do you say your prayers properly, My children?"* the Lady then asked them, and they replied: *"No, Madame, not so much." – "Ah! my children, you must say them morning and evening. When you can do no more, say a****Pater****and an****Ave Maria****; and when you have the time to do better, you will say more."*  *"Only a few old women go to Mass; in the summer, the rest work all day Sunday and in the winter, when they do not know what to do, they only go to Mass to make fun of religion. During Lent, they go to the butcher’s like hungry dogs!"*  Then the Blessed Virgin added: *"Have you ever seen spoilt wheat, My children?"* They both answered: *"Oh! no, Madame."* Then, She said to Maximin: *"But you, My child, you must have seen some once near Coin, with your father. The farmer said to your father: ‘Come and see how my wheat has gone bad!’ You both went to see. Your father took two or three ears in his hand, rubbed them, and they fell to dust. Then, on your way back, when you were no more than half an hour away from Corps, your father gave you a piece of bread, and said: ‘Take it, eat while you can, my son, for I don’t know who will be eating anything next year if the wheat is spoiled like that.’"* And Maximin replied: *"That’s quite true, Madame; I didn’t remember."*  The Blessed Virgin ended Her speech with these words, spoken in French: *"And so, My children, you will pass this on to all My people."* Leaving the shepherds, She crossed the stream of the Sézia and without looking back to them, She said a second time: *"And so, My children, you will pass this on to all my people."* Then She walked towards the plateau from where She rose above the ground to regain the serene heights of the firmament and of Paradise… The water from the *petite Fontaine* began to flow! That evening, as the sun went down, Maximin and Mélanie hurried back with their flocks to the village of Ablandens to tell their masters all that they had seen and heard on the mountain.  And the account the little shepherds gave on that same day, 19 September 1846, was invariably repeated by them before a countless number of pilgrims as before the civil and religious authorities.  "I certify", wrote Mélanie on 4 November 1850, "I certify in order to testify to the Truth, and for the greater glory of God and the honour of the Blessed Virgin, that I have always told and shall always tell, without any variation, the truth concerning the Event of La Salette of 19 September 1846, and that if I had to swear an oath on what I then saw and heard, I would do so without fear of offending God or of committing perjury." Until the day of her death, 15 December 1904, she maintained her original account in its entirety – an account which she reiterated on the Holy Mountain at the time of her last visit on 28 July 1903.  Maximin likewise wrote the following note on 14 April 1847: "I declare in the presence of God that I saw the Blessed Virgin on the mountain of Dorcières, as radiant as the sun." He kept to the same words in his final testament: "After my death, let no one assure you or say that I was heard to deny the great Event of La Salette; for in lying to the whole world, such a one would be lying to himself." Again, before his death, on 1 March 1875, he wished to make a solemn renewal of his profession of faith: "The Holy Viaticum was there; also present were several people from the neighbourhood, summoned on behalf of the dying man. Then with a dying breath, he said: ‘I take God to my witness, my God whom I am about to receive, my God who will be my Judge, that I have never lied concerning the Apparition of La Salette: I have told what I saw and heard; this I swear on the salvation of my soul!’"  What more could one want? One of those present then took it into his head to cast doubt on the perpetuity of the salutary effects produced by the event or even on the future of La Salette itself: "Bah!" said one, "it may last another year, and then it will fall away!" – "***It will fall away***", answered Maximin, "***it will fall away when Religion falls away…*** You’ll see! The Blessed Virgin will never let anyone come along and wipe out Her Mountain." "You see", he added in the presence of attacks directed against the Apparition, at the beginning of the year 1851, "***the Miracle of La Salette is a flower now being dragged in the mud, but it will bear fruit in autumn and in spring it will re-blossom.***"  Mélanie gives the same assurance: "Have you", they asked her in 1854, "heard of all the lies now being uttered against La Salette by the enemies of the Apparition?" – "No", she answered; "***but, they can say what they like, La Salette will always triumph!***"  Yes, wise and upright minds will always bend before the evidence and will radiate their grateful enthusiasm, once enlightened by the light of the facts and reasoning. If there are, among our readers, some who at this point experience a painful perplexity, as did the Curé d’Ars himself, we hope that they will soon conclude as he did, once better informed and happy in the end to learn the consoling truth: "It would now be impossible for me not to believe in La Salette. I requested signs in order to believe in La Salette, and I obtained them: ***one can and one should believe in La Salette!***"    **LA SALETTE IS CATHOLIC IN ITS PEOPLE, ITS SAINTS, ITS HIERARCHY**  It is difficult to imagine a mystery more simple than that of La Salette. A single apparition, on 19 September 1846, to two shepherds, a brief message which they memorise faultlessly, half in French which they hear and retain without understanding a word, and half in patois. The message is for everybody: *"And so, my children, you will pass this on to all my people."* However, the "beautiful Lady" interrupted Her speech to give, first one and then the other, a secret. Each child has a secret which the other will not know, secrets which they will never tell for five years despite all sorts of ingratiating or brutal attempts to make them yield. Then, the Blessed Virgin, for it is She, since She speaks of Jesus as Her Son, ascends to Heaven, turning Her eyes towards Rome, as seen and understood by Mélanie. Thereafter the event is never repeated, and no heavenly enlightenment is given concerning this event, which is, therefore, sufficient in itself.  Because of this, the indefinitely repeated narration, always in exactly the same terms by the two children, will appear in countless books and studies on La Salette without any embellishment, with the danger that constant re-reading will end in boredom. But no, at every reading, thoughts and details are revealed which renew our interest and our emotion, generating a conversion of hearts and morals.  **THE DIVINE ORTHODROMY**  To discover the effect this apparition immediately had on the good Catholic people of France, I like to quote the testimony of the great Cardinal de Cabrières, Archbishop of Montpellier, disciple of Mgr Freppel and friend of Action Française, known for his support of the wine growers’ revolt in 1907, because it is touching, but also because further on we shall invoke his authorised testimony as Prince of the Church. Here, it is the adolescent who had the good fortune to be informed of the nearby and recent event. Later, it will be the venerable and holy Archbishop of Montpellier, who will record his youthful emotion and his immediate certitude. This is what he will write in 1915:  "It is at this moment – September 1846 – that the rumour of mysterious events at La Salette reached the family circle. Need I say how piously and eagerly such news was greeted by my mother, my sister and her two nieces?… *They remembered the Apparition of the Most Blessed Virgin in the chapel of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, in 1830; and for them it was comforting to learn that, sixteen years later, the Mother of God Herself again wished to give proof of Her care. They asked themselves whether this very recent manifestation did not herald some menacing crisis affecting the country’s tranquillity, to which Our Lady promised in advance to supply the remedy of Her powerful intercession.* How could I not thrill at the thought that not far from the place where I lived, the Blessed Virgin had shown Herself and had spoken and wept! Moreover, there was nothing lacking to the austere poetry of this apparition…" (Bassette, p. 30)  In fact, the de Cabrières family went to the heart of the matter in linking this event of 1846 with the apparitions of the Most Blessed Virgin at the rue du Bac in 1830, and in interpreting this further warning as the announcement of another chastisement – 1848 will bring back the same sad popular uprisings of the "*trois glorieuses*" of 1830 – but also of a renewed mercy. The "orthodromic" continuation of Our Lady’s great apparitions in the 19th century will confirm this constant two part lesson: the first, a warning and threats of chastisements for France, eldest daughter of the Church, the second, a promise of forgiveness and of renaissance…  **A MESSAGE OF CONVERSION**  There is nothing more simple or more accessible than the message addressed by the Blessed Virgin to the people and clergy of that period and of those poor and remote districts. This "pastoral" message was perfectly adapted, immediately understood and bore amazing fruits of conversion.  To quote only the early examples: the Parish Priest of La Salette himself who exclaimed in his naive faith (*sic*) on 20 September: *"Ah, my children, how happy you are! You have seen the Blessed Virgin! Ah, I said to my parishioners, you must not work on Sundays! What will become of us?"* And on that same day his sermon was pronounced with such feeling that, at the time, nobody understood a thing, but his flock were soon to be enlightened concerning the announced chastisements and God’s mercy to be gained. He himself will be the first to obey Our Lady (P. Laurent, Marie V, 1, p. 26).  And again this, which is more convincing than a hundred speeches, concerning the truth of the remarkable fact and of its immediate application… "The wheelwright Giraud, Maximin’s father, was indifferent but not godless… One day, it was the Friday following the Apparition, 25 September, exasperated by all that was being said about his son, he wanted to stop Maximin from telling his story in public and even beat him, but in tears the child said to him: ‘But, Father, the Lady also spoke to me about you.’ – ‘About me?’, answered Maximin’s father; ‘and what did She say about me?’ Maximin then related the episode of the land at Coin. The father was amazed to hear such a fact recalled – a fact he was sure of never having mentioned to anybody and which occurred without witnesses. ‘Ah! She told you that! That is something quite extraordinary… Well then, I shall also go up and have a look. But then I have asthma; if it is the Blessed Virgin who appeared to you and if She is willing to cure me, I shall believe in the Apparition and I promise to convert’"… And so it was done. Having drunk from the miraculous spring, he was suddenly cured and then he went to church. It was twenty years since he had last been to confession! He remained a good Christian until the end of his days and died an edifying death (*Les miracles de La Salette*, Giray, p. 235). The wonderful simplicity of heavenly things!  The nearby town of Corps in Matheysine was also converted en bloc: they renounced their religious indifference; they found their way back to the Church and the practice of the sacraments to the amazement of the clergy of Grenoble. And shortly after, their parish priest, who had been barred for scandalous behaviour, repented and was reconciled to the Church in a most edifying manner through the grace of Our Lady of La Salette (Bassette, p. 286-287).  If the tears of the Queen of Heaven and the pleas of Her motherly Heart had the gift of touching hearts, Her grave words captured minds all the more in that they began to be fulfilled in the months following the apparition, freezing the smile on the lips of those who made fun of the "Peasant Virgin". The year 1847 was a year of famine, claiming more than a hundred thousand victims in France and a million in Europe. At Christmas, there were no more potatoes as Our Lady had predicted. At the same time, the vineyards were ravaged by vine-pest. Nuts – so important in Dauphiné – had become worth their weight in gold, for there were no more. As though that were not enough, an epidemic decimated the number of small children, who were seized by shivering, and France would be devastated by cholera on two occasions. According to witnesses, out of every five persons who went up to La Salette in 1856, three were in mourning.  **THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE SAINTS**  It is important to emphasise the fact that the whole region was making a journey, not only physically by going on pilgrimage to the very place of the Apparition, but also morally, through a moral conversion modelled on the "beautiful Lady’s" warnings. Thus, it was the first time in France since the Revolution that countless pilgrims came on pilgrimage without a declaration or order of command from the clergy. The pilgrimage of the first anniversary was impressive: a hundred thousand pilgrims beneath torrential rain. The published reports of this pilgrimage stunned the whole of France. The "Holy Man of Tours", the venerable Monsieur Dupont, came on foot and recounted the happy news to the Carmelites of Tours, among whom was the confidant of the Holy Face, Sister Marie de Saint-Pierre, mysteriously warned of the heavenly apparition, which she had greatly desired through her prayers. Inset here, is an account of these supernatural and most certain events:   |  | | --- | | **MYSTERIOUS CONVERGENCE**  "… Despite her insistence, Sister Marie de Saint-Pierre still bad not succeeded in having the Work of Reparation established as Our Lord seemed to want it. In 1845, having lost all hope of convincing Mgr Morlot, she understood that her only recourse would be prayer. And it is towards the Blessed Virgin that she deliberately turned. Every day, she recited the Rosary in order to obtain the establishment of the Work and France’s salvation. Before the imminence of a danger she felt coming, and the supernatural certitude she possessed of the efficacy of a remedy people refuse to apply, she cried out:*‘****Ah, how much I suffer in being the only guardian of something so important for the whole of France… Blessed Virgin, appear to someone in the world and impart to him what has been communicated to me concerning France.’***  "Nearly a year passed. But on the 1st September 1846, the Mother Prioress of the Carmel informed M. Dupont of what Sister Marie de Saint-Pierre had just related, and which had greatly impressed her. M. Dupont had noted the very terms related by the Prioress. Our Lord had just said:  *"****My Mother has just spoken to men of My anger. She has shown Me her bosom saying: ‘Allow Thyself to be moved by this bosom which suckled Thee and let blessings be poured over all My other children.’ And then, She came down to earth, full of mercy. We must all have great confidence in Her!****"* (Le message de soeur Marie de Saint-Pierre, Louis Van den Bossche, p. 164-165) |   A few days after this memorable first anniversary of the Apparition, M. Gérin, priest of the Cathedral of Grenoble, wrote an account of it for his friend, the Abbé des Genettes, Rector of Our Lady of Victories in Paris: "On 19 September, I went to the mountain of La Salette; it was one of the loveliest days of my life. The pathway was all muddy after the rain of the previous day, not to mention its natural ruggedness. When we finally reached the holy Mountain, we were thrilled to see a veritable Israelite camp, groups on all sides with their horses and donkeys. I have never seen such a sight…" (Bassette, p. 82) The divinely inspired devotions of the Church recall and support one another: at Our Lady of Victories, the most Blessed Virgin had offered Her most Holy and Immaculate Heart for sinners to take refuge; here, on the mountain of La Salette, She offered Herself as their "*Reconciler*", according to the term sprung spontaneously from popular devotion.  Miracles of all sorts and in large number occurred. One of them, the cure of Marguerite Guillot, took place beneath the eyes of the future Saint Julien Eymard, the apostle of the Eucharist, on 8 September 1848. Having been miraculously cured, she will go on to become the co-foundress of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. As for Father Eymard, he adhered to La Salette with all his faith and for good; he had the grace of celebrating his last Mass in the chapel of the Missionaries at Grenoble on 22 July 1868! Another saint will, in his turn, also come to La Salette a few years later: Don Bosco who, from 1846, marvelled to learn that the Blessed Virgin Mary had chosen for Her confidants two poor disinherited children, speaking the patois of the mountains, like those for whom he had just been inspired to consecrate his life and his work. He immediately became the apostle and propagandist of Her Message.  **THE CHURCH’S INQUIRY**  Before such an influx of pilgrims and such an abundance of graces, it was for the Church to pronounce on the truth of the Fact of La Salette in its three components: The apparition in itself, the public message and the secrets given to each of the two children. In his book **Le Fait de La Salette (1846-1854)**, Louis Bassette has decisively shown that the Church perfectly fulfilled her mission with wisdom, prudence and discretion, and that her conviction now rests on unshakeable foundations. The historian has retained all the facts and documents necessary to manifest the divine orthodromy, to satisfy the demands of historical science and to meet the needs of the heart and of the faithful’s devotion. He has discreetly mentioned the disturbing shadows – we shall come back to this –; but on the other hand, he has shown all the scandalous force of the opposition of unbelievers and their press campaigns in order to demonstrate their inanity and their odiousness and so highlight the divine Truth. Let us follow the main points of his demonstration:  The first information dates from the month of October 1846. Different ecclesiastics questioned the seers and then addressed reports to the Bishop of Grenoble, Mgr de Bruillard, who before long appointed Father Rousselot, his Vicar General, one of the best theologians of the diocese, as official investigator. In the course of his inquiry, the Vicar General passed from uncertainty to faith; he will become one of the most zealous and perspicacious defenders of La Salette. For the moment, he limited himself to seeing that all the statements were concordant, that the accounts were truthful – the children seemed to be incapable of deceiving or of being deceived – and that the facts could not be reduced to natural forces alone.  The fury of the anticlerical press did not prevent the Bishop from convening, in November 1847, a commission of inquiry in which he was careful to include opponents among the clergy of his diocese. Father Rousselot was the appointed reporter, whose answers to the twelve objections against the reality of the Apparition (Bassette, p. 135-147) won the near unanimity of his fellow priests. His report entitled "*The Truth about the event of La Salette*" was addressed to Pope Pius IX in the month of August 1848. The Pope found the time to reply on 20 September, when the revolution that was soon to drive him into exile was already grumbling: "It was especially pleasing for Us to learn what you relate of this numerous concourse of pilgrims who flock from all parts to honour the Blessed Virgin Mary, and it is particularly pleasing to learn that once there, these people implore the all powerful protection and the help of the Mother of God for Our humble Person. And so, we have the greatest desire that these people of whom you speak should be told that We impart to them Our apostolic blessing."  **THE TRIAL OF THE CURÉ D’ARS**  Mgr de Bruillard could have given his judgement at that time, as he was empowered to do and dearly wished to do, but he was prevented by two curious procedures on the part of his Metropolitan of Lyon, Cardinal de Bonald, who went as far as to support the clergy of Grenoble who had declared themselves against the reality of the Apparition. It is painful to read this account in Bassette (p. 148 sq), but this we know: from the beginning, La Salette was a sign of contradiction, not only on the part of outside enemies, but also among the clergy, as Fatima will be 70 years later.  Especially as this veiled and ill-intentioned opposition was added to by what is called the "Ars incident". On 24 and 25 September 1850, Maximin visited Ars, where he met the holy Curé, who had been in favour of La Salette the day before, preaching its Message, distributing medals, exhorting his penitents to go there on pilgrimage, but then after this interview he became painfully reticent on the subject. Here again, Bassette says all there is to be known about the circumstances of this painful event, which was "the most cruel thorn in the crown" of this holy priest (p. 186-205). He did not return to his previous belief until eight years later, after having obtained from Heaven the three signs he had requested in order to be free of this persistent doubt.  Another saint, Father Eymard, found that on this occasion too much credit had been given to the judgement of the Curé d’Ars, for whom he nevertheless felt the most ardent veneration and affection. "In perspective, too much weight is given to the opinion of the Curé d’Ars. Here, it is very ordinary, as far as judgement is concerned (*!*)…" he wrote to his great friend from Grenoble, the Abbé Rousselot. And to the same priest, he wrote this letter dated 29 January 1851:  "*Monsieur le Vicaire général et bon Père,*  "I thank you with all my heart for your two letters; they only confirm me in my original conviction concerning the truth of the apparition of La Salette. I have professed my conviction despite all its enemies, and the incredible thing is that through wanting to be prudent, the ecclesiastical scholars become incredulous! What harm they have done to weak souls and to the indifferent! I particularly like these words of Mgr the Bishop of Belley (Mgr Devie) to one of my friends: *‘What has happened at Ars is no more than a trial, a storm mused by the devil; the fact of La Salette will emerge from that all the more brilliant.’* Those who speak against La Salette were content to be able to justify their incredulity and paid no attention to avoid a woman’s credulity, as they call it, and they fell into a strange contradiction in basing their judgement on an event that is ridiculous in the eyes of reason and common sense, such as occurred at Ars, without proof, without examination, and without dignity. Today, they are beginning to fall silent and to say: the truth will come to light…" (Bassette, p. 204)  **THE TRANSMISSION OF THE SECRETS**  The public’s curiosity and the interest of the clergy soon focused on the famous secrets. Every means were used to extort the secrets from the seers, who proved to be of an invincible constancy and never consented to divulge them to anyone. The Abbé Dupanloup learned this to his cost… The children invariably repeated: "The Lady has forbidden us to say it." And in answer to the question put to Maximin, "What if you had to tell your secret or die?" he categorically replied: "*I would die…* I would not tell it."  When Cardinal de Bonald ,in his turn, wanted to know the secrets, in March 1851, he argued that he was "the Pope’s advisor" and that he had to be given the secrets so that he could "transmit them to His Holiness", who could then finally settle this quarrelsome problem. It was a crude trap, and was bound to succeed. The seers wrote their text separately. Maximin wrote his on the 2nd July and Mélanie on the 6th. But Mélanie was categorically opposed to her secret being transmitted to the Pope by any intermediary other than her own bishop. Mgr de Bruillard, therefore, sealed the two envelopes himself, after having read their contents, and his two envoys, MM. Rousselot and Gérin placed them in Pope Pius IX’s own hand on 18 July. What took place at the papal audience is known to us through a letter Father Rousselot wrote to his bishop:  "His Holiness unsealed the three letters in our presence, read them, and commenting on Maximin’s he said: *‘This has the candour and simplicity of a child.’* We replied that these children were little mountain dwellers, who, for some months had been in an educational institute.  "In order to read these two letters more easily, His Holiness stood up and went towards the window to open the shutter. We followed him. After reading Mélanie’s letter, His Holiness said to us: *‘I must re-read this with a calm head.’* While re-reading Mélanie’s letter, the Holy Father showed a certain emotion in his cheeks. His lips contracted and his cheeks swelled.  "When he had finished reading, the Holy Father said to us:  *‘****France is threatened with scourges.****She is not the only culpable one. Germany, Italy and the whole of Europe are culpable and deserve to be chastised.****I have less to fear from Proudhon than from religious indifference and human respect.****Your soldiers* (the French army, which, after its victory of 29 June 1849 over the troops of Mazzini and Garibaldi, made it possible for Pius IX to return to Rome, which he did on the following 12 April, whilst the French occupied the eternal City until 1866),*your soldiers kneel when they see me, but only after looking left and right to make sure they are not seen.****It is not for nothing that the Church is called militant and that you see here the Captain*** (bringing his right hand up to his chest)… *I have had your book examined by Mgr Frattini, promoter of the faith, and he told me that it was all right, he was pleased with it and that it radiated the truth.*"  "Furthermore, His Holiness told us that he would reply to Your Excellency in a way to make you forget the vexations caused you by the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons. It is impossible, my Lord, to tell you how good, affable and kind the Pope is. It is also impossible for us to describe our happiness as we emerged from this audience, especially when thinking of the happiness you would experience at seeing the work of La Salette crowned with the happiest success and having obtained the most decisive approval…  "The next day, we saw H.E. Cardinal Fornari, to whom I paid homage in my writings on La Salette. The Cardinal had known of this fact during his time as Nuncio in France. He told us that he would read my work with pleasure: *‘Besides’*, he added, *‘I am alarmed by such wonders. We have in our religion all that is necessary for the conversion of sinners, and****when Heaven employs such means, the evil must be very grave****’.*"  In his report, M. Gérin added this most important point:  *"Simply from the few crumbs of these secrets which have reached us, we think that Maximin foretells****mercy and the rehabilitation of all things****, and that Mélanie announces****great chastisements****."* (Bassette, p. 229) The Pope also had the secrets read by Cardinal Lambruschini, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites. As neither the Pope nor the Cardinal could find fault with the contents of the message that had been transmitted to them, Pius IX encouraged Mgr de Bruillard to recognize the supernatural facts of La Salette, by virtue of his competence as Ordinary of the place. The Church would at last pronounce through the authorised voice of her pastors.  The Pope’s fatherly kindness and the speed with which the decision was reached made Father Rousselot conclude: "Finally, my Lord, I think that the calumnies of the press, the story of Ars and the ill will of the opposition, which are the prime reasons for our visit to Rome, will have contributed to the clearest, swiftest and most decisive solution of all the difficulties. Thus will be verified for the Fact of La Salette the words *Salutem ex inimicis nostris*."  **THE OFFICIAL APPROVAL OF 1851**  Mgr de Bruillard did not have to be begged to do what he regarded as a sacred duty. On 19 September 1851, he published a pastoral letter for the fifth anniversary of the Apparition in which he affirmed that the Apparition "has within itself all the characteristics of the truth, and that ***the faithful are justified in believing it beyond doubt and for certain***" (art. 1). "Hence, in order to bear our warmest gratitude to God and to the glorious Virgin Mary, ***we authorise the devotion to Our Lady of La Salette***. We allow the clergy to preach on this great Event and to draw the practical and moral consequences arising from it." (art. 3) "We expressly forbid the faithful and the clergy of our diocese ever to speak or write against the Event which we proclaim this day and which, henceforth, demands the respect of all." (art. 5)  He concluded by saying: "We entreat you, our dear brethren, for the sake of your heavenly and even earthly interests, seriously to examine yourselves, to do penance for your sins, and particularly for those committed against the second and third commandments of God. (*A confraternity of reparation for blasphemies and profanations of Sundays will soon be raised to the rank of archconfraternity, under the name of Our Reconciling Lady of La Salette, by the Pope himself and enriched with numerous indulgences.*) We entreat you, our dearly beloved brethren: ***make yourselves docile to the voice of Mary who calls you to penance, and who, on behalf of Her Son, threatens you with spiritual and temporal ills if, remaining insensitive to Her maternal warnings, you harden your hearts.***"  It was not by chance that the Blessed Virgin chose to manifest Herself in the diocese of such a pious and deserving bishop, just as we have seen Her favouring with Her visit priests according to Her Heart: good priests like Father Guérin at Pontmain, Father Peyramale at Lourdes and Father des Genettes at Paris! Mgr de Bruillard had been one of the seven "guillotine chaplains" under the Terror, and under the Restoration he was "the model of Parisian parish priests", according to the Duchess of Angoulême. Appointed to the see of Grenoble in 1826, he did considerable good there despite the persecutions he had to suffer under Louis-Philippe’s government for his legitimist convictions: three hundred churches were built or enlarged, a hundred parishes erected, a great number of religious communities established, countless works of charity achieved…   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette5.jpg *The shrine of La Salette*, built near the place of the Apparition (in the foreground, the valley of the Sézia) at the centre of an imposing mountain ring formed by the Gargas and the Chamoux. The first stone was blessed by Mgr de Bruillard in 1852; the completed basilica was consecrated in 1879. |   A year had not passed since his doctrinal judgement before he announced, in a further pastoral letter of 1 May 1852, the erection of a shrine on the mountain of the Apparition and the institution of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, commissioned to serve the shrine. It was the venerable prelate’s *Nunc dimittis* which allowed his joy to spill over into an act of thanksgiving towards "Her who came from above to our mountains to plant there something of a rallying sign, a sign of salvation, a radiant beacon, a bronze serpent to which pious souls have raised their eyes to divert the heavenly wrath and to heal us of incurable wounds!" And he concluded with these magnificent words:  "It had to be thus, our Very Dear Brethren. It is not in vain that the Mother of Mercy deigned to visit the children of men. It is not in vain that at the sight of disorders which rouse the anger of Her Son, She came as though to take refuge in our mountains, to shed tears, to warn us of the chastisements that were reserved for us if we did not convert; to remind us of the fear of God, respect for His Holy Name, the sanctification of the Sunday and observation of all the commandments of God and of His Church. Words come down from such a height should have an immense echo and should be heard by every nation, just as the place where She showed Herself had to be, so it seems, high enough to be seen by all peoples. Go back to the origin of this great event: you see its almost unknown birth, its prompt and rapid diffusion throughout France and Europe, its soaring to the four corners of the world, and finally its providential arrival in the capital of the Christian world. To God alone be the honour and glory! We have merely been the feeble instrument of His adorable will. This amazing and wonderful success is due to the August Virgin of La Salette: She alone has arranged everything to bring about this unhoped for result; She alone has triumphed over every obstacle, answered every objection and dissolved every difficulty; She alone has prepared the success; She alone will know how to crown Her work. For our part, we have only to thank her a thousand times for the purely gratuitous choice She has made of us to be the herald of Her glory and of the merciful protection with which She is ever willing to cover our beloved diocese, our dear country and the whole world."  The following 25 May, he wanted, despite his age – he was 86! – to ascend his "dear mountain" on horseback in order to bless the first stone of the future shrine. Despite the persistent rain, whole parishes climbed the mountain in long processions (one should read the account of this magnificent and holy ceremony in Bassette, p. 284-285). Mgr de Bruillard then tended his resignation.  **APPROVAL CONFIRMED IN 1854**  It fell to Mgr Ginoulhiac, appointed bishop of Grenoble in May 1853, to consolidate his predecessor’s work. It was not easy, for the opposition had reared its head. Taking advantage of the new bishop’s liberal attitudes, the opposition multiplied infamous articles and pamphlets against La Salette. A lost priest even claimed to have discovered a certain demoiselle de Lamerlière who supposedly passed herself off in the mountains as the Blessed Virgin. It was grotesque! Even more serious: a memorandum addressed to the Pope against the judgement of 1851 was published in Grenoble. Pius IX then urged Mgr Ginoulhiac to intervene. The Bishop then re-examined the dossier, studying it scrupulously, and in a pastoral letter dated 4 November 1854, he not only condemned the memorandum in question but renewed his predecessor’s doctrinal judgement in a more explicit and this time definitive way. The following 8 December, the Bishop of Grenoble went to Rome to hear Pius IX proclaim the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which was wonderfully confirmed four years later by the Immaculate Virgin herself at Lourdes. Thus, from one mountain to another, the thread of Marian orthodromy is unbroken.  At La Salette, the Church will now continue her work in an impeccable manner: the work of the pilgrimages will never stop, supported by all the bishops of Grenoble without exception, nor will that of the Missionaries whose main aim will be to spread the devotion to *"Mary, Mediatrix, help of mankind"* (Mgr Ginoulhiac), all powerful and supplicating, turning away from sinful mankind the scourges of God’s wrath, on condition that we respond to Her appeal and obey Her… As for the seers, Mgr Ginhoulhiac declared on 19 September 1855: *"****The mission of the shepherds is ended; that of the Church begins.****They can move away, become dispersed in the world, even unfaithful to the great grace received, but****the Apparition of Mary will not thereby be shaken; for it is certain and nothing coming after can act against it.****"*  **THE FIRST NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE**  To end, let us relate a little known episode of the history of La Salette – an episode that could serve as a figurative for our last months of ascent towards Fatima. I find this episode related in the review *Marie*, written by the Assumptionist father, Émile Gabel (p. 66-69).  I quote: "Father d’Alzon had the idea, from the time of the First Vatican Council, of forming a Catholic league for the defence of the Church. The plan, mentioned in a letter addressed to Fathers Picard and Bailly, on 10 February 1870, was grandiose…" It took shape in 1872 under the form of a crusade of national pilgrimages. The goal of the first of these was La Salette. One by one, the obstacles were overcome and the pilgrims who left from Paris, on 18 August 1872, numbered **seven hundred**, soon to be joined by other groups from Dijon, Ars and Lyons. "Pilgrims!… that they were through and through. Neither human respect nor fear of exhaustion moderated their ardour… Neither silly jokes nor insults could wear down the zeal of the pilgrims, encouraged on all sides by the sympathy of other fellow countrymen. At Grenoble, however, matters grew more serious and the pious procession was spared little by way of contempt: they were jeered, spat upon and showered with mud and stones. It was, as the biographer of Father Picard magnificenfly wrote, *‘The consecration of this new crusade’*. The pilgrims felt no fear, no bitterness, no hatred and no regrets: they were content to answer those insulting them with: ‘We shall pray for you at La Salette.’  "On 21 August, our pilgrims finally arrived within sight of the mountain of the Apparition, some by coach, some on mule, some on foot. A group from Marseilles and several from Grenoble were already there, around their bishop, Mgr Paulinier, an old friend of Father d’Alzon’s from their youth.  "History has preserved the theme of the sermon given by Father Picard once the pilgrimage had gathered. Overflowing with faith and enthusiasm, he commented on the words of scripture with which the Bishop of Grenoble had greeted the pilgrims: *‘Vadam ad montem myrrhae et ad collem thuris’*. Yes, truly on this day of splendour among all days, La Salette became ‘the mountain of myrrh and the hill of incense’. The prayer of the pilgrims, weeping over their sins and those of France, could not fail to be heard by Heaven. Two whole days were filled with ceremonies, processions and pious exercises."  On 22 August, a general Council of pilgrimages was established – a Council which would give an extraordinary momentum to this renaissance of faith and piety, to be greeted by holy Pope Pius IX as the dawn of a "new era". The whole of France was shaken, and it would not have taken much for the long awaited "restoration of all things" to have come about in the following year… Tomorrow, it will come to pass, through the grace of Fatima and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary!  http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette6.jpg *Pilgrimage to La Salette* on the anniversary day of the Apparition, according to an engraving from the end of the 19th century, Marie V. p. 18. |

**THE SECRETS OF LA SALETTE**

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| We now come to the most sensitive, and also the most controversial, part of the Apparition of 19 September 1846: the secrets entrusted by Our Lady to Her two messengers Maximin and Mélanie, faithfully guarded for five years, written down under the circumstances we have already described, then transmitted to Pope Pius IX who was visibly moved on reading them, finally consigned to the archives of the Holy Office with a view to their eventual publication, which none of his successors has yet judged opportune… La Salette with Fatima are thus the only two apparitions recognised by the Church, which have a hidden, prophetic, apocalyptic extension. |

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| http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette7.jpg |

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| It is easy to guess how much interest has been shown in these messages over these last one hundred and fifty or eighty years on the part of Catholics concerned for the world’s future and attentive to the will of Heaven. Questioned one day by Father Giraud, Superior General of the Missionaries of La Salette, about the content of these secrets, Pius IX replied: "*You wish to know the secrets of La Salette? Well, it is this:****‘If you do not do penance, you will all perish!’***" (quoted by Le Hidec, p. 67) There is, therefore, great danger of perdition for our souls, for our families, our nations, for our entire society! The Blessed Virgin Mary warns us in Her maternal wisdom of grave "***spiritual and temporal evils***" threatening us, according to the expression of Mgr de Bruillard, who was the first to have read it, and we would do nothing about it? Since both Pius IX and Mgr de Bruillard confided that they had found it beneficial and comforting to read it, may we be permitted to hope for the same grace for ourselves today.  But before embarking on a critical study of the life of the seers and of their Secret, true or supposedly so, it is necessary for us to go back to the account of the apparition itself. If you turn back to [page 4](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette2.htm#message), you can re-read the Message of Mary, as we did here, with an ever increasing amazement and something of an infinite veneration for Her who, amid tears, wished to pass on to all Her people a great and terrible lesson. Our Father has long sought for a correct and profound interpretation of this Message, of benefit to souls. He found it recently, through the key of the figuratives and guided by his quest for the divine orthodromy. Here is the commentary he gave us in the course of a spiritual reading during the month of July, and which I, as his interim secretary, have been asked to transcribe as near as possible in its original style, free and spontaneous, to be accessible to the humble and the lowly, the true devotees of La Salette and Fatima.  **AN OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION**  So, let us turn back to this all too quickly read account. It has many surprising elements. The Blessed Virgin comes towards the children and announces that She wants to teach them a great lesson: "*Come, My children, do not be afraid; I am here to proclaim great news to you.*" So what is this "great news", which has brought Her down from Heaven to this place?  When one considers this group, with the thought of looking for a figurative, one thinks of Adam and Eve in their primaeval innocence. They are alone, on this deserted mountain, beyond all civilisation, and there is God: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in Paradise in the afternoon air…" (Gn 3.8) It does not correspond completely, but the children say that they have never forgotten this "voice of paradise". They also built a "little paradise" and adorned it with alpine flowers. The Blessed Virgin sat on it; She is seated on their paradise, but to weep… over the ingratitude and the sinfulness of Her children, renewing that of the originals.  Or again, it is Mount Sinai, and Horeb, where Yahweh gave His Law to Moses. Why look so far? Because the Law, recalled by the Blessed Virgin at La Salette, is purely Judaic. It is of the Old Testament. However, the greatest amazement felt on reading this is the use of the first person singular: "***I****gave you six days to work,****I****kept the seventh for****Myself****, and no one wishes to grant it to****Me****.*" Is not that strange? It is the literal renewal of a verse from Exodus (31.15). The Blessed Virgin Mary, therefore, takes the place of God; She is enthroned and She legislates, assuming responsibility for God’s Law as though it were Her own. This is truly the first time in the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the last! At Fatima, She will explain that it is God’s Will that She should go before and that everything should be subject to Her.  Here, the name of God, of our dearest Heavenly Father, is not mentioned. It is Her and… Her Son whom the children contemplate in rapture – Her Son on a living crucifix, as though "embedded in Her chest", and which seems to be the source of the light and glory surrounding Her. It is "*the Name of My Son*" that is blasphemed, it is "*My Son’s arm*" that weighs heavily, and it is "*My Son… to Whom I must ceaselessly pray for you*". The people of God have become Her people; She has received them for Her heritage: "*… If My people will not submit… You will pass this on to all My people.*" Finally, one last reminder of Exodus: the spring that fed the little fountain, near where the Blessed Virgin appeared, began to flow again, recalling the water which sprang from the rock in the desert.  In Deuteronomy, Moses prophesies that the people will not follow the commandments of their God, and so he foretells chastisements to punish them, but also, wonderful rewards if they repent. It is the morality of the Alliance, severe but just and holy, resumed here by the Blessed Virgin Mary, with striking temporal punishments: *the potatoes and the grapes will rot, the wheat will fall to dust; famine will follow, and small children will die a horrible death…* It sounds like the linguistic imagery of the Prophet Amos, or the rending appeal of Jeremiah’s Lamentations: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, come back to the Lord your God…" with the added pleas of a Mother’s tears. It is the same biblical language for the promise, purely conditional: "*If they convert…*", of a messianic harvest: "*… the stones and rocks will change into piles of wheat, and potatoes will be found sown in the earth*".  The Blessed Virgin then asks the children whether they say their prayers properly; She complains of Mass being deserted in summer, badly followed in winter; finally, abstinence is no longer respected: "*they go to the butcher’s like hungry dogs*"! It reminds us of the precepts of the Law which the good Jews of the Old Testament were bound to observe to the letter. And the Blessed Virgin came down from Heaven simply to remind us of that? And is that why the "Beautiful Lady", her head adorned with a royal diadem, wore the apron of a poor servant, and bore on her shoulders a heavy chain?   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette2.jpg |   Well, yes. She is the Handmaid of the Lord and ready for the hard necessities of the Service She has been commanded to do: address Her people with reproaches, call them to conversion with threats and promises, to obedience to the Law of God and of the Church, beginning with the adoration due to His Name and keeping holy the Day that belongs to Him. She knows that the rest will follow… Such was the religion of our fathers, humble and strong, which Heaven came to recommend and which will never change. But in God’s plan, it also marked the expectation of another wonderful, divine grace: the apparition of the Immaculate Virgin and the gift of Her Heart, firstly at Lourdes and then supremely at Fatima, compared with which the apparition of Our Lady at La Salette would be the prefiguration, the Old Testament shadow before the light of the New.  As for the seers, they too will accomplish their mission well: they will pass on the Beautiful Lady’s message to all Her people. But, for all that, they will not become saints, and that is what is so surprising about La Salette! As was said by the good Father Rousselot, whose subtle theological distinction has been a light for me: "*There was****gratia gratis data****of which the children were the instruments*", which made them apt for the fulfilment of their mission, "*but there was no****gratia gratum faciens****, sanctifying grace*", a special gift, which would have changed them inwardly (Bassette, p. 399). Look at these poor children in their authentic portrait   reproduced above. They have been drawn from their semi-uneducated state to become the messengers of the Queen of Heaven! Like Adam and Eve, they then led a pitiful life, keeping their faults, subject to temptations, and even falls… The Blessed Virgin permitted it, wished it, for what design? We shall understand this better after a more careful study of their lives. |

