Letters to Lucie: Spirituality, Friendship, and Politics during the Dreyfus Affair

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When men throw themselves into action, and the affair is particularly strong and passionate, the motives which animate them are various, diverse: the feeling for justice, the passion for truth, the taste for struggle, the search for glory, the defense of principles, the need for the ideal. And these sentiments can, by turns or simultaneously, act upon men's consciences without their being able to limit or recognize exactly what motives they are obeying.

But the love of principles, the thirst for the ideal, when they are the exclusive motivation of action, are the attribute only of a few.

After the campaign [action], it is the return to normal life, with its pettiness, its needs, its necessities. We become what we were: complicated machines, animated by good and bad sentiments.

Mathieu Dreyfus, 1901

While Mathieu Dreyfus accepted this descent into the mundane, Charles Péguy protested it. Notre jeunesse (1910) lamented what he saw as the tragic degeneration of the Dreyfusard movement from a lofty "mystique" into a mere ideological politique. In a scathing polemic, this militant socialist and Catholic celebrated the early Dreyfusard campaign as embodying the greatest religious impulses of humanity. He identified the righteous passion that reached beyond the temporal hold of the church, inspiring a love of truth and justice permeated by the primary Christian virtue of charity. He bemoaned the way this mystique of "sainthood" and "heroism" had been corrupted by the political maneuverings of men on his own side.¹

¹ Charles Péguy, Notre jeunesse (Paris, 1957), esp. 58–132. For the best coverage of this little-known period of the affair, see Alfred Dreyfus, Carnets (1899–1907), with the invaluable editorial commentary and notes of Philippe Oriol (Paris, 1998). Péguy condemned the radical and social-
Péguy’s characterization of the movement as a mystique has never really penetrated the interpretive historiography of the affair. Although often cited, the insight is taken for granted, not subject to serious examination.2 The keen identification with Dreyfus and his family, the crusading zeal that inspired the major protagonists and even the rank and file, the visceral dedication to righting a judicial error that was seen as a moral blot on France—historians allude to such feelings but do not feel that they are part of their domain. At times such passionate emotions are given a secondary role when they are linked to the petitions of the Ligue des droits de l’homme and hence analyzed as part of “engagement.”3 But by being the preserve of the “intellectuals,” such novelties are taken to suggest that engagement was envisaged in rationalist terms. Both for contemporaries and in the historiography, this interpretation encouraged an uncritical veneration of the Dreyfusards’ most cherished self-perceptions.4

From the very beginning, the pro-Dreyfusard historiography of the affair was rationalist and civil libertarian, animated by an attempt to detach itself from what was seen as the political and religious fanaticism of the Right. Joseph Reinach, the mainstream Republican politician who was the metteur en scène of the Dreyfusard cause, inaugurated this tradition with his seven-volume history between 1901 and 1908;
in it he marshaled thousands of documents, established a chronology, and provided a narrative of verifiable facts that was a monumental positivist response to what he saw as the monstrous fabrications of the Right. The Dreyfusard editor Pierre-Victor Stock published 129 books on the affair, 76 of which were documentary editions to provide the bewildered public with “rational” evidence on which to make a better judgment.

This self-conscious embrace of “intellectualism” gave a false impression of the Dreyfusards’ mystique, a mixture of reason and emotion that released tremendous psychological and political energy. For example, when Emile Zola offered his eloquent and passionate advocacy of Dreyfus’s innocence in his open letter, “J’accuse,” the intellectuals embraced him as the epitome of their mystique. But while they supported Zola as a fellow intellectual, and even allowed a secularized vision of a universalized Christ, the Dreyfusards were less comfortable with the sentimental and genuinely religious effusions of their own rank and file.

These were men, but especially women, who were, in Daniel Halévy’s description, “pleurant sur le martyr.” To counter such disdainful remarks, feminist historians have highlighted the achievements of women like Caroline Rémy, whose journalism for *La fronde* under the pseudonym of Séverine was as important as that of many of their male counterparts. But such a response fails to acknowledge the way in which Halévy somehow captured the essence of many women’s activities. The letters written to Lucie Dreyfus analyzed here are significant

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7 Christopher Forth, in *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (Baltimore, 2004), 81–90, describes how this “intellectual” label caused problems for Dreyfusards, who were unhappy with the Right’s portrayal of them as “sedentary,” “bespectacled,” and “cerebral.”
precisely because they reveal the “compassionate” and “religious” sensibility that pervaded the Dreyfusard movement, hence offering a novel vision of what animated the cause célèbre.

There are more than four hundred letters of this kind, written largely during the period when Alfred Dreyfus was on Devil’s Island (1895–99) and after his transfer to Rennes for his second court-martial in the summer of 1899. Missives also flooded in at the moment of his pardon in September of that year, when correspondents expressed their pleasure at his release as well as their horror at his second condemnation. They reflect the high-water mark of the epistolary mode in Western society. The fin de siècle was the era of letter writing, before the widespread use of the telephone and when mass literacy made it possible for even the most humble to write to a stranger. The letters range from the most educated and articulate to the most unsophisticated, with poor women, semiliterate children, and even the occasional peasant undertaking to write. For the highbrow, this was an act of fluent ease, an integral part of daily routine; for the less-well-favored, expression was more difficult, and we can only wonder how many brouillons were scratched out before the final draft was dispatched.

While the wives of some Dreyfusards discussed politics and tactics with Lucie—and gave vent to their Republican and often anticlerical sentiments—most women offered their moral support and spiritual advice. In their letters, they prayed for Alfred and Lucie and likened them to Christ and Mary, seeking through biblical quotation and religious precepts to find meaning in the couple’s joint “martyrdom.” Their emotional and spiritual impulses, their tireless emphasis on ecumenicism, sat uncomfortably with the leading anticlerics of the movement, who increasingly supported an intolerant version of laïcité. For these women correspondents, religion was at the heart of Dreyfusard politics and demonstrates how, in their case, the conventional divide between the religious and secular simply did not apply.

While the letters just described largely came from inconnus or acquaintances, a second set of letters to be analyzed here came from close associates, from men and women who had staked their emotional and political identity on Captain Dreyfus’s release and exoneration.

13 For this key event in the history of the affair, the world in which it took place, and the emotions it inspired, see Colette Cosnier and André Hélard, Rennes et Dreyfus en 1899: Une ville, un procès (Paris, 1999).

14 The Dreyfusard family papers are now at the Musée d’art et d’histoire du judaïsme (hereafter MAHJ); see Olympe Havet in 97.17.51.26, Paris, Dec. 6, 1899, and Noémie Pschiari in 97.17.042.85, Paris, Mar. 13, 1900, who both expressed anticlerical sentiments. They were the wives of leading Dreyfusards, and their remarks were rare among Lucie’s female correspondents.
They were dedicated to extending the cause of rationalism but were vividly aware that this required a quasi-religious dedication. Intellect and passion were fused in their advocacy, as they dedicated themselves to the cause without hesitation, in a manner that confirmed Péguy’s vision of a pure mystique.¹⁵

These letters, especially in the wake of the Rennes verdict in 1899, show the difficulty of maintaining the mystique in the face of personal disenchantment and latent anti-Semitism. The euphoria of Dreyfus’s subsequent release and pardon was followed by keen disillusionment, as Dreyfusards sought to cope with the possibility that he might never receive the full public rehabilitation he deserved. The Dreyfuses thus had to broker a series of competing expectations in the midst of apparent political failure. Before Rennes, the idea of an absent and tortured Dreyfus personalized the affair and idealized him as a hero. But in their view, Alfred’s behavior after his pardon—with what were perceived as his human weakness and even pusillanimity—jeopardized the cause. These letters show both the centrality of friendship and shared ideals in the creation of a cause célèbre, as well as the instability of a political movement in which such exalted emotions played a key role.

