

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The religion of the poor is an ambitious survey of Catholic missions into the European countryside from 1500 to 1800. In it the distinguished French historian of religion Louis Châtellier, author of the acclaimed *Europe of the devout* (Cambridge, 1989), analyses the impulses to missionary activity at the end of the Middle Ages, and the specific conception of Ignatius Loyola. The author then outlines the development of missionary activity after the Council of Trent, particularly that of the Jesuits and the Capuchins: he details how these missions provided both a propagandistic counter to Protestantism in areas where the Reformation was a threat and also a revival of piety and doctrine in those areas not under such a threat.

In the second part Professor Châtellier discusses the type of religion proffered by the missionaries, examining a variety of key themes in Catholic belief, including the roles of the deity, of the cross and of Satan. The book contains a concluding summary of the impact of these rural missions up to the French Revolution, and documents the way in which they changed in reaction to external social and political circumstance.

Now available in English for the first time, *The religion of the poor* is an accessible insight into the rural religion of 1500–1800, and is suitable for students and scholars of European religious, social and cultural history at all levels.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The religion of the poor

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

This book is published as part of the joint publishing agreement established in 1977 between the Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge. Titles published under this arrangement may appear in any European language or, in the case of volumes of collected essays, in several languages.

New books will appear either as individual titles or in one of the series which the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and the Cambridge University Press have jointly agreed to publish. All books published jointly by the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and the Cambridge University Press will be distributed by the Press throughout the world.

Cet ouvrage est publié dans le cadre de l'accord de co-édition passé en 1977 entre la Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme et le Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge. Toutes les langues européennes sont admises pour les titres couverts par cet accord, et les ouvrages collectifs peuvent paraître en plusieurs langues.

Les ouvrages paraissent soit isolément, soit dans l'une des séries que la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme et Cambridge University Press ont convenu de publier ensemble. La distribution dans le monde entier des titres ainsi publiés conjointement par les deux établissements est assurée par Cambridge University Press.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The religion of the poor

Rural missions in Europe and the formation
of modern Catholicism, c.1500–c.1800

Louis Châtellier

Translated by Brian Pearce



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Maison des Sciences de l'Homme

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521562010

© Cambridge University Press 1997

Originally published in French by Aubier as *La religion des pauvres: les missions rurales en Europe et la formation du catholicisme moderne xvième-xixième siècles*

© 1993, Aubier, Paris

First published in English by Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme 1997 as *The religion of the poor: rural missions in Europe and the formation of modern catholicism, c. 1500–1800*

© in the English translation Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme 1997

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1997

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Châtellier, Louis.

[Religion des pauvres. English]

The religion of the poor: rural missions in Europe and the formation of modern Catholicism, c. 1500 – c. 1800 / Louis Châtellier; translated by Brian Pearce.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 56201 5

1. Catholic Church – Missions – Europe – History. 2. Church work with the poor – Catholic Church – History. 3. Church work with the poor – Europe – History. 4. Catholic Church – Europe – History – Modern period, 1500– . 5. Europe – Church history. 6. Europe – Religious life and customs.

I. Title.

BV2900.C4313 1997

266'24–dc21 96-45552 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-56201-0 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xiii
Part I The extent of the missions in Europe	1
1 From the Middle Ages to modern times	3
2 The spirit of the Council	12
3 From the missionary impulse to the impossible mission	37
4 Apotheosis	60
Part II The world disillusioned	91
5 God	93
6 The cross	108
7 Bread	131
8 From pardon to salvation	148
9 Satan	162
Part III Towards a new religion	185
10 Changing the village	187
11 The missions challenged	206
12 From the religion of the poor to the religion of modern times	220
Conclusion	234
<i>Index</i>	237
	vii

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Illustrations

Maps

(drawn by Annik Châtellier-Schon)

1	The mission centres of the Jesuits and the Capuchins in the southern Netherlands, c. 1640.	<i>page</i> 20
2	The principal mission centres of the Jesuits in Silesia in the first half of the seventeenth century.	27
3	The sphere of influence of a small Jesuit mission centre in Pomerania (Wałcz) at the end of the seventeenth century and in the first half of the eighteenth.	50
4	Missions subsidised by the King and the clergy of France in the dioceses after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685–7.	53
5	Regions regularly visited by Jesuit missionaries from Madrid and Toledo as a result of foundations established between 1680 and 1750.	63
6	The missions of Pedro Calatayud, 1718–1760.	64
7	Three years' work by a missionary. The missions of Father Mailliardoz in Switzerland 1715–18.	68
8	The mission centres of the Society of Jesus in Hungary and its borderlands in the first years of the eighteenth century.	73
9	The Jesuit missions in Bavaria in the eighteenth century, 1718–52: first period, 1718–22; second period, 1723–32; third period; 1733–52.	80–2
10a	The royal missions in Lorraine, 1741–66.	83
10b	The village missions of Jean-Martin Moÿe in Lorraine 1783–91.	84
11	The Pontchâteau calvary and its surroundings.	112
12	The missions of Father François-Xavier Duplessis, SJ, and the spread of the cult of the cross in northern France, 1738–44.	118

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

	List of illustrations	ix
13	The first Redemptorist establishments in southern Italy in the time of Alfonso de Liguori (d.1787).	189
	Figures	
1	Welcoming the missionaries	41
2	The sermon	71
3	The good works performed by the mission: charity, mass, procession	144

