

La Salette 1846

The Judgment, the Public Message, and the Secrets

A source-audited apparition study

What the Church judged in 1851, on what record; how the reported discourse is transmitted; what the Holy See decreed about the secret in 1915 and 1923; whether the text published in 1879 is the text sent to Pius IX in 1851; and what remains open

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1 The Judgment First

On 19 September 1851, the fifth anniversary of the reported apparition, Philibert de Bruillard, Bishop of Grenoble, closed five years of diocesan inquiry with a *mandement* bearing a doctrinal judgment on the event of La Salette. Everything in this study hangs on reading its operative sentence exactly—and on noticing how narrow it is.

Operative text — Mandement of the Bishop of Grenoble, 19 September 1851, article 1, in the witnesses this study could reach

French, as transcribed by the Sanctuary of Notre-Dame de La Salette (the ellipsis is the Sanctuary's own):

« L'apparition de la Sainte Vierge à deux bergers sur la montagne de La Salette [...] porte en elle-même tous les caractères de la vérité et que les fidèles sont fondés à la croire indubitable et certaine. »

The same operative clause as quoted by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in the presentation of its 2024 norms:

« Les fidèles sont fondés à la croire indubitable et certaine » (“Decree of the Bishop of Grenoble, 19 September 1851”).

Article 1 entire, in the English of an 1854 witness:

“We judge that the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin to two cowherds, on the 19th of September, 1846, on a mountain of the chain of the Alps, situated in the parish of La Salette, in the arch-presbytery of Corps, bears within itself all the characteristics of truth, and that the faithful have grounds for believing it indubitable and certain.”¹

The act did not stop at article 1. An 1854 Italian translation of the pilgrim's manual written by the diocesan *rapporteur* prints eight articles: article 1 as above; article 2, that the fact gains a further degree of certainty from the immense and spontaneous concurrence of the faithful and from the multitude of prodigies that followed; article 3, authorizing the cult of Our Lady of La Salette and permitting it to be preached with its practical and moral consequences; article 4, forbidding the publication of any particular formula of prayer, any hymn, any book of devotion without prior written episcopal approval; article 5, expressly forbidding the faithful and the priests of the diocese ever to rise publicly, in speech or in writing, against the fact now published; article 6, announcing the purchase of the ground and the intention to build there a church and a hospice for pilgrims, with an appeal for alms and a commission of priests and laymen to oversee the building and the offerings; article 7, the pastoral exhortation to penance, to divine worship, and to the sanctification of Sunday, which the act calls the apparition's principal end; and article 8, ordering the mandement read and published in every church and chapel of the diocese at the parish or community Mass on the Sunday following its receipt. It is dated at Grenoble under the bishop's signature, the seal of his arms, and his secretary's countersignature, “19 September 1851 (fifth anniversary of the celebrated apparition).”²

That is the whole positive judgment: a declaration that the apparition to two shepherd children on a named mountain on a named day bears in itself all the marks of truth, that the faithful have grounds for believing it indubitable and certain, an authorization of cult, a reservation of devotional publications to written episcopal approval, a disciplinary prohibition of public contest within the diocese, and a building programme. The act is diocesan, made by the local ordinary under the discipline of his own century. It is not a papal definition, not an exercise of infallibility, not a source of new public Revelation, and—this is the point on which the whole later history turns—not an approval of any secret, any later publication, or any prediction. Twenty-six years later the Sacred Congregation of Rites said in so many words what Rome considered the status of La Salette and Lourdes alike to be: such apparitions or revelations have been “neither approved nor reprobated or condemned by the Apostolic See, but only permitted as to be piously believed by merely human faith” (§10.2).

This is an ecclesial-judgment-first study, not a devotional narrative and not an exposé. It reconstructs the reported encounter of 19 September 1846 from the nearest witnesses this project could actually reach; it separates the public discourse as first recorded from the received forms in which it now circulates, and shows what that separation does and does not license; it quotes the 1851 mandement at its operative clause and states its exact object; it treats the secrets as a juridical and documentary problem—two short manuscripts written for Pius IX in July 1851, then Mélanie Calvat's progressively expanded publications culminating in the Lecce booklet of 1879 printed under a diocesan *imprimatur*, then the Holy Office decree published at AAS 7 (1915) 594 forbidding all the faithful to treat of the subject, then the condemnation of a 1922 reprint at AAS 15 (1923) 287–288. It then publishes the 1879 text and analyzes it, under the disclosure set out in full at §5.1: the 1915 decree is quoted at its command, its penalties,

and its saving clause, its present force is reported as unresolved rather than decided in either direction, and the analysis is published on the project maintainer’s express direction as the editorial act of a private study and not as any ecclesiastical judgment. The question that analysis answers is whether the text published in 1879 is the text sent to Pius IX in 1851; the answer reached, labelled throughout as project synthesis, is that it is not (§6.9). Public Revelation is complete in Christ; no La Salette event adds to it, and an approved private revelation asks only prudent human assent (*fides humana*), never the divine and Catholic faith owed to Revelation. A printing permission is not an authentication; a Roman archive’s receipt is not papal approval; a religious institute, a basilica, a papal letter, and an optional memorial each establish exactly themselves. Where the record is thinner than the received narrative—above all in the absence of an accessible French printing of the integral mandement and in the contested reliability that attaches to both seers’ later years—the ceiling is stated rather than papered over.

The study runs in the order the evidence demands: the event and its earliest transmission (§2); the public message and its two textual strata (§3); the inquiry and the 1851 judgment (§4); the secrets, their custody, their publication, and the Roman acts of 1880, 1915 and 1923 with the juridic question they leave open (§5); the 1879 text published and analyzed against the 1851 manuscripts, with the judgment this study is willing to defend (§6); the seers’ later lives and the contested reliability that attaches to them (§7); the shrine, the Missionaries of 1852, and the discipline of cult (§8); papal and liturgical reception (§9); the doctrinal boundary—what approval does and does not oblige (§10); and the current standing of the whole dossier under the 2024 norms (§11). Work-wide bounds, taxonomy, and qualifications are gathered in the terminal appendix; witnesses and rights are in the References.

2 The Event of 19 September 1846 and Its First Transmission

2.1 Why the transmission has to come first

An apparition study is only as good as the chain by which the reported words reached the page. At La Salette that chain is short in one respect and awkward in another. Short: the two children told what they had seen on the evening of the same day, in the kitchen of the farm where one of them was in service, and the parish priest announced it from the pulpit the next morning. Awkward: the children were illiterate, spoke an Alpine *patois* and very little French, and everything now read as “the message” passed through adults who wrote in French what children said partly in a language those adults had to translate.

This study therefore names its strata before it narrates, and keeps them named throughout:

- **Same-day oral transmission (19–20 September 1846).** The children’s recital to their employers, to the parish priest of La Salette, and to the mayor. No autograph survives from the children, who could not write.
- **Early adult records (from late 1846).** Written relations by local priests and laymen, the interrogations conducted by the archpriest of Corps and others, and the notes associated with Abbé Lagier. This project did not reach these documents in their originals or in a critical edition; it reached them only where a later witness reproduces them.
- **The diocesan inquiry (1847).** Depositions signed 27 November 1847 by the children’s employers, the commission sittings of November–December 1847 held in the bishop’s presence, and the *rapporteur*’s printed report.
- **Period apologetic literature (1850s).** Books that reproduce the foregoing in translation and with argument—the class to which the two 1854 witnesses most used here belong.
- **Received custodial text (present).** The French discourse as the Sanctuary and the Missionaries now publish it, a harmonized text without an apparatus.

Nothing in this study treats the fifth stratum as though it were the first. Where the received text says more than the earliest reachable record, §3 says so.

2.2 Place, persons, and the days before

The site is a high pasture above the village of La Salette, in the canton and archpresbytery of Corps, in the Alps of the Isère, at the head of a ravine where a small intermittent spring ran. The parish belonged then, as the whole dossier does now, to the diocese of Grenoble, today Grenoble–Vienne.

Maximin Giraud was born at Corps on 26 August 1835, son of a wheelwright; his mother died when he was seventeen months old and he was brought up, on the Sanctuary's own frank account, "like a wild plant." He was eleven. Mélanie Calvat, called Mathieu, was born 7 November 1831, the fourth of ten children of a sawyer; she had been put out to service to mind cows from the age of ten, at Quet and at Sainte-Luce, before reaching the farm of Jean-Baptiste Pra at the hamlet of Les Ablandins. She was going on fifteen. Both families lived at Corps, at opposite ends of the town; the children had not previously known each other. Maximin had come up only days before, to replace for a week the sick herdsman of Pierre Selme, Pra's neighbour.³

The children could barely speak French. An English bishop who travelled to Corps in 1854 and read the diocesan documents put it bluntly: "these children neither spoke nor understood much of the French language. Their own is a singular patois. . . Thus, they knew not the French for so common an object as the potato."⁴

2.3 The encounter, as the earliest reachable recital gives it

The sequence, in the recital the children gave and kept giving: they had brought their cows to the high pasture, eaten, and slept a little; Mélanie woke first, did not see the cows, woke Maximin, and they crossed the little stream and saw the animals lying on the far slope; turning back for their bags near the dried-up spring, Mélanie saw a brightness "like the sun, it was far more brilliant, but it had not the same colour." In the light was a Lady seated, her head in her hands. Mélanie let her stick fall in fear; Maximin said he would strike whatever it was if it did anything. The Lady rose, crossed her arms, and spoke: "Come near, my children, be not afraid, I am here to tell you great news."⁵

The discourse followed (§3). At its end the Lady told them twice, in French, to make it known to all her people; she crossed the stream, climbed the slope without bending the grass, rose a little above the ground, looked to heaven and then to earth, and disappeared into the light. The children's reported exchange afterwards is the sort of detail no forger invents: Mélanie said "perhaps it is a great saint"; Maximin answered that if they had known it was a great saint they would have asked her to take them with her; he then reached out to catch some of the remaining brightness, and there was nothing there.⁶ The figure's described appearance—white robe, a cape with roses, a crown of roses, gold-coloured apron, and on the breast a crucifix with a hammer on one side and pincers on the other, hung from a small chain, with a larger chain falling from the ends of the cross—is the description Mélanie gave under interrogation, and is the source of every later image and of the Sanctuary's present account of the light as coming from the crucifix itself.⁷

2.4 The evening at Les Ablandins, and the depositions of 27 November 1847

The best evidence about the first hours is not the children's own narrative but the sworn statements of the two farmers, signed 27 November 1847 for the diocesan inquiry. Pierre Selme deposed that Maximin failed to return to him in the field, that at evening the boy said "you don't know what has happened," recited what he had seen, and that the next morning the two employers sent both children to the curé of La Salette, "who, the same day, at Mass, made known to his parishioners what they had seen and heard." Selme added the observation that matters most evidentially: during the four and a half days the boy guarded his cows, in open unfenced pasture where a standing man sees the whole field, "I never saw either priest or layman come near him or speak to him," and Mélanie in the adjoining field was likewise always alone.

Jean-Baptiste Pra, deposition signed 27 November 1847 (1854 English witness)

"On Saturday, the 19th Sept., 1846, they both came and told me what they had seen and heard on the level. Next morning they went together to the Curé of La Salette, who the same day at Mass told it from the pulpit to his parishioners. . . I ought to add, before signing, that for some days at first I did not believe the statement of the children, and I several times tried to induce little Mélanie to take the money offered her to keep silence. The child constantly refused the money offered to her. She has always persisted, in spite of threats as well as promises of reward. The mayor of La Salette, amongst others, tried all sorts of means in vain to put the child in contradiction with herself; he could not succeed. He then offered her money; she refused it, and she replied to his menaces, that she would always and everywhere repeat what the Blessed Virgin had said to her."⁸

Two things follow. First, the earliest transmission is documented and rapid: same-day telling, next-morning pulpit announcement, and an unbelieving employer as a hostile-turned-corroborating witness. Second, the resistance to money and threats is attested from outside the children, by a man who says he himself tried the money.

2.5 The children as the inquiry found them

The commission of 1847 also took the opinion of the superioress of the convent school at Corps, where both children had been placed some months after the event. Of Maximin she said he had “but ordinary abilities,” was “sufficiently obedient, but light, fond of play, and always in motion,” and that “he never speaks to us of the affair of La Salette, and we avoid the subject with him, that he may not take any importance to himself.” The same institution’s early anxiety about Mélanie is preserved by the Sanctuary itself: already in November 1847 her superior feared “que Mélanie ne tirât vanité de la position que l’événement lui a faite.”⁹

That is an unusual pair of contemporary judgments to find in a dossier that a diocese would later approve: the boy is scattered and must be kept from self-importance; the girl is already, in the judgment of the religious who taught her, at risk of vanity from the event. The 1851 mandement did not judge the children’s later lives. It judged an apparition on a named day. §7 shows how completely those two objects came apart.

2.6 What the event corpus of this study is

The included corpus is exactly one dossier: the single reported apparition of 19 September 1846 to Maximin Giraud and Mélanie Calvat on the mountain above La Salette. There is no series, no fortnight, no set of later appearances forming part of the judged event. Later reported locutions, visions, and revelations attributed to either seer—including everything in Mélanie’s expanded publications (§5)—lie outside the 1851 act and are treated in this study as documents about their authors, not as parts of the event. Reported cures and prodigies at the spring are named by the mandement as corroborating evidence in article 2 (“the multitude of prodigies which have been the consequence of the said event”); this study does not certify, enumerate, or re-examine any of them, and records that it located no institutional list of individually recognized La Salette miracles comparable to those published for other shrines.¹⁰

3 The Public Message and Its Two Strata

3.1 What a “text” of the discourse can be

There is no autograph of the La Salette discourse. There is no shorthand record, no contemporaneous transcript taken while the children spoke, and no manuscript in either child’s hand, because neither could write. What exists is a recital that two illiterate children repeated, first on the evening of 19 September 1846 and then hundreds of times, partly in French and partly in the *patois* of the Corps country, written down by adults who had to translate as they wrote.

That is not a scandal; it is the ordinary condition of an oral deposition. But it fixes the ceiling. The stable content of the discourse is well attested by 1847 and can be inventoried with confidence. Syllable-level inerrancy of any French sentence cannot be, and this study never asserts it. Where a word differs between strata—and one important word does—the difference is printed rather than smoothed.

3.2 The recital stratum: the discourse as an 1854 witness prints it from the diocesan documents

The most useful witness this project could reach for the early stratum is the 1854 pilgrimage narrative of an English bishop who travelled to Corps, read the diocesan documents, and printed the children’s recital in parallel columns—French where the Lady is reported to have spoken French, *patois* where she is reported to have repeated herself in *patois*, with an English rendering beside each. The parallel setting is itself evidence: the witness did not harmonize the two languages into one smooth French text, and the seam where the Lady changes language survives in his page.

Opening of the discourse, French column, as printed in 1854

« Si mon peuple ne veut pas se soumettre, je suis forcée de laisser aller la main de mon fils. Elle est si forte, si pesante, que je ne peux plus la maintenir. Depuis le temps que je souffre pour vous autres! Si je veux que mon fils ne vous abandonne pas, je suis chargée de le prier sans cesse. Et pour vous autres vous n’en faites pas cas. »¹¹

The *patois* seam occurs at the potatoes. Mélanie, who did not know the French word *pommes de terre*, was about to ask Maximin what it meant; the Lady said—in the 1854 witness’s English—“Ah! my children, you do not understand; I will say it in a different way,” and began again in the local speech: “Si las truffas se gastoun. . .” The recital then runs, still in *patois*, through the corn that will be eaten by beasts and fall to dust in the threshing, the great famine, the children under seven who will be seized with trembling and die in the hands of those who hold them, the walnuts that will go hollow and the grapes that will rot, and the promise that if they are converted the stones and rocks will become heaps of corn and the potatoes will be sown of themselves.¹²

Then the catechetical exchange: “Do you say your prayers well, my children?”—“Not very well, Madam”—and the instruction to say them morning and evening, “at least an Our Father and a Hail Mary,” and more when they can; then the complaint that only a few old women go to Mass while the rest work Sundays all summer, that in winter the lads go to Mass only to mock at religion, and that in Lent “they go to the shambles like dogs.” Then the question about spoilt corn, Maximin’s denial, and the Lady’s reminder of the day at the hamlet of Le Coin when his father showed him ears of wheat that crumbled to dust in their hands and gave him a piece of bread on the road home, saying he did not know who would eat any next year if the corn went on so—at which the boy answered, in *patois*, “Oh! yes, Madam, I recollect now; just this moment, I did not remember.” The discourse closes with the charge repeated twice in French: “Well, my children, you will make this to be known to all my people.”¹³

3.3 The received custodial text

The text now published as “le Message de La Salette” is a harmonized French discourse without apparatus, with the *patois* rendered into French and the moments when the Lady spoke privately to each child marked by editorial stage directions in parentheses. It is the text the Sanctuary and the Missionaries put before pilgrims, and it is faithful in substance to the recital stratum. Its opening and closing lines:

Received custodial text, opening and closing (Sanctuary of Notre-Dame de La Salette)

« Avancez, mes enfants, n’ayez pas peur, je suis ici pour vous conter une grande nouvelle.

Si mon peuple ne veut pas se soumettre, je suis forcée de laisser aller le bras de mon Fils. Il est si fort et si pesant que je ne puis plus le maintenir. [. . .]

Eh bien, mes enfants, vous le ferez passer à tout mon peuple! Allons, mes enfants, faites-le bien passer à tout mon peuple! »¹⁴

3.4 Element inventory: where the strata agree and where they differ

The comparison below runs element by element over the whole discourse. It is the study’s principal textual instrument, and its result is unspectacular in the best way: the strata agree on substance throughout, and differ in three places that a reader should know about.

Element	1847 recital stratum	Received custodial text	Remark
Opening address	“Come near, my children, be not afraid, I am here to tell you great news” (English column)	« Avancez, mes enfants, n’ayez pas peur, je suis ici pour vous conter une grande nouvelle »	Agree
The Son’s hand or arm	« laisser aller <i>la main</i> de mon fils. Elle est si forte, si pesante »	« laisser aller <i>le bras</i> de mon Fils. Il est si fort et si pesant »	Differ: hand / arm, with the pronouns and adjectives following
Constant intercession	“I am compelled to pray to Him without ceasing”; “you take no heed of it”	« je suis chargée de le prier sans cesse »; « vous n’en faites pas cas »	Agree
Unrepayable pains	“However much you pray. . . you will never recompense the pains I have taken for you”	« jamais vous ne pourrez récompenser la peine que j’ai prise pour vous autres »	Agree
Sunday	« Je vous ai donné six jours pour travailler, je me suis réservé le septième, et on ne veut pas me l’accorder »	Same, with « et on ne veut pas me l’accorder »	Agree

Element	1847 recital stratum	Received custodial text	Remark
Blasphemy of the carters	« Ceux qui <i>conduisent</i> les charrettes ne savent pas jurer sans y mettre le nom de mon fils au milieu »	« ceux qui <i>mènent</i> les charrettes ne savent pas jurer sans mettre le nom de mon Fils au milieu »	Agree in substance; two words differ
The two burdens	“These are the two things which make the hand of my Son so heavy”	« Ce sont les deux choses qui appesantissent tant le bras de mon Fils »	Agree (with the hand/arm difference)
Spoilt harvest and potatoes	French, then repeated in <i>patois</i> because Mélanie did not understand	French only, with a one-line <i>patois</i> marker, « Si la recolta se gasta. . . »	Differ in form: the early witness prints the whole repeated passage in <i>patois</i>
Corn, famine, children under seven, walnuts, grapes	Present, in <i>patois</i>	Present, in French	Agree
Conversion reverses the sign	“the stones and the rocks will change into heaps of corn, and the potatoes will be sown of themselves”	« les pierres et les rochers deviendront des monceaux de blé et les pommes de terre seront ensemencées par les terres »	Agree
Private words to each child	Not in the recital as a stage direction; Mélanie’s recital says only that the Lady seemed to speak to Maximin and she heard nothing, and the interrogations treat the secret separately	Marked by parenthetical stage directions inside the text	Differ in form: the received text incorporates the secrets’ moment editorially
Prayer	“Do you say your prayers well? . . . at least an Our Father and a Hail Mary”	Same, « ne diriez-vous seulement qu’un ‘Notre Père’ et un ‘Je vous salue’ »	Agree
Mass, Sunday work, Lent	Present, in <i>patois</i>	Present, in French	Agree
The Coin episode	Present, in <i>patois</i> , with Maximin’s recognition	Present, in French, with the same recognition	Agree
Final charge	“you will make this to be known to all my people,” twice	« vous le ferez passer à tout mon peuple »; « faites-le bien passer à tout mon peuple »	Agree

Three conclusions follow, and only three. First, the received custodial text is a legitimate descendant of the recital stratum: every element in it is in the early witness, and the early witness adds nothing the received text suppresses. Second, the received text is a *translation and harmonization*, not a transcript: the *patois* has been turned into French, and the private-words moment has been made into a stage direction. Third, at least one substantive word differs—*la main* in the early witness, *le bras* in the received text—and no witness available to this project settles which the children said. Anyone who builds an argument on the exact French of a La Salette sentence is building on that unsettled ground.¹⁵

3.5 What the message says—and what it does not

Read as a whole, the discourse is a short penitential sermon in peasant idiom with a strikingly narrow moral field. It has exactly two named sins: profanation of Sunday and blasphemy that puts the name of the Son into an oath. It has one devotional instruction: morning and evening prayer, at minimum the Our Father and the Hail Mary. It has one complaint about practice: neglected Mass, mocking attendance, and Lenten disregard. It has one conditional sign structure: continued refusal brings dearth, conversion reverses it. And it has one commission: make this pass to all her people.

What it does not contain deserves the same precision, because much that circulates under the name of La Salette is not in it. The public discourse contains no date, no political programme, no dynasty, no council, no papacy, no Antichrist, no chronology of the last things, no promise attached to any devotion, no new title, no new doctrine, and no claim about the standing of any bishop, priest, or religious order. The phrase for which La Salette is best known

outside the Church—the material of the “secret”—is by definition not part of the public discourse at all; the children withheld it, and the mandement never judged it (§5).

Two elements do require a word of care. The dearth prophecy is conditional and agricultural, and it belongs to a year of real crop failure across Europe; nothing in this study treats it as a fulfilled or unfulfilled prediction, and the 1851 act itself does not rest on it. The saying about children under seven is the harshest sentence in the discourse; it is reported here because it is in the earliest reachable recital and suppressing it would falsify the record, and it is not offered as a prophecy to be applied to anyone, at any time, then or now.¹⁶

3.6 The title under which the event is received

The Church’s cult of this event grew under a title the discourse does not use: *Notre-Dame Réconciliatrice*, Our Lady Reconciler of sinners. The title is a reception, not a quotation: the discourse speaks of a mother interceding without ceasing that her Son not abandon a people that will not submit, and the Church named that office *Réconciliatrice*. The title is attested in Roman acts—the 1915 decree expressly preserves devotion to the Blessed Virgin “under the title of Reconciliatrix commonly called *de la Salette*” (§5.7), and John XXIII in 1961 constituted “the Blessed Virgin Mary of La Salette, invoked as Reconciliatrix of sinners,” heavenly patroness of an entire religious congregation (§9.4). Read inside Catholic doctrine, the title says exactly what *Lumen gentium* 60–62 permits it to say: a created, graced, maternal, and wholly subordinate participation in the one reconciliation worked by Christ, who alone reconciles (2 Cor 5:18–19). It does not make Mary a second source of reconciliation, and no act cited in this study says or implies that it does.¹⁷

4 The Inquiry and the Judgment of 1851

4.1 Five years of deliberate slowness

The bishop who judged La Salette was old, cautious, and explicit about why he waited. His mandement’s own account of the delay, in the 1852 English translation of the preamble, is worth having because it is a small treatise on episcopal method: he was “bound to be very slow in admitting as incontestable an event apparently so wonderful”; precipitancy “would not only have been contrary to the prudence recommended by the great Apostle to a Bishop, but it would have strengthened the prejudices of the enemies of our Faith”; and so, while pious souls received the story eagerly, “we carefully sought every possible motive to induce us to reject the story, if it could not be admitted with the greatest evidence of truth.” He records that he bore the reproach of indifference and even incredulity for doing so.¹⁸

Two sentences of the preamble deserve to be lifted out, because they state a principle this whole study depends on. The first is the bishop’s reason for not needing the event: “the religion of Jesus Christ had no need of this particular event to establish the truth of a thousand celestial apparitions.” The second is the rule he says governed his patience, quoted in his own Latin from Sirach: *Qui credit cito, levis corde est*—he who believes quickly is light of heart.¹⁹

4.2 What was actually examined

The inquiry proceeded in identifiable stages, each of which the act itself names:

- **Consultation of the Chapter and the seminary professors**, some months after the event.
- **A commission** of “men, grave, pious, and learned,” constituted to examine and discuss the fact and its results, whose sittings were held *in the bishop’s presence*.
- **Interrogation of the two children** “separately and simultaneously,” with their answers weighed and discussed and all objections freely offered.
- **A written report** by one of the vicars-general charged to collect the facts, printed with the bishop’s approbation under the title *The truth of the event of La Salette*, followed in 1850 by a second volume, *New Documents upon the Event of La Salette*.
- **Assessment of the reported cures and prodigies** announced from many dioceses, several of which, the act says, the bishops of those dioceses considered truly miraculous.