The nature of this emotional ebb and flow is inexplicable without a bare chronology of the affair itself. Each stage had its dramas and disclosures, periods of anticipation and hope, followed by despondency and even despair. From his initial arrest to his transportation in 1894–95, the family lived in shamed isolation, broken by the realization that Dreyfus had been condemned on the basis of a dossier secret that they had never seen.¹⁶ They knew nothing of Georges Picquart’s activities in the Statistical Section in 1896, and this officer’s success in uncovering the real culprit, Walsin Esterhazy.¹⁷ Picquart was the “second” hero of the affair, admired for his courage in resisting his superiors’ attempts to conceal the judicial error, and suffering in consequence a period of imprisonment in 1898 for divulging classified information.¹⁸ It was only in 1897 that Mathieu Dreyfus independently uncovered Esterhazy’s guilt and learned of Picquart’s involvement, but his subsequent public accusation of Esterhazy led merely to the latter’s acquittal. As a result, Zola intervened, accusing the government and the military of a cover-up. The Dreyfusards expected much from this public

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¹⁵ Alas, we do not always have Lucie’s response to these letters.
¹⁶ See this moving series of family letters at MAHJ series 97.17.30.
¹⁸ See Francis de Pressensé, Un héros: Le Colonel Picquart (Paris, 1898). Picquart was imprisoned in the military fortress of Mont Valérien in January 1898; for the details of the charges against him, see Bredin, Affair, 318–19.
campaign, but despite its success in mobilizing support, Zola’s letter failed to bring about a revision of the case. Indeed, it was not until the suicide on August 31, 1898, of Lieutenant Colonel Henry—an officer who admitted to forging a document to reinforce Dreyfus’s conviction—that Alfred’s return from Devil’s Island for a second court-martial was assured. He came back to France disoriented and ill, so emaciated that he needed cotton wadding to fill out the uniform that hung from his sticklike frame. The rejoicing among the Dreyfusards proved short-lived. He was again found guilty in September 1899—albeit in a split decision—and condemned to ten years’ imprisonment. Although pardoned almost immediately, he was not fully rehabilitated until 1906.\textsuperscript{19}

Lucie Dreyfus was central to the cause, yet veiled behind the public activism of her brother-in-law, Mathieu.\textsuperscript{20} As his posthumous memoir, \textit{L’affaire telle que je l’ai vécue} (1978), revealed, in the early years he cajoled, argued, paid informers, and spent hours with a famous medium, Léonie, in the desperate hope that she might help him uncover the real culprit.\textsuperscript{21} His unwavering fraternal devotion was central to the conduct and high moral tone of the affair, his personal warmth and acuity an inspiration for collaborators. But Lucie was no less vital. From the moment of Alfred’s arrest on October 15, 1894, she endured the searches, harangues, and innuendos of abusive officers.\textsuperscript{22} She persisted in proclaiming his innocence and fought against obstructions to visit and console him, despite the often illegal and frightening tactics used against her. When Dreyfus was condemned in December 1894 and then transferred to the Ile-de-Ré before transportation to Devil’s Island, she was not even permitted to kiss him good-bye, even though she had offered to have her hands tied behind her back so that she could not pass messages.\textsuperscript{23} Her letters to men in power in the early years

\textsuperscript{19} There are many books that tell this story, but a good brief account of chronology is Denis Bon, \textit{L’affaire Dreyfus} (Paris, 1999).
\textsuperscript{20} Michael Burns, \textit{Dreyfus: A Family Affair, 1789–1945} (New York, 1991), 171–94. The letters of Mathieu to Alfred during his stay on Devil’s Island testify to an extraordinary devotion; see MAHJ series 97.17.30.
\textsuperscript{22} Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises (hereafter BN, NAF) 24895, Lucie Dreyfus to Joseph Reinach, n.d., pieces 2–3; and Bredin, \textit{Affair}, 70.
of his incarceration often went unanswered, while those she wrote to Alfred took months to arrive.

When the case turned into an affair toward the end of 1897, Lucie gained further significance as a focus for idealization and identification in the Dreyfusard press. The famous “reporteresses” of La fronde, the feminist newspaper founded in December 1897, marveled at her courage in trying to join her husband in his captivity, knowing that the torrid heat and contaminated food might mean a death sentence for them both.24 They recorded the way she defied witnesses who claimed her husband had confessed,25 applauded her struggle against ministerial inhumanity,26 and endorsed the way she furthered the case through petitions, letters, and well-timed legal interventions. Her decision to wear black until her husband’s return was seen as another indication of her “virtuous” and “noble” comportment.

Their empathy was evident in the way they reported on Lucie chez elle, hence identifying with a woman whose natural destiny was her peaceful “foyer,” now disrupted by the turbulence of a campaign for her husband’s rehabilitation.27 Other newspapers, such as Le Figaro, admired her iron will in hiding their father’s dishonor from her innocent children28 and later explained how “maternal love” had confined the children in such “a prison so gentle” that they were prevented from having friends and learned their lessons at home.29 They published Dreyfus’s letters in which he credited her with his survival, her quiet strength and resolve seen as the crucial inspirations enabling him to fight against intolerable odds: “All that I can say to you is that, night and day, at all hours, at every minute, my heart, my thoughts, everything that is alive in me is for you, for our children.”30 What touched readers was this intimate drama of a loving couple torn from each other by injustice, and the implications of this injustice for their children, their wider family, and for France.


28 Charles Chincholle, “Avant le retour de Dreyfus à Rennes,” Le Figaro, June 29, 1899; but this discussion of her determination to hide the dishonor from her children was common across the Dreyfusard press. Pierre Dreyfus maintained that he had absolutely no sense of his father’s plight until Alfred returned to his family in Carpentras after his pardon in Sept. 1899. See Burns, Dreyfus, 275–76. This policy was not shared by all the major protagonists. Mathieu Dreyfus and Joseph Reinauch told their children about events from early on; see ibid., 344.


