




RESEARCH ARTICLE

Paternalism, petitions and the politics of church construction in Alsace, c. 1850–1885

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Abstract

This article builds on recent works which challenge the dichotomy between religion and modern urban planning. The article focuses on a case-study in the Alsatian city of Mulhouse during the nineteenth century. Over a period of 30 years, Catholic parishioners and clergy repeatedly petitioned the town's Calvinist industrial and municipal elite for a church to be built in the paternalist *cités ouvrières* housing district, culminating in the eventual construction of the church of Saint-Joseph by 1883. Through a close analysis of the archival records of these petitions, the discussions they sparked and the shifting local and national political dynamics of the city, this article argues that religious groups used myriad tactics to engage in modern planning and that municipal authorities were won over by these tactics if they were politically expedient.

When Joseph Uhlmann wrote to the mayor of Mulhouse in late 1864 to convince him of the need for a new Catholic church, he adopted different tactics, all 'based on reason'. Using statistics, he estimated that there were 55,000 Catholics in and around the Alsatian city, 33,000 of whom were willing and able to go to church.¹ He then calculated the internal dimensions of the city's two existing Catholic churches and, allowing six square metres per person, concluded they accommodated a maximum of 4,600 at any time. Then, examining the planning priorities of the whole city, he argued how to allocate public funds to construct one or even two new churches in the working-class *cités ouvrières* district to the north of the city. Uhlmann, though, was not a statistician, nor an architect, nor a city planner. He was, instead, a Catholic priest attached to one of the existing churches in Mulhouse. The target of his letter, Jean Dollfus, was not just the mayor but also a leading industrialist from a long-established elite Calvinist family. Just as importantly, he was the founder and main shareholder of the paternalist *cités ouvrières* housing scheme where Uhlmann wanted the new church to be built. In closing, Uhlmann folded these myriad roles together by aligning his spiritual duties as priest with Dollfus' secular responsibilities: 'I count on

¹He overestimated: there were closer to 45,000. P. Schmitt, *Mulhouse au XIXe siècle: la montée du catholicisme* (Strasbourg, 1992), 107.

your feelings of loyalty and justice in the interest of your constituents who are largely your workers and all my poor parishioners.²

Uhlmann's letter was the latest in a series of petitions from Catholic inhabitants who, sitting outside the formal structures and social circles of the municipal government and the industrial elite in Mulhouse, argued for a church to be built in the *cités ouvrières*. This article is based on a close analysis of the archival records of these petitions to various local state and non-state authorities over a 30 year period in this city in the east of France: a first set in 1857–58, shortly after the *cités* were founded in 1853; a second set in 1863–64; and a final petition in 1877, which eventually culminated in the construction of the church of Saint-Joseph between 1879 and 1883.

Petitions, like those analysed here, encompass 'ritualised formal/informal requests to an established authority, and other audiences, written and signed by one or more persons'.³ In the long nineteenth century, as Richard Huzzey and Henry Miller have argued, petitioning was 'a key component of the shifting ecosystem of popular participation and representation',⁴ while Benoît Agnès argues that writing or signing a petition was seen as an exercise of one's rights, regardless of the outcome.⁵ Exploring petitions in the context of urban planning allows us to analyse the tactics used by those who, while explicitly excluded from formal planning processes, nonetheless sought to work within this existing structure of exclusion. As Lex Heerma Van Voss has argued, these forms of petitions rarely 'intend to question the established power structure' itself but, rather, show that the authors of petitions 'must have seen government as something which could be moved to decide in their favour'.⁶

It should not be surprising to see religious groups and authorities actively engaged with debates on shaping planning priorities in the modern city. Recent work in the field of urban planning has sought to challenge the 'essentialist tendency to view planning in epistemological opposition to religion'.⁷ This builds on a generation of scholarship which challenges the secularization thesis that places religion – particularly Catholicism – as a conservative bulwark to an inexorable modernization of Europe.⁸ Rather than being swept away by the forces of industrial modernity, the Church and its churches continued to play important roles in the modern urban environment: spiritually for

²Archives municipales de Mulhouse (AMM), M2 Ac 1, Uhlmann to Dollfus, 3 Dec. 1864.

³H.J. Miller, *A Nation of Petitioners: Petitions and Petitioning in the United Kingdom, 1780–1918* (Cambridge, 2023), 14.