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| MAXIMIN’S SECRET  "**THE BLESSED VIRGIN’S LITTLE BOY**"  Born on 27 August 1835 into a poor family of Corps in Matheysine, Maximin was certainly not a privileged child. His father, a wheelwright by trade, did not make much of a living because he drank too much; his mother had died when he was only one year old. Of a playful and mischievous character, he could not stay still for an instant, always moving his arms and hands (during the apparition, whilst Our Lady was communicating Her secret to Mélanie, he amused himself throwing stones!). Of a good heart and totally unselfish, he had, however, received no education up to the age of eleven, neither schooling nor catechism. He ran away from church if taken there by his father, and only with difficulty did he succeed in learning the *Pater* and the *Ave Maria*, in two years… Pierre Selme, who employed him as a casual shepherd, said of him: "*He is a little innocent who has no more forethought than malice.*"   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette8.jpg *Maximin*, shepherd of La Salette, in 1846 |   The event of 19 September 1846 completely overturned his life. That same evening, he gave his first account of the event before the Pra family, without really understanding all that he was saying. But when he went to bed and wanted to say a *Pater* and an *Ave*, as the Beautiful Lady had asked him, he could not remember what he had to say and he cried… From mid October he went to school with the Sisters of Providence to learn how to read and write. As he passed in the street, people would say: "There’s the Blessed Virgin’s little boy." Before long, both he and Mélanie were taken in as boarders. They stayed there about four years. It was not until May 1848 that they were able to make their first Communion together. The Superior, Sister Sainte-Thècle, very wisely kept them out of the way as much as possible, but she could not prevent pilgrims and others constantly coming out of curiosity to disturb them.  Maximin always repeated his account with the same seriousness, and his answers to the questions fired at him were always unexpected, clear and precise. Here are some of them:  Mgr Darboy, future Archbishop of Paris, was sceptical and asked him: "Look here, my boy, how is it that, knowing your ignorance of the ordinary language, the Blessed Virgin would have used it in speaking to you? Isn’t there something ridiculous and consequently unacceptable (*sic*) in all this? What would you say if, at this moment, I were to declaim a long speech in Greek, which you don’t understand?"  – *What would you in your turn say, Monseigneur, if, after hearing it only once, I were repeating it everywhere, without mistake, making it understood by everybody, without understanding it myself?*  A priest declared peremptorily: "You are a little liar, I don’t believe you." – *What has that to do with me? My task is to tell you, not to make you believe.*  – I don’t believe you have any secret. – *Then why, Monsieur, have you come all this way to ask me?*  – Aren’t you bored, repeating the same thing every day? – *And you, Monsieur l’Abbé, do you get bored saying Mass every day?*  To Canon Chambon, who asked in 1847, "If the Pope asked you for your secret, would you be obliged to tell him, for the Pope is much more than the Blessed Virgin?" Maximin replied:  *– The Pope, much more than the Blessed Virgin?… But the Blessed Virgin is the Queen of all the saints, if the Pope does his duty well, he will be a saint, but he will still be less than the Blessed Virgin; if he does not do his duty, he will be punished more than others.*  – But it may be the devil who has entrusted you with your secret? – *No, for the devil has nothing to do with Christ, and the devil would not forbid blasphemy.*  Finally, when they tried to catch him out by saying: "The Lady has deceived you; she predicted a famine and yet the harvest is good everywhere", he replied: "*What has that to do with me? That is what she told me, and that is her concern.*" And at other times, he would answer as Mélanie always did: "*But, what if people did penance?*"  **FIRST TROUBLES**  In February 1849, the death of his father came as a bitter trial for the young boy, who was now orphaned of both father and mother. Life in the Providence Convent began to weigh on him. After three successive escapes, the sisters placed him in the hands of his legal guardian in the spring of 1850. At the beginning of the month of September, he was welcomed by a rich count who pushed indiscretion to the point of offering him his castle if he would divulge his secret! Later, Maximin was to admit: "*I was about to betray the secret, when all of a sudden my memory failed; I found it impossible to articulate a word; I remained dumb and I understood my fault through this warning of the Blessed Virgin.*" He returned to La Salette for 19 September. He made some strange encounters on the mountain that day.  Supporters of Baron de Richemont, an adventurer who passed himself off as King Louis XVII escaped from the Tower, were convinced that the Baron in whom they believed was actually designated by name in the seer’s secret. They spoke to him about the Pretender and showed him his portrait, but Maximin simply answered that he had never heard of Louis XVII nor of Louis XVIII, but only of Louis-Philippe (it was in 1848, before the Revolution). On that 19 September, these men returned to the charge and suggested taking Maximin to Ars to consult "the saint who is able to read a person’s conscience". When Mgr de Bruillard came to hear of this, he wisely forbade Maximin to step beyond the limits of his diocese, but the ban was ignored. This act of disobedience had painful consequences, as is known (cf. supra, p. 8). We recall that on the subject of his vocation, the Curé d’Ars twice advised the seer to return to his diocese of Grenoble.  On the way back, Maximin and his fellow travellers stopped at Lyons, at the Marist noviciate in the Saint Irenaeus quarter, where Father Eymard would have been very willing to have the seer, but on condition that the Bishop of Grenoble gave permission. Father Eymard knew Maximin very well: "either directly or through the intermediary of their common friend, M. Dausse, he constantly followed, observed and kept in touch with him without ever discovering anything to make him doubt the reality of the Fact of La Salette." (Louis Bassette, *Notre-Dame de La Salette et Saint Pierre-Julien Eymard*, p. 17)  Maximin will next meet, still escorted by his "*survivantist*" friends, the famous (and false) Baron de Richemont. Finding himself faced with the impostor, he recognised him because he had already seen his portrait; but after having told his usual account, he confided to the person who had introduced him this quite ludicrous prophecy: "He must be told to cut himself off from his favourites, because his life is in danger!" followed by a brief "Let’s go!" And that was all. We shrug our shoulders today, without understanding that it may simply have been said on the spur of the moment in order to avoid any indiscreet question concerning the Secret. Subsequently, we shall often see him mysteriously drawn to royalist circles, without ever revealing anything of the secret, but, by his attitude, letting it be understood that Heaven was interested in the restoration of the most Christian Monarchy.  **THE WRITING OF THE SECRET**  After the group had returned from Ars, Maximin entered the minor seminary of Rondeau at Grenoble. His teachers quickly realised that his unstable character made him unsuitable for the priesthood: "He is light hearted and a little thoughtless, but I think he has a great fund of faith", the superior declared with regard to him. While he was there, the anticlerical press unleashed the virulent opposition of certain clerics, reinforced by the Ars incident, which caused him to declare: "*La Salette is now like a flower covered by mud and manure in winter, but it will emerge even more beautiful.*"  It was from Rondeau that he was taken to the Bishop’s Palace so that he might write his secret there.  "M. Dausse, who accompanied him, recommended that he think very carefully about what he was going to do. The child had no worries: *‘I remember very well what was said to me. You will see how I write rapidly without looking for my words.’* He spoke of other things. In the Bishop’s Palace, they went to a room on the second floor overlooking the Place Notre-Dame. A large desk had been installed in the room, provided with all the necessary writing materials. Canon de Taxis joined M. Dausse to supervise him. The Bishop left them together.  "Maximin held his head in his hands, dipped his pen in the ink pot and heedlessly shook it over the parquet floor. The witnesses, observing him from afar, reprimanded him for this unseemly behaviour. He took up his pen and wrote: *On the 19th September 1846, I saw a Lady as brilliant as the sun whom I believe to be the Blessed Virgin; but I have never said that it was the Blessed Virgin. It is for the Church to judge whether it really was the Blessed Virgin or some other person, from what I am now going to say. In the middle of her speech, she confided it to me following this phrase: the grapes will rot and the nuts will go bad.*" (It would be after reading these few introductory lines that Pope Pius IX pronounced these words: "Here we have the simplicity and the candour of a child.")  "Maximin showed this to M. Dausse, who found it acceptable, and then he got down to writing rapidly at his desk, without pause as though he were copying out a text. As soon as he had finished writing, he stood up and threw the sheet he had just written into the air. "*Now, he said, I am rid of that; I have no more secret and am like the others. People won’t need to come and ask me any more; they can go and ask the Pope; he will speak if he wants to.*" The two witnesses saw this sheet of paper on the floor: it was a real schoolboy’s piece of untidy work, written aslant and speckled with ink blots. The child was made to re-do it. He balked at this, but this time he wrote properly. They rang for the Bishop, who ordered Maximin to place what he had written in an envelope and to seal it. M. Dausse asked the Bishop to read the text for fear of sending the Holy Father something unworthy of His Holiness. The Bishop hesitated, then took this advice. Maximin then sealed the envelope, stamped with the episcopal seal. M. Dausse and Canon de Taxis wrote on the envelope certifying that Maximin had written and signed the contents himself, without being influenced. (Bassette, p. 211-212)  It is to be noted, as H. Voilin reports in *La Salette, Montagne Prophétique*, that in the course of writing his secret he asked them for the spelling of the word "*Pontife*" (p. 78).  Was it at Grenoble or at the Grande Chartreuse, where the young boy spent his summer holidays, that an event took place which later caused a lot of trouble, as related by Father Parent in his *Vie de Maximin* written in 1913: "The only thing that history could hold against Mary’s confidant, concerning his secret, is that he scribbled a botched up prophetic revelation some weeks later, on 11 August 1851, to please M. Dausse, who was bothering him. This pious layman kept this piece of writing by the little seer as a precious document. But before long, and especially before his death, the writer protested against M. Dausse who believed that he was in possession of the *true* secret, whereas he had naively received nothing more than a ***prophetic fantasy***, like certain letters which he sometimes wrote in answer to nuns who would pester him to know the future." (quoted by Le Hidec, p. 81)  Maximin no doubt did not foresee the consequences of such thoughtlessness, which he probably did to get himself out of an awkward situation for fear of saying too much to his dear guardian, to whom he was sincerely and affectionately devoted. Yes, he was "*without forethought*", just as he was "*without malice*"… As for this good M. Dausse, although mistaken in his good faith, he remained equitable and sound in his judgement concerning the seer. In 1879, he wrote that "by not regulating the freedom with which all the curious had to see him, question him and hear him, Maximin’s formative years were sacrificed… a mistake that was wisely avoided in the case of Bernadette." (Bassette, p. 419)  **A SEVERE RECALL TO ORDER**  With the opening of the school year in October 1851, a new stage began in the life of Maximin: he had transmitted his secret, and the Church, in the person of Mgr de Bruillard, having recognised the truth of the apparition, in its turn became responsible for "passing on the message". But there still remained the seer of La Salette… with his imperfections! After a year spent in another minor seminary of the diocese, he was entrusted to the care of a holy priest, the Abbé Champon, Parish Priest of Seyssins. He stayed there for three years continuing with his studies against all odds, acquiring great merit but little knowledge…  It was the time when bad priests and malevolent journalists showered Maximin, and Mélanie too, with every kind of calumny in order to discredit the Apparition:  "One day, the Abbé Champon went to spend a week in Lyons. On his return, some well intentioned people came to warn him:  ‘Monsieur le Curé, you need to take precautions with your boarder. Whilst you were in Lyons, Maximin hit your sister and got hold of the parish money. With this money, he spent a whole day and night revelling in Grenoble, where he was found dead drunk in the Place Grenette in the early hours of the morning.’  The Abbé was appalled: ‘That’s very serious. When did this happen?’  ‘Last week, while you were away; the individual was picked up in the Place Grenette on Wednesday morning.’  ‘Well then, I have to tell you that this story has been invented from beginning to end. Maximin accompanied me to Lyons. He did not leave me during those eight days and, on Wednesday morning, he served my Mass at Fourvière and received Communion…’ "  The opponents shamelessly exploited the business of Ars and the relations Maximin had had with the *survivantistes*. La Salette had become a "Royalist affair" (sic)! Mgr Ginoulhiac was disturbed at this and roundly settled the question in his pastoral letter of 4 November 1854: "… Given Maximin’s total and absolute ignorance concerning the very existence of Louis XVII, and of these futile attempts over several years, it is plainly impossible to accept that the apparition of La Salette is the work of Louis XVII’s supporters, and that this daydream could lie at the bottom of this whole affair (...)  "It had proved impossible to wrench the secret away from the child and to discover the prophecies the secret was supposed to contain, and of which he was informed.*Fascinated or persuaded by what could be flattering for him, Maximin, who until 1851 had not even suspected the role being cast for him, ended by letting himself be infatuated by a sense of his own importance; and finding fellow disciples and other persons ready to listen to him, he confided these supposed oracles to them. He then committed himself even further to this path, and when we were informed of this, we had to take quite severe measures in order to pull him out of it.*  "Although these measures were deserved, this young man did not, however, appear as he has been represented in the Memorandum. The seminarian whose testimony is quoted, came to us spontaneously to declare that Maximin never pronounced in his presence the words reported nor did he profess the odious morality attributed to him; nor is it true, as has been advanced elsewhere, that he gained nothing from the measures we took in his regard, and that he has since made no progress in his studies, and that he has not shown himself to be hard working and reserved."  Note that although Mgr Ginoulhiac judged Maximin severely – "*he let himself be infatuated by a sense of his own importance*" –, reproaching him for heedlessly allying himself with these adventurers and allowing himself to make predictions, he came to his defence for all the rest and was pleased to emphasise his progress. As for the political question, he settled it wisely and cleanly… but he had not read the secret!  **OUR LADY’S VAGABOND**  In 1856, the Abbé Champon entrusted his pupil to one of his brothers, a Jesuit and philosophy teacher in the seminary at Dax in les Landes, temporarily transferred to Aire-sur-l’Adour. There were numerous friendships and frequent visits, to the detriment of both work and meditation… He remained a big child, of an incorrigible mischievousness, missing his Dauphiné and with a growing feeling of his unsuitability for the priesthood. "Although I cannot say about the future, for the moment I have this dark thought that I shall do more harm than good to the glory of God if I take the soutane", he wrote in March 1857 to Sister Thècle, to whom he always remained attached.  He finally returned to the country in 1858 where he was first employed at the home of the tax collector of La Tronche and then as a mechanic, before moving on to Paris, where he wandered from place to place for several months with an empty purse and a sad heart. Bad companions tried to lure him into places of debauchery, but he always saw through their intrigues and his heart remained ever pure through the special protection of his Lady, at whose feet he would often take refuge in the Church of Saint-Sulpice. A family of retired traders, the Jourdain family, took pity on this poor uprooted young man and adopted him in 1861. He stayed with them for three years, following courses at the faculty of medicine to be able to care better for the poor sick. Other benefactors were also concerned for him: the Spanish Comte de Penlaver and the Marquise de Pignerolles. The Marquise offered him a large sum of money if he would go to Frohsdorf in Austria to meet the Comte de Chambord, legitimate pretender to the throne of France.  The historians usually skate over this mysterious interview which took place at the end of April 1865: "Wasted expense for an interview that could not have been less cordial", wrote Henri Voilin. "For its greater good, La Salette yet again escaped from the hold of politics (sic!)." That is easily said, without knowledge of the seer’s attachment to the legitimate royalty, as recalled by Fr. Parent:  "Maximin was a loyal supporter of the Comte de Chambord. We have two proofs of this. Following the example of the Carthusians and other religious, who stamped their products with their coat of arms, he too had his coat of arms. They were suggested to him by the Comtesse de Chambord, then painted by M. de Grammont, who explained their meaning on 2 February 1869: three lilies, symbol of attachment to Our Lady of La Salette, to the Pope and to the King. And in a letter dated 24 July 1874, Maximin wrote these lines: ‘I am still confident that our King will come… The Chamber is failing in its mission and MacMahon is failing in his duty, by not going to fetch the King and offer him what is his due, at least for the salvation of France.’ " (Le Hidec, p. 86)   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette9.jpg Maximin Giraud, papal zouave |   Should we then believe the Marquis de la Franquerie when he quotes, without reference, the account of the conversation between the Pretender and the seer, written by the Comte de Vanssay, secretary to the Prince, for his family (*La Vierge Marie dans l’histoire de France*, p. 258)? Maximin is supposed to have said, among other things, that he would never ascend the throne of France, but "*It is God’s will that we keep the secret. The reestablishment of the royalty is reserved to God Himself alone*". Perhaps that would explain the Prince’s hesitant attitude in 1873.  From Vienna, Maximin went on to Rome, where he enlisted as a Papal zouave in the service of the Pope for the protection of his States. He was helped on this occasion by Cardinal de Villecourt, former bishop of La Rochelle and great friend of Pius IX, the apostle in France of the Immaculate Virgin and of La Salette, who gave him the necessary money to enlist, but on condition that he did not reveal his identity.  Among the zouaves, there was a future Jesuit, Henri le Chauff from Kerguenec, who had noticed this man at night prayers "praying earnestly and looking with such affection and supplication at the statue of the Blessed Virgin". He easily saw through his anonymity and became his friend.  Writing about Maximin, he said: "In ordinary conversation, the shepherd of Corps is quite heavy, but he is not without judgement… When he speaks of the apparition, he is a different person. He must indeed be inspired by the Most Blessed Virgin, for then he is admirably clear and logical; the best formulated objections are a game for him and he will demolish them more easily than a child knocks down a castle of cards he has built."  But six months later, Maximin left the zouaves and returned to France where he rejoined his adoptive parents, his pockets more empty than ever. Calumniated by a Parisian journalist, the shepherd of La Salette replied in a pamphlet in which he declared: "*I would be rich at this present moment, if I had cowardly and self-indulgently contradicted myself.*"  **RETURN TO CORPS**  In 1868, he returned for good to his native village, Corps, where he was joined by the Jourdains two years later. He refused to marry: "*When one has seen the Blessed Virgin, he confided to a close friend, it is not possible to be attached to anyone on this earth.*" He wanted to practise a trade "*in order to earn his living in the sweat of his brow*". These were years of general poverty and hunger which led him to that deplorable production of a liqueur which earned him as much trouble as it did discredit. Yet again, he was the victim of his naivety, cleverly exploited by a crook.  His one consolation was to go up there on the mountain, especially on the anniversary day of the apparition. "On 19 September 1871, he told the pilgrims around the miraculous fountain the account he had begun to spread twenty five years ago to the day. Fr. Bossan, who listened to him, noted first of all that ‘Maximin still has the tone and the bearing of a child’ and records his final words for us: *‘Then the Blessed Virgin walked over there* (pointing to the mound She had climbed). *Having reached this height, She rose and disappeared, leaving me with all my faults.’*"  Two days later, the same Fr. Bossan came down to Corps to see Maximin.  – What should one say, asked the pitiless questioner, to those who accuse you and Mélanie of having faults? – *You have to ask them what faults.* – They say that you are light-headed and inconstant. – *They are not faults.* – They are not vices, but they are faults. – *Like everyone else, I am not perfect.* – I have always said that you are a good Christian, because that is true… But did not the apparition produce any particular effect in you? the questioner asked after a few moments. I mean: did it not bring you any particular grace to correct you and enable you to live in a holy manner? – *I cannot say. I felt nothing particular; but the Blessed Virgin made me the gift of a good Christian education with the good sisters of Corps. She surrounded me with very edifying priests. Throughout my childhood and my youth I found myself in a setting that brought me to the good and deflected me from evil. Without the apparition, I could have been very far from the good God and, like many others, I could have become very bad, perhaps even a member of the Internationale, of the Commune. It was a very great grace, therefore, that was granted me to be kept in the setting where I was and to be given the religious convictions I have.* – They are certainly very great graces. But many unthinking people would like to see you a saint and not just a good Christian as you are. – *Well, they are foolish. It is impossible to reason with them. The apparition and I are two different things. I was only an instrument. It doesn’t matter how long water flows through a pipe of silver or of gold, it will never become wine, not more than if it flowed through a pipe of wood or of clay. The grace of the apparition did indeed flow through my channel, but it did not change it.* – Are you convinced, his persistent questioner asked, that you were no more than an instrument in the hands of the Blessed Virgin? – *Yes, absolutely. We were but a channel, like parrots that repeat what they have heard. We were stupid before the apparition, we were stupid after the apparition and we shall be stupid all our lives.* (quoted by Jaouen, *La grâce de La Salette, au regard de l’Église*, p. 251)  What candour! Maximin had no illusions about himself, never complained of his shortcomings, but the tribulations of his unstable life faded in his eyes before the incomprehensible mystery of the Beautiful Lady having chosen him – he the poor, ignorant shepherd – as Her messenger and of having made Herself the gentle Mediatrix of so many benefits! However, his humility in no way impeded his firmness, especially when it came to the Secret, as he was to prove several months later.  **CONTROVERSY OVER THE SECRET**  In December 1871, there appeared in the bookshops a booklet entitled "*The secrets of La Salette and their importance. Latest revelations of forthcoming events.*" The author, a certain M. Girard, whose intentions in other respects were praiseworthy, claimed to be revealing the true text of Maximin’s secret – the text of his first draft, covered in ink blots, which the seer had to re-do.  Maximin was not slow to answer: he denied the text in the most vigorous terms:  "1).In the presence of the Bishop, of Canon de Taxis and of M. Dausse himself, *I burned the rough copy* [Maximin wrote *brouillard* (fog) instead of *brouillon* (rough draft)]*of my secret*; I sealed the copy with His Excellency’s arms and then placed my Secret in the hands of the Bishop to be taken to Rome. That is the truth pure and simple. M. Dausse, whose testimony is quoted by M. Girard, is still alive and can certify what I say here. I did not, therefore insist that M. Dausse accept the rough draft of my secret or take cognisance of it. It seems to me to be pointless to say any more on this subject.  "2). Mgr de Bruillard, M. Gérin and M. Rousselot assured me that the secrets had not been violated either in the Bishop’s palace of Grenoble or during the journey to Rome, and that the Holy Father alone had broken the seal that I myself had affixed in the presence of the Bishop, Canon de Taxis and M. Dausse. Consequently and in the light of these proofs, the secret was not violated as far as I am concerned; the only one who knows it is the Holy Father, unless His Holiness has communicated it. He alone is the owner and master of this secret.  "*As for me, I shall be in the future what I have always been in this matter: impenetrable. And if at any time I were commissioned to divulge it to the public, I would not do so without the consent of my bishop, who himself would refer to Rome. In that way, I would always be sure of being in the line of duty, as well as subject to the Most Holy Church our good Mother.*  "3). Many people ask me whether the text quoted in M. Girard’s book is that of my secret. I never answer this question for reasons that are easy to guess."  Maximin Giraud. 2 February 1872.  And in a personal letter addressed to M. Girard, he wrote: "I have never divulged anything, not even in my hours of extreme distress or of the most irresistible temptation… I have never hesitated and have always been ready, like Thomas of Canterbury, to die rather than deliver my secret to the public!"  "**AN ENVIABLE DEATH**"  His health weakened. On 4 November 1874, he made his last pilgrimage to La Salette. He was asked to tell his account of the apparition, which he did with a good grace. He held his audience spellbound for over an hour, giving proof of an extraordinary memory. It was the last time he narrated the words of the beautiful Lady in public. He then went back to Corps, to the poor dwelling where he had been born, to prepare for death with the piety of the child he had always remained. Pious women, Sister Sainte-Thècle and Madame Jourdain were at his side.  On Monday the 1st of March 1875, he felt his end approaching and requested the last sacraments. He piously responded to the prayers for the dying and received Holy Communion. He had difficulty in swallowing the Host and asked for some water from La Salette. He was given a few drops and then, very quietly, he died. The missionary Father of La Salette who assisted him at this last moment, declared: "*I would like to be in his place.*"  His testament was couched in these terms:  "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.  "I believe in all that is taught by the Holy, Apostolic and Roman Church, in all the dogmas defined by our Holy Father the Pope, the august and infallible Pius IX.  "I firmly believe, even at the cost of my blood, in the celebrated apparition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary on the holy mountain of La Salette, on 19 September 1846 – an apparition which I have defended in speech, writing and suffering.  "After my death, let no one assert or say that I was ever heard to deny the great event of La Salette; for in lying to the whole world, he would be lying to himself.  "In these sentiments, I give my heart to Our Lady of La Salette."  **FIGURE OF ADAM REDEEMED**  Our intention has been to tell the whole story of this poor life, wandering and unhappy, sown with contradictions and failures, thorns and briars, so misunderstood and despised, in his own time as in ours, and even eclipsed by most of today’s devotees of La Salette in favour of the life of Mélanie, which is much more sparkling, at least in appearance, for her life appears to us to be figurative: Maximin, a son and figure of Adam, but redeemed, bearing his cross, tempted to fall again, but victorious over temptation through his humble and prayerful faith. Our Lady no doubt had Her reasons for choosing this ignorant little shepherd behind his grazing sheep – this little scatterbrain with a heart as pure and as simple as a mountain spring. He lived and died as he was born, in poverty, without any material gain from the mission he nevertheless accomplished with admirable fidelity until his death in the arms of Holy Church and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Beautiful Lady, the Reconciler!  Deep down, his inner strength and his invincible strength came from his inviolate Secret, which shone in his heart like a burning lamp in the night. Can we reasonably draw any conclusions about its content? asks his biographer, Father Parent, quoted by Le Hidec,and he answers:  "Yes, if we follow certain clues. Obviously, the shepherd’s message can but confirm that of the shepherdess; at least it cannot contradict it. The one must complement the other, after the example of the Gospels which are in agreement over the truth despite certain apparent divergences. Furthermore, each secret must contain special prophecies of a particular character. So what would be the particular mark of Maximin’s secret? Principally, it would seem to proclaim the triumph of the Church and above all it would seem to designate the political saviour, referred to in so many prophecies by the popular name of the Grand Monarch."  We have seen how things stood regarding the return of the king, son of Saint Louis: not this one, the supposed survivor, nor the other one, the legitimate Pretender, but another one.., much later!  "As for the triumph of the Church, I think it is indicated by the little alpine shepherd’s eagerness to plant his wooden cross in the place called ‘the Assumption of Mary’, where Mary ascended, triumphant, to Heaven, whilst looking towards Rome. Pius IX, more than his two successors, was the pope who was put to the test and crucified, according to Malachy’s very just motto concerning the popes, *Crux de Cruce*. However, it was noticed that his brow was generally radiant with serenity and he often pronounced solemn words of confidence in a better future, which we have not yet been seen, alas! Now, this pious Pontiff s surprising calm is attributed to his knowledge of these two secrets of La Salette. In 1869, Maximin wrote these remarkable words to his Spanish benefactor, the Comte de Penalver: ‘I never weary praying for Pius IX, who is the greatest man we have in our time. He has a great love for Our Lady of La Salette, who sustains him in his difficulties and assists him in the government of the Church. He often alludes to the least of the Beautiful Lady’s public words and secrets. I do not say this to the prejudice of my secret, which I have entrusted to the Pope alone, nor am I revealing anything when I happen to speak like everyone else of one or other of the events that were foretold to me.’" (p. 82-83)  Maximin, Pius IX: what an instructive comparison between the little shepherd of Corps and the greatest pope of his century, elected in 1846, the year of the Apparition! Are they not both in their own way a figure of the fidelity of the Catholic Church in the thick of the cruellest trials, awaiting the certain fulfilment of the promises of their adored Lord and of His dearest Mother!    **MÉLANIE’S SECRET**  Beside Adam, there stands Eve whose twists and turns in life cannot all be blamed on the lack of understanding or the malice of the wicked. It is important to pick out from her long life (she will die in 1904) the key events where her own action seems to us to be decisive: the same goes for the credit we should give to the writings she produced, on her own initiative:   * **The Autobiography**, published in 1900, which transports us to the first fourteen years of her life, *her Childhood Gospel*. * **The Rule of the Mother of God**, as it was handed to Pope Leo XIII on 5 January 1879, and which would correspond to her *Acts of the Apostles* (those of the "Last Times", according to her own expression). * **The Secret of La Salette**, the 1879 version, with the imprimatur of the Bishop of Lecce (Italy), which would be her *Apocalypse*.   The complexity of this life is due, among other things, to the contradictory judgements she aroused among ecclesiastics, some of whom, we are bound to think, must have been abused and others perspicacious: discernment was brought to bear by the definitive judgement of the Church. The controversy, even at the time, did not suppress apostolic goodness, as a missionary of  La Salette, Father Perrin, thus summed up in 1867:  "*Although she was the most terrible thorn for all those who gave her welcome, they were, however, inclined to take an interest in her, because she was felt to be more worthy of pity than of blame.*"  **Corenc. The first blot. 1850-1853 (first disobedience).**  In 1846, a few weeks after the apparition, Mgr de Bruillard arranged for Mélanie and Maximin to be admitted to the school directed by the Sisters of Providence at Corps. They stayed there for four years.  On 10 October 1850, Mélanie entered as a postulant of the same order, at their convent at Corenc. She took the habit in 1851 under the name of Sister Mary of the Cross, where she edified her community. *But*, she had a passion for reading mystical writings and revelations of varying authenticity. *But* she lived in an atmosphere of unctuous admiration: visitors flocked to the convent, priests and lay people drank in her words and collected them to spread abroad. *But* her novice mistress was captivated, exalted her and encouraged confidences when it was her mission to keep her in the shade.  Finally, for a year or two, Mélanie suffered from spectacular attacks of the devil, which threw her to the ground, making her deaf and dumb, plunging her into despair and sometimes taking the form of terrifying animals.  In short, when the time came for her to take her vows, Mgr Ginoulhiac, who succeeded Mgr de Bruillard, thought it better to postpone them. He explained his decision in a pastoral letter addressed to his clergy, dated 4 November 1854.  "*Having become, since 19 September 1846, the object of delicate attention and tender, respectful consideration on the part of many people, even among the most important and most distinguished, resembling a sort of cult, if over the years she were somewhat affected by this, would it not be surprising if, in the end, she were not to allow herself to be won over by attachment to her own opinion, which is one of the greatest dangers incurred by souls favoured with extraordinary gifts? This attachment to her opinion and to the peculiarities which naturally follow commanded our attention as soon as we were informed of them, and, although the community paid homage to her piety and zeal in instructing children in religious knowledge, we believed it to be our duty to refuse to admit her to the yearly vows, in order to form her more effectively in the practice of Christian humility and simplicity, which are the necessary and surest protection against the illusions of the interior life.*"  All these intentions – malevolent –, attributed by the *mélanistes* to the Bishop, do not alter the fact that Mélanie refused to accept the required year’s probation, with the result that an English prelate, Mgr Newsham, Bishop of Hexham, asked the Bishop of Grenoble if he might take her with him, for the good of English Catholicism. The Bishop of Grenoble accepted with relief! So did Mélanie.  **Darlington, Second blot. 1854-1860 (second disobedience).**  She quickly disappointed the expectation of the English bishop, who soon lost interest in her, and we next find her in the Carmelite convent in Darlington. There are different versions of her entry into Carmel. But the Carmelites record that she was welcomed and introduced into the cloister to be looked after. She showed a desire to remain, and with great pomp – too much! – she received the habit on 23 February 1855. However, with the objection that she had a "mission" to discharge on behalf of the Blessed Virgin, Mélanie refused to make her profession, then – constrained by her superiors, she says – she brought herself to do so, but interiorly she did not take the vow of enclosure.  When she wanted to leave attempts were made to restrain her, so she threw letters over the enclosure wall to let it be known that she was being sequestered. Hoping to avoid all scandal, Mgr Hogarth had her taken back to Marseilles.  We find in the confidential reports she made on this subject to the curious Abbé Combe, in 1901, this enlightening summary on how she came to be judged wherever she went:  "*For a long time, the Prioress (of Darlington), forgetting her authority, did nothing without consulting her. After a retreat preached by a religious, the Prioress and the community turned against her. She was refused Holy Communion, even to make her Easter duties.*  " *– My dear sister, Our Lord who gave Himself to you in communion at Dompierre, did He not do so at Darlington? – Oh, yes."*  What was she accused of? Making up stories. How did they see her? As mentally unbalanced. The good religious who gave the retreat asked her after confession whether she had ever happened to see someone and then wonder whether she had already seen that person with her own eyes or whether she had dreamed it. She answered frankly:  "*Yes, once when I was travelling, I saw a person whom I thought I recognised, but I couldn’t remember where I had seen her; or whether it was simply a dream.* – *Ah!* he said to her, with a start, *that’s a sure sign of madness; yes, you are mad, well and truly mad!*"  **Marseilles. Third blot. 1860-1867 (third disobedience).**  Welcomed by friends who entrusted her to the direction of a Jesuit, Father Calage, who took pity on her and had her relieved of her simple vows, she was taken in as a boarder at the Compassion Order’s mother house, under the name of Sister Zénaïde. There, she wanted to adopt a habit indicated to her, so she said, by the Madonna, but she had to obey the founder of the order who made her wear the same habit as her daughters. After various missions within the order, and after a fruitless attempt at the Carmelite convent in Marseilles, she was admitted to take vows in the Compassion Order, provided she did not reveal her identity to the outside world.  She contravened that order, and the Superior, treating her as a witch and a traitress, obliged her to leave the congregation, the habit and… Marseilles!  **Castellamare (Italy). Fourth blot. 1867-1885 (fourth disobedience).**  An Italian prelate, Mgr Petagna, Bishop of Castellamare, known when she was at Marseilles, took an interest in her and installed her in the Palazzo Ruffo with a sister of the Compassion order. She attempted to found the Order of the Sons of the Mother of God, on the fringes of the regular 1852 foundation of the Missionaries of La Salette, but according to the rule she claimed to have received from the Blessed Virgin in 1846.  Summoned to Rome, in 1879, accused by Mgr Fava, Bishop of Grenoble, supported, she maintains, by Leo XIII, she left without, in the end, winning her case, but not without writing a new version of the famous *Secret*. On her return to Italy after a long journey, her protector died, and the community was dispersed.  **Return to France. The trial at Chalon-sur-Saône. 1885-1892 (fifth disobedience).**  Pursuing her dream of making a foundation in France, armed with a legacy left her by the Abbé Ronjon and with the support of Canon de Brandt, she engaged in a feverish but fruitless activity. She will find herself caught up in a legal case against the Bishop of Chalon who contests the validity of the Ronjon inheritance.  This legal case, with all its repercussions, went on until 1895, and she lost. She fought the case tooth and nail, which made her protector and spiritual father, Mgr Zola, say of her:  "*Sister Mary of the Cross had a quarrel with a French bishop. She showed very little submission towards her superiors in these circumstances, maybe through lack of guidance or of light, or for both reasons.*"  **Wandering. 1892-1904. The Abbé Combe.**  Back in Italy, at Messina and then at Moncalien, in 1899, Mélanie, on the insistence of Abbe Combe, who was infatuated with her, returned to France, changing her address three times. Stormy relations with this priest made her flee to Italy again, in 1904. On leaving, they told each other a piece of their mind. He, that he is now persuaded that she is subject to illusion and that she does not see "everything in God". She, that her former confessor and protector wanted to wrench all her secrets from her, and that he lacked intelligence and humility in wanting to interpret God’s will for her, in his way (cf. Guilhot, p. 481). On the 15th December 1904, she was found dead in her house at Altamura. What a life! And what an end!  But now let us look at her writings, in three parts. |

**THE SECRETS OF LA SALETTE**

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| We now come to the most sensitive, and also the most controversial, part of the Apparition of 19 September 1846: the secrets entrusted by Our Lady to Her two messengers Maximin and Mélanie, faithfully guarded for five years, written down under the circumstances we have already described, then transmitted to Pope Pius IX who was visibly moved on reading them, finally consigned to the archives of the Holy Office with a view to their eventual publication, which none of his successors has yet judged opportune… La Salette with Fatima are thus the only two apparitions recognised by the Church, which have a hidden, prophetic, apocalyptic extension. |

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| http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette7.jpg |

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| It is easy to guess how much interest has been shown in these messages over these last one hundred and fifty or eighty years on the part of Catholics concerned for the world’s future and attentive to the will of Heaven. Questioned one day by Father Giraud, Superior General of the Missionaries of La Salette, about the content of these secrets, Pius IX replied: "*You wish to know the secrets of La Salette? Well, it is this:****‘If you do not do penance, you will all perish!’***" (quoted by Le Hidec, p. 67) There is, therefore, great danger of perdition for our souls, for our families, our nations, for our entire society! The Blessed Virgin Mary warns us in Her maternal wisdom of grave "***spiritual and temporal evils***" threatening us, according to the expression of Mgr de Bruillard, who was the first to have read it, and we would do nothing about it? Since both Pius IX and Mgr de Bruillard confided that they had found it beneficial and comforting to read it, may we be permitted to hope for the same grace for ourselves today.  But before embarking on a critical study of the life of the seers and of their Secret, true or supposedly so, it is necessary for us to go back to the account of the apparition itself. If you turn back to [page 4](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette2.htm#message), you can re-read the Message of Mary, as we did here, with an ever increasing amazement and something of an infinite veneration for Her who, amid tears, wished to pass on to all Her people a great and terrible lesson. Our Father has long sought for a correct and profound interpretation of this Message, of benefit to souls. He found it recently, through the key of the figuratives and guided by his quest for the divine orthodromy. Here is the commentary he gave us in the course of a spiritual reading during the month of July, and which I, as his interim secretary, have been asked to transcribe as near as possible in its original style, free and spontaneous, to be accessible to the humble and the lowly, the true devotees of La Salette and Fatima.  **AN OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION**  So, let us turn back to this all too quickly read account. It has many surprising elements. The Blessed Virgin comes towards the children and announces that She wants to teach them a great lesson: "*Come, My children, do not be afraid; I am here to proclaim great news to you.*" So what is this "great news", which has brought Her down from Heaven to this place?  When one considers this group, with the thought of looking for a figurative, one thinks of Adam and Eve in their primaeval innocence. They are alone, on this deserted mountain, beyond all civilisation, and there is God: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in Paradise in the afternoon air…" (Gn 3.8) It does not correspond completely, but the children say that they have never forgotten this "voice of paradise". They also built a "little paradise" and adorned it with alpine flowers. The Blessed Virgin sat on it; She is seated on their paradise, but to weep… over the ingratitude and the sinfulness of Her children, renewing that of the originals.  Or again, it is Mount Sinai, and Horeb, where Yahweh gave His Law to Moses. Why look so far? Because the Law, recalled by the Blessed Virgin at La Salette, is purely Judaic. It is of the Old Testament. However, the greatest amazement felt on reading this is the use of the first person singular: "***I****gave you six days to work,****I****kept the seventh for****Myself****, and no one wishes to grant it to****Me****.*" Is not that strange? It is the literal renewal of a verse from Exodus (31.15). The Blessed Virgin Mary, therefore, takes the place of God; She is enthroned and She legislates, assuming responsibility for God’s Law as though it were Her own. This is truly the first time in the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the last! At Fatima, She will explain that it is God’s Will that She should go before and that everything should be subject to Her.  Here, the name of God, of our dearest Heavenly Father, is not mentioned. It is Her and… Her Son whom the children contemplate in rapture – Her Son on a living crucifix, as though "embedded in Her chest", and which seems to be the source of the light and glory surrounding Her. It is "*the Name of My Son*" that is blasphemed, it is "*My Son’s arm*" that weighs heavily, and it is "*My Son… to Whom I must ceaselessly pray for you*". The people of God have become Her people; She has received them for Her heritage: "*… If My people will not submit… You will pass this on to all My people.*" Finally, one last reminder of Exodus: the spring that fed the little fountain, near where the Blessed Virgin appeared, began to flow again, recalling the water which sprang from the rock in the desert.  In Deuteronomy, Moses prophesies that the people will not follow the commandments of their God, and so he foretells chastisements to punish them, but also, wonderful rewards if they repent. It is the morality of the Alliance, severe but just and holy, resumed here by the Blessed Virgin Mary, with striking temporal punishments: *the potatoes and the grapes will rot, the wheat will fall to dust; famine will follow, and small children will die a horrible death…* It sounds like the linguistic imagery of the Prophet Amos, or the rending appeal of Jeremiah’s Lamentations: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, come back to the Lord your God…" with the added pleas of a Mother’s tears. It is the same biblical language for the promise, purely conditional: "*If they convert…*", of a messianic harvest: "*… the stones and rocks will change into piles of wheat, and potatoes will be found sown in the earth*".  The Blessed Virgin then asks the children whether they say their prayers properly; She complains of Mass being deserted in summer, badly followed in winter; finally, abstinence is no longer respected: "*they go to the butcher’s like hungry dogs*"! It reminds us of the precepts of the Law which the good Jews of the Old Testament were bound to observe to the letter. And the Blessed Virgin came down from Heaven simply to remind us of that? And is that why the "Beautiful Lady", her head adorned with a royal diadem, wore the apron of a poor servant, and bore on her shoulders a heavy chain?   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette2.jpg |   Well, yes. She is the Handmaid of the Lord and ready for the hard necessities of the Service She has been commanded to do: address Her people with reproaches, call them to conversion with threats and promises, to obedience to the Law of God and of the Church, beginning with the adoration due to His Name and keeping holy the Day that belongs to Him. She knows that the rest will follow… Such was the religion of our fathers, humble and strong, which Heaven came to recommend and which will never change. But in God’s plan, it also marked the expectation of another wonderful, divine grace: the apparition of the Immaculate Virgin and the gift of Her Heart, firstly at Lourdes and then supremely at Fatima, compared with which the apparition of Our Lady at La Salette would be the prefiguration, the Old Testament shadow before the light of the New.  As for the seers, they too will accomplish their mission well: they will pass on the Beautiful Lady’s message to all Her people. But, for all that, they will not become saints, and that is what is so surprising about La Salette! As was said by the good Father Rousselot, whose subtle theological distinction has been a light for me: "*There was****gratia gratis data****of which the children were the instruments*", which made them apt for the fulfilment of their mission, "*but there was no****gratia gratum faciens****, sanctifying grace*", a special gift, which would have changed them inwardly (Bassette, p. 399). Look at these poor children in their authentic portrait   reproduced above. They have been drawn from their semi-uneducated state to become the messengers of the Queen of Heaven! Like Adam and Eve, they then led a pitiful life, keeping their faults, subject to temptations, and even falls… The Blessed Virgin permitted it, wished it, for what design? We shall understand this better after a more careful study of their lives. |