So unimpeachable was Lucie’s character that one journalist remarked that at Rennes “she does not at all have the air of asking for justice. One would say that she is justice herself.” 31 La constitution commented on her remarkable willingness to knock at every door: “She, the wife of the Jew, has sustained the republican press, encouraged Zola and Picquart, invoked the impartial intervention of the judges of the Cour de Cassation.” 32 Her refusal at Rennes to accept the magnificent bouquets that so many well-wishers sought to bestow upon her was seen as dignity personified: “We have no cause for celebration. I will only rejoice on the day of the acquittal. Until then, no flowers, no dinners, no receptions. Let us only think of the unfortunate who awaits so painfully the proclamation of his innocence.” 33 By calling her “the wife of the Jew,” La constitution had not only evoked the status of Jews in Christian society— those who were persecuted and tormented—but associated her with a certain image of la juive, a woman of active virtue. La fronde explicitly paid homage to this “type” when it asserted that Lucie differed from Catholic women—all too willing to submit to the will of God—because of her inexorable determination to see Dreyfus returned to her: “It is no longer the Christian woman who, resigned, offers her sufferings to God and keeps her intimate pains with a sublime renunciation; it is the Jewish wife, for whom the absent husband, the new family are the new patrie and gods. . . . Her weakness finds infinite treasures of initiative and tenacity.” 34

We can only guess whether these associations drew on a fund of literary tradition, such as Rebecca, Sir Walter Scott’s heroine in Ivanhoe (1819), who was one of the most widely loved characters of romantic genre fiction and painting in France. 35 Rebecca tends to the wounded knight and never abjures her faith, showing both her virtue and intellectual prowess throughout the novel. Such ideas once again took shape in La juive, an opera performed endlessly in the nineteenth century, featuring the martyrdom of a virtuous Rachel who refused to convert after falling in love with a Christian nobleman. 36

31 Chincholle, “Avant le retour de Dreyfus à Rennes.”
34 “Osmont,” “Leurs femmes,” La fronde, Mar. 21, 1899.
36 Ronald Schechter of the College of William and Mary is currently working on perceptions of the Jewess in nineteenth-century France; I am grateful to him for conveying this material. See
Activism, martyrdom, and victimhood all came together in painting Lucie’s portrait. Yet there were other moments when the “Jewish” dimension of her character seemed to evaporate in language that associated her more closely with the Virgin and the “Christian” model of suffering that La fronde had fleetingly alluded to. She was portrayed as a “silent” sufferer, a model of “abnegation,” as supporting “the most appalling martyrdom that the annals of Pain have recorded.”

By invoking douleur with a capital D, La fronde came close to suggesting the torments of Jesus’ Mother, who was Notre-Dame de Douleur, obliged to watch the death of her son crucified on the cross.

This elision was not surprising, as New Testament images of suffering pervaded the affair. Dreyfus was regularly portrayed as a Christ figure, an attempt to counter the widespread anti-Dreyfusard association of the Jewish captain with Judas. Théodore Reinach, the brother of Joseph, wrote a short story titled “Gonse-Pilate” in Le siècle, in which he associated General Gonse, one of the central figures in the military conspiracy, with Christ’s treacherous betrayer. In an open letter to Lucie in Aurore, after the captain’s pardon in 1899, Zola described Dreyfus as a “martyr unnailed from his cross,” obliged during his trial to hear witnesses who “covered him with spittle, inflicted numerous stabs, pouring on his wounds gall and vinegar.”

The letters that Lucie received were very much in step with this public exploration of the couple’s joint martyrdom. Indeed, the correspondents’ willingness to write to her about their own problems and to offer advice on hers rested on their conviction that they already “knew” her from the press reports. Their solidarity was remarkable, as the image of Lucie might easily have turned the other way. Lucie was the daughter of David Hadamard, a wealthy diamond merchant; in their social ascent and fortune, the Hadamards—as much as the Dreyfuses, who had founded a textile dynasty—were potential targets for anti-Semitic envy. Indeed, when the Right evoked the Jewish syndicate pulling the strings of Republican government to release the “traitor” from captivity, they had in mind not only Jewish bankers like the Reinachs and Rothschilds but also families like the Hadamards with their stashes of gold and jewels. However, despite the savagery of their

his unpublished “The Jewish Syndrome: Gender, Sexuality, and the Jewish Question in Modern Europe.”

37 Brémontier, “Chez Madame Dreyfus.”
38 Forth, Dreyfus Affair, 67–70.
39 Ibid., 95–99.
41 See Pierre Birnbaum, Un mythe politique: La “république juive” de Léon Blum à Mendès France
anti-Semitism, newspapers like *La croix* never once attacked Lucie Dreyfus; as a model of motherly and wifely virtue she seemed above assault, even if this did not stop them from attacking other Jewish women whom they felt fell beneath this elevated standard.

Admirers justified their approach to Lucie by remarking on her heroic qualities: “You have given to women in all countries, and particularly to French women, such a noble example of conjugal fidelity and courage in adversity.” She was the “model of the true wife” and the “veritable heroine of modern times”; she was the essence of active virtue, “the strong woman, loyal, energetic, the intangible wife, who defends, with a superhuman courage and at the price of all trials and sacrifices, your martyr husband.”

One woman assured her that “the cross of the Légion d’Honneur” would compensate her for her “sufferings.” An admiring gentleman sought to link Lucie’s courage and nobility to the unsullied essence of womanhood, remarking on a campaign in the newspaper *La dépêche* that praised to the skies her impeccable attitude since her husband’s arrest. Citing Victor Hugo, the paper had suggested that “in the midst of the most shameful lowness, only women stay great.”

Letters awaiting Dreyfus’s return during June 1899 were full of celebratory anticipation. One officer’s wife wrote, “Yesterday again I was crying with joy in thinking about the emotion you would experience in seeing your dear husband again!” Another could barely contain her emotion: “For months, I have not stopped thinking of you, and I suffered, really suffered, all your moral tortures.” She was so overcome that she kept on going to Lucie’s house on the rue Chateaudun “with a mad desire” to introduce herself and only stopped herself for fear of

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42 See Pierre Sorlin, *La croix et les juifs (1880–1899)* (Paris, 1967); I read *La croix* for the whole period of the affair and did not uncover the insulting remarks I expected.

43 This did not stop them from elaborating the image of the Jewish ogress, women who kidnapped Christian children so that Jewish men might ritually slaughter them for their blood to make matzo. See their discussion of this in Anon., “Vol d’une petite fille par une femme juive à Jérusalem,” *La croix*, Apr. 28, 1898. For the prevalence of these fantasies and the history of ritual murder and the increase of such cases in the fin de siècle in Europe, see Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher’s Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town* (New York, 2002), 91–134.

44 MAHJ 97.17.032.01 Clémence Dally, Sept. 16, 1899.


46 MAHJ 97.17.033.91 Clara Darcey Roche, Paris, June 7, 1899.

47 MAHJ 97.17.033.128 George de Rozières, Limoges, June 30, 1899.

48 MAHJ 97.17.032.42 Eugénie Defaux, Grenoble, June 30, 1899.
being taken “as an indiscreet or extravagant person.” She lingered on an empathetic fantasy that envisaged Lucie’s reunion with her husband and his with their children.  

Similar compassionate outpourings focused on Alfred’s mental and physical health. Who could not be moved by the tale of his suffering, reported in detail in the Dreyfusard press, of the time when a palisade was constructed to obscure his view of the sea or when his hands were manacled to his bed while he slept? One woman who had worked with Siberian exiles warned Lucie not to worry if her husband was unable to “express emotions of happiness or hope,” to remember that it might take as long as four to six years “of family life . . . to make minds which have suffered too much function morally.”  

Women fretted over Dreyfus’s digestive disorder, identifying with her wifely concerns to bring him back to health. Often, in the same letter, they would switch their identification from her to her husband. One correspondent recounted how her “nerves had been tested by fatigue, trials, disappointment, the work of anguish” and recommended a patented flour that would take away “nausea and bitterness,” physical sensations that referred, perhaps, to the same emotional states. Another woman, claiming a neighborly connection from Alsace, wanted Lucie to know that, like Alfred, she too was in exile, where she “suffered the most poignant moral and physical tortures”: Sicily was her Devil’s Island, and she also put her faith in a certain flour as a sure means of the captain’s moral and physical redemption.  