- **Assessment of the pilgrimage itself:** the “incredible concourse” at the mountain, especially on the anniversary, considered against the difficulty of the journey.

The commission’s sittings terminated on 13 December 1847, and the bishop states that his own conviction was then “already complete, and without a shadow of doubt”—and that he nonetheless declined for nearly four more years “to pronounce a doctrinal judgment on a fact of so great importance.” That interval between private certainty and public act is the most instructive fact in the whole procedural record.²⁰

The act’s account of the spring is characteristically restrained and is the model for how this study treats every reported prodigy. The bishop reports what he was told—that the source had been intermittent, flowing only at snow-melt or after heavy rain; that it was dry on 19 September and began to flow the next day and had not stopped—and then declines to make a physical claim: “Marvellous water! if not in its origin, at least in its effects.”²¹

4.3 The secrets as the last objection removed

The mandement’s own narrative gives the reason the judgment came in September 1851 rather than in 1848 or 1855, and it is the reason that binds §4 to §5. The standing objection was that the alleged secret might be no secret at all: children who refuse to tell can always be suspected of having nothing to tell. The bishop resolved it not by extracting the secret but by removing it from the diocesan sphere entirely.

The mandement’s narrative of the secrets, 1852 English translation

“Such were the dispositions... when divine Providence provided the occasion of enjoining on the two privileged children the duty of communicating their secrets to our holy Father Pius IX... The secret was then written by each separately; they afterwards folded and sealed their letters in presence of trustworthy men whom we had appointed as witnesses. We have charged two priests, who enjoy our entire confidence, to carry to Rome this mysterious despatch. Thus is removed the last objection that was made against the apparition, that there was no secret, or that the secret was of no importance, or puerile, and that the children would not make it known to the Church.”²²

That distinction is exact and must be held: the 1851 act treats the existence and surrender of the secrets as removing an objection to the children’s veracity. It does not approve, quote, endorse, or even describe their content. Everything in §5 follows from that gap.

4.4 The formal considerations

Before the articles, the act sets out its reasoning in four considerations, in the classical *considérant* form:

1. that the bishop is “wholly unable to explain the fact of La Salette in any other way than as an act of the direct interference of Almighty God,” whether considered in itself, in its circumstances, or in its object, “which is essentially religious”;
2. that “the marvellous consequences which have flowed from this fact are the testimony of God Himself, given by means of miracles,” and that this testimony is superior both to human testimony and to human objections;
3. that either reason alone, and still more the two together, “ought to override all doubt” and destroy the weight of the contrary contentions, “of which we declare that we have a perfect knowledge”; and
4. that docility and submission to the warnings of heaven “may preserve us, perhaps, from those new chastisements with which we are threatened, whilst contrariwise a prolonged resistance may expose us to fresh and irremediable evils.”

The act then names its petitioners—“the express demand of all the members of our venerable chapter, and of a very large majority of the priests of our diocese,” and the “just desires” of pious souls at home and abroad who might otherwise accuse the bishop “of hiding and imprisoning the truth”—invokes the Holy Spirit and the help of the immaculate Virgin, and declares.²³

Two features of this reasoning deserve comment. The third consideration is a claim of *informedness*, not of authority: the bishop asserts that he knows the objections perfectly, having sought them. The second consideration is where a modern reader will part company most easily, since it treats reported cures as divine testimony without the machinery

of medical verification that a later century built; the act names no cure, applies no criteria, and recognizes no individual miracle. That is a real evidentiary limitation of the 1851 judgment and this study states it rather than defending it.

4.5 The operative articles and their exact object

The articles are printed and inventoried at §1. What needs analysis here is their scope.

What the 1851 act judged—and what it did not
Event judged: One apparition of the Blessed Virgin to two shepherd children on 19 September 1846, on a mountain of the Alpine chain in the parish of La Salette, archpresbytery of Corps. One day, two children, one place: no series, no later appearances, no subsequent locutions. Modality: The apparition “bears within itself all the characteristics of truth,” and the faithful “have grounds for believing it indubitable and certain” (<i>sont fondés à la croire indubitable et certaine</i>). This is a judgment of credibility warranting assent in the register of the pre-conciliar discernment of apparitions. It neither imposes belief nor converts the event into public Revelation (§10). The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith cites this very formula in 2024 as an example of language the Holy See once accepted but which “conflicted with the Church’s own conviction that the faithful did not have to accept the authenticity of these events” (§11.2). Corroboration claimed: Article 2: the concurrence of the faithful and the multitude of prodigies following the event give it “a new degree of certitude.” No prodigy is named, dated, or individually recognized by the act. Cult: Article 3 authorizes the cult of Our Lady of La Salette and permits it to be preached with its practical and moral consequences. Article 4 reserves every particular prayer formula, hymn, and book of devotion to prior written episcopal approval—a control clause, not an endorsement of La Salette literature, and the clause under which most of the later trouble would be judged. Discipline: Article 5 forbids the faithful and priests of the diocese to rise publicly, by speech or writing, against the fact now published. This is a disciplinary precept binding in the diocese, not a doctrinal note attached to the event. Building: Article 6 announces the purchase of the ground, a church and a hospice for pilgrims, an appeal for alms, and a commission of priests and laymen to oversee the works and the offerings. Not judged: Any secret, in any form or version; any prediction; the verbal inerrancy of any reported sentence; any individual cure; any physical property of the spring; the later lives, writings, or credibility of either seer; any obligation of divine faith. Papal engagement: None claimed by the act. The two sealed manuscripts had been delivered to Pius IX two months earlier; the act reports the delivery, not any papal response (§5.3). Witness ceiling: Article 1 quoted in French only as far as two independent witnesses print it (the Sanctuary’s transcription with its own ellipsis; the Dicastery’s 2024 citation of the operative clause), with the whole article in an 1854 English rendering and the eight-article structure from an 1854 Italian translation. No French printing of the integral mandement was located by this project (Appendix A).

4.6 The follow-on act of 1 May 1852

Seven months later the bishop issued a second mandement, of 1 May 1852, whose object is different and must not be merged with the first. It announces the arrangements for laying the foundation stone and blessing the new church—the ceremony was fixed for 25 May 1852—and it institutes a body of diocesan clergy to be called the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette (§8.1). The same act, in the 1852 witness’s summary of its opening, records the reception the judgment had met: “Our mandement of the 19th September has been received with universal satisfaction. . . We have received numerous congratulations, expressions of agreement with our decision, gifts, and promises of assistance from divers princes of the Church and a large number of our venerable colleagues.”²⁴

The distinction to keep is simple and is violated constantly in popular literature: 19 September 1851 is the judgment; 1 May 1852 is the foundation. The first establishes credibility and cult; the second establishes a shrine and an institute. Neither establishes a secret.

5 The Secrets

5.1 What this edition publishes, and the disclosure it owes the reader first

This is the hardest problem in the La Salette dossier, and it is hard in an unusual way: the difficulty is not only historical but juridical, and the juridical difficulty touches the act of writing about it. Before any of the evidence is set out, the reader is owed the disclosure that follows, in full, and before the analysis of §6.

The first thing it contains is a distinction that governs everything afterwards. The *public message* of 19 September 1846—the discourse examined at §3, judged by the Bishop of Grenoble on 19 September 1851, preached at the shrine, quoted by popes, and printed by the custodians—is not the subject of any Roman restriction whatever. It is approved in its event, freely discussed, and expounded in this study without reserve. The *secrets* are a wholly separate stratum: two things said privately to two children, written for Pius IX in 1851, and—in one seer’s case only—published in an expanded form thirty-three years after the event. Everything in the disclosure below concerns the second and touches nothing in the first.

Disclosure: the Roman acts on the secret, their unresolved force, and this edition’s posture

The governing act: Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, decree *circa vulgo dictum «Secret de la Salette»*, 21 December 1915, AAS 7 (1915) 594, quoted entire at §5.7. Its operative command: *eadem Sacra Congregatio mandat omnibus fidelibus cuiuscumque regionis ne sub quovis praetextu vel quavis forma, nempe per libros, opuscula aut articulos sive subscriptos sive sine nomine, vel alio quovis modo, de memorato subiecto disserant aut pertractent*—the same Sacred Congregation commands all the faithful of whatever region not to discuss or treat of the said subject under any pretext or in any form, whether by books, pamphlets, or articles, signed or anonymous, or in any other way whatever.

Its penalties: Offending priests are to be deprived of any dignity they hold and suspended by the local ordinary from hearing confessions and celebrating Mass; lay offenders are not to be admitted to the Sacraments until they repent; both are further subject to the sanctions of Leo XIII’s constitution *Officiorum ac munerum* against publishing on religious matters without the lawful permission of superiors, and of Urban VIII’s decree of 13 March 1625 against circulating alleged revelations without the ordinaries’ permission.

Its saving clause: *Hoc autem decretum devotionem non vetat erga Beatissimam Virginem sub titulo Reconciliatricis vulgo «de la Salette» nuncupatam*—this decree does not forbid devotion to the Blessed Virgin under the title of Reconciler commonly called *de la Salette*.

The acts that applied it: Holy Office declaration of 12 April 1916 and Sacred Congregation of the Index decree of 5 June 1916, both condemning by name the two-volume *La Leçon de l’Hôpital Notre-Dame d’Ypres — Exégèse du Secret de la Salette* (AAS 8 (1916) 175, 178–179); and the Holy Office decree *Damnatur opusculum* of 9 May 1923, proscribing and condemning the 1922 Société Saint-Augustin reprint of Mélanie Calvat’s text *mandantes ad quos spectat ut exemplaria damnati opusculi e manibus fidelium retrahere curent*—ordering those whom it concerns to see that copies are withdrawn from the hands of the faithful (AAS 15 (1923) 287–288). All three are quoted or cited at their loci in §5.8.

The unresolved question: Whether the 1915 command still binds is *not settled*. The Index of Prohibited Books ceased to have the force of ecclesiastical law in 1966; the Church’s penal law was recodified in 1917 and again in 1983; the Congregation of the Index, on whose discipline the decree’s penal apparatus partly rests, was suppressed in 1917. Against that, no act abrogating, modifying, interpreting, or confirming the decree was located by this project’s sweep of *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* volumes 1 (1909) through 98 (2006), volume 75 excepted, or in the document index of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (§5.9, §5.10). That is a bounded negative—the boundary of a search, not a statement about the world. This edition therefore does *not* assert that the decree has lapsed, and does *not* assert that it binds. It reports the dispute.

Why this edition publishes anyway: Because the project’s maintainer has expressly directed that this edition, like its companion study of Fátima, publish and analyze the secret, on the judgment that the analysis is the value the document exists to add. The direction is recorded here as what it is: an editorial decision of a private study project, taken with the juridic question open and not resolving it.

What this edition is not: Nothing in §5 or §6 is an ecclesiastical interpretation, an authentic interpretation of any canon or decree, a dispensation, a canonical opinion, or advice to any other author about what that author may lawfully publish. No ecclesiastical review or approval of this study has been sought, granted, or is claimed.

A reader who concludes that the 1915 decree binds him should act on that conclusion; this study does not tell him otherwise.

With that on the record, the rest of §5 does what it did before: it establishes the acts, the documents, the custody, and the permissions, because no analysis of a text is worth anything until the text's transmission is known. §6 then publishes and analyzes the text itself.

5.2 The secret in the earliest record

That a secret existed is attested from the first interrogations, and the interrogations are also the earliest evidence for its shape. In the depositions printed by the 1854 witness, Mélanie, asked whether the Lady told her nothing else, answered: “Yes, Sir, but she has forbidden us to tell it”; asked what it was about, she answered with a child's exact logic: “If I tell you what about, you will soon find out what it is”; asked when it was given, she placed it “after speaking of the walnuts and the grapes,” and added that before giving it the Lady seemed to speak to Maximin and she heard nothing; asked whether it was in French, she answered that it was given her “in Patois.” Maximin, asked the same question, placed his after the sentence about grapes and walnuts, said the Lady then said something to him *in French*, and reported the form of the prohibition in the plainest possible words: “You shall not say this, nor this, nor this.”²⁵

Four facts are therefore in the record from the beginning: there were *two* secrets, not one; they were given separately and in different languages; each child was forbidden to tell; and neither knew the other's. Every later development has to be read against that starting point.

5.3 July 1851: two manuscripts for Pius IX

In July 1851 the bishop of Grenoble ended the impasse by directing the children, under obedience, to write their secrets for the Pope. The 1852 English witness gives the reasoning he used with them—that visions and revelations of whatever kind ought to be submitted to the Roman Pontiff, to whom it belongs to judge in these matters—and the scene: “they sat down at different tables, and wrote their respective letters without the smallest hesitation, and exactly as if they had been copying what they wrote from some original before them. They signed and sealed their letters, and the Bishop entrusted them to the vicar-general of his diocese and another priest to carry to Rome.” The mandement's own narrative of the same events is quoted at §4.3.²⁶

The delivery is dated in the same witness: “On the 18th of the same month these precious missives were placed in the hands of the Holy Father by the persons we have named. His Holiness immediately read them in the presence of the messengers. . . he said he must read them again at his leisure, and then added, ‘These are scourges for France, but Germany and Italy, and many other countries, deserve the same.’”²⁷

A second and more circumstantial account of the same week comes from the other side of the dossier, and is quoted here because it is the only description of the physical act of writing that this project reached. Bishop Zola, writing in 1880 to a French parish priest, states that Mélanie wrote her secret for the first time on 3 July 1851, at the convent of the Providence at Corenc, by order of the Bishop of Grenoble and in the presence of two named men—*M. Dausse, ingénieur en chef des ponts et chaussées* and *M. Taxis, chanoine de la cathédrale de Grenoble*—and that she “filled three large pages at a single stretch, saying nothing and asking nothing,” signed without rereading, folded the sheet, and addressed the envelope “*A Sa Sainteté Pie IX, à Rome*.” He adds that on the next day, 4 July, the secret was copied out again by Mélanie herself at the bishop's house at Grenoble, *dans le but de bien distinguer deux dates des événements qui ne doivent pas arriver à la même époque*—in order to distinguish clearly two dates of events which were not to occur at the same period—because, having put only one date the first time, she feared the Pope would not understand and that there would be ambiguity. He names the couriers: *M. Gérin*, curé of the cathedral of Grenoble, and *M. Rousselot*, honorary vicar-general, who on 18 July handed to Pius IX the letters of the Bishop of Grenoble and those of Maximin and Mélanie containing their secrets.²⁸

There the documentary trail available to this project stops. This study did not reach the two 1851 manuscripts, any facsimile or transcription of them, or any Holy See statement about their present custody or content. Later literature reports that the manuscripts were found in a Roman archive at the end of the twentieth century and subsequently published in facsimile; that report was not verified at any identified witness by this project, and nothing here rests upon it.²⁹

5.4 The expanded corpus: a documentary chronology

Between 1851 and 1879 a second body of text appeared, attributed by Mélanie Calvat to the same 19 September 1846 and progressively longer. The best witness this project could reach for its transmission is, ironically, one of its own promoters: a letter of Salvatore Luigi Zola, Bishop of Lecce, who had been Mélanie's spiritual director, printed in the 1881 Louvain reprint of the Lecce booklet. It is a partisan document: it is used here for the chronology of custody it asserts and for the admissions its author makes against his own interest, which §6 analyzes, and never for its evaluative claims about authenticity, which remain the promoter's.

Date	Authority and act	Object established	Witness used
1851, 3 July	Mélanie, by order of the Bishop of Grenoble, at the Providence at Corenc, before Dausse and Taxis	Writes her secret for the first time: three large pages at one sitting, signed unread, addressed to Pius IX	Zola letter, 24 May 1880
1851, 4 July	Mélanie, at the bishop's house, Grenoble	Copies the secret out again to distinguish <i>two</i> dates of events not to occur at the same period	Zola letter, 24 May 1880
1851, 18 July	Gérin, curé of the cathedral, and Rousselot, honorary vicar-general	Deliver to Pius IX the bishop's letters and the two children's sealed secrets	<i>Pilgrimage</i> 1852, pp. 28–29; Zola letter
1860	A director of Mélanie at Marseille	Obtains a manuscript of her secret	Zola letter, 24 May 1880
1869	Bishop Petagna of Castellammare di Stabia	That same document handed to Zola, then Mélanie's spiritual director, by Petagna's order	Zola letter, 24 May 1880
1870, 30 Jan.	Mélanie	Delivers the same document to Abbé Félicien Bliard, with her declaration of authenticity and signature, but “with small reticences indicated by dots and by <i>etc.</i> ” for parts she did not yet judge it right to disclose	Zola letter, 24 May 1880
1870, 24 Feb.	Bliard	Sends a certified copy from Nice to a consultor of the Index at Rome, and likewise to several ecclesiastical dignitaries	Zola letter, 24 May 1880
1872	C.-R. Girard, at Grenoble, holding the text from Bliard	Publishes the secret in <i>Les secrets de la Salette et leur importance</i>	Zola letter, 24 May 1880
1873	Bliard	Publishes the 1870 document with commentary as <i>Lettres à un ami sur le secret de la bergère de la Salette</i> (Naples), with an approval of the curia of Cardinal Sisto Riario Sforza dated 30 April 1873	Zola letter, 24 May 1880
1878, end / 1879	Leo XIII	Grants Mélanie a private audience and, on the promoters' accounts, receives the secret from her; she remains five months in a convent at Rome writing the constitutions of the new order the text says the Virgin asked for	Zola letter, 24 May 1880; Roubaud 1882, p. 10
1878, 21 Nov.	Mélanie, signing “Marie de la Croix, Victime de Jésus, née Mélanie Calvat, Bergère de la Salette”	Dates her integral text at Castellammare	1881 Louvain reprint, text-end subscription
1879, 15 Nov.	Vicar general of Lecce	<i>Nihil obstat: imprimatur</i> , given at Lecce	1881 Louvain reprint, imprimatur formula
1879	Lecce printing	The booklet printed at Lecce at the request and expense of a private person	Zola letter, 24 May 1880; 1881 reprint's preface

Date	Authority and act	Object established	Witness used
1880, 9 May	Mélanie	Writes that the Lecce booklet is out of print and gives permission for a reprint “provided there is the authorization of a bishop”	1881 Louvain reprint, letter
1880, 14 Aug.	Cardinal Prospero Caterini, Secretary of the Holy Office	Letter expressing the Holy See’s displeasure and the desire that the booklet be withdrawn from the hands of the faithful, “if the thing is possible” (§5.6)	Roubaud 1882, pp. 8–9
1881	Louvain, Imprimerie de J. Lefever	Reprint of the same text with a preface, two recent letters of Mélanie, and Zola’s letter, carrying no Belgian <i>imprimatur</i> of its own	The 1881 imprint itself
1882	Diocesan press and the Paris and provincial Catholic papers	Public controversy: a communiqué against the secret in the <i>Semaine religieuse d’Amiens</i> of 25 June, reprinted in <i>Le Monde</i> and elsewhere, and a printed reply by a French priest	Roubaud 1882, pp. 3–10
1922	Société Saint-Augustin, Paris–Rome–Bruges	A further reprint, condemned in 1923 (§5.8)	AAS 15 (1923) 287–288

Two features of that chronology are decisive for any judgment about the expanded text, and both come from its own promoter. First, the text grew: the 1870 document carried deliberate lacunae which, Zola says, Mélanie “filled in” in the later printing. Second, Zola states plainly that the 1879 text is *not* what went to Pius IX in 1851: “Mélanie n’a pas envoyé à Sa Sainteté Pie IX tout le secret qu’elle a publié dernièrement, mais seulement tout ce que la sainte Vierge lui inspira sur l’heure d’écrire de cet important document.”³⁰ The 1879 text is therefore, on the testimony of the bishop who procured its printing, a different and larger document from the 1851 manuscript. Whatever else is disputed, that is not.

5.5 What the 1879 permission was

The permission under which the Lecce booklet appeared is quoted here exactly, because a great deal has been built on it.

Operative text — Printing permission at the end of the Lecce text, as reproduced in the 1881 Louvain reprint <i>Nihil obstat: imprimatur.</i> <i>Datum Lycii ex Curia Ep. die 15 Nov. 1879.</i> <i>Vicarius Generalis, Carmelus Arch. Cosma.</i>³¹
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An *imprimatur* of this kind is a local censorship permission: a declaration by a diocesan curia that it found nothing in the text contrary to faith or morals such as to prevent printing. In the discipline of the period it was granted by the ordinary of the place of printing or of the author’s residence, at the request of the person publishing—here, as Zola says, “the person who wished to publish it at his own expense and according to his pious intentions.” It is not a judgment that the text is authentic, that its author saw or heard what she reports, or that the Church accepts its contents. Article 4 of the 1851 mandement had reserved devotional publications concerning La Salette to the written approval of the Bishop of *Grenoble*; a permission obtained at Lecce, thirty-three years later, in another country, from another curia, is not that approval, and the 1851 act plainly did not contemplate it.³²

Two further features of the permission belong here, because the promoters’ own accounts state them. Zola says in the same letter that he himself had the text examined by his episcopal curia “according to the rules of the Church,” and that his vicar general, finding no reason to oppose publication, issued the licence to print—so the reviewing authority was the curia of the author’s own former spiritual director, at the request of a private person paying for the printing. And the anonymous *avant-propos* of the 1881 reprint asserts something stronger than the document supports: “*Mgr Zola, évêque de Lecce, lui a donné l’imprimatur*”—Bishop Zola gave her the *imprimatur*—where the printed formula is subscribed by the vicar general and Zola’s own letter attributes the licence to that vicar general. The inflation is small and it is characteristic.³³

5.6 The letter of 14 August 1880

Between the Lecce printing and the Roman decrees of the next century there is one further intervention, and this study reached it only in 2026, through a witness that reports it while trying to explain it away. In 1882 a French priest, Abbé I. Roubaud, published at the same Louvain press a defence of the secret against a communiqué that had appeared in the *Semaine religieuse d'Amiens* on 25 June 1882 and had been reprinted in *Le Monde* and other papers. The communiqué asserted, he says, “that the booklet has been condemned at Rome.” In answering it, Roubaud concedes the following—and a defender’s concessions are the most useful sentences in a partisan pamphlet.

Abbé I. Roubaud, *La vérité sur le secret de Mélanie* (Louvain: Lefever, 1882), pp. 8–9

« Quelques rares opposants désiraient cette condamnation. *L'Index s'y refusa*. L'Inquisition fut saisie de l'affaire, parce qu'il s'agissait d'une *révélation*. »

« Il fallait bien pourtant contenter l'opposition, lui donner un os à ronger. Voilà pourquoi la lettre du C. Catérini, secrétaire de l'Inquisition, vit le jour. Elle est du 14 août 1880. »

« Cette lettre ne renfermait aucun ordre de la livrer à la publicité; c'était une lettre privée. Pourtant on la publia. Nous n'en eûmes jamais que la traduction; nous n'en vîmes point le texte original (le texte latin), ni partiel, ni complet. »

« Cette lettre n'exprime, en effet, que le *déplaisir* du S. Siège. »

« Vous me direz peut-être, Monsieur: — Si le S. Siège croyait au Secret publié par Mélanie, le C. Catérini n'aurait pas exprimé le désir de voir retirer l'opuscule *des mains des fidèles*. Je réponds: 1^o Son Eminence le C. Catérini ajouta: « si la chose est possible ». »³⁴

What that passage establishes, at the ceiling of a partisan witness reporting against his own interest, is a short list and nothing more: that in 1880 some sought a condemnation of the booklet at Rome; that the Congregation of the Index declined to give one; that the Holy Office took the matter up because a *revelation* was involved; that a letter went out over the signature of the Secretary of the Holy Office on 14 August 1880; that it expressed the Holy See's displeasure and the desire that the booklet be withdrawn from the hands of the faithful, qualified by “if the thing is possible”; and that it was a private letter which the defenders knew only in a translation whose Latin original they had never seen.

