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**COUNTER-REVOLUTION TO THE TEST OF RELIGION:
THE EXAMPLE OF THE MONSEIGNEUR OF MERCY
(Summary)**

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Tocqueville wrote in a chapter fragment on the Directory that “the punishment of exile” taught nothing. The topic of emigrants who neither learnt nor forgot anything, assimilated to counter-revolution, fuelled the national French imagination and the historiographical memory of the Revolution. However, by integrating counter-revolution into the revolutionary process and ascribing their entire importance to individual strategies and practices and the reconstruction of factual events, the works penned by Jean-Clément Martin have shown that counter-revolution was far from representing a rigid formation diabolised by its adversaries. Such an example is the Bishop of Luçon, the Monseigneur of Mercy.

An immediate victim of the revolutionary policy, the Terror is not for Mercy (as it was for Joseph de Maistre), a necessary consequence of the revolutionary principle. Whereas, for this man of the Church, the French are mere instruments in the hands of Divine Providence, not all of them are to be blamed, according to him. His theology allows him to not only discuss the political autonomy highlighted by the Revolution but also understand – beyond the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual – the differentiation of the public and private fields and their institutionalisation during the Revolution. The period of exile could approach the end. After a few more years of patiently waiting, to the French weary of the Revolution (not enough, though, to believe that Monarchy could advantageously replace the Republic), Bonaparte gave a government equally against the Old Regime and the Terror to practice a moderate policy to which the Catholic Church and its exiled clergy could rally at an acceptable cost, though bringing an end to the Gallican Church.

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