Such missives demonstrated how letter writers sought to relate their own stories to Lucie and Alfred as much as to offer them support.  

Repeatedly, correspondents wrote of Lucie’s trials in a Catholic idiom. One Catholic widow from Lorraine and a military family proudly told how she and her mother followed “with a painful and deep sympathy the last stages of your Calvary.” This metaphor of her Calvary was reiterated in several letters, and thus unconsciously associated Lucie with Christ’s travails. At other times, she was Mary who “consoles” “the poor martyr,” becoming the “most noble . . . woman.” They too took up the association between Dreyfus and Christ, with one woman asking Lucie to send a photograph of her husband so that she could give it a “place of honor next to our Christ!” on her mantelpiece.

50 MAHJ 97.17.032.44 Gabrielle Degois, Versailles, July 2, 1899.  
51 MAHJ 97.17.032.165 Thyn Catherine Alberdingk, June 11, 1899.  
52 MAHJ 97.17.032.141 Marie Dumas, n.d.  
53 MAHJ 97.17.032.93 Marie Dollman, Sicily, Aug. 10, 1899.  
54 MAHJ 97.17.032.69 Marie Derevogue, Châlons, July 20, 1899.  
56 MAHJ 97.17.032. 128, Marie Dubois, Sept. 20, 1899.
assured her that “the resurrection of your husband is as assured as that of Christ,” while still another suggested that Alfred “incarnated...all of human pain.”  

Another ascribed a Christlike forgiveness to Dreyfus, fantasizing how, upon his return, his enemies would bow in shame, fearing vengeance but receiving only Dreyfus’s “sublime gesture of pity.”

Such imagery pervaded the correspondence because devout Catholics wanted to show their support for the cause. A woman scientist expressed her view that “all really French women, really Christian women,” would swear an oath of “eternal devotion” to the Dreyfus family. They sought repeatedly to demonstrate their ecumenicism, with one Catholic woman proclaiming that she and her friends did not admit “divisions in the struggle of the ‘only God’ for all religions”; they had “no other objective in life than these two primordial principles: Charity and Justice.” Such a remark suggests that Péguy’s religious characterization of the mystique of the Dreyfusard cause was shared by women like her. Another representative of a Catholic youth organization wanted Lucie to know that “we have not forgotten the people of Israel and their impending restoration,” while a prominent Catholic lawyer in Italy offered his services to prove “to the Catholic clergy and to all the world that one can be a Jew and a noble heart and patriot at the same time.” Perhaps the most extraordinary of these testimonies came from an Alsatian Catholic who accompanied his missive of support with a copy of a letter written to a vituperative anti-Dreyfusard priest in 1895, just days after Dreyfus’s first condemnation. Not only did this letter prove the author’s claim that he had pleaded for Dreyfus in an era when virtually everyone thought him guilty, but it also chastised the priest for spreading anti-Semitic hatred: “Is it your vocation, M. l’Abbé, to cry crucify the traitor, crucify the coward? You have not noticed at all that this man has a rare and constant courage, and that he exhibits a completely tranquil conscience. Have you never read the Bible? It was also a traitor, a Jew coward, who said: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’”

Other letters show the range of religious, regional, and national interests that came together, a shifting coalition in which Lucie served

59 MAHJ 97.17.032.65 Alma Deo, Sept. 16, 1899.
60 MAHJ 97.17.034.66 Louise Villiers, Paris, June 27, 1899.
62 MAHJ 97.17.04.71 L. De Vylder, Obernai, Nov. 1, 1898. In French, “Ce que vous avez fait à un de ces plus petits de mes frères, vous l’avez fait à moi” (Matt. 25:40).
as a screen for myriad projections. While these adherents were welcome, they often represented minority or “foreign” interests that would have confirmed anti-Dreyfusard fantasies of internal subversion linked with external threat. Protestants, for example, identified with Jews as a persecuted minority and evoked their own history; they spoke of the late-seventeenth-century Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which withdrew their rights to limited tolerance, and referred to the Calas affair as evidence of Catholicism’s long history of persecution.

This affair concerned a Huguenot textile merchant who was accused in 1761 of murdering his eldest son to stop him from converting to Catholicism; Calas was broken on the wheel and his son buried as a Catholic martyr. The case became a cause célèbre when Voltaire intervened, triggering a public inquiry that led to Calas’s rehabilitation and the promulgation of an edict of tolerance. The Calas case inspired the Dreyfusards, even if they glossed over the details of the two episodes to exaggerate their similarities: while Calas was immediately “martyred” and his “resurrection” a posthumous event, Dreyfus lived on in Devil’s Island.

Joseph Reinach was unconcerned with these distinctions when, in August 1897, he sought to convert Auguste Scheurer-Kestner—vice president of the Senate, Alsatian, and Protestant—to the Dreyfusard cause by addressing him as Arouet, Voltaire’s real name. He repeatedly made the link between Scheurer’s would-be activism and the philosophe’s prominent role in defending the Protestant of the eighteenth century. For Reinach, both the past and the present were a time for heroes: “I give you only one piece of advice: it is to reread the Calas affair. It is always exactly the same obstacles, the same difficulties, the same arguments. Only the names have changed. The king’s ministers employed the same tricks. And Voltaire’s noble impatience is little different from yours.”

64 For the relations between the two “affairs,” see Raoul Allier, Voltaire et Calas: Une affaire judiciaire au XVIIIème siècle (Paris, 1898); and Edgar Sanderson, Historic Parallels to L’Affaire Dreyfus (London, 1900). See also Voltaire, L’affaire Calas (Paris, 1975); and André Castelot, L’affaire Calas (Paris, 1965).
Others also picked up the parallel: one Protestant from Castres wrote to Lucie after the Rennes trial that “your husband undergoes martyrdom with the same innocence as my coreligionists, Calas and Sirven, underwent it in 1762.” They referred repeatedly to a common Jewish-Protestant commitment to the Old Testament, especially the prophets, with their emphasis on inner conviction and godly behavior rather than outward displays and ritual. Their sense of a shared God was evoked by one Protestant wife of a cavalry officer, who wrote to Lucie: “Let me tell you that the small herd of Protestant Christians in Laôn, for a long time, call out cries of appeal toward your God, who is our own.” She continued by quoting the plaintive cry from the prophets, “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel,” and concluded that nonetheless God would in time intervene and save Dreyfus. Time and again it was Protestants who made reference to the God of Abraham and Isaac and the certainty that he would come to Lucie and Alfred’s aid. One Alsatian woman promised to pray and to ask “our brothers the Jews to unite with us in order to pray for the deliverance of your dear husband,” openly stating her ecumenical creed and concluding her letter with biblical quotations of God’s strength and power. For Protestant women, as much as for their Catholic counterparts, the affair excited moral outrage and provided a context for spiritual reawakening and ecumenicism.

Jews too wrote to Lucie, but in remarkably small numbers. The grand rabbi of France, Zadoc Kahn, who had married the Dreyfuses, wrote from Switzerland in November 1898. The rabbi believed that it was the “seventh sound of the trumpet which is going to make the walls of Jericho fall down,” a biblical allusion that expressed the sense of imminent triumph among the “Parisian Jews present at Interlaken.” Ernestine, his wife, completed the picture by adding that “we are so moved, so beside ourselves, it is [difficult to know] who is the least calm.”