⁴R. Huzzey and H.J. Miller, 'Petitions, parliament and political culture: petitioning the House of Commons, 1780–1918', *Past & Present*, 248 (2020), 123–64.

⁵B. Agnès, *L'appel au pouvoir: les pétitions aux parlements en France et au Royaume-Uni, 1814–1848* (Rennes, 2018), 33.

⁶L.H. Van Voss, 'Introduction', in L.H. Van Voss (ed.), *Petitions in Social History* (Cambridge, 2002), 2, 6.

⁷B. Manouchehrif, 'Is planning "secular"? Rethinking religion, secularism, and planning', *Planning Theory & Practice*, 19 (2018), 655.

⁸H. McLeod (ed.), *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities: 1830–1930* (London, 1995); S. Hellemans, 'From "Catholicism against modernity" to the problematic "modernity of Catholicism"', *Ethical Perspectives: Journal of the European Ethics Network*, 8 (2001), 117–27; C. Clark, 'The new Catholicism and the European culture wars', in C. Clark and W. Kaiser (eds.), *Culture Wars: Secular Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2003), 11–46; A.J. Steinhoff, *Gods of the City: Protestantism and Religious Culture in Strasbourg, 1870–1914* (Leiden, 2008); M. Conway, 'The Christian churches and politics in Europe, 1914–1939', in H. McLeod (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. IX: *World Christianities, c. 1914–c. 2000* (Cambridge, 2006), 154.

accommodating worshippers, but more broadly in a material and visual sense in terms of their continued prominence in urban landscapes for believers and non-believers alike.⁹ The significance and symbolism of some churches and cathedrals might have shifted in the nineteenth century as a result of new municipal policies of urban redevelopment and land clearance which sought to monumentalize these buildings.¹⁰ But in terms of new construction, the question of church building sits at the intersection of secular urban planning, the liturgical need for spaces for worship and wider visual aesthetics and considerations of the modern city. The active role that clergy and congregations played in both urban planning and architectural design processes of church construction is gaining significant attention as part of this movement to consider the intersection of modernity and religion.¹¹ As urban historian Richard J. Butler argues: ‘The history of European town planning stands to be enriched by including the perspectives of religious groups who maintained distinct – sometimes parallel, sometimes opposing – concepts of urban governance.’¹²

Focusing on the petitions from Catholic groups in Mulhouse contributes to this growing interest in religious urban planners in a wider sense, but it also speaks to three unique characteristics present in this case. First, Mulhouse was a ‘Protestant oasis’ in the midst of Catholic France due to its tightly endogenous, homogeneous and long-established Calvinist municipal and industrial elite, who held onto their religion as a marker of municipal identity against the Catholic French state and migrant workforce.¹³ Second, this Calvinist ‘fabricantocracy’ were internationally renowned for their industrial paternalism and philanthropy, such as the *cités ouvrières* workers’ housing scheme.¹⁴ Within this context of extensive and well-known paternalist building projects, the decision not to include a church in the original plans

⁹T. Kselman, ‘The varieties of religious experience in urban France’, in McLeod (ed.), *European Religion*, 167.

¹⁰S. Schoonbaert, ‘Une place pour la cathédrale de Bordeaux: l’isolement de Saint-André (1807–1888)’, *Histoire urbaine*, 7 (2003), 141–62. There were also new privately funded, monumental basilica in Paris and Lyon from the 1870s. K. Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat: The War of 1870–71 in French Memory* (Basingstoke, 2008), 65, 216.

¹¹William Whyte sets the clergy as one set of overlapping actors with the laity, architects and antiquarians in Victorian Britain. W. Whyte, *Unlocking the Church: The Lost Secrets of Victorian Sacred Space* (Oxford, 2017), 124–55. Joks Janssen also challenges the idea that secular urban planning erased religious engagement and agency; instead, planning was repurposed ‘by the Catholic authorities to achieve their desired Christian social order and associated community life’. J. Janssen, ‘Religiously inspired urbanism: Catholicism and the planning of the southern Dutch provincial cities Eindhoven and Roermond, c. 1900 to 1960’, *Urban History*, 43 (2016), 135–7. Richard Butler, meanwhile, has revealed how priests ‘engaged in a serious and scholarly way with architectural style’ in mid-twentieth-century Ireland. R.J. Butler, ‘Building a Catholic church in 1950s Ireland: architecture, rhetoric and landscape in Dromore, Co. Cork, 1952–6’, *Rural History*, 31 (2020), 223–49.