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| MAXIMIN’S SECRET  "**THE BLESSED VIRGIN’S LITTLE BOY**"  Born on 27 August 1835 into a poor family of Corps in Matheysine, Maximin was certainly not a privileged child. His father, a wheelwright by trade, did not make much of a living because he drank too much; his mother had died when he was only one year old. Of a playful and mischievous character, he could not stay still for an instant, always moving his arms and hands (during the apparition, whilst Our Lady was communicating Her secret to Mélanie, he amused himself throwing stones!). Of a good heart and totally unselfish, he had, however, received no education up to the age of eleven, neither schooling nor catechism. He ran away from church if taken there by his father, and only with difficulty did he succeed in learning the *Pater* and the *Ave Maria*, in two years… Pierre Selme, who employed him as a casual shepherd, said of him: "*He is a little innocent who has no more forethought than malice.*"   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette8.jpg *Maximin*, shepherd of La Salette, in 1846 |   The event of 19 September 1846 completely overturned his life. That same evening, he gave his first account of the event before the Pra family, without really understanding all that he was saying. But when he went to bed and wanted to say a *Pater* and an *Ave*, as the Beautiful Lady had asked him, he could not remember what he had to say and he cried… From mid October he went to school with the Sisters of Providence to learn how to read and write. As he passed in the street, people would say: "There’s the Blessed Virgin’s little boy." Before long, both he and Mélanie were taken in as boarders. They stayed there about four years. It was not until May 1848 that they were able to make their first Communion together. The Superior, Sister Sainte-Thècle, very wisely kept them out of the way as much as possible, but she could not prevent pilgrims and others constantly coming out of curiosity to disturb them.  Maximin always repeated his account with the same seriousness, and his answers to the questions fired at him were always unexpected, clear and precise. Here are some of them:  Mgr Darboy, future Archbishop of Paris, was sceptical and asked him: "Look here, my boy, how is it that, knowing your ignorance of the ordinary language, the Blessed Virgin would have used it in speaking to you? Isn’t there something ridiculous and consequently unacceptable (*sic*) in all this? What would you say if, at this moment, I were to declaim a long speech in Greek, which you don’t understand?"  – *What would you in your turn say, Monseigneur, if, after hearing it only once, I were repeating it everywhere, without mistake, making it understood by everybody, without understanding it myself?*  A priest declared peremptorily: "You are a little liar, I don’t believe you." – *What has that to do with me? My task is to tell you, not to make you believe.*  – I don’t believe you have any secret. – *Then why, Monsieur, have you come all this way to ask me?*  – Aren’t you bored, repeating the same thing every day? – *And you, Monsieur l’Abbé, do you get bored saying Mass every day?*  To Canon Chambon, who asked in 1847, "If the Pope asked you for your secret, would you be obliged to tell him, for the Pope is much more than the Blessed Virgin?" Maximin replied:  *– The Pope, much more than the Blessed Virgin?… But the Blessed Virgin is the Queen of all the saints, if the Pope does his duty well, he will be a saint, but he will still be less than the Blessed Virgin; if he does not do his duty, he will be punished more than others.*  – But it may be the devil who has entrusted you with your secret? – *No, for the devil has nothing to do with Christ, and the devil would not forbid blasphemy.*  Finally, when they tried to catch him out by saying: "The Lady has deceived you; she predicted a famine and yet the harvest is good everywhere", he replied: "*What has that to do with me? That is what she told me, and that is her concern.*" And at other times, he would answer as Mélanie always did: "*But, what if people did penance?*"  **FIRST TROUBLES**  In February 1849, the death of his father came as a bitter trial for the young boy, who was now orphaned of both father and mother. Life in the Providence Convent began to weigh on him. After three successive escapes, the sisters placed him in the hands of his legal guardian in the spring of 1850. At the beginning of the month of September, he was welcomed by a rich count who pushed indiscretion to the point of offering him his castle if he would divulge his secret! Later, Maximin was to admit: "*I was about to betray the secret, when all of a sudden my memory failed; I found it impossible to articulate a word; I remained dumb and I understood my fault through this warning of the Blessed Virgin.*" He returned to La Salette for 19 September. He made some strange encounters on the mountain that day.  Supporters of Baron de Richemont, an adventurer who passed himself off as King Louis XVII escaped from the Tower, were convinced that the Baron in whom they believed was actually designated by name in the seer’s secret. They spoke to him about the Pretender and showed him his portrait, but Maximin simply answered that he had never heard of Louis XVII nor of Louis XVIII, but only of Louis-Philippe (it was in 1848, before the Revolution). On that 19 September, these men returned to the charge and suggested taking Maximin to Ars to consult "the saint who is able to read a person’s conscience". When Mgr de Bruillard came to hear of this, he wisely forbade Maximin to step beyond the limits of his diocese, but the ban was ignored. This act of disobedience had painful consequences, as is known (cf. supra, p. 8). We recall that on the subject of his vocation, the Curé d’Ars twice advised the seer to return to his diocese of Grenoble.  On the way back, Maximin and his fellow travellers stopped at Lyons, at the Marist noviciate in the Saint Irenaeus quarter, where Father Eymard would have been very willing to have the seer, but on condition that the Bishop of Grenoble gave permission. Father Eymard knew Maximin very well: "either directly or through the intermediary of their common friend, M. Dausse, he constantly followed, observed and kept in touch with him without ever discovering anything to make him doubt the reality of the Fact of La Salette." (Louis Bassette, *Notre-Dame de La Salette et Saint Pierre-Julien Eymard*, p. 17)  Maximin will next meet, still escorted by his "*survivantist*" friends, the famous (and false) Baron de Richemont. Finding himself faced with the impostor, he recognised him because he had already seen his portrait; but after having told his usual account, he confided to the person who had introduced him this quite ludicrous prophecy: "He must be told to cut himself off from his favourites, because his life is in danger!" followed by a brief "Let’s go!" And that was all. We shrug our shoulders today, without understanding that it may simply have been said on the spur of the moment in order to avoid any indiscreet question concerning the Secret. Subsequently, we shall often see him mysteriously drawn to royalist circles, without ever revealing anything of the secret, but, by his attitude, letting it be understood that Heaven was interested in the restoration of the most Christian Monarchy.  **THE WRITING OF THE SECRET**  After the group had returned from Ars, Maximin entered the minor seminary of Rondeau at Grenoble. His teachers quickly realised that his unstable character made him unsuitable for the priesthood: "He is light hearted and a little thoughtless, but I think he has a great fund of faith", the superior declared with regard to him. While he was there, the anticlerical press unleashed the virulent opposition of certain clerics, reinforced by the Ars incident, which caused him to declare: "*La Salette is now like a flower covered by mud and manure in winter, but it will emerge even more beautiful.*"  It was from Rondeau that he was taken to the Bishop’s Palace so that he might write his secret there.  "M. Dausse, who accompanied him, recommended that he think very carefully about what he was going to do. The child had no worries: *‘I remember very well what was said to me. You will see how I write rapidly without looking for my words.’* He spoke of other things. In the Bishop’s Palace, they went to a room on the second floor overlooking the Place Notre-Dame. A large desk had been installed in the room, provided with all the necessary writing materials. Canon de Taxis joined M. Dausse to supervise him. The Bishop left them together.  "Maximin held his head in his hands, dipped his pen in the ink pot and heedlessly shook it over the parquet floor. The witnesses, observing him from afar, reprimanded him for this unseemly behaviour. He took up his pen and wrote: *On the 19th September 1846, I saw a Lady as brilliant as the sun whom I believe to be the Blessed Virgin; but I have never said that it was the Blessed Virgin. It is for the Church to judge whether it really was the Blessed Virgin or some other person, from what I am now going to say. In the middle of her speech, she confided it to me following this phrase: the grapes will rot and the nuts will go bad.*" (It would be after reading these few introductory lines that Pope Pius IX pronounced these words: "Here we have the simplicity and the candour of a child.")  "Maximin showed this to M. Dausse, who found it acceptable, and then he got down to writing rapidly at his desk, without pause as though he were copying out a text. As soon as he had finished writing, he stood up and threw the sheet he had just written into the air. "*Now, he said, I am rid of that; I have no more secret and am like the others. People won’t need to come and ask me any more; they can go and ask the Pope; he will speak if he wants to.*" The two witnesses saw this sheet of paper on the floor: it was a real schoolboy’s piece of untidy work, written aslant and speckled with ink blots. The child was made to re-do it. He balked at this, but this time he wrote properly. They rang for the Bishop, who ordered Maximin to place what he had written in an envelope and to seal it. M. Dausse asked the Bishop to read the text for fear of sending the Holy Father something unworthy of His Holiness. The Bishop hesitated, then took this advice. Maximin then sealed the envelope, stamped with the episcopal seal. M. Dausse and Canon de Taxis wrote on the envelope certifying that Maximin had written and signed the contents himself, without being influenced. (Bassette, p. 211-212)  It is to be noted, as H. Voilin reports in *La Salette, Montagne Prophétique*, that in the course of writing his secret he asked them for the spelling of the word "*Pontife*" (p. 78).  Was it at Grenoble or at the Grande Chartreuse, where the young boy spent his summer holidays, that an event took place which later caused a lot of trouble, as related by Father Parent in his *Vie de Maximin* written in 1913: "The only thing that history could hold against Mary’s confidant, concerning his secret, is that he scribbled a botched up prophetic revelation some weeks later, on 11 August 1851, to please M. Dausse, who was bothering him. This pious layman kept this piece of writing by the little seer as a precious document. But before long, and especially before his death, the writer protested against M. Dausse who believed that he was in possession of the *true* secret, whereas he had naively received nothing more than a ***prophetic fantasy***, like certain letters which he sometimes wrote in answer to nuns who would pester him to know the future." (quoted by Le Hidec, p. 81)  Maximin no doubt did not foresee the consequences of such thoughtlessness, which he probably did to get himself out of an awkward situation for fear of saying too much to his dear guardian, to whom he was sincerely and affectionately devoted. Yes, he was "*without forethought*", just as he was "*without malice*"… As for this good M. Dausse, although mistaken in his good faith, he remained equitable and sound in his judgement concerning the seer. In 1879, he wrote that "by not regulating the freedom with which all the curious had to see him, question him and hear him, Maximin’s formative years were sacrificed… a mistake that was wisely avoided in the case of Bernadette." (Bassette, p. 419)  **A SEVERE RECALL TO ORDER**  With the opening of the school year in October 1851, a new stage began in the life of Maximin: he had transmitted his secret, and the Church, in the person of Mgr de Bruillard, having recognised the truth of the apparition, in its turn became responsible for "passing on the message". But there still remained the seer of La Salette… with his imperfections! After a year spent in another minor seminary of the diocese, he was entrusted to the care of a holy priest, the Abbé Champon, Parish Priest of Seyssins. He stayed there for three years continuing with his studies against all odds, acquiring great merit but little knowledge…  It was the time when bad priests and malevolent journalists showered Maximin, and Mélanie too, with every kind of calumny in order to discredit the Apparition:  "One day, the Abbé Champon went to spend a week in Lyons. On his return, some well intentioned people came to warn him:  ‘Monsieur le Curé, you need to take precautions with your boarder. Whilst you were in Lyons, Maximin hit your sister and got hold of the parish money. With this money, he spent a whole day and night revelling in Grenoble, where he was found dead drunk in the Place Grenette in the early hours of the morning.’  The Abbé was appalled: ‘That’s very serious. When did this happen?’  ‘Last week, while you were away; the individual was picked up in the Place Grenette on Wednesday morning.’  ‘Well then, I have to tell you that this story has been invented from beginning to end. Maximin accompanied me to Lyons. He did not leave me during those eight days and, on Wednesday morning, he served my Mass at Fourvière and received Communion…’ "  The opponents shamelessly exploited the business of Ars and the relations Maximin had had with the *survivantistes*. La Salette had become a "Royalist affair" (sic)! Mgr Ginoulhiac was disturbed at this and roundly settled the question in his pastoral letter of 4 November 1854: "… Given Maximin’s total and absolute ignorance concerning the very existence of Louis XVII, and of these futile attempts over several years, it is plainly impossible to accept that the apparition of La Salette is the work of Louis XVII’s supporters, and that this daydream could lie at the bottom of this whole affair (...)  "It had proved impossible to wrench the secret away from the child and to discover the prophecies the secret was supposed to contain, and of which he was informed.*Fascinated or persuaded by what could be flattering for him, Maximin, who until 1851 had not even suspected the role being cast for him, ended by letting himself be infatuated by a sense of his own importance; and finding fellow disciples and other persons ready to listen to him, he confided these supposed oracles to them. He then committed himself even further to this path, and when we were informed of this, we had to take quite severe measures in order to pull him out of it.*  "Although these measures were deserved, this young man did not, however, appear as he has been represented in the Memorandum. The seminarian whose testimony is quoted, came to us spontaneously to declare that Maximin never pronounced in his presence the words reported nor did he profess the odious morality attributed to him; nor is it true, as has been advanced elsewhere, that he gained nothing from the measures we took in his regard, and that he has since made no progress in his studies, and that he has not shown himself to be hard working and reserved."  Note that although Mgr Ginoulhiac judged Maximin severely – "*he let himself be infatuated by a sense of his own importance*" –, reproaching him for heedlessly allying himself with these adventurers and allowing himself to make predictions, he came to his defence for all the rest and was pleased to emphasise his progress. As for the political question, he settled it wisely and cleanly… but he had not read the secret!  **OUR LADY’S VAGABOND**  In 1856, the Abbé Champon entrusted his pupil to one of his brothers, a Jesuit and philosophy teacher in the seminary at Dax in les Landes, temporarily transferred to Aire-sur-l’Adour. There were numerous friendships and frequent visits, to the detriment of both work and meditation… He remained a big child, of an incorrigible mischievousness, missing his Dauphiné and with a growing feeling of his unsuitability for the priesthood. "Although I cannot say about the future, for the moment I have this dark thought that I shall do more harm than good to the glory of God if I take the soutane", he wrote in March 1857 to Sister Thècle, to whom he always remained attached.  He finally returned to the country in 1858 where he was first employed at the home of the tax collector of La Tronche and then as a mechanic, before moving on to Paris, where he wandered from place to place for several months with an empty purse and a sad heart. Bad companions tried to lure him into places of debauchery, but he always saw through their intrigues and his heart remained ever pure through the special protection of his Lady, at whose feet he would often take refuge in the Church of Saint-Sulpice. A family of retired traders, the Jourdain family, took pity on this poor uprooted young man and adopted him in 1861. He stayed with them for three years, following courses at the faculty of medicine to be able to care better for the poor sick. Other benefactors were also concerned for him: the Spanish Comte de Penlaver and the Marquise de Pignerolles. The Marquise offered him a large sum of money if he would go to Frohsdorf in Austria to meet the Comte de Chambord, legitimate pretender to the throne of France.  The historians usually skate over this mysterious interview which took place at the end of April 1865: "Wasted expense for an interview that could not have been less cordial", wrote Henri Voilin. "For its greater good, La Salette yet again escaped from the hold of politics (sic!)." That is easily said, without knowledge of the seer’s attachment to the legitimate royalty, as recalled by Fr. Parent:  "Maximin was a loyal supporter of the Comte de Chambord. We have two proofs of this. Following the example of the Carthusians and other religious, who stamped their products with their coat of arms, he too had his coat of arms. They were suggested to him by the Comtesse de Chambord, then painted by M. de Grammont, who explained their meaning on 2 February 1869: three lilies, symbol of attachment to Our Lady of La Salette, to the Pope and to the King. And in a letter dated 24 July 1874, Maximin wrote these lines: ‘I am still confident that our King will come… The Chamber is failing in its mission and MacMahon is failing in his duty, by not going to fetch the King and offer him what is his due, at least for the salvation of France.’ " (Le Hidec, p. 86)   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette9.jpg Maximin Giraud, papal zouave |   Should we then believe the Marquis de la Franquerie when he quotes, without reference, the account of the conversation between the Pretender and the seer, written by the Comte de Vanssay, secretary to the Prince, for his family (*La Vierge Marie dans l’histoire de France*, p. 258)? Maximin is supposed to have said, among other things, that he would never ascend the throne of France, but "*It is God’s will that we keep the secret. The reestablishment of the royalty is reserved to God Himself alone*". Perhaps that would explain the Prince’s hesitant attitude in 1873.  From Vienna, Maximin went on to Rome, where he enlisted as a Papal zouave in the service of the Pope for the protection of his States. He was helped on this occasion by Cardinal de Villecourt, former bishop of La Rochelle and great friend of Pius IX, the apostle in France of the Immaculate Virgin and of La Salette, who gave him the necessary money to enlist, but on condition that he did not reveal his identity.  Among the zouaves, there was a future Jesuit, Henri le Chauff from Kerguenec, who had noticed this man at night prayers "praying earnestly and looking with such affection and supplication at the statue of the Blessed Virgin". He easily saw through his anonymity and became his friend.  Writing about Maximin, he said: "In ordinary conversation, the shepherd of Corps is quite heavy, but he is not without judgement… When he speaks of the apparition, he is a different person. He must indeed be inspired by the Most Blessed Virgin, for then he is admirably clear and logical; the best formulated objections are a game for him and he will demolish them more easily than a child knocks down a castle of cards he has built."  But six months later, Maximin left the zouaves and returned to France where he rejoined his adoptive parents, his pockets more empty than ever. Calumniated by a Parisian journalist, the shepherd of La Salette replied in a pamphlet in which he declared: "*I would be rich at this present moment, if I had cowardly and self-indulgently contradicted myself.*"  **RETURN TO CORPS**  In 1868, he returned for good to his native village, Corps, where he was joined by the Jourdains two years later. He refused to marry: "*When one has seen the Blessed Virgin, he confided to a close friend, it is not possible to be attached to anyone on this earth.*" He wanted to practise a trade "*in order to earn his living in the sweat of his brow*". These were years of general poverty and hunger which led him to that deplorable production of a liqueur which earned him as much trouble as it did discredit. Yet again, he was the victim of his naivety, cleverly exploited by a crook.  His one consolation was to go up there on the mountain, especially on the anniversary day of the apparition. "On 19 September 1871, he told the pilgrims around the miraculous fountain the account he had begun to spread twenty five years ago to the day. Fr. Bossan, who listened to him, noted first of all that ‘Maximin still has the tone and the bearing of a child’ and records his final words for us: *‘Then the Blessed Virgin walked over there* (pointing to the mound She had climbed). *Having reached this height, She rose and disappeared, leaving me with all my faults.’*"  Two days later, the same Fr. Bossan came down to Corps to see Maximin.  – What should one say, asked the pitiless questioner, to those who accuse you and Mélanie of having faults? – *You have to ask them what faults.* – They say that you are light-headed and inconstant. – *They are not faults.* – They are not vices, but they are faults. – *Like everyone else, I am not perfect.* – I have always said that you are a good Christian, because that is true… But did not the apparition produce any particular effect in you? the questioner asked after a few moments. I mean: did it not bring you any particular grace to correct you and enable you to live in a holy manner? – *I cannot say. I felt nothing particular; but the Blessed Virgin made me the gift of a good Christian education with the good sisters of Corps. She surrounded me with very edifying priests. Throughout my childhood and my youth I found myself in a setting that brought me to the good and deflected me from evil. Without the apparition, I could have been very far from the good God and, like many others, I could have become very bad, perhaps even a member of the Internationale, of the Commune. It was a very great grace, therefore, that was granted me to be kept in the setting where I was and to be given the religious convictions I have.* – They are certainly very great graces. But many unthinking people would like to see you a saint and not just a good Christian as you are. – *Well, they are foolish. It is impossible to reason with them. The apparition and I are two different things. I was only an instrument. It doesn’t matter how long water flows through a pipe of silver or of gold, it will never become wine, not more than if it flowed through a pipe of wood or of clay. The grace of the apparition did indeed flow through my channel, but it did not change it.* – Are you convinced, his persistent questioner asked, that you were no more than an instrument in the hands of the Blessed Virgin? – *Yes, absolutely. We were but a channel, like parrots that repeat what they have heard. We were stupid before the apparition, we were stupid after the apparition and we shall be stupid all our lives.* (quoted by Jaouen, *La grâce de La Salette, au regard de l’Église*, p. 251)  What candour! Maximin had no illusions about himself, never complained of his shortcomings, but the tribulations of his unstable life faded in his eyes before the incomprehensible mystery of the Beautiful Lady having chosen him – he the poor, ignorant shepherd – as Her messenger and of having made Herself the gentle Mediatrix of so many benefits! However, his humility in no way impeded his firmness, especially when it came to the Secret, as he was to prove several months later.  **CONTROVERSY OVER THE SECRET**  In December 1871, there appeared in the bookshops a booklet entitled "*The secrets of La Salette and their importance. Latest revelations of forthcoming events.*" The author, a certain M. Girard, whose intentions in other respects were praiseworthy, claimed to be revealing the true text of Maximin’s secret – the text of his first draft, covered in ink blots, which the seer had to re-do.  Maximin was not slow to answer: he denied the text in the most vigorous terms:  "1).In the presence of the Bishop, of Canon de Taxis and of M. Dausse himself, *I burned the rough copy* [Maximin wrote *brouillard* (fog) instead of *brouillon* (rough draft)]*of my secret*; I sealed the copy with His Excellency’s arms and then placed my Secret in the hands of the Bishop to be taken to Rome. That is the truth pure and simple. M. Dausse, whose testimony is quoted by M. Girard, is still alive and can certify what I say here. I did not, therefore insist that M. Dausse accept the rough draft of my secret or take cognisance of it. It seems to me to be pointless to say any more on this subject.  "2). Mgr de Bruillard, M. Gérin and M. Rousselot assured me that the secrets had not been violated either in the Bishop’s palace of Grenoble or during the journey to Rome, and that the Holy Father alone had broken the seal that I myself had affixed in the presence of the Bishop, Canon de Taxis and M. Dausse. Consequently and in the light of these proofs, the secret was not violated as far as I am concerned; the only one who knows it is the Holy Father, unless His Holiness has communicated it. He alone is the owner and master of this secret.  "*As for me, I shall be in the future what I have always been in this matter: impenetrable. And if at any time I were commissioned to divulge it to the public, I would not do so without the consent of my bishop, who himself would refer to Rome. In that way, I would always be sure of being in the line of duty, as well as subject to the Most Holy Church our good Mother.*  "3). Many people ask me whether the text quoted in M. Girard’s book is that of my secret. I never answer this question for reasons that are easy to guess."  Maximin Giraud. 2 February 1872.  And in a personal letter addressed to M. Girard, he wrote: "I have never divulged anything, not even in my hours of extreme distress or of the most irresistible temptation… I have never hesitated and have always been ready, like Thomas of Canterbury, to die rather than deliver my secret to the public!"  "**AN ENVIABLE DEATH**"  His health weakened. On 4 November 1874, he made his last pilgrimage to La Salette. He was asked to tell his account of the apparition, which he did with a good grace. He held his audience spellbound for over an hour, giving proof of an extraordinary memory. It was the last time he narrated the words of the beautiful Lady in public. He then went back to Corps, to the poor dwelling where he had been born, to prepare for death with the piety of the child he had always remained. Pious women, Sister Sainte-Thècle and Madame Jourdain were at his side.  On Monday the 1st of March 1875, he felt his end approaching and requested the last sacraments. He piously responded to the prayers for the dying and received Holy Communion. He had difficulty in swallowing the Host and asked for some water from La Salette. He was given a few drops and then, very quietly, he died. The missionary Father of La Salette who assisted him at this last moment, declared: "*I would like to be in his place.*"  His testament was couched in these terms:  "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.  "I believe in all that is taught by the Holy, Apostolic and Roman Church, in all the dogmas defined by our Holy Father the Pope, the august and infallible Pius IX.  "I firmly believe, even at the cost of my blood, in the celebrated apparition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary on the holy mountain of La Salette, on 19 September 1846 – an apparition which I have defended in speech, writing and suffering.  "After my death, let no one assert or say that I was ever heard to deny the great event of La Salette; for in lying to the whole world, he would be lying to himself.  "In these sentiments, I give my heart to Our Lady of La Salette."  **FIGURE OF ADAM REDEEMED**  Our intention has been to tell the whole story of this poor life, wandering and unhappy, sown with contradictions and failures, thorns and briars, so misunderstood and despised, in his own time as in ours, and even eclipsed by most of today’s devotees of La Salette in favour of the life of Mélanie, which is much more sparkling, at least in appearance, for her life appears to us to be figurative: Maximin, a son and figure of Adam, but redeemed, bearing his cross, tempted to fall again, but victorious over temptation through his humble and prayerful faith. Our Lady no doubt had Her reasons for choosing this ignorant little shepherd behind his grazing sheep – this little scatterbrain with a heart as pure and as simple as a mountain spring. He lived and died as he was born, in poverty, without any material gain from the mission he nevertheless accomplished with admirable fidelity until his death in the arms of Holy Church and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Beautiful Lady, the Reconciler!  Deep down, his inner strength and his invincible strength came from his inviolate Secret, which shone in his heart like a burning lamp in the night. Can we reasonably draw any conclusions about its content? asks his biographer, Father Parent, quoted by Le Hidec,and he answers:  "Yes, if we follow certain clues. Obviously, the shepherd’s message can but confirm that of the shepherdess; at least it cannot contradict it. The one must complement the other, after the example of the Gospels which are in agreement over the truth despite certain apparent divergences. Furthermore, each secret must contain special prophecies of a particular character. So what would be the particular mark of Maximin’s secret? Principally, it would seem to proclaim the triumph of the Church and above all it would seem to designate the political saviour, referred to in so many prophecies by the popular name of the Grand Monarch."  We have seen how things stood regarding the return of the king, son of Saint Louis: not this one, the supposed survivor, nor the other one, the legitimate Pretender, but another one.., much later!  "As for the triumph of the Church, I think it is indicated by the little alpine shepherd’s eagerness to plant his wooden cross in the place called ‘the Assumption of Mary’, where Mary ascended, triumphant, to Heaven, whilst looking towards Rome. Pius IX, more than his two successors, was the pope who was put to the test and crucified, according to Malachy’s very just motto concerning the popes, *Crux de Cruce*. However, it was noticed that his brow was generally radiant with serenity and he often pronounced solemn words of confidence in a better future, which we have not yet been seen, alas! Now, this pious Pontiff s surprising calm is attributed to his knowledge of these two secrets of La Salette. In 1869, Maximin wrote these remarkable words to his Spanish benefactor, the Comte de Penalver: ‘I never weary praying for Pius IX, who is the greatest man we have in our time. He has a great love for Our Lady of La Salette, who sustains him in his difficulties and assists him in the government of the Church. He often alludes to the least of the Beautiful Lady’s public words and secrets. I do not say this to the prejudice of my secret, which I have entrusted to the Pope alone, nor am I revealing anything when I happen to speak like everyone else of one or other of the events that were foretold to me.’" (p. 82-83)  Maximin, Pius IX: what an instructive comparison between the little shepherd of Corps and the greatest pope of his century, elected in 1846, the year of the Apparition! Are they not both in their own way a figure of the fidelity of the Catholic Church in the thick of the cruellest trials, awaiting the certain fulfilment of the promises of their adored Lord and of His dearest Mother!    **MÉLANIE’S SECRET**  Beside Adam, there stands Eve whose twists and turns in life cannot all be blamed on the lack of understanding or the malice of the wicked. It is important to pick out from her long life (she will die in 1904) the key events where her own action seems to us to be decisive: the same goes for the credit we should give to the writings she produced, on her own initiative:   * **The Autobiography**, published in 1900, which transports us to the first fourteen years of her life, *her Childhood Gospel*. * **The Rule of the Mother of God**, as it was handed to Pope Leo XIII on 5 January 1879, and which would correspond to her *Acts of the Apostles* (those of the "Last Times", according to her own expression). * **The Secret of La Salette**, the 1879 version, with the imprimatur of the Bishop of Lecce (Italy), which would be her *Apocalypse*.   The complexity of this life is due, among other things, to the contradictory judgements she aroused among ecclesiastics, some of whom, we are bound to think, must have been abused and others perspicacious: discernment was brought to bear by the definitive judgement of the Church. The controversy, even at the time, did not suppress apostolic goodness, as a missionary of  La Salette, Father Perrin, thus summed up in 1867:  "*Although she was the most terrible thorn for all those who gave her welcome, they were, however, inclined to take an interest in her, because she was felt to be more worthy of pity than of blame.*"  **Corenc. The first blot. 1850-1853 (first disobedience).**  In 1846, a few weeks after the apparition, Mgr de Bruillard arranged for Mélanie and Maximin to be admitted to the school directed by the Sisters of Providence at Corps. They stayed there for four years.  On 10 October 1850, Mélanie entered as a postulant of the same order, at their convent at Corenc. She took the habit in 1851 under the name of Sister Mary of the Cross, where she edified her community. *But*, she had a passion for reading mystical writings and revelations of varying authenticity. *But* she lived in an atmosphere of unctuous admiration: visitors flocked to the convent, priests and lay people drank in her words and collected them to spread abroad. *But* her novice mistress was captivated, exalted her and encouraged confidences when it was her mission to keep her in the shade.  Finally, for a year or two, Mélanie suffered from spectacular attacks of the devil, which threw her to the ground, making her deaf and dumb, plunging her into despair and sometimes taking the form of terrifying animals.  In short, when the time came for her to take her vows, Mgr Ginoulhiac, who succeeded Mgr de Bruillard, thought it better to postpone them. He explained his decision in a pastoral letter addressed to his clergy, dated 4 November 1854.  "*Having become, since 19 September 1846, the object of delicate attention and tender, respectful consideration on the part of many people, even among the most important and most distinguished, resembling a sort of cult, if over the years she were somewhat affected by this, would it not be surprising if, in the end, she were not to allow herself to be won over by attachment to her own opinion, which is one of the greatest dangers incurred by souls favoured with extraordinary gifts? This attachment to her opinion and to the peculiarities which naturally follow commanded our attention as soon as we were informed of them, and, although the community paid homage to her piety and zeal in instructing children in religious knowledge, we believed it to be our duty to refuse to admit her to the yearly vows, in order to form her more effectively in the practice of Christian humility and simplicity, which are the necessary and surest protection against the illusions of the interior life.*"  All these intentions – malevolent –, attributed by the *mélanistes* to the Bishop, do not alter the fact that Mélanie refused to accept the required year’s probation, with the result that an English prelate, Mgr Newsham, Bishop of Hexham, asked the Bishop of Grenoble if he might take her with him, for the good of English Catholicism. The Bishop of Grenoble accepted with relief! So did Mélanie.  **Darlington, Second blot. 1854-1860 (second disobedience).**  She quickly disappointed the expectation of the English bishop, who soon lost interest in her, and we next find her in the Carmelite convent in Darlington. There are different versions of her entry into Carmel. But the Carmelites record that she was welcomed and introduced into the cloister to be looked after. She showed a desire to remain, and with great pomp – too much! – she received the habit on 23 February 1855. However, with the objection that she had a "mission" to discharge on behalf of the Blessed Virgin, Mélanie refused to make her profession, then – constrained by her superiors, she says – she brought herself to do so, but interiorly she did not take the vow of enclosure.  When she wanted to leave attempts were made to restrain her, so she threw letters over the enclosure wall to let it be known that she was being sequestered. Hoping to avoid all scandal, Mgr Hogarth had her taken back to Marseilles.  We find in the confidential reports she made on this subject to the curious Abbé Combe, in 1901, this enlightening summary on how she came to be judged wherever she went:  "*For a long time, the Prioress (of Darlington), forgetting her authority, did nothing without consulting her. After a retreat preached by a religious, the Prioress and the community turned against her. She was refused Holy Communion, even to make her Easter duties.*  " *– My dear sister, Our Lord who gave Himself to you in communion at Dompierre, did He not do so at Darlington? – Oh, yes."*  What was she accused of? Making up stories. How did they see her? As mentally unbalanced. The good religious who gave the retreat asked her after confession whether she had ever happened to see someone and then wonder whether she had already seen that person with her own eyes or whether she had dreamed it. She answered frankly:  "*Yes, once when I was travelling, I saw a person whom I thought I recognised, but I couldn’t remember where I had seen her; or whether it was simply a dream.* – *Ah!* he said to her, with a start, *that’s a sure sign of madness; yes, you are mad, well and truly mad!*"  **Marseilles. Third blot. 1860-1867 (third disobedience).**  Welcomed by friends who entrusted her to the direction of a Jesuit, Father Calage, who took pity on her and had her relieved of her simple vows, she was taken in as a boarder at the Compassion Order’s mother house, under the name of Sister Zénaïde. There, she wanted to adopt a habit indicated to her, so she said, by the Madonna, but she had to obey the founder of the order who made her wear the same habit as her daughters. After various missions within the order, and after a fruitless attempt at the Carmelite convent in Marseilles, she was admitted to take vows in the Compassion Order, provided she did not reveal her identity to the outside world.  She contravened that order, and the Superior, treating her as a witch and a traitress, obliged her to leave the congregation, the habit and… Marseilles!  **Castellamare (Italy). Fourth blot. 1867-1885 (fourth disobedience).**  An Italian prelate, Mgr Petagna, Bishop of Castellamare, known when she was at Marseilles, took an interest in her and installed her in the Palazzo Ruffo with a sister of the Compassion order. She attempted to found the Order of the Sons of the Mother of God, on the fringes of the regular 1852 foundation of the Missionaries of La Salette, but according to the rule she claimed to have received from the Blessed Virgin in 1846.  Summoned to Rome, in 1879, accused by Mgr Fava, Bishop of Grenoble, supported, she maintains, by Leo XIII, she left without, in the end, winning her case, but not without writing a new version of the famous *Secret*. On her return to Italy after a long journey, her protector died, and the community was dispersed.  **Return to France. The trial at Chalon-sur-Saône. 1885-1892 (fifth disobedience).**  Pursuing her dream of making a foundation in France, armed with a legacy left her by the Abbé Ronjon and with the support of Canon de Brandt, she engaged in a feverish but fruitless activity. She will find herself caught up in a legal case against the Bishop of Chalon who contests the validity of the Ronjon inheritance.  This legal case, with all its repercussions, went on until 1895, and she lost. She fought the case tooth and nail, which made her protector and spiritual father, Mgr Zola, say of her:  "*Sister Mary of the Cross had a quarrel with a French bishop. She showed very little submission towards her superiors in these circumstances, maybe through lack of guidance or of light, or for both reasons.*"  **Wandering. 1892-1904. The Abbé Combe.**  Back in Italy, at Messina and then at Moncalien, in 1899, Mélanie, on the insistence of Abbe Combe, who was infatuated with her, returned to France, changing her address three times. Stormy relations with this priest made her flee to Italy again, in 1904. On leaving, they told each other a piece of their mind. He, that he is now persuaded that she is subject to illusion and that she does not see "everything in God". She, that her former confessor and protector wanted to wrench all her secrets from her, and that he lacked intelligence and humility in wanting to interpret God’s will for her, in his way (cf. Guilhot, p. 481). On the 15th December 1904, she was found dead in her house at Altamura. What a life! And what an end!  But now let us look at her writings, in three parts. |

**THE SECRETS OF LA SALETTE**

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| We now come to the most sensitive, and also the most controversial, part of the Apparition of 19 September 1846: the secrets entrusted by Our Lady to Her two messengers Maximin and Mélanie, faithfully guarded for five years, written down under the circumstances we have already described, then transmitted to Pope Pius IX who was visibly moved on reading them, finally consigned to the archives of the Holy Office with a view to their eventual publication, which none of his successors has yet judged opportune… La Salette with Fatima are thus the only two apparitions recognised by the Church, which have a hidden, prophetic, apocalyptic extension. |

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| http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette7.jpg |

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| It is easy to guess how much interest has been shown in these messages over these last one hundred and fifty or eighty years on the part of Catholics concerned for the world’s future and attentive to the will of Heaven. Questioned one day by Father Giraud, Superior General of the Missionaries of La Salette, about the content of these secrets, Pius IX replied: "*You wish to know the secrets of La Salette? Well, it is this:****‘If you do not do penance, you will all perish!’***" (quoted by Le Hidec, p. 67) There is, therefore, great danger of perdition for our souls, for our families, our nations, for our entire society! The Blessed Virgin Mary warns us in Her maternal wisdom of grave "***spiritual and temporal evils***" threatening us, according to the expression of Mgr de Bruillard, who was the first to have read it, and we would do nothing about it? Since both Pius IX and Mgr de Bruillard confided that they had found it beneficial and comforting to read it, may we be permitted to hope for the same grace for ourselves today.  But before embarking on a critical study of the life of the seers and of their Secret, true or supposedly so, it is necessary for us to go back to the account of the apparition itself. If you turn back to [page 4](http://www.crc-internet.org/salette2.htm#message), you can re-read the Message of Mary, as we did here, with an ever increasing amazement and something of an infinite veneration for Her who, amid tears, wished to pass on to all Her people a great and terrible lesson. Our Father has long sought for a correct and profound interpretation of this Message, of benefit to souls. He found it recently, through the key of the figuratives and guided by his quest for the divine orthodromy. Here is the commentary he gave us in the course of a spiritual reading during the month of July, and which I, as his interim secretary, have been asked to transcribe as near as possible in its original style, free and spontaneous, to be accessible to the humble and the lowly, the true devotees of La Salette and Fatima.  **AN OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION**  So, let us turn back to this all too quickly read account. It has many surprising elements. The Blessed Virgin comes towards the children and announces that She wants to teach them a great lesson: "*Come, My children, do not be afraid; I am here to proclaim great news to you.*" So what is this "great news", which has brought Her down from Heaven to this place?  When one considers this group, with the thought of looking for a figurative, one thinks of Adam and Eve in their primaeval innocence. They are alone, on this deserted mountain, beyond all civilisation, and there is God: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in Paradise in the afternoon air…" (Gn 3.8) It does not correspond completely, but the children say that they have never forgotten this "voice of paradise". They also built a "little paradise" and adorned it with alpine flowers. The Blessed Virgin sat on it; She is seated on their paradise, but to weep… over the ingratitude and the sinfulness of Her children, renewing that of the originals.  Or again, it is Mount Sinai, and Horeb, where Yahweh gave His Law to Moses. Why look so far? Because the Law, recalled by the Blessed Virgin at La Salette, is purely Judaic. It is of the Old Testament. However, the greatest amazement felt on reading this is the use of the first person singular: "***I****gave you six days to work,****I****kept the seventh for****Myself****, and no one wishes to grant it to****Me****.*" Is not that strange? It is the literal renewal of a verse from Exodus (31.15). The Blessed Virgin Mary, therefore, takes the place of God; She is enthroned and She legislates, assuming responsibility for God’s Law as though it were Her own. This is truly the first time in the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the last! At Fatima, She will explain that it is God’s Will that She should go before and that everything should be subject to Her.  Here, the name of God, of our dearest Heavenly Father, is not mentioned. It is Her and… Her Son whom the children contemplate in rapture – Her Son on a living crucifix, as though "embedded in Her chest", and which seems to be the source of the light and glory surrounding Her. It is "*the Name of My Son*" that is blasphemed, it is "*My Son’s arm*" that weighs heavily, and it is "*My Son… to Whom I must ceaselessly pray for you*". The people of God have become Her people; She has received them for Her heritage: "*… If My people will not submit… You will pass this on to all My people.*" Finally, one last reminder of Exodus: the spring that fed the little fountain, near where the Blessed Virgin appeared, began to flow again, recalling the water which sprang from the rock in the desert.  In Deuteronomy, Moses prophesies that the people will not follow the commandments of their God, and so he foretells chastisements to punish them, but also, wonderful rewards if they repent. It is the morality of the Alliance, severe but just and holy, resumed here by the Blessed Virgin Mary, with striking temporal punishments: *the potatoes and the grapes will rot, the wheat will fall to dust; famine will follow, and small children will die a horrible death…* It sounds like the linguistic imagery of the Prophet Amos, or the rending appeal of Jeremiah’s Lamentations: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, come back to the Lord your God…" with the added pleas of a Mother’s tears. It is the same biblical language for the promise, purely conditional: "*If they convert…*", of a messianic harvest: "*… the stones and rocks will change into piles of wheat, and potatoes will be found sown in the earth*".  The Blessed Virgin then asks the children whether they say their prayers properly; She complains of Mass being deserted in summer, badly followed in winter; finally, abstinence is no longer respected: "*they go to the butcher’s like hungry dogs*"! It reminds us of the precepts of the Law which the good Jews of the Old Testament were bound to observe to the letter. And the Blessed Virgin came down from Heaven simply to remind us of that? And is that why the "Beautiful Lady", her head adorned with a royal diadem, wore the apron of a poor servant, and bore on her shoulders a heavy chain?   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette2.jpg |   Well, yes. She is the Handmaid of the Lord and ready for the hard necessities of the Service She has been commanded to do: address Her people with reproaches, call them to conversion with threats and promises, to obedience to the Law of God and of the Church, beginning with the adoration due to His Name and keeping holy the Day that belongs to Him. She knows that the rest will follow… Such was the religion of our fathers, humble and strong, which Heaven came to recommend and which will never change. But in God’s plan, it also marked the expectation of another wonderful, divine grace: the apparition of the Immaculate Virgin and the gift of Her Heart, firstly at Lourdes and then supremely at Fatima, compared with which the apparition of Our Lady at La Salette would be the prefiguration, the Old Testament shadow before the light of the New.  As for the seers, they too will accomplish their mission well: they will pass on the Beautiful Lady’s message to all Her people. But, for all that, they will not become saints, and that is what is so surprising about La Salette! As was said by the good Father Rousselot, whose subtle theological distinction has been a light for me: "*There was****gratia gratis data****of which the children were the instruments*", which made them apt for the fulfilment of their mission, "*but there was no****gratia gratum faciens****, sanctifying grace*", a special gift, which would have changed them inwardly (Bassette, p. 399). Look at these poor children in their authentic portrait   reproduced above. They have been drawn from their semi-uneducated state to become the messengers of the Queen of Heaven! Like Adam and Eve, they then led a pitiful life, keeping their faults, subject to temptations, and even falls… The Blessed Virgin permitted it, wished it, for what design? We shall understand this better after a more careful study of their lives. |