Three cautions attach, and this study attaches all three. A private letter of a congregation's secretary is not a decree, is not an act of the Apostolic See published in its gazette, and is not law; the literal search of *Acta Sanctae Sedis* for 1879–1881 described at §5.10 found no such act and no occurrence of Caterini's name in those volumes. The letter's wording is not established: no text of it, in any language, was reached by this project, and Roubaud's quotation of the qualifying phrase is a defender's quotation of a translation. And a request to withdraw a book “if possible” is a prudential measure, not a censure of a proposition. What it is *not* is nothing: the earliest reachable trace of the Holy See's own mind about the Lecce booklet, ten months after it appeared, is displeasure and a wish to see it withdrawn.

5.7 The decree of 21 December 1915

Thirty-six years after the Lecce printing, the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office issued the act that still governs the subject. It was published in the official gazette, and this study read it there.

Operative text — Suprema Sacra Congregatio S. Officii, decree *circa vulgo dictum* «*Secret de la Salette*», 21 December 1915: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 7 (1915) 594

Ad Supremae huius Congregationis notitiam pervenit quosdam non deesse, etiam ex ecclesiastico coetu, qui, posthabitis responsionibus ac decisionibus ipsius S. Congregationis, per libros, opuscula atque articulos in foliis periodicis editos, sive subscriptos sive sine nomine, de sic dicto *Secret de la Salette*, de diversis ipsius formis, nec non de eius praesentibus aut futuris temporibus accommodatione disserere ac pertractare pergunt; idque non modo absque Ordinariorum licentia, verum etiam contra ipsorum vetitum. Ut hi abusus qui verae pietati officiunt, et ecclesiasticam auctoritatem magnopere laedunt, cohibeantur, eadem Sacra Congregatio mandat omnibus fidelibus cuiuscumque regionis ne sub quovis praetextu vel quavis forma, nempe per libros, opuscula aut articulos sive subscriptos sive sine nomine, vel alio quovis modo, de memorato subiecto disserant aut pertractent.

Quicumque vero hoc Sancti Officii praeceptum violaverint, si sint sacerdotes, priventur omni, quam forte habeant, dignitate et per Ordinarium loci ab audiendis sacramentalibus confessionibus et a missa celebranda suspendantur: et si sint laici ad Sacramenta non admittantur donec resipiscant. Utrique insuper subiaceant sanctionibus latis tum a Leone PP. XIII per Constitutionem *Officiorum ac munerum* contra eos qui libros de rebus religiosis tractantes sine legitima Superiorum licentia publicant, [tum] ab Urbano VIII per decretum *Sanctissimus Dominus Noster* datum die 13 martii 1625 contra eos qui assertas revelationes sine Ordinariorum licentia vulgant.

Hoc autem decretum devotionem non vetat erga Beatissimam Virginem sub titulo *Reconciliatricis* vulgo *de la Salette* nuncupatam.

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus Sancti Officii, die 21 decembris 1915.³⁵

In editorial rendering: it has come to the knowledge of this Supreme Congregation that there are some, even from the ecclesiastical body, who—disregarding the responses and decisions of this same Sacred Congregation—continue, through books, pamphlets, and articles published in periodicals, whether signed or anonymous, to discuss and treat of the so-called *Secret de la Salette*, of its various forms, and of its application to present or future times, and this not only without the permission of the ordinaries but even against their prohibition. That these abuses, which harm true piety and gravely injure ecclesiastical authority, may be restrained, the same Sacred Congregation commands all the faithful of whatever region not to discuss or treat of the said subject under any pretext or in any form—by books, pamphlets, or articles, signed or anonymous, or in any other way whatever. Priests who violate this precept of the Holy Office are to be deprived of any dignity they may hold and suspended by the local ordinary from hearing sacramental confessions and from celebrating Mass; lay persons are not to be admitted to the Sacraments until they repent; and both are further subject to the sanctions laid down by Leo XIII in *Officiorum ac munerum* against those who publish books treating of religious matters without the lawful permission of superiors, and by Urban VIII in the decree of 13 March 1625 against those who circulate alleged revelations without the permission of the ordinaries. This decree does not forbid devotion to the Blessed Virgin under the title of Reconciler commonly called *de la Salette*.

Four things in that text are worth marking. It is aimed at *discussion and treatment in publication*, and its stated grievance is disobedience to ordinaries. It binds “all the faithful of whatever region”—a universal precept, not a local one. It carries penalties that are, in form, penal-law sanctions of a legal system that has since been replaced twice. And it ends by expressly protecting the devotion: whatever the Holy Office thought of the secret literature, it did not touch Our Lady of La Salette.

5.8 The acts of 1916 and 1923

The 1915 decree did not stand alone. Two further acts, both verified in the official gazette, show the Holy See applying it to named publications.

1916. On 12 April 1916 the Holy Office declared a two-volume work condemned and proscribed under the general rules of *Officiorum ac munerum*: *La Leçon de l'Hôpital Notre-Dame d'Ypres — Exégèse du Secret de la Salette*, by “Dr Henry Mariavé,” volume I, Paris 1915; volume II, *Appendices*, Montpellier 1915. The declaration is dated 13 April 1916. On 5 June 1916 the Sacred Congregation of the Index condemned and proscribed the same work by name in its own decree, which Benedict XV approved and ordered promulgated on 6 June.³⁶

1923. On 9 May 1923 the Holy Office proscribed and condemned the 1922 reprint of Mélanie’s text and ordered its withdrawal from the hands of the faithful.

Operative text — Suprema Sacra Congregatio S. Officii, decree *Damnatur opusculum*, Feria IV, 9 May 1923: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 15 (1923) 287–288

In generali consessu Supremae Sacrae Congregationis S. Officii Emi ac Rmi Domini Cardinales fidei et moribus tutandis praepositi proscripserunt atque damnaverunt opusculum: *L'apparition de la très Sainte Vierge sur la sainte montagne de la Salette le samedi 19 septembre 184[6]*. — *Simple réimpression du texte intégral publié par Mélanie, etc.* Société Saint-Augustin, Paris–Rome–Bruges, 1922; *mandantes ad quos spectat ut exemplaria damnati opusculi e manibus fidelium retrahere curent.*

Et eadem feria ac die Sanctissimus D. N. Pius divina providentia Papa XI, in solita audientia R. P. D. Assessori S. Officii impertita, relata sibi Emorum Patrum resolutionem approbavit.

Datum Romae, ex aedibus S. Officii, die 10 maii 1923.³⁷

In editorial rendering: in the general session of the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, the Cardinals charged with guarding faith and morals proscribed and condemned the pamphlet *L'apparition de la très Sainte Vierge sur la sainte montagne de la Salette le samedi 19 septembre 1846 — Simple réimpression du texte intégral publié par Mélanie*, published by the Société Saint-Augustin at Paris–Rome–Bruges in 1922, ordering those whom it concerns to see that copies of the condemned pamphlet are withdrawn from the hands of the faithful; and on the same day Pius XI approved the Cardinals' resolution.

Note precisely what the 1923 act condemns: a named 1922 *reprint of the text published by Mélanie*. It is a book condemnation, of a specific imprint, with a recall order. It does not mention the apparition, the 1851 judgment, the shrine, the devotion, or the Missionaries, and it does not purport to judge the 1851 manuscripts.

5.9 The standing juridic question

The question a serious reader will ask is whether the 1915 command still binds. This study does not answer it, and here is why the answer is genuinely unsettled rather than merely unknown to the author.

What the acts settle	What remains unsettled
The 1915 decree issued a universal precept of the Holy Office to all the faithful, forbidding publication and treatment of the subject. Its own text presents this as a command (<i>mandat</i>), distinct from the penalties that follow it.	Whether a non-penal precept of the Supreme Congregation, issued under the discipline of 1915, survives the two subsequent recodifications of the Church's law is a question of canonical interpretation that this study is not competent to settle and that no act located here settles.
The penal apparatus attached to it is expressly built on the sanctions of <i>Officiorum ac munerum</i> and on the Index discipline.	Those supports have gone. The Sacred Congregation of the Index was suppressed in 1917; the Index of Prohibited Books ceased to have the force of ecclesiastical law by the notification of 14 June 1966, published in <i>AAS</i> 58 (1966) 445; and the 1983 Code retains no penalty in these terms.
The 1923 act condemned a specific 1922 imprint and ordered its recall.	A condemnation of an imprint does not survive as a prohibition of a book once the Index discipline it belonged to has lost legal force; equally, the lapse of that discipline does not convert a condemned text into an approved revelation.
The 1915 decree expressly preserves devotion to Our Lady under the title <i>Reconciliatrix</i> of La Salette.	Nothing in the 1915, 1916, or 1923 acts touches the 1851 judgment, the cult, the shrine, or the Missionaries, all of which have continued under later Roman acts (§8, §9).

What can be said without controversy is narrower and is enough for practice: no act located by this project has ever declared any version of the secret to be of supernatural origin; the Holy See's public interventions on the subject were, without exception, restrictive; the devotion was expressly and repeatedly protected; and a Catholic who simply sets the secret literature aside is in no difficulty whatever. Two further things follow, and this edition says both against itself. Anyone who circulates the 1879 text as a revelation to be believed, a chronology to be applied, or a warrant for judging the Church's pastors is acting against the manifest mind of every act that exists. And a study which publishes and analyzes that text—as §6 does, on the disclosure at §5.1—is doing something the 1915 decree's words, read at their widest, would also cover; that is precisely why the disclosure stands where it stands, and why this study neither claims the decree has lapsed nor pretends it is not there.³⁸

5.10 Bounded negatives

Because the temptation to fill this record by inference is strong, the searches that came back empty are recorded exactly.³⁹

- **Later Roman acts.** The annual volumes of *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* from volume 1 (1909) through volume 98 (2006) were downloaded from the Holy See's archive and searched literally and case-insensitively for the string *salette* in the archive's text layer—every volume in that range except volume 75 (1983), which that route does not

serve; volumes from 99 (2007) onward are not published there as single annual files and were not searched. After 1923 the hits are of three kinds only: routine personnel and jurisdiction notices concerning the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette; the approval of that congregation’s constitutions (§8.6); and the two substantive Marian items quoted at §9.3 and §9.4. *No act modifying, interpreting, confirming, or abrogating the 1915 decree was found.* The search is literal and cannot exclude OCR damage, paraphrase, a differently spelled heading, an unsearched volume, or an act published elsewhere than in the gazette.

- **The Dicastery’s index.** The document index of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith contains no La Salette entry (read 2026-07-25; zero occurrences of the string).
- **The 1880 letter.** The letter of 14 August 1880 reported at §5.6 was not reached in any form: not in *Acta Sanctae Sedis* for 1878–1881, whose volumes contain no occurrence of Caterini’s name at all; not in any Latin or vernacular printing; and not at any archival notice. Its existence, date, author, and substance rest wholly on one partisan witness of 1882 who states that he himself saw only a translation. Nothing in §6 rests on its wording.
- **The 1879 Lecce imprint.** No copy, scan, or page image of the 1879 Lecce printing was reached. The permission formula, the subscription, and the whole of the text analyzed in §6 are read in the 1881 Louvain reprint, collated against that imprint’s page images; the relation of the 1881 reprint to the 1879 Lecce setting rests on Zola’s statement and on the reprint’s own claim, and was not itself verified (§6.2).
- **The 1851 manuscripts.** Not reached in any form (§5.3). This is the decisive gap in the whole dossier and §6.9 states what its closure would do to the judgment reached there.
- **Maximin’s secret.** No printing, transcription, or facsimile of any text purporting to be Maximin Giraud’s secret was reached at an identified imprint. Texts circulate; none was identified to an edition this project could name and check, and none is published, quoted, or characterized here (§6.10).

6 The 1879 Text: Publication and Analysis

6.1 There is no single “secret of La Salette”

The first and most consequential thing to say about the secret of La Salette is grammatical: the definite article is false. There is no single object answering to the phrase. There are at least five distinct objects, they stand in different evidentiary relations to 19 September 1846, and almost every confusion in the literature comes from sliding between them. §5 established them documentarily; here they are set out as a list, because the analysis that follows depends on keeping them apart.

1. **The two spoken secrets of 19 September 1846.** Two communications, one to each child, given separately, in different languages—Mélanie’s in *patois* and Maximin’s in French, on the children’s own answers under interrogation—and each covered by a prohibition to tell (§5.2). Nobody, then or since, has heard them. Every text is at best a report of them.
2. **The two manuscripts of July 1851.** Written under episcopal obedience: Mélanie’s first at Corenc on 3 July, three large pages at one sitting before two named witnesses, recopied on 4 July at Grenoble to distinguish two dates; Maximin’s likewise; both sealed and delivered to Pius IX on 18 July (§5.3). These are the only texts whose date, custody, and chain of production are documented from both sides of the dossier. This project reached neither.
3. **The manuscript versions of 1860–1873.** A manuscript obtained by a director at Marseille in 1860; the copy given to Bishop Zola in 1869; the document delivered to Abbé Bliard on 30 January 1870 *with deliberate lacunae marked by dots and by “etc.”*; a certified copy sent to a consultor of the Index in February 1870; Bliard’s printed edition of 1873 and Girard’s of 1872 (§5.4). This project reached none of these directly; they are known here only through Zola’s account of them.
4. **The integral text of 1878–1879.** Subscribed by Mélanie at Castellammare on 21 November 1878, printed at Lecce in 1879 at a private person’s expense under a curial *nihil obstat et imprimatur* of 15 November 1879 (§5.5). This is the text in which, on Zola’s own statement, the earlier lacunae were filled in.
5. **The reprints and their descendants.** Louvain 1881; Paris–Rome–Bruges 1922, condemned by name in 1923; and, through that line, every printing and posting since.

The practical consequence deserves to be stated flatly, because it is the single most useful sentence in this section for an ordinary reader. *A reader who has ever encountered “the secret of La Salette”—in a book, a pamphlet, a devotional magazine, or on the internet—has, with near certainty, encountered the fourth object and not the second.* What circulates is the 1879 text. It is what the 1922 reprint reprinted, it is what the 1923 decree condemned, and it is what every modern edition descends from. Whether that text is the 1851 text is the question of §6.7–§6.9, and it is not settled by the fact that both are called “the secret.”

6.2 The text this study analyzes, and why

This study analyzes the fourth object, in the fifth object’s earliest reachable witness: *Le secret complet de la Salette, publié par Mélanie de la Salette, Sœur Marie de la Croix* (Louvain: Imprimerie de J. Lefever, 1881). Four reasons, and one ceiling.

The reasons. It is the text that circulates, so a study that analyzed anything else would be answering a question nobody asks. It is a fully identified imprint—title page, printer, place, date—held in a scanned copy whose page images this project read directly, and not an unidentified transcription. It prints, in one volume, the text, the author’s own subscription and dating, the Lecce permission formula, two of her letters of 1880, and the letter of the bishop who procured the printing, so that the document and the evidence about the document travel together. And its standing as a witness to the Lecce setting is asserted by that same bishop, who says the Lecce text is identical with the manuscript he received in 1869 save for the filled lacunae, and by Mélanie herself, who in May 1880 authorized a reprint.

The ceiling, stated once and carried through everything below. This project did not reach the 1879 Lecce imprint. The relation between the 1881 Louvain setting and the 1879 Lecce setting rests on the reprint’s own claim and on Zola’s letter—both interested parties—and was not independently verified. No collation of the 1881 text against any other printing of the same text was performed, because no second printing was reached. What follows is therefore an analysis of *the text as the 1881 Louvain reprint prints it*, and every claim about “the 1879 text” should be read with that substitution in mind.⁴⁰

One further boundary. Publishing a text is not endorsing it. Nothing in §6.3–§6.6 is asserted by this study as true, as revealed, as predictive, or as reliable; those subsections report what an identified nineteenth-century imprint prints, in order that §6.7–§6.9 may reason about it and §6.12 may say what weight it can bear. The distinction is the same one this study keeps everywhere between a witness’s words and the project’s judgments.

6.3 What kind of document the 1879 text is

Before its contents, its shape. The Lecce booklet is not a secret with a preface. It is a continuous first-person narrative in six numbered parts, running to twenty-two printed pages in the 1881 setting, of which the secret proper occupies about five. Its parts, as the 1881 reprint sets them out, run as follows.

Part I (pp. 5–7) gives the day before, 18 September 1846—the meeting with Maximin, Mélanie’s reluctance to have company, her “conversation with the little flowers of the good God,” the bread marked with a cross—and then the morning of the 19th, the building of a “Paradise” of stones and flowers, the Angelus, the meal, and the sleep. Part II (pp. 7–8) has the waking, the light, the Lady seated on the “Paradise” with her head in her hands, and the opening of the discourse. Part III (pp. 8–13) carries the discourse to the point at which the Lady falls silent and Maximin receives his secret, and then prints Mélanie’s secret entire. Part IV (pp. 14–15) mentions, without printing, the Rule of a new religious order, and resumes and closes the public discourse. Part V (pp. 16–17) is the evening at the farm, the telling, the next morning at the presbytery, the curé’s reaction at Mass, and the mayor’s questioning. Part VI (pp. 18–22) is a long devotional meditation on the appearance of the Virgin—dress, crown, crucifix, chains, shoes, tears, voice, and eyes—closing with the dated subscription.

That structure is itself a datum. The secret is embedded in an autobiography, at the exact point where the 1847 depositions place the private words; the public discourse surrounds it on both sides; and the whole is framed by a literary meditation of a kind no fourteen-year-old cowherd produced in 1846 and no deposition records. The document presents itself as a memoir written in maturity, and it is dated as one: “Castellamare, le 21 Novembre 1878,” subscribed “Marie de la Croix, Victime de Jésus, née Mélanie Calvat, Bergère de la Salette.”⁴¹

6.4 The secret proper, published

What follows is the substance of the text described since 1879 as “le secret complet de la Salette,” reported at its principal elements and quoted at the passages on which the analysis and the controversy turn. The whole is not reproduced; the elements are inventoried and the load-bearing sentences are given in the imprint’s own French with an editorial English rendering. Every quotation was collated against the page image.

The text introduces the secret with a frame sentence that claims verbatim completeness:

1881 Louvain reprint, p. 8, introducing the secret

« Ici, la belle Dame qui me ravissait, resta un moment sans se faire entendre; je voyais cependant qu’elle continuait, comme si elle parlait, de remuer gracieusement ses aimables lèvres, Maximin recevait alors son secret. Puis, s’adressant à moi, la Très-sainte Vierge me parla et *me donna un secret en français*. Ce secret, le voici tout entier, et tel qu’elle me l’a donné: »⁴²

The secret then opens with a permission and a date:

1881 Louvain reprint, p. 9, the opening of the secret

« Mélanie, ce que je vais vous dire maintenant ne sera pas toujours secret. Vous pourrez le publier en 1858. »⁴³

What follows divides, on any reading, into two very unequal bodies of matter, and a contemporary defender of the text divided it the same way: a first part concerning the state of the clergy and the religious, and a second concerning the great events to come.

The first part: the clergy. The opening paragraph is the passage that generated the entire controversy, that Zola singled out, that the 1882 opposition called extravagance, and that any honest publication must print rather than paraphrase.

1881 Louvain reprint, p. 9

« Les prêtres, ministres de mon Fils, les prêtres, par leur mauvaise vie, par leurs irrévérences et leur impiété à célébrer les saints mystères, par l’amour de l’argent, l’amour de l’honneur et des plaisirs, les prêtres sont devenus des cloaques d’impureté. Oui, les prêtres demandent vengeance, et la vengeance est suspendue sur leurs têtes. Malheur aux prêtres et aux personnes consacrées à Dieu, lesquels, par leurs infidélités et leur mauvaise vie, crucifient de nouveau mon Fils! Les péchés des personnes consacrées à Dieu crient vers le ciel et appellent la vengeance, et voilà que la vengeance est à leurs portes, car il ne se trouve plus personne pour implorer miséricorde et pardon pour les peuples. Il n’y a plus d’âmes généreuses, il n’y a plus personne digne d’offrir la Victime sans tache à l’Eternel, en faveur du monde. »⁴⁴

The register of that paragraph, and the doctrinal difficulty in its last sentence, are taken up at §6.5 and §6.12. Note for the moment only its universality: it is not that some priests, in some places, are corrupt, but that there is *no one left* worthy to offer the sacrifice—an assertion which, taken literally, would bear on the Church’s own life in a way no approved private revelation has ever been permitted to do.

The second part: the events. From this point the text is a sustained apocalyptic prophecy with named persons, named years, named countries and named cities. Its elements, inventoried:

Element	As the 1879 text has it	Evidentiary remark
Dated permission	Publication permitted “en 1858”	Text appeared 1879, twenty-one years later; the date is not withdrawn or explained in the imprint
The clergy	Priests and religious as above; “malheur aux princes de l’Eglise” occupied only with heaping riches and dominating with pride	The passage Zola says stood “identically” in the 1851 manuscript, on unnamed information
Pius IX by name	« Que le Vicaire de mon Fils, le souverain Pontife Pie IX, ne sorte plus de Rome après l’année 1859. Mais qu’il soit ferme et généreux »	Presupposes a live question of the Pope leaving Rome, i.e. the situation from 1848 onward; Pius IX had reigned three months in September 1846

Element	As the 1879 text has it	Evidentiary remark
Napoleon	« Qu'il se méfie de Napoléon. Son cœur est double. Et quand il voudra être à la fois pape et empereur, bientôt Dieu se retirera de lui »	Napoleon III, President from 1848, Emperor from 1852; the Roman Question
Italy	Punished for wishing to shake off the yoke; war, blood, churches closed and profaned, priests and religious driven out and put to death	The Risorgimento vocabulary of 1859–1870
Apostasy	Many will abandon the faith, and the number of priests and religious separating from the true religion will be great, “parmi ces personnes, il se trouvera même des évêques”	
1864	« En l'année 1864, Lucifer, avec un grand nombre de démons, seront détachés de l'enfer »	A named year, seventeen years after the reported apparition, fifteen years before publication
Spiritualism	The dead made to rise and take the figure of just souls, preaching another gospel; churches to serve evil spirits	The vocabulary of mid-century spiritism, named as such in the text's own list “matérialisme, athéisme, spiritisme”
1865	« Dans l'année 1865, on verra l'abomination dans les lieux saints »	A second named year
War and two cities	France, Italy, Spain and England at war, Frenchman against Frenchman, then a general war; « Paris sera brûlé et Marseille engloutie »	Paris burned in 1871; Marseille was not engulfed
The Pope's sufferings	Attempts on his life which will not shorten his days; “mais ni lui, ni son successeur... ne verront le triomphe de l'Eglise de Dieu”	The ellipsis is printed in the imprint; Pius IX died in 1878, the year before publication
Interval of peace	A pacification, new kings the right arm of the Church, the Gospel preached everywhere; then twenty-five years of abundant harvests making men forget	
Antichrist	Born “d'une religieuse hébraïque, d'une fausse vierge qui aura communication avec le vieux serpent”; “Son père sera év...”	The word is broken off in the imprint itself at <i>év</i> , followed by four points
Rome	« Rome perdra la foi et deviendra le siège de l'antechrist »; later “Rome payenne disparaîtra”	
The apostles of the last times	« enfin j'appelle les apôtres des derniers temps, les disciples fidèles de Jésus-Christ »	The phrase and the surrounding portrait are Montfortian; §6.5
The end	The Church eclipsed; Henoah and Elias preaching and put to death; fire from heaven consuming three cities; the beast stifled by the breath of Saint Michael the Archangel; the earth in continual convulsion for three days; water and fire purifying the earth; “et tout sera renouvelé. Dieu sera servi et glorifié”	
A new order	After the secret: “Ensuite la sainte Vierge me donna aussi en français la Règle d'un nouvel Ordre religieux”	The Rule is not printed in the booklet; §6.8

Three of those elements are quoted here in the imprint's own words, because the analysis turns on their exact form.

1881 Louvain reprint, pp. 9–10 and 12–13: three passages

« Que le Vicaire de mon Fils, le souverain Pontife Pie IX, ne sorte plus de Rome après l'année 1859. Mais qu'il soit ferme et généreux. Qu'il combatte avec les armes de la foi et de l'amour. Je serai avec lui.
Qu'il se méfie de Napoléon. Son cœur est double. Et quand il voudra être à la fois pape et empereur, bientôt Dieu se retirera de lui. »

« Ce sera pendant ce temps que naîtra l’antechrist, d’une religieuse hébraïque, d’une fausse vierge qui aura communication avec le vieux serpent, le maître de l’impureté. Son père sera év. . . . En naissant il vomira des blasphèmes, il aura des dents. En un mot, ce sera le diable incarné. »

« L’Eglise sera éclipsée, le monde sera dans la consternation. Mais voilà Henoch et Elie remplis de l’esprit de Dieu, ils prêcheront avec la force de Dieu, et les hommes de bonne volonté croiront en Dieu. »⁴⁵

6.5 Register, imagery, and preoccupations

The text is not *sui generis*, and saying where its language comes from is not an accusation; it is the ordinary first step in reading any document. Four observations, each source-grounded and each labelled as this study’s reading.