Jews named Dreyfus explained how they had been victimized by association, with one I. M. Dreyfus, a police commissioner, relating

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68 MAH 97.17.033.007, Camille Rabaud, Castres, Sept. 10, 1899.
69 One Alsatian theologian, Louis Leblois, father of the eminent Dreyfusard of the same name, was important in elaborating these ideas. See his Les Bibles et les initiateurs religieux de l’humanité (Paris, 1887), 3:72–272. For the importance of this tendency in biblical and religious studies, see Perrine Simon-Nahum, La cité investie: La “science du Judaïsme” française et la République (Paris, 1991), 237–39.
71 MAH 97.17.053.60 Emma Richter, Brighton, Sept. 1899.
72 MAH 97.17.043.96 Zadoc Kahn, Interlaken, Nov. 2, 1899.
73 MAH 97.17.043.96 Ernestine Zadoc-Kahn, Interlaken, Nov. 2, 1899.
how he had been unfairly demoted after Alfred’s conviction in 1895 because of their shared patronym. He was reinstated by the good graces of Ludovic Trarieux, the first president of the Ligue des Droits de l’Homme, a widely respected jurist, and a former minister of justice. But not all Jews saw Dreyfus as a martyr. An A. Dreyfus, who claimed to be a distant relation, believed that the captain’s misfortune was the result of his impiety, while another believed that the affair was God’s plan to remind Jews that “they are a people apart, which they have only too often forgotten.” Assimilation, he warned, meant that they were unequal to the task of defending fellow Jews now being persecuted in Algeria, Austria, and Bohemia.

Even though small in number, they reflect the different positions that Jews took up vis-à-vis the affair. Zadoc Kahn’s report suggests it was at the forefront of their preoccupations, while the letters of the demoted official and his wife show remarkable solidarity, despite their suffering. These men and women shared the language of martyrdom and victimhood that inspired their Christian counterparts, interpreting the affair as a religious trial. But the angry, critical tone of the other correspondents reveals a more troubled dimension of Jewish feeling. Until the affair, French Jews had perceived themselves as privileged inhabitants in the “land of liberty”; while the incidence of anti-Semitism grew everywhere, “enlightened” France provided a tolerant home for their patriotic passions. They looked at the pogroms in Russia in the early 1880s and regarded such monstrous attacks as the result of an outmoded autocracy that, thankfully, the French regime did not emulate. The violence of the affair threatened such optimistic beliefs; assimilation, some argued, had brought God’s just chastisement. For the last correspondent, the riots in Algeria against Jews in 1898 were the saddest proof that the French were as susceptible as other nations to the scourge of anti-Semitism. Rather than feel solidarity with Dreyfus, he

75 MAHJ 97.12.032.112 A. Dreyfus, Sept. 1899. This man was an Alsatian who had become a German, which might in part account for the extent of his hostility.
76 MAHJ 97.12.032.114 G. Dreyfus, Geneva, June 2, 1899.
77 See Paula Hyman, The Jews of Modern France (Berkeley, CA, 1998), 53–76, in which Hyman describes the difficulties of acculturation but also the desire to be good French citizens.
78 For a survey of Russian persecution, see Hans Rogger, Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia (Basingstoke, 1986).
blamed him for his plight and offered a bleak vision of withdrawal from an anti-Semitic world as the only option.

While Catholics, Protestants, and Jews all had their various agendas, other letters from abroad demonstrated how important the affair was to the world at large. People wrote from North and South America, and from all over Europe, but especially from Switzerland, the Low Countries, and above all England. They reveal the importance of small, individual acts, whether writing letters, signing petitions, talking about the affair, or simply waiting for news of Dreyfus’s release or acquittal. All these activities helped keep the affair alive.

In Switzerland, interest in the case was particularly strong. A woman from Basel recounted the moment when the citizens gathered in front of a newspaper’s offices to await the Rennes verdict. “We Swiss... we are not very... theatrical people; I did not hear exclamations, but I saw men paling when they read the fatal bulletin.” For her, the Dreyfusard cause evoked the struggle of the fourteenth-century Swiss confederation, the group of cantons that allied to thwart the ambitions of the German Empire for more direct rule. The writer recalled the victorious battles that she saw as proof of divine election: “At the battle of Saint Jacques, the Swiss confederates, in struggling against an army ten times more numerous than their own, pulled out the arrows from their breasts to refire them against the enemy. It is necessary to return to the charge, it is necessary to reconquer the honor of your husband and that of your children.”

This woman used a mythological vision of the Swiss past to justify her Dreyfusard position.

The same strategy was deployed by other nationals, a dynamic observed among the English, who wrote in the greatest number to Lucie. Their solidarity was nonetheless ambivalent, informed by a great power rivalry when, at the height of the controversy surrounding revision in 1898, the British and French tussled over dominance in the Upper Nile at Fashoda. Such adventures intensified the long-standing British ambivalence toward the French and their culture, revealed in the letters accompanying the 150,000 signatures sent to Lucie by the Daily Chronicle after Rennes.

The petition assured the Dreyfuses that the signatories were “firm friends and deep admirers of the French people and their institu-

82 For more on this history, see Oliver Zimmer, A Contested Nation: History, Memory, and Nationalism in Switzerland, 1761–1891 (Cambridge, 2003), 21–31.
tions,\textsuperscript{84} but letter writers often scarcely hid their pleasure at what they perceived as Gallic shame. One suggested that the “poor,” “victimized” children of Alfred and Lucie would find educational salvation in a British public school, while another attempted to organize a “bodyguard” of British cyclists to protect Dreyfus from the insults of a hostile French crowd when he arrived in Rennes.\textsuperscript{85} While a touching—if eccentric—offer, the letter to Mathieu Dreyfus also displayed a desire to contrast manly British moral courage with French perfidy. A similar psychology led Admiral Jackie Fisher to concoct a rescue plan to save Dreyfus from Devil’s Island when he commanded the West Indies fleet in 1897.\textsuperscript{86}

Both in personal missives and in letters to the editors of the \textit{Daily Chronicle}, British men and woman saw Lucie and Alfred in the same martyrlogical terms as their French counterparts. The Protestant theme was even stronger, however, with one woman from Tunbridge Wells writing a prayer: “May our God, who hears the sorrowful singing of the poor prisoner, still help and support both him and you, and restore him to you and to his children again.”\textsuperscript{87} One Anglican clergyman condemned what he saw as French tyranny: “Apart from any racial considerations the whole civilised world staggered at the suicidal madness of France.”\textsuperscript{88} His remarks suggested, however, that his anti-French sentiments were stronger than his championship of the Jewish cause.

Above all, English evangelicals hated Catholicism:

\begin{quote}
Until the sacrilegious verdict was delivered under the Holy Crucifix! [sic] at Rennes on Saturday last, I was even charitable towards Roman Catholicism and Ritualism.

When, however, I observe the guilty silence of the Roman Catholic priesthood throughout the world towards such a blasphemous outrage of truth, perpetuated under the very image of Him who is the ever living Truth [sic].