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| MAXIMIN’S SECRET  "**THE BLESSED VIRGIN’S LITTLE BOY**"  Born on 27 August 1835 into a poor family of Corps in Matheysine, Maximin was certainly not a privileged child. His father, a wheelwright by trade, did not make much of a living because he drank too much; his mother had died when he was only one year old. Of a playful and mischievous character, he could not stay still for an instant, always moving his arms and hands (during the apparition, whilst Our Lady was communicating Her secret to Mélanie, he amused himself throwing stones!). Of a good heart and totally unselfish, he had, however, received no education up to the age of eleven, neither schooling nor catechism. He ran away from church if taken there by his father, and only with difficulty did he succeed in learning the *Pater* and the *Ave Maria*, in two years… Pierre Selme, who employed him as a casual shepherd, said of him: "*He is a little innocent who has no more forethought than malice.*"   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette8.jpg *Maximin*, shepherd of La Salette, in 1846 |   The event of 19 September 1846 completely overturned his life. That same evening, he gave his first account of the event before the Pra family, without really understanding all that he was saying. But when he went to bed and wanted to say a *Pater* and an *Ave*, as the Beautiful Lady had asked him, he could not remember what he had to say and he cried… From mid October he went to school with the Sisters of Providence to learn how to read and write. As he passed in the street, people would say: "There’s the Blessed Virgin’s little boy." Before long, both he and Mélanie were taken in as boarders. They stayed there about four years. It was not until May 1848 that they were able to make their first Communion together. The Superior, Sister Sainte-Thècle, very wisely kept them out of the way as much as possible, but she could not prevent pilgrims and others constantly coming out of curiosity to disturb them.  Maximin always repeated his account with the same seriousness, and his answers to the questions fired at him were always unexpected, clear and precise. Here are some of them:  Mgr Darboy, future Archbishop of Paris, was sceptical and asked him: "Look here, my boy, how is it that, knowing your ignorance of the ordinary language, the Blessed Virgin would have used it in speaking to you? Isn’t there something ridiculous and consequently unacceptable (*sic*) in all this? What would you say if, at this moment, I were to declaim a long speech in Greek, which you don’t understand?"  – *What would you in your turn say, Monseigneur, if, after hearing it only once, I were repeating it everywhere, without mistake, making it understood by everybody, without understanding it myself?*  A priest declared peremptorily: "You are a little liar, I don’t believe you." – *What has that to do with me? My task is to tell you, not to make you believe.*  – I don’t believe you have any secret. – *Then why, Monsieur, have you come all this way to ask me?*  – Aren’t you bored, repeating the same thing every day? – *And you, Monsieur l’Abbé, do you get bored saying Mass every day?*  To Canon Chambon, who asked in 1847, "If the Pope asked you for your secret, would you be obliged to tell him, for the Pope is much more than the Blessed Virgin?" Maximin replied:  *– The Pope, much more than the Blessed Virgin?… But the Blessed Virgin is the Queen of all the saints, if the Pope does his duty well, he will be a saint, but he will still be less than the Blessed Virgin; if he does not do his duty, he will be punished more than others.*  – But it may be the devil who has entrusted you with your secret? – *No, for the devil has nothing to do with Christ, and the devil would not forbid blasphemy.*  Finally, when they tried to catch him out by saying: "The Lady has deceived you; she predicted a famine and yet the harvest is good everywhere", he replied: "*What has that to do with me? That is what she told me, and that is her concern.*" And at other times, he would answer as Mélanie always did: "*But, what if people did penance?*"  **FIRST TROUBLES**  In February 1849, the death of his father came as a bitter trial for the young boy, who was now orphaned of both father and mother. Life in the Providence Convent began to weigh on him. After three successive escapes, the sisters placed him in the hands of his legal guardian in the spring of 1850. At the beginning of the month of September, he was welcomed by a rich count who pushed indiscretion to the point of offering him his castle if he would divulge his secret! Later, Maximin was to admit: "*I was about to betray the secret, when all of a sudden my memory failed; I found it impossible to articulate a word; I remained dumb and I understood my fault through this warning of the Blessed Virgin.*" He returned to La Salette for 19 September. He made some strange encounters on the mountain that day.  Supporters of Baron de Richemont, an adventurer who passed himself off as King Louis XVII escaped from the Tower, were convinced that the Baron in whom they believed was actually designated by name in the seer’s secret. They spoke to him about the Pretender and showed him his portrait, but Maximin simply answered that he had never heard of Louis XVII nor of Louis XVIII, but only of Louis-Philippe (it was in 1848, before the Revolution). On that 19 September, these men returned to the charge and suggested taking Maximin to Ars to consult "the saint who is able to read a person’s conscience". When Mgr de Bruillard came to hear of this, he wisely forbade Maximin to step beyond the limits of his diocese, but the ban was ignored. This act of disobedience had painful consequences, as is known (cf. supra, p. 8). We recall that on the subject of his vocation, the Curé d’Ars twice advised the seer to return to his diocese of Grenoble.  On the way back, Maximin and his fellow travellers stopped at Lyons, at the Marist noviciate in the Saint Irenaeus quarter, where Father Eymard would have been very willing to have the seer, but on condition that the Bishop of Grenoble gave permission. Father Eymard knew Maximin very well: "either directly or through the intermediary of their common friend, M. Dausse, he constantly followed, observed and kept in touch with him without ever discovering anything to make him doubt the reality of the Fact of La Salette." (Louis Bassette, *Notre-Dame de La Salette et Saint Pierre-Julien Eymard*, p. 17)  Maximin will next meet, still escorted by his "*survivantist*" friends, the famous (and false) Baron de Richemont. Finding himself faced with the impostor, he recognised him because he had already seen his portrait; but after having told his usual account, he confided to the person who had introduced him this quite ludicrous prophecy: "He must be told to cut himself off from his favourites, because his life is in danger!" followed by a brief "Let’s go!" And that was all. We shrug our shoulders today, without understanding that it may simply have been said on the spur of the moment in order to avoid any indiscreet question concerning the Secret. Subsequently, we shall often see him mysteriously drawn to royalist circles, without ever revealing anything of the secret, but, by his attitude, letting it be understood that Heaven was interested in the restoration of the most Christian Monarchy.  **THE WRITING OF THE SECRET**  After the group had returned from Ars, Maximin entered the minor seminary of Rondeau at Grenoble. His teachers quickly realised that his unstable character made him unsuitable for the priesthood: "He is light hearted and a little thoughtless, but I think he has a great fund of faith", the superior declared with regard to him. While he was there, the anticlerical press unleashed the virulent opposition of certain clerics, reinforced by the Ars incident, which caused him to declare: "*La Salette is now like a flower covered by mud and manure in winter, but it will emerge even more beautiful.*"  It was from Rondeau that he was taken to the Bishop’s Palace so that he might write his secret there.  "M. Dausse, who accompanied him, recommended that he think very carefully about what he was going to do. The child had no worries: *‘I remember very well what was said to me. You will see how I write rapidly without looking for my words.’* He spoke of other things. In the Bishop’s Palace, they went to a room on the second floor overlooking the Place Notre-Dame. A large desk had been installed in the room, provided with all the necessary writing materials. Canon de Taxis joined M. Dausse to supervise him. The Bishop left them together.  "Maximin held his head in his hands, dipped his pen in the ink pot and heedlessly shook it over the parquet floor. The witnesses, observing him from afar, reprimanded him for this unseemly behaviour. He took up his pen and wrote: *On the 19th September 1846, I saw a Lady as brilliant as the sun whom I believe to be the Blessed Virgin; but I have never said that it was the Blessed Virgin. It is for the Church to judge whether it really was the Blessed Virgin or some other person, from what I am now going to say. In the middle of her speech, she confided it to me following this phrase: the grapes will rot and the nuts will go bad.*" (It would be after reading these few introductory lines that Pope Pius IX pronounced these words: "Here we have the simplicity and the candour of a child.")  "Maximin showed this to M. Dausse, who found it acceptable, and then he got down to writing rapidly at his desk, without pause as though he were copying out a text. As soon as he had finished writing, he stood up and threw the sheet he had just written into the air. "*Now, he said, I am rid of that; I have no more secret and am like the others. People won’t need to come and ask me any more; they can go and ask the Pope; he will speak if he wants to.*" The two witnesses saw this sheet of paper on the floor: it was a real schoolboy’s piece of untidy work, written aslant and speckled with ink blots. The child was made to re-do it. He balked at this, but this time he wrote properly. They rang for the Bishop, who ordered Maximin to place what he had written in an envelope and to seal it. M. Dausse asked the Bishop to read the text for fear of sending the Holy Father something unworthy of His Holiness. The Bishop hesitated, then took this advice. Maximin then sealed the envelope, stamped with the episcopal seal. M. Dausse and Canon de Taxis wrote on the envelope certifying that Maximin had written and signed the contents himself, without being influenced. (Bassette, p. 211-212)  It is to be noted, as H. Voilin reports in *La Salette, Montagne Prophétique*, that in the course of writing his secret he asked them for the spelling of the word "*Pontife*" (p. 78).  Was it at Grenoble or at the Grande Chartreuse, where the young boy spent his summer holidays, that an event took place which later caused a lot of trouble, as related by Father Parent in his *Vie de Maximin* written in 1913: "The only thing that history could hold against Mary’s confidant, concerning his secret, is that he scribbled a botched up prophetic revelation some weeks later, on 11 August 1851, to please M. Dausse, who was bothering him. This pious layman kept this piece of writing by the little seer as a precious document. But before long, and especially before his death, the writer protested against M. Dausse who believed that he was in possession of the *true* secret, whereas he had naively received nothing more than a ***prophetic fantasy***, like certain letters which he sometimes wrote in answer to nuns who would pester him to know the future." (quoted by Le Hidec, p. 81)  Maximin no doubt did not foresee the consequences of such thoughtlessness, which he probably did to get himself out of an awkward situation for fear of saying too much to his dear guardian, to whom he was sincerely and affectionately devoted. Yes, he was "*without forethought*", just as he was "*without malice*"… As for this good M. Dausse, although mistaken in his good faith, he remained equitable and sound in his judgement concerning the seer. In 1879, he wrote that "by not regulating the freedom with which all the curious had to see him, question him and hear him, Maximin’s formative years were sacrificed… a mistake that was wisely avoided in the case of Bernadette." (Bassette, p. 419)  **A SEVERE RECALL TO ORDER**  With the opening of the school year in October 1851, a new stage began in the life of Maximin: he had transmitted his secret, and the Church, in the person of Mgr de Bruillard, having recognised the truth of the apparition, in its turn became responsible for "passing on the message". But there still remained the seer of La Salette… with his imperfections! After a year spent in another minor seminary of the diocese, he was entrusted to the care of a holy priest, the Abbé Champon, Parish Priest of Seyssins. He stayed there for three years continuing with his studies against all odds, acquiring great merit but little knowledge…  It was the time when bad priests and malevolent journalists showered Maximin, and Mélanie too, with every kind of calumny in order to discredit the Apparition:  "One day, the Abbé Champon went to spend a week in Lyons. On his return, some well intentioned people came to warn him:  ‘Monsieur le Curé, you need to take precautions with your boarder. Whilst you were in Lyons, Maximin hit your sister and got hold of the parish money. With this money, he spent a whole day and night revelling in Grenoble, where he was found dead drunk in the Place Grenette in the early hours of the morning.’  The Abbé was appalled: ‘That’s very serious. When did this happen?’  ‘Last week, while you were away; the individual was picked up in the Place Grenette on Wednesday morning.’  ‘Well then, I have to tell you that this story has been invented from beginning to end. Maximin accompanied me to Lyons. He did not leave me during those eight days and, on Wednesday morning, he served my Mass at Fourvière and received Communion…’ "  The opponents shamelessly exploited the business of Ars and the relations Maximin had had with the *survivantistes*. La Salette had become a "Royalist affair" (sic)! Mgr Ginoulhiac was disturbed at this and roundly settled the question in his pastoral letter of 4 November 1854: "… Given Maximin’s total and absolute ignorance concerning the very existence of Louis XVII, and of these futile attempts over several years, it is plainly impossible to accept that the apparition of La Salette is the work of Louis XVII’s supporters, and that this daydream could lie at the bottom of this whole affair (...)  "It had proved impossible to wrench the secret away from the child and to discover the prophecies the secret was supposed to contain, and of which he was informed.*Fascinated or persuaded by what could be flattering for him, Maximin, who until 1851 had not even suspected the role being cast for him, ended by letting himself be infatuated by a sense of his own importance; and finding fellow disciples and other persons ready to listen to him, he confided these supposed oracles to them. He then committed himself even further to this path, and when we were informed of this, we had to take quite severe measures in order to pull him out of it.*  "Although these measures were deserved, this young man did not, however, appear as he has been represented in the Memorandum. The seminarian whose testimony is quoted, came to us spontaneously to declare that Maximin never pronounced in his presence the words reported nor did he profess the odious morality attributed to him; nor is it true, as has been advanced elsewhere, that he gained nothing from the measures we took in his regard, and that he has since made no progress in his studies, and that he has not shown himself to be hard working and reserved."  Note that although Mgr Ginoulhiac judged Maximin severely – "*he let himself be infatuated by a sense of his own importance*" –, reproaching him for heedlessly allying himself with these adventurers and allowing himself to make predictions, he came to his defence for all the rest and was pleased to emphasise his progress. As for the political question, he settled it wisely and cleanly… but he had not read the secret!  **OUR LADY’S VAGABOND**  In 1856, the Abbé Champon entrusted his pupil to one of his brothers, a Jesuit and philosophy teacher in the seminary at Dax in les Landes, temporarily transferred to Aire-sur-l’Adour. There were numerous friendships and frequent visits, to the detriment of both work and meditation… He remained a big child, of an incorrigible mischievousness, missing his Dauphiné and with a growing feeling of his unsuitability for the priesthood. "Although I cannot say about the future, for the moment I have this dark thought that I shall do more harm than good to the glory of God if I take the soutane", he wrote in March 1857 to Sister Thècle, to whom he always remained attached.  He finally returned to the country in 1858 where he was first employed at the home of the tax collector of La Tronche and then as a mechanic, before moving on to Paris, where he wandered from place to place for several months with an empty purse and a sad heart. Bad companions tried to lure him into places of debauchery, but he always saw through their intrigues and his heart remained ever pure through the special protection of his Lady, at whose feet he would often take refuge in the Church of Saint-Sulpice. A family of retired traders, the Jourdain family, took pity on this poor uprooted young man and adopted him in 1861. He stayed with them for three years, following courses at the faculty of medicine to be able to care better for the poor sick. Other benefactors were also concerned for him: the Spanish Comte de Penlaver and the Marquise de Pignerolles. The Marquise offered him a large sum of money if he would go to Frohsdorf in Austria to meet the Comte de Chambord, legitimate pretender to the throne of France.  The historians usually skate over this mysterious interview which took place at the end of April 1865: "Wasted expense for an interview that could not have been less cordial", wrote Henri Voilin. "For its greater good, La Salette yet again escaped from the hold of politics (sic!)." That is easily said, without knowledge of the seer’s attachment to the legitimate royalty, as recalled by Fr. Parent:  "Maximin was a loyal supporter of the Comte de Chambord. We have two proofs of this. Following the example of the Carthusians and other religious, who stamped their products with their coat of arms, he too had his coat of arms. They were suggested to him by the Comtesse de Chambord, then painted by M. de Grammont, who explained their meaning on 2 February 1869: three lilies, symbol of attachment to Our Lady of La Salette, to the Pope and to the King. And in a letter dated 24 July 1874, Maximin wrote these lines: ‘I am still confident that our King will come… The Chamber is failing in its mission and MacMahon is failing in his duty, by not going to fetch the King and offer him what is his due, at least for the salvation of France.’ " (Le Hidec, p. 86)   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette9.jpg Maximin Giraud, papal zouave |   Should we then believe the Marquis de la Franquerie when he quotes, without reference, the account of the conversation between the Pretender and the seer, written by the Comte de Vanssay, secretary to the Prince, for his family (*La Vierge Marie dans l’histoire de France*, p. 258)? Maximin is supposed to have said, among other things, that he would never ascend the throne of France, but "*It is God’s will that we keep the secret. The reestablishment of the royalty is reserved to God Himself alone*". Perhaps that would explain the Prince’s hesitant attitude in 1873.  From Vienna, Maximin went on to Rome, where he enlisted as a Papal zouave in the service of the Pope for the protection of his States. He was helped on this occasion by Cardinal de Villecourt, former bishop of La Rochelle and great friend of Pius IX, the apostle in France of the Immaculate Virgin and of La Salette, who gave him the necessary money to enlist, but on condition that he did not reveal his identity.  Among the zouaves, there was a future Jesuit, Henri le Chauff from Kerguenec, who had noticed this man at night prayers "praying earnestly and looking with such affection and supplication at the statue of the Blessed Virgin". He easily saw through his anonymity and became his friend.  Writing about Maximin, he said: "In ordinary conversation, the shepherd of Corps is quite heavy, but he is not without judgement… When he speaks of the apparition, he is a different person. He must indeed be inspired by the Most Blessed Virgin, for then he is admirably clear and logical; the best formulated objections are a game for him and he will demolish them more easily than a child knocks down a castle of cards he has built."  But six months later, Maximin left the zouaves and returned to France where he rejoined his adoptive parents, his pockets more empty than ever. Calumniated by a Parisian journalist, the shepherd of La Salette replied in a pamphlet in which he declared: "*I would be rich at this present moment, if I had cowardly and self-indulgently contradicted myself.*"  **RETURN TO CORPS**  In 1868, he returned for good to his native village, Corps, where he was joined by the Jourdains two years later. He refused to marry: "*When one has seen the Blessed Virgin, he confided to a close friend, it is not possible to be attached to anyone on this earth.*" He wanted to practise a trade "*in order to earn his living in the sweat of his brow*". These were years of general poverty and hunger which led him to that deplorable production of a liqueur which earned him as much trouble as it did discredit. Yet again, he was the victim of his naivety, cleverly exploited by a crook.  His one consolation was to go up there on the mountain, especially on the anniversary day of the apparition. "On 19 September 1871, he told the pilgrims around the miraculous fountain the account he had begun to spread twenty five years ago to the day. Fr. Bossan, who listened to him, noted first of all that ‘Maximin still has the tone and the bearing of a child’ and records his final words for us: *‘Then the Blessed Virgin walked over there* (pointing to the mound She had climbed). *Having reached this height, She rose and disappeared, leaving me with all my faults.’*"  Two days later, the same Fr. Bossan came down to Corps to see Maximin.  – What should one say, asked the pitiless questioner, to those who accuse you and Mélanie of having faults? – *You have to ask them what faults.* – They say that you are light-headed and inconstant. – *They are not faults.* – They are not vices, but they are faults. – *Like everyone else, I am not perfect.* – I have always said that you are a good Christian, because that is true… But did not the apparition produce any particular effect in you? the questioner asked after a few moments. I mean: did it not bring you any particular grace to correct you and enable you to live in a holy manner? – *I cannot say. I felt nothing particular; but the Blessed Virgin made me the gift of a good Christian education with the good sisters of Corps. She surrounded me with very edifying priests. Throughout my childhood and my youth I found myself in a setting that brought me to the good and deflected me from evil. Without the apparition, I could have been very far from the good God and, like many others, I could have become very bad, perhaps even a member of the Internationale, of the Commune. It was a very great grace, therefore, that was granted me to be kept in the setting where I was and to be given the religious convictions I have.* – They are certainly very great graces. But many unthinking people would like to see you a saint and not just a good Christian as you are. – *Well, they are foolish. It is impossible to reason with them. The apparition and I are two different things. I was only an instrument. It doesn’t matter how long water flows through a pipe of silver or of gold, it will never become wine, not more than if it flowed through a pipe of wood or of clay. The grace of the apparition did indeed flow through my channel, but it did not change it.* – Are you convinced, his persistent questioner asked, that you were no more than an instrument in the hands of the Blessed Virgin? – *Yes, absolutely. We were but a channel, like parrots that repeat what they have heard. We were stupid before the apparition, we were stupid after the apparition and we shall be stupid all our lives.* (quoted by Jaouen, *La grâce de La Salette, au regard de l’Église*, p. 251)  What candour! Maximin had no illusions about himself, never complained of his shortcomings, but the tribulations of his unstable life faded in his eyes before the incomprehensible mystery of the Beautiful Lady having chosen him – he the poor, ignorant shepherd – as Her messenger and of having made Herself the gentle Mediatrix of so many benefits! However, his humility in no way impeded his firmness, especially when it came to the Secret, as he was to prove several months later.  **CONTROVERSY OVER THE SECRET**  In December 1871, there appeared in the bookshops a booklet entitled "*The secrets of La Salette and their importance. Latest revelations of forthcoming events.*" The author, a certain M. Girard, whose intentions in other respects were praiseworthy, claimed to be revealing the true text of Maximin’s secret – the text of his first draft, covered in ink blots, which the seer had to re-do.  Maximin was not slow to answer: he denied the text in the most vigorous terms:  "1).In the presence of the Bishop, of Canon de Taxis and of M. Dausse himself, *I burned the rough copy* [Maximin wrote *brouillard* (fog) instead of *brouillon* (rough draft)]*of my secret*; I sealed the copy with His Excellency’s arms and then placed my Secret in the hands of the Bishop to be taken to Rome. That is the truth pure and simple. M. Dausse, whose testimony is quoted by M. Girard, is still alive and can certify what I say here. I did not, therefore insist that M. Dausse accept the rough draft of my secret or take cognisance of it. It seems to me to be pointless to say any more on this subject.  "2). Mgr de Bruillard, M. Gérin and M. Rousselot assured me that the secrets had not been violated either in the Bishop’s palace of Grenoble or during the journey to Rome, and that the Holy Father alone had broken the seal that I myself had affixed in the presence of the Bishop, Canon de Taxis and M. Dausse. Consequently and in the light of these proofs, the secret was not violated as far as I am concerned; the only one who knows it is the Holy Father, unless His Holiness has communicated it. He alone is the owner and master of this secret.  "*As for me, I shall be in the future what I have always been in this matter: impenetrable. And if at any time I were commissioned to divulge it to the public, I would not do so without the consent of my bishop, who himself would refer to Rome. In that way, I would always be sure of being in the line of duty, as well as subject to the Most Holy Church our good Mother.*  "3). Many people ask me whether the text quoted in M. Girard’s book is that of my secret. I never answer this question for reasons that are easy to guess."  Maximin Giraud. 2 February 1872.  And in a personal letter addressed to M. Girard, he wrote: "I have never divulged anything, not even in my hours of extreme distress or of the most irresistible temptation… I have never hesitated and have always been ready, like Thomas of Canterbury, to die rather than deliver my secret to the public!"  "**AN ENVIABLE DEATH**"  His health weakened. On 4 November 1874, he made his last pilgrimage to La Salette. He was asked to tell his account of the apparition, which he did with a good grace. He held his audience spellbound for over an hour, giving proof of an extraordinary memory. It was the last time he narrated the words of the beautiful Lady in public. He then went back to Corps, to the poor dwelling where he had been born, to prepare for death with the piety of the child he had always remained. Pious women, Sister Sainte-Thècle and Madame Jourdain were at his side.  On Monday the 1st of March 1875, he felt his end approaching and requested the last sacraments. He piously responded to the prayers for the dying and received Holy Communion. He had difficulty in swallowing the Host and asked for some water from La Salette. He was given a few drops and then, very quietly, he died. The missionary Father of La Salette who assisted him at this last moment, declared: "*I would like to be in his place.*"  His testament was couched in these terms:  "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.  "I believe in all that is taught by the Holy, Apostolic and Roman Church, in all the dogmas defined by our Holy Father the Pope, the august and infallible Pius IX.  "I firmly believe, even at the cost of my blood, in the celebrated apparition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary on the holy mountain of La Salette, on 19 September 1846 – an apparition which I have defended in speech, writing and suffering.  "After my death, let no one assert or say that I was ever heard to deny the great event of La Salette; for in lying to the whole world, he would be lying to himself.  "In these sentiments, I give my heart to Our Lady of La Salette."  **FIGURE OF ADAM REDEEMED**  Our intention has been to tell the whole story of this poor life, wandering and unhappy, sown with contradictions and failures, thorns and briars, so misunderstood and despised, in his own time as in ours, and even eclipsed by most of today’s devotees of La Salette in favour of the life of Mélanie, which is much more sparkling, at least in appearance, for her life appears to us to be figurative: Maximin, a son and figure of Adam, but redeemed, bearing his cross, tempted to fall again, but victorious over temptation through his humble and prayerful faith. Our Lady no doubt had Her reasons for choosing this ignorant little shepherd behind his grazing sheep – this little scatterbrain with a heart as pure and as simple as a mountain spring. He lived and died as he was born, in poverty, without any material gain from the mission he nevertheless accomplished with admirable fidelity until his death in the arms of Holy Church and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Beautiful Lady, the Reconciler!  Deep down, his inner strength and his invincible strength came from his inviolate Secret, which shone in his heart like a burning lamp in the night. Can we reasonably draw any conclusions about its content? asks his biographer, Father Parent, quoted by Le Hidec,and he answers:  "Yes, if we follow certain clues. Obviously, the shepherd’s message can but confirm that of the shepherdess; at least it cannot contradict it. The one must complement the other, after the example of the Gospels which are in agreement over the truth despite certain apparent divergences. Furthermore, each secret must contain special prophecies of a particular character. So what would be the particular mark of Maximin’s secret? Principally, it would seem to proclaim the triumph of the Church and above all it would seem to designate the political saviour, referred to in so many prophecies by the popular name of the Grand Monarch."  We have seen how things stood regarding the return of the king, son of Saint Louis: not this one, the supposed survivor, nor the other one, the legitimate Pretender, but another one.., much later!  "As for the triumph of the Church, I think it is indicated by the little alpine shepherd’s eagerness to plant his wooden cross in the place called ‘the Assumption of Mary’, where Mary ascended, triumphant, to Heaven, whilst looking towards Rome. Pius IX, more than his two successors, was the pope who was put to the test and crucified, according to Malachy’s very just motto concerning the popes, *Crux de Cruce*. However, it was noticed that his brow was generally radiant with serenity and he often pronounced solemn words of confidence in a better future, which we have not yet been seen, alas! Now, this pious Pontiff s surprising calm is attributed to his knowledge of these two secrets of La Salette. In 1869, Maximin wrote these remarkable words to his Spanish benefactor, the Comte de Penalver: ‘I never weary praying for Pius IX, who is the greatest man we have in our time. He has a great love for Our Lady of La Salette, who sustains him in his difficulties and assists him in the government of the Church. He often alludes to the least of the Beautiful Lady’s public words and secrets. I do not say this to the prejudice of my secret, which I have entrusted to the Pope alone, nor am I revealing anything when I happen to speak like everyone else of one or other of the events that were foretold to me.’" (p. 82-83)  Maximin, Pius IX: what an instructive comparison between the little shepherd of Corps and the greatest pope of his century, elected in 1846, the year of the Apparition! Are they not both in their own way a figure of the fidelity of the Catholic Church in the thick of the cruellest trials, awaiting the certain fulfilment of the promises of their adored Lord and of His dearest Mother!    **MÉLANIE’S SECRET**  Beside Adam, there stands Eve whose twists and turns in life cannot all be blamed on the lack of understanding or the malice of the wicked. It is important to pick out from her long life (she will die in 1904) the key events where her own action seems to us to be decisive: the same goes for the credit we should give to the writings she produced, on her own initiative:   * **The Autobiography**, published in 1900, which transports us to the first fourteen years of her life, *her Childhood Gospel*. * **The Rule of the Mother of God**, as it was handed to Pope Leo XIII on 5 January 1879, and which would correspond to her *Acts of the Apostles* (those of the "Last Times", according to her own expression). * **The Secret of La Salette**, the 1879 version, with the imprimatur of the Bishop of Lecce (Italy), which would be her *Apocalypse*.   The complexity of this life is due, among other things, to the contradictory judgements she aroused among ecclesiastics, some of whom, we are bound to think, must have been abused and others perspicacious: discernment was brought to bear by the definitive judgement of the Church. The controversy, even at the time, did not suppress apostolic goodness, as a missionary of  La Salette, Father Perrin, thus summed up in 1867:  "*Although she was the most terrible thorn for all those who gave her welcome, they were, however, inclined to take an interest in her, because she was felt to be more worthy of pity than of blame.*"  **Corenc. The first blot. 1850-1853 (first disobedience).**  In 1846, a few weeks after the apparition, Mgr de Bruillard arranged for Mélanie and Maximin to be admitted to the school directed by the Sisters of Providence at Corps. They stayed there for four years.  On 10 October 1850, Mélanie entered as a postulant of the same order, at their convent at Corenc. She took the habit in 1851 under the name of Sister Mary of the Cross, where she edified her community. *But*, she had a passion for reading mystical writings and revelations of varying authenticity. *But* she lived in an atmosphere of unctuous admiration: visitors flocked to the convent, priests and lay people drank in her words and collected them to spread abroad. *But* her novice mistress was captivated, exalted her and encouraged confidences when it was her mission to keep her in the shade.  Finally, for a year or two, Mélanie suffered from spectacular attacks of the devil, which threw her to the ground, making her deaf and dumb, plunging her into despair and sometimes taking the form of terrifying animals.  In short, when the time came for her to take her vows, Mgr Ginoulhiac, who succeeded Mgr de Bruillard, thought it better to postpone them. He explained his decision in a pastoral letter addressed to his clergy, dated 4 November 1854.  "*Having become, since 19 September 1846, the object of delicate attention and tender, respectful consideration on the part of many people, even among the most important and most distinguished, resembling a sort of cult, if over the years she were somewhat affected by this, would it not be surprising if, in the end, she were not to allow herself to be won over by attachment to her own opinion, which is one of the greatest dangers incurred by souls favoured with extraordinary gifts? This attachment to her opinion and to the peculiarities which naturally follow commanded our attention as soon as we were informed of them, and, although the community paid homage to her piety and zeal in instructing children in religious knowledge, we believed it to be our duty to refuse to admit her to the yearly vows, in order to form her more effectively in the practice of Christian humility and simplicity, which are the necessary and surest protection against the illusions of the interior life.*"  All these intentions – malevolent –, attributed by the *mélanistes* to the Bishop, do not alter the fact that Mélanie refused to accept the required year’s probation, with the result that an English prelate, Mgr Newsham, Bishop of Hexham, asked the Bishop of Grenoble if he might take her with him, for the good of English Catholicism. The Bishop of Grenoble accepted with relief! So did Mélanie.  **Darlington, Second blot. 1854-1860 (second disobedience).**  She quickly disappointed the expectation of the English bishop, who soon lost interest in her, and we next find her in the Carmelite convent in Darlington. There are different versions of her entry into Carmel. But the Carmelites record that she was welcomed and introduced into the cloister to be looked after. She showed a desire to remain, and with great pomp – too much! – she received the habit on 23 February 1855. However, with the objection that she had a "mission" to discharge on behalf of the Blessed Virgin, Mélanie refused to make her profession, then – constrained by her superiors, she says – she brought herself to do so, but interiorly she did not take the vow of enclosure.  When she wanted to leave attempts were made to restrain her, so she threw letters over the enclosure wall to let it be known that she was being sequestered. Hoping to avoid all scandal, Mgr Hogarth had her taken back to Marseilles.  We find in the confidential reports she made on this subject to the curious Abbé Combe, in 1901, this enlightening summary on how she came to be judged wherever she went:  "*For a long time, the Prioress (of Darlington), forgetting her authority, did nothing without consulting her. After a retreat preached by a religious, the Prioress and the community turned against her. She was refused Holy Communion, even to make her Easter duties.*  " *– My dear sister, Our Lord who gave Himself to you in communion at Dompierre, did He not do so at Darlington? – Oh, yes."*  What was she accused of? Making up stories. How did they see her? As mentally unbalanced. The good religious who gave the retreat asked her after confession whether she had ever happened to see someone and then wonder whether she had already seen that person with her own eyes or whether she had dreamed it. She answered frankly:  "*Yes, once when I was travelling, I saw a person whom I thought I recognised, but I couldn’t remember where I had seen her; or whether it was simply a dream.* – *Ah!* he said to her, with a start, *that’s a sure sign of madness; yes, you are mad, well and truly mad!*"  **Marseilles. Third blot. 1860-1867 (third disobedience).**  Welcomed by friends who entrusted her to the direction of a Jesuit, Father Calage, who took pity on her and had her relieved of her simple vows, she was taken in as a boarder at the Compassion Order’s mother house, under the name of Sister Zénaïde. There, she wanted to adopt a habit indicated to her, so she said, by the Madonna, but she had to obey the founder of the order who made her wear the same habit as her daughters. After various missions within the order, and after a fruitless attempt at the Carmelite convent in Marseilles, she was admitted to take vows in the Compassion Order, provided she did not reveal her identity to the outside world.  She contravened that order, and the Superior, treating her as a witch and a traitress, obliged her to leave the congregation, the habit and… Marseilles!  **Castellamare (Italy). Fourth blot. 1867-1885 (fourth disobedience).**  An Italian prelate, Mgr Petagna, Bishop of Castellamare, known when she was at Marseilles, took an interest in her and installed her in the Palazzo Ruffo with a sister of the Compassion order. She attempted to found the Order of the Sons of the Mother of God, on the fringes of the regular 1852 foundation of the Missionaries of La Salette, but according to the rule she claimed to have received from the Blessed Virgin in 1846.  Summoned to Rome, in 1879, accused by Mgr Fava, Bishop of Grenoble, supported, she maintains, by Leo XIII, she left without, in the end, winning her case, but not without writing a new version of the famous *Secret*. On her return to Italy after a long journey, her protector died, and the community was dispersed.  **Return to France. The trial at Chalon-sur-Saône. 1885-1892 (fifth disobedience).**  Pursuing her dream of making a foundation in France, armed with a legacy left her by the Abbé Ronjon and with the support of Canon de Brandt, she engaged in a feverish but fruitless activity. She will find herself caught up in a legal case against the Bishop of Chalon who contests the validity of the Ronjon inheritance.  This legal case, with all its repercussions, went on until 1895, and she lost. She fought the case tooth and nail, which made her protector and spiritual father, Mgr Zola, say of her:  "*Sister Mary of the Cross had a quarrel with a French bishop. She showed very little submission towards her superiors in these circumstances, maybe through lack of guidance or of light, or for both reasons.*"  **Wandering. 1892-1904. The Abbé Combe.**  Back in Italy, at Messina and then at Moncalien, in 1899, Mélanie, on the insistence of Abbe Combe, who was infatuated with her, returned to France, changing her address three times. Stormy relations with this priest made her flee to Italy again, in 1904. On leaving, they told each other a piece of their mind. He, that he is now persuaded that she is subject to illusion and that she does not see "everything in God". She, that her former confessor and protector wanted to wrench all her secrets from her, and that he lacked intelligence and humility in wanting to interpret God’s will for her, in his way (cf. Guilhot, p. 481). On the 15th December 1904, she was found dead in her house at Altamura. What a life! And what an end!  But now let us look at her writings, in three parts. |