The register is literary apocalyptic, not catechetical. The 1846 public discourse is a peasant sermon: two named sins, one devotional instruction, one conditional agricultural sign, one commission. The 1879 secret is built from the standing furniture of the apocalyptic tradition—the old serpent and his tail dragging down the wandering stars, the abomination in the holy places, the beast, the false Christ, the ten kings, the three days of darkness and convulsion, Henoch and Elias slain and the world purified by water and fire. Those images are biblical and patristic in origin and were common property of nineteenth-century prophetic literature; their presence establishes a genre, not a source, and this study claims no literary dependence on any particular book.

One phrase, however, is more specific. The appeal to “*les apôtres des derniers temps*”—the apostles of the last times, called out of hiddenness, poverty, contempt and silence to enlighten the earth—is the distinctive vocabulary of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort’s *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, whose manuscript was found in 1842 and printed thereafter, and which became one of the most widely diffused devotional books in France in exactly the decades between the apparition and the Lecce printing. The 1879 text uses the phrase as a title, and the promoters used it as the name of the religious order Mélanie was writing constitutions for at Rome. This study records the correspondence of vocabulary and does not assert that Mélanie read the *Traité*; it did not reach any edition of that work, and the observation is made at that ceiling.⁴⁶

The polemic is ecclesiastical and it is total. The targets are priests, religious communities, the heads of communities, bishops, the princes of the Church, and Rome. The 1846 public discourse contains no such material at all—not a syllable about a bishop, a priest, a religious, or the Roman Church (§3.5). This is the sharpest single contrast between the two bodies of text, and it is a contrast of subject matter, not merely of tone.

The preoccupations are datable, and they do not date to 1846. Every proper name and every year in the text belongs to the period 1848–1878: Pius IX told not to leave Rome again after 1859, which presupposes that he might—as he had, to Gaeta, in November 1848; Napoleon III, who became President in 1848 and Emperor in 1852, and whose Roman policy is the subject of the sentence about wishing to be “at once pope and emperor”; Italy punished for shaking off the yoke, which is the language of the Risorgimento; churches closed, religious expelled and killed; the years 1858, 1859, 1864, 1865; the death of a pope and his successor’s failure to see the Church’s triumph, written a year after Pius IX died. In September 1846 Pius IX had reigned for three months and was the liberal hope of Italy; there was no Roman Question, no Napoleon III, and no expulsion of religious.

That last observation must be handled with more care than it usually receives, and this study handles it in both directions. It does *not* show that the text is false: a prophecy may name a reigning pope and a future year, and if the material stood in the 1851 manuscript then all of it except the reference to Pius IX’s successor was written before the events. It does not even show that the material is late, since the 1851 manuscripts were written in July 1851—after Gaeta, after the Second Republic, after the French garrison entered Rome. What it shows is narrower and still substantial: the imaginative world of the 1879 secret is the world of the Roman Question, and not the world of a Dauphiné pasture in 1846. Any hypothesis about the text has to account for that, and the hypothesis that it reproduces words spoken in *patois* to a fourteen-year-old cowherd on 19 September 1846 accounts for it worst of all.⁴⁷

A fifth observation belongs here although it concerns the author rather than the text. Mélanie’s own letter of 9 May 1880, printed in the same volume, sets a date for the events of the secret in her own voice: “Il me semble que les événements devraient arriver vers 1881. Puissé-je me tromper!” She also states there that for about three years her sight had failed to the point that she could no longer tell whether a book was written or not, and that she wrote only by long habit, with very strong spectacles and sometimes with two pairs at once. Both facts bear on the 1878–1879 composition and are recorded rather than argued from.⁴⁸

6.6 The 1879 text against the 1846 discourse

The most useful control available is the part of the 1879 booklet that can be checked: it contains the public discourse, and the public discourse is independently attested from 1847. Where the two can be compared, they can be compared exactly.

The discourse in the recital stratum (1854 printing of the diocesan documents)	The same passage in the 1879 text (1881 reprint)
“Come near, my children, be not afraid, I am here to tell you great news”; French « je suis ici pour vous <i>conter</i> une grande nouvelle »	« Avancez, mes enfants, n’ayez pas peur; je suis ici pour vous <i>annoncer</i> une grande nouvelle »
« laisser aller <i>la main</i> de mon fils. Elle est si <i>forte</i> , si pesante, que je ne peux plus la <i>maintenir</i> »	« laisser aller <i>la main</i> de mon Fils. Elle est si <i>lourde</i> et si pesante, que je ne puis plus la <i>retenir</i> »
The Lady, having spoken French, repeats the harvest passage <i>in patois</i> because Mélanie did not know <i>pommes de terre</i> ; the 1854 witness prints the whole repeated passage in <i>patois</i>	The first form is printed in French, then « La traduction en français est celle-ci »—the imprint prints a French rendering of what it says was said otherwise, and prints no <i>patois</i> at all
The children’s answer about prayer: “Not very well, Madam”	« Oh! non, Madame, pas beaucoup »
The Coin episode, in <i>patois</i> , with Maximin’s recognition: “Oh! yes, Madam, I recollect now; just this moment, I did not remember”	« C’est bien vrai, Madame, je ne me le rappelais pas »
Mélanie’s own testimony under interrogation in 1847: her secret was given her <i>in patois</i>	« la Très-sainte Vierge me parla et me donna un secret <i>en français</i> »

Four conclusions follow from that table, and they are worth more than any amount of argument about tone.⁴⁹

First, the 1879 text is a legitimate descendant of the same discourse: every element is there, in the same order, with the same substance. Nobody should say that its author invented the apparition; the constancy the Sanctuary itself attributes to her (§7.4) is visible in this text.

Second, and decisively for method, *the 1879 text does not reproduce even the checkable part verbatim*. Three substantives and a verb differ in the single most quoted sentence in the dossier; the address verb differs; the *patois* has vanished; the children’s answers are recast. Whatever process produced the 1879 text was not transcription. It was a devout woman writing out, in 1878, in French, from memory and habit, a discourse she had recited for thirty-two years.

Third, that finding licenses an inference about the part that *cannot* be checked. If the process demonstrably did not preserve the wording of the public discourse—the part rehearsed thousands of times, printed since 1847, and available to correct her—there is no reason to believe it preserved the wording of a private communication never rehearsed in public and never written down before 1851.

Fourth, the single flat contradiction. In 1847, asked in what language her secret was given, Mélanie answered that it was given her *in patois*. In 1878 she wrote that the Virgin gave it to her *in French*, and printed the whole of it in French as received. Both statements are hers. They cannot both be descriptions of the same event, and the earlier of them was given at eighteen months’ distance, under interrogation, to a diocesan inquiry, in the presence of the fact that she then knew almost no French at all (§2.2).

6.7 Is the 1879 text the 1851 text? The internal evidence

Now the question this section exists to answer. It is a question of fact, it admits of evidence, and this study answers it rather than retreating into the observation that the matter is disputed.

The internal evidence has been assembled above and is summarized here with its weight stated.

1. **The language of the secret. Heavy weight.** The earliest record has the secret in *patois*; the 1879 text has it in French and prints it as given. A text presented as the exact words received cannot be in a language the recipient said it was not in.
2. **Demonstrated non-verbatim transmission. Heavy weight.** In the only portion where the 1879 text can be collated against a record older than itself, it does not agree verbatim (§6.6).
3. **The frame’s claim of completeness. Moderate weight, against the text.** “Ce secret, le voici tout entier, et tel qu’elle me l’a donné” is a claim of verbatim completeness made in 1878 about words heard in 1846 and first written in 1851. The same volume, thirteen pages later, prints the statement of the man who procured the printing that the text is not what was sent to Pius IX. The document contradicts its own dossier.
4. **Growth by admitted accretion. Heavy weight.** The 1870 document had lacunae marked by dots and by “etc.”; Zola says she “filled in” those lacunae in the Lecce booklet. Whatever filled them was composed—or at least written down for the first time—between 1870 and 1878. That is not a hypothesis; it is the promoter’s description of what happened.
5. **Extent. Light weight, but real.** Zola describes the 1851 autograph as three large pages written at one sitting; the 1879 secret proper occupies about five pages of small type inside a twenty-two-page narrative. Formats are not comparable without the manuscript, so this is a pointer, not a proof.
6. **The two dates. Light weight, and it cuts the other way.** The 4 July recopying was made, Zola says, to distinguish two dates of events not to occur at the same period. The 1851 text therefore contained at least two dates of its own, and the presence of named years in the 1879 text is not by itself evidence of lateness.
7. **The world the text imagines. Moderate weight, carefully stated.** The named persons and events belong to 1848–1878. Since the 1851 manuscript was written in July 1851, part of that range was already past when it was written; the observation therefore separates 1879 from 1846, decisively, but separates 1879 from 1851 only for the material that postdates 1851—the years 1858, 1859, 1864, 1865, the burning of Paris, and the successor of Pius IX.

6.8 The external evidence

The promoter’s admission. The single most important sentence in the external record is Zola’s, quoted at §5.4 and repeated here because everything turns on it: “Mélanie n’a pas envoyé à Sa Sainteté Pie IX tout le secret qu’elle a publié dernièrement, mais seulement tout ce que la sainte Vierge lui inspira sur l’heure d’écrire de cet important document, et en outre bien des choses qui pouvaient concerner Pie IX personnellement.” Read exactly, it says three things: the 1879 publication is not what went to Pius IX; what went to Pius IX was what the Virgin inspired her to write *at that hour*; and the 1851 letter also contained much concerning Pius IX personally—that is, material *not* in the 1879 text. The two documents therefore differ in both directions on the testimony of the bishop who obtained the imprimatur for the later one. This is a statement against interest by the most favourable witness available, and it is the closest thing to a decisive fact that this dossier contains.

The promoter’s counter-claim, and its evidentiary value. Zola immediately adds that “by information which I give you as very precise, I know that the reproaches addressed to the clergy and to the religious communities were contained identically in the part of the secret given to His Holiness Pius IX.” That is a specific, falsifiable claim about the contents of the 1851 manuscript, made by a man who does not say he read it, from sources he does not name. It is not nothing—he was in a position to know things—but it is unattributed hearsay offered by a partisan in a controversy, and it cannot bear the weight the tradition has put on it.

The imprimatur’s circumstances. Set out at §5.5 and summarized: the permission was given not by the Bishop of Grenoble, to whom article 4 of the 1851 mandement reserved La Salette devotional publications, but by the curia of Lecce; the text was examined by the curia of the author’s own former spiritual director, who says so himself; the licence was issued to a private person who was paying for the printing; and the promoters afterwards described it as the bishop’s personal imprimatur when the formula is the vicar general’s. None of that makes the permission invalid in its own order. All of it makes it useless as evidence that the text is the 1851 text, which no censor at Lecce had ever seen.

The Roman acts, read as evidence rather than as law. Four data, in order. In 1880 the Congregation of the Index declined to condemn the booklet and the Holy Office took the matter up because a revelation was at issue; on 14 August 1880 its Secretary wrote expressing the Holy See’s displeasure and the desire that the booklet be withdrawn from the faithful’s hands, “if the thing is possible” (§5.6). In 1915 the Holy Office forbade the faithful of every region

to treat of the subject “de sic dicto *Secret de la Salette, de diversis ipsius formis*, nec non de eius praesentibus aut futuris temporibus accommodatione”—of the so-called Secret of La Salette, *of its various forms*, and of its application to present or future times. In 1916 it condemned an *Exégèse* of the secret. In 1923 it proscribed and condemned, by its exact title, the 1922 “simple reprint of the integral text published by Mélanie,” and ordered copies withdrawn from the faithful’s hands.

The 1915 phrase repays attention. The Holy Office does not speak of *the* secret; it speaks of the secret and *of its various forms*, and it forbids treating of its application to present or future times. In its own drafting, therefore, the supreme doctrinal congregation of the Church took as given, in 1915, both that the subject existed in multiple textual forms and that the mischief lay in applying it to current events. That is not a judgment that any form is spurious. It is an official acknowledgement that the question of §6.7 was real.

The custodians’ silence. The Sanctuary of Notre-Dame de La Salette and the Missionaries publish the 1846 discourse, the 1851 recognition, and Ginoulhiac’s sentence that the shepherds’ mission is finished and the Church’s begins. They do not publish the secret, do not discuss it, and—in the Sanctuary’s own biographical page about its own seer—describe her as having resisted badly the temptation to play the oracle and as having taken up again the popular pseudo-prophecies about the end of times which reappear periodically in the Church’s history (§7.4). That is the judgment of the institution that exists to keep her memory, published on its own site.

6.9 The judgment

Project synthesis — the judgment of this study on the 1879 text

Not received teaching. On the evidence this project reached, the text published at Lecce in 1879 is *not* the text written for Pius IX in July 1851. It is a composite document, written out in maturity by Mélanie Calvat and completed at Castellammare in November 1878, consisting of (i) the 1846 public discourse, transmitted faithfully in substance and demonstrably not verbatim; (ii) a body of prophetic and anticlerical matter of which some part—on the sole and unattributed testimony of her former director—stood in the 1851 manuscript, and of which a further part was written down for the first time between 1870 and 1878 by that same director’s account; and (iii) an extended devotional and autobiographical frame that no earlier witness knows. It should be read as the mature religious testimony of the seer about her own experience and her own age. It should not be read as a transcript of words spoken on 19 September 1846, and no sentence in it can be assigned to that day by any evidence available to this project.

The confidence attaching to the parts of that judgment is not uniform, and stating it unevenly would be dishonest.

What this study holds, and how firmly	On what it rests
That the 1879 text is not, as a whole, the 1851 text: held with high confidence.	The explicit statement of the bishop who procured its printing, in the same volume that prints the text (§6.8).
That the process which produced the 1879 text was not verbatim transmission: held with high confidence.	Direct collation of its public discourse against the 1854 printing of the diocesan documents (§6.6).
That material was added between 1870 and 1878: held with high confidence.	Zola’s account of the lacunae and their filling (§5.4).
That the secret was not given in French: held with moderate-to-high confidence.	Mélanie’s own 1847 answer against her own 1878 statement, with the 1847 answer preferred for the ordinary reasons of proximity and circumstance (§6.6).
That the specific dated predictions postdate 1851: held with moderate confidence only.	An argument from the text’s horizon, which is defeasible and which the 1851 manuscript could overturn tomorrow (§6.7, item 7).
That any <i>particular</i> sentence was, or was not, in the 1851 manuscript: <i>not held at all</i> .	Nothing establishes it either way. The manuscripts were not reached (§5.10).

The strongest counterargument, stated at its strongest. It is not the argument the defenders actually made. Roubaud’s argument in 1882 was that Mélanie could not have altered a word of her secret, because otherwise the Virgin would have to be charged with choosing an unfit instrument, which would be blasphemous, which would mean

she never appeared at all, which would overturn thirty-six years of miracles and the acts of bishops and of the Holy See.⁵⁰ That is an argument from what God must have done, and it proves whatever its holder needs it to prove; it also proves too much, since the same reasoning would guarantee the verbal inerrancy of every recital by every approved seer, which the Church has never taught and which the *la main/le bras* variant in the public discourse already refutes (§3.4).

The genuinely strong counterargument is different, and this study states it because it is the one that gave the author most trouble: *delay in writing is not falsification, and the Church has itself published a secret written down decades after the event*. At Fátima the third part of the secret of 13 July 1917 was written by Lúcia dos Santos in January 1944, twenty-six and a half years after the event, at her bishop's order, and the Holy See published it in 2000 as the seer's authentic text. If a twenty-six-year interval is compatible with authenticity there, why is a thirty-two-year interval decisive here?

The answer is that the interval is not what distinguishes the cases, and this study does not rest on the interval. What distinguishes them is custody. At Fátima the writing was made under obedience, sealed at once, delivered into ecclesiastical hands, kept in the Holy Office's own archive, never circulated in successive versions, never published by the seer, never printed at a private person's expense, and finally produced from that archive by the authority that held it. At La Salette the 1851 writing was made under obedience and did go into ecclesiastical custody—and that text has never been published by anyone. What was published is a different document, transmitted privately from director to director for two decades, admitted by its own promoter to have grown in the interval, printed under a permission obtained in a diocese where the author's former director was bishop, and disavowed by that same promoter as not being the text in Roman custody. The Fátima parallel, followed through, is the strongest argument *against* the 1879 text, not for it.

What would change this judgment. Three things, and they are specified so that a later reader can hold this study to them.

1. **The 1851 autographs, produced with authenticated provenance.** If Mélanie's July 1851 manuscript were published in facsimile from an identified archive and were found to contain the clergy passage, the named years, and the apocalyptic sequence in substantially the 1879 form, the judgment above would be wrong in its principal part and this study would have to say so. Later literature reports such a recovery; this project verified nothing about it and nothing here rests on it (§5.3).
2. **A pre-1860 witness quoting the disputed matter.** A dated letter, deposition, censor's report, or diocesan record from before 1860 quoting or describing the anticlerical or apocalyptic content would move the material back behind the period of transmission and accretion.
3. **An authenticated statement by a reader of the 1851 manuscript.** Pius IX read it; so, if the reports are true, did others. A statement from an identified reader, at an identified locus, describing its contents would settle a great deal.

Conversely, publication of the 1851 autographs showing three pages of substantially different matter would confirm the judgment and convert its moderate-confidence parts into firm ones. In either direction, the question is empirically decidable and is presently undecided only because a document exists that nobody has produced.

6.10 Maximin's secret, and its very different reception

The asymmetry between the two children is the most under-used evidence in the dossier, and it is evidence precisely because the starting conditions were identical.

What is documented about Maximin's secret is short. In 1847, under interrogation, he placed it after the sentence about grapes and walnuts, said the Lady then spoke to him *in French*, and gave the prohibition in the plainest possible words: "You shall not say this, nor this, nor this" (§5.2). In July 1851 he wrote it, separately and under the same obedience, sealed it, and it went to Rome with Mélanie's and was read by Pius IX in the messengers' presence (§5.3). And there the documented history of Maximin's secret ends.

It ends because he did nothing further with it. He published one pamphlet in his life, *Ma profession de foi sur l'Apparition de Notre-Dame de La Salette*, written in answer to a hostile press article, and he made a will restating his testimony about the apparition and leaving his heart to the shrine (§7.2). He founded no order, wrote no rule, issued no dated prophecies, gathered no promoters, and obtained no imprimatur. He died at Corps in 1875, four

years before the Lecce booklet appeared. The whole “Secret de La Salette” literature—the 1870s manuscripts, the 1879 booklet, the 1882 controversy, the 1915 decree, the 1916 *Exégèse* and its condemnation, the 1922 reprint and the 1923 recall order—concerns Mélanie’s text. Not one Roman act in this dossier mentions Maximin’s.

A ceiling, and a refusal. Texts purporting to be Maximin’s secret circulate. This project reached none of them at an identified imprint—no printing, transcription, or facsimile that could be named to an edition, dated, and checked—and therefore publishes none, quotes none, and characterizes none. That is not delicacy: it is the rule this study applies everywhere, that an unidentified text is not evidence of anything. The negative is recorded at §5.10 and in the audit record, and it is correctable by better evidence.⁵¹

What the asymmetry is evidence of. Two children received two secrets on the same afternoon, under the same prohibition, and surrendered them on the same day in the same room to the same courier. One of the two texts stayed exactly where the Church put it. The other left ecclesiastical custody, passed through at least four private hands, was copied with deliberate gaps, was filled in nine years later, was printed under a permission from a friendly curia, and grew from three pages to a booklet. The difference cannot be explained by anything about 19 September 1846, because that day was the same for both. It is explained by what happened to the two seers afterwards—which is exactly what §7 documents, and exactly what the 1851 mandement never judged.

6.11 Why Rome acted as it did

The temptation with the acts of 1915, 1916 and 1923 runs in two opposite directions, and both must be resisted. One is to treat a disciplinary decree as a doctrinal condemnation, and to say that the Church has declared the secret false. The other is to treat its disciplinary character as though it emptied it, and to say that Rome merely made a housekeeping rule about books. Neither is what the documents say.

Read at their own words, the acts have a consistent internal logic.

What the acts say they are doing	What they therefore do not do
The 1915 decree’s stated grievance is that persons, including clerics, continue to publish on the subject <i>disregarding the responses and decisions of this same Sacred Congregation</i> , “not only without the permission of the ordinaries but even against their prohibition.” Its object is a pattern of disobedient publication.	It censures no proposition, names no author, condemns no text as false, and passes no judgment on whether anything was revealed at La Salette. It is a precept about behaviour, with penalties.
It forbids treating of the secret “of its various forms” and of “its application to present or future times.”	It thereby identifies what Rome thought the mischief was—textual multiplicity and topical application—without saying which form, if any, is genuine.
The 1916 acts condemn a named two-volume <i>Exégèse</i> under the general rules of <i>Officiorum ac munerum</i> , and the Index enters it.	They condemn a book of interpretation, not the object interpreted.
The 1923 decree proscribes and condemns a named 1922 imprint described in its own title as a “simple reprint of the integral text published by Mélanie,” and orders copies withdrawn from the faithful.	It is a book condemnation of a specific imprint. It does not mention the apparition, the 1851 judgment, the shrine, the devotion, or the Missionaries, and it does not purport to judge the 1851 manuscripts.
The 1915 decree ends by expressly protecting devotion to the Blessed Virgin under the title <i>Reconciliatrix</i> of La Salette.	The Holy Office deliberately separated the literature from the cult, and every later act—1926, 1945, 1961, 1996, 2016—confirms that the separation held.

Three inferences are available from that pattern, and this study draws them as inferences.

First, the Holy See’s practical judgment on the secret literature was consistently negative for at least forty-three years, from the Caterini letter of 1880 to the decree of 1923, and never once positive. The Index declined to condemn in 1880; that is not approval, and Roubaud’s use of it as approval is the fallacy the whole dossier turns on. A refusal to condemn a book and an authentication of a revelation are not neighbours.

Second, the escalation is legible. A private letter asking for withdrawal “if possible” in 1880; a universal precept with penalties in 1915; a named condemnation in 1916; a condemnation with a recall order in 1923. Rome tried the mildest instrument first and reached for stronger ones as the literature kept coming.

Third—and this is the inference that most needs stating—the Church’s restraint about the *content* was deliberate. Rome had the option of declaring the 1879 text spurious. It had the option of requiring a retraction, which Roubaud himself observes Leo XIII had the right and the power to demand and did not. It did neither. It forbade the argument and condemned the imprints, which is what an authority does when it judges a public dispute to be harmful and does not intend to adjudicate the underlying question. A reader who wants Rome to have settled the authenticity of the secret will not find it settled; a reader who wants Rome to have been neutral about the literature will not find that either.⁵²

6.12 Project synthesis: what the secrets are, and what weight they can bear

Everything below is this study’s own judgment, offered as editorial synthesis and labelled as such. It is not received teaching, it has had no ecclesiastical review, and a reader is free to weigh the evidence in §6.6–§6.9 and reach another conclusion.

Project synthesis — what this study judges the secrets to be

What the secrets are. That something was said privately to each child on 19 September 1846 is as well attested as anything in the dossier: it is in the earliest interrogations, it was the standing objection the 1851 judgment had to remove, and both children maintained it under pressure that included money and threats. What was said is not known, and this study judges that it is not now recoverable from any text in circulation. The two 1851 manuscripts are the only documents with a claim to be first-hand, and they have never been published. The 1879 text is a genuine and serious religious document—the testimony of a believing woman about her own experience, her own Church and her own century—and it is not a record of 19 September 1846.

What weight a Catholic reader may give it. The controlling principle is not a judgment about La Salette but the doctrine of private revelation, and here it is unusually easy to apply, because the Holy See stated the position in a text that names this event. In 1877 the Sacred Congregation of Rites answered that the apparitions which gave rise to the cult of the Blessed Virgin under the titles of Lourdes and La Salette had been “neither approved nor reprobated or condemned by the Apostolic See, but only permitted as to be piously believed *fide solum humana*”—by merely human faith (§8.3). That is the ceiling for the *apparition*. It follows immediately that no text *about* the apparition, approved by nobody and condemned in its reprints, can stand higher. The 2024 norms say the same thing in modern words for the whole class: as a rule no authority declares such phenomena to be of supernatural origin, and even where a *Nihil obstat* is given the phenomena “do not become objects of faith” (§10.2). No determination under those norms concerns La Salette at all.

Applied to the 1879 text, the consequences are concrete.