I pray the God of Truth to save England and the whole world from a form of religion which is more cruel and injurious than irreligion.\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

The writer had correctly identified the strange alliance that brought fierce Protestants together with irreligious anticlericals. Reinach fa-
mously excoriated Jesuitry and all priest craft, but he was a proud ratio-
nalist who would have found this letter writer’s Protestant piety dif-
ficult to comprehend. In this distinction lay the great difference in 
political and religious sensibility between England and France. Whereas 
in English evangelism the language of conscience and liberal reform-
ism intermingled, among French republicans issues of conscience were 
often explicitly severed from Catholicism. By its perceived link to hier-
archy and the confessional, Catholicism was portrayed as wedded to 
unquestioning authority and oppression. Reinach was a Freemason 
who, like other Republican luminaries, used the power of the lodges to 
oppose the church’s influence, winning through their membership to 
these “diabolical” organizations the increased hatred of their priestly 
opponents.

Despite their prominence, support for Dreyfus in Britain came not 
just from these religious quarters. Liberalism and associative politics 
in government offices, factories, villages, and seaside resorts guaran-
teed many signatures to the petition. One manager from a Hertford-
shire sawmill pointed proudly to the workers’ signatures that adorned 
his letter. Moreover, he took the opportunity to compare the plight of 
the Dreyfus family to that of the Boers, who, he believed, were being 
wrongly “goaded . . . into war” by the unjust policy of the British gov-
ernment. This antijingoist declaration was uniquely insightful; it sought 
to link Dreyfusard humanitarianism with the struggle against the domi-
nation of a “race of honest yeomen” whose right to self-determination 
this letter writer endorsed.90

These unknown supporters’ relationship with Lucie was based on an 
idealization, while her relationship with leading players in the Drey-
fusard struggle reveals a more complicated dynamic. The man to whom 
she owed most was Joseph Reinach, the son of a German Jewish banker 
and prominent member of an international financial dynasty that 
spanned Europe from the Low Countries through German-speaking 
Europe and Italy.91 A disciple of the early Third Republican premier 
Léon Gambetta, he held a vision of French republicanism that was 
meritocratic, populist, and antisocialist.92 Despite his German origins,
he was anti-German and revanchist, even though his brothers, Théodore and Solomon, were crucial intellectual influences in bringing German scholarly techniques and ideas into their study of the ancient world and biblical history.93

Joseph Reinach was convinced that meritocratic republicanism was the only means to ensure continued equality for Jewish citizens. At the heart of his vision was a belief in the Voltairean strand of Enlightenment tolerance, a vision that he had successfully conveyed to Scheurer-Kestner when he lobbied for the latter’s support in the early stages of the affair.94 This conscious investment in rational politics based on secular moral outrage was typical of leading Dreyfusards. Once again, emotion and rationality were paired to create the quasi-religious crusade that sustained their activism. But such positive elements scarcely veiled a phantasmagoric fear of, and obsession with, the Jesuits, who Reinach believed were responsible for the plot against Dreyfus: “After Pascal, after the Revolution, [the Jesuit] again takes up the struggle to conquer France.”95 Reinach even suggested that he “knew” that Dreyfus was innocent, because the Jesuits said he was guilty: “From the first day, I had the intuition that the accused was innocent. A first indication was the deliberate fury that one sensed in the newspapers of the congregation in contrast to the indifference before other treasons.”96 Reinach’s admission demonstrates the role of “irrational” conviction in shaping his Dreyfusard activism, despite his rational, conscious beliefs.97

Lucie cherished Reinach’s advice and indefatigable energy; letters of thanks to him demonstrate an aching gratitude that overwhelmed her natural reserve.98 One cannot help but be struck by the depth of her political inexperience in contrast to his enormous fund of worldly savvy.

93 For more on the brothers, see the excellent analysis by Simon-Nahum, Cité investie, 222–29; the author also describes their centrality to the creation of a current of “reform” Judaism inside France, reminiscent of its counterpart in Germany.


95 Reinach, Histoire de l’affaire Dreyfus, 1:216.

96 Quoted in Simon-Nahum, Cité investie, 263n28. At the same time, La croix assumed that Dreyfus was guilty because Jews defended him.

97 See also Geoffrey Cubitt, The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France (Oxford, 1993). Joseph Reinach was the quintessential example of a juif d’état, who associated the Republic and its values with the fate of his coreligionists, even though his identity was entirely secular. It was for this reason that throughout the affair he laid emphasis on preserving and extending republican values rather than defending Dreyfus as a Jew. When after 1892 anti-Semitism exploded in reaction to the role of a few Jewish financiers in the Panama scandal (including his father-in-law), he equated the rise of anti-Semitism with anti-republicanism. He dedicated himself to combating both simultaneously and believed that only through Enlightenment universalism and secularism could the Republic and the Jews be saved.

and social contacts. His letters discuss the warm support of the prince of Monaco; his knowledge of German court and military circles, especially of the sentiments of Max von Schwartzkoppen, the German intelligence officer who had employed the real culprit, Esterhazy; and the sensibilities and doings of political actors on both sides of the affair.

Reinach wrote frequently to Lucie and then, after her husband’s pardon, corresponded directly with Alfred, only resuming contact with her when he felt Alfred might ignore his advice. The letters mix virtual orders with a genuine appreciation of her importance and moral courage, which, he believed, had secured a place for her “in history.” On several occasions he actually produced model missives that she recopied in her own hand. In a futile effort to convey to Dreyfus that Scheurer-Kestner had become a believer in the cause, he directed Lucie to write first a letter of family news, followed by a second sheet that transmitted the more important details of a new champion in the fold, a ruse that he hoped might fool the censor. He told her when he required photographs of Alfred and when she needed to install a telephone to make communication more rapid. He insisted that she write in 1899 to Mme Waldeck-Rousseau, the wife of the premier, who—through his mediation—had made it possible for Lucie to see her husband without a guard when he returned from Devil’s Island.

This dedicated officiousness is best exemplified by a conversation that Reinach had with Marguerite Durand, the editor of the feminist newspaper La fronde, which in mid-1899 inexplicably stopped its campaign in favor of Dreyfus. Reinach discovered that Durand was irritated that Lucie had never thanked her for the paper’s support. In an effort to smooth the ruffled feathers of this “disinterested” but very “sensitive” woman, he explained to Durand that Lucie’s “excessive reserve” and “exaggerated timidity” had prevented her from expressing her gratitude. He then urged Lucie to repair the damage by going straight to the newspaper’s offices or, if necessary, to Durand’s house in the Bois de Boulogne.

She did notsubmit, however, without a protest; rather than apologize, Lucie replied that she had thought of writing a word of thanks but had renounced the idea, in case the letter ended up printed in the

99 MAHJ 97.17.053.18, J. Reinach, Marienbad, Sept. 1899. In this letter he includes a quotation from a letter from the prince of Monaco that Reinach received; in this letter, the prince wants to open his garden to Dreyfus.
100 MAHJ 97.17.053.016 J. Reinach, Paris, July 1899.
101 MAHJ 97.17.053.02 J. Reinach, Bayreuth, July 1897.
103 MAHJ 97.17.053.16 J. Reinach, Paris, July 1899.
104 MAHJ 97.17.053.06 J. Reinach, Paris, June 16, 1899.
newspaper, offending the other journalists who had also aided the campaign. Nonetheless, she bowed to his superior experience and told him she would go at once to call on the editor.\textsuperscript{105} But she refused his request for a press photograph to send to an English woman. She would happily send him one, she said, but only when it could be taken with her husband, a statement that both underlined her wifely modesty and made clear her hatred of publicity.\textsuperscript{106} She knew that Reinach wanted to profit from her devotion to Alfred to generate sympathy for the cause, but she refused, even for her husband’s sake, to be used in such a way.