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| ***MÉLANIE’S WRITINGS***  **I. THE CHILDHOOD GOSPEL**   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteA.jpg *Mélanie,*the shepherdess of La Salette, in 1846 |   Her time at Corenc, where she was adulated, marks an obvious turning point in her life. Constantly being asked to *tell the story* of the apparition and of her early life, deep into all sorts of mystical writing and already refined through four years of education at Corps, she began*to tell the story of herself*. With time and imagination, she will produce her *Autobiography* in 1900, which resumes an original manuscript dating from 1852. The drift can be dated perfectly. Whilst Mélanie remained under the direction of Sister Thècle, the superior at Corps, she struggled successfully against the temptation of vanity, as her notes testify. But at Corenc, as M. Gérente, the convent chaplain, relates to Father Bossan, "I saw priests there (in the parlour) writing down everything Mélanie said as though they were oracles. I once said to a priest from the South, who had already written three pages of conversation with Melanie: "*But, my good Father, what are you doing there? – I am writing down everything she says because it is very edifying, On Sunday, I shall read out to my parishioners, in the pulpit, everything I have just written.*" He said this while Mélanie was present.  "I saw priests, ladies, generals, officers, highly placed men all standing before Melanie as though she were some very important person, speaking to her with humility, asking her to sign prints or anything simply to have her autograph. All sorts of follies were committed with regard to her.  "In the meantime, Mélanie was ardently throwing herself into the lives of the saints, their mystical writings and revelations, of varying authenticity. "*She read a lot*, M. Gérente declared to the same interviewer. *Everything she wrote after the apparition, she could have taken from her reading*." (…).  "There is, therefore, a turning point in Mélanie’s life; it has a perceptible starting point from which a curve could be traced. History guarantees that the inclination to story-telling was alien to the adolescent who, with her little companion on the mountainside, gave a message which she understood no more than he did." (Jaouen, *La grâce de La Salette*, p. 257-259)  All the introductions to the *Autobiography* admit or accuse – depending on their final judgement – the exceptional strangeness, be it human or supernatural, of the account. Among the "*Mélanistes*", emotion and unconditional admiration are carried to the limit through the number and harshness of the trials endured by Mélanie, through the lofty sentiments she expresses and the heroic nature of the virtues she implicitly admits to having practised.  Every objection is brushed aside by these two arguments, which are reckoned to be irrefutable:   1. Almighty God can do what He wants: our human reason has only to bow. 2. The Blessed Virgin Mary could not have chosen a seer, knowing that she would begin to ramble.   Everything written by Melanie, therefore, is literally true. Which is what we contest, with proofs to hand.  **AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF PERSECUTION**  It is rare to find a child so unhappy and so ill treated by her mother from the age of five, to six months: she was beaten, thrown to the ground, expelled from the home at the age of two or three years, found wandering in the forest, inexplicably re-integrated into the home, rebuffed for her displays of affection, cruelly separated from her sympathetic father, placed with various ill-tempered, perverse masters, one after the other, where she endured endless vexations, went hungry, fell sick, was neglected. In short, she was one of those child martyrs whose parents would face loss of parental rights and imprisonment today.  And all the more a martyr, in that this poor child opposed her persecutors with nothing other than resignation, meekness, patience, forgetfulness and pardon of injuries, dedication and courage in work which drew cries of admiration for this "holy and spotless victim".    But it is all too much! Although very enlightening, the exact study of this "display" of totally unjust situations, to highlight the victim’s exemplary reaction, would take us too far. We shall simply oppose this flow of writing with two outside testimonies.  The first knocks down the statue of the saint; it is the testimony of her last employer, Jean-Baptiste Pra, certified by his parish priest as being "a trustworthy man and a good Catholic": he relates that before the apparition in 1846, Melanie was "*sulky, lazy and disobedient*", often insolent, "*to the point of sometimes refusing to answer those who spoke to her*", thoughtless and often locked in her reveries (Bassette, p. 101).  The second testimony comes from the Mélanistes themselves, who are astonished, as we are too, that for fourteen years nobody protested against these butchers of parents. They made their enquiries and we find their testimony precious, since they reveal that "*the parents were poor but believed to be honourable*[!].*Nobody in the little village of Corps would have imagined that Madame Calvat (ten children) was capable of inflicting on her two to three year old daughter ill-treatment unworthy of a mother simply on the pretext that Mélanie’s tastes did not agree with hers.*  "*We would not have known of these unedifying facts if Melanie had not yielded to the entreaties of her confessors by giving an account of them. And perhaps there would remain a few doubts in our minds*[ah, even so!] *about the authenticity of this account, if the parents had not, according to the nuns of Corenc*[!], *recognised the truth of their daughter’s account.*" (Hyacinthe Guilhot, *La vraie Mélanie de La Salette*, p. 347)  But Bassette points out that the nuns of Corenc are not reliable! There is no doubt about it: Melanie Calvat, of a poor family of ten children, was not a child martyr edifying those around her with her holiness. She invented that afterwards.  First point established.  **A SUPER-PREDESTINED CHILDHOOD**  The concentration of mystical graces, with which she is said to have been favoured, is quite extraordinary. The first of these graces is startling. It is surprising when one learns that she received it at the age of two or three, after her mother had chased her into the woods: an encounter with him whom she will refer to, until the age of twenty, as her Brother. This story inevitably reminds one of Anne de Saint-Barthélemy, the Spanish Carmelite (1548-1626), whose childhood was favoured with very real and extraordinary mystical graces.  We find almost similar situations in the autobiographies of both Mélanie and Anne: Anne is an orphan, consoled by the Child Jesus:  "It happened to me when I was about ten years old, at the death of my parents which caused me great distress. I still had brothers and sisters, who acted as parents and who were very good. But having reached the age of ten, I was sent to look after the sheep in the fields. Although not far from the village, I suffered greatly to begin with; but soon Our Lord consoled me: the fields were my delight and the birds welcomed me with their song. If they began to sing, I would remain recollected for hours. And often, the Child Jesus would come; He would sit on my lap, and I would find Him there when I came to.  Mélanie is endowed with parents, travestied as butchers, consoled by… a little Brother.  "… There were three or four days when I was in the woods without seeing or hearing anyone… Suddenly, I saw coming towards me a small child of great beauty, clothed in shining white with a pretty crown on his head. When this little child was near the recluse, he said to her:  "*Good day, sister, why are you crying? I have come to console you.*  – *Ah!*said the recluse; *my poor little child, speak very softly, for I do not like noise. I am crying because I would like to know all that my Jesus did to save the world, so that I can do as he did without failing in anything; then I would like to know what the world did to cause the death of my Jesus; then I would like to have a mummy; I have no one. I used to be in a house with a woman and children; this woman does not want me any more. Ah! if only I had a mummy!*  – *My sister,*the little child then said, *call me brother; I am your good brother, I watch over you; we have a mummy...*" (p. 38)  Anne feels an attraction for solitude, but Jesus wisely corrects her of this:  "What I then felt in my spirit I cannot say; how gloriously I felt myself to be in a glorious heaven. I desired to live there forever, to see no one, and I wished to go far away. Once I said to the Child Jesus: ‘Lord, since you keep me company, let us not go where there are other people, but let us go alone towards the mountains, for with your company I shall want for nothing.’ But he laughed, and without words he showed me that that was not what he wanted of me." (p. 40)  Mélanie’s "little Brother", on the contrary, urges her to seek solitude, at the age of two or three years!  "Then my loving brother said to me: '*My sister, flee from the world, love retirement and recollection; have your heart on the cross and the cross in your heart; let Jesus Christ be your sole concern. Love silence and you will hear the voice of God from Heaven who will speak in your heart; form no relationship with anyone and God will be all for you.'*  "My little brother came to see me almost every day; sometimes he stayed without seeing me, but often he would come several times in the same day. We would always talk about the passion or the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ…" (p. 38)  Jesus leaves a mystery hanging over his encounters with Anne:  "Sometimes, he would take me away at night, without my noticing, half a league away from the village. In alarm, my brothers would go out looking for me and would scold me. But I was not surprised, for not knowing whom I was with – and I did not tell them –they could never have thought otherwise." (p. 40)  Mélanie is often expelled from the house at night, and nobody asks how, at her age, she could have survived.  Thus Mélanie plagiarises Anne, always going one better and becoming increasingly more unrealistic – the marks of plagiarism. The habitual presence of Jesus with Mélanie is but the prelude to raptures, ecstasies, conversations with the divine Persons, theophanies, meetings with the Blessed Virgin, journeys to Paradise and the stigmata, between the ages of one and six, if you please! followed by visits to Purgatory, charisms with animals (the forest is her favourite place), miracles repeated on herself and others, with spiritual marriage at the age of thirteen!  It is all too much! Especially when one unfailingly recognises in all this a pastiche of the Bible: the crossing of the Red Sea (here a torrent), the prophet Elijah miraculously fed (1 Kings 19.1-8), the divine raven messenger *(ibid.* 17.2-6), the Song of Songs, Francis of Assisi for the animals, Saint John Bosco for the protective dog, Saint Margaret-Mary for the burning in the chest, Saint Mechtilde and Anne of Saint-Barthélemy for the visits to Purgatory!  But the fervour, or the deliberate blindness, of the Mélanistes are such that Melanie’s going one better, which reaches the farcical, ceases to affect them. It makes one despair of human common sense! Listen to this catechism lesson to the animals, reproduced by Hyacinthe Guilhot, without raising an eyebrow, p. 130-131:  "I told these animals the story of their creation by the all powerful word of our eternal God, as my good Brother had taught it to me, and I encouraged them to seek food everywhere, without harming men, their masters and their kings, for they are created in the image of God through the powers of their souls, and again, through their bodies, they are images of Jesus … To begin with, a wolf would come every day, and I taught him what I could; however, I did not like that very much because, unlike a man, he could not love me with a conscious and disinterested love (*sic!*)…  "Before long, the number of wolves increased; there were foxes, hares, three little fawns and a cloud of birds that came every day. And then, for lack of men to speak to about the good God, the She-wolf (*she is speaking of herself*) preached to them and then sang the canticle: Taste, fervent souls. All the animals showed signs of great attention and bowed their heads at the holy names of Jesus and Mary.  "The wolves normally came together at a fixed hour; the foxes came together as well as the hares, the fawns and the birds (a snake came too, but was sent away). Once they had all arrived, each animal took the place assigned to him and listened. Then, when they heard the end which went something like this: *Sit nomen Domini benedictum!* they all went wild, especially the foxes who played tricks on their brother wolves: they bit their ears and their tails; they slapped the hares with their paws and made them roll over; they pulled the fawns from behind by their little tails… as soon as I told them to retire, they all left. Oh! how ungrateful I was towards my loving Jesus! I amused myself with the animals, and wearied conversing with my all." (Guilhot, p. 130-131)  It is grotesque, and perfectly ridiculous. The imitation of the Poverello of Assisi is obvious, at least in Mélanie’s mind. There is no doubt in our mind: she is inventing by plagiarising. Second point established.  **IN BREACH WITH THE APPARITION OF 1846**  More seriously, we would like the Mélanistes to explain one single point: how does this child who has reached the peaks of the mystical life, constantly immersed in prayer and in intimate conversation with all the beings of Heaven even from the age of fourteen or fifteen, this lyrical, delicate, tender-hearted, exquisite young girl, of such refined expression, – how do these attributes agree with the Mélanie of 1846, who was boorish, not very likeable, ignorant, practically without any knowledge of religion, as her parish priest testified, and whose stubborn memory could not retain two lines of the catechism? How does the super mystical Mélanie agree with the Mélanie of 1846 who failed to recognise this Lady who was weeping: "We told each other that she was very pretty. As for me, I said it could be some Saint who had disappeared." (Bassette, p. 45)  And how does the Mélanie of the *Autobiography* agree with the Mélanie of 1846, who is not all alone as in all her other "apparitions", but with a naughty fellow, Maximin, even more boorish and bad-tempered than herself, and whom, to cap it all, the beautiful Lady – who has clearly not read the *Autobiography*! – associates with her, to the extent of speaking to the two of them in a strangely prosaic language – about potatoes and butcher’s meat and spoilt wheat! – to the extent of asking them a question that is very strange for those of us who have read the *Autobiography*:  "*Do you say your prayers properly, my children? – Not very much, Madame*(!)*. – You must say your prayers, my children, morning and evening; when you can do no more, say a Pater and an Ave Maria, and when you have the time, say more."*  The Mélanie of 1846, oblivious of the Mélanie of the *Autobiography* who refers to herself as "the dumb She-wolf", keeps her secrets hidden, and that same evening she relates the Apparition as the event of her life! And the beautiful Lady of 1846 also forgets herself and speaks in both French and patois. It is clearly the first time in fourteen years!  Is the Mélanie of 1900 aware of such obvious discordance? It would seem so if we compare the 1846 version, recorded in 1847, with that of 1879: poor Maximin, so unflattered, is practically painted out; Mélanie has made great strides in style, and in… autism: it is a dialogue of her "little heart" with the beautiful Lady. A few more years, and she will possess this unctuous style, bewitching for some, cringe-making for others; and always enveloping and suffocating one with what is essentially charismatic mythomania. Judge for yourself:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1847 VERSION:** | **1879 VERSION:** | | *It is prosaic and rough, but true; they are the facts.* | *It is embellished;*it *draws attention to herself.* | | We then saw a Lady in the light. We were afraid. I dropped my stick. Then Maximin said to me: "Keep hold of your stick! If it does anything to us, I’ll hit it with the stick!" | (…) Suddenly, *I* saw a beautiful light, more brilliant than the sun and I could scarcely say these words: "Maximin, do you see what is over there? Oh! my God!" At the same time, I dropped the stick I was holding.  *I* do not know what happened in that moment, but *I* felt myself being drawn, *I* felt a great respect, full of love, and *my heart* seemed to run faster than me.  *I* kept my eyes firmly fixed on this light, which was static and as though it had opened up. *I*noticed another, much more brilliant light which was in movement, and in this light a most beautiful Lady sitting on top of our Paradise, with her head in her hands. | | Then this Lady stood up straight and said to us: | The beautiful Lady stood up; she coolly crossed her arms while watching us, and said to us: | | "Come my children, do not be afraid. I am here to tell you great news." | "Come, my children, I am here to proclaim great news to you!" | | Then we crossed over the stream and she came to the place where we had been sleeping. Then she said to us, crying all the time that she spoke (I really saw her tears flow) (…) | These soft and sweet words made *me* fly to her, and *my heart* desired to attach itself to her forever. When I was close to the beautiful Lady, in front of her to her right, she began to speak and from her beautiful eyes tears also started to flow (…) | | And then I did not understand what was meant by ‘pommes de terre’ [potatoes]. I was about to ask Maximin: "What does ‘pommes de terre’ mean?" | At this point, I tried to interpret the word: ‘pommes de terre’. I thought it meant ‘apples’. | | And the Lady said: "You do not understand, my children; I will tell it to you differently." | The good and beautiful Lady, reading *my thoughts*, thus repeated: "You do not understand, my children? I will tell it to you differently." | | "If the potatoes go bad", the Lady continued in patois… | "If the harvest is spoiled…" |   **EVE’S TEMPTATION**  What are we to make of this *Childhood Gospel*, and of these reveries? That, in our interpretation, they represent the ***temptation of Eve***. It begins at Corenc, where she confides in the ecstatic nuns that she is missing her forest, with its snakes, wolves and foxes… A diabolical temptation is slipping in here, making her paint a dream Paradise: as a child, from the age of two to three, she was with her Adam. They were both very nice; he would work miracles for her, and she would tell him everything, more and more mystical.  We have seen that Maximin emerged victorious from this temptation, because he was able to resist it and keep himself from all illusion. Mélanie, who was strongly assailed by the devil at Corenc, – the devil who got her into a thousand eccentricities – gave in, rather like the people of God on the plain whilst Moses was receiving the Tables of the Law on Mount Sinaï.  Yielding to mythomania, Mélanie looks down on Maximin. Surrounded, flattered and listened to, *she knows* the secrets of God and will pass from the illusion of Paradise in the forest with her "little brother" Adam to the illusion of the highest mystical graces. Again, at Darlington she experiences the assaults of the devil, from which she will escape through the illusion of the stigmata. It is a constant fact in her life: she inflates her mystical illusions in step with the contradictions she meets.  Thus, Maximin’s path, like Saint Peter’s after his denial, seems to be a path of fidelity, whereas Mélanie’s is the path of infidelity and of schism.  Another point of reflection: the pilgrimage of La Salette develops and the Church continues to walk straight. But Mélanie is not concerned with that, no more than she is concerned with the declaration of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the apparition of Lourdes in 1858, much more brilliant and newer than that of La Salette!  In the Secret she attributes to the Blessed Virgin, in 1879, there is not a single allusion to these glories of the Blessed Virgin! Still worse, she attempts to overshadow Lourdes by inventing the story that her Secret, Mélanie’s, should have been published… in 1858! Later, she will confide to the Abbé Combe, that if he had not thwarted her mission, all the miracles of Lourdes would have been done at La Salette (Guilhot, p. 269).  The same thing is to be found in the life of Saint Catherine Labouré; it is probable that Mélanie, making her bitter confidences several years after the death of the seer of the rue du Bac (1876) knew of this… Saint Catherine said, in fact, of the miracles being worked at Lourdes: "*To think that these miracles could have taken place in our chapel!*" But just before 1858, she had scribbled on a piece of paper, discovered among her things: "*My good Mother, they will not do what you want here; manifest Yourself elsewhere!*" and on learning of the apparitions of Lourdes, she exclaimed: "*It’s the same!*"  Provided the Immaculate Virgin is better known, loved and invoked, the rest matters little to a true saint, to a true Catholic! For it is plain that Lourdes was not the contradiction of La Salette, but its fulfilment.  Mélanie did not understand that, *did not want to understand*, and isolated herself in her imaginings, awaiting the propitious hour for her revelation to the world…    **II. THE NEW LAW: THE ORDER OF THE LAST TIMES**  The event of 1846 should have made her pass, according to her later version of the facts, from her private, hidden life, to her public life. The pious Mélanistes sum up and quote as follows, without a hint of surprise or amusement:  "Until the apparition of 19 September 1846, Mélanie had remained small for her age, and the little Brother, who frequently came to see her, was always the same height as herself. After Mélanie had joined the nuns of Corenc (*them again! always them!*),it was no longer the same. Mélanie began to grow quite rapidly, whereas the little Brother’s height decreased (*No! I tell you, they won’t laugh!*). She noticed it (!) and remarked on it to him. – *‘****How funny! I am growing, and you are diminishing.****’ – ‘****It has to be like that***’, he answers." (Guilhot, p. 467) That Jesus should become smaller and that Mélanie should grow?!  In fact, the 1879 version of the Secret, at the cost of a further pastiche, bestowed on her a new and extraordinary mission: to promote the foundation of the Order of the Sons and Daughters of the Mother of God, also called the Apostles of the Last Times, according to the rule to have come straight from the mouth of the Blessed Virgin.  First of all, let us compare the two versions:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1847 VERSION:** | **1879 VERSION:** | | At this point, the Lady kept silence for a moment; she seemed to be speaking to Maximin, but I heard nothing.  Then, afterwards, she spoke to me in patois, whilst Maximin played with stones. | Then addressing me, the Most Blessed Virgin spoke and gave me a secret in French:  "*Mélanie, what I am about to tell you now will not always be a secret; you may publish it in 1858.*"  Then, the Blessed Virgin gave me, also in French, the rule of a new religious order. | | Then she said: | After giving me the rule of this new religious order, the Blessed Virgin thus continued her speech: | | "*If they convert…*" | "*If they convert…*" |   **FABRICATION**  Now, let us go back to our chronology. Following recognition of the events of La Salette in 1851, the Bishop of Grenoble announced to his diocese, on 1 May 1852, his plan to build, on the mountain of La Salette, a basilica "*worthy of the Queen of Heaven and of the grateful piety of the diocese*", together with the creation, at Grenoble, of a body of diocesan missionary priests who would reside on the mountain during the pilgrimage season and evangelize the different parishes of the diocese during the winter. On 25 May 1852, thousands of pilgrims and about a hundred priests were present when the Bishop of Grenoble laid the first stone of the basilica. It was the beginning of a great work of *the Church*.  But, at Corenc, Mélanie also began to speak of statutes to be given to the Missionaries of La Salette, proposing the adoption of a rule which, she guaranteed, had come straight from the Blessed Virgin; she even wrote a rough draft. Mgr Ginoulhiac, who was wary of her and had just postponed her vows, was angry, but she vaunted this rule which, "instead of causing those in force to lapse, would have reinvigorated them, bringing about a rebirth of the spirit of the Gospel".  We are in 1853.  Before continuing with this painful history, which will end only with the death of Mélanie in 1904, let us make one, nay two, reflections:  1). The Blessed Virgin Mary, had, in fact, given the children a mission, concerning the material chastisements that would befall men if they did not convert. "*And so, My children, She told them on two occasions, you will pass this on to all My people.*"  The children accomplished this mission, and the Church has taken it over. Until 1851, there was no question of anything else, other than the Secret, but when Pius IX learned of it, he revealed nothing concerning an Order and a supposedly inspired Rule, to be put into application after 1858!  2). More disturbing is the date supposedly fixed by the Blessed Virgin: 1858. But if she really made it clear to Mélanie (and not to Maximin) that the Secret, which included the Rule, could be revealed at this date, why did not Mélanie say so earlier? Would it not have been a good way of keeping the curious at arm’s length? Sister Lucy of Fatima succeeded in keeping silence over her Secret, without being troubled by it, clearly stating that from 1960 it would be timely to divulge it.  Installed at Castellammare, in Italy, under the protection of Mgr Petagna, she nevertheless continued to pursue her dream, charged with exhorting religious to fervour. She spoke, so her biographer, the Abbé Gouin, tells us, "with the effusion of the permanent memory of this rule she had received on the day of the Apparition, proposing it as the rule for all monastic life".  **FOUNDATION TRIALS**  At the same time, her chaplain, Father Fusco, together with two or three priests, were putting the rule into practice, for which Mélanie let them have the first floor of the Palazzo Ruffo. Other priests, passing through Castellammare, took this initiative into consideration, among whom was Canon de Brandt from the cathedral of Amiens. She saw in this "*tall and noble figure*", writes the Abbé Gouin, the ideal superior for the order of her dreams. Note that, at the same time, she was accepting sums of money sent to her by Father Giraud, superior of the Missionaries of La Salette, to complement the generosity of the Italian prelate protector!  In a letter to Canon de Brandt, dated 23 March 1877, therefore, Mélanie wrote to present her project and let it be known that a noviciate of the new order could be opened in France in a house which a priest had promised to give her!  The priest was the Abbé Jean Ronjon, of Chalon-surSaône. On 24 August 1878, he handed over to her, by a legal act, a chapel he had founded at Chalon, and opened for public worship, together with an adjacent dwelling house to house members of the order which was to come to birth through the will of the Mother of God, as Mélanie asserted (cf. Galli, p. 92-93).  We are at the height of anarchy! In 1876 she even wrote a book entitled: "*A view of the costume and of the works in which the Sons and Daughters of the Mother of God will be employed*".  *A view*? So the words of the Blessed Virgin are amplified by visions! It is now time to quote the second part of the Secret which she let out in snatches and in private, before releasing a public version in 1879:  *"1. It is indeed true that, in the apparition on the mountain of La Salette of 19 September 1846, the most Blessed Virgin showed me that She desired the creation of a new religious order designated by Herself under the title of the****Apostles of the Last Times****. The proof of this is either in the rule She then gave me by word of mouth following the secret. which you have long possessed, or in the sight of this work.*  "*This order will comprise: 1. priests who will be the missionaries of the Blessed Virgin and the apostles of the last times; 2. nuns, who will be dependent on the missionaries; 3. members of the faithful working in the world and who would like to be united and attached to the work.*  *"2. The aim of this new religious order is to work for the sanctification of the clergy, for the conversion of sinners and for the extension of God’s Kingdom throughout the world* […].  *"I saw that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached throughout the whole earth and to all peoples in all its purity.*  *"I saw that God wanted this order to fight against all the abuses that have led to the decadence of the clergy, of the religious state and to the ruin of Christian society."* (Guilhot, ed. Téqui, p. 305-306)  As for the thirty three articles of the rule, they are so trivial and vague that any genuine superior would despair of true vocations being based on them. It is true that Mélanie herself was to be their superior… after having formally denied this to Mgr Ginouilhac in 1853.  But, in the mind of the seer become the foundress of an order, these "Apostles of the Last Times" were obviously meant to correspond to the image given of them by Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort in his ***Ardent Prayer***, composed for the missionary priests of his Company of Mary: "These missionary saints, children of Mary, your Spouse, whom you are to gather and separate from ordinary mortals, for the good of your Church, so enfeebled and sullied by the crimes of her children…" (*Golden Book*, p. 757) Thus, what the Mélanistes present as the fulfilment of the saint’s prophecy is nothing but a vulgar pastiche composed by an illuminist (cf. *Bibliographie*, p. 3).  **ROME’S HESITATIONS**  In this context, it is understandable that Mgr Fava, the new Bishop of Grenoble, should have caused an uproar when he came to Rome in November 1878 accompanied by a La Salette Father to request the crowning and title of basilica for the shrine, and at the same time approval for the Missionaries’ rule.   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteB.jpg Mélanie, clothed in the habit of her order, in 1887. |   Forewarned of his intentions, Mélanie had sent her work to Rome and knew that it had been well received. Summoned to Rome, she learned that she could count on three cardinals, but more importantly on the new Pope, Leo XIII. At least that is what she claims, and we are reduced to admitting her version of the papal audience. Here it is, as devoutly reproduced by the Mélanistes.  " – You must go up there and make known the Rule dictated by the Most Blessed Virgin. If there are those who would not want to observe it, you should warn the bishop to transfer them elsewhere.  – Very good, Most Holy Father, she exclaimed, bowing her head as a mark of obedience.  – You will leave immediately, said the Pontiff, who added with a fatherly voice: when the Lord deigns to communicate a monastic rule of life, He can also transmit the spirit and the ability to observe this same rule. That is why it is necessary that you write it down when you are in Grenoble, and before going up to the Holy Mountain you will send it to me.  Mélanie gave a start when she heard that:  – Oh! no, Most Holy Father, she pleaded, do not send me to Grenoble. I shall have no freedom of action with Mgr Fava.  – What, how is that? asked an incredulous Leo XIII.  – Mgr Fava, explained the seer, would order me to write what he desires and not what has been dictated to me by the Holy Spirit.  – No, no! replied the Pope with a trembling voice." (Mgr Galli, p. 102)  Whatever credit is to be given to Mélanie’s account, Mgr Fava’s position, based on his conviction of Mélanie’s mental instability, was a fact, and his reaction expresses his deepest thoughts on the subject:  "*I shall accept Mélanie’s rule only when the Church has proved to me that it really comes from the Blessed Virgin.*"  And there is the reaction of Mgr Bianchi, Cardinal Ferrieri’s secretary:  "*Eminence, is it a good thing to set up counter-altars? The counter-altar is Mélanie’s creation, in founding, without the Church’s authorisation, the Sons of the Mother of God in her residence at Castellammare, whilst the missionaries of La Salette are already working on the Holy Mountain. That does harm, a great deal of harm. It should not be allowed.*"  Faced with an opposition so much in line with the law, with common sense and the Church’s discipline, Leo XIII gave way, but without blaming Mélanie, at least so she claims, leaving her morally victorious and persuaded, yet again, that she is the victim of persecution. Infinitely more prudent and respectful of the laws, Pius IX had upheld the competent authority, leaving the ordinary of the place to act, in this case the Bishop of Grenoble.  Fortified by the new Pope’s support, Mélanie continued with her intrigues all the more ardently, always finding, it has to be said, simpletons or strange beings around her to encourage her, flatter her and supply her with the necessary money for her many journeys. She wrote, she directed priests, with no scruple about lying. To one of them, she wrote advising that no mention of the new order should be made to his bishop, for "*in this business, one has to be more cunning than the devil, and all means possible have to be used*". She tirelessly badgered her correspondents: "*We must not sleep, most reverend Father, we have to act energetically. It is for the good cause that we are fighting. Let us not back down before the enemy*."  All her endeavours failed.  **TRUE OR FALSE LAW?**  What are we to conclude from these developments whereby *habit, order and rule* became with time and Mélanie’s imagination the work of the Blessed Virgin? Opposed to the hierarchy? Might such a woman be Our Lady’s legislator? She showed herself to be more the figure of Eve pursuing her original revolt; of the Jewish people, constantly rebellious towards Yahweh and Moses, and finally rejecting their Messiah, Jesus Christ; of nineteenth century France, orphaned of its King, pulled in all directions, ending in rebellion against the warnings of Our Lady of La Salette and of Our Lady of Lourdes; finally, a figure of the apostate twentieth century in its conciliar Church, turning its back on the religion of Jesus Christ to found another according to its own taste, "with its eye fixed on a chimera" (Saint Pius X).  Catastrophes have come, and they are still coming.  It is the story of the life of Mélanie, who always believed in the possible fulfilment of her dream, from one house to another, with one priest and then another. But her projects all went up in smoke and all ended scandalously in one way or another. And one morning she was found dead, stretched out on her bedroom floor, alone and clothed in her black habit. Dreadful!  Was that the end of her Apocalypse?    **III. MÉLANIE’S APOCALYPSE**  It is the last form of the revelations that released storms of contradiction and floods of enthusiasm. The important event that facilitates the passing from one stage to the other is the death of Pius IX (1878) and the accession of Leo XIII: after the Pope of fidelity, the Pope of infidelity.  It is Mélanie’s oracle: she had to appropriate the whole of the New Testament, and thus represent the Church inventing a new spirituality, a new religious rule and a new Apocalypse.  The great Secret stigmatises a clergy unfaithful to their religious duties and possessed by love of money and a taste for honours and pleasure. It is pronounced with the tone of an Old Testament prophet, commissioned to express the violent wrath of Yahweh.  Here are the key phrases of this white hot lava which must cover a rebellious humanity:  **1. Against the priests**. "The priests have become cesspools of impurity. Woe to priests and to those dedicated to God… [their] sins call for vengeance… there are no more generous souls, there is no one left worthy of offering a stainless sacrifice to the Eternal for the sake of the world. God will strike in an unprecedented manner… for more than twenty five years."  **2. Against the kings**. "Expect to be ruled with a rod of iron and to drink the chalice of God’s wrath."  **3. Advice for the Pope**. "May Pius IX not leave Rome again after 1859. May he be on his guard against Napoleon; he is of a double heart."  **4. Oracle concerning Italy.** "Italy will be punished for her ambition… a great number of priests and members of religious orders will break away from the true religion; among these people there will even be bishops."  **5. A date**. "In the year 1864, Lucifer together with a large number of demons will be unloosed from hell; they will put an end to faith little by little, even in persons dedicated to God. Woe to the princes of the Church! The Vicar of my Son will have much to suffer, because for a time the Church will be given over to great persecution. It will be a time of darkness. The Church will go through an appalling crisis. All civil and ecclesiastical order will be abolished."  **6. A new date**. "In the year 1865, the abomination in holy places will be seen. France, Italy, Spain and England will be at war. For a time, God will cease to remember France and Italy because the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been forgotten. Paris will burn and Marseilles will be engulfed."  **7. The false peace**. "(But) the people of God will ask for my help (says the Blessed Virgin) and for my intercession. Then the peace of God will be made among men. This peace will not last long: twenty five years. A forerunner of the Antichrist will fight against the true Christ: He will shed much blood and will want to annihilate the worship of God to make himself be looked upon as God. The earth will be struck by all sorts of plagues. Before this happens, there will be a false peace in the world."  **8. The Antichrist**. "It will be during this time that the antichrist will be born of a Hebrew nun, a false virgin, who will communicate with the old serpent, the master of impurity; his father will be a bishop. He will be the devil incarnate, he will work wonders, he will feed on nothing but impurity."  "**ROME WILL LOSE THE FAITH AND BECOME THE SEAT OF THE ANTICHRIST"**  **9. Appeal to the Apostles of the last times**. "I address an urgent appeal to the earth. I call on the true disciples of the living God who reigns in Heaven… I call on the Apostles of the last times. For now is the time of all times, the end of all ends.  "But now Enoch and Elijah will come, filled with the Spirit of God. They will condemn the diabolical errors of the Antichrist. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth! Who will be able to withstand them? God will allow Himself to bend through the blood, tears and prayers of the just: Enoch and Elijah will be put to death.  "It is time; the sun will be darkened; faith alone will live. Behold the Beast with his subjects, calling himself the saviour of the world."  **10. The victory**. "He will be stifled by the breath of Saint Michael the Archangel. And then water and fire will purify the earth and consume all the works of men’s pride, and all will be renewed: God will be served and glorified." (Guilhot, p. 285-292)  **TRUE OR FALSE PROPHECY?**  Let us try to see clearly into this Secret, which sparked off an ignominious rumpus in the Church when it was published: twisted blows on one side, fanaticism and curses on the other, and everybody, including Léon Bloy, offering interpretations, to such an extent that a Jesuit, Father Poulard, affirmed that this secret was "a suggestion from the devil". We cannot retrace all its stages and refer our reader to chapter VI of Le Hidec’s book.  Let us get down to the facts.  1. First of all, there is the original secret delivered to Pius IX written in 1851, and perfectly vouched for in every detail.  "That same day, 2 July, M. Dausse went to Corenc, to fulfil the same mission with Mélanie as he had with Maximin. He did not have the same success. Mélanie again refused and began to cry. The matter was postponed until the next day rather than upset her. The next day, in the presence of M. Gérente, the chaplain, and M. Dausse, she decided to write, which she did calmly and without hesitation. She signed her writing, put it in an envelope, sealed it and wrote: "*To His Holiness Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX in Rome.*" Monsieur Dausse and Monsieur Gérente certified that it was indeed Mélanie who wrote this text alone. Monsieur Dausse took the sealed envelope and brought it to the Bishop.  "Only, a few hours later, Mélanie had feelings of remorse. She felt sad and asked to see Monsieur Rousselot. She admitted to him that she had forgotten to write something. Monsieur Rousselot advised her to re-write her text. The second draft was written at Grenoble, at the school of the Sisters of Providence, rue des Beaux-Tailleurs, Sunday, 6 July between 14.30 and 16.30.  "Monsieur Gérente was prevented from acting as witness as he had done on the first occasion, and so his place was taken by Monsieur Auvergne. Mélanie asked for the meaning of the word "***infailliblement***" and the spelling of the words "ville ***souillée***" [sullied city] and "***antéchrist***". The two witnesses then accompanied the young girl to the Bishop, handing him the open envelope in which she had placed her writing and she proposed that he read it. This he did in his room and came back very moved and in tears. He returned the envelope to Mélanie; it was sealed and MM. Auvergne and Dausse witnessed the same thing as for Maximin’s writing.  "It might be thought – it is not certain –that the first draft remained in the hands of Mgr de Bruillard. It is also possible that Mélanie kept it with her." (Le Hidec, p. 60).  Likewise, the Pope’s reaction is well known (cf. *supra*, p. 8). So far, Mélanie has behaved very sensibly. In this form, the Secret proved to be very useful for the Pope, as he later testified: "It is fortunate that we were warned; otherwise we would have found ourselves in an impasse, from which we could not have escaped." (cf. Le Hidec, p. 196).  With that done, she had only to enter a monastery and be forgotten, which is what she began by doing.   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteC.jpg | | The towers of the Basilica   (and bottom left, buried beneath the snow, the Way of the Cross of the Apparition). |   2. But her stay at Corenc threw her into story-telling. In England, then on her return to France, she began to divulge snatches of the Secret, written surreptitiously to Father Calage between 1862 and 1863, in disobedience to orders from the Bishop of Marseilles (cf. Guilhot, p. 274), to Mgr Zola in 1869, to the Abbé Bliard in 1870. The tragic events in France (the Prussian invasion) kept her from publishing it in its entirety, she said. But finally from 1870 to 1875, various versions, each time a little more explicit, were in circulation until the 15th November 1879 when there appeared the "*Total Account of the apparition of the Most Blessed Virgin on the mountainside of La Salette*", with the imprimatur of Mgr Zola, Bishop of Lecce. Leo XIII’s favourable welcome guaranteed it a good send off, and the generosity of a French benefactress saw to its financing. It was a bomb, twenty years after Lourdes. In competition with Lourdes.  It is possible to discover the point at which Mélanie goes astray from her explanation to Father Bliard in 1870 where she says that in addition to Our Lady’s words there were visions; for the great Secret as well as for the Rule:  "The Blessed Virgin pronounced all the words, for the secrets and for the rules; only I could have guessed or penetrated the rest of what she said in words: a great veil was lifted, events were uncovered before my eyes and my imagination (*sic!*) as she pronounced all the words, and a great space was unfolded before me; I saw events and the world’s changing works; and God, changeless in His glory, looked at the Blessed Virgin who stooped down to speak to two points [her and Maximin]… There are people who would prefer that the Blessed Virgin had not spoken so much. Every word is developed, and future action takes place in the moment, and thousands upon thousands more things are seen than heard by the ear." (Le Hidec, p. 142)  It is mad… For the cinema grows from year to year until the sensational publication of 1879, when this Secret will be manipulated by all sorts of people, who will find in it an opportunity to make a case against Rome, to doom the cardinals and bishops to hell, often in order to settle personal scores. Following the example of Mélanie, moreover.  In fact, Mélanie yields to prophetic delirium, taken from the Old Testament then from Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. She furiously spits out her personal hatreds, which she nurtures; she is fierce against those many priests and bishops who rebuffed her –the bad priests because they were bad, the good ones because they found the Secret revolting! Whence "the priests are a cesspool of iniquity".  Likewise, her political ideas are dictated by her passions: Mgr Ginoulhiac was favourable to Napoleon III, he chased her out of Corenc, therefore she is opposed to Napoleon III! who was "a two-faced being!" But she did not reveal that *before* Napoleon III was known! Had she been very intelligent, or very inspired, she could have said that from 2 December 1851!  She lies and pre-dates the oracles with which she fills out her Secret. Beware! All her dates are thought to be prophetic, but they are *post eventum* prophecies, for the phrase which authorises publication "in 1858" is added after the event! in 1870 or 1878, *after Lourdes,*in order to draw attention to herself. There is no doubt that such *post eventum* prophecies were customary among the Jewish prophets: for example, Daniel begins by recounting a past history, in a prophetic mode, in order to capture his reader’s attention, but when he comes to the actual event, he continues his prophecies by announcing the future.  She too continues, but by announcing and piling up catastrophes, one lot more disastrous than the next. It is neither Catholic nor worthy of the Blessed Virgin, as all good souls have understood: the saints, Saint Pius X, Cardinal de Cabrières who remained absolutely calm throughout this brawl and practised the discernment of spirits. Here are the last pages of the masterly letter by this cardinal whose testimony in favour of the Apparition of La Salette we have already quoted (cf. *supra*, p. 6) dated 1 July 1915:   |  | | --- | | **THE COUNTERFEIT VERSION OF OUR LADY’S SECRET**  "It is this secret, already several times printed, distributed, commented on and recommended by various authors, both ecclesiastical and lay, that M. Mariavé has thought fit to give to the public, presenting it as 'The Gospel of the Virgin Mary', to accompany and complement the Gospel of Jesus Christ!  "In order to answer your question Monseigneur, I have just read the two pamphlets concerning which you desire to know my opinion. It is absolutely unfavourable. The authors of previous publications, to do with this secret, were condemned, *if not because of the secret itself, at least because of the scope and the consequences they gave it. A similar fate awaits this present publication.*  " I. – It seems, in fact, that we do not have here the secret handed by the Bishop of Grenoble’s envoys to HH Pope Pius IX in 1851. In its present form, it was written by Mélanie Calvat, but on various occasions and in successive fragments, and seems *rather to be the result of a personal composition than an exact repetition of the original text given to Pius IX, and which is said to be no longer in the Vatican.*  " II. – As it stands, this secret has no value other than as Mélanie Calvat’s personal statement, supported by the signature of two bishops from around Naples. Mélanie seems to have been sincerely pious, but she may have been deluded, and it seems that her 'mission', instead of extending to our period, ended with the Church’s recognition of the reality of the Apparition.  " III. – What is certain, according to a well informed author, is that the first versions of the secret were less developed than the last; it is probable, therefore, that under the influence of the setting in which her life ended, *Mélanie amplified the first form of the writing she had had sent to the Pope*; for certain, we do not have here an official copy of the secret handed to Pius IX. *Only the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office could, with the Pope’s consent, seek out the original and so determine, against the original contents, its true authority.*  " IV. –The nature of this secret, as we read it today, is so strange, arranged in such a confused manner, containing particular allusions to politics, it seems to favour, in such a very precise way, the errors of the ancient millenarists – in that it announces a renovation to be accomplished in time and on earth, unlike the teaching of the true religion about the general resurrection at the end of the world, and about the eternal happiness of the elect – that one necessarily hesitates to ascribe it a heavenly origin. Finally, and more especially, the commentator has taken such liberty in evaluating and judging the Catholic hierarchy, in all its degrees, that one wonders what basis there is for the severity of his words, which would not be out of place in the pages of a newspaper most hostile to the Christian faith. One also wonders how he allies the true piety he professes with the harshness he displays towards persons worthy of every respect.  "What aggravates the rashness of these judgements is that they are, on several occasions, given in a form that is both mocking and insulting, which is belied by the character and dignity of the persons the author sees fit to denounce.  "The holy pope Pius IX, venerable cardinals such as Mgr Perraud, Mgr Luçon and Mgr Sevin, bishops like Mgr Maurin of Grenoble, and all his predecessors down to Mgr Ginoulhiac, of such learned memory: all are included in the hurtful reproaches, which the commentator dares to attribute in the first place to the Most Blessed Virgin Herself!  "And all this is written and published, offered and distributed for those who would like to find in these pages food for their curiosity. Would they learn charity and love by learning to despise the legitimate authority of the priesthood? For, the remarkable thing is that this Christian, this Catholic, seems to savour a sort of enjoyment in scourging the leaders of holy Church, those whom he mocks in calling them "our princes" […].  "… You will not, therefore be surprised, Monseigneur, if I condemn these two pamphlets by Dr Mariavé, if I rebuke their spirit and their character, and if I advise the faithful not to read them.  "With my affectionate respect,  A., cardinal de Cabrières     Bishop of Montpellier.  (Le Hidec, *Les secrets de La Salette*, p. 164-167) |   This definitive judgement was corroborated a few months later by Rome through the publication of a decree which forbade Catholics to deal with the question.  What remained of the great Secret? Only what Pius IX had read of it, which was not revealed, the contents of which can only be guessed from what the Pope let escape and from the three words Mélanie quoted from it: grave crises and grave chastisements for States as well as for the Church. But there is nothing that would yield to the morbid curiosity nurtured by integrist and anticlerical circles alike, curiously associated here! That is why Rome wisely put a Secret published in disobedience on the Index, for it was but a distortion of the authentic one. At the same time, Rome did not wish to effect a separation between the true and the false secret. Why?  We add this, which throws open the debate again:  Just as the Jewish people remain with the Scriptures, awaiting the Messiah, testifying to their veracity, even in impiety, so Mélanie had to remain, until her death in 1904, to give witness from the outside, in infidelity, to the Old and New Testament… and to the Secret still unveiled. But it will have to be unveiled one day, perhaps in the fairly near future, for we now have the wherewithal to enter a new era, namely the newness of the Immaculate Conception which must regenerate all things. In fact, She who showed Herself at La Salette as Handmaid is the same who is now to reveal Herself as Universal Mother, Mediatrix and Queen, obliging the men of the Church to recognise the all-powerfulness of Her Immaculate Heart.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | ***MÉLANIE’S WRITINGS***  **I. THE CHILDHOOD GOSPEL**   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteA.jpg *Mélanie,*the shepherdess of La Salette, in 1846 |   Her time at Corenc, where she was adulated, marks an obvious turning point in her life. Constantly being asked to *tell the story* of the apparition and of her early life, deep into all sorts of mystical writing and already refined through four years of education at Corps, she began*to tell the story of herself*. With time and imagination, she will produce her *Autobiography* in 1900, which resumes an original manuscript dating from 1852. The drift can be dated perfectly. Whilst Mélanie remained under the direction of Sister Thècle, the superior at Corps, she struggled successfully against the temptation of vanity, as her notes testify. But at Corenc, as M. Gérente, the convent chaplain, relates to Father Bossan, "I saw priests there (in the parlour) writing down everything Mélanie said as though they were oracles. I once said to a priest from the South, who had already written three pages of conversation with Melanie: "*But, my good Father, what are you doing there? – I am writing down everything she says because it is very edifying, On Sunday, I shall read out to my parishioners, in the pulpit, everything I have just written.*" He said this while Mélanie was present.  "I saw priests, ladies, generals, officers, highly placed men all standing before Melanie as though she were some very important person, speaking to her with humility, asking her to sign prints or anything simply to have her autograph. All sorts of follies were committed with regard to her.  "In the meantime, Mélanie was ardently throwing herself into the lives of the saints, their mystical writings and revelations, of varying authenticity. "*She read a lot*, M. Gérente declared to the same interviewer. *Everything she wrote after the apparition, she could have taken from her reading*." (…).  "There is, therefore, a turning point in Mélanie’s life; it has a perceptible starting point from which a curve could be traced. History guarantees that the inclination to story-telling was alien to the adolescent who, with her little companion on the mountainside, gave a message which she understood no more than he did." (Jaouen, *La grâce de La Salette*, p. 257-259)  All the introductions to the *Autobiography* admit or accuse – depending on their final judgement – the exceptional strangeness, be it human or supernatural, of the account. Among the "*Mélanistes*", emotion and unconditional admiration are carried to the limit through the number and harshness of the trials endured by Mélanie, through the lofty sentiments she expresses and the heroic nature of the virtues she implicitly admits to having practised.  Every objection is brushed aside by these two arguments, which are reckoned to be irrefutable:   1. Almighty God can do what He wants: our human reason has only to bow. 2. The Blessed Virgin Mary could not have chosen a seer, knowing that she would begin to ramble.   Everything written by Melanie, therefore, is literally true. Which is what we contest, with proofs to hand.  **AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF PERSECUTION**  It is rare to find a child so unhappy and so ill treated by her mother from the age of five, to six months: she was beaten, thrown to the ground, expelled from the home at the age of two or three years, found wandering in the forest, inexplicably re-integrated into the home, rebuffed for her displays of affection, cruelly separated from her sympathetic father, placed with various ill-tempered, perverse masters, one after the other, where she endured endless vexations, went hungry, fell sick, was neglected. In short, she was one of those child martyrs whose parents would face loss of parental rights and imprisonment today.  And all the more a martyr, in that this poor child opposed her persecutors with nothing other than resignation, meekness, patience, forgetfulness and pardon of injuries, dedication and courage in work which drew cries of admiration for this "holy and spotless victim".    But it is all too much! Although very enlightening, the exact study of this "display" of totally unjust situations, to highlight the victim’s exemplary reaction, would take us too far. We shall simply oppose this flow of writing with two outside testimonies.  The first knocks down the statue of the saint; it is the testimony of her last employer, Jean-Baptiste Pra, certified by his parish priest as being "a trustworthy man and a good Catholic": he relates that before the apparition in 1846, Melanie was "*sulky, lazy and disobedient*", often insolent, "*to the point of sometimes refusing to answer those who spoke to her*", thoughtless and often locked in her reveries (Bassette, p. 101).  The second testimony comes from the Mélanistes themselves, who are astonished, as we are too, that for fourteen years nobody protested against these butchers of parents. They made their enquiries and we find their testimony precious, since they reveal that "*the parents were poor but believed to be honourable*[!].*Nobody in the little village of Corps would have imagined that Madame Calvat (ten children) was capable of inflicting on her two to three year old daughter ill-treatment unworthy of a mother simply on the pretext that Mélanie’s tastes did not agree with hers.*  "*We would not have known of these unedifying facts if Melanie had not yielded to the entreaties of her confessors by giving an account of them. And perhaps there would remain a few doubts in our minds*[ah, even so!] *about the authenticity of this account, if the parents had not, according to the nuns of Corenc*[!], *recognised the truth of their daughter’s account.*" (Hyacinthe Guilhot, *La vraie Mélanie de La Salette*, p. 347)  But Bassette points out that the nuns of Corenc are not reliable! There is no doubt about it: Melanie Calvat, of a poor family of ten children, was not a child martyr edifying those around her with her holiness. She invented that afterwards.  First point established.  **A SUPER-PREDESTINED CHILDHOOD**  The concentration of mystical graces, with which she is said to have been favoured, is quite extraordinary. The first of these graces is startling. It is surprising when one learns that she received it at the age of two or three, after her mother had chased her into the woods: an encounter with him whom she will refer to, until the age of twenty, as her Brother. This story inevitably reminds one of Anne de Saint-Barthélemy, the Spanish Carmelite (1548-1626), whose childhood was favoured with very real and extraordinary mystical graces.  We find almost similar situations in the autobiographies of both Mélanie and Anne: Anne is an orphan, consoled by the Child Jesus:  "It happened to me when I was about ten years old, at the death of my parents which caused me great distress. I still had brothers and sisters, who acted as parents and who were very good. But having reached the age of ten, I was sent to look after the sheep in the fields. Although not far from the village, I suffered greatly to begin with; but soon Our Lord consoled me: the fields were my delight and the birds welcomed me with their song. If they began to sing, I would remain recollected for hours. And often, the Child Jesus would come; He would sit on my lap, and I would find Him there when I came to.  Mélanie is endowed with parents, travestied as butchers, consoled by… a little Brother.  "… There were three or four days when I was in the woods without seeing or hearing anyone… Suddenly, I saw coming towards me a small child of great beauty, clothed in shining white with a pretty crown on his head. When this little child was near the recluse, he said to her:  "*Good day, sister, why are you crying? I have come to console you.*  – *Ah!*said the recluse; *my poor little child, speak very softly, for I do not like noise. I am crying because I would like to know all that my Jesus did to save the world, so that I can do as he did without failing in anything; then I would like to know what the world did to cause the death of my Jesus; then I would like to have a mummy; I have no one. I used to be in a house with a woman and children; this woman does not want me any more. Ah! if only I had a mummy!*  – *My sister,*the little child then said, *call me brother; I am your good brother, I watch over you; we have a mummy...*" (p. 38)  Anne feels an attraction for solitude, but Jesus wisely corrects her of this:  "What I then felt in my spirit I cannot say; how gloriously I felt myself to be in a glorious heaven. I desired to live there forever, to see no one, and I wished to go far away. Once I said to the Child Jesus: ‘Lord, since you keep me company, let us not go where there are other people, but let us go alone towards the mountains, for with your company I shall want for nothing.’ But he laughed, and without words he showed me that that was not what he wanted of me." (p. 40)  Mélanie’s "little Brother", on the contrary, urges her to seek solitude, at the age of two or three years!  "Then my loving brother said to me: '*My sister, flee from the world, love retirement and recollection; have your heart on the cross and the cross in your heart; let Jesus Christ be your sole concern. Love silence and you will hear the voice of God from Heaven who will speak in your heart; form no relationship with anyone and God will be all for you.'*  "My little brother came to see me almost every day; sometimes he stayed without seeing me, but often he would come several times in the same day. We would always talk about the passion or the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ…" (p. 38)  Jesus leaves a mystery hanging over his encounters with Anne:  "Sometimes, he would take me away at night, without my noticing, half a league away from the village. In alarm, my brothers would go out looking for me and would scold me. But I was not surprised, for not knowing whom I was with – and I did not tell them –they could never have thought otherwise." (p. 40)  Mélanie is often expelled from the house at night, and nobody asks how, at her age, she could have survived.  Thus Mélanie plagiarises Anne, always going one better and becoming increasingly more unrealistic – the marks of plagiarism. The habitual presence of Jesus with Mélanie is but the prelude to raptures, ecstasies, conversations with the divine Persons, theophanies, meetings with the Blessed Virgin, journeys to Paradise and the stigmata, between the ages of one and six, if you please! followed by visits to Purgatory, charisms with animals (the forest is her favourite place), miracles repeated on herself and others, with spiritual marriage at the age of thirteen!  It is all too much! Especially when one unfailingly recognises in all this a pastiche of the Bible: the crossing of the Red Sea (here a torrent), the prophet Elijah miraculously fed (1 Kings 19.1-8), the divine raven messenger *(ibid.* 17.2-6), the Song of Songs, Francis of Assisi for the animals, Saint John Bosco for the protective dog, Saint Margaret-Mary for the burning in the chest, Saint Mechtilde and Anne of Saint-Barthélemy for the visits to Purgatory!  But the fervour, or the deliberate blindness, of the Mélanistes are such that Melanie’s going one better, which reaches the farcical, ceases to affect them. It makes one despair of human common sense! Listen to this catechism lesson to the animals, reproduced by Hyacinthe Guilhot, without raising an eyebrow, p. 130-131:  "I told these animals the story of their creation by the all powerful word of our eternal God, as my good Brother had taught it to me, and I encouraged them to seek food everywhere, without harming men, their masters and their kings, for they are created in the image of God through the powers of their souls, and again, through their bodies, they are images of Jesus … To begin with, a wolf would come every day, and I taught him what I could; however, I did not like that very much because, unlike a man, he could not love me with a conscious and disinterested love (*sic!*)…  "Before long, the number of wolves increased; there were foxes, hares, three little fawns and a cloud of birds that came every day. And then, for lack of men to speak to about the good God, the She-wolf (*she is speaking of herself*) preached to them and then sang the canticle: Taste, fervent souls. All the animals showed signs of great attention and bowed their heads at the holy names of Jesus and Mary.  "The wolves normally came together at a fixed hour; the foxes came together as well as the hares, the fawns and the birds (a snake came too, but was sent away). Once they had all arrived, each animal took the place assigned to him and listened. Then, when they heard the end which went something like this: *Sit nomen Domini benedictum!* they all went wild, especially the foxes who played tricks on their brother wolves: they bit their ears and their tails; they slapped the hares with their paws and made them roll over; they pulled the fawns from behind by their little tails… as soon as I told them to retire, they all left. Oh! how ungrateful I was towards my loving Jesus! I amused myself with the animals, and wearied conversing with my all." (Guilhot, p. 130-131)  It is grotesque, and perfectly ridiculous. The imitation of the Poverello of Assisi is obvious, at least in Mélanie’s mind. There is no doubt in our mind: she is inventing by plagiarising. Second point established.  **IN BREACH WITH THE APPARITION OF 1846**  More seriously, we would like the Mélanistes to explain one single point: how does this child who has reached the peaks of the mystical life, constantly immersed in prayer and in intimate conversation with all the beings of Heaven even from the age of fourteen or fifteen, this lyrical, delicate, tender-hearted, exquisite young girl, of such refined expression, – how do these attributes agree with the Mélanie of 1846, who was boorish, not very likeable, ignorant, practically without any knowledge of religion, as her parish priest testified, and whose stubborn memory could not retain two lines of the catechism? How does the super mystical Mélanie agree with the Mélanie of 1846 who failed to recognise this Lady who was weeping: "We told each other that she was very pretty. As for me, I said it could be some Saint who had disappeared." (Bassette, p. 45)  And how does the Mélanie of the *Autobiography* agree with the Mélanie of 1846, who is not all alone as in all her other "apparitions", but with a naughty fellow, Maximin, even more boorish and bad-tempered than herself, and whom, to cap it all, the beautiful Lady – who has clearly not read the *Autobiography*! – associates with her, to the extent of speaking to the two of them in a strangely prosaic language – about potatoes and butcher’s meat and spoilt wheat! – to the extent of asking them a question that is very strange for those of us who have read the *Autobiography*:  "*Do you say your prayers properly, my children? – Not very much, Madame*(!)*. – You must say your prayers, my children, morning and evening; when you can do no more, say a Pater and an Ave Maria, and when you have the time, say more."*  The Mélanie of 1846, oblivious of the Mélanie of the *Autobiography* who refers to herself as "the dumb She-wolf", keeps her secrets hidden, and that same evening she relates the Apparition as the event of her life! And the beautiful Lady of 1846 also forgets herself and speaks in both French and patois. It is clearly the first time in fourteen years!  Is the Mélanie of 1900 aware of such obvious discordance? It would seem so if we compare the 1846 version, recorded in 1847, with that of 1879: poor Maximin, so unflattered, is practically painted out; Mélanie has made great strides in style, and in… autism: it is a dialogue of her "little heart" with the beautiful Lady. A few more years, and she will possess this unctuous style, bewitching for some, cringe-making for others; and always enveloping and suffocating one with what is essentially charismatic mythomania. Judge for yourself:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1847 VERSION:** | **1879 VERSION:** | | *It is prosaic and rough, but true; they are the facts.* | *It is embellished;*it *draws attention to herself.* | | We then saw a Lady in the light. We were afraid. I dropped my stick. Then Maximin said to me: "Keep hold of your stick! If it does anything to us, I’ll hit it with the stick!" | (…) Suddenly, *I* saw a beautiful light, more brilliant than the sun and I could scarcely say these words: "Maximin, do you see what is over there? Oh! my God!" At the same time, I dropped the stick I was holding.  *I* do not know what happened in that moment, but *I* felt myself being drawn, *I* felt a great respect, full of love, and *my heart* seemed to run faster than me.  *I* kept my eyes firmly fixed on this light, which was static and as though it had opened up. *I*noticed another, much more brilliant light which was in movement, and in this light a most beautiful Lady sitting on top of our Paradise, with her head in her hands. | | Then this Lady stood up straight and said to us: | The beautiful Lady stood up; she coolly crossed her arms while watching us, and said to us: | | "Come my children, do not be afraid. I am here to tell you great news." | "Come, my children, I am here to proclaim great news to you!" | | Then we crossed over the stream and she came to the place where we had been sleeping. Then she said to us, crying all the time that she spoke (I really saw her tears flow) (…) | These soft and sweet words made *me* fly to her, and *my heart* desired to attach itself to her forever. When I was close to the beautiful Lady, in front of her to her right, she began to speak and from her beautiful eyes tears also started to flow (…) | | And then I did not understand what was meant by ‘pommes de terre’ [potatoes]. I was about to ask Maximin: "What does ‘pommes de terre’ mean?" | At this point, I tried to interpret the word: ‘pommes de terre’. I thought it meant ‘apples’. | | And the Lady said: "You do not understand, my children; I will tell it to you differently." | The good and beautiful Lady, reading *my thoughts*, thus repeated: "You do not understand, my children? I will tell it to you differently." | | "If the potatoes go bad", the Lady continued in patois… | "If the harvest is spoiled…" |   **EVE’S TEMPTATION**  What are we to make of this *Childhood Gospel*, and of these reveries? That, in our interpretation, they represent the ***temptation of Eve***. It begins at Corenc, where she confides in the ecstatic nuns that she is missing her forest, with its snakes, wolves and foxes… A diabolical temptation is slipping in here, making her paint a dream Paradise: as a child, from the age of two to three, she was with her Adam. They were both very nice; he would work miracles for her, and she would tell him everything, more and more mystical.  We have seen that Maximin emerged victorious from this temptation, because he was able to resist it and keep himself from all illusion. Mélanie, who was strongly assailed by the devil at Corenc, – the devil who got her into a thousand eccentricities – gave in, rather like the people of God on the plain whilst Moses was receiving the Tables of the Law on Mount Sinaï.  Yielding to mythomania, Mélanie looks down on Maximin. Surrounded, flattered and listened to, *she knows* the secrets of God and will pass from the illusion of Paradise in the forest with her "little brother" Adam to the illusion of the highest mystical graces. Again, at Darlington she experiences the assaults of the devil, from which she will escape through the illusion of the stigmata. It is a constant fact in her life: she inflates her mystical illusions in step with the contradictions she meets.  Thus, Maximin’s path, like Saint Peter’s after his denial, seems to be a path of fidelity, whereas Mélanie’s is the path of infidelity and of schism.  Another point of reflection: the pilgrimage of La Salette develops and the Church continues to walk straight. But Mélanie is not concerned with that, no more than she is concerned with the declaration of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the apparition of Lourdes in 1858, much more brilliant and newer than that of La Salette!  In the Secret she attributes to the Blessed Virgin, in 1879, there is not a single allusion to these glories of the Blessed Virgin! Still worse, she attempts to overshadow Lourdes by inventing the story that her Secret, Mélanie’s, should have been published… in 1858! Later, she will confide to the Abbé Combe, that if he had not thwarted her mission, all the miracles of Lourdes would have been done at La Salette (Guilhot, p. 269).  The same thing is to be found in the life of Saint Catherine Labouré; it is probable that Mélanie, making her bitter confidences several years after the death of the seer of the rue du Bac (1876) knew of this… Saint Catherine said, in fact, of the miracles being worked at Lourdes: "*To think that these miracles could have taken place in our chapel!*" But just before 1858, she had scribbled on a piece of paper, discovered among her things: "*My good Mother, they will not do what you want here; manifest Yourself elsewhere!*" and on learning of the apparitions of Lourdes, she exclaimed: "*It’s the same!*"  Provided the Immaculate Virgin is better known, loved and invoked, the rest matters little to a true saint, to a true Catholic! For it is plain that Lourdes was not the contradiction of La Salette, but its fulfilment.  Mélanie did not understand that, *did not want to understand*, and isolated herself in her imaginings, awaiting the propitious hour for her revelation to the world…    **II. THE NEW LAW: THE ORDER OF THE LAST TIMES**  The event of 1846 should have made her pass, according to her later version of the facts, from her private, hidden life, to her public life. The pious Mélanistes sum up and quote as follows, without a hint of surprise or amusement:  "Until the apparition of 19 September 1846, Mélanie had remained small for her age, and the little Brother, who frequently came to see her, was always the same height as herself. After Mélanie had joined the nuns of Corenc (*them again! always them!*),it was no longer the same. Mélanie began to grow quite rapidly, whereas the little Brother’s height decreased (*No! I tell you, they won’t laugh!*). She noticed it (!) and remarked on it to him. – *‘****How funny! I am growing, and you are diminishing.****’ – ‘****It has to be like that***’, he answers." (Guilhot, p. 467) That Jesus should become smaller and that Mélanie should grow?!  In fact, the 1879 version of the Secret, at the cost of a further pastiche, bestowed on her a new and extraordinary mission: to promote the foundation of the Order of the Sons and Daughters of the Mother of God, also called the Apostles of the Last Times, according to the rule to have come straight from the mouth of the Blessed Virgin.  First of all, let us compare the two versions:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1847 VERSION:** | **1879 VERSION:** | | At this point, the Lady kept silence for a moment; she seemed to be speaking to Maximin, but I heard nothing.  Then, afterwards, she spoke to me in patois, whilst Maximin played with stones. | Then addressing me, the Most Blessed Virgin spoke and gave me a secret in French:  "*Mélanie, what I am about to tell you now will not always be a secret; you may publish it in 1858.*"  Then, the Blessed Virgin gave me, also in French, the rule of a new religious order. | | Then she said: | After giving me the rule of this new religious order, the Blessed Virgin thus continued her speech: | | "*If they convert…*" | "*If they convert…*" |   **FABRICATION**  Now, let us go back to our chronology. Following recognition of the events of La Salette in 1851, the Bishop of Grenoble announced to his diocese, on 1 May 1852, his plan to build, on the mountain of La Salette, a basilica "*worthy of the Queen of Heaven and of the grateful piety of the diocese*", together with the creation, at Grenoble, of a body of diocesan missionary priests who would reside on the mountain during the pilgrimage season and evangelize the different parishes of the diocese during the winter. On 25 May 1852, thousands of pilgrims and about a hundred priests were present when the Bishop of Grenoble laid the first stone of the basilica. It was the beginning of a great work of *the Church*.  But, at Corenc, Mélanie also began to speak of statutes to be given to the Missionaries of La Salette, proposing the adoption of a rule which, she guaranteed, had come straight from the Blessed Virgin; she even wrote a rough draft. Mgr Ginoulhiac, who was wary of her and had just postponed her vows, was angry, but she vaunted this rule which, "instead of causing those in force to lapse, would have reinvigorated them, bringing about a rebirth of the spirit of the Gospel".  We are in 1853.  Before continuing with this painful history, which will end only with the death of Mélanie in 1904, let us make one, nay two, reflections:  1). The Blessed Virgin Mary, had, in fact, given the children a mission, concerning the material chastisements that would befall men if they did not convert. "*And so, My children, She told them on two occasions, you will pass this on to all My people.*"  The children accomplished this mission, and the Church has taken it over. Until 1851, there was no question of anything else, other than the Secret, but when Pius IX learned of it, he revealed nothing concerning an Order and a supposedly inspired Rule, to be put into application after 1858!  2). More disturbing is the date supposedly fixed by the Blessed Virgin: 1858. But if she really made it clear to Mélanie (and not to Maximin) that the Secret, which included the Rule, could be revealed at this date, why did not Mélanie say so earlier? Would it not have been a good way of keeping the curious at arm’s length? Sister Lucy of Fatima succeeded in keeping silence over her Secret, without being troubled by it, clearly stating that from 1960 it would be timely to divulge it.  Installed at Castellammare, in Italy, under the protection of Mgr Petagna, she nevertheless continued to pursue her dream, charged with exhorting religious to fervour. She spoke, so her biographer, the Abbé Gouin, tells us, "with the effusion of the permanent memory of this rule she had received on the day of the Apparition, proposing it as the rule for all monastic life".  **FOUNDATION TRIALS**  At the same time, her chaplain, Father Fusco, together with two or three priests, were putting the rule into practice, for which Mélanie let them have the first floor of the Palazzo Ruffo. Other priests, passing through Castellammare, took this initiative into consideration, among whom was Canon de Brandt from the cathedral of Amiens. She saw in this "*tall and noble figure*", writes the Abbé Gouin, the ideal superior for the order of her dreams. Note that, at the same time, she was accepting sums of money sent to her by Father Giraud, superior of the Missionaries of La Salette, to complement the generosity of the Italian prelate protector!  In a letter to Canon de Brandt, dated 23 March 1877, therefore, Mélanie wrote to present her project and let it be known that a noviciate of the new order could be opened in France in a house which a priest had promised to give her!  The priest was the Abbé Jean Ronjon, of Chalon-surSaône. On 24 August 1878, he handed over to her, by a legal act, a chapel he had founded at Chalon, and opened for public worship, together with an adjacent dwelling house to house members of the order which was to come to birth through the will of the Mother of God, as Mélanie asserted (cf. Galli, p. 92-93).  We are at the height of anarchy! In 1876 she even wrote a book entitled: "*A view of the costume and of the works in which the Sons and Daughters of the Mother of God will be employed*".  *A view*? So the words of the Blessed Virgin are amplified by visions! It is now time to quote the second part of the Secret which she let out in snatches and in private, before releasing a public version in 1879:  *"1. It is indeed true that, in the apparition on the mountain of La Salette of 19 September 1846, the most Blessed Virgin showed me that She desired the creation of a new religious order designated by Herself under the title of the****Apostles of the Last Times****. The proof of this is either in the rule She then gave me by word of mouth following the secret. which you have long possessed, or in the sight of this work.*  "*This order will comprise: 1. priests who will be the missionaries of the Blessed Virgin and the apostles of the last times; 2. nuns, who will be dependent on the missionaries; 3. members of the faithful working in the world and who would like to be united and attached to the work.*  *"2. The aim of this new religious order is to work for the sanctification of the clergy, for the conversion of sinners and for the extension of God’s Kingdom throughout the world* […].  *"I saw that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached throughout the whole earth and to all peoples in all its purity.*  *"I saw that God wanted this order to fight against all the abuses that have led to the decadence of the clergy, of the religious state and to the ruin of Christian society."* (Guilhot, ed. Téqui, p. 305-306)  As for the thirty three articles of the rule, they are so trivial and vague that any genuine superior would despair of true vocations being based on them. It is true that Mélanie herself was to be their superior… after having formally denied this to Mgr Ginouilhac in 1853.  But, in the mind of the seer become the foundress of an order, these "Apostles of the Last Times" were obviously meant to correspond to the image given of them by Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort in his ***Ardent Prayer***, composed for the missionary priests of his Company of Mary: "These missionary saints, children of Mary, your Spouse, whom you are to gather and separate from ordinary mortals, for the good of your Church, so enfeebled and sullied by the crimes of her children…" (*Golden Book*, p. 757) Thus, what the Mélanistes present as the fulfilment of the saint’s prophecy is nothing but a vulgar pastiche composed by an illuminist (cf. *Bibliographie*, p. 3).  **ROME’S HESITATIONS**  In this context, it is understandable that Mgr Fava, the new Bishop of Grenoble, should have caused an uproar when he came to Rome in November 1878 accompanied by a La Salette Father to request the crowning and title of basilica for the shrine, and at the same time approval for the Missionaries’ rule.   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteB.jpg Mélanie, clothed in the habit of her order, in 1887. |   Forewarned of his intentions, Mélanie had sent her work to Rome and knew that it had been well received. Summoned to Rome, she learned that she could count on three cardinals, but more importantly on the new Pope, Leo XIII. At least that is what she claims, and we are reduced to admitting her version of the papal audience. Here it is, as devoutly reproduced by the Mélanistes.  " – You must go up there and make known the Rule dictated by the Most Blessed Virgin. If there are those who would not want to observe it, you should warn the bishop to transfer them elsewhere.  – Very good, Most Holy Father, she exclaimed, bowing her head as a mark of obedience.  – You will leave immediately, said the Pontiff, who added with a fatherly voice: when the Lord deigns to communicate a monastic rule of life, He can also transmit the spirit and the ability to observe this same rule. That is why it is necessary that you write it down when you are in Grenoble, and before going up to the Holy Mountain you will send it to me.  Mélanie gave a start when she heard that:  – Oh! no, Most Holy Father, she pleaded, do not send me to Grenoble. I shall have no freedom of action with Mgr Fava.  – What, how is that? asked an incredulous Leo XIII.  – Mgr Fava, explained the seer, would order me to write what he desires and not what has been dictated to me by the Holy Spirit.  – No, no! replied the Pope with a trembling voice." (Mgr Galli, p. 102)  Whatever credit is to be given to Mélanie’s account, Mgr Fava’s position, based on his conviction of Mélanie’s mental instability, was a fact, and his reaction expresses his deepest thoughts on the subject:  "*I shall accept Mélanie’s rule only when the Church has proved to me that it really comes from the Blessed Virgin.*"  And there is the reaction of Mgr Bianchi, Cardinal Ferrieri’s secretary:  "*Eminence, is it a good thing to set up counter-altars? The counter-altar is Mélanie’s creation, in founding, without the Church’s authorisation, the Sons of the Mother of God in her residence at Castellammare, whilst the missionaries of La Salette are already working on the Holy Mountain. That does harm, a great deal of harm. It should not be allowed.*"  Faced with an opposition so much in line with the law, with common sense and the Church’s discipline, Leo XIII gave way, but without blaming Mélanie, at least so she claims, leaving her morally victorious and persuaded, yet again, that she is the victim of persecution. Infinitely more prudent and respectful of the laws, Pius IX had upheld the competent authority, leaving the ordinary of the place to act, in this case the Bishop of Grenoble.  Fortified by the new Pope’s support, Mélanie continued with her intrigues all the more ardently, always finding, it has to be said, simpletons or strange beings around her to encourage her, flatter her and supply her with the necessary money for her many journeys. She wrote, she directed priests, with no scruple about lying. To one of them, she wrote advising that no mention of the new order should be made to his bishop, for "*in this business, one has to be more cunning than the devil, and all means possible have to be used*". She tirelessly badgered her correspondents: "*We must not sleep, most reverend Father, we have to act energetically. It is for the good cause that we are fighting. Let us not back down before the enemy*."  All her endeavours failed.  **TRUE OR FALSE LAW?**  What are we to conclude from these developments whereby *habit, order and rule* became with time and Mélanie’s imagination the work of the Blessed Virgin? Opposed to the hierarchy? Might such a woman be Our Lady’s legislator? She showed herself to be more the figure of Eve pursuing her original revolt; of the Jewish people, constantly rebellious towards Yahweh and Moses, and finally rejecting their Messiah, Jesus Christ; of nineteenth century France, orphaned of its King, pulled in all directions, ending in rebellion against the warnings of Our Lady of La Salette and of Our Lady of Lourdes; finally, a figure of the apostate twentieth century in its conciliar Church, turning its back on the religion of Jesus Christ to found another according to its own taste, "with its eye fixed on a chimera" (Saint Pius X).  Catastrophes have come, and they are still coming.  It is the story of the life of Mélanie, who always believed in the possible fulfilment of her dream, from one house to another, with one priest and then another. But her projects all went up in smoke and all ended scandalously in one way or another. And one morning she was found dead, stretched out on her bedroom floor, alone and clothed in her black habit. Dreadful!  Was that the end of her Apocalypse?    **III. MÉLANIE’S APOCALYPSE**  It is the last form of the revelations that released storms of contradiction and floods of enthusiasm. The important event that facilitates the passing from one stage to the other is the death of Pius IX (1878) and the accession of Leo XIII: after the Pope of fidelity, the Pope of infidelity.  It is Mélanie’s oracle: she had to appropriate the whole of the New Testament, and thus represent the Church inventing a new spirituality, a new religious rule and a new Apocalypse.  The great Secret stigmatises a clergy unfaithful to their religious duties and possessed by love of money and a taste for honours and pleasure. It is pronounced with the tone of an Old Testament prophet, commissioned to express the violent wrath of Yahweh.  Here are the key phrases of this white hot lava which must cover a rebellious humanity:  **1. Against the priests**. "The priests have become cesspools of impurity. Woe to priests and to those dedicated to God… [their] sins call for vengeance… there are no more generous souls, there is no one left worthy of offering a stainless sacrifice to the Eternal for the sake of the world. God will strike in an unprecedented manner… for more than twenty five years."  **2. Against the kings**. "Expect to be ruled with a rod of iron and to drink the chalice of God’s wrath."  **3. Advice for the Pope**. "May Pius IX not leave Rome again after 1859. May he be on his guard against Napoleon; he is of a double heart."  **4. Oracle concerning Italy.** "Italy will be punished for her ambition… a great number of priests and members of religious orders will break away from the true religion; among these people there will even be bishops."  **5. A date**. "In the year 1864, Lucifer together with a large number of demons will be unloosed from hell; they will put an end to faith little by little, even in persons dedicated to God. Woe to the princes of the Church! The Vicar of my Son will have much to suffer, because for a time the Church will be given over to great persecution. It will be a time of darkness. The Church will go through an appalling crisis. All civil and ecclesiastical order will be abolished."  **6. A new date**. "In the year 1865, the abomination in holy places will be seen. France, Italy, Spain and England will be at war. For a time, God will cease to remember France and Italy because the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been forgotten. Paris will burn and Marseilles will be engulfed."  **7. The false peace**. "(But) the people of God will ask for my help (says the Blessed Virgin) and for my intercession. Then the peace of God will be made among men. This peace will not last long: twenty five years. A forerunner of the Antichrist will fight against the true Christ: He will shed much blood and will want to annihilate the worship of God to make himself be looked upon as God. The earth will be struck by all sorts of plagues. Before this happens, there will be a false peace in the world."  **8. The Antichrist**. "It will be during this time that the antichrist will be born of a Hebrew nun, a false virgin, who will communicate with the old serpent, the master of impurity; his father will be a bishop. He will be the devil incarnate, he will work wonders, he will feed on nothing but impurity."  "**ROME WILL LOSE THE FAITH AND BECOME THE SEAT OF THE ANTICHRIST"**  **9. Appeal to the Apostles of the last times**. "I address an urgent appeal to the earth. I call on the true disciples of the living God who reigns in Heaven… I call on the Apostles of the last times. For now is the time of all times, the end of all ends.  "But now Enoch and Elijah will come, filled with the Spirit of God. They will condemn the diabolical errors of the Antichrist. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth! Who will be able to withstand them? God will allow Himself to bend through the blood, tears and prayers of the just: Enoch and Elijah will be put to death.  "It is time; the sun will be darkened; faith alone will live. Behold the Beast with his subjects, calling himself the saviour of the world."  **10. The victory**. "He will be stifled by the breath of Saint Michael the Archangel. And then water and fire will purify the earth and consume all the works of men’s pride, and all will be renewed: God will be served and glorified." (Guilhot, p. 285-292)  **TRUE OR FALSE PROPHECY?**  Let us try to see clearly into this Secret, which sparked off an ignominious rumpus in the Church when it was published: twisted blows on one side, fanaticism and curses on the other, and everybody, including Léon Bloy, offering interpretations, to such an extent that a Jesuit, Father Poulard, affirmed that this secret was "a suggestion from the devil". We cannot retrace all its stages and refer our reader to chapter VI of Le Hidec’s book.  Let us get down to the facts.  1. First of all, there is the original secret delivered to Pius IX written in 1851, and perfectly vouched for in every detail.  "That same day, 2 July, M. Dausse went to Corenc, to fulfil the same mission with Mélanie as he had with Maximin. He did not have the same success. Mélanie again refused and began to cry. The matter was postponed until the next day rather than upset her. The next day, in the presence of M. Gérente, the chaplain, and M. Dausse, she decided to write, which she did calmly and without hesitation. She signed her writing, put it in an envelope, sealed it and wrote: "*To His Holiness Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX in Rome.*" Monsieur Dausse and Monsieur Gérente certified that it was indeed Mélanie who wrote this text alone. Monsieur Dausse took the sealed envelope and brought it to the Bishop.  "Only, a few hours later, Mélanie had feelings of remorse. She felt sad and asked to see Monsieur Rousselot. She admitted to him that she had forgotten to write something. Monsieur Rousselot advised her to re-write her text. The second draft was written at Grenoble, at the school of the Sisters of Providence, rue des Beaux-Tailleurs, Sunday, 6 July between 14.30 and 16.30.  "Monsieur Gérente was prevented from acting as witness as he had done on the first occasion, and so his place was taken by Monsieur Auvergne. Mélanie asked for the meaning of the word "***infailliblement***" and the spelling of the words "ville ***souillée***" [sullied city] and "***antéchrist***". The two witnesses then accompanied the young girl to the Bishop, handing him the open envelope in which she had placed her writing and she proposed that he read it. This he did in his room and came back very moved and in tears. He returned the envelope to Mélanie; it was sealed and MM. Auvergne and Dausse witnessed the same thing as for Maximin’s writing.  "It might be thought – it is not certain –that the first draft remained in the hands of Mgr de Bruillard. It is also possible that Mélanie kept it with her." (Le Hidec, p. 60).  Likewise, the Pope’s reaction is well known (cf. *supra*, p. 8). So far, Mélanie has behaved very sensibly. In this form, the Secret proved to be very useful for the Pope, as he later testified: "It is fortunate that we were warned; otherwise we would have found ourselves in an impasse, from which we could not have escaped." (cf. Le Hidec, p. 196).  With that done, she had only to enter a monastery and be forgotten, which is what she began by doing.   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteC.jpg | | The towers of the Basilica   (and bottom left, buried beneath the snow, the Way of the Cross of the Apparition). |   2. But her stay at Corenc threw her into story-telling. In England, then on her return to France, she began to divulge snatches of the Secret, written surreptitiously to Father Calage between 1862 and 1863, in disobedience to orders from the Bishop of Marseilles (cf. Guilhot, p. 274), to Mgr Zola in 1869, to the Abbé Bliard in 1870. The tragic events in France (the Prussian invasion) kept her from publishing it in its entirety, she said. But finally from 1870 to 1875, various versions, each time a little more explicit, were in circulation until the 15th November 1879 when there appeared the "*Total Account of the apparition of the Most Blessed Virgin on the mountainside of La Salette*", with the imprimatur of Mgr Zola, Bishop of Lecce. Leo XIII’s favourable welcome guaranteed it a good send off, and the generosity of a French benefactress saw to its financing. It was a bomb, twenty years after Lourdes. In competition with Lourdes.  It is possible to discover the point at which Mélanie goes astray from her explanation to Father Bliard in 1870 where she says that in addition to Our Lady’s words there were visions; for the great Secret as well as for the Rule:  "The Blessed Virgin pronounced all the words, for the secrets and for the rules; only I could have guessed or penetrated the rest of what she said in words: a great veil was lifted, events were uncovered before my eyes and my imagination (*sic!*) as she pronounced all the words, and a great space was unfolded before me; I saw events and the world’s changing works; and God, changeless in His glory, looked at the Blessed Virgin who stooped down to speak to two points [her and Maximin]… There are people who would prefer that the Blessed Virgin had not spoken so much. Every word is developed, and future action takes place in the moment, and thousands upon thousands more things are seen than heard by the ear." (Le Hidec, p. 142)  It is mad… For the cinema grows from year to year until the sensational publication of 1879, when this Secret will be manipulated by all sorts of people, who will find in it an opportunity to make a case against Rome, to doom the cardinals and bishops to hell, often in order to settle personal scores. Following the example of Mélanie, moreover.  In fact, Mélanie yields to prophetic delirium, taken from the Old Testament then from Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. She furiously spits out her personal hatreds, which she nurtures; she is fierce against those many priests and bishops who rebuffed her –the bad priests because they were bad, the good ones because they found the Secret revolting! Whence "the priests are a cesspool of iniquity".  Likewise, her political ideas are dictated by her passions: Mgr Ginoulhiac was favourable to Napoleon III, he chased her out of Corenc, therefore she is opposed to Napoleon III! who was "a two-faced being!" But she did not reveal that *before* Napoleon III was known! Had she been very intelligent, or very inspired, she could have said that from 2 December 1851!  She lies and pre-dates the oracles with which she fills out her Secret. Beware! All her dates are thought to be prophetic, but they are *post eventum* prophecies, for the phrase which authorises publication "in 1858" is added after the event! in 1870 or 1878, *after Lourdes,*in order to draw attention to herself. There is no doubt that such *post eventum* prophecies were customary among the Jewish prophets: for example, Daniel begins by recounting a past history, in a prophetic mode, in order to capture his reader’s attention, but when he comes to the actual event, he continues his prophecies by announcing the future.  She too continues, but by announcing and piling up catastrophes, one lot more disastrous than the next. It is neither Catholic nor worthy of the Blessed Virgin, as all good souls have understood: the saints, Saint Pius X, Cardinal de Cabrières who remained absolutely calm throughout this brawl and practised the discernment of spirits. Here are the last pages of the masterly letter by this cardinal whose testimony in favour of the Apparition of La Salette we have already quoted (cf. *supra*, p. 6) dated 1 July 1915:   |  | | --- | | **THE COUNTERFEIT VERSION OF OUR LADY’S SECRET**  "It is this secret, already several times printed, distributed, commented on and recommended by various authors, both ecclesiastical and lay, that M. Mariavé has thought fit to give to the public, presenting it as 'The Gospel of the Virgin Mary', to accompany and complement the Gospel of Jesus Christ!  "In order to answer your question Monseigneur, I have just read the two pamphlets concerning which you desire to know my opinion. It is absolutely unfavourable. The authors of previous publications, to do with this secret, were condemned, *if not because of the secret itself, at least because of the scope and the consequences they gave it. A similar fate awaits this present publication.*  " I. – It seems, in fact, that we do not have here the secret handed by the Bishop of Grenoble’s envoys to HH Pope Pius IX in 1851. In its present form, it was written by Mélanie Calvat, but on various occasions and in successive fragments, and seems *rather to be the result of a personal composition than an exact repetition of the original text given to Pius IX, and which is said to be no longer in the Vatican.*  " II. – As it stands, this secret has no value other than as Mélanie Calvat’s personal statement, supported by the signature of two bishops from around Naples. Mélanie seems to have been sincerely pious, but she may have been deluded, and it seems that her 'mission', instead of extending to our period, ended with the Church’s recognition of the reality of the Apparition.  " III. – What is certain, according to a well informed author, is that the first versions of the secret were less developed than the last; it is probable, therefore, that under the influence of the setting in which her life ended, *Mélanie amplified the first form of the writing she had had sent to the Pope*; for certain, we do not have here an official copy of the secret handed to Pius IX. *Only the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office could, with the Pope’s consent, seek out the original and so determine, against the original contents, its true authority.*  " IV. –The nature of this secret, as we read it today, is so strange, arranged in such a confused manner, containing particular allusions to politics, it seems to favour, in such a very precise way, the errors of the ancient millenarists – in that it announces a renovation to be accomplished in time and on earth, unlike the teaching of the true religion about the general resurrection at the end of the world, and about the eternal happiness of the elect – that one necessarily hesitates to ascribe it a heavenly origin. Finally, and more especially, the commentator has taken such liberty in evaluating and judging the Catholic hierarchy, in all its degrees, that one wonders what basis there is for the severity of his words, which would not be out of place in the pages of a newspaper most hostile to the Christian faith. One also wonders how he allies the true piety he professes with the harshness he displays towards persons worthy of every respect.  "What aggravates the rashness of these judgements is that they are, on several occasions, given in a form that is both mocking and insulting, which is belied by the character and dignity of the persons the author sees fit to denounce.  "The holy pope Pius IX, venerable cardinals such as Mgr Perraud, Mgr Luçon and Mgr Sevin, bishops like Mgr Maurin of Grenoble, and all his predecessors down to Mgr Ginoulhiac, of such learned memory: all are included in the hurtful reproaches, which the commentator dares to attribute in the first place to the Most Blessed Virgin Herself!  "And all this is written and published, offered and distributed for those who would like to find in these pages food for their curiosity. Would they learn charity and love by learning to despise the legitimate authority of the priesthood? For, the remarkable thing is that this Christian, this Catholic, seems to savour a sort of enjoyment in scourging the leaders of holy Church, those whom he mocks in calling them "our princes" […].  "… You will not, therefore be surprised, Monseigneur, if I condemn these two pamphlets by Dr Mariavé, if I rebuke their spirit and their character, and if I advise the faithful not to read them.  "With my affectionate respect,  A., cardinal de Cabrières     Bishop of Montpellier.  (Le Hidec, *Les secrets de La Salette*, p. 164-167) |   This definitive judgement was corroborated a few months later by Rome through the publication of a decree which forbade Catholics to deal with the question.  What remained of the great Secret? Only what Pius IX had read of it, which was not revealed, the contents of which can only be guessed from what the Pope let escape and from the three words Mélanie quoted from it: grave crises and grave chastisements for States as well as for the Church. But there is nothing that would yield to the morbid curiosity nurtured by integrist and anticlerical circles alike, curiously associated here! That is why Rome wisely put a Secret published in disobedience on the Index, for it was but a distortion of the authentic one. At the same time, Rome did not wish to effect a separation between the true and the false secret. Why?  We add this, which throws open the debate again:  Just as the Jewish people remain with the Scriptures, awaiting the Messiah, testifying to their veracity, even in impiety, so Mélanie had to remain, until her death in 1904, to give witness from the outside, in infidelity, to the Old and New Testament… and to the Secret still unveiled. But it will have to be unveiled one day, perhaps in the fairly near future, for we now have the wherewithal to enter a new era, namely the newness of the Immaculate Conception which must regenerate all things. In fact, She who showed Herself at La Salette as Handmaid is the same who is now to reveal Herself as Universal Mother, Mediatrix and Queen, obliging the men of the Church to recognise the all-powerfulness of Her Immaculate Heart. |      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | ***MÉLANIE’S WRITINGS***  **I. THE CHILDHOOD GOSPEL**   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteA.jpg *Mélanie,*the shepherdess of La Salette, in 1846 |   Her time at Corenc, where she was adulated, marks an obvious turning point in her life. Constantly being asked to *tell the story* of the apparition and of her early life, deep into all sorts of mystical writing and already refined through four years of education at Corps, she began*to tell the story of herself*. With time and imagination, she will produce her *Autobiography* in 1900, which resumes an original manuscript dating from 1852. The drift can be dated perfectly. Whilst Mélanie remained under the direction of Sister Thècle, the superior at Corps, she struggled successfully against the temptation of vanity, as her notes testify. But at Corenc, as M. Gérente, the convent chaplain, relates to Father Bossan, "I saw priests there (in the parlour) writing down everything Mélanie said as though they were oracles. I once said to a priest from the South, who had already written three pages of conversation with Melanie: "*But, my good Father, what are you doing there? – I am writing down everything she says because it is very edifying, On Sunday, I shall read out to my parishioners, in the pulpit, everything I have just written.*" He said this while Mélanie was present.  "I saw priests, ladies, generals, officers, highly placed men all standing before Melanie as though she were some very important person, speaking to her with humility, asking her to sign prints or anything simply to have her autograph. All sorts of follies were committed with regard to her.  "In the meantime, Mélanie was ardently throwing herself into the lives of the saints, their mystical writings and revelations, of varying authenticity. "*She read a lot*, M. Gérente declared to the same interviewer. *Everything she wrote after the apparition, she could have taken from her reading*." (…).  "There is, therefore, a turning point in Mélanie’s life; it has a perceptible starting point from which a curve could be traced. History guarantees that the inclination to story-telling was alien to the adolescent who, with her little companion on the mountainside, gave a message which she understood no more than he did." (Jaouen, *La grâce de La Salette*, p. 257-259)  All the introductions to the *Autobiography* admit or accuse – depending on their final judgement – the exceptional strangeness, be it human or supernatural, of the account. Among the "*Mélanistes*", emotion and unconditional admiration are carried to the limit through the number and harshness of the trials endured by Mélanie, through the lofty sentiments she expresses and the heroic nature of the virtues she implicitly admits to having practised.  Every objection is brushed aside by these two arguments, which are reckoned to be irrefutable:   1. Almighty God can do what He wants: our human reason has only to bow. 2. The Blessed Virgin Mary could not have chosen a seer, knowing that she would begin to ramble.   Everything written by Melanie, therefore, is literally true. Which is what we contest, with proofs to hand.  **AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF PERSECUTION**  It is rare to find a child so unhappy and so ill treated by her mother from the age of five, to six months: she was beaten, thrown to the ground, expelled from the home at the age of two or three years, found wandering in the forest, inexplicably re-integrated into the home, rebuffed for her displays of affection, cruelly separated from her sympathetic father, placed with various ill-tempered, perverse masters, one after the other, where she endured endless vexations, went hungry, fell sick, was neglected. In short, she was one of those child martyrs whose parents would face loss of parental rights and imprisonment today.  And all the more a martyr, in that this poor child opposed her persecutors with nothing other than resignation, meekness, patience, forgetfulness and pardon of injuries, dedication and courage in work which drew cries of admiration for this "holy and spotless victim".    But it is all too much! Although very enlightening, the exact study of this "display" of totally unjust situations, to highlight the victim’s exemplary reaction, would take us too far. We shall simply oppose this flow of writing with two outside testimonies.  The first knocks down the statue of the saint; it is the testimony of her last employer, Jean-Baptiste Pra, certified by his parish priest as being "a trustworthy man and a good Catholic": he relates that before the apparition in 1846, Melanie was "*sulky, lazy and disobedient*", often insolent, "*to the point of sometimes refusing to answer those who spoke to her*", thoughtless and often locked in her reveries (Bassette, p. 101).  The second testimony comes from the Mélanistes themselves, who are astonished, as we are too, that for fourteen years nobody protested against these butchers of parents. They made their enquiries and we find their testimony precious, since they reveal that "*the parents were poor but believed to be honourable*[!].*Nobody in the little village of Corps would have imagined that Madame Calvat (ten children) was capable of inflicting on her two to three year old daughter ill-treatment unworthy of a mother simply on the pretext that Mélanie’s tastes did not agree with hers.*  "*We would not have known of these unedifying facts if Melanie had not yielded to the entreaties of her confessors by giving an account of them. And perhaps there would remain a few doubts in our minds*[ah, even so!] *about the authenticity of this account, if the parents had not, according to the nuns of Corenc*[!], *recognised the truth of their daughter’s account.*" (Hyacinthe Guilhot, *La vraie Mélanie de La Salette*, p. 347)  But Bassette points out that the nuns of Corenc are not reliable! There is no doubt about it: Melanie Calvat, of a poor family of ten children, was not a child martyr edifying those around her with her holiness. She invented that afterwards.  First point established.  **A SUPER-PREDESTINED CHILDHOOD**  The concentration of mystical graces, with which she is said to have been favoured, is quite extraordinary. The first of these graces is startling. It is surprising when one learns that she received it at the age of two or three, after her mother had chased her into the woods: an encounter with him whom she will refer to, until the age of twenty, as her Brother. This story inevitably reminds one of Anne de Saint-Barthélemy, the Spanish Carmelite (1548-1626), whose childhood was favoured with very real and extraordinary mystical graces.  We find almost similar situations in the autobiographies of both Mélanie and Anne: Anne is an orphan, consoled by the Child Jesus:  "It happened to me when I was about ten years old, at the death of my parents which caused me great distress. I still had brothers and sisters, who acted as parents and who were very good. But having reached the age of ten, I was sent to look after the sheep in the fields. Although not far from the village, I suffered greatly to begin with; but soon Our Lord consoled me: the fields were my delight and the birds welcomed me with their song. If they began to sing, I would remain recollected for hours. And often, the Child Jesus would come; He would sit on my lap, and I would find Him there when I came to.  Mélanie is endowed with parents, travestied as butchers, consoled by… a little Brother.  "… There were three or four days when I was in the woods without seeing or hearing anyone… Suddenly, I saw coming towards me a small child of great beauty, clothed in shining white with a pretty crown on his head. When this little child was near the recluse, he said to her:  "*Good day, sister, why are you crying? I have come to console you.*  – *Ah!*said the recluse; *my poor little child, speak very softly, for I do not like noise. I am crying because I would like to know all that my Jesus did to save the world, so that I can do as he did without failing in anything; then I would like to know what the world did to cause the death of my Jesus; then I would like to have a mummy; I have no one. I used to be in a house with a woman and children; this woman does not want me any more. Ah! if only I had a mummy!*  – *My sister,*the little child then said, *call me brother; I am your good brother, I watch over you; we have a mummy...*" (p. 38)  Anne feels an attraction for solitude, but Jesus wisely corrects her of this:  "What I then felt in my spirit I cannot say; how gloriously I felt myself to be in a glorious heaven. I desired to live there forever, to see no one, and I wished to go far away. Once I said to the Child Jesus: ‘Lord, since you keep me company, let us not go where there are other people, but let us go alone towards the mountains, for with your company I shall want for nothing.’ But he laughed, and without words he showed me that that was not what he wanted of me." (p. 40)  Mélanie’s "little Brother", on the contrary, urges her to seek solitude, at the age of two or three years!  "Then my loving brother said to me: '*My sister, flee from the world, love retirement and recollection; have your heart on the cross and the cross in your heart; let Jesus Christ be your sole concern. Love silence and you will hear the voice of God from Heaven who will speak in your heart; form no relationship with anyone and God will be all for you.'*  "My little brother came to see me almost every day; sometimes he stayed without seeing me, but often he would come several times in the same day. We would always talk about the passion or the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ…" (p. 38)  Jesus leaves a mystery hanging over his encounters with Anne:  "Sometimes, he would take me away at night, without my noticing, half a league away from the village. In alarm, my brothers would go out looking for me and would scold me. But I was not surprised, for not knowing whom I was with – and I did not tell them –they could never have thought otherwise." (p. 40)  Mélanie is often expelled from the house at night, and nobody asks how, at her age, she could have survived.  Thus Mélanie plagiarises Anne, always going one better and becoming increasingly more unrealistic – the marks of plagiarism. The habitual presence of Jesus with Mélanie is but the prelude to raptures, ecstasies, conversations with the divine Persons, theophanies, meetings with the Blessed Virgin, journeys to Paradise and the stigmata, between the ages of one and six, if you please! followed by visits to Purgatory, charisms with animals (the forest is her favourite place), miracles repeated on herself and others, with spiritual marriage at the age of thirteen!  It is all too much! Especially when one unfailingly recognises in all this a pastiche of the Bible: the crossing of the Red Sea (here a torrent), the prophet Elijah miraculously fed (1 Kings 19.1-8), the divine raven messenger *(ibid.* 17.2-6), the Song of Songs, Francis of Assisi for the animals, Saint John Bosco for the protective dog, Saint Margaret-Mary for the burning in the chest, Saint Mechtilde and Anne of Saint-Barthélemy for the visits to Purgatory!  But the fervour, or the deliberate blindness, of the Mélanistes are such that Melanie’s going one better, which reaches the farcical, ceases to affect them. It makes one despair of human common sense! Listen to this catechism lesson to the animals, reproduced by Hyacinthe Guilhot, without raising an eyebrow, p. 130-131:  "I told these animals the story of their creation by the all powerful word of our eternal God, as my good Brother had taught it to me, and I encouraged them to seek food everywhere, without harming men, their masters and their kings, for they are created in the image of God through the powers of their souls, and again, through their bodies, they are images of Jesus … To begin with, a wolf would come every day, and I taught him what I could; however, I did not like that very much because, unlike a man, he could not love me with a conscious and disinterested love (*sic!