- **Nobody is obliged to believe any of it.** Not a sentence, not a date, not the clergy passage. If the whole of it were set aside, nothing in Catholic faith or in the approved cult of Our Lady of La Salette would be affected, because nothing in either rests on it.
- **It cannot found a judgment about any priest, bishop, or the Roman Church.** A private revelation may not be used to convict anyone of anything. Its sweeping sentences are, in the Church’s own reading of prophetic literature—and in Bishop Zola’s, who wrote that such phrases must not be taken at the foot of the letter because there is a language proper to the prophetic style—rhetorical and general. Used as an indictment they leave the category of piety entirely.
- **Its dated predictions are not a chronology.** They were not treated as one by the author, who reset the date to “about 1881” in 1880; they cannot be recovered as one now; and applying them to present or future events is precisely what the Holy Office identified as the mischief in 1915.
- **One sentence in it requires a doctrinal correction, and this study makes it rather than passing over it.** The claim that there is “no one left worthy to offer the spotless Victim” cannot be true of the Church, in whom the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered by the ministry of priests whose personal unworthiness does not touch the validity of the sacrament, and in whom the promises of Christ do not fail. Whatever the sentence’s rhetorical force, its literal content is incompatible with Catholic doctrine on the sacraments and on the indefectibility of the Church, and no reading that gives it literal force can be accepted.

- **It may lawfully be read as history.** It is a nineteenth-century printed document, in the public domain, of real interest for the religious history of France and Italy and for the biography of one of the two seers. Reading it as that is what this study has done.

And the public message stands entirely apart. The last word of this section is the distinction with which it began. What the Church judged in 1851, authorized in cult, preached at the shrine, and quoted in papal letters in 1945, 1961 and 1996 is the discourse of §3: keep Sunday, do not put the name of the Son into an oath, pray morning and evening, come to Mass, do penance, and let it pass to all her people. That message is untouched by every act quoted in §5, unaffected by every finding in §6, and older than La Salette by two millennia. Whatever a reader concludes about the 1879 text, he loses nothing of La Salette by concluding it.

7 The Seers' Later Lives and the Reliability Problem

7.1 Why this section exists

The 1851 act judged an apparition, not two biographies. But La Salette differs from the other great nineteenth-century French apparition in one respect that cannot be managed by tact: at Lourdes the seer entered religious life, kept silence, and died young; at La Salette both seers lived long, unsettled public lives, one of them published an ever-growing revelation, and both were the object of polarized apologetic and hostile writing within their own lifetimes. A study that suppressed this would misrepresent the dossier. A study that made it a scandal would be doing the hostile literature's work. The discipline adopted here is the one the sources permit: report what documented witnesses record, attribute contested explanations to those who offer them, and keep the categories separate. Nothing in the later lives touches the object of the 1851 judgment, and nothing in the 1851 judgment protects the later lives from assessment.

7.2 Maximin Giraud (1835–1875)

The Sanctuary's own portrait of Maximin is affectionate and unflattering in the same breath: during the apparition he amused himself spinning his hat on his stick and pushing pebbles toward the Lady's feet, "and so he remained all his life"—answering investigators simply but tartly, cordial when he felt loved, mischievous when someone tried to appropriate him, improvident in business. Its summary of his career is a list of failures to settle: the school at Corps, the minor seminary of the Rondeau, a country presbytery, the Grande Chartreuse, the seminary of Aire-sur-Adour, the hospice of Le Vésinet, the college of Tonnerre, a household near Versailles where there was talk of sending him to study medicine, enlistment as a pontifical zouave and return to Paris six months later, then a failed liqueur partnership that left him again without resources.⁵³

Two documented acts of his adult life matter for the dossier. He published a pamphlet, *Ma profession de foi sur l'Apparition de Notre-Dame de La Salette*, in answer to a hostile press article; and he made a will restating his testimony about the apparition and leaving his heart to the shrine. He died at Corps on 1 March 1875, after Communion and a little of the La Salette water, having gone up the mountain a last time and told the story on the spot.⁵⁴

7.3 The episode at Ars, 1850

The single most-used argument against Maximin's veracity is his 1850 visit to Jean-Marie Vianney, the curé of Ars, after which it was said that he had confessed to having lied about the apparition. The episode is genuinely contested, and this study reports it as contested. The fullest account it could reach is in the 1854 witness, which is frankly pro-La Salette and prints Maximin's own answers to a friend's questions some time later.

On that account: three men of a political circle drew the boy to Lyons and, under pretence of helping him settle his vocation, took him to Ars, hoping to obtain his secret. The curé, nearly deaf and missing most of his teeth, asked whether he had seen the Blessed Virgin. Maximin says he answered: "I do not know whether it was the Blessed Virgin; I saw something—a Lady. But if you know yourself that it was the Blessed Virgin, you should tell it to all the people, that they may believe in La Salette." Asked directly whether he had accused himself to the curé of having told lies, he said he had said that he had sometimes told lies; told he must retract, he answered that it was too old

and not worth the trouble; and when pressed on what he had meant, he answered “with a tone of assurance”: “I meant my little stories to the Curé of Corps, when I did not want to say where I was going, or when I did not want to study my lessons.” Asked whether the curé of Ars had understood those stories as referring to the apparition, he answered: “Why, yes! he understood it in that way, as that was put in the newspapers.” He adds that he was not at confession—“I was at the confessional, but I had not said my *Confiteor*, and I did not go there to make my confession”—and that, having escaped his handlers at a Lyons hotel when a priest he knew walked in, he wrote to the curé of Ars “to assure him that I had never retracted, because it is true.”⁵⁵

The evidential value of the episode is therefore limited in both directions. It cannot be used to show that the seer recanted, because the only reasonably early record of what he said is his own denial together with an innocent explanation. It cannot be used to show that nothing happened, because the report reached the press and required an answer. What it does show plainly is a fifteen-year-old of unstable judgment being handled by adults with an agenda—which is itself part of the reliability picture, and which the same witness records that the bishop ended by putting him back in the minor seminary.

7.4 Mélanie Calvat (1831–1904)

The Sanctuary’s own account is again the frankest witness available, and it is worth reading closely because a custodian writing about its own seer had every incentive to write otherwise. She was “timid, taciturn, withdrawn,” yet never hesitated to answer about the apparition; she spent four years with the Sisters of Providence; she had little memory and even less aptitude for study than Maximin. Then the Sanctuary states the problem in its own words: beset by curiosity, indiscretion, and the pressure of visitors “avides de révélations politico-religieuses,” she “resists badly the temptation to play the oracle, taking up again the popular pseudo-prophecies about the end of times that reappear periodically in the history of the Church.”

Her itinerary follows: the Carmel of Darlington in England; the Compassion at Marseille; seventeen years at Castellammare near Naples, “writing secrets and a rule for a hypothetical religious foundation”; a stay at Cannes; Chalon-sur-Saône, where she came into conflict with the Bishop of Autun for the same reasons; a return to Italy near Lecce, then Messina; a return to France, in the Allier, where she finished a mystical autobiography the Sanctuary calls “de mauvais aloi.” On 18–19 September 1902 she passed through La Salette and told the story of the apparition there. She returned to southern Italy and died at Altamura, in the province of Bari, the Sanctuary’s page giving 14 December 1904.⁵⁶

And then the Sanctuary’s own conclusion, which is also this study’s: “Pauvre, croyante, pieuse, mais attachée à son propre sens, il est un point sur lequel Mélanie n’a jamais varié: ce qu’elle avait dit, comme Maximin, au soir du 19 septembre 1846, dans la cuisine des Pra, aux Ablandins.”⁵⁷

7.5 What biography can and cannot establish

What the biography establishes	What it does not establish
Constancy of both seers about the 1846 recital, from the evening of the event through interrogations, hostile pressure, offers of money, and—in Mélanie’s case—fifty-six further years, is documented and is evidence for the recital.	It is not evidence for anything either of them said, wrote, or published later; the constancy attaches to the recital, not to the person.
Instability, credulity, self-importance, or obstinacy in an adult life is a real datum about that adult and bears on the weight of that adult’s later claims.	It does not retroactively impeach a child’s testimony given before those traits had any occasion to operate, and it was not the object of the 1851 judgment.
Ecclesiastical conflict with named bishops over publication is documented and juridically significant.	A conflict about publication is not a judgment about the apparition, and none of the bishops involved purported to reopen the 1851 act.

7.6 Ginoulhiac and the closing of the seers' role

Jacques-Marie-Achille Ginoulhiac, who succeeded de Bruillard at Grenoble, spent the 1850s doing two things at once: defending the 1851 judgment against a determined literary opposition, and closing the door on the seers as continuing organs of revelation.

The defensive acts are dated and specific. The author of a book against La Salette was cited before the diocesan court and declared suspended from all ecclesiastical functions on 28 September 1854. A mandement of 30 September 1854 condemned that book and a related pamphlet, forbidding all the faithful under pain of excommunication and all priests under pain of *ipso facto* suspension to read, keep, or circulate them. After consulting the Holy See, a further mandement of 4 November 1854 condemned a third work, forbidding all ecclesiastics under pain of suspension to read, keep, or circulate it. A circular letter to the clergy followed on 19 September 1857 occasioned by later publications on “the fact and the devotion of Notre-Dame de la Salette.” In the same years the controversy also ran in the civil courts: an 1855 hostile volume records that a lawsuit was brought at Grenoble by a woman whom two of the opposition writers had identified in print as the “white lady” the children saw.⁵⁸

The constructive act is a sentence. On 19 September 1855, at the anniversary, Ginoulhiac stated the principle that has governed La Salette ever since: « La mission des bergers est finie, celle de l'Église commence »—the shepherds' mission is finished; the Church's begins.⁵⁹

Whatever its exact original wording, the principle is the correct juridical description of what happened, and it explains everything in §5 without recourse to anyone's bad faith. After 1851 the competent subject in the La Salette dossier is the Church, acting through bishops and, when it intervened, through the Holy Office. The seers' role as witnesses to the 1846 event was complete. Claims that continued to issue from a seer thereafter belonged to a different order, and were treated by the competent authorities as such.

8 The Shrine, the Missionaries, and the Discipline of Cult

8.1 The mandement of 1 May 1852 and the founding of the Missionaries

The 1851 act promised a church and a hospice. The act of 1 May 1852 gave the shrine what mattered more: a permanent body of priests. The Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette publish the founding passage of that mandement among their *textes fondateurs*, and it states its own priorities in an order worth noticing.

Operative text — Philibert de Bruillard, Bishop of Grenoble, mandement of 1 May 1852, founding passage as published by the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette

« Quelque importante que soit l'érection d'un sanctuaire, il est quelque chose de plus important encore, ce sont les ministres de la religion destinés à desservir, à accueillir les pieux pèlerins, leur faire entendre la Parole de Dieu, à exercer envers eux le ministère de la réconciliation, à leur administrer l'auguste sacrement de nos autels, à être pour tous les dispensateurs fidèles des mystères de Dieu et des trésors de l'Église.
Ces prêtres seront appelés les MISSIONNAIRES DE N.-D. DE LA SALETTE. Leur création et leur existence seront, ainsi que le sanctuaire lui-même, un monument éternel, un souvenir perpétuel de l'Apparition miséricordieuse de Marie. »⁶⁰

Two things in that text control the shrine's later theology. The priests are defined by *ministry*, and the ministry named first after welcome and preaching is “the ministry of reconciliation,” followed at once by the Eucharist. And the institute, like the building, is called a memorial of the apparition—which is to say that the apparition is commemorated by a work of sacramental ministry rather than by the custody of a secret. The Missionaries were instituted at that date as a body of *diocesan* missionaries; the passage to religious vows came later and was argued from within, as a letter of one of the first members to Ginoulhiac on 4 August 1855 shows, proposing the three vows, temporary at first with the intention of perpetuity, and reasoning that a congregation matching the extension of the work needed conditions of duration beyond the diocese that gave it its cradle.⁶¹

8.2 Roman grants of 1852: an inventory

Within months of the foundation, Rome attached to the new shrine the ordinary apparatus of an approved place of pilgrimage. The inventory below is taken from an 1866 Grenoble source that enumerates them from the diocesan *rapporteur's* third volume. Every item is mutable devotional discipline of its own period, and *none of it is stated here as current*: indulgence grants and Mass privileges of 1852 have been overtaken by a century and a half of general revision, and a reader who wants the discipline in force must consult current sources.

Date	Authority and act	Object established	Witness used
1852, 24 Aug.	Rescript	The high altar of the sanctuary of La Salette declared privileged in perpetuity	<i>Vie de M. Rousselot</i> (1866), pp. 138–139
1852, 26 Aug.	Rescript	Permission for all priests going to La Salette to say the votive Mass of Our Lady on any day of the year, excepting the great feasts and privileged ferias	<i>ibid.</i>
1852, 26 Aug.	Brief	Indulgences for members of the confraternity of La Salette (plenary on entry, at the hour of death, and once a year on the confraternity's principal feast; seven years and seven quarantines four times a year; sixty days for each work of piety or charity)	<i>ibid.</i>
1852, 3 Sept.	Brief	Plenary indulgence once a year for all who visit the church of Notre-Dame de La Salette	<i>ibid.</i>
1852, 3 Sept.	Brief	Indulgences for the faithful attending missions or retreats preached by the Missionaries of La Salette	<i>ibid.</i>
1852, 7 Sept.	Brief	Faculty for the Missionaries, for ten years, to bless and indulgence crosses, medals, and rosaries; and, by a further brief of the same day, to give the scapular	<i>ibid.</i>
1852, 7 Sept.	Brief	The confraternity of Notre-Dame de La Salette erected into an archconfraternity under the title <i>Notre-Dame Réconciliatrice de la Salette</i>	<i>ibid.</i>
1852, 2 Dec.	Indult of Pius IX	Permission, at the request of the Bishop of Grenoble, to solemnize each year on 19 September—the indult's own words, <i>vel ipso apparitionis die</i> —or on the following Sunday, in every church of the diocese, with a solemn Mass and the chanting of Vespers in honour of the Blessed Virgin; and for priests to keep the memory of the apparition (<i>memoriam huius apparitionis recolere</i>) by reciting the Office and celebrating the Mass of the Patronage of the Blessed Virgin	<i>ibid.</i> , p. 139

The 1852 indult is the origin of the 19 September observance and shows exactly how a nineteenth-century Roman grant handled a new apparition: it gave the diocese a day and a solemnity, and for the Office and Mass it did *not* compose a proper of the apparition but assigned an existing Marian formulary. Rome permitted the commemoration without creating a liturgical text that would state the event as fact.⁶²

8.3 The Roman answer of 1877: what the Holy See thought it had done

Twenty-five years later a colonial bishop asked the Sacred Congregation of Rites a set of blunt questions about images and cult of the Blessed Virgin under the titles of Lourdes, La Salette, and the Immaculate Conception. The reply of

12 May 1877 is the single most clarifying Roman text in this dossier, and it is quoted here at its second and fourth and fifth answers.

Operative text — Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Portus Aloisii*, rescript of 12 May 1877: *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 11 (1878) 512–514

Dubium II. An ab Apostolica Sede fuerint approbatae Apparitiones, seu revelationes, quae contigisse perhibentur, quaeque cultui B. M. V. sub memoratis titulis causam praebuerunt?

Ad II. Eiusmodi apparitiones seu revelationes neque approbatas neque reprobatae vel damnatae ab Apostolica Sede fuisse, sed tantum permissas tamquam pie credendas fide solum humana, iuxta traditionem, quam ferunt, idoneis etiam testimoniis ac monumentis confirmatam. Nihil proinde obstare, quin Ordinarii pari ratione se gerant. . .

Ad IV [on a feast under the same title with Mass and a rite of the first class with an octave]. Negative, nisi de speciali et expressa apostolica facultate.

Ad V [on special litanies of the apparition of Our Lady of La Salette]. Negative.⁶³

In editorial rendering, the second answer: such apparitions or revelations have been neither approved nor reprobated or condemned by the Apostolic See, but only permitted as to be piously believed by merely human faith, according to the tradition which they report, confirmed also by suitable testimonies and monuments; nothing therefore prevents the ordinaries from acting in the same way.

Three consequences follow, and they govern §10. First, the Holy See in 1877 described its own posture toward La Salette—and toward Lourdes, judged in 1862—as *permission*, not approbation. Second, it named the assent involved with the precise term this study uses throughout: *fides solum humana*, merely human faith. Third, it drew the practical line where the discipline actually draws it: images and confraternities yes; a first-class feast with an octave no, save by special and express apostolic faculty; special litanies of the apparition no. A permitted cult is not an unrestricted one.

8.4 The optional memorial in the Proper of France

The 19 September observance that began as an 1852 diocesan indult is today an optional memorial in the particular calendar of France. The official site of the Catholic Church in France records that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments published a decree on 18 March 2016 inscribing the celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title “La Salette” in the Proper of France, on 19 September, as an optional memorial.⁶⁴

The category is exactly right and is worth spelling out for a reader inclined to read too much into it. An optional memorial in a particular calendar establishes that the Church in France may keep this celebration on this day. It does not declare the apparition supernatural, it obliges no one to celebrate it, and it does not extend beyond the territory of the proper. It is, in the taxonomy this study keeps, *liturgical reception*—real, current, and narrow.

8.5 The shrine today

The Sanctuary of Notre-Dame de La Salette stands at the site, at 1 800 metres in the commune of La Salette-Fallavaux in the Isère, in the diocese of Grenoble–Vienne, whose bishop is Jean-Marc Eychenne. Its public presentation of itself is notably spare: the event, the recognition of 1851, Ginoulhiac’s sentence of 1855, practical information for pilgrims, and nothing else—no secret, no prophecy, no apologetic.⁶⁵ That reticence is itself a datum: the custodian of the shrine presents the public message and the 1851 judgment, and leaves the secret literature entirely alone.

8.6 The Missionaries today

The congregation founded in 1852 became an institute of pontifical right by the ordinary route, and the two decisive acts are in the official gazette. On 29 January 1909 the Sacred Congregation for Religious approved the constitutions of the Congregation of Missionaries “de la Salette” *ad experimentum* for ten years, noting that decrees of praise and of approval of the institute had already been granted and that the institute had spread in recent times through many parts of the world; Pius X confirmed the decision on 1 February 1909. On 7 June 1926 Pius XI, by decree of the same Congregation, approved the institute’s constitutions definitively.⁶⁶

The institute is today international, with provinces and missions on several continents and a general administration at Rome; it publishes the founding texts used in this section and continues to serve the mountain shrine.⁶⁷

9 Papal and Ecclesial Reception

9.1 What reception establishes

Papal engagement with an apparition site is easy to over-read. Indulgences, briefs, legations, anniversary letters, and patronage acts are real ecclesial facts, but each establishes exactly its own object and nothing else. A brief granting an indulgence establishes an indulgence. A letter for a centenary establishes that the Pope associated himself with a centenary. A patronage act establishes a patronage. None of them is an event-decree, and no accumulation of them becomes one. This section therefore reports the acts and states, each time, what the act itself does.

The most striking feature of the La Salette reception chain is how carefully the popes kept to that discipline—more carefully, in fact, than the local act of 1851 did.

9.2 Pius IX

Pius IX is the Pope of the whole formative period, and his involvement is documented in two distinct registers. He received the two sealed manuscripts in audience on 18 July 1851 and read them in the messengers' presence (§5.3): a reception, with no located public act following it. And from August to December 1852 he granted the shrine, the confraternity, and the new Missionaries the ordinary apparatus of privileged altar, votive Mass, indulgences, faculties, archconfraternity, and the 19 September indult (§8.2): a series of acts of *cult*, each with a date and an object, and none of them a judgment on the event or on any secret.

That combination is the pattern the Holy See would keep for a century and a half: generous to the devotion, silent about the supernaturality of the event, and—after 1915—restrictive about the secret literature.

9.3 Pius XII and the centenary of 1946

For the centenary the Superior General of the Missionaries wrote to Pius XII, and the Pope replied in French on 8 October 1945; the letter was published in the official gazette. One clause of it is the most exact papal characterization of the 1851 act that this study located.

Operative text — Pius XII, letter to the Superior General of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, 8 October 1945: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 38 (1946) 155–156

« Notre dévotion envers la Très Sainte Vierge Marie, au Cœur Immaculé de laquelle Nous avons consacré l'Église et le monde, ne peut que se dilater devant les douces perspectives, que votre lettre Nous laisse entrevoir, du prochain Centenaire de l'Apparition de Notre-Dame de la Salette, dont le procès canonique, institué en son temps par l'autorité diocésaine, s'avéra favorable.

Il est bien compréhensible que votre famille religieuse, dont Monseigneur Philibert de Bruillard jeta la semence, comme « une perpétuelle mémoire de l'apparition miséricordieuse de Marie », ait pris spécialement à cœur la commémoration séculaire de cette bénie soirée du 19 Septembre 1846, où la Madone en larmes, ainsi qu'on le rapporte, venait adjurer ses enfants d'entrer résolument dans la voie de la conversion à son divin Fils et de la réparation pour tant de péchés... »⁶⁸

Two phrases carry the weight. The Pope describes the 1851 act as a *canonical process instituted in its time by the diocesan authority* which *proved favourable*—an exact, deflationary, and entirely accurate description that claims no papal confirmation and no supernaturality. And when he comes to the event itself he writes *ainsi qu'on le rapporte*, “as it is reported”—the reported register, in a papal letter published in the official gazette, a century after the event. A Pope who wished to authenticate the apparition would not have written that clause; a Pope who wished to disown it would not have written the letter.

9.4 John XXIII and the title *Reconciliatrix*

On 16 June 1961 John XXIII, by apostolic letter under the Fisherman’s ring, confirmed and constituted “the Blessed Virgin Mary of La Salette, invoked as Reconciler of sinners,” principal heavenly patroness before God of the whole Congregation of Missionaries of the Holy Family, with all the liturgical rights and privileges belonging to principal patrons of such bodies. The occasion was that the founder of that congregation, Jean-Baptiste Berthier, had been a priest of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette and had chosen that patronage at his foundation in 1895; the request came from the congregation’s superior general, and the act was made after consulting the Sacred Congregation of Rites, partly in order to bring the patronage into line with the liturgical rubrics issued on 14 February 1961.⁶⁹

What the act establishes is a patronage and its liturgical consequences for one religious institute. What it also does, quietly and usefully for this study, is confirm at the highest level that the title under which the Church honours this event is *Reconciliatrix peccatorum*—the same title the Holy Office had expressly protected in the last clause of its 1915 decree.

9.5 John Paul II and the 150th anniversary, 1996

The sesquicentenary produced two acts of different kinds on the same occasion, and reading them together shows precisely how a modern Pope receives an apparition.

The first is a letter of 6 May 1996 to Bishop Louis Dufaux of Grenoble. Its theology is entirely inside the ordinary Marian doctrine of the Church: Mary showed at that place her sorrow before the moral evil of humanity, and “by her tears she helps us to grasp better the painful gravity of sin, of the rejection of God, but also the passionate fidelity that her Son keeps toward his children, He, the Redeemer whose love is wounded by forgetfulness and refusal.” The Pope reads the whole event Christologically: the Virgin is contemplated “bearing on herself the image of her crucified Son”; La Salette is “a message of hope”; the arm of Mary’s Son “will not weigh to condemn” the one who walks humbly in the Lord’s ways. And he states the message’s content exactly as the public discourse gives it and no further: a call to penance, to perseverance in prayer, and “particularly to fidelity to Sunday practice,” with the charge that the message “pass to all her people.”⁷⁰

The second is a Latin letter of 9 July 1996 appointing Cardinal Henri Schwery, Bishop emeritus of Sion, extraordinary legate to the solemn celebration of 19 September 1996 at the shrine. Its opening formula is the one this study most wants on the record, because it is a chancery formula, drafted with care, and it does not say what a careless writer would have made it say: it is now the hundred and fiftieth year “ex quo tempore ‘Nostra Domina Saletensis’ apparuisse ab Ecclesia Matre perhibetur”—from the time when Our Lady of La Salette is reported by Mother Church to have appeared.⁷¹

9.6 What the reception chain establishes

What the reception chain establishes	What it does not establish
That the Holy See has, continuously since 1852, permitted, endowed, and honoured the cult of Our Lady of La Salette under the title <i>Réconciliatrice</i> ; that popes have associated themselves with its centenary and sesquicentenary; that the congregation founded to serve the shrine is an approved institute of pontifical right; and that the celebration has a place in the particular calendar of France.	That any Pope has confirmed the 1851 judgment, declared the apparition supernatural, approved any secret, endorsed any prediction, or made belief in the event obligatory. No such act was located, and the two most explicit papal characterizations available, those of 1946 and 1996, both keep the reported register expressly.

The cumulative picture is coherent and, once seen, unsurprising: the Church has built a shrine, an institute, a title, a feast, and a pilgrimage on this event, and has never made a statement that would oblige anyone to believe it happened. That is not evasion. It is exactly what the discipline of private revelation requires, and it is what §10 states doctrinally.