¹²R.J. Butler, ‘Catholic power and the Irish city: modernity, religion, and planning in Galway, 1944–1949’, *Journal of British Studies*, 59 (2020), 554.

¹³For example, their sons were educated in Protestant Switzerland. C.E. Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1999), 18.

¹⁴For Mulhouse’s elite’s philanthropy, see R. Fox, ‘Presidential address: science, industry and the social order in Mulhouse, 1798–1871’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 17 (1984), 127–68; F. Ott, *La société industrielle de Mulhouse, 1826–1876: ses membres, son action, ses réseaux* (Strasbourg, 1999). For industrial paternalism in France, see D. Reid, ‘Industrial paternalism: discourse and practice in nineteenth-century French mining and metallurgy’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 27 (1985), 579–607; A. Gueslin, ‘Le paternalisme revisité en Europe occidentale (seconde moitié du XIXe siècle, début du XXe siècle)’, *Genèses. Sciences sociales et histoire*, 7 (1992), 201–11.

for the Mulhouse *cités* was a visible and jarring omission, especially when compared to paternalist housing schemes with churches elsewhere in Britain and Europe.¹⁵ Third, the German annexation of most of Alsace and the Moselle region of Lorraine following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 changed the political power dynamics in Mulhouse which would have an impact on the sway Catholics would have in local planning.

These characteristics shaped the language and tactics used by petitioners, who sought at times to critique and at times to bridge the denominational divide, to appeal to past paternalism to encourage new construction, and to draw on wider French and German politics to leverage church planning in Mulhouse. By analysing petitions with the same goal but a range of authors, targets and tactics, this article encourages us to view urban infrastructure planning through the lens of interfaith socio-economic dynamics, to explore a more reciprocal expectation in paternalist relationships and to track the influence of geopolitical shifts on local politics and planning in nineteenth-century Europe.

The first petitions, 1857–58

After the integration of the small, independent city republic of Mülhausen into France in 1798, the booming textile industry drove a fivefold population increase to nearly 30,000 by 1850.¹⁶ This came primarily from Catholic workers migrating from surrounding Alsace or further afield, meaning the proportion of Catholics in the city increased from 10 per cent to 66 per cent, exerting significant pressure on the religious infrastructure.¹⁷ Yet, as David Tournier has shown, the majority Catholics in Mulhouse in this period remained ‘without representation, without possible cohesion, without substantial financial resources, [and] without municipal support’.¹⁸ So, despite this demographic shift, there was only the thirteenth-century

¹⁵Patrick Joyce, writing on late Victorian Britain, argues ‘large employers regarded the building of churches as part of their duty to the town and its operative population’. P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian Britain* (Brighton, 1980), 174. This was also the case at model communities like Port Sunlight in the early 1900s. D.J. Jeremy, ‘The enlightened paternalist in action: William Hesketh Lever at Port Sunlight before 1914’, *Business History*, 33 (1991), 59.

¹⁶A not unsubstantial proportion of workers still lived outside the city proper. In 1830, around half the workers in Mulhouse’s factories lived beyond Mulhouse, with many walking up to six miles a day between home and factory. Fox, ‘Presidential address’, 147. Mulhouse’s textile industry and accompanying rapid in-migration is well studied. See C. Fohlen, *L’industrie textile au temps du Second Empire* (Paris, 1956); M. Hau, *L’industrialisation de l’Alsace (1803–1939)* (Strasbourg, 1987); N. Schreck, ‘Dollfus-Mieg et Cie: histoire d’une grande industrie cotonnière des origines à la Première Guerre Mondiale’, in P. Fluck (ed.), *DMC: patrimoine mondial?* (Colmar, 2006), 13–35.

¹⁷D. Tournier, ‘Le protestantisme mulhousien et ses œuvres au XIXe siècle: éthique et pragmatisme (1798–1870)’, in Céline Borello (ed.), *Les œuvres protestantes en Europe* (Rennes, 2013), 240.