Reinach’s attention to detail at least got results. Lucie leaned on him and believed rightly that he was a key figure in her husband’s liberation. But other friends within the movement were even closer to her, men and especially women who were confidantes and \textit{amies de coeur}. This complicated emotional history reveals both the mystique and the \textit{politique} of Péguy’s analysis. The Dreyfusards’ letters reveal the explosion of passion that drove the movement, as well as the pain that ensued as it disintegrated. The rational, ideological precepts they defended were fueled by, and based on, extreme emotional arousal, a psychological world central to understanding the particular political disputes and tactics after Dreyfus’s pardon in September 1899.

Among Lucie’s most devoted correspondents were Olympe and Louis Havet. While Louis, a philologist and professor at the Collège de France, often figures in histories of the affair, Olympe is generally absent, yet her correspondence shows how for years the affair was the outlet for all her energies, the crucible out of which her political vision was molded and the emotional center of her marriage. While Louis wrote to the male elite of the cause, Olympe dedicated herself to Lucie, although she, too, had close relations with men, especially Georges Picquart. Picquart was never her lover, but she clearly loved him, and it was Lucie’s unwillingness to convince Alfred to follow Picquart’s tactical line after the Rennes verdict that brought about the painful breach between Lucie and Olympe.

But before these days of disillusion, the Havets embraced their supportive role as a kind of moral pilgrimage: “Whatever happens to us . . . you have changed the orientation of our life, you have raised us above ourselves; we are better than we would have been.”\textsuperscript{107} Their missives reveal an almost messianic fervor, as well as the emotional rollercoaster ride that was the lot of active Dreyfusards. Their hard work and expectations of revision were constantly dashed by subterfuge and

\textsuperscript{105} NAF 24898 Lucie Dreyfus, n.d., pieces 36–37.
\textsuperscript{106} NAF 24898 Lucie Dreyfus, n.d., pieces 45–46.
\textsuperscript{107} MAHJ 97.17.51.14 Olympe Havet, July 11, 1899.
deceit, but they always returned to the special pleasure of working for something bigger than themselves.

The tone of Olympe’s letters suggests that they were vital to Lucie’s emotional survival. When Zola was condemned in early 1898, Olympe affirmed her belief that, despite the perfidy of the judges and military men, Alfred would eventually go free. She recounted her conversation at dinner with Picquart, who in March 1898, with “simplicity, serenity,” had affirmed that revision would take place.108 She described moments of paralyzed stupor when things went wrong and gave vent to feelings of bitterness and hatred. For example, she exploded in July 1898 when General Cavaignac tried to end the affair once again by assuring the populace of Dreyfus’s guilt by relying on forged evidence.109 She gave full rein to her mixed and violent emotions in the wake of Lieutenant Colonel Henry’s suicide. While she felt guilty about speaking ill of the dead, and guiltier still to feel no pity for Henry’s widow—who became a heroine for the Right after her husband’s suicide—she none-theless showed her unequivocal solidarity by reserving such feelings for Lucie and Alfred alone. Henry’s suicide confirmed the deceit and villainy of their opponents, but Olympe found comfort in the fact that Lucie could continue to keep the truth from Pierre, Dreyfus’s son, since the captain’s return was now imminent.110

Olympe’s involvement was not confined to outrage and sympathy, however. She sought details of the brutal conditions on Devil’s Island to aid her husband in his campaign and visited Picquart in prison, maintaining his morale in the face of mounting pressures.111 She even managed to contact someone who had seen Dreyfus and could give some account of his health.112 We can only imagine what this must have meant to Lucie, who thirsted after such news.

Although furious at the Rennes verdict and convinced of the need to carry on until a full acquittal was won, the Dreyfuses and the Havets knew a rare moment of joy when, after his pardon, Lucie and Alfred were reunited. Here is how Olympe described her husband’s emotion on receiving a letter from Alfred:

I cannot tell you of the emotion of my dear husband when he recognized the handwriting of the captain on the envelope. He said to me: “A year ago, he knew nothing of what we were doing for him,

108 MAHJ 97.17.51.01 Olympe Havet, Paris, Mar. 18, 1898.
109 MAHJ 97.17.51.08 Olympe Havet, Paris, July 8, 1898.
110 MAHJ 97.17.51.08 Olympe Havet, Paris, Sept. 1, 1898.
111 MAHJ 97.17.51.15 Olympe Havet, July 13, 1899; MAHJ 97.17.51.05 Olympe Havet, Rochecorbon (Indre-et-Loire), July 23, 1898.
112 MAHJ 97.17.51.03 Olympe Havet, June 30, 1898.
and today he is with his wife and his children.” And the letter illuminated him with joy for several days; he related it to some friends in order to make them understand your husband’s character, and those that read it were first penetrated by emotion, and they were duly conscious of the grandeur of the cause of Dreyfus.\textsuperscript{113}

They became a kind of foursome, with Havet writing to Dreyfus and Olympe writing to Lucie. But the joint love affair, and the pleasure of absolute accord, dissolved in disenchantment and bitterness. The ambiguity of the pardon—which liberated Alfred but did not resolve the moral and political debate—threw up so many divisive issues that the two couples were bound to disagree. This led to extreme emotional distress and a futile attempt to return to that unity of purpose that had defined their mystique. Nor was this unique. What divided the Dreyfuses from the Havets also divided many other erstwhile allies within the Dreyfusard camp. There were unseemly squabbles and failed attempts to recover past sensations of trust and union until the final, ugly break.\textsuperscript{114}

Olympe urged Lucie and Alfred to take a more active role in condemning the amnesty that the government issued after the Rennes trial. This law of 1899 not only shielded the real culprits from prosecution, it also prevented Dreyfusards such as Picquart, Zola, and Reinach from proving their innocence in other legal actions. Indeed, when thinking that Picquart would not be openly exonerated, Olympe was beside herself: “I literally leap on my chair.”\textsuperscript{115} At the end of 1900 she and her husband became even more extreme, scolding the Dreyfuses for their “exile” in Switzerland: “You must return to France—it is your absolute duty—and to Paris, \textit{even if there were danger}.” For the first time they relayed to her the growing perception that Dreyfus \textit{was} a coward and transmitted to her Picquart’s belief that the Dreyfuses were looking after themselves rather than furthering the “cause.”\textsuperscript{116}

At this stage, the friendship was strong enough for Alfred and Lucie to take their advice, and the Dreyfuses returned, responding also to Mathieu’s reports that their Swiss exile was being misinterpreted.\textsuperscript{117}

But by 1901 more serious matters were at stake. The real traitor, Ester-

\textsuperscript{113} MAHJ 97.17.51.22 Olympe Havet, Mar. 10, 1899.
\textsuperscript{114} For these sorry tales of distrust and resentment between Fernand Labori (one of Alfred’s lawyers at the Rennes trial and the hero of Zola’s first trial) and the Dreyfuses, Havet and the Dreyfuses, and Picquart and the Dreyfuses, see Dreyfus, \textit{Carnets}. Oriol’s discussion in the footnotes provides an invaluable aid to understanding the reasons behind their disputes.
\textsuperscript{115} MAHJ 97.17.051.26 Olympe Havet, Paris, Dec. 6, 1899.
\textsuperscript{116} MAHJ 97.17.051.29 Olympe and Louis Havet, Paris, Nov. 3, 1900.
\textsuperscript{117} Burns, \textit{Dreyfus}, 288–89. While he reported the general consternation among the Dreyfusards, Mathieu remained worried about Alfred’s security.
hazy, had admitted his guilt in London, and a large contingent of Dreyfusards wanted to renew the campaign for rehabilitation. There was no disagreement over the ultimate aim, but the Dreyfuses’ legal advisers informed Mathieu that Esterhazy’s confession was not the *fait nouveau* that would ensure final victory. The Dreyfuses feared, above all, a third court-martial that would produce yet another conviction by an intransigent military. But for Havet, who wrote to Alfred, the choice was clear: “It is your right, and, I dare to say it, your duty. With or without hope of immediate success . . . I believe that the moment has come when you must demand revision. Any hesitation, any delay can only do harm; it is one of those cases in which rapid action is imperative.”