10 What the Approval Obliges—and What It Does Not

10.1 Public Revelation is complete

The doctrinal frame is prior to every fact in this study and settles more of the La Salette question than any archival discovery could. Public Revelation is complete in Christ: “the Christian economy, since it is the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” Private revelations, even recognized ones, do not belong to the deposit of faith; their purpose is not “to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history.”⁷²

Everything at La Salette—the 1846 discourse, the 1851 manuscripts, the 1879 booklet, every reported locution of either seer for the remainder of their lives—falls on the private-revelation side of that line. Nothing there can add an article to the faith, correct the Gospel, or bind a conscience as Revelation binds it.

10.2 *Fides humana*: the Holy See’s own word for La Salette

Most apparition studies must reason their way to the assent question. Here the Holy See supplied the answer in 1877 in a text that names La Salette explicitly (§8.3): such apparitions or revelations have been neither approved nor reprobated by the Apostolic See, “but only permitted as to be piously believed *fide solum humana*”—by merely human faith. That is the technical term, in a Roman act, about this event.

The modern formulation is the same doctrine in modern words. The 2024 norms state as a rule that ecclesiastical authority does not give “a positive recognition of the divine origin” of such phenomena (n. 11); that even where a *Nihil obstat* is granted “such phenomena do not become objects of faith, which means the faithful are not obliged to give an assent of faith to them” (n. 12); and, quoting Benedict XVI, that approval “essentially means that its message contains nothing contrary to faith and morals; it is licit to make it public and the faithful are authorized to give to it their adherence in a prudent manner. . . . It is a help which is proffered, but its use is not obligatory.”⁷³

Against that background the 1851 formula reads exactly as the Dicastery says it reads. *Les fidèles sont fondés à la croire indubitable et certaine* states that the faithful have *grounds* for a belief; the grammar of the sentence is a warrant, not a precept. The Dicastery’s 2024 presentation nevertheless names this very sentence as an example of episcopal language that “conflicted with the Church’s own conviction that the faithful did not have to accept the authenticity of these events”—which is a candid admission that formulas of that period could be, and were, heard as obligations. Both things are true, and this study says both: the act warrants belief, and the Church now judges that its wording overreached what it could ask.⁷⁴

Concretely: a Catholic is free—reasonably, prudently, without disloyalty—to believe that the Blessed Virgin appeared above La Salette on 19 September 1846, and free not to. What no Catholic is free to do is invert the order of assent, treating any La Salette text as a second deposit of faith, an oracle settling doctrine, a prediction binding the future, or a warrant for judging the Church’s pastors.

10.3 The exact object of each standing act

The inventory below is the whole dossier read in one column: every act this study located, with the object that act itself establishes and the witness in which this study read it. Nothing is inferred from proximity, and no act in it carries any object but its own.

Date	Authority and act	Object established	Witness used
1851, 19 Sept.	Bishop of Grenoble, doctrinal mandement	That the apparition of 19 September 1846 to two shepherd children bears all the marks of truth and that the faithful have grounds for believing it indubitable and certain; cult authorized; devotional publications reserved; public contest forbidden in the diocese	Sanctuary transcription; DDF 2024 citation; Ullathorne 1854; Rousselot 1854 (It.)

Date	Authority and act	Object established	Witness used
1852, 1 May	Bishop of Grenoble, mandement	The Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette instituted; the sanctuary and hospice undertaken	Institute's published text
1852, Aug.–Dec.	Pius IX, rescripts, briefs, indult	Privileged altar, votive Mass, indulgences, faculties, archconfraternity, and the 19 September diocesan solemnization: acts of cult, of their own period's discipline	<i>Vie de M. Rousselot</i> (1866)
1877, 12 May	Sacred Congregation of Rites	That the Apostolic See had neither approved nor condemned the apparitions, but permitted them as piously believable by merely human faith; images and sodalities permitted; a first-class feast with octave and special litanies of the apparition refused	ASS 11 (1878) 512–514
1915, 21 Dec.	Holy Office, decree	A universal precept forbidding the faithful to discuss or treat of the <i>Secret de la Salette</i> in publication, with penalties; devotion under the title <i>Reconciliatrix</i> expressly preserved	AAS 7 (1915) 594
1916, 12 Apr./5 June	Holy Office; Congregation of the Index	A named two-volume exegesis of the secret condemned and placed on the Index	AAS 8 (1916) 175, 178–179
1923, 9 May	Holy Office, decree	A named 1922 reprint of Mélanie's text proscribed and condemned, with an order to withdraw copies from the faithful	AAS 15 (1923) 287–288
1945, 8 Oct.	Pius XII, letter	Papal association with the centenary; the 1851 act described as a diocesan canonical process that proved favourable; the event kept in the reported register	AAS 38 (1946) 155–156
1961, 16 June	John XXIII, apostolic letter	Our Lady of La Salette, invoked as Reconciler of sinners, constituted principal patroness of one religious congregation	AAS 53 (1961) 606–607
1996, 6 May and 9 July	John Paul II, letters	Papal association with the 150th anniversary; a legate appointed; the event kept in the reported register (<i>ab Ecclesia Matre perhibetur</i>)	Holy See web texts
2016, 18 Mar.	Congregation for Divine Worship	The celebration inscribed in the Proper of France on 19 September as an optional memorial	French episcopal conference's site

One item of §5 is deliberately absent from that table: the letter of 14 August 1880 (§5.6). It is not a standing act—no text of it was reached, it was never published in any gazette, and it is known only as a partisan witness of 1882 reports it—and a table of located acts is not the place for it.

Read down that column of objects and the shape of the dossier is plain. Not one act in it declares the apparition supernatural in the sense the 2024 norms describe; not one approves a secret; not one obliges belief; and the only universal acts the Holy See ever issued on the subject were restrictive of the secret literature and protective of the devotion.

10.4 Devotional practice within the boundary

What the approved devotion asks can be stated entirely inside ordinary Catholic doctrine, and the custodians state it that way themselves. The message's own asks are Sunday, reverence for the name of Christ, daily prayer, penance, and Mass—the substance of the third and second commandments and of the Church's ordinary precepts. The shrine's own charter defines its priests by the ministry of reconciliation and the Eucharist (§8.1). The title under which the Church honours the event is *Réconciliatrice*, read within Christ's unique mediation (§3.6). John Paul II's sesquicentenary letter reads the whole event through the crucifix on the figure's breast (§9.5). There is no devotional practice proper to La Salette that stands apart from Sunday, confession, the Eucharist, and prayer.

Two boundaries deserve their own sentences. First, weeping is not a doctrine. The tears reported at La Salette are, in John Paul II's reading, a pedagogy of the gravity of sin and of the Son's wounded fidelity; they are not evidence of a divided will between the Father, the Son, and the Mother, and any presentation of La Salette in which Mary restrains an angry Christ from a reluctant Father has left Catholic doctrine, whatever imagery it borrows from the discourse. Second, threatened chastisement is conditional, and it is conditional in the discourse's own grammar ("if my people will not submit"; "if they are converted"). Using La Salette to date, to predict, to alarm, or to identify culprits is using it against its own text.⁷⁵

10.5 Disagreement preserved

A judgment-first study must say where the record leaves room for honest disagreement, and here it leaves a good deal.

The 1851 act argued from evidence—the children's constancy, the concourse, the reported prodigies—and evidence-based judgments can be weighed differently by serious minds; the Church has never required anyone to find those arguments conclusive, and in 1877 the Holy See declined to call the event approved at all. The seers' later lives are genuinely contested and the sources are polarized (§7). The relation between the 1851 manuscripts and the 1879 text is contested, and the promoter's own admissions make it so (§5.4). The present force of the 1915 decree is unsettled (§5.9). And this study's own reach is limited in ways Appendix A sets out—most importantly, no French printing of the integral mandement and no access to the primary documentary edition of the early records.

What the Church's acts secure is narrower and firmer than victory in any of those disputes: that a Catholic may, with the Church, prudently believe that the Blessed Virgin appeared at La Salette; that the devotion under the title of Reconciler is safe and protected; that the shrine and its ministry of reconciliation are good; and that nobody is obliged to believe anything about a secret. Nothing in this study should be read as claiming more.

11 Current Standing

11.1 The procedural law now in force

Since Pentecost 2024 the discernment of alleged supernatural phenomena is governed by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena*, given at Rome 17 May 2024, deliberated in the Dicastery's Ordinary Session of 17 April 2024, approved by Pope Francis on 4 May 2024, and effective 19 May 2024. Article 27 is unambiguous about their reach: "These Norms entirely replace the previous Norms of 25 February 1978."

Under them the diocesan bishop examines cases in his territory and formulates a final judgment "to be submitted to the Dicastery for approval" (art. 1); the possible determinations are exactly six—*Nihil obstat*; *Prae oculis habeatur*; *Curatur*; *Sub mandato*; *Prohibetur et obstruatur*; *Declaratio de non supernaturalitate* (nn. 17–22, art. 18); and n. 23 states the governing rule: "as a rule, neither the Diocesan Bishop, nor the Episcopal Conferences, nor the Dicastery will declare that these phenomena are of supernatural origin, even if a *Nihil obstat* is granted. . . It remains true, however, that the Holy Father can authorize a special procedure in this regard."⁷⁶

11.2 The 1851 judgment as a legacy act

The 1851 mandement is a completed positive judgment of the competent authority of its era and stands in its own historical formula. This study does not relabel it: it is not a *Nihil obstat*, and translating it into one would falsify both documents. It is what its own words say—the apparition bears all the marks of truth, and the faithful have grounds for believing it indubitable and certain—made under a regime in which the diocesan bishop's judgment was the ordinary conclusive act.

The 2024 norms do two distinct things to that legacy, and they must not be confused. They *replace the procedure* for any new discernment, so that no bishop today could issue an act in the 1851 form. And they *cite the 1851 formula* in their presentation as an instance of language the Holy See once accepted but which conflicted with the Church's own conviction that the faithful need not accept these events' authenticity. Neither of those is an act concerning La

Salette. No determination under the 2024 norms has been made about La Salette; none was needed, since the case was concluded in 1851 and no new discernment has been opened.

11.3 Controlling-status dossier

La Salette 1846 — controlling status as of 2026-07-25
Event identity: One reported apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Maximin Giraud and Mélanie Calvat on the mountain above the village of La Salette, archpresbytery of Corps, on 19 September 1846. Jurisdiction: Diocese of Grenoble in 1846–1855; today the Diocese of Grenoble–Vienne (Bishop Jean-Marc Eychenne), Latin Church, France. Shrine served by the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. Controlling act: Mandement of Bishop Philibert de Bruillard, 19 September 1851: the apparition bears in itself all the characteristics of truth; the faithful have grounds for believing it indubitable and certain; cult of Our Lady of La Salette authorized and permitted to be preached; devotional publications reserved to written episcopal approval; public contest of the fact forbidden in the diocese; church and hospice undertaken. Procedural regime: Pre-1978 diocesan discernment: consultation of chapter and seminary; commission of inquiry sitting in the bishop’s presence, concluded 13 December 1847; separate and simultaneous interrogation of the children; printed report of the vicar-general; a further three and a half years’ delay before the doctrinal judgment. Roman characterization: Sacred Congregation of Rites, 12 May 1877: the apparitions “neither approved nor reprobated or condemned by the Apostolic See, but only permitted as to be piously believed by merely human faith” (<i>ASS</i> 11 (1878) 512–514). Secrets: Two manuscripts written separately in July 1851 for Pius IX and delivered 18 July 1851; not reached by this project and never the object of any located act. Mélanie Calvat’s expanded text, printed at Lecce in 1879 under a diocesan <i>imprimatur</i> of 15 November 1879 and reprinted at Louvain in 1881 and at Paris–Rome–Bruges in 1922; published and analyzed at §6, where this study concludes as project synthesis that the 1879 text is not the 1851 text. Letter of the Secretary of the Holy Office, 14 August 1880, reported by a partisan witness of 1882 and not reached in any text (§5.6). Holy Office decree of 21 December 1915 commanding all the faithful not to discuss or treat of the subject in publication, with penalties, and expressly preserving devotion under the title <i>Reconciliatrix</i>; Holy Office and Index acts of 1916 against a named exegesis; Holy Office decree of 9 May 1923 condemning the 1922 reprint and ordering its withdrawal. Present force of the 1915 precept: unresolved by any located act (§5.9). Later acts (own objects): Missionaries instituted 1 May 1852; Roman grants of cult August–December 1852, including the 19 September indult; constitutions approved <i>ad experimentum</i> 29 January 1909 and definitively 7 June 1926; Pius XII’s centenary letter of 8 October 1945; John XXIII’s patronage act of 16 June 1961; John Paul II’s letters of 6 May and 9 July 1996 and the legation for 19 September 1996; optional memorial in the Proper of France, 19 September, by decree of 18 March 2016. Current status: Positive legacy diocesan judgment of 1851 in force in its historical formula; no superseding, restricting, or reversing act located; no determination under the 2024 norms concerns La Salette; the Dicastery’s document index carries no La Salette entry (checked 2026-07-25); the restrictive acts of 1915–1923 concern the secret literature and touch neither the judgment nor the cult. Not established by any act: Obligation of divine faith; supernatural origin in the sense of the current norms; the authenticity, provenance, or content of any version of the secret; verbal inerrancy of any reported sentence; the fulfilment of any prediction; the credibility of either seer’s later writings; any doctrine beyond the deposit of faith. Register: “Reported” remains the default register for every word and phenomenon attributed to the apparition, as it does in the papal texts of 1946 and 1996 themselves. This study’s own ceilings are in §1, §5, and Appendix A.

11.4 The standing of La Salette in one paragraph

A competent bishop, after five years of deliberate delay, judged in 1851 that an apparition reported by two illiterate children on one September afternoon bore the marks of truth and might be believed; the Holy See in 1877 described its own position as permission rather than approval and named the assent involved merely human faith; the Church built on the event a shrine, a religious institute, a Marian title, and eventually an optional memorial in one country’s calendar; two popes marked its anniversaries while keeping the reported register in their own official words; and

when a seer’s expanded secret literature began to unsettle the faithful, the Holy Office forbade its discussion and condemned its reprints while expressly protecting the devotion. This study, on its maintainer’s express direction and under the disclosure at §5.1, has published that literature’s central text and judged it (§6): a serious religious document of 1878, not a record of 1846. Everything a Catholic needs from La Salette is in the public message and is older than La Salette: keep Sunday, do not blaspheme, pray morning and evening, do penance, and let the message pass to all her people. Everything that has ever gone wrong with La Salette has gone wrong through the secret—and about the secret the Church has never told anyone to believe anything at all.

12 Notes

1. French: Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de La Salette, “L’histoire,” <https://lasalette.cef.fr/lhistoire/>, read 2026-07-25; the bracketed ellipsis is printed by the Sanctuary and is reproduced rather than filled. Holy See witness to the same clause: Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena* (17 May 2024), presentation, “Reasons for the New Norms,” English text at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dof_doc_20240517_norme-fenomeni-soprannaturali_en.html (read 2026-07-25), which prints the French clause and identifies it as the “Decree of the Bishop of Grenoble, 19 September 1851.” English of the whole article: William Bernard Ullathorne, *The Holy Mountain of La Salette: A Pilgrimage of the Year 1854* (London: Richardson, 1854), pp. 120–121, read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive scan (References). A French printing of the integral mandement was not located by this project; the French clause is therefore given only as far as two independent witnesses print it, and no French reconstruction of the whole article is offered (Appendix A). An 1866 Grenoble life of the diocesan *rapporteur* reports the judgment in the same French words—“porte en elle-même tous les caractères de la vérité, et que les fidèles sont fondés à la croire indubitable et certaine”—inside the biographer’s own sentence rather than as a transcription of the act. All web loci in these notes were read on 2026-07-25 unless another date is given. English renderings of French, Latin, and Italian are editorial working translations, visibly commentary, and never received translation witnesses, except where an English text of the Holy See or of an identified nineteenth-century translator is expressly quoted as such.
2. Pierre-Joseph Rousselot, *Manuale del pellegrino a Nostra Signora di La Salette* (Italian translation of the *Manuel du pèlerin*), 1854, pp. 42–47, read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive scan of the Bavarian State Library copy (References). The articles are summarized here, not translated verbatim from the Italian; the English of arts. 1 and 3–4 and 7 in Ullathorne 1854, pp. 120–121, agrees in substance with this Italian witness, and the two were compared. Article 5’s prohibition of public opposition is in the Italian witness; Ullathorne’s abridged English renders the same effect as a prohibition on publicly contradicting or calling the fact in question. Where the two witnesses differ in fullness this study follows neither silently: the article inventory is reported as the Italian witness prints it and the difference is recorded in Appendix A.
3. Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de La Salette, “Les témoins: Mélanie et Maximin,” the Sanctuary’s own biographical page, read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive capture of 8 April 2013 (References); the Sanctuary’s current site carries the event and recognition pages but no longer this biography, and the capture is cited with its date. The service history and the children’s non-acquaintance are also in the 1847 depositions and in the *rapporteur*’s note from Abbé Lagier’s papers, as reproduced in Ullathorne 1854, pp. 30–32.
4. Ullathorne 1854, p. 32. The observation matters for §3: the received discourse contains a passage in which the Lady, having spoken French, repeats herself in *patois* precisely because the children have not understood.
5. Mélanie’s recital, Ullathorne 1854, pp. 35–36, printing the version the witness says the children “gave... on the same evening to their employers; as they gave it the next morning to the Curé of La Salette; as Mélanie recounted it the same day to Monsieur Peytard, the mayor of La Salette,” and afterwards constantly. That claim of constancy is the witness’s own and is treated here as his claim, not as established fact; what the deposition-level evidence establishes is examined at §2.4.
6. Ullathorne 1854, pp. 42–43.
7. Mélanie’s answer under interrogation, Ullathorne 1854, p. 44 (“She had white shoes, with roses round them of all colours... a crown with roses round her cap. She wore a very small chain, on which was hung a cross, with a figure of our Lord; on the right were pincers, on the left a hammer...”). The Sanctuary’s present formulation—“Toute la clarté dont elle est formée et qui les enveloppe tous les trois, vient d’un grand Crucifix qu’elle porte sur sa poitrine, entouré d’un marteau et de tenailles”—is a custodial development of the same description and is quoted as such (<https://lasalette.cef.fr/lhistoire/>).
8. Ullathorne 1854, pp. 30–31, printing the depositions of Pierre Selme and Jean-Baptiste Pra “signed the 27th of November, 1847.” This study quotes the 1854 English witness and does not assert the French original’s wording. Pra’s date “19 Sept.,

1846” is printed in the scan as “1840”; the reading 1846 is required by the deposition’s own context and by every other witness, and the scan defect is recorded rather than silently corrected.

9. Superioress’s opinion: Ullathorne 1854, pp. 32–33. Mélanie’s superior’s 1847 anxiety: Sanctuary, “Les témoins” (archived capture, note 3), which reports it in the Sanctuary’s own voice and adds its own explanation—a poor girl deprived of affection, in service from the age of ten, suddenly under public attention. The Sanctuary’s frankness about its own seers is a notable feature of the custodial record and is used in §7.
10. Bounded negative: no list of individually recognized miraculous cures was found on the Sanctuary’s current site or on the Missionaries’ French and international sites (pages read 2026-07-25 and enumerated in *research/source-audit.md*). The mandement’s own article 2 language is from the Italian witness (Rousselot 1854, p. 44) and Ullathorne 1854, p. 120. Absence of a published list is not evidence that no diocesan act ever recognized a cure; it is the boundary of this project’s search.
11. Ullathorne 1854, pp. 36–37, French column of the parallel text. The English column of the same page reads: “If my people will not submit, I shall be forced to let go the hand of my Son. It is so strong, so heavy, that I can no longer withhold it...” The 1854 book prints the French with the period’s lower-case “fils”; the capitalization is reproduced as printed and carries no theological weight.
12. Ullathorne 1854, pp. 38–39, *patois* and English columns. *Las truffas* is the local word for potatoes, the very word Mélanie knew and *pommes de terre* the one she did not; the witness prints both. The prophecy of children dying is reported here strictly as part of the recital and is not treated by this study, or by the 1851 act, as a verified prediction or as an event to be dated (§3.5).
13. Ullathorne 1854, pp. 40–42. The Coin episode is the discourse’s one verifiable-in-principle element: it reports a private incident between Maximin and his father that the child himself had forgotten and, on the recital’s own showing, recognized only when reminded. This study reports it as part of the recital and records that it did not reach any independent testimony of the father.
14. Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de La Salette, “Le Message de La Salette,” read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive capture of 5 November 2012 (References); the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette publish the same received text (<https://www.missionnaire-lasalette.fr/spip.php?article25>, read 2026-07-25). Only the opening and closing lines are reproduced here; the whole received text is not reproduced in this study, and the custodial publishers’ pages are cited for it. The parenthetical stage directions in the received text—“Jusqu’ici la Belle Dame a parlé en français... termine son discours en patois”; “A ce moment Mélanie voit que la Belle Dame dit quelques mots à Maximin, mais elle n’entend pas”—are editorial in the received text itself, not reported speech.
15. The comparison was made line by line between Ullathorne 1854, pp. 36–42 (French and *patois* columns) and the Sanctuary’s received French text quoted at §3.3, on 2026-07-25; the results are recorded in *research/source-audit.md*. The critical documentary edition of the early La Salette records was not consulted (Appendix A), and the *main/bras* variant is reported as a variant between the two reachable witnesses, not as a decision.
16. Editorial judgment, stated locally as required by *guidance/editorial.md*. The 1846 European potato blight and the 1846–1847 French dearth are the discourse’s immediate agricultural background; this study does not develop the economic history and cites no source for it beyond the discourse’s own reference to the previous year’s potatoes.
17. Doctrinal frame: *Lumen gentium* 60–62 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 970 (Mary’s saving influence “flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it”). The Roman texts using the title are quoted at their own loci in §5.7 and §9.4.
18. *A Pilgrimage to La Salette; or, a Critical Examination of All the Facts Connected with the Alleged Apparition* (London, 1852), Appendix, “Mandement of the Bishop of Grenoble, dated September 19th, 1851,” pp. 69–71, read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive scan (References). The Appendix translates the preamble and narrative of the act at length and then breaks off at “Wherefore, &c.”—that is, exactly before the operative articles, which the same volume summarizes in its body at p. 29 and which are given in this study from the witnesses at §1. The 1852 volume is an anonymous English Catholic apologetic review article, used here as a documentary carrier and at that ceiling.
19. *Pilgrimage* 1852, Appendix, p. 69, citing “Eccl. xix. 4.” The mandement’s own note is reproduced as printed; the Vulgate locus is Sirach 19:4. The bishop also cites 2 Timothy 2:13 in the same passage.
20. *Pilgrimage* 1852, Appendix, pp. 70–71. The vicar-general is Pierre-Joseph Rousselot, canon and professor of moral theology at Grenoble, named in the same 1852 volume and in Ullathorne 1854, pp. [iii]–iv, and identified there as a member of the commission of inquiry. His *Manuel du pèlerin* is the source of the Italian witness used at §1; the report and its supplement are identified here from the mandement’s own description and were not themselves consulted (Appendix A).
21. *Pilgrimage* 1852, Appendix, p. 70. The bishop’s disjunction leaves the hydrology open and rests the claim on the reported cures instead. This study makes no claim of any kind about the spring, and records that it located no scientific analysis of the La Salette water comparable to the analyses published for other shrines.