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

When we read the great writers we sometimes wonder if, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, religion was a privilege of the rich. What, in the sermons, the pastoral letters and, still more, the works of spirituality by Bossuet, Fénelon and Massillon – who yet were bishops – could have been understood by the humble countryfolk of their dioceses? The Council of Trent (1545–63), which regulated religious life in Catholic countries for almost three centuries, made it an obligation for prelates to instruct the faithful. In every village there was a church and, almost everywhere, there was a priest responsible, under the guidance of his bishop, for instructing his parishioners and serving them the sacraments. What he said and what he thought of them is practically unknown to us. It may be that, before the beginning of the eighteenth century – meaning, until priests were trained in diocesan seminaries – their sermons and instructions, indeed their entire pastoral work, were in many cases confined to essentials. That was why the Popes and the bishops considered it useful to make up for this lack of zeal by sending missionaries into the towns and, especially, into the country districts. These missionaries stayed for eight days, fifteen days or a month in a certain place, where they instructed the people, prepared them for confession and communion, and tried to pacify quarrels and establish peace in the village before leaving for other places where they would perform the same task.

In Early Modern times (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries) those missionaries travelled around Europe while others were taking the Gospel to Asia or America. Both groups compiled reports for their superiors in which they described the regions and the people assigned to their care, the instruction they imparted and the sermons they delivered to them, the ceremonies they organised and, sometimes, the unusual events which they had had the opportunity to observe. These documents have been for several years objects of interest to historians and ethnologists specialising in the study of extra-European societies, and have provided them with very valuable information in all branches of

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii Preface

knowledge. (See on this subject the works of Serge Gruzinski and his team about the American field of operations.)

As regards Europe it must be admitted that the documents in question are not interesting to ethnologists to the same extent as the others. The missionaries who wrote them were little concerned to describe a landscape that was familiar to them, or customs which often seemed similar to those they knew already. It is on how the Church's teachings were diffused among the poor, and also on how the latter received them, that the European missionaries' reports furnish information. Thanks to what they tell us, we can attempt our analysis of rural Christianity in the epoch of Baroque civilisation and in the age of Enlightenment.

A choice had to be made in carrying out this investigation. If I have dealt mostly with the eighteenth century this is, in the first place, because good studies on the previous period, especially in France, are already available (for example those of Alain Croix and Fanch Roudaut on Brittany and of Bernard Dompnier on Dauphiné). But it also seemed to me that an approach, by way of the missions, to the Catholic religion as it was on the eve of a crisis – that of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution – from which it was to emerge quite transformed might be a way of understanding, through its origins, the nature of present-day Catholicism.

This study covers a wide area of Western, Southern and Central Europe because it seemed to me hard to understand the history of Catholicism after the Council of Trent, and especially, perhaps, in the eighteenth century, without situating this history in a sufficiently extensive setting. There could be no question of covering all the European missions, even if this were possible, and still less of examining all the mission reports that still exist. What was essential was to work on a group of reports, all drawn from the same period (1700–70), but from different regions.

My search for mission reports took me from Naples to Rome, from Rome to Madrid, from Madrid to Paris, from Paris to Brussels, from Brussels to Zurich, from Zurich to Munich and Regensburg. I was excellently received in all these places, especially by the archivists of the various religious orders, both central and regional. Nor was that all: I shall always remember the fruitful discussions, about the past or the present, which accompanied me as I was writing these pages. Great institutions such as the French School in Rome, the Casa de Velazquez in Madrid and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst helped me at various stages of my research. To all I express my deepest thanks. As for my wife, who has been so closely associated with this protracted task, this book of mine is hers as well.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56201-0 - The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–c. 1800

Louis Châtellier

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Abbreviations

ACJM Paris	Archives of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (Eudists), Paris
AC, Paris	Archives of the Capuchin Fathers, Paris
ADMM	Departmental Archives of Meurthe-et-Moselle, Nancy
AHN, Madrid	Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid
AJF, Vanves	Archives of the French Jesuits, Vanves
AN, Luxemburg	National Archives, Luxemburg
AN, Paris	National Archives, Paris
AOF	Archives de l'Oratoire de France
APM, Paris	Archives of the Missionary Fathers, Paris
ARB, Brussels	Belgian Royal Archives, Brussels
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Rome
ASJ, Cologne	Archives of the Society of Jesus, Cologne
ASJ, Zurich	Archives of the Society of Jesus, Zurich
ASS, Paris	Archives of the Company of Priests of Saint-Sulpice, Paris
BH, Munich	Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich
BM, Nancy	Municipal Library, Nancy
BN, Madrid	Biblioteca nacional, Madrid
BN, Paris	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
BSJ, Chantilly	Library of the Society of Jesus, Chantilly
BZAR	Bischöfliches Zentralarchiv Regensburg
CPF, Rome	Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, Rome
OP, Munich	Oberdeutsche Provinz SJ, Munich
SA, Mainz	Stadtarchiv, Mainz

Dictionaries

<i>Catho.</i>	<i>Catholicisme hier, aujourd'hui, demain</i>
<i>DHGE</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique</i>
<i>DTC</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
<i>Dict. spir.</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de spiritualité</i>
<i>LTK</i>	<i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i>