*)…  "Before long, the number of wolves increased; there were foxes, hares, three little fawns and a cloud of birds that came every day. And then, for lack of men to speak to about the good God, the She-wolf (*she is speaking of herself*) preached to them and then sang the canticle: Taste, fervent souls. All the animals showed signs of great attention and bowed their heads at the holy names of Jesus and Mary.  "The wolves normally came together at a fixed hour; the foxes came together as well as the hares, the fawns and the birds (a snake came too, but was sent away). Once they had all arrived, each animal took the place assigned to him and listened. Then, when they heard the end which went something like this: *Sit nomen Domini benedictum!* they all went wild, especially the foxes who played tricks on their brother wolves: they bit their ears and their tails; they slapped the hares with their paws and made them roll over; they pulled the fawns from behind by their little tails… as soon as I told them to retire, they all left. Oh! how ungrateful I was towards my loving Jesus! I amused myself with the animals, and wearied conversing with my all." (Guilhot, p. 130-131)  It is grotesque, and perfectly ridiculous. The imitation of the Poverello of Assisi is obvious, at least in Mélanie’s mind. There is no doubt in our mind: she is inventing by plagiarising. Second point established.  **IN BREACH WITH THE APPARITION OF 1846**  More seriously, we would like the Mélanistes to explain one single point: how does this child who has reached the peaks of the mystical life, constantly immersed in prayer and in intimate conversation with all the beings of Heaven even from the age of fourteen or fifteen, this lyrical, delicate, tender-hearted, exquisite young girl, of such refined expression, – how do these attributes agree with the Mélanie of 1846, who was boorish, not very likeable, ignorant, practically without any knowledge of religion, as her parish priest testified, and whose stubborn memory could not retain two lines of the catechism? How does the super mystical Mélanie agree with the Mélanie of 1846 who failed to recognise this Lady who was weeping: "We told each other that she was very pretty. As for me, I said it could be some Saint who had disappeared." (Bassette, p. 45)  And how does the Mélanie of the *Autobiography* agree with the Mélanie of 1846, who is not all alone as in all her other "apparitions", but with a naughty fellow, Maximin, even more boorish and bad-tempered than herself, and whom, to cap it all, the beautiful Lady – who has clearly not read the *Autobiography*! – associates with her, to the extent of speaking to the two of them in a strangely prosaic language – about potatoes and butcher’s meat and spoilt wheat! – to the extent of asking them a question that is very strange for those of us who have read the *Autobiography*:  "*Do you say your prayers properly, my children? – Not very much, Madame*(!)*. – You must say your prayers, my children, morning and evening; when you can do no more, say a Pater and an Ave Maria, and when you have the time, say more."*  The Mélanie of 1846, oblivious of the Mélanie of the *Autobiography* who refers to herself as "the dumb She-wolf", keeps her secrets hidden, and that same evening she relates the Apparition as the event of her life! And the beautiful Lady of 1846 also forgets herself and speaks in both French and patois. It is clearly the first time in fourteen years!  Is the Mélanie of 1900 aware of such obvious discordance? It would seem so if we compare the 1846 version, recorded in 1847, with that of 1879: poor Maximin, so unflattered, is practically painted out; Mélanie has made great strides in style, and in… autism: it is a dialogue of her "little heart" with the beautiful Lady. A few more years, and she will possess this unctuous style, bewitching for some, cringe-making for others; and always enveloping and suffocating one with what is essentially charismatic mythomania. Judge for yourself:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1847 VERSION:** | **1879 VERSION:** | | *It is prosaic and rough, but true; they are the facts.* | *It is embellished;*it *draws attention to herself.* | | We then saw a Lady in the light. We were afraid. I dropped my stick. Then Maximin said to me: "Keep hold of your stick! If it does anything to us, I’ll hit it with the stick!" | (…) Suddenly, *I* saw a beautiful light, more brilliant than the sun and I could scarcely say these words: "Maximin, do you see what is over there? Oh! my God!" At the same time, I dropped the stick I was holding.  *I* do not know what happened in that moment, but *I* felt myself being drawn, *I* felt a great respect, full of love, and *my heart* seemed to run faster than me.  *I* kept my eyes firmly fixed on this light, which was static and as though it had opened up. *I*noticed another, much more brilliant light which was in movement, and in this light a most beautiful Lady sitting on top of our Paradise, with her head in her hands. | | Then this Lady stood up straight and said to us: | The beautiful Lady stood up; she coolly crossed her arms while watching us, and said to us: | | "Come my children, do not be afraid. I am here to tell you great news." | "Come, my children, I am here to proclaim great news to you!" | | Then we crossed over the stream and she came to the place where we had been sleeping. Then she said to us, crying all the time that she spoke (I really saw her tears flow) (…) | These soft and sweet words made *me* fly to her, and *my heart* desired to attach itself to her forever. When I was close to the beautiful Lady, in front of her to her right, she began to speak and from her beautiful eyes tears also started to flow (…) | | And then I did not understand what was meant by ‘pommes de terre’ [potatoes]. I was about to ask Maximin: "What does ‘pommes de terre’ mean?" | At this point, I tried to interpret the word: ‘pommes de terre’. I thought it meant ‘apples’. | | And the Lady said: "You do not understand, my children; I will tell it to you differently." | The good and beautiful Lady, reading *my thoughts*, thus repeated: "You do not understand, my children? I will tell it to you differently." | | "If the potatoes go bad", the Lady continued in patois… | "If the harvest is spoiled…" |   **EVE’S TEMPTATION**  What are we to make of this *Childhood Gospel*, and of these reveries? That, in our interpretation, they represent the ***temptation of Eve***. It begins at Corenc, where she confides in the ecstatic nuns that she is missing her forest, with its snakes, wolves and foxes… A diabolical temptation is slipping in here, making her paint a dream Paradise: as a child, from the age of two to three, she was with her Adam. They were both very nice; he would work miracles for her, and she would tell him everything, more and more mystical.  We have seen that Maximin emerged victorious from this temptation, because he was able to resist it and keep himself from all illusion. Mélanie, who was strongly assailed by the devil at Corenc, – the devil who got her into a thousand eccentricities – gave in, rather like the people of God on the plain whilst Moses was receiving the Tables of the Law on Mount Sinaï.  Yielding to mythomania, Mélanie looks down on Maximin. Surrounded, flattered and listened to, *she knows* the secrets of God and will pass from the illusion of Paradise in the forest with her "little brother" Adam to the illusion of the highest mystical graces. Again, at Darlington she experiences the assaults of the devil, from which she will escape through the illusion of the stigmata. It is a constant fact in her life: she inflates her mystical illusions in step with the contradictions she meets.  Thus, Maximin’s path, like Saint Peter’s after his denial, seems to be a path of fidelity, whereas Mélanie’s is the path of infidelity and of schism.  Another point of reflection: the pilgrimage of La Salette develops and the Church continues to walk straight. But Mélanie is not concerned with that, no more than she is concerned with the declaration of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the apparition of Lourdes in 1858, much more brilliant and newer than that of La Salette!  In the Secret she attributes to the Blessed Virgin, in 1879, there is not a single allusion to these glories of the Blessed Virgin! Still worse, she attempts to overshadow Lourdes by inventing the story that her Secret, Mélanie’s, should have been published… in 1858! Later, she will confide to the Abbé Combe, that if he had not thwarted her mission, all the miracles of Lourdes would have been done at La Salette (Guilhot, p. 269).  The same thing is to be found in the life of Saint Catherine Labouré; it is probable that Mélanie, making her bitter confidences several years after the death of the seer of the rue du Bac (1876) knew of this… Saint Catherine said, in fact, of the miracles being worked at Lourdes: "*To think that these miracles could have taken place in our chapel!*" But just before 1858, she had scribbled on a piece of paper, discovered among her things: "*My good Mother, they will not do what you want here; manifest Yourself elsewhere!*" and on learning of the apparitions of Lourdes, she exclaimed: "*It’s the same!*"  Provided the Immaculate Virgin is better known, loved and invoked, the rest matters little to a true saint, to a true Catholic! For it is plain that Lourdes was not the contradiction of La Salette, but its fulfilment.  Mélanie did not understand that, *did not want to understand*, and isolated herself in her imaginings, awaiting the propitious hour for her revelation to the world…    **II. THE NEW LAW: THE ORDER OF THE LAST TIMES**  The event of 1846 should have made her pass, according to her later version of the facts, from her private, hidden life, to her public life. The pious Mélanistes sum up and quote as follows, without a hint of surprise or amusement:  "Until the apparition of 19 September 1846, Mélanie had remained small for her age, and the little Brother, who frequently came to see her, was always the same height as herself. After Mélanie had joined the nuns of Corenc (*them again! always them!*),it was no longer the same. Mélanie began to grow quite rapidly, whereas the little Brother’s height decreased (*No! I tell you, they won’t laugh!*). She noticed it (!) and remarked on it to him. – *‘****How funny! I am growing, and you are diminishing.****’ – ‘****It has to be like that***’, he answers." (Guilhot, p. 467) That Jesus should become smaller and that Mélanie should grow?!  In fact, the 1879 version of the Secret, at the cost of a further pastiche, bestowed on her a new and extraordinary mission: to promote the foundation of the Order of the Sons and Daughters of the Mother of God, also called the Apostles of the Last Times, according to the rule to have come straight from the mouth of the Blessed Virgin.  First of all, let us compare the two versions:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1847 VERSION:** | **1879 VERSION:** | | At this point, the Lady kept silence for a moment; she seemed to be speaking to Maximin, but I heard nothing.  Then, afterwards, she spoke to me in patois, whilst Maximin played with stones. | Then addressing me, the Most Blessed Virgin spoke and gave me a secret in French:  "*Mélanie, what I am about to tell you now will not always be a secret; you may publish it in 1858.*"  Then, the Blessed Virgin gave me, also in French, the rule of a new religious order. | | Then she said: | After giving me the rule of this new religious order, the Blessed Virgin thus continued her speech: | | "*If they convert…*" | "*If they convert…*" |   **FABRICATION**  Now, let us go back to our chronology. Following recognition of the events of La Salette in 1851, the Bishop of Grenoble announced to his diocese, on 1 May 1852, his plan to build, on the mountain of La Salette, a basilica "*worthy of the Queen of Heaven and of the grateful piety of the diocese*", together with the creation, at Grenoble, of a body of diocesan missionary priests who would reside on the mountain during the pilgrimage season and evangelize the different parishes of the diocese during the winter. On 25 May 1852, thousands of pilgrims and about a hundred priests were present when the Bishop of Grenoble laid the first stone of the basilica. It was the beginning of a great work of *the Church*.  But, at Corenc, Mélanie also began to speak of statutes to be given to the Missionaries of La Salette, proposing the adoption of a rule which, she guaranteed, had come straight from the Blessed Virgin; she even wrote a rough draft. Mgr Ginoulhiac, who was wary of her and had just postponed her vows, was angry, but she vaunted this rule which, "instead of causing those in force to lapse, would have reinvigorated them, bringing about a rebirth of the spirit of the Gospel".  We are in 1853.  Before continuing with this painful history, which will end only with the death of Mélanie in 1904, let us make one, nay two, reflections:  1). The Blessed Virgin Mary, had, in fact, given the children a mission, concerning the material chastisements that would befall men if they did not convert. "*And so, My children, She told them on two occasions, you will pass this on to all My people.*"  The children accomplished this mission, and the Church has taken it over. Until 1851, there was no question of anything else, other than the Secret, but when Pius IX learned of it, he revealed nothing concerning an Order and a supposedly inspired Rule, to be put into application after 1858!  2). More disturbing is the date supposedly fixed by the Blessed Virgin: 1858. But if she really made it clear to Mélanie (and not to Maximin) that the Secret, which included the Rule, could be revealed at this date, why did not Mélanie say so earlier? Would it not have been a good way of keeping the curious at arm’s length? Sister Lucy of Fatima succeeded in keeping silence over her Secret, without being troubled by it, clearly stating that from 1960 it would be timely to divulge it.  Installed at Castellammare, in Italy, under the protection of Mgr Petagna, she nevertheless continued to pursue her dream, charged with exhorting religious to fervour. She spoke, so her biographer, the Abbé Gouin, tells us, "with the effusion of the permanent memory of this rule she had received on the day of the Apparition, proposing it as the rule for all monastic life".  **FOUNDATION TRIALS**  At the same time, her chaplain, Father Fusco, together with two or three priests, were putting the rule into practice, for which Mélanie let them have the first floor of the Palazzo Ruffo. Other priests, passing through Castellammare, took this initiative into consideration, among whom was Canon de Brandt from the cathedral of Amiens. She saw in this "*tall and noble figure*", writes the Abbé Gouin, the ideal superior for the order of her dreams. Note that, at the same time, she was accepting sums of money sent to her by Father Giraud, superior of the Missionaries of La Salette, to complement the generosity of the Italian prelate protector!  In a letter to Canon de Brandt, dated 23 March 1877, therefore, Mélanie wrote to present her project and let it be known that a noviciate of the new order could be opened in France in a house which a priest had promised to give her!  The priest was the Abbé Jean Ronjon, of Chalon-surSaône. On 24 August 1878, he handed over to her, by a legal act, a chapel he had founded at Chalon, and opened for public worship, together with an adjacent dwelling house to house members of the order which was to come to birth through the will of the Mother of God, as Mélanie asserted (cf. Galli, p. 92-93).  We are at the height of anarchy! In 1876 she even wrote a book entitled: "*A view of the costume and of the works in which the Sons and Daughters of the Mother of God will be employed*".  *A view*? So the words of the Blessed Virgin are amplified by visions! It is now time to quote the second part of the Secret which she let out in snatches and in private, before releasing a public version in 1879:  *"1. It is indeed true that, in the apparition on the mountain of La Salette of 19 September 1846, the most Blessed Virgin showed me that She desired the creation of a new religious order designated by Herself under the title of the****Apostles of the Last Times****. The proof of this is either in the rule She then gave me by word of mouth following the secret. which you have long possessed, or in the sight of this work.*  "*This order will comprise: 1. priests who will be the missionaries of the Blessed Virgin and the apostles of the last times; 2. nuns, who will be dependent on the missionaries; 3. members of the faithful working in the world and who would like to be united and attached to the work.*  *"2. The aim of this new religious order is to work for the sanctification of the clergy, for the conversion of sinners and for the extension of God’s Kingdom throughout the world* […].  *"I saw that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached throughout the whole earth and to all peoples in all its purity.*  *"I saw that God wanted this order to fight against all the abuses that have led to the decadence of the clergy, of the religious state and to the ruin of Christian society."* (Guilhot, ed. Téqui, p. 305-306)  As for the thirty three articles of the rule, they are so trivial and vague that any genuine superior would despair of true vocations being based on them. It is true that Mélanie herself was to be their superior… after having formally denied this to Mgr Ginouilhac in 1853.  But, in the mind of the seer become the foundress of an order, these "Apostles of the Last Times" were obviously meant to correspond to the image given of them by Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort in his ***Ardent Prayer***, composed for the missionary priests of his Company of Mary: "These missionary saints, children of Mary, your Spouse, whom you are to gather and separate from ordinary mortals, for the good of your Church, so enfeebled and sullied by the crimes of her children…" (*Golden Book*, p. 757) Thus, what the Mélanistes present as the fulfilment of the saint’s prophecy is nothing but a vulgar pastiche composed by an illuminist (cf. *Bibliographie*, p. 3).  **ROME’S HESITATIONS**  In this context, it is understandable that Mgr Fava, the new Bishop of Grenoble, should have caused an uproar when he came to Rome in November 1878 accompanied by a La Salette Father to request the crowning and title of basilica for the shrine, and at the same time approval for the Missionaries’ rule.   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteB.jpg Mélanie, clothed in the habit of her order, in 1887. |   Forewarned of his intentions, Mélanie had sent her work to Rome and knew that it had been well received. Summoned to Rome, she learned that she could count on three cardinals, but more importantly on the new Pope, Leo XIII. At least that is what she claims, and we are reduced to admitting her version of the papal audience. Here it is, as devoutly reproduced by the Mélanistes.  " – You must go up there and make known the Rule dictated by the Most Blessed Virgin. If there are those who would not want to observe it, you should warn the bishop to transfer them elsewhere.  – Very good, Most Holy Father, she exclaimed, bowing her head as a mark of obedience.  – You will leave immediately, said the Pontiff, who added with a fatherly voice: when the Lord deigns to communicate a monastic rule of life, He can also transmit the spirit and the ability to observe this same rule. That is why it is necessary that you write it down when you are in Grenoble, and before going up to the Holy Mountain you will send it to me.  Mélanie gave a start when she heard that:  – Oh! no, Most Holy Father, she pleaded, do not send me to Grenoble. I shall have no freedom of action with Mgr Fava.  – What, how is that? asked an incredulous Leo XIII.  – Mgr Fava, explained the seer, would order me to write what he desires and not what has been dictated to me by the Holy Spirit.  – No, no! replied the Pope with a trembling voice." (Mgr Galli, p. 102)  Whatever credit is to be given to Mélanie’s account, Mgr Fava’s position, based on his conviction of Mélanie’s mental instability, was a fact, and his reaction expresses his deepest thoughts on the subject:  "*I shall accept Mélanie’s rule only when the Church has proved to me that it really comes from the Blessed Virgin.*"  And there is the reaction of Mgr Bianchi, Cardinal Ferrieri’s secretary:  "*Eminence, is it a good thing to set up counter-altars? The counter-altar is Mélanie’s creation, in founding, without the Church’s authorisation, the Sons of the Mother of God in her residence at Castellammare, whilst the missionaries of La Salette are already working on the Holy Mountain. That does harm, a great deal of harm. It should not be allowed.*"  Faced with an opposition so much in line with the law, with common sense and the Church’s discipline, Leo XIII gave way, but without blaming Mélanie, at least so she claims, leaving her morally victorious and persuaded, yet again, that she is the victim of persecution. Infinitely more prudent and respectful of the laws, Pius IX had upheld the competent authority, leaving the ordinary of the place to act, in this case the Bishop of Grenoble.  Fortified by the new Pope’s support, Mélanie continued with her intrigues all the more ardently, always finding, it has to be said, simpletons or strange beings around her to encourage her, flatter her and supply her with the necessary money for her many journeys. She wrote, she directed priests, with no scruple about lying. To one of them, she wrote advising that no mention of the new order should be made to his bishop, for "*in this business, one has to be more cunning than the devil, and all means possible have to be used*". She tirelessly badgered her correspondents: "*We must not sleep, most reverend Father, we have to act energetically. It is for the good cause that we are fighting. Let us not back down before the enemy*."  All her endeavours failed.  **TRUE OR FALSE LAW?**  What are we to conclude from these developments whereby *habit, order and rule* became with time and Mélanie’s imagination the work of the Blessed Virgin? Opposed to the hierarchy? Might such a woman be Our Lady’s legislator? She showed herself to be more the figure of Eve pursuing her original revolt; of the Jewish people, constantly rebellious towards Yahweh and Moses, and finally rejecting their Messiah, Jesus Christ; of nineteenth century France, orphaned of its King, pulled in all directions, ending in rebellion against the warnings of Our Lady of La Salette and of Our Lady of Lourdes; finally, a figure of the apostate twentieth century in its conciliar Church, turning its back on the religion of Jesus Christ to found another according to its own taste, "with its eye fixed on a chimera" (Saint Pius X).  Catastrophes have come, and they are still coming.  It is the story of the life of Mélanie, who always believed in the possible fulfilment of her dream, from one house to another, with one priest and then another. But her projects all went up in smoke and all ended scandalously in one way or another. And one morning she was found dead, stretched out on her bedroom floor, alone and clothed in her black habit. Dreadful!  Was that the end of her Apocalypse?    **III. MÉLANIE’S APOCALYPSE**  It is the last form of the revelations that released storms of contradiction and floods of enthusiasm. The important event that facilitates the passing from one stage to the other is the death of Pius IX (1878) and the accession of Leo XIII: after the Pope of fidelity, the Pope of infidelity.  It is Mélanie’s oracle: she had to appropriate the whole of the New Testament, and thus represent the Church inventing a new spirituality, a new religious rule and a new Apocalypse.  The great Secret stigmatises a clergy unfaithful to their religious duties and possessed by love of money and a taste for honours and pleasure. It is pronounced with the tone of an Old Testament prophet, commissioned to express the violent wrath of Yahweh.  Here are the key phrases of this white hot lava which must cover a rebellious humanity:  **1. Against the priests**. "The priests have become cesspools of impurity. Woe to priests and to those dedicated to God… [their] sins call for vengeance… there are no more generous souls, there is no one left worthy of offering a stainless sacrifice to the Eternal for the sake of the world. God will strike in an unprecedented manner… for more than twenty five years."  **2. Against the kings**. "Expect to be ruled with a rod of iron and to drink the chalice of God’s wrath."  **3. Advice for the Pope**. "May Pius IX not leave Rome again after 1859. May he be on his guard against Napoleon; he is of a double heart."  **4. Oracle concerning Italy.** "Italy will be punished for her ambition… a great number of priests and members of religious orders will break away from the true religion; among these people there will even be bishops."  **5. A date**. "In the year 1864, Lucifer together with a large number of demons will be unloosed from hell; they will put an end to faith little by little, even in persons dedicated to God. Woe to the princes of the Church! The Vicar of my Son will have much to suffer, because for a time the Church will be given over to great persecution. It will be a time of darkness. The Church will go through an appalling crisis. All civil and ecclesiastical order will be abolished."  **6. A new date**. "In the year 1865, the abomination in holy places will be seen. France, Italy, Spain and England will be at war. For a time, God will cease to remember France and Italy because the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been forgotten. Paris will burn and Marseilles will be engulfed."  **7. The false peace**. "(But) the people of God will ask for my help (says the Blessed Virgin) and for my intercession. Then the peace of God will be made among men. This peace will not last long: twenty five years. A forerunner of the Antichrist will fight against the true Christ: He will shed much blood and will want to annihilate the worship of God to make himself be looked upon as God. The earth will be struck by all sorts of plagues. Before this happens, there will be a false peace in the world."  **8. The Antichrist**. "It will be during this time that the antichrist will be born of a Hebrew nun, a false virgin, who will communicate with the old serpent, the master of impurity; his father will be a bishop. He will be the devil incarnate, he will work wonders, he will feed on nothing but impurity."  "**ROME WILL LOSE THE FAITH AND BECOME THE SEAT OF THE ANTICHRIST"**  **9. Appeal to the Apostles of the last times**. "I address an urgent appeal to the earth. I call on the true disciples of the living God who reigns in Heaven… I call on the Apostles of the last times. For now is the time of all times, the end of all ends.  "But now Enoch and Elijah will come, filled with the Spirit of God. They will condemn the diabolical errors of the Antichrist. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth! Who will be able to withstand them? God will allow Himself to bend through the blood, tears and prayers of the just: Enoch and Elijah will be put to death.  "It is time; the sun will be darkened; faith alone will live. Behold the Beast with his subjects, calling himself the saviour of the world."  **10. The victory**. "He will be stifled by the breath of Saint Michael the Archangel. And then water and fire will purify the earth and consume all the works of men’s pride, and all will be renewed: God will be served and glorified." (Guilhot, p. 285-292)  **TRUE OR FALSE PROPHECY?**  Let us try to see clearly into this Secret, which sparked off an ignominious rumpus in the Church when it was published: twisted blows on one side, fanaticism and curses on the other, and everybody, including Léon Bloy, offering interpretations, to such an extent that a Jesuit, Father Poulard, affirmed that this secret was "a suggestion from the devil". We cannot retrace all its stages and refer our reader to chapter VI of Le Hidec’s book.  Let us get down to the facts.  1. First of all, there is the original secret delivered to Pius IX written in 1851, and perfectly vouched for in every detail.  "That same day, 2 July, M. Dausse went to Corenc, to fulfil the same mission with Mélanie as he had with Maximin. He did not have the same success. Mélanie again refused and began to cry. The matter was postponed until the next day rather than upset her. The next day, in the presence of M. Gérente, the chaplain, and M. Dausse, she decided to write, which she did calmly and without hesitation. She signed her writing, put it in an envelope, sealed it and wrote: "*To His Holiness Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX in Rome.*" Monsieur Dausse and Monsieur Gérente certified that it was indeed Mélanie who wrote this text alone. Monsieur Dausse took the sealed envelope and brought it to the Bishop.  "Only, a few hours later, Mélanie had feelings of remorse. She felt sad and asked to see Monsieur Rousselot. She admitted to him that she had forgotten to write something. Monsieur Rousselot advised her to re-write her text. The second draft was written at Grenoble, at the school of the Sisters of Providence, rue des Beaux-Tailleurs, Sunday, 6 July between 14.30 and 16.30.  "Monsieur Gérente was prevented from acting as witness as he had done on the first occasion, and so his place was taken by Monsieur Auvergne. Mélanie asked for the meaning of the word "***infailliblement***" and the spelling of the words "ville ***souillée***" [sullied city] and "***antéchrist***". The two witnesses then accompanied the young girl to the Bishop, handing him the open envelope in which she had placed her writing and she proposed that he read it. This he did in his room and came back very moved and in tears. He returned the envelope to Mélanie; it was sealed and MM. Auvergne and Dausse witnessed the same thing as for Maximin’s writing.  "It might be thought – it is not certain –that the first draft remained in the hands of Mgr de Bruillard. It is also possible that Mélanie kept it with her." (Le Hidec, p. 60).  Likewise, the Pope’s reaction is well known (cf. *supra*, p. 8). So far, Mélanie has behaved very sensibly. In this form, the Secret proved to be very useful for the Pope, as he later testified: "It is fortunate that we were warned; otherwise we would have found ourselves in an impasse, from which we could not have escaped." (cf. Le Hidec, p. 196).  With that done, she had only to enter a monastery and be forgotten, which is what she began by doing.   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteC.jpg | | The towers of the Basilica   (and bottom left, buried beneath the snow, the Way of the Cross of the Apparition). |   2. But her stay at Corenc threw her into story-telling. In England, then on her return to France, she began to divulge snatches of the Secret, written surreptitiously to Father Calage between 1862 and 1863, in disobedience to orders from the Bishop of Marseilles (cf. Guilhot, p. 274), to Mgr Zola in 1869, to the Abbé Bliard in 1870. The tragic events in France (the Prussian invasion) kept her from publishing it in its entirety, she said. But finally from 1870 to 1875, various versions, each time a little more explicit, were in circulation until the 15th November 1879 when there appeared the "*Total Account of the apparition of the Most Blessed Virgin on the mountainside of La Salette*", with the imprimatur of Mgr Zola, Bishop of Lecce. Leo XIII’s favourable welcome guaranteed it a good send off, and the generosity of a French benefactress saw to its financing. It was a bomb, twenty years after Lourdes. In competition with Lourdes.  It is possible to discover the point at which Mélanie goes astray from her explanation to Father Bliard in 1870 where she says that in addition to Our Lady’s words there were visions; for the great Secret as well as for the Rule:  "The Blessed Virgin pronounced all the words, for the secrets and for the rules; only I could have guessed or penetrated the rest of what she said in words: a great veil was lifted, events were uncovered before my eyes and my imagination (*sic!*) as she pronounced all the words, and a great space was unfolded before me; I saw events and the world’s changing works; and God, changeless in His glory, looked at the Blessed Virgin who stooped down to speak to two points [her and Maximin]… There are people who would prefer that the Blessed Virgin had not spoken so much. Every word is developed, and future action takes place in the moment, and thousands upon thousands more things are seen than heard by the ear." (Le Hidec, p. 142)  It is mad… For the cinema grows from year to year until the sensational publication of 1879, when this Secret will be manipulated by all sorts of people, who will find in it an opportunity to make a case against Rome, to doom the cardinals and bishops to hell, often in order to settle personal scores. Following the example of Mélanie, moreover.  In fact, Mélanie yields to prophetic delirium, taken from the Old Testament then from Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. She furiously spits out her personal hatreds, which she nurtures; she is fierce against those many priests and bishops who rebuffed her –the bad priests because they were bad, the good ones because they found the Secret revolting! Whence "the priests are a cesspool of iniquity".  Likewise, her political ideas are dictated by her passions: Mgr Ginoulhiac was favourable to Napoleon III, he chased her out of Corenc, therefore she is opposed to Napoleon III! who was "a two-faced being!" But she did not reveal that *before* Napoleon III was known! Had she been very intelligent, or very inspired, she could have said that from 2 December 1851!  She lies and pre-dates the oracles with which she fills out her Secret. Beware! All her dates are thought to be prophetic, but they are *post eventum* prophecies, for the phrase which authorises publication "in 1858" is added after the event! in 1870 or 1878, *after Lourdes,*in order to draw attention to herself. There is no doubt that such *post eventum* prophecies were customary among the Jewish prophets: for example, Daniel begins by recounting a past history, in a prophetic mode, in order to capture his reader’s attention, but when he comes to the actual event, he continues his prophecies by announcing the future.  She too continues, but by announcing and piling up catastrophes, one lot more disastrous than the next. It is neither Catholic nor worthy of the Blessed Virgin, as all good souls have understood: the saints, Saint Pius X, Cardinal de Cabrières who remained absolutely calm throughout this brawl and practised the discernment of spirits. Here are the last pages of the masterly letter by this cardinal whose testimony in favour of the Apparition of La Salette we have already quoted (cf. *supra*, p. 6) dated 1 July 1915:   |  | | --- | | **THE COUNTERFEIT VERSION OF OUR LADY’S SECRET**  "It is this secret, already several times printed, distributed, commented on and recommended by various authors, both ecclesiastical and lay, that M. Mariavé has thought fit to give to the public, presenting it as 'The Gospel of the Virgin Mary', to accompany and complement the Gospel of Jesus Christ!  "In order to answer your question Monseigneur, I have just read the two pamphlets concerning which you desire to know my opinion. It is absolutely unfavourable. The authors of previous publications, to do with this secret, were condemned, *if not because of the secret itself, at least because of the scope and the consequences they gave it. A similar fate awaits this present publication.*  " I. – It seems, in fact, that we do not have here the secret handed by the Bishop of Grenoble’s envoys to HH Pope Pius IX in 1851. In its present form, it was written by Mélanie Calvat, but on various occasions and in successive fragments, and seems *rather to be the result of a personal composition than an exact repetition of the original text given to Pius IX, and which is said to be no longer in the Vatican.*  " II. – As it stands, this secret has no value other than as Mélanie Calvat’s personal statement, supported by the signature of two bishops from around Naples. Mélanie seems to have been sincerely pious, but she may have been deluded, and it seems that her 'mission', instead of extending to our period, ended with the Church’s recognition of the reality of the Apparition.  " III. – What is certain, according to a well informed author, is that the first versions of the secret were less developed than the last; it is probable, therefore, that under the influence of the setting in which her life ended, *Mélanie amplified the first form of the writing she had had sent to the Pope*; for certain, we do not have here an official copy of the secret handed to Pius IX. *Only the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office could, with the Pope’s consent, seek out the original and so determine, against the original contents, its true authority.*  " IV. –The nature of this secret, as we read it today, is so strange, arranged in such a confused manner, containing particular allusions to politics, it seems to favour, in such a very precise way, the errors of the ancient millenarists – in that it announces a renovation to be accomplished in time and on earth, unlike the teaching of the true religion about the general resurrection at the end of the world, and about the eternal happiness of the elect – that one necessarily hesitates to ascribe it a heavenly origin. Finally, and more especially, the commentator has taken such liberty in evaluating and judging the Catholic hierarchy, in all its degrees, that one wonders what basis there is for the severity of his words, which would not be out of place in the pages of a newspaper most hostile to the Christian faith. One also wonders how he allies the true piety he professes with the harshness he displays towards persons worthy of every respect.  "What aggravates the rashness of these judgements is that they are, on several occasions, given in a form that is both mocking and insulting, which is belied by the character and dignity of the persons the author sees fit to denounce.  "The holy pope Pius IX, venerable cardinals such as Mgr Perraud, Mgr Luçon and Mgr Sevin, bishops like Mgr Maurin of Grenoble, and all his predecessors down to Mgr Ginoulhiac, of such learned memory: all are included in the hurtful reproaches, which the commentator dares to attribute in the first place to the Most Blessed Virgin Herself!  "And all this is written and published, offered and distributed for those who would like to find in these pages food for their curiosity. Would they learn charity and love by learning to despise the legitimate authority of the priesthood? For, the remarkable thing is that this Christian, this Catholic, seems to savour a sort of enjoyment in scourging the leaders of holy Church, those whom he mocks in calling them "our princes" […].  "… You will not, therefore be surprised, Monseigneur, if I condemn these two pamphlets by Dr Mariavé, if I rebuke their spirit and their character, and if I advise the faithful not to read them.  "With my affectionate respect,  A., cardinal de Cabrières     Bishop of Montpellier.  (Le Hidec, *Les secrets de La Salette*, p. 164-167) |   This definitive judgement was corroborated a few months later by Rome through the publication of a decree which forbade Catholics to deal with the question.  What remained of the great Secret? Only what Pius IX had read of it, which was not revealed, the contents of which can only be guessed from what the Pope let escape and from the three words Mélanie quoted from it: grave crises and grave chastisements for States as well as for the Church. But there is nothing that would yield to the morbid curiosity nurtured by integrist and anticlerical circles alike, curiously associated here! That is why Rome wisely put a Secret published in disobedience on the Index, for it was but a distortion of the authentic one. At the same time, Rome did not wish to effect a separation between the true and the false secret. Why?  We add this, which throws open the debate again:  Just as the Jewish people remain with the Scriptures, awaiting the Messiah, testifying to their veracity, even in impiety, so Mélanie had to remain, until her death in 1904, to give witness from the outside, in infidelity, to the Old and New Testament… and to the Secret still unveiled. But it will have to be unveiled one day, perhaps in the fairly near future, for we now have the wherewithal to enter a new era, namely the newness of the Immaculate Conception which must regenerate all things. In fact, She who showed Herself at La Salette as Handmaid is the same who is now to reveal Herself as Universal Mother, Mediatrix and Queen, obliging the men of the Church to recognise the all-powerfulness of Her Immaculate Heart. |      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | ***MÉLANIE’S WRITINGS***  **I. THE CHILDHOOD GOSPEL**   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteA.jpg *Mélanie,*the shepherdess of La Salette, in 1846 |   Her time at Corenc, where she was adulated, marks an obvious turning point in her life. Constantly being asked to *tell the story* of the apparition and of her early life, deep into all sorts of mystical writing and already refined through four years of education at Corps, she began*to tell the story of herself*. With time and imagination, she will produce her *Autobiography* in 1900, which resumes an original manuscript dating from 1852. The drift can be dated perfectly. Whilst Mélanie remained under the direction of Sister Thècle, the superior at Corps, she struggled successfully against the temptation of vanity, as her notes testify. But at Corenc, as M. Gérente, the convent chaplain, relates to Father Bossan, "I saw priests there (in the parlour) writing down everything Mélanie said as though they were oracles. I once said to a priest from the South, who had already written three pages of conversation with Melanie: "*But, my good Father, what are you doing there? – I am writing down everything she says because it is very edifying, On Sunday, I shall read out to my parishioners, in the pulpit, everything I have just written.*" He said this while Mélanie was present.  "I saw priests, ladies, generals, officers, highly placed men all standing before Melanie as though she were some very important person, speaking to her with humility, asking her to sign prints or anything simply to have her autograph. All sorts of follies were committed with regard to her.  "In the meantime, Mélanie was ardently throwing herself into the lives of the saints, their mystical writings and revelations, of varying authenticity. "*She read a lot*, M. Gérente declared to the same interviewer. *Everything she wrote after the apparition, she could have taken from her reading*." (…).  "There is, therefore, a turning point in Mélanie’s life; it has a perceptible starting point from which a curve could be traced. History guarantees that the inclination to story-telling was alien to the adolescent who, with her little companion on the mountainside, gave a message which she understood no more than he did." (Jaouen, *La grâce de La Salette*, p. 257-259)  All the introductions to the *Autobiography* admit or accuse – depending on their final judgement – the exceptional strangeness, be it human or supernatural, of the account. Among the "*Mélanistes*", emotion and unconditional admiration are carried to the limit through the number and harshness of the trials endured by Mélanie, through the lofty sentiments she expresses and the heroic nature of the virtues she implicitly admits to having practised.  Every objection is brushed aside by these two arguments, which are reckoned to be irrefutable:   1. Almighty God can do what He wants: our human reason has only to bow. 2. The Blessed Virgin Mary could not have chosen a seer, knowing that she would begin to ramble.   Everything written by Melanie, therefore, is literally true. Which is what we contest, with proofs to hand.  **AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF PERSECUTION**  It is rare to find a child so unhappy and so ill treated by her mother from the age of five, to six months: she was beaten, thrown to the ground, expelled from the home at the age of two or three years, found wandering in the forest, inexplicably re-integrated into the home, rebuffed for her displays of affection, cruelly separated from her sympathetic father, placed with various ill-tempered, perverse masters, one after the other, where she endured endless vexations, went hungry, fell sick, was neglected. In short, she was one of those child martyrs whose parents would face loss of parental rights and imprisonment today.  And all the more a martyr, in that this poor child opposed her persecutors with nothing other than resignation, meekness, patience, forgetfulness and pardon of injuries, dedication and courage in work which drew cries of admiration for this "holy and spotless victim".    But it is all too much! Although very enlightening, the exact study of this "display" of totally unjust situations, to highlight the victim’s exemplary reaction, would take us too far. We shall simply oppose this flow of writing with two outside testimonies.  The first knocks down the statue of the saint; it is the testimony of her last employer, Jean-Baptiste Pra, certified by his parish priest as being "a trustworthy man and a good Catholic": he relates that before the apparition in 1846, Melanie was "*sulky, lazy and disobedient*", often insolent, "*to the point of sometimes refusing to answer those who spoke to her*", thoughtless and often locked in her reveries (Bassette, p. 101).  The second testimony comes from the Mélanistes themselves, who are astonished, as we are too, that for fourteen years nobody protested against these butchers of parents. They made their enquiries and we find their testimony precious, since they reveal that "*the parents were poor but believed to be honourable*[!].*Nobody in the little village of Corps would have imagined that Madame Calvat (ten children) was capable of inflicting on her two to three year old daughter ill-treatment unworthy of a mother simply on the pretext that Mélanie’s tastes did not agree with hers.*  "*We would not have known of these unedifying facts if Melanie had not yielded to the entreaties of her confessors by giving an account of them. And perhaps there would remain a few doubts in our minds*[ah, even so!] *about the authenticity of this account, if the parents had not, according to the nuns of Corenc*[!], *recognised the truth of their daughter’s account.*" (Hyacinthe Guilhot, *La vraie Mélanie de La Salette*, p. 347)  But Bassette points out that the nuns of Corenc are not reliable! There is no doubt about it: Melanie Calvat, of a poor family of ten children, was not a child martyr edifying those around her with her holiness. She invented that afterwards.  First point established.  **A SUPER-PREDESTINED CHILDHOOD**  The concentration of mystical graces, with which she is said to have been favoured, is quite extraordinary. The first of these graces is startling. It is surprising when one learns that she received it at the age of two or three, after her mother had chased her into the woods: an encounter with him whom she will refer to, until the age of twenty, as her Brother. This story inevitably reminds one of Anne de Saint-Barthélemy, the Spanish Carmelite (1548-1626), whose childhood was favoured with very real and extraordinary mystical graces.  We find almost similar situations in the autobiographies of both Mélanie and Anne: Anne is an orphan, consoled by the Child Jesus:  "It happened to me when I was about ten years old, at the death of my parents which caused me great distress. I still had brothers and sisters, who acted as parents and who were very good. But having reached the age of ten, I was sent to look after the sheep in the fields. Although not far from the village, I suffered greatly to begin with; but soon Our Lord consoled me: the fields were my delight and the birds welcomed me with their song. If they began to sing, I would remain recollected for hours. And often, the Child Jesus would come; He would sit on my lap, and I would find Him there when I came to.  Mélanie is endowed with parents, travestied as butchers, consoled by… a little Brother.  "… There were three or four days when I was in the woods without seeing or hearing anyone… Suddenly, I saw coming towards me a small child of great beauty, clothed in shining white with a pretty crown on his head. When this little child was near the recluse, he said to her:  "*Good day, sister, why are you crying? I have come to console you.*  – *Ah!*said the recluse; *my poor little child, speak very softly, for I do not like noise. I am crying because I would like to know all that my Jesus did to save the world, so that I can do as he did without failing in anything; then I would like to know what the world did to cause the death of my Jesus; then I would like to have a mummy; I have no one. I used to be in a house with a woman and children; this woman does not want me any more. Ah! if only I had a mummy!*  – *My sister,*the little child then said, *call me brother; I am your good brother, I watch over you; we have a mummy...*" (p. 38)  Anne feels an attraction for solitude, but Jesus wisely corrects her of this:  "What I then felt in my spirit I cannot say; how gloriously I felt myself to be in a glorious heaven. I desired to live there forever, to see no one, and I wished to go far away. Once I said to the Child Jesus: ‘Lord, since you keep me company, let us not go where there are other people, but let us go alone towards the mountains, for with your company I shall want for nothing.’ But he laughed, and without words he showed me that that was not what he wanted of me." (p. 40)  Mélanie’s "little Brother", on the contrary, urges her to seek solitude, at the age of two or three years!  "Then my loving brother said to me: '*My sister, flee from the world, love retirement and recollection; have your heart on the cross and the cross in your heart; let Jesus Christ be your sole concern. Love silence and you will hear the voice of God from Heaven who will speak in your heart; form no relationship with anyone and God will be all for you.'*  "My little brother came to see me almost every day; sometimes he stayed without seeing me, but often he would come several times in the same day. We would always talk about the passion or the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ…" (p. 38)  Jesus leaves a mystery hanging over his encounters with Anne:  "Sometimes, he would take me away at night, without my noticing, half a league away from the village. In alarm, my brothers would go out looking for me and would scold me. But I was not surprised, for not knowing whom I was with – and I did not tell them –they could never have thought otherwise." (p. 40)  Mélanie is often expelled from the house at night, and nobody asks how, at her age, she could have survived.  Thus Mélanie plagiarises Anne, always going one better and becoming increasingly more unrealistic – the marks of plagiarism. The habitual presence of Jesus with Mélanie is but the prelude to raptures, ecstasies, conversations with the divine Persons, theophanies, meetings with the Blessed Virgin, journeys to Paradise and the stigmata, between the ages of one and six, if you please! followed by visits to Purgatory, charisms with animals (the forest is her favourite place), miracles repeated on herself and others, with spiritual marriage at the age of thirteen!  It is all too much! Especially when one unfailingly recognises in all this a pastiche of the Bible: the crossing of the Red Sea (here a torrent), the prophet Elijah miraculously fed (1 Kings 19.1-8), the divine raven messenger *(ibid.* 17.2-6), the Song of Songs, Francis of Assisi for the animals, Saint John Bosco for the protective dog, Saint Margaret-Mary for the burning in the chest, Saint Mechtilde and Anne of Saint-Barthélemy for the visits to Purgatory!  But the fervour, or the deliberate blindness, of the Mélanistes are such that Melanie’s going one better, which reaches the farcical, ceases to affect them. It makes one despair of human common sense! Listen to this catechism lesson to the animals, reproduced by Hyacinthe Guilhot, without raising an eyebrow, p. 130-131:  "I told these animals the story of their creation by the all powerful word of our eternal God, as my good Brother had taught it to me, and I encouraged them to seek food everywhere, without harming men, their masters and their kings, for they are created in the image of God through the powers of their souls, and again, through their bodies, they are images of Jesus … To begin with, a wolf would come every day, and I taught him what I could; however, I did not like that very much because, unlike a man, he could not love me with a conscious and disinterested love (*sic!*)…  "Before long, the number of wolves increased; there were foxes, hares, three little fawns and a cloud of birds that came every day. And then, for lack of men to speak to about the good God, the She-wolf (*she is speaking of herself*) preached to them and then sang the canticle: Taste, fervent souls. All the animals showed signs of great attention and bowed their heads at the holy names of Jesus and Mary.  "The wolves normally came together at a fixed hour; the foxes came together as well as the hares, the fawns and the birds (a snake came too, but was sent away). Once they had all arrived, each animal took the place assigned to him and listened. Then, when they heard the end which went something like this: *Sit nomen Domini benedictum!* they all went wild, especially the foxes who played tricks on their brother wolves: they bit their ears and their tails; they slapped the hares with their paws and made them roll over; they pulled the fawns from behind by their little tails… as soon as I told them to retire, they all left. Oh! how ungrateful I was towards my loving Jesus! I amused myself with the animals, and wearied conversing with my all." (Guilhot, p. 130-131)  It is grotesque, and perfectly ridiculous. The imitation of the Poverello of Assisi is obvious, at least in Mélanie’s mind. There is no doubt in our mind: she is inventing by plagiarising. Second point established.  **IN BREACH WITH THE APPARITION OF 1846**  More seriously, we would like the Mélanistes to explain one single point: how does this child who has reached the peaks of the mystical life, constantly immersed in prayer and in intimate conversation with all the beings of Heaven even from the age of fourteen or fifteen, this lyrical, delicate, tender-hearted, exquisite young girl, of such refined expression, – how do these attributes agree with the Mélanie of 1846, who was boorish, not very likeable, ignorant, practically without any knowledge of religion, as her parish priest testified, and whose stubborn memory could not retain two lines of the catechism? How does the super mystical Mélanie agree with the Mélanie of 1846 who failed to recognise this Lady who was weeping: "We told each other that she was very pretty. As for me, I said it could be some Saint who had disappeared." (Bassette, p. 45)  And how does the Mélanie of the *Autobiography* agree with the Mélanie of 1846, who is not all alone as in all her other "apparitions", but with a naughty fellow, Maximin, even more boorish and bad-tempered than herself, and whom, to cap it all, the beautiful Lady – who has clearly not read the *Autobiography*! – associates with her, to the extent of speaking to the two of them in a strangely prosaic language – about potatoes and butcher’s meat and spoilt wheat! – to the extent of asking them a question that is very strange for those of us who have read the *Autobiography*:  "*Do you say your prayers properly, my children? – Not very much, Madame*(!)*. – You must say your prayers, my children, morning and evening; when you can do no more, say a Pater and an Ave Maria, and when you have the time, say more."*  The Mélanie of 1846, oblivious of the Mélanie of the *Autobiography* who refers to herself as "the dumb She-wolf", keeps her secrets hidden, and that same evening she relates the Apparition as the event of her life! And the beautiful Lady of 1846 also forgets herself and speaks in both French and patois. It is clearly the first time in fourteen years!  Is the Mélanie of 1900 aware of such obvious discordance? It would seem so if we compare the 1846 version, recorded in 1847, with that of 1879: poor Maximin, so unflattered, is practically painted out; Mélanie has made great strides in style, and in… autism: it is a dialogue of her "little heart" with the beautiful Lady. A few more years, and she will possess this unctuous style, bewitching for some, cringe-making for others; and always enveloping and suffocating one with what is essentially charismatic mythomania. Judge for yourself:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1847 VERSION:** | **1879 VERSION:** | | *It is prosaic and rough, but true; they are the facts.* | *It is embellished;*it *draws attention to herself.* | | We then saw a Lady in the light. We were afraid. I dropped my stick. Then Maximin said to me: "Keep hold of your stick! If it does anything to us, I’ll hit it with the stick!" | (…) Suddenly, *I* saw a beautiful light, more brilliant than the sun and I could scarcely say these words: "Maximin, do you see what is over there? Oh! my God!" At the same time, I dropped the stick I was holding.  *I* do not know what happened in that moment, but *I* felt myself being drawn, *I* felt a great respect, full of love, and *my heart* seemed to run faster than me.  *I* kept my eyes firmly fixed on this light, which was static and as though it had opened up. *I*noticed another, much more brilliant light which was in movement, and in this light a most beautiful Lady sitting on top of our Paradise, with her head in her hands. | | Then this Lady stood up straight and said to us: | The beautiful Lady stood up; she coolly crossed her arms while watching us, and said to us: | | "Come my children, do not be afraid. I am here to tell you great news." | "Come, my children, I am here to proclaim great news to you!" | | Then we crossed over the stream and she came to the place where we had been sleeping. Then she said to us, crying all the time that she spoke (I really saw her tears flow) (…) | These soft and sweet words made *me* fly to her, and *my heart* desired to attach itself to her forever. When I was close to the beautiful Lady, in front of her to her right, she began to speak and from her beautiful eyes tears also started to flow (…) | | And then I did not understand what was meant by ‘pommes de terre’ [potatoes]. I was about to ask Maximin: "What does ‘pommes de terre’ mean?" | At this point, I tried to interpret the word: ‘pommes de terre’. I thought it meant ‘apples’. | | And the Lady said: "You do not understand, my children; I will tell it to you differently." | The good and beautiful Lady, reading *my thoughts*, thus repeated: "You do not understand, my children? I will tell it to you differently." | | "If the potatoes go bad", the Lady continued in patois… | "If the harvest is spoiled…" |   **EVE’S TEMPTATION**  What are we to make of this *Childhood Gospel*, and of these reveries? That, in our interpretation, they represent the ***temptation of Eve***. It begins at Corenc, where she confides in the ecstatic nuns that she is missing her forest, with its snakes, wolves and foxes… A diabolical temptation is slipping in here, making her paint a dream Paradise: as a child, from the age of two to three, she was with her Adam. They were both very nice; he would work miracles for her, and she would tell him everything, more and more mystical.  