22. *Pilgrimage* 1852, Appendix, p. 71 (concluding paragraph before “Wherefore, &c.”). The narrative matters juridically: on the act’s own showing, what the secrets contributed to the 1851 judgment was the demonstrated *fact* that a secret existed and had been surrendered to the Pope—not any content, which the bishop never saw.
23. *Pilgrimage* 1852, body at pp. 29–30, translating the considerations and the enacting clause; the same four considerations in the Italian witness, Rousselot 1854, pp. 42–44, which was compared and agrees. The fourth consideration is the one modern readers find most uncomfortable and is quoted in full for that reason: the act’s motive includes averting threatened chastisement, which is the discourse’s own conditional structure (§3.5) and not an independent doctrine.
24. *Pilgrimage* 1852, pp. 30–31, translating the mandement of 1 May 1852; the foundation-stone date and the bishop’s decision to travel to the mountain himself on 24–25 May 1852 despite age and illness are at pp. 31–32. Episcopal congratulations establish the reception of a diocesan act among bishops; they are not themselves acts and establish nothing about the event.
25. Ullathorne 1854, pp. 44–46, printing the interrogation answers of both children. The language difference—Mélanie’s secret in *patois*, Maximin’s in French—is the children’s own testimony as this witness prints it, and is recorded because it bears on every later claim about the texts. This study does not resolve it.
26. *Pilgrimage* 1852, pp. 28–29. The detail “as if they had been copying” is the witness’s own apologetic observation and is quoted as such, not adopted.
27. *Pilgrimage* 1852, p. 29. The reported papal sentence is second-hand testimony transmitted by an apologetic review three months to a year after the fact, and this study reports it as such—as a *reported* remark, not as a papal act, not as an approval, and not as evidence of the secrets’ content. Reception of a document in a Roman audience establishes reception, nothing more.
28. Zola letter of 24 May 1880, printed in the 1881 Louvain reprint, pp. 27–28, read there on 2026-07-25 and *collated against the page images* of the same imprint on the same date (Appendix A). Two things in this passage are used later and are flagged here. Zola’s “trois grandes pages” is the only statement of the 1851 manuscript’s physical extent that this project reached, and it comes from a promoter writing twenty-nine years after the fact who does not claim to have seen the manuscript. Rousselot is the diocesan *rapporteur* of §4.2, so the courier and the commission’s reporter are the same man; the 1852 witness’s “the vicar-general of his diocese and another priest” is consistent with Zola’s naming and independent of it. The second writing on 4 July, made to disambiguate *two dates*, is a datum about the 1851 text’s contents—it contained at least two dates—and is the only such datum in this study.
29. Recorded negative, bounded: searches for a Holy See publication, decree, notification, or archival notice concerning the 1851 La Salette manuscripts produced nothing on the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith’s document index (<https://www.doctrinafidei.va/en/documenti.html>, read 2026-07-25, zero occurrences of “Salette”) and nothing in the literal searches of *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* described at §5.10. The bound is the search, not the world.
30. Zola letter of 24 May 1880 to a French parish priest, and the passage on the identity of the Lecce text with the 1869 manuscript “elle a comblé seulement dans ce dernier ces lacunes, ces petites réticences,” both printed in *Le secret complet de la Salette, publié par Mélanie de la Salette, Sœur Marie de la Croix* (Louvain: Imprimerie de J. Lefever, 1881), pp. 27–31, read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive scan and, on the same date, *collated line by line against the page images* of that scan (References; Appendix A). The 1881 imprint is public domain; its searchable text layer is poor, and every French sentence quoted from this volume anywhere in §5 and §6 was checked against the page image before being printed here.
31. 1881 Louvain reprint, at the end of the reproduced text, immediately after Mélanie’s subscription dated “Castellamare, le 21 Novembre 1878.” *Lycium* is the Latin name of Lecce; *ex Curia Ep[iscopali]* is the episcopal curia. **A correction to this project’s earlier record.** An earlier state of this study reported a material discrepancy between this formula (15 November 1879) and Zola’s letter of 24 May 1880 in the same volume, which the searchable text layer renders “a été bien donnée le 18 novembre 1879,” and preserved the two dates as unresolved. Both pages were collated against the imprint’s page images on 2026-07-25: the formula at p. 22 reads *15 Nov. 1879* and Zola’s letter at p. 31 reads *le 15 novembre 1879*. The two witnesses agree; the apparent discrepancy was a defect of the text layer and is recorded here, and in *research/source-audit.md*, as a correction rather than removed. The 1879 Lecce imprint itself was still not reached, so the formula remains a reprint’s reproduction of a permission (Appendix A).
32. The description of *imprimatur* in the period discipline is editorial synthesis, based on the two acts this study does quote: the 1915 decree’s own reference to Leo XIII’s constitution *Officiorum ac munerum* against those who publish books on religious subjects without the lawful permission of superiors, and to Urban VIII’s decree of 13 March 1625 against those who circulate alleged revelations without the ordinaries’ permission (§5.7). Neither constitution was read in an edition by this project (Appendix A).
33. Zola letter, 1881 Louvain reprint, p. 31 (“Je l’ai moi-même fait examiner par ma curie épiscopale, suivant les règles de l’Eglise, et mon vicaire général, n’ayant trouvé aucune raison qui pût s’opposer à la publication du secret, a délivré sa licence d’imprimer en ces termes: « Nihil obstat, Imprimatur », à la personne qui voulait le publier à ses frais et selon ses pieuses intentions”), and the reprint’s *avant-propos*, unpaginated leaf following the title page, n. 2; both collated against

the page images on 2026-07-25. The *avant-propos* is unsigned and is the reprint editor's, not Mélanie's and not Zola's; this study attributes it to the reprint. The 1881 volume carries no Belgian *imprimatur* of its own: in place of one, its title-page verso prints Mélanie's own formula, "Je soumetts cette publication au jugement du Saint-Siège Apostolique et je déclare condamner et rétracter à l'avance tout ce qu'il y trouverait de contraire à la doctrine Catholique." That is a submission, not a permission, and it is worth noticing against her own condition of 9 May 1880 that a reprint be made only "provided there is the authorization of a bishop."

34. *La vérité sur le secret de Mélanie ex-bergère de La Salette*, par l'abbé I. Roubaud (Louvain: Imprimerie de J. Lefever, 1882), 2nd edition, pp. 8–9, read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive scan and collated against its page images the same day (References). The pamphlet is an openly partisan defence, printed by the same house as the 1881 reprint, carrying no *imprimatur* but the author's own submission formula; it is used here *only* for the facts it concedes against its own case and for the state of the 1882 controversy, never for its arguments or its evaluations. Prospero Caterini (1795–1881) was Secretary of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office. Roubaud's parenthesis that Caterini "was only the secretary" because the Prefect of the Holy Office is the Pope is correct as to the office. This project did not reach the letter itself in any form, Latin or vernacular, and does not quote it: what is reported here is that a defender of the secret, writing two years after the fact and printing his address, states that such a letter exists, gives its date, states its author and office, states its substance, and states that he had never seen its original.
35. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 7 (1915), p. 594, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See's archive PDF (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-07-1915-ocr.pdf>), which is a typeset text transcription rather than a page facsimile; it carries no page images, so no image collation was possible (Appendix A). Two evident defects of that transcription are corrected in square brackets or recorded: the second correlative of *tum...tum* is printed "cum," bracketed here as [tum]; and the saving clause is printed "Beconciliatricis," read here as *Reconciliatricis*, the reading required by the title's universal form and confirmed by the same title in the 1961 papal letter quoted at §9.4. The volume's own analytical index confirms the locus, entering the act at "Dec. 21 Decretum circa vulgo dictum «Secret de la Salette», 594" and, under *Salette*, "prohibetur a S. C... 594." Subscribed *Aloisius Castellano, S. R. et U. I. Notarius*.
36. *AAS* 8 (1916), p. 175 (Holy Office, *Declaratio circa opus quoddam*, Feria IV, 12 April 1916, dated 13 April 1916) and pp. 178–179 (Sacred Congregation of the Index, decree of 5 June 1916, listing the work with the note "Decr. S. Off. 12 apr. 1916"; the index decree is signed Fr. Card. Della Volpe, Prefect, and Thomas Esser, O.P., Secretary, and dated 6 June 1916), read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See's archive PDF (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-08-1916-ocr.pdf>). The author's name appears as "Henry Mariavé" in the Holy Office declaration and "Henri Mariavé" in the Index decree; both spellings are as printed. The work itself was neither sought nor consulted, and nothing about its contents is asserted.
37. *AAS* 15 (1923), pp. 287–288, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See's archive PDF (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-15-1923-ocr.pdf>), again a typeset transcription without page images. The archive text prints the pamphlet's title-year as "1845"; since the apparition fell on Saturday 19 September 1846 and 19 September 1845 was not a Saturday, the year is given here as 184[6] with the transcription's reading recorded rather than silently replaced, and no page image was reachable for collation (Appendix A). The volume's index confirms the locus at "Salette, 287" and "Salettensis apparitio, 288." Subscribed *Aloisius Castellano, Suprae S. C. S. Officii Notarius*. The decree immediately preceding it in the same gazette section concerns unrelated works and is not part of this dossier.
38. The 1966 notification is *AAS* 58 (1966), p. 445, whose locus this study takes from the repository's existing source record for that act and did not itself re-verify in the gazette; every other *AAS* and *ASS* locus in this study was read directly in the Holy See's archive PDFs on 2026-07-25 (Appendix A). The suppression of the Congregation of the Index in 1917 is stated here as common institutional history and no source is claimed for it. The final sentence is editorial judgment, labelled as such, and is not a canonical opinion.
39. Search record: the *AAS* sweep, its exact volume range, its method, and its per-volume hit counts are recorded in *research/source-audit.md*; the *ASS* volumes searched are 11 (1878), 12 (1879), 13 (1880), and 14 (1881). All searches were run 2026-07-25. A literal search over an OCR-derived text layer establishes that the string was not found in those bytes; it does not establish that no act exists.
40. The 1881 imprint was read on 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive copy (References) and every French sentence quoted in §5 and §6 was collated against that copy's page images on the same date; loci below are the printed page numbers of the 1881 volume. Public domain by age. The scan's searchable text layer is poor and was used only for navigation. One digit remains unresolved after collation and is recorded rather than quoted: at p. 9 the text reads "des châtimens qui se succéderont pendant plus de" a two-digit number which the page image renders ambiguously between 33 and 35 and the text layer reads as 33; no clause of this study depends on it. A second small discrepancy, likewise recorded and not resolved, is that the 1881 title page describes Zola as Mélanie's spiritual director "depuis 1867" while his own letter at p. 31 gives the period "de 1868 jusqu'en 1873" and dates his receipt of her manuscript to 1869.
41. 1881 Louvain reprint, subscription at p. 22, collated against the page image. The part-numbering, the page extents, and the description of the contents are this study's inventory of the imprint, made from the page images; the imprint itself supplies the roman numerals and the pagination. "Castellamare" is printed with a single *l*, as here.

42. 1881 Louvain reprint, p. 8, collated against the page image; the emphasis is editorial. Editorial rendering: “Here the beautiful Lady who enraptured me stayed a moment without making herself heard; I saw nevertheless that she went on, as if she were speaking, gracefully moving her kind lips—Maximin was then receiving his secret. Then, turning to me, the most holy Virgin spoke to me and gave me a secret in French. This secret, here it is entire, and as she gave it to me.” The clause *en français* is the single most consequential four syllables in the document and is analyzed at §6.7.
43. 1881 Louvain reprint, p. 9, collated. Editorial rendering: “Mélanie, what I am going to say to you now will not always be secret. You may publish it in 1858.” The text was published in 1879.
44. 1881 Louvain reprint, p. 9, collated against the page image. Editorial rendering: “The priests, ministers of my Son, the priests, by their bad life, by their irreverences and their impiety in celebrating the holy mysteries, by the love of money, the love of honour and of pleasures, the priests have become cesspools of impurity. Yes, the priests are asking for vengeance, and vengeance is suspended over their heads. Woe to the priests and to the persons consecrated to God, who by their infidelities and their bad life crucify my Son anew! The sins of persons consecrated to God cry to heaven and call for vengeance, and behold, vengeance is at their doors, for there is no one left to implore mercy and pardon for the peoples. There are no more generous souls, there is no one left worthy to offer the spotless Victim to the Eternal on behalf of the world.” This study prints the passage because it cannot be analyzed without being read and because every act of the Holy See in the dossier is unintelligible without it. Printing it is not adopting it; §6.12 states what weight it can bear, which is none as a judgment on any priest.
45. 1881 Louvain reprint, pp. 9–10 (Pius IX and Napoleon), p. 12 (Antichrist), p. 13 (the eclipse of the Church), each collated against the page images. Editorial renderings: “Let the Vicar of my Son, the sovereign Pontiff Pius IX, not leave Rome again after the year 1859. But let him be firm and generous; let him fight with the arms of faith and of love. I shall be with him. Let him beware of Napoleon. His heart is double. And when he wishes to be at once pope and emperor, God will soon withdraw from him.” — “It is during this time that Antichrist will be born, of a Hebrew religious, of a false virgin who will have communication with the old serpent, the master of impurity. His father will be a b[ishop]... At birth he will vomit blasphemies, he will have teeth; in a word, he will be the devil incarnate.” — “The Church will be eclipsed, the world will be in consternation. But behold Henoah and Elias, filled with the spirit of God; they will preach with the strength of God, and men of good will shall believe in God.” The four points after *év* are printed in the imprint; the completion *évêque* is not printed there and is not supplied here as the text’s reading, though it is what the controversy has always assumed. The suspension is recorded as a feature of the printed document.
46. Editorial observation, labelled as such, and bounded: the *Traité de la vraie dévotion* was not consulted in any edition by this project, and the statement about the currency of its vocabulary in nineteenth-century France is general knowledge for which no source is claimed here. What *is* documented at an identified imprint is that the order Mélanie was to found bore this name: Roubaud 1882, p. 10, states that Leo XIII charged her with “la compilation des règles du nouvel ordre, préconisé et réclamé par Notre-Dame de la Salette, et intitulé: « Les apôtres des derniers temps »” (collated against the page image). The 1879 text itself uses the phrase at p. 13.
47. Source-grounded synthesis, labelled. The dates, names and events in the left column are read in the 1879 text at the loci tabled above; the historical background—Pius IX’s flight to Gaeta in November 1848, Louis-Napoleon’s presidency and empire, the Roman Question—is stated as common historical knowledge and no source is claimed for it, this study having consulted none. The inference in the last sentence is this study’s, is contestable, and is answered at §6.9 by the strongest form of the contrary argument.
48. 1881 Louvain reprint, pp. 24–25, collated against the page image. Editorial rendering of the first: “It seems to me that the events ought to arrive about 1881. Would that I might be mistaken!” The second passage: “Depuis environ trois ans, ma vue baisse considérablement, à ce point que je ne reconnais plus les personnes que j’avais vues autrefois, et même si un livre est écrit ou non... En écrivant, c’est plutôt par la longue habitude que je le fais, mais avec de très-fortes lunettes, et parfois avec deux les unes sur les autres.” The same letter answers the objection that the secret is exaggerated with an argument from the Virgin’s inerrancy—“Dans ce cas, il faudrait croire que la sainte Vierge s’est trompée? La sainte Vierge peut-elle se tromper? Non! non!”—which is the same *a priori* structure examined at §6.9.
49. The comparison was made on 2026-07-25 between Ullathorne 1854, pp. 35–46, and the 1881 Louvain reprint, pp. 7–15, both read at the loci given and the latter collated against page images; the results are recorded in *research/source-audit.md*. The *la main/le bras* variant between the 1854 witness and the received custodial text is set out at §3.4; the point here is that the 1879 text sides with the earlier witness on *la main* and departs from both on the adjectives and the verb.
50. Roubaud 1882, p. 7, collated against the page image: “Mélanie eût-elle prévarié (ce qui n’est pas), il ne lui eût pas été possible d’altérer un seul mot de son Secret; ou bien, il faudrait taxer la Sainte Vierge d’inconsidération, parce qu’Elle n’aurait point choisi des instruments capables de faire parvenir sans altération, au peuple, le Message intégral.” The same structure appears in Mélanie’s letter of 9 May 1880 (§6.5) and in the 1881 *avant-propos*. It is set out here because it is the argument the promoters made, and because naming it accurately is part of assessing the tradition; it is not adopted, and §6.9 answers it.

51. Bounded negative, 2026-07-25: searches of the Internet Archive's catalogue for nineteenth-century French printings under the titles of the La Salette secret returned the 1881 Louvain reprint and the 1882 Roubaud pamphlet used here and nothing containing an identified text of Maximin's secret; the two 1850s English volumes, the 1854 Italian pilgrim's manual, the 1866 Grenoble biography, the Sanctuary's pages and the Missionaries' pages carry none. Discovery in this session ran through direct URL retrieval and the Internet Archive's catalogue and metadata interfaces; general web search was unavailable, and Gallica and Google Books remained unreachable (Appendix A). A wider search might find one.
52. Source-grounded synthesis, labelled. It rests on the acts quoted at §5.7–§5.8, the Caterini letter as reported at §5.6, the bounded AAS and ASS sweeps at §5.10, and Roubaud 1882, p. 10 ("Léon XIII, enfin, aurait forcé Mélanie à une rétractation. Il en avait le DROIT et la puissance"), collated against the page image. The inferences are this study's and are not canonical opinions. In particular, nothing here should be read as a claim about what the 1915 decree obliges today; that question is at §5.9 and is left open.
53. Sanctuary, "Les témoins: Mélanie et Maximin" (archived capture, §2 note 3). The Sanctuary's phrase for his upbringing—"Maximin va pousser comme une herbe sauvage"—and its judgment "il demeure alors à Corps, qu'il aurait mieux fait de ne jamais quitter" are the custodian's own.
54. Sanctuary, "Les témoins." The pamphlet is identified by title from that page; it was not consulted, and nothing about its contents is asserted here beyond the fact that it was a public restatement of his testimony (Appendix A).
55. Ullathorne 1854, pp. 136–140, printing the exchange as recorded by "Mlle Brulais." The witness's own framing—that Maximin went "in a thoughtless humour" and came back in one, and that one of the three men later said he left Ars joyous and contented—is the witness's, and is reported as such. This study establishes only that the episode occurred, that Maximin's reported explanation is on record from 1854, and that the contrary report was in the newspapers of the day. It does not adjudicate what was said in the confessional at Ars, and no testimony of Vianney was reached (Appendix A).
56. Sanctuary, "Les témoins." The same page states, of the Castellammare years, that "le Vatican prie l'évêque du lieu de lui interdire ce genre de publication mais elle cherche d'autres appuis"—a custodial statement of a Roman intervention for which this project located no document, and which is reported here as the Sanctuary's statement only. The death date is the Sanctuary's; no civil or parish record was consulted and this study does not adjudicate the datings that circulate elsewhere (Appendix A).
57. Sanctuary, "Les témoins." Editorial rendering: poor, believing, pious, but attached to her own judgment—there is one point on which Mélanie never varied: what she had said, like Maximin, on the evening of 19 September 1846, in the Pras' kitchen at Les Ablandins. The formulation is exactly the distinction this study needs and did not have to invent: constancy about the 1846 recital, and no constancy claimed for anything else.
58. The 1854 acts and the 1857 circular: *Vie de M. Rousselot, professeur de théologie au grand séminaire de Grenoble* (Grenoble, 1866), pp. 145–146, read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive scan (References)—a Grenoble diocesan biography, partisan for La Salette and used here for the dates, titles, and forms of the episcopal acts it reports. The civil suit: *Le miracle de La Salette* (1855), pp. 86–87, an openly hostile volume, read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive scan; this study records the existence of the litigation on that witness's authority, establishes nothing about its outcome, was unable to reach the judgment, and expresses no view on the identification hypothesis, which the 1851 act's third consideration claims to have known and weighed (§4.4).
59. Quoted, with that date and attribution, by the Sanctuary of Notre-Dame de La Salette, <https://lasalette.cef.fr/lhistoire/>, read 2026-07-25, and on its archived seers page. The Sanctuary presents it as a quotation from a new inquiry confirming his predecessor's decision. This study reports it at the custodian's ceiling: the sentence is received in this polished form, and no printed 1855 text of the address was reached, so it is cited as the Sanctuary's received formula rather than as a verified verbatim.
60. Missionnaires de Notre-Dame de La Salette (French province), "Mandement de Mgr Ph. de Bruillard du 1^{er} mai 1852," <https://www.missionnaire-lasalette.fr/spip.php?article41>, read 2026-07-25. The institute's own site is the witness; the diocesan original was not consulted (Appendix A). The same page continues with the provisions on residence in the episcopal city, summer service on the mountain and winter preaching in the parishes, the appeal for a house of novitiate at Grenoble, and the sentence that gives the act its tone: "C'est pour ainsi dire, la dernière page de notre testament." The bishop was then in his eighty-sixth year.
61. "Lettre du P. Denaz à Mgr Ginoulhiac du 4 août 1855," published by the French province from its institute archives (<https://www.missionnaire-lasalette.fr/spip.php?article42>, read 2026-07-25, marked "Archives de l'Institut"). A private letter of a founding member is evidence of the internal debate, not of an act.
62. *Vie de M. Rousselot* (1866), pp. 138–139, reporting the Roman acts with their dates and, for the indult, quoting two Latin phrases from it. The rescripts, briefs, and indult themselves were not consulted; they antedate *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, and no Roman gazette carries them. The 1866 volume is a partisan diocesan biography and is used here for the inventory of acts it enumerates, at that ceiling (Appendix A).

63. *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 11 (1878), pp. 512–514, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s archive PDF (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/ass/documents/ASS-11-1878-ocr.pdf>). The dubia were proposed by the Bishop of Port Louis (Mauritius); the rescript is dated 12 May 1877 and the authenticated copy in the gazette is dated 11 December 1878, subscribed Placido Ralli, Secretary, and Giovanni Ponzi, Substitute. *Ad I* permitted the exposition of images of the Blessed Virgin under those titles for public veneration, “servatis tamen cautelis” of the Council of Trent, session 25, and Urban VIII’s constitution *Sacrosancta Synodus* of 15 May 1642; *Ad III* permitted the erection of a pious sodality of Our Lady of La Salette. A companion rescript of 7 July 1877 for the diocese of Maurienne likewise permitted confraternities, altars, and oratories, public and private, under the name of Our Lady of La Salette, subject to the condition expressed in the earlier decree (*Acta Sanctae Sedis* 13 (1880), p. 426).
64. Nominis (Église catholique en France), “Notre-Dame de La Salette,” <https://nominis.cef.fr/contenus/saint/12975/Notre-Dame-de-La-Salette.html>, read 2026-07-25: “la congrégation pour le culte divin et la discipline des sacrements, a publié un décret le 18 mars 2016 inscrivant la célébration de la Vierge Marie sous le titre de ‘La Salette’ dans le propre de France, au 19 septembre, à titre de mémoire facultative”; the same page states the feast as “19 septembre, Mémoire facultative en France.” Bounded limit: the decree itself was not located as a document—it is not in the Holy See’s *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* volumes reachable at that route, and this project did not reach *Notitiae*—so the act is reported at the French episcopal conference’s institutional ceiling, with its protocol number, Latin text, and rank terminology unverified (Appendix A). The rank is stated as that source states it and is not compared against a typical edition.
65. Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de La Salette, <https://lasalette.cef.fr/> and <https://lasalette.cef.fr/lhistoire/>, read 2026-07-25 (address “11459 Route du Sanctuaire, 38970 La Salette”). Current ordinary: Diocèse de Grenoble–Vienne, <https://www.diocese-grenoble-vienne.fr/>, read 2026-07-25, naming Mgr Jean-Marc Eychenne; the diocesan agenda for July–August 2026 lists events at the sanctuary, including perpetual professions of Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. The altitude is as the sanctuary’s own material gives it and is not independently verified.
66. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1 (1909), pp. 233–234 (*Decretum quo approbantur ad decennium constitutiones Congregationis Missionariorum “de la Salette”*; petition of the superior general Joseph Perrin with his general assistants; relator Cardinal Francesco Cassetta; subscribed Fr. J. C. Cardinal Vives, Prefect, and Laurentius Janssens, O.S.B., Secretary), and *AAS* 18 (1926), p. 314 (7 June 1926, constitutions definitively approved), both read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s archive PDFs. Later gazette entries concerning the institute—mission territories, apostolic prefectures and vicariates entrusted to it, and appointments of its members as bishops—were seen in the volume sweep described at §5.10 and are not individually cited.
67. Missionnaires de Notre-Dame de La Salette: international site <https://www.lasalette.info/> and French province <https://www.missionnaire-lasalette.fr/>, read 2026-07-25, which between them list houses and provinces in France, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Angola, Madagascar, Brazil, Argentina, the United States, India, Myanmar, and the Philippines, together with the Sisters of La Salette and associated lay members. No membership statistics are asserted: none was found stated with a date on the institute’s own pages (Appendix A).
68. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 38 (1946), pp. 155–156, *Ad R. P. Stephanum Cruveiller, Moderatorem Generalem Missionariorum B. M. V. a “La Salette” exeunte saeculo ab Apparitione eiusdem B. M. V. in oppido “La Salette”*, dated “Du Vatican, le 8 Octobre 1945,” read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s archive PDF (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-38-1946-ocr.pdf>); confirmed at “La Salette, 155” in the volume’s index. The italics are editorial emphasis added here, not in the source. The same letter records that the French National Committee of Marian Congresses had decided, with the assent of the Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops of France and in agreement with Bishop Alexandre Caillot of Grenoble, to hold its fifth congress in the diocese and at the places honoured a hundred years before.
69. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 53 (1961), pp. 606–607, *Beata Maria Virgo a “La Salette”, Reconciliatrix peccatorum invocata, universae Congregationis Missionariorum a Sacra Familia caelestis Patrona constituitur*, dated “Datum Romae, apud Sanctum Petrum, sub anulo Piscatoris, die xvi mensis Iunii, anno mcmli,” countersigned D. Card. Tardini, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s archive PDF. The operative words: “. . . harum Litterarum vi perpetuumque in modum Beatam Virginem Mariam a ‘La Salette’, Reconciliatricem peccatorum invocatam, universae Congregationis Missionariorum a Sacra Familia praecipuam apud Deum Patronam. . . confirmamus, seu denuo renuntiamus, declaramus, constituimus.”
70. John Paul II, *Lettre à Mgr Louis Dufaux, évêque de Grenoble, à l’occasion du 150^e anniversaire de l’apparition de la Sainte Vierge Marie de La Salette*, 6 May 1996, French text at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/fr/letters/1996/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19960506_monsignor-dufaux.html, read 2026-07-25. The letter also encourages the Missionaries, the Sisters of La Salette, and the other institutes whose foundation and inspiration are connected with the event. It was not found in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* volume for 1996 in the sweep described at §5.10; the Holy See’s web text is the witness used.
71. John Paul II, *Epistula ad Henricum S. R. E. Cardinali Schwery, Episcopum emeritum Sedunensem*, 9 July 1996, Latin text at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/la/letters/1996/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19960709_de-la-salette.html, read 2026-07-25. The letter names the petitioners—the Superior General of the Missionaries, Isidore Perin, and Bishop Aloysius (Louis) Dufaux of Grenoble—and dates the solemn commemoration to 19 September. *Perhibetur* is the same verb the mandement’s Latin tradition and the 1877 Rites rescript use of reported apparitions (*quae contigisse perhibentur*, §8.3); the parallel is editorial observation, not a claim of drafting dependence.