When the Dreyfuses rejected this plan, relations between the two couples never really recovered. The break between them can be related to the Havets’ need for sacrificial, martyred figures at the center of the campaign. When Alfred and Lucie refused to carry on in their allotted roles, the Havets felt that their mystique was mortally threatened. The spiritual underpinnings of the movement, despite its secular aims, had a narrative and moral logic that was increasingly absolutist, and Alfred’s and Lucie’s mutual decision to reject the Havets’ vision of the Dreyfusard mystique was utterly destabilizing.

The Havets’ disappointment was matched by their deepening friendship with Picquart. Throughout the affair, they had nurtured a special regard for this soldier, whose letters—both in prison and out—shone with wit and cultivation. Here was a man who joked about his imprisonment, who proclaimed his liberty of spirit despite his physical confinement. The Havets were ever solicitous of his intellectual comfort and did everything in their power to lighten his physical burden.

He in turn peppered his letters with words of thanks for the food their servant Annette prepared for his delectation. Indeed, so extraordinary was this culinary largesse that he once exclaimed, “I am becoming the most difficult and the most gluttonous of men by your fault.” He described in mouthwatering terms the “terrines,” the “rillettes,” a “superb spiny lobster,” and a “galantine of pigeon” that they so thoughtfully provided.

However, Picquart offered not just gratitude but also a community of taste and intellectual interests. He mused from prison on the magnificence and barbarity of Rome, spoke of his love of Wagner,

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and waited eagerly for their reports of a new exhibition of Rembrandt in Amsterdam. It was in the last letter that his latent anti-Semitism emerged. Somehow he had the misguided impression that Rembrandt was Jewish, and he admitted to experiencing “an instinctive feeling of resentment, moreover immediately repressed.” While he acknowledged the shameful depth of his prejudice, he continued by ascribing to Rembrandt’s art “Jewish” characteristics that he had hitherto not comprehended. Rembrandt’s Jewishness now explained “this ostentation, this sort of showiness that he likes to deploy on certain occasions; those feathers, those strange turbans; all of that which is from the Orient that this Dutchmen knew in the latent state.”

By focusing on the material extravagance and “orientalism” of Rembrandt’s painting, Picquart believed he had found its Jewish essence.

Such artistic commentary, however, was only the beginning of an anti-Semitic outpouring that deepened with his disillusionment with the Dreyfus family. When talking about the Dreyfuses and their refusal to embark on the campaign for rehabilitation in 1900, he remarked that one must never expect “heroism from a grocer.” In another letter he remarked bitterly that the same government that had pardoned right-wing extremists like Paul Déroulède had pardoned Dreyfus, leaving the unwanted impression that the two men could be equated. With exasperation he proclaimed, “Here is where the pusillanimity of the Jews has brought us.” Whatever their views on such anti-Semitic explosions, there is no doubt that, for the Havets, Picquart became a truer, more worthy hero than Dreyfus. This judgment was integral to their disagreement over tactical and political differences and their need to find a figure worthy of their sacrifice, conviction, and emotional investment. They could not forgive what they saw as the Dreyfuses’ caution, the family’s apparent desire to protect their own and to forget the greater good. They implied that the Dreyfuses were too calculating, a criticism that suggested their wariness of what was generally seen as a Jewish tendency.

No doubt, at the heart of these reflections were hurt and a heartfelt, if irrational, feeling of betrayal. Despite their joy at Dreyfus’s release, the Jewish captain was not, in real life, what they had wished him to be. Endless were the commentaries in the press about the monotonous quality of Dreyfus’s testimony during the trial, his apparent lack of

123 BN, NAF 24503 (1) Georges Picquart 149–50, Paris, Nov. 6, 1898.
passion, his inability to inspire that sympathetic ardor that the French expected from their heroes. While the Havets were less small-minded, their complaints nonetheless manifested the same reserve; somehow Dreyfus was unworthy of the righteous passion that they and Picquart had invested in the cause. Louis continued to write, albeit in a cooler tone, while Olympe fell silent altogether and even became ill from disappointment, with Louis alluding to her migraines in explaining why she did not put pen to paper. She admitted later that “I almost became sick with emotion because of our differences of opinion.”

Indeed, relations became so bad at one point that there were open and heated quarrels between Alfred and Louis, wounds that stopped bleeding but that nonetheless left scars. When Dreyfus retired from the army after his rehabilitation in 1906, disillusioned yet again because he had been denied the full promotion that Picquart had won, Olympe disapproved of this decision too and told Lucie so. It seemed that their disagreements would never end. It is a testimony to the attempt to cherish those moments of past endeavor and shared idealism that, despite the pain of these later years, Olympe was able to sign her last letter, “Your loyal friend for life.”

Causes célèbres are predicated on the need for passionate involvement, an engagement central to political mobilization and effective intervention, even if later recriminations show how hard it was to sustain such a campaign. The Dreyfusards’ conscious commitment to rationalism, as well as the subsequent historiography, obscured the spiritual substratum that supported their political convictions. They were ambivalent about the relationship between emotion and intellect and distrustful of a Christian religious language that they used tactically but did not formally endorse. The images of a suffering Mary and a martyred Jesus, of ecumenical renewal, of a just God who would redeem Dreyfus, were all central to thousands of inconnus but disturbed the vision of leading Dreyfusards, whose mystique was based on secularism. The “religious politics” of the inconnus tapped into a language of martyrology and prayer that was ubiquitous, especially among women, and indicated how little they subscribed to the anticlerical struggle so dear to the movement’s leadership.

However, even if they eschewed the self-conscious religious models of the inconnus, leading Dreyfusards also expressed their commitment in quasi-religious terms. Their vibrant eloquence in defense of Enlight-
enment values and a Republic purged of “superstition” contained a strong missionizing element. But this positive idealism was often shadowed by irrational feelings of threat. Reinach’s conjuring of the Jesuitical conspiracy testifies to the occult dimension of their political psychology. Even cautious Mathieu, through recourse to the medium, Léonie, demonstrated how his desperation led him on a search into experimental spiritualism. The disenchantment between the Havets and the Dreyfuses emerged from Alfred’s refusal to continue in the role of martyr. When he accepted the pardon and refused any new judicial adventures in order to protect himself and his family, he lost the heroic stature they had previously accorded him. They were disappointed in him and shaken in their exalted vision of their own engagement; so they turned to another for the heroism that would sustain them. It is through understanding these various fin de siècle emotional resonances—both the idealism and the fear—that the Dreyfus affair comes alive again, not merely as a struggle between Right and Left, but as a spiritual and psychological journey.