We have seen that Maximin emerged victorious from this temptation, because he was able to resist it and keep himself from all illusion. Mélanie, who was strongly assailed by the devil at Corenc, – the devil who got her into a thousand eccentricities – gave in, rather like the people of God on the plain whilst Moses was receiving the Tables of the Law on Mount Sinaï.  Yielding to mythomania, Mélanie looks down on Maximin. Surrounded, flattered and listened to, *she knows* the secrets of God and will pass from the illusion of Paradise in the forest with her "little brother" Adam to the illusion of the highest mystical graces. Again, at Darlington she experiences the assaults of the devil, from which she will escape through the illusion of the stigmata. It is a constant fact in her life: she inflates her mystical illusions in step with the contradictions she meets.  Thus, Maximin’s path, like Saint Peter’s after his denial, seems to be a path of fidelity, whereas Mélanie’s is the path of infidelity and of schism.  Another point of reflection: the pilgrimage of La Salette develops and the Church continues to walk straight. But Mélanie is not concerned with that, no more than she is concerned with the declaration of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the apparition of Lourdes in 1858, much more brilliant and newer than that of La Salette!  In the Secret she attributes to the Blessed Virgin, in 1879, there is not a single allusion to these glories of the Blessed Virgin! Still worse, she attempts to overshadow Lourdes by inventing the story that her Secret, Mélanie’s, should have been published… in 1858! Later, she will confide to the Abbé Combe, that if he had not thwarted her mission, all the miracles of Lourdes would have been done at La Salette (Guilhot, p. 269).  The same thing is to be found in the life of Saint Catherine Labouré; it is probable that Mélanie, making her bitter confidences several years after the death of the seer of the rue du Bac (1876) knew of this… Saint Catherine said, in fact, of the miracles being worked at Lourdes: "*To think that these miracles could have taken place in our chapel!*" But just before 1858, she had scribbled on a piece of paper, discovered among her things: "*My good Mother, they will not do what you want here; manifest Yourself elsewhere!*" and on learning of the apparitions of Lourdes, she exclaimed: "*It’s the same!*"  Provided the Immaculate Virgin is better known, loved and invoked, the rest matters little to a true saint, to a true Catholic! For it is plain that Lourdes was not the contradiction of La Salette, but its fulfilment.  Mélanie did not understand that, *did not want to understand*, and isolated herself in her imaginings, awaiting the propitious hour for her revelation to the world…    **II. THE NEW LAW: THE ORDER OF THE LAST TIMES**  The event of 1846 should have made her pass, according to her later version of the facts, from her private, hidden life, to her public life. The pious Mélanistes sum up and quote as follows, without a hint of surprise or amusement:  "Until the apparition of 19 September 1846, Mélanie had remained small for her age, and the little Brother, who frequently came to see her, was always the same height as herself. After Mélanie had joined the nuns of Corenc (*them again! always them!*),it was no longer the same. Mélanie began to grow quite rapidly, whereas the little Brother’s height decreased (*No! I tell you, they won’t laugh!*). She noticed it (!) and remarked on it to him. – *‘****How funny! I am growing, and you are diminishing.****’ – ‘****It has to be like that***’, he answers." (Guilhot, p. 467) That Jesus should become smaller and that Mélanie should grow?!  In fact, the 1879 version of the Secret, at the cost of a further pastiche, bestowed on her a new and extraordinary mission: to promote the foundation of the Order of the Sons and Daughters of the Mother of God, also called the Apostles of the Last Times, according to the rule to have come straight from the mouth of the Blessed Virgin.  First of all, let us compare the two versions:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1847 VERSION:** | **1879 VERSION:** | | At this point, the Lady kept silence for a moment; she seemed to be speaking to Maximin, but I heard nothing.  Then, afterwards, she spoke to me in patois, whilst Maximin played with stones. | Then addressing me, the Most Blessed Virgin spoke and gave me a secret in French:  "*Mélanie, what I am about to tell you now will not always be a secret; you may publish it in 1858.*"  Then, the Blessed Virgin gave me, also in French, the rule of a new religious order. | | Then she said: | After giving me the rule of this new religious order, the Blessed Virgin thus continued her speech: | | "*If they convert…*" | "*If they convert…*" |   **FABRICATION**  Now, let us go back to our chronology. Following recognition of the events of La Salette in 1851, the Bishop of Grenoble announced to his diocese, on 1 May 1852, his plan to build, on the mountain of La Salette, a basilica "*worthy of the Queen of Heaven and of the grateful piety of the diocese*", together with the creation, at Grenoble, of a body of diocesan missionary priests who would reside on the mountain during the pilgrimage season and evangelize the different parishes of the diocese during the winter. On 25 May 1852, thousands of pilgrims and about a hundred priests were present when the Bishop of Grenoble laid the first stone of the basilica. It was the beginning of a great work of *the Church*.  But, at Corenc, Mélanie also began to speak of statutes to be given to the Missionaries of La Salette, proposing the adoption of a rule which, she guaranteed, had come straight from the Blessed Virgin; she even wrote a rough draft. Mgr Ginoulhiac, who was wary of her and had just postponed her vows, was angry, but she vaunted this rule which, "instead of causing those in force to lapse, would have reinvigorated them, bringing about a rebirth of the spirit of the Gospel".  We are in 1853.  Before continuing with this painful history, which will end only with the death of Mélanie in 1904, let us make one, nay two, reflections:  1). The Blessed Virgin Mary, had, in fact, given the children a mission, concerning the material chastisements that would befall men if they did not convert. "*And so, My children, She told them on two occasions, you will pass this on to all My people.*"  The children accomplished this mission, and the Church has taken it over. Until 1851, there was no question of anything else, other than the Secret, but when Pius IX learned of it, he revealed nothing concerning an Order and a supposedly inspired Rule, to be put into application after 1858!  2). More disturbing is the date supposedly fixed by the Blessed Virgin: 1858. But if she really made it clear to Mélanie (and not to Maximin) that the Secret, which included the Rule, could be revealed at this date, why did not Mélanie say so earlier? Would it not have been a good way of keeping the curious at arm’s length? Sister Lucy of Fatima succeeded in keeping silence over her Secret, without being troubled by it, clearly stating that from 1960 it would be timely to divulge it.  Installed at Castellammare, in Italy, under the protection of Mgr Petagna, she nevertheless continued to pursue her dream, charged with exhorting religious to fervour. She spoke, so her biographer, the Abbé Gouin, tells us, "with the effusion of the permanent memory of this rule she had received on the day of the Apparition, proposing it as the rule for all monastic life".  **FOUNDATION TRIALS**  At the same time, her chaplain, Father Fusco, together with two or three priests, were putting the rule into practice, for which Mélanie let them have the first floor of the Palazzo Ruffo. Other priests, passing through Castellammare, took this initiative into consideration, among whom was Canon de Brandt from the cathedral of Amiens. She saw in this "*tall and noble figure*", writes the Abbé Gouin, the ideal superior for the order of her dreams. Note that, at the same time, she was accepting sums of money sent to her by Father Giraud, superior of the Missionaries of La Salette, to complement the generosity of the Italian prelate protector!  In a letter to Canon de Brandt, dated 23 March 1877, therefore, Mélanie wrote to present her project and let it be known that a noviciate of the new order could be opened in France in a house which a priest had promised to give her!  The priest was the Abbé Jean Ronjon, of Chalon-surSaône. On 24 August 1878, he handed over to her, by a legal act, a chapel he had founded at Chalon, and opened for public worship, together with an adjacent dwelling house to house members of the order which was to come to birth through the will of the Mother of God, as Mélanie asserted (cf. Galli, p. 92-93).  We are at the height of anarchy! In 1876 she even wrote a book entitled: "*A view of the costume and of the works in which the Sons and Daughters of the Mother of God will be employed*".  *A view*? So the words of the Blessed Virgin are amplified by visions! It is now time to quote the second part of the Secret which she let out in snatches and in private, before releasing a public version in 1879:  *"1. It is indeed true that, in the apparition on the mountain of La Salette of 19 September 1846, the most Blessed Virgin showed me that She desired the creation of a new religious order designated by Herself under the title of the****Apostles of the Last Times****. The proof of this is either in the rule She then gave me by word of mouth following the secret. which you have long possessed, or in the sight of this work.*  "*This order will comprise: 1. priests who will be the missionaries of the Blessed Virgin and the apostles of the last times; 2. nuns, who will be dependent on the missionaries; 3. members of the faithful working in the world and who would like to be united and attached to the work.*  *"2. The aim of this new religious order is to work for the sanctification of the clergy, for the conversion of sinners and for the extension of God’s Kingdom throughout the world* […].  *"I saw that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached throughout the whole earth and to all peoples in all its purity.*  *"I saw that God wanted this order to fight against all the abuses that have led to the decadence of the clergy, of the religious state and to the ruin of Christian society."* (Guilhot, ed. Téqui, p. 305-306)  As for the thirty three articles of the rule, they are so trivial and vague that any genuine superior would despair of true vocations being based on them. It is true that Mélanie herself was to be their superior… after having formally denied this to Mgr Ginouilhac in 1853.  But, in the mind of the seer become the foundress of an order, these "Apostles of the Last Times" were obviously meant to correspond to the image given of them by Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort in his ***Ardent Prayer***, composed for the missionary priests of his Company of Mary: "These missionary saints, children of Mary, your Spouse, whom you are to gather and separate from ordinary mortals, for the good of your Church, so enfeebled and sullied by the crimes of her children…" (*Golden Book*, p. 757) Thus, what the Mélanistes present as the fulfilment of the saint’s prophecy is nothing but a vulgar pastiche composed by an illuminist (cf. *Bibliographie*, p. 3).  **ROME’S HESITATIONS**  In this context, it is understandable that Mgr Fava, the new Bishop of Grenoble, should have caused an uproar when he came to Rome in November 1878 accompanied by a La Salette Father to request the crowning and title of basilica for the shrine, and at the same time approval for the Missionaries’ rule.   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteB.jpg Mélanie, clothed in the habit of her order, in 1887. |   Forewarned of his intentions, Mélanie had sent her work to Rome and knew that it had been well received. Summoned to Rome, she learned that she could count on three cardinals, but more importantly on the new Pope, Leo XIII. At least that is what she claims, and we are reduced to admitting her version of the papal audience. Here it is, as devoutly reproduced by the Mélanistes.  " – You must go up there and make known the Rule dictated by the Most Blessed Virgin. If there are those who would not want to observe it, you should warn the bishop to transfer them elsewhere.  – Very good, Most Holy Father, she exclaimed, bowing her head as a mark of obedience.  – You will leave immediately, said the Pontiff, who added with a fatherly voice: when the Lord deigns to communicate a monastic rule of life, He can also transmit the spirit and the ability to observe this same rule. That is why it is necessary that you write it down when you are in Grenoble, and before going up to the Holy Mountain you will send it to me.  Mélanie gave a start when she heard that:  – Oh! no, Most Holy Father, she pleaded, do not send me to Grenoble. I shall have no freedom of action with Mgr Fava.  – What, how is that? asked an incredulous Leo XIII.  – Mgr Fava, explained the seer, would order me to write what he desires and not what has been dictated to me by the Holy Spirit.  – No, no! replied the Pope with a trembling voice." (Mgr Galli, p. 102)  Whatever credit is to be given to Mélanie’s account, Mgr Fava’s position, based on his conviction of Mélanie’s mental instability, was a fact, and his reaction expresses his deepest thoughts on the subject:  "*I shall accept Mélanie’s rule only when the Church has proved to me that it really comes from the Blessed Virgin.*"  And there is the reaction of Mgr Bianchi, Cardinal Ferrieri’s secretary:  "*Eminence, is it a good thing to set up counter-altars? The counter-altar is Mélanie’s creation, in founding, without the Church’s authorisation, the Sons of the Mother of God in her residence at Castellammare, whilst the missionaries of La Salette are already working on the Holy Mountain. That does harm, a great deal of harm. It should not be allowed.*"  Faced with an opposition so much in line with the law, with common sense and the Church’s discipline, Leo XIII gave way, but without blaming Mélanie, at least so she claims, leaving her morally victorious and persuaded, yet again, that she is the victim of persecution. Infinitely more prudent and respectful of the laws, Pius IX had upheld the competent authority, leaving the ordinary of the place to act, in this case the Bishop of Grenoble.  Fortified by the new Pope’s support, Mélanie continued with her intrigues all the more ardently, always finding, it has to be said, simpletons or strange beings around her to encourage her, flatter her and supply her with the necessary money for her many journeys. She wrote, she directed priests, with no scruple about lying. To one of them, she wrote advising that no mention of the new order should be made to his bishop, for "*in this business, one has to be more cunning than the devil, and all means possible have to be used*". She tirelessly badgered her correspondents: "*We must not sleep, most reverend Father, we have to act energetically. It is for the good cause that we are fighting. Let us not back down before the enemy*."  All her endeavours failed.  **TRUE OR FALSE LAW?**  What are we to conclude from these developments whereby *habit, order and rule* became with time and Mélanie’s imagination the work of the Blessed Virgin? Opposed to the hierarchy? Might such a woman be Our Lady’s legislator? She showed herself to be more the figure of Eve pursuing her original revolt; of the Jewish people, constantly rebellious towards Yahweh and Moses, and finally rejecting their Messiah, Jesus Christ; of nineteenth century France, orphaned of its King, pulled in all directions, ending in rebellion against the warnings of Our Lady of La Salette and of Our Lady of Lourdes; finally, a figure of the apostate twentieth century in its conciliar Church, turning its back on the religion of Jesus Christ to found another according to its own taste, "with its eye fixed on a chimera" (Saint Pius X).  Catastrophes have come, and they are still coming.  It is the story of the life of Mélanie, who always believed in the possible fulfilment of her dream, from one house to another, with one priest and then another. But her projects all went up in smoke and all ended scandalously in one way or another. And one morning she was found dead, stretched out on her bedroom floor, alone and clothed in her black habit. Dreadful!  Was that the end of her Apocalypse?    **III. MÉLANIE’S APOCALYPSE**  It is the last form of the revelations that released storms of contradiction and floods of enthusiasm. The important event that facilitates the passing from one stage to the other is the death of Pius IX (1878) and the accession of Leo XIII: after the Pope of fidelity, the Pope of infidelity.  It is Mélanie’s oracle: she had to appropriate the whole of the New Testament, and thus represent the Church inventing a new spirituality, a new religious rule and a new Apocalypse.  The great Secret stigmatises a clergy unfaithful to their religious duties and possessed by love of money and a taste for honours and pleasure. It is pronounced with the tone of an Old Testament prophet, commissioned to express the violent wrath of Yahweh.  Here are the key phrases of this white hot lava which must cover a rebellious humanity:  **1. Against the priests**. "The priests have become cesspools of impurity. Woe to priests and to those dedicated to God… [their] sins call for vengeance… there are no more generous souls, there is no one left worthy of offering a stainless sacrifice to the Eternal for the sake of the world. God will strike in an unprecedented manner… for more than twenty five years."  **2. Against the kings**. "Expect to be ruled with a rod of iron and to drink the chalice of God’s wrath."  **3. Advice for the Pope**. "May Pius IX not leave Rome again after 1859. May he be on his guard against Napoleon; he is of a double heart."  **4. Oracle concerning Italy.** "Italy will be punished for her ambition… a great number of priests and members of religious orders will break away from the true religion; among these people there will even be bishops."  **5. A date**. "In the year 1864, Lucifer together with a large number of demons will be unloosed from hell; they will put an end to faith little by little, even in persons dedicated to God. Woe to the princes of the Church! The Vicar of my Son will have much to suffer, because for a time the Church will be given over to great persecution. It will be a time of darkness. The Church will go through an appalling crisis. All civil and ecclesiastical order will be abolished."  **6. A new date**. "In the year 1865, the abomination in holy places will be seen. France, Italy, Spain and England will be at war. For a time, God will cease to remember France and Italy because the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been forgotten. Paris will burn and Marseilles will be engulfed."  **7. The false peace**. "(But) the people of God will ask for my help (says the Blessed Virgin) and for my intercession. Then the peace of God will be made among men. This peace will not last long: twenty five years. A forerunner of the Antichrist will fight against the true Christ: He will shed much blood and will want to annihilate the worship of God to make himself be looked upon as God. The earth will be struck by all sorts of plagues. Before this happens, there will be a false peace in the world."  **8. The Antichrist**. "It will be during this time that the antichrist will be born of a Hebrew nun, a false virgin, who will communicate with the old serpent, the master of impurity; his father will be a bishop. He will be the devil incarnate, he will work wonders, he will feed on nothing but impurity."  "**ROME WILL LOSE THE FAITH AND BECOME THE SEAT OF THE ANTICHRIST"**  **9. Appeal to the Apostles of the last times**. "I address an urgent appeal to the earth. I call on the true disciples of the living God who reigns in Heaven… I call on the Apostles of the last times. For now is the time of all times, the end of all ends.  "But now Enoch and Elijah will come, filled with the Spirit of God. They will condemn the diabolical errors of the Antichrist. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth! Who will be able to withstand them? God will allow Himself to bend through the blood, tears and prayers of the just: Enoch and Elijah will be put to death.  "It is time; the sun will be darkened; faith alone will live. Behold the Beast with his subjects, calling himself the saviour of the world."  **10. The victory**. "He will be stifled by the breath of Saint Michael the Archangel. And then water and fire will purify the earth and consume all the works of men’s pride, and all will be renewed: God will be served and glorified." (Guilhot, p. 285-292)  **TRUE OR FALSE PROPHECY?**  Let us try to see clearly into this Secret, which sparked off an ignominious rumpus in the Church when it was published: twisted blows on one side, fanaticism and curses on the other, and everybody, including Léon Bloy, offering interpretations, to such an extent that a Jesuit, Father Poulard, affirmed that this secret was "a suggestion from the devil". We cannot retrace all its stages and refer our reader to chapter VI of Le Hidec’s book.  Let us get down to the facts.  1. First of all, there is the original secret delivered to Pius IX written in 1851, and perfectly vouched for in every detail.  "That same day, 2 July, M. Dausse went to Corenc, to fulfil the same mission with Mélanie as he had with Maximin. He did not have the same success. Mélanie again refused and began to cry. The matter was postponed until the next day rather than upset her. The next day, in the presence of M. Gérente, the chaplain, and M. Dausse, she decided to write, which she did calmly and without hesitation. She signed her writing, put it in an envelope, sealed it and wrote: "*To His Holiness Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX in Rome.*" Monsieur Dausse and Monsieur Gérente certified that it was indeed Mélanie who wrote this text alone. Monsieur Dausse took the sealed envelope and brought it to the Bishop.  "Only, a few hours later, Mélanie had feelings of remorse. She felt sad and asked to see Monsieur Rousselot. She admitted to him that she had forgotten to write something. Monsieur Rousselot advised her to re-write her text. The second draft was written at Grenoble, at the school of the Sisters of Providence, rue des Beaux-Tailleurs, Sunday, 6 July between 14.30 and 16.30.  "Monsieur Gérente was prevented from acting as witness as he had done on the first occasion, and so his place was taken by Monsieur Auvergne. Mélanie asked for the meaning of the word "***infailliblement***" and the spelling of the words "ville ***souillée***" [sullied city] and "***antéchrist***". The two witnesses then accompanied the young girl to the Bishop, handing him the open envelope in which she had placed her writing and she proposed that he read it. This he did in his room and came back very moved and in tears. He returned the envelope to Mélanie; it was sealed and MM. Auvergne and Dausse witnessed the same thing as for Maximin’s writing.  "It might be thought – it is not certain –that the first draft remained in the hands of Mgr de Bruillard. It is also possible that Mélanie kept it with her." (Le Hidec, p. 60).  Likewise, the Pope’s reaction is well known (cf. *supra*, p. 8). So far, Mélanie has behaved very sensibly. In this form, the Secret proved to be very useful for the Pope, as he later testified: "It is fortunate that we were warned; otherwise we would have found ourselves in an impasse, from which we could not have escaped." (cf. Le Hidec, p. 196).  With that done, she had only to enter a monastery and be forgotten, which is what she began by doing.   |  | | --- | | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/saletteC.jpg | | The towers of the Basilica   (and bottom left, buried beneath the snow, the Way of the Cross of the Apparition). |   2. But her stay at Corenc threw her into story-telling. In England, then on her return to France, she began to divulge snatches of the Secret, written surreptitiously to Father Calage between 1862 and 1863, in disobedience to orders from the Bishop of Marseilles (cf. Guilhot, p. 274), to Mgr Zola in 1869, to the Abbé Bliard in 1870. The tragic events in France (the Prussian invasion) kept her from publishing it in its entirety, she said. But finally from 1870 to 1875, various versions, each time a little more explicit, were in circulation until the 15th November 1879 when there appeared the "*Total Account of the apparition of the Most Blessed Virgin on the mountainside of La Salette*", with the imprimatur of Mgr Zola, Bishop of Lecce. Leo XIII’s favourable welcome guaranteed it a good send off, and the generosity of a French benefactress saw to its financing. It was a bomb, twenty years after Lourdes. In competition with Lourdes.  It is possible to discover the point at which Mélanie goes astray from her explanation to Father Bliard in 1870 where she says that in addition to Our Lady’s words there were visions; for the great Secret as well as for the Rule:  "The Blessed Virgin pronounced all the words, for the secrets and for the rules; only I could have guessed or penetrated the rest of what she said in words: a great veil was lifted, events were uncovered before my eyes and my imagination (*sic!*) as she pronounced all the words, and a great space was unfolded before me; I saw events and the world’s changing works; and God, changeless in His glory, looked at the Blessed Virgin who stooped down to speak to two points [her and Maximin]… There are people who would prefer that the Blessed Virgin had not spoken so much. Every word is developed, and future action takes place in the moment, and thousands upon thousands more things are seen than heard by the ear." (Le Hidec, p. 142)  It is mad… For the cinema grows from year to year until the sensational publication of 1879, when this Secret will be manipulated by all sorts of people, who will find in it an opportunity to make a case against Rome, to doom the cardinals and bishops to hell, often in order to settle personal scores. Following the example of Mélanie, moreover.  In fact, Mélanie yields to prophetic delirium, taken from the Old Testament then from Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. She furiously spits out her personal hatreds, which she nurtures; she is fierce against those many priests and bishops who rebuffed her –the bad priests because they were bad, the good ones because they found the Secret revolting! Whence "the priests are a cesspool of iniquity".  Likewise, her political ideas are dictated by her passions: Mgr Ginoulhiac was favourable to Napoleon III, he chased her out of Corenc, therefore she is opposed to Napoleon III! who was "a two-faced being!" But she did not reveal that *before* Napoleon III was known! Had she been very intelligent, or very inspired, she could have said that from 2 December 1851!  She lies and pre-dates the oracles with which she fills out her Secret. Beware! All her dates are thought to be prophetic, but they are *post eventum* prophecies, for the phrase which authorises publication "in 1858" is added after the event! in 1870 or 1878, *after Lourdes,*in order to draw attention to herself. There is no doubt that such *post eventum* prophecies were customary among the Jewish prophets: for example, Daniel begins by recounting a past history, in a prophetic mode, in order to capture his reader’s attention, but when he comes to the actual event, he continues his prophecies by announcing the future.  She too continues, but by announcing and piling up catastrophes, one lot more disastrous than the next. It is neither Catholic nor worthy of the Blessed Virgin, as all good souls have understood: the saints, Saint Pius X, Cardinal de Cabrières who remained absolutely calm throughout this brawl and practised the discernment of spirits. Here are the last pages of the masterly letter by this cardinal whose testimony in favour of the Apparition of La Salette we have already quoted (cf. *supra*, p. 6) dated 1 July 1915:   |  | | --- | | **THE COUNTERFEIT VERSION OF OUR LADY’S SECRET**  "It is this secret, already several times printed, distributed, commented on and recommended by various authors, both ecclesiastical and lay, that M. Mariavé has thought fit to give to the public, presenting it as 'The Gospel of the Virgin Mary', to accompany and complement the Gospel of Jesus Christ!  "In order to answer your question Monseigneur, I have just read the two pamphlets concerning which you desire to know my opinion. It is absolutely unfavourable. The authors of previous publications, to do with this secret, were condemned, *if not because of the secret itself, at least because of the scope and the consequences they gave it. A similar fate awaits this present publication.*  " I. – It seems, in fact, that we do not have here the secret handed by the Bishop of Grenoble’s envoys to HH Pope Pius IX in 1851. In its present form, it was written by Mélanie Calvat, but on various occasions and in successive fragments, and seems *rather to be the result of a personal composition than an exact repetition of the original text given to Pius IX, and which is said to be no longer in the Vatican.*  " II. – As it stands, this secret has no value other than as Mélanie Calvat’s personal statement, supported by the signature of two bishops from around Naples. Mélanie seems to have been sincerely pious, but she may have been deluded, and it seems that her 'mission', instead of extending to our period, ended with the Church’s recognition of the reality of the Apparition.  " III. – What is certain, according to a well informed author, is that the first versions of the secret were less developed than the last; it is probable, therefore, that under the influence of the setting in which her life ended, *Mélanie amplified the first form of the writing she had had sent to the Pope*; for certain, we do not have here an official copy of the secret handed to Pius IX. *Only the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office could, with the Pope’s consent, seek out the original and so determine, against the original contents, its true authority.*  " IV. –The nature of this secret, as we read it today, is so strange, arranged in such a confused manner, containing particular allusions to politics, it seems to favour, in such a very precise way, the errors of the ancient millenarists – in that it announces a renovation to be accomplished in time and on earth, unlike the teaching of the true religion about the general resurrection at the end of the world, and about the eternal happiness of the elect – that one necessarily hesitates to ascribe it a heavenly origin. Finally, and more especially, the commentator has taken such liberty in evaluating and judging the Catholic hierarchy, in all its degrees, that one wonders what basis there is for the severity of his words, which would not be out of place in the pages of a newspaper most hostile to the Christian faith. One also wonders how he allies the true piety he professes with the harshness he displays towards persons worthy of every respect.  "What aggravates the rashness of these judgements is that they are, on several occasions, given in a form that is both mocking and insulting, which is belied by the character and dignity of the persons the author sees fit to denounce.  "The holy pope Pius IX, venerable cardinals such as Mgr Perraud, Mgr Luçon and Mgr Sevin, bishops like Mgr Maurin of Grenoble, and all his predecessors down to Mgr Ginoulhiac, of such learned memory: all are included in the hurtful reproaches, which the commentator dares to attribute in the first place to the Most Blessed Virgin Herself!  "And all this is written and published, offered and distributed for those who would like to find in these pages food for their curiosity. Would they learn charity and love by learning to despise the legitimate authority of the priesthood? For, the remarkable thing is that this Christian, this Catholic, seems to savour a sort of enjoyment in scourging the leaders of holy Church, those whom he mocks in calling them "our princes" […].  "… You will not, therefore be surprised, Monseigneur, if I condemn these two pamphlets by Dr Mariavé, if I rebuke their spirit and their character, and if I advise the faithful not to read them.  "With my affectionate respect,  A., cardinal de Cabrières     Bishop of Montpellier.  (Le Hidec, *Les secrets de La Salette*, p. 164-167) |   This definitive judgement was corroborated a few months later by Rome through the publication of a decree which forbade Catholics to deal with the question.  What remained of the great Secret? Only what Pius IX had read of it, which was not revealed, the contents of which can only be guessed from what the Pope let escape and from the three words Mélanie quoted from it: grave crises and grave chastisements for States as well as for the Church. But there is nothing that would yield to the morbid curiosity nurtured by integrist and anticlerical circles alike, curiously associated here! That is why Rome wisely put a Secret published in disobedience on the Index, for it was but a distortion of the authentic one. At the same time, Rome did not wish to effect a separation between the true and the false secret. Why?  We add this, which throws open the debate again:  Just as the Jewish people remain with the Scriptures, awaiting the Messiah, testifying to their veracity, even in impiety, so Mélanie had to remain, until her death in 1904, to give witness from the outside, in infidelity, to the Old and New Testament… and to the Secret still unveiled. But it will have to be unveiled one day, perhaps in the fairly near future, for we now have the wherewithal to enter a new era, namely the newness of the Immaculate Conception which must regenerate all things. In fact, She who showed Herself at La Salette as Handmaid is the same who is now to reveal Herself as Universal Mother, Mediatrix and Queen, obliging the men of the Church to recognise the all-powerfulness of Her Immaculate Heart. |      |  | | --- | | **LA SALETTE A FIGURATIVE RE-COMMENCEMENT OF THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD**  http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette3.jpgThe apparition of 19 September 1846, on the mountainside of La Salette, hardly lasted more than half an hour; vouched for on the day itself by the children, it was carefully taken down from their dictation, before witnesses, on 29 May 1847, before being officially recognised by the Church. There is nothing to object to in all this; on the contrary, there is everything to accept, admire and love. As Mgr Paulinier said on the occasion of the *National Pilgrimage* on 21 August 1872: "God Himself has given us three proofs of the truth of the apparition. The first being *the miracles* that have multiplied here… The second, the transformation of the mountain, the extension of the cult of Mary: the devotion of La Salette having become a ***Catholic devotion****...* The third, *the fulfilment of the prophecies*, "the scourges with which France was threatened" and which we have experienced with the trials of this terrible year." (Giray, *Les miracles de La Salette*, vol. II, p. 410).  Even so, this apparition is different from the other apparitions of the Blessed Virgin. The repercussions it provoked in the Church make it a special, difficult and wonderful event. The contradictions it encountered are a sure sign for us of their importance in the history of the Church and of the world.  "**GREAT NEWS**"  "*Come, My children, do not be afraid; I am here to proclaim great news to you*", the Beautiful Lady had said to the two seers before dictating to them, word for word, a message, which they then "passed on to all *Her* people". We have decoded this as God’s address to our first and guilty parents, the words of Moses to his stiff necked people, those "tribes of people" spoken of in the Book of Numbers, the words of the prophets to a renegade and perverse Jerusalem before the chastisement. It is a sort of re-commencement of the religious history of mankind and the promise of a renewal of all things… through the gracious mediation of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, established as Legislator and Prophet for *Her* people, in the stead and in the place of God the Father.  She Herself says: "*I am****charged****to pray unceasingly for you.*"So, there are three Persons: He who charges the Blessed Virgin Mary to intervene is God Himself, our dearest heavenly Father, and He with whom she pleads is Her Son, whose arm is already raised against us. He *showed in advance to Sister Marie de Saint-Pierre, His confidant*, how His Mother had placed Herself between the arm of His wrath and guilty France, showing Him "this breast that nourished Him", begging Him to "allow His mercy to be shed over His other children (cf. *supra*, p. 7). So that men might know that a new era  would open for them, She "came down on earth" to announce it to them. That is "*the great news*":reconciliation offered, the return to grace, salvation promised and final victory assured  The Heart of God has allowed Itself to be touched by the prayer of Mary’s Heart, and He has decided to entrust our salvation to Her! That is what She will write in the sky of Pontmain on 17 January 1871: "*But pray My children, God will hear you in a little while. My Son allows Himself to be touched.*" (cf. CRC no 283, English ed.)  But you see Her there, weeping… Already at the rue du Bac, She was in tears! And later at Lourdes, at Pontmain and at Fatima, with what sadness Her face is marked! It is not for Herself, that our Beautiful Shepherdess, with Her grief-stricken Heart of love, weeps, but for the ingratitude of Her children, deaf to Her appeals and to Her warnings and threatened with even worse chastisements if they do not convert.  "*How long I have suffered for you!... and you others, you take no notice!… never will you be able to recompense the trouble I have taken for you!*"  It is at the sight of Her tears, of the sword piercing Her soul, that in the words of the prophecy of old Simeon, would be "revealed the inner thoughts of many hearts" (Lk 2.35). "According to these words, whoever is moved by the wound of the Heart of Mary will be saved. Whoever despises or ignores the Sorrows of Mary will be condemned." (CRC 263, Eng. ed., p. 20) Let us fear for ourselves, let us be converted and console our dearest Mother by listening to Her.  The lesson She gives at La Salette is simple and prosaic. To some, it will sound coarse and unworthy of the Queen of Heaven, but by such means, She makes Herself accessible to all, for She wants to start everything again from the beginning. Our Father made us understand this by analysing a part of the message word by word: "It figures in a way an absolute re-commencement of religion. We are to start again from zero. Since you are debauched, since you have not obeyed, you have been punished: ‘*If the harvest is spoiled, it is only because of you.*’ But you did not understand: ‘*I made you see this last year with the potatoes, but you made little of it*’. You even hardened yourselves: ‘*Quite the contrary, when you found bad potatoes, you swore, using the name of My Son.*’ We see all that as though we were there. With every rotten potato, a swearword, a blasphemy! Well, says the Blessed Virgin, I have come to warn you. If you do not convert, chastisements will fall upon you, and they will be terrible: ‘*They will continue to go bad, and at Christmas there will be no more.*’ That is Old Testament language, for sure, but the lesson is eternal from Genesis to the Apocalypse, from Jeremiah to Our Lord Jesus Christ, from La Salette to Fatima… Woe to those who do not hear it!  If La Salette really is an absolute re-beginning, one single apparition is insufficient; others will have to follow, and they will follow, always of the Blessed Virgin, "charged" with leading Her people, with educating them, making them pass from the Old to the New Testament, by gradually unveiling to them the will of Her Son concerning Her. There will be Lourdes, the apparition of the Immaculate Conception, already triumphant (cf. CRC 284, Eng. ed.), then Fatima, the total revelation of God’s grand design. Thus, in the divine orthodromy, La Salette and Fatima correspond and figuratively shed light on each other. The message of La Salette came as a forerunner, to prepare for the splendours of the revelation of the most loving and unique Heart of Jesus and Mary, at Fatima.  **LA SALETTE ANNOUNCES FATIMA**  **1. The preparations**. What a contrast between the two apparitions! La Salette in 1846 is a little mountain village, surrounded by hamlets lost in their solitude, better preserved no doubt than the big town of Corps, but on all sides poverty has done its damage, and so has irreligion in the State and among the elites, spreading from there to the people in the course of fifty years. The clergy are in despair of ever remedying religious indifference, debauchery, and human respect among the Catholics themselves. The families of the two seers are no exception to this rule, and the children, placed with masters at a very early age, are practically abandoned to themselves. Maximin and Mélanie come together "by chance" on 19 September to guard the cows on the mountainside. They hardly get on together; the boy is certainly good-hearted and the girl is reserved, but they are both ignorant, coarse and half savage. Yet, it is their innocent voice, faithfully transmitting Heaven’s message, that will reawaken the people of France and draw them to this mountain. There were very many who recognised their crime, feared the chastisements and were converted, whilst the best generously entered on the path of reparation demanded by Heaven.  Fatima is also a small remote village, lost in the mountainous massif of the Serra da Aire. People lived poorly in the hamlet of Aljustrel in the 1910s, but not in destitution. It was country life, hard and simple, virtuous and joyful, wholly steeped in a solid piety and a profound faith. It is one of those regions that were loyal to Catholic and royal traditions, which will be the starting point for the reconquest of power by the Catholics in 1918. And then, it is the traditional village religion of this Christendom that Our Lady came to reawaken in the last century, in all her apparitions, beginning with La Salette. It is the charm of this traditional religion that captures us in the Memoirs of Sister Lucy, dedicated to the Marto and Dos Santos families: the parents were of excellent reputation, and the future little seers, three predestined children, in harmony, well instructed in their religion, forming an inseparable trio when they go out to graze their parents flocks. That is the first, charming, comforting and already enticing revelation of the predilections of the Heart of Mary (cf. *Fatima, Joie Intime, Événement Mondial*, p. 12-39).  **2. The apparitions**. At La Salette, the seers were favoured with no preparation; they were taken by surprise in the midst of their normal occupations. Placed in direct contact with the supernatural world, they were dazzled and enthralled, but they were not inwardly seized nor were they transformed: "I felt nothing", Maximin was to admit. Whereas at Fatima, an angel prepared the children to be visited by the Queen of Heaven, teaching them to pray and to offer up their suffering. He introduced them into the light of God and told them: "Make reparation for the crimes of sinners and console your God!"  Our Lady of La Salette appears "within a light, the most brilliant light there is", which obviously reminds us of Fatima’s Lady "more brilliant than the sun", all expressions in keeping with the vision of the "Woman clothed in the sun" of the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse. But whereas at La Salette only one apparition was sufficient for the Mother of God to remind Her people of Her Son’s law, through fear of chastisements, the six apparitions of Fatima are not too many to show the full scope of God’s design: to establish the universal royalty of Mary, through devotion to Her Immaculate Heart.  On the 13th May 1917, the expression of the Lady all clothed in white, "***I am****from Heaven*", reminds us of Her declaration at a Salette, which so greatly astonished us: "***I****gave you six days...*" Mystery of Her pre-existence, before all centuries?… Then She requests the daily recitation of the Rosary, and even much more for Francisco! whereas Maximin and Mélanie had to recite with difficulty one *Pater* and one *Ave*! There has to be a beginning to everything, but the goal is clear: it is a question of honouring Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary ever more greatly. Then, Our Lady of Fatima opens Her hands and infuses into the children’s hearts and souls that divine grace of which She is the mediatrix, making them see themselves in God, wholly illumined by His Presence and burning with His Love; what intimate renewal!  The same "positive" grace on 13 June, this time introducing them into the great mystery: at La Salette, Our Lady bore a living crucifix, "as though embedded in Her chest", whence floods of light shone forth; the same vision, but more sorrowful, at Pontmain. At Fatima, Jesus seems to withdraw and, from within the same light, there appears the Immaculate Heart of Mary, wreathed in thorns and demanding reparation. There could not be a clearer manifestation of God’s Will to establish in the world this devotion, which is closest to His Heart, so as to renew all things through Her.  The secret of 13 July, prepared and announced by the secret of La Salette, tells of its urgency: souls, nations, even the Church are in great danger! So can Mary save everything? Is everything subject to Her? Yes, for She has taken great pains: "*Try as you may, you will never be able to recompense Me for the trouble I have taken over you*".  The atmospheric miracles of the 13th September figure Paradise regained, for She has also received power to make everything reburgeon, flower in virtue and bear much fruit.  Finally, the miracle of the 13th October witnesses to Her all-powerfulness. "*I shall work a great miracle which all shall see so that they may believe*". "Opening Her hands, Our Lady makes them reflect the sun", bringing about its terrifying fall and its saving re-establishment. This unprecedented miracle vouches for the truth of this new, unique and marvellous grace, which fulfils every *law*!  **3. The seers and their secret**. The life of the seers is in itself an illustration of the differences and perfections of the two apparitions, thus marking the stages of this renewal.  Maximin and Mélanie make a very pitiful Adam and Eve: they announce the Beautiful Lady’s message, whilst keeping the blemish of original sin and their own imperfections and faults. Having been entrusted with a secret that is too heavy for him to bear, poor Maximin aspires only to be free of it. Nevertheless, he will faithfully guard it intact until his death; Mélanie, on the other hand, invents another; she constructs for herself a world apart, full of illusions, to escape from the terrible daily round… Both of them are figures of this poor humanity stretching out its hands towards its liberator, sometimes submissive, at other times rebellious. They thus testify negatively, in a shade mixed with light, to the wisdom of God’s designs. |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | **THE THREE PHASES OF THE APPARITION OF LA SALETTE: THE RELIGION OF ALL TIME.**  ***"Maria Rosa dos Santos, Lucy’s mother, used to read to her children the Missao abreviada, a religious manual for country people, intended to ‘prolong the fruits of the missions’. It taught a strict religion, but of exact doctrine and solid devotion (it contained the Litanies of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary, a devotion from the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories AND A WHOLE CHAPTER WAS DEVOTED TO THE APPARITION OF LA SALETTE); it went straight to the essential and all the truths of faith were to be found there in their full light."***  ***"When Our Lady comes to the Cova da Iria, She will offer no other ideal. And Fatima is primarily this: the most urgent reminder ever that the true religion which is pleasing to God and which saves souls is indeed this traditional religion… Tomorrow, when a new Christendom will arise by the grace of Our Lady of Fatima and in accordance with Her promise, the same dogmas, the same devotions, the same morality will be its soul and its essential. There is to be found the source of true peace and of happiness..."*** | http://www.crc-internet.org/images/salette1.jpg |  |  | | --- | | By contrast, how wonderful is the radiant and ardent life of the three little shepherds of Fatima, regenerated and introduced through grace into this Paradise regained by devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Their souls will be so profoundly marked by the Secret communicated to them that the deeply moving story of their life will convert the greatest sinners tomorrow and will kindle in every heart the fire of love with which they were consumed: there is Francisco, the model of those who console the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and little Jacinta, heroically co-operating with Jesus and Mary to snatch souls from hell.  As for Lucy, Jesus has made use of her "to make His Mother’s Heart known and loved". To this day, she still pursues this mission in perfect fidelity: "To make this ray of light always to shine before souls, to show them this harbour of salvation, ever ready to welcome all the shipwrecked of this world… As for me, whilst savouring the delicious fruits of this beautiful garden, I strive to make it easy for souls to gain access to this garden, where they may satisfy their hunger and quench their thirst for grace, comfort and help." Her testimony is transparent: she writes only in obedience, does not tell stories as Mélanie did, and does not talk about herself. Her last two "Memoirs" are dedicated uniquely to her father and her mother.  In one thing could the two seers be likened: the difficulties they experienced in writing their secret. Mélanie’s terror and tears in July 1851 inevitably make us think of Sister Lucy’s mysterious and terrible agony from October 1943 to January 1944 – a terror and an agony proportionate to the apocalyptic drama they both had to announce on Heaven’s behalf. But thereafter, their lives diverge: Mélanie’s fabrications break with her initial message, whereas the revelations of Pontevedra and of Tuy are in perfect continuity with the revelations of Fatima. Mélanie, daughter of Eve, is a mythomaniac, disobedient and unbalanced –which excuses her in part… – her "prophecies" were invalidated by events: the years 1864 and 1865 did not mark the unchaining of the forces of Evil, as she had announced, despite every attempt to explain this on the part of her supporters. Sister Mary-Lucy of the Immaculate Heart, on the other hand, a child of Mary and Her living image, is still to this day a well balanced religious, obedient and radiant; she has always recalled Our Lady’s requests at the most favourable hour, and all the known part of the Secret has been fulfilled and is being fulfilled.  If Mélanie of La Salette anticipated in herself the "*diabolical disorientation*" denounced by Lucy of Fatima, the latter personifies the fidelity which the new Eve has come to recreate on earth.  **FATIMA SHEDS LIGHT ON LA SALETTE**  Just as the Gospel sheds a new light on the Old Testament by fulfilling it, so Fatima, which is the completion of God’s design, reveals the meaning of the previous apparitions. Thus it was that a special revelation to Lucy taught us that the requests of the Sacred Heart to King Louis XIV, made through the intermediary of Saint Margaret-Mary, had not been satisfied.  Let us try, therefore, in the light of Fatima and its Secret, to isolate the true Secret of La Salette from every gross counterfeit.  The peerless expert on Fatima, Father Alonso, can help us here: "It is quite probable that the text of the third secret makes concrete allusions ***to the crisis of faith in the Church*** and to the negligence of the Pastors themselves. Very possibly, the Secret does not speak only of a veritable crisis of faith in the Church during this intermediary period, but also contains, as for example does the secret of La Salette, more concrete references to internal conflicts among Catholics or to the failings of priests, religious, and the Church’s top Hierarchy." (cf. Brother François, p. 403)  Father Alonso based his thinking on the known part of the Secret: "In Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved, etc." In Portugal… and in Rome will the dogma of the faith be preserved? This little phrase, purposely unveiled by Sister Lucy, leads one to think not.  On the other hand, there is the question of the "mystery of iniquity", which Saint Paul speaks of in order to designate the times of Antichrist: "It is necessary that there come a revolt first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and who is lifted up above all that is called God or that is worshipped, to the extent of ***sitting in the temple of God***, showing himself as if he were God. (II Thess 2.3-4) And in referring us to chapter XIII of the Apocalypse, Sister Lucy clearly intends to signify that we have entered this great battle of the last times, from which the Blessed Virgin will emerge victorious!  To come back to La Salette: there is one phrase that stands out from the great Secret published by Mélanie in 1879, and which we hold to be authentic: *"****Rome will lose the faith and become the seat of the Antichrist.****"* We recognise here, in fact, one of the three words that escaped from the draft of 1851: *"****Antichrist****"*. It is impossible for this key phrase, of such amazing force and clarity, to have been invented by Mélanie, because there was such a cult of Rome at the time that it would have been absolutely unthinkable that the apostasy could come from there one day. Furthermore, this was a conviction shared by Mélanie, whose admiration for the Pope, whether it be Pius IX or Leo XIII, whom she claimed to have won over to her cause, was boundless.  The other three words, known to be authentic (cf. p. 25) add some light to this essential revelation:  *"****infailliblement****"*: Mélanie will explain later that this word applies to predicted events, which were to "happen ‘infailliblement’" or without fail (Voilin, p. 78), but should we believe her? For the term applies more especially to the truths of faith which have to be defined "infailliblement" – infallibly.  *"****villes souillées****"* – sullied towns: It is the image and the consequence of their apostasy. For that, they deserve a hundred times over the chastisement of Sodom and Gomorrha, unless… repenting and turning their eyes towards the Immaculate Virgin, they are healed through Her positive purity of all impurity and pride!  "***Pontife***" – Pontiff: The role of the Sovereign Pontiff is decisive for the success of the providential great design revealed at Fatima, as at La Salette. "It is not without reason that the Church is called militant, and that you see here her Captain", said Pius IX after reading the Secret. "And if the Secret concerned the Pope himself?" said Mélanie one day; Maximin too, often returned to the Pope’s duty to defend dogma and to condemn errors (Mgr Giray, p. 424).  The Secret of Fatima speaks of persecution against the Church and the Holy Father, no doubt the one who, in Rome, will restore the faith and consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary? One remembers how ardently the children of Fatima, Jacinta in particular, prayed and made sacrifices for the Holy Father. At this point, let us quote an astonishing remark made by Pius IX, who was often inspired by the two secrets of La Salette in his public speeches: "In 1871, on the 25th anniversary of his election, he said to a French deputation presided over by Mgr Forcade of Nevers: ‘There will be a great wonder that will astonish the whole world. This wonder, however, has to be preceded by the triumph of the Revolution. The Church will have much to suffer: her ministers and head first and foremost will be dishonoured, persecuted and martyred.’" (Le Hidec, p. 87)  The link that our Father has established between La Salette and Fatima had been unimaginable until today. Nor could it have been imagined, since Rome, under Benedict XV in 1915, put a stop to any further controversy being stirred up by Mélanie’s great Secret by settling the matter bluntly, too bluntly: "… *The Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office orders all the faithful, whatever country they may belong to, to abstain from dealing with or discussing the matter in question…*" (Le Hidec, p. 123) By banning all commentary, Rome shut herself off from any profound understanding of Heaven’s intentions. And so, for want of having understood La Salette which was preparing the way, Rome could not understand Fatima: she did not have the key, either religious or political, of the events to come…  And so we conclude these pages, which call for many others, with a sort of radiant equation, which we owe entirely, as a light on our path at the end of this century, to our venerable and unique Father:  "**Mélanie, Eve of the last times, seems to prefigure the modernist and conciliar Church, going to the extremes of atheist gnosticism and yet preserving the dogma of the faith, with great difficulty and through torments, for her persecuted children. Maximin, a modest and superseded Adam, seems to be, as he was seen by the holy Pope Pius IX, the honest representative of the real France, the legitimist people, *‘catholique et français toujours’*, to whom the Blessed Virgin Mary secretly announced the return of the Lily, the coming of the Great Monarch, in the happy days of the crowning of the Holy Pontiff, the restorer of all things through the grace of the most holy and unique Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary.**"  That is why we hope for the publication of the Secret of La Salette as well as for that of Fatima, and it would not surprise us if Our Lady made an allusion revealing the connection between Her two apparitions, Her two messages, thus unveiling the tragic but grandiose orthodromy of our 20th century which must end with the universal triumph of and world-wide devotion to Her Immaculate Heart, as God so wills – *"Dieu le veut!"*  Brother Thomas. | |