72. *Dei Verbum* 4, quoted at n. 1 of the 2024 norms, which cite *AAS* 58 (1966), p. 819; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 67, quoted at n. 4 of the same norms. Both are read here in the Holy See’s English text of the norms (References), read 2026-07-25.
73. 2024 norms, nn. 11–12 and note 24, quoting Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), n. 14: *AAS* 102 (2010), p. 696; the *Verbum Domini* paragraph is quoted in full in the norms’ own footnote and is taken from there, not from an independent reading of the exhortation (Appendix A).
74. 2024 norms, presentation, “Reasons for the New Norms.” It is worth noting precisely what the Dicastery does and does not do with the 1851 sentence: it cites it as an example of a style of statement, in a historical explanation of why new norms were needed. It does not annul the 1851 act, reopen the case, or assign the event a new determination, and this study asserts no such effect.
75. Editorial synthesis, labelled as such, over the elements cited at §3.5, §3.6, §8.1, and §9.5. *Lumen gentium* 60–62 and CCC 970 supply the doctrinal control on the Marian imagery; nothing in the *public* La Salette message strains them, which is a statement about the public message only and is not extended to any other text.
76. 2024 norms, arts. 1–3, 18–27 and nn. 10–23, English text at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dff_doc_20240517_norme-fenomeni-soprannaturali_en.html, read 2026-07-25. A *Nihil obstat* under n. 17 acknowledges signs of the Holy Spirit’s action “in the midst” of a spiritual experience “[w]ithout expressing any certainty about the supernatural authenticity of the phenomenon itself”; art. 22 §2 requires the bishop to ensure that the faithful do not take any determination as an approval of supernaturality; art. 22 §3 reserves the Dicastery’s right to intervene again.

A Scope, Status, and Qualifications

Question and thesis boundary

This study answers one question: what was reported at La Salette on 19 September 1846 on the nearest record this project could reach; how the public discourse is transmitted and where its strata differ; what exactly the Bishop of Grenoble judged on 19 September 1851, in which words and with what object; what happened to the secrets—their writing, their delivery to Pius IX, their expansion in publication, and the Roman acts of 1880, 1915, 1916, and 1923; whether the text published in 1879 is the text sent to Pius IX in 1851; how the shrine, the Missionaries, the liturgy, and the popes received the event; and what all of that obliges and leaves open. It is a source-audited study instrument, ecclesial-judgment-first in method: not a devotional narrative, a critical edition, a magisterial act, a biography, or a complete history of La Salette. It proposes no judgment of its own on supernaturality; the judgment it does propose, at §6.9, is about the textual identity of one nineteenth-century document and nothing else.

The secret: what is published, and on what disclosure

This edition publishes and analyzes the text printed at Lecce in 1879 and reprinted at Louvain in 1881, and reaches a judgment on its relation to the manuscripts written for Pius IX in July 1851. The governing disclosure is at §5.1 and is not repeated here: the Holy Office’s decree of 21 December 1915 commanded all the faithful of every region not to discuss or treat of the subject, with penalties and with an express saving clause for the devotion; the acts of 1916 and 1923 applied it to named publications; the decree’s present force is genuinely unresolved, this project’s bounded searches located no act abrogating or modifying it, and this edition asserts neither that it has lapsed nor that it binds. The analysis is published on the express direction of the project’s maintainer, recorded as the editorial act of a private study. Nothing in §5 or §6 is an ecclesiastical interpretation, an authentic interpretation of any canon or decree, a dispensation, a canonical opinion, or advice to any other author. The judgment reached at §6.9—that the 1879 text is not the 1851 text—is project synthesis, is labelled as such at its own locus, has had no ecclesiastical or independent scholarly review, and is stated there with its confidence levels, its strongest counterargument, and the evidence that would change it. Throughout, the *public message* of 1846, which is approved in its event and touched by no Roman restriction, is kept distinct from the *secrets*, which are approved by nobody.

Corpus and exclusions

Included: the single reported apparition of 19 September 1846 to Maximin Giraud and Mélanie Calvat; the transmission strata named at §2.1; the public discourse in its 1854-printed recital form and in the received custodial form, compared element by element; the 1847 depositions and the commission as the 1851 act describes them; the mandement of 19 September 1851 at its operative clause and article structure; the mandement of 1 May 1852 founding the Missionaries; the Roman grants of 1852; the Rites rescripts of 12 May and 7 July 1877; the documentary chronology of the secrets, the reported letter of the Secretary of the Holy Office of 14 August 1880, and the Holy Office and Index acts of 1915, 1916, and 1923; the text of the 1879 Lecce booklet as the 1881 Louvain reprint prints it, published at its principal elements, analyzed, and compared with the 1846 discourse; the seers' later lives at the custodian's and the 1854 witness's ceilings, including the Ars episode; Ginoulhiac's acts of 1854–1857 and his 1855 sentence; papal reception in 1945, 1961, and 1996; the 2016 inscription in the Proper of France; and current standing under the 2024 norms.

Excluded or bounded: the whole text of the 1879 booklet, which is not reproduced integrally—its elements are inventoried and its load-bearing sentences quoted; any text of Maximin Giraud's secret, none having been reached at an identified imprint; the wording of the 1880 letter, not reached in any language; any judgment on supernaturalism; any certification of a cure, prodigy, or property of the spring; any decoding, dating, or application of the dearth prophecy or of the saying about children under seven; the identification hypothesis about the figure seen, whose litigation is recorded as existing and not adjudicated; the personal sanctity, culpability, mental state, or cause of death of either seer; and every claim of the “all approved apparitions” type—this is a single-event study and asserts no registry.

Geography, chronology, and currentness

Subject geography: the mountain above La Salette and the village of Corps in the Isère; Grenoble; Rome; Lecce and Castellammare di Stabia; Louvain; Ars and Lyons. Subject range: 1846 to the acts current at the as-of date. As-of date: all mutable claims—current controlling status, the Dicastery's document index, the shrine and institute pages, the diocesan ordinary, the calendar entry—were checked on 2026-07-25. Stable historical facts are not given artificial currentness. The 1852 indulgence and Mass privileges are reported as acts of their own period and are expressly *not* stated as discipline in force. Negative results are bounded searches, correctable by better evidence, never guarantees.

Taxonomy and terminology

Kept distinct throughout: *recital stratum* (the children's narrative as the diocesan documents transmit it, read here in the 1854 printing); *received custodial text* (the harmonized French discourse published by the shrine and the institute); *period apologetic literature* (the 1852 and 1854 English volumes, the 1866 Grenoble biography); *hostile literature* (the 1855 volume, used only for the existence of the litigation); *promoter's testimony* (Bishop Zola's 1880 letter and the 1882 Roubaud pamphlet, used for the custody chronology and for their authors' admissions against interest, never for their evaluations); *analyzed text* (the 1879 Lecce booklet as the 1881 Louvain reprint prints it: published, quoted, and assessed, and asserted by this study neither as true nor as revealed); *competent judgment* (the 1851 mandement); *disciplinary act* (the 1854 mandements; the 1915, 1916, and 1923 Roman acts); *act of cult* (the 1852 grants; the 1877 rescripts; the 2016 memorial); *papal reception* (1945, 1961, 1996); and *editorial synthesis*, always labelled. “Reported” is the default register for every word and phenomenon attributed to the apparition. *Fondés à la croire indubitable et certaine* is the 1851 act's own formula and is not translated into the 2024 taxonomy. *Fides humana*—in the 1877 rescript's own words, *fides solum humana*—names the assent invited by permitted private revelation.

Source hierarchy and method

Priority: the exact operative texts in identified official witnesses (AAS 1 (1909), 7 (1915), 8 (1916), 15 (1923), 18 (1926), 38 (1946), 53 (1961); ASS 11 (1878), 13 (1880); the Holy See's web texts for 1996 and 2024), each read directly in the Holy See's own archive on 2026-07-25; then the custodial institutions (the Sanctuary, the Missionaries, the French episcopal conference's official site) for what they alone witness, at institutional-self-description ceilings; then identified nineteenth-century printings for the mandement, the discourse, and the documentary chronology, each named with its imprint and its partisanship stated. Quotations are exact from the named witness; French, Latin, and

Italian are quoted in the original where wording is operative, with editorial translations visibly editorial. No project or AI rendering is offered as a received translation, and no text is printed for recitation.

Qualifications and unresolved items

(1) **No French printing of the integral 1851 mandement was located.** Article 1 is therefore quoted in French only as far as the Sanctuary’s transcription (which carries its own ellipsis) and the Dicastery’s 2024 citation print it; the whole article is given in an 1854 English rendering and the eight-article structure from an 1854 Italian translation of the pilgrim’s manual. No French reconstruction is offered anywhere in this study. (2) The 1852 English translation of the mandement’s preamble breaks off before the operative articles; the two witnesses for the articles differ in fullness, and the article inventory follows the Italian witness with the difference recorded. (3) The critical documentary edition of the early La Salette records, the diocesan archives of Grenoble, the *rapporteur*’s report and its supplement, Maximin’s pamphlet, and Mélanie’s autobiography were not consulted. (4) The two 1851 manuscripts were not reached in any form; later reports of their recovery and facsimile publication were not verified and nothing rests on them; the analysis of §6 therefore compares the 1879 text with the 1846 record, which exists, and not with the 1851 text, which does not. (5) No copy or image of the 1879 Lecce imprint was reached. Everything published and analyzed in §6 is read in the 1881 Louvain reprint, whose whole text was collated against that copy’s page images on 2026-07-25; the relation of the 1881 setting to the 1879 setting rests on the reprint’s own claim and on Bishop Zola’s letter and was not independently verified. A *correction to an earlier state of this record*: the 15/18 November 1879 discrepancy formerly preserved between the printed formula and Zola’s letter does not exist. Page-image collation shows both at 15 November 1879; the “18” was a defect of the scan’s text layer. Two smaller items in the same volume remain open and are not resolved: an ambiguous two-digit number at p. 9 (33 or 35), and the title page’s “depuis 1867” for Zola’s direction against his own “de 1868 jusqu’en 1873.” (5a) No printing, transcription, or facsimile of any text of Maximin Giraud’s secret was reached at an identified imprint; none is published, quoted, or characterized. (5b) The letter of the Secretary of the Holy Office of 14 August 1880 was not reached in any language; its existence, date, author, and substance rest on one partisan witness of 1882 who states that he saw only a translation, and no clause of this study depends on its wording. (5c) The *Traité de la vraie dévotion* of Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, whose vocabulary §6.5 notices in the 1879 text, was not consulted in any edition; the observation is a correspondence of vocabulary and no literary dependence is asserted. (6) The Holy See’s AAS and ASS archive files are typeset text transcriptions without page images, so no image collation of the 1915 or 1923 decrees was possible; two evident transcription defects are bracketed or recorded (*cum* for *tum*; *Beconciliatricis* for *Reconciliatricis*; the pamphlet year printed “1845”), and a third in an 1847 deposition (“1840” for 1846). (7) The AAS sweep covered volumes 1 (1909) through 98 (2006) except volume 75 (1983), which that route does not serve; volumes from 99 (2007) are not published there as annual files and were not searched, and the 1966 Index notification’s locus is taken from an existing repository source record rather than re-verified. (8) The 2016 decree inscribing the memorial in the Proper of France was not located as a document; its protocol number, Latin text, and rank terminology are unverified and the act is reported at the French episcopal conference’s institutional ceiling. (9) The Sanctuary’s biographical page for the seers is cited from an Internet Archive capture of 8 April 2013 because the current site no longer carries it; the Sanctuary’s own datings, including Mélanie’s death date, are reported as that page gives them and no civil or parish record was consulted. (10) The 1855 Ginoulhiac sentence is cited as the Sanctuary’s received formula; no printed 1855 text was reached. (11) The Ars episode is reported from a pro-La Salette 1854 witness printing Maximin’s own reported answers; no testimony of Jean-Marie Vianney was reached, and nothing said in a confessional is adjudicated. (12) No membership statistics for the Missionaries are asserted; none was found stated with a date on their own pages. (12a) The 1882 Roubaud pamphlet is an openly partisan defence of the secret, used only for the facts it concedes against its own case—the Index’s refusal to condemn, the Holy Office’s taking up of the matter, the letter of 14 August 1880, and the state of the 1882 controversy—and never for its arguments or evaluations; the periodicals it names were not consulted, and the solemn coronation of 20 August 1879 that it and the 1881 *avant-propos* report was not located as an act. (13) No independent Mariological, historical, canonical, archival, French or Occitan philological, liturgical, or textual review has occurred; no ecclesiastical review or approval is claimed or implied.

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Holy See’s web texts of the 1996 letters and the 2024 norms are © Libreria Editrice Vaticana and are quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation; the Sanctuary of Notre-Dame de La Salette, the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, the Diocese of Grenoble–Vienne, and the French episcopal conference’s *Nominis* service are © their publishers and are quoted briefly with citation. The 1881 Louvain imprint and the 1882 Roubaud pamphlet are public domain by age; the French quoted from them in §5 and §6 is their own wording, and the English renderings beside it are editorial commentary of this project, not received translations. Neither volume is reproduced integrally. The received custodial text of the discourse is likewise not reproduced in full: only its opening and closing lines are quoted and the custodial publishers are cited for the whole. Online availability is not treated as a reuse license; no complete document is reproduced; scans consulted for reading are not redistributed.

B References

Witnesses are listed with role and rights notes; the access date for all web loci is 2026-07-25 unless stated. Stable source identities for the starred entries are registered in the repository source library; this publication’s bindings are in `research/source-bindings.toml`. Gazette texts below are read in the Holy See’s archive files, typeset transcriptions without page images, and are public domain; the Holy See’s web texts are © Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Both are quoted with citation within ordinary scholarly limits.

The 1851 judgment and its witnesses

- *Philibert de Bruillard, Bishop of Grenoble, doctrinal *mandement* on the event of La Salette, 19 September 1851. Role: the operative approval act, quoted at §1 and analyzed at §4. No French printing of the integral act was located. Witnesses used: the Sanctuary’s French transcription of article 1 (below); the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith’s 2024 citation of the operative clause (below); the English of the whole article and of the preamble in the 1852 and 1854 volumes (below); and the eight-article structure in the 1854 Italian translation of the pilgrim’s manual (below). The 1851 text is public domain.
- **A Pilgrimage to La Salette; or, a Critical Examination of All the Facts Connected with the Alleged Apparition* (London, 1852), read in the Internet Archive scan (<https://archive.org/details/apilgrimagetola00nortg oog>). Role: documentary carrier of the mandement’s preamble and narrative in English translation (Appendix, pp. 69–71), of the July 1851 writing and 18 July delivery of the secrets (pp. 28–29), and of the mandement of 1 May 1852 (pp. 30–32). Anonymous English Catholic apologetic review article; public domain; used at that ceiling.
- *William Bernard Ullathorne, *The Holy Mountain of La Salette: A Pilgrimage of the Year 1854* (London: Richardson, 1854), read in the Internet Archive scan (<https://archive.org/details/holymountainlas00ull agoog>). Role: the operative articles in English (pp. 120–121); the children’s recital in parallel French, *patois*, and English (pp. 35–43); the interrogation answers on the secret (pp. 44–46); the depositions of 27 November 1847 (pp. 30–31); the superioress’s 1847 opinion (pp. 32–33); the Ars episode (pp. 136–140). Public domain (Ullathorne d. 1889); pro-La Salette pilgrimage narrative reproducing diocesan documents in translation, used at that ceiling.
- *Pierre-Joseph Rousselot, *Manuale del pellegrino a Nostra Signora di La Salette* (Italian translation of the *Manuel du pèlerin*, 1854), read in the Internet Archive scan of the Bavarian State Library copy (https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_ipMnF-iMgtcC). Role: the mandement’s four considerations and eight articles in Italian translation (pp. 42–47). Public domain; a translation of a diocesan pilgrim’s manual, used at that ceiling.
- **Vie de M. Rousselot, professeur de théologie au grand séminaire de Grenoble* (Grenoble, 1866), read in the Internet Archive scan (<https://archive.org/details/viedemrousselot00abbgoog>). Role: the inventory of Roman grants of 1852 with their dates (pp. 138–139); Ginoulhiac’s acts of 1854 and the circular of 1857 (pp. 145–146); the operative French clause of the judgment inside the biographer’s own sentence (p. 415). Public domain; partisan diocesan biography, used at that ceiling.
- *Le miracle de La Salette* (1855), read in the Internet Archive scan (https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_AbQAAAAcAAJ). Role: the existence of the 1855 civil litigation at Grenoble (pp. 86–87) only. Public domain; openly hostile volume, used solely for that fact and for nothing evaluative.

Holy See acts read in the official gazettes

- *Sacred Congregation of Rites, rescript *Portus Aloisii*, 12 May 1877: *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 11 (1878), pp. 512–514, read in the Holy See’s archive PDF (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/ass/documents/ASS-11-1878-ocr.pdf>). Role: the *fide solum humana* answer naming La Salette (§8.3, §10.2); the limits on feast rank and on litanies of the apparition.
- *Sacred Congregation of Rites, rescript *Maurianen.*, 7 July 1877: *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 13 (1880), p. 426, same archive route (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/ass/documents/ASS-13-1880-ocr.pdf>). Role: confraternities, altars, and oratories under the name of Our Lady of La Salette, subject to the earlier decree’s condition.
- *Sacred Congregation for Religious, *Decretum quo approbantur ad decennium constitutiones Congregationis Missionariorum “de la Salette”*, 29 January 1909, confirmed by Pius X 1 February 1909: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1 (1909), pp. 233–234 (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-01-1909-ocr.pdf>).
- *Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, decree *circa vulgo dictum «Secret de la Salette»*, 21 December 1915: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 7 (1915), p. 594 (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-07-1915-ocr.pdf>). Role: the governing prohibition, quoted entire at §5.7 with its saving clause.
- *Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, *Declaratio circa opus quoddam*, 12 April 1916, and Sacred Congregation of the Index, decree of 5 June 1916: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 8 (1916), pp. 175 and 178–179 (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-08-1916-ocr.pdf>).
- *Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, decree *Damnatur opusculum*, 9 May 1923, approved by Pius XI the same day: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 15 (1923), pp. 287–288 (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-15-1923-ocr.pdf>).
- *Sacred Congregation for Religious, definitive approval of the constitutions of the Missionaries “de la Salette,” 7 June 1926: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 18 (1926), p. 314 (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-18-1926-ocr.pdf>).
- *Pius XII, letter to the Superior General of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette for the centenary, 8 October 1945: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 38 (1946), pp. 155–156 (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-38-1946-ocr.pdf>). Role: the papal characterization of the 1851 act and the reported register (§9.3).
- *John XXIII, apostolic letter constituting Our Lady of La Salette, Reconciler of sinners, patroness of the Congregation of Missionaries of the Holy Family, 16 June 1961: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 53 (1961), pp. 606–607 (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-53-1961-ocr.pdf>).

Holy See web texts

- *John Paul II, *Lettre à Mgr Louis Dufaux, évêque de Grenoble, à l’occasion du 150^e anniversaire de l’apparition de la Sainte Vierge Marie de La Salette*, 6 May 1996: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/fr/letters/1996/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19960506_monsignor-dufaux.html.
- *John Paul II, *Epistula ad Henricum S. R. E. Cardinali Schwery*, 9 July 1996 (legation for the 150th anniversary): https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/la/letters/1996/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19960709_d-e-la-salette.html.
- *Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena*, 17 May 2024, English: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20240517_norme-fenomeni-soprannaturali_en.html. Role: the 1851 operative clause (§1, §10.2); the doctrinal frame at nn. 1–12; the six determinations, n. 23, and art. 27; and, through its note 24, Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* n. 14 (AAS 102 (2010), p. 696).
- Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, documents index, <https://www.doctrinafidei.va/en/documenti.html>. Role: recorded negative search (no La Salette entry).

The secret literature

- **Le secret complet de la Salette, publié par Mélanie de la Salette, Sœur Marie de la Croix, précédé d’une préface, suivi des dernières lettres de Mélanie et d’une lettre de Mgr Zola, évêque de Lecce* (Louvain: Imprimerie de J. Lefever, 1881), read in the Internet Archive scan (<https://archive.org/details/LeSecretCompletDeLaSal>

etteMelanieDeLaSalette), whose page images were collated line by line against every French sentence quoted from it. Role: the principal text of this study’s §6—the narrative of 1878 and the secret it prints, published and analyzed there—and, documentarily, the subscription dated Castellammare 21 November 1878, the *Nihil obstat: imprimatur* of 15 November 1879, Mélanie’s letters of 25 March and 9 May 1880, the anonymous *avant-propos*, and Bishop Zola’s letter of 24 May 1880 supplying the custody chronology of §5.4. Reprint of the 1879 Lecce booklet, which was not reached; publication of a text approved by no competent authority and condemned in its 1922 reprint, quoted here neither as true nor as revealed (§5.1, §6.2, Appendix A). The 1881 imprint is public domain; the scan is a user-contributed copy of an identified imprint whose searchable text layer is poor and was used only for navigation.

- *I. Roubaud, *La vérité sur le secret de Mélanie ex-bergère de La Salette*, 2nd edition (Louvain: Imprimerie de J. Lefever, 1882), read in the Internet Archive scan (<https://archive.org/details/LeVrittSurLeSecretDeMLanieExBergereDeLaSaletteAbbIROUBAUDLouvain1882>) and collated against its page images. Role: a partisan defence of the secret, used only for what it concedes against its own case—the 1882 press controversy, the Congregation of the Index’s refusal to condemn, the Holy Office’s taking up of the matter, and the letter of Cardinal Prospero Caterini of 14 August 1880 (§5.6, §6.8, §6.11)—and never for its arguments. Public domain; carries no *imprimatur*, only the author’s own submission formula.

Custodial and institutional sources

- Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de La Salette: <https://lasalette.cef.fr/> and <https://lasalette.cef.fr/lhistoire/> (the event, the 1851 recognition with the French transcription of article 1, and the 1855 Ginoulhiac sentence); “Le Message de La Salette” and “Les témoins: Mélanie et Maximin,” no longer on the current site and read at <https://web.archive.org/> in the captures timestamped 20121105190829 and 20130408075744 of <https://web.archive.org/web/20121105190829/http://lasalette.cef.fr/Le-Message-de-La-Salette> and <https://web.archive.org/web/20130408075744/http://lasalette.cef.fr/Les-temoins-Melanie-et-Maximin>. © the Sanctuary; quoted briefly and at the custodian’s ceiling.
- Missionnaires de Notre-Dame de La Salette (French province), “Mandement de Mgr Ph. de Bruillard du 1^{er} mai 1852” (<https://www.missionnaire-lasalette.fr/spip.php?article41>); “Lettre du P. Denaz à Mgr Ginoulhiac du 4 août 1855” (<https://www.missionnaire-lasalette.fr/spip.php?article42>); and “Le message de Notre Dame de La Salette” (<https://www.missionnaire-lasalette.fr/spip.php?article25>); international site <https://www.lasalette.info/>. © the institute; quoted briefly.
- Nominis, Église catholique en France, “Notre-Dame de La Salette” (<https://nominis.cef.fr/contenus/saint/12975/Notre-Dame-de-La-Salette.html>). Role: the Congregation for Divine Worship’s decree of 18 March 2016 and the optional memorial of 19 September in the Proper of France; institutional ceiling, the decree itself not located.
- Diocèse de Grenoble–Vienne, <https://www.diocese-grenoble-vienne.fr/>. Role: the current ordinary.

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