¹⁸Some bourgeois Catholics born beyond Mulhouse managed to break into the social milieu of the Calvinist municipal elite, but they were exceptions. D. Tournier, ‘Salut par les œuvres et cohabitation confessionnelle. De l’initiative charitable individuelle à l’organisation ségréguée du contrôle des âmes (Mulhouse, 1798–1870)’, *Histoire, Économie & Société*, 35 (2016), 66–7. The socio-economic disparity between the majority population of Catholic workers and minority elite of Protestant (predominantly Calvinist) industrialists was seen more broadly in the Haut-Rhin department at mid-century too: 87% of the total population of the Haut-Rhin in 1851 was Catholic, but only 17% of industrialists were Catholic.

Franciscan church of Sainte-Marie designated for Catholic worship at mid-century.¹⁹ It was not until 1855–60 that, after petitioning and fundraising from parishioners, the city council built a second Catholic church, Saint-Étienne, to the south-west of the medieval centre.²⁰ Concurrently, the municipality supported the reconstruction of an old Protestant church (also named Saint-Étienne), in an uncharacteristically grandiose style in the town centre between 1858 and 1866. This ostentatious marker of wealth was a sign of an elite reasserting their stamp on the confessional landscape of their city: though both projects were allocated the same amount of public funds, private donations to support the reconstruction of this Protestant church were four times as high as those for the new Catholic church.²¹

Aside from displaying the imbalance in grandeur and priorities between Catholic and Protestant building, both Saint-Étienne building projects demonstrated the city council's continued focus on the centre of Mulhouse rather than the densely populated and swiftly growing north of the city, where most of the textile factories were concentrated and Catholic workers lived. It was to the north of Mulhouse that Jean Dollfus founded the *cités ouvrières* housing scheme from 1853. The first *cit  * comprised 186 single-family houses with gardens, built close to Dollfus' factories between 1853 and 1854 either as 'back-to-back' terraces or in what would become the distinctive '*carr   Mulhousien*' blocks of four houses. A second *cit  * was started soon after to the west, with almost 800 houses across both *cit  s ouvri  res* by 1867 and over 1,200 by the 1890s.²² Funding came in part from small government subsidies from a 10 million Fr. source set up in January 1852 by the Prince-President Louis-Napol  on Bonaparte for workers' housing, but the majority of funding came from local industrialist shareholders of the Soci  t   mulhousienne des *cit  s ouvri  res* (SOMCO) – of which Dollfus was the dominant shareholder – with limited 4 per cent dividends. This was not a 'company town' tied exclusively to Dollfus' factory; rather, the *cit  s* had a wider relationship to central government and to the local industrial elite. The scheme was also innovative in that workers could pay towards becoming homeowners, attempting to instil bourgeois ideals of pride in property ownership.²³

The *cit  s* were an expansion of Mulhouse, with an Alsatian vernacular architecture and street names honouring leading industrial families (e.g. Rue Dollfus, Rue K  chlin). Yet, they also formed a new, self-contained community at the border of the older city limits. Within the *cit  s* were new facilities aimed at improving the moral

Instead, 72% of these industrialists were Calvinist with a further 9% being Lutheran and 2% Jewish. N. Stoskopf, *Les patrons du Second Empire: Alsace* (Paris, 1994), 20–1.

¹⁹Sainte-Marie only returned to Catholic worship in 1812 after centuries of use by the town's Protestants. D. Tournier, 'La construction des deux Saint-Etienne. Un catalyseur des crispations interconfessionnelles    Mulhouse (1830–1866)', *Revue d'Alsace*, 136 (2010), 72.

²⁰*Ibid.*; AMM, M2 Aa 1, petition to the mayor of Mulhouse, 21 Dec 1846.

²¹Donations totalled 106,000 Fr. for the new Catholic church and 400,000 Fr. for the reconstructed Protestant church. Tournier, 'Salut par les   uvres', 68–9.

²²For the long-term architectural development of the *cit  s ouvri  res*, see F. Kostourou, 'Agents of change in the domestic built environment', *Urban Planning*, 7 (2022), 5–20.

²³Mulhouse's *cit  s ouvri  res* are well studied. See N. Bullock and J. Read, *The Movement for Housing Reform in Germany and France, 1840–1914* (Cambridge, 1985), 318–28; S. Jonas, *Mulhouse et ses cit  s ouvri  res* (Strasbourg, 2003); W. Clement, 'The "unrealizable chimera": workers' housing in nineteenth-century Mulhouse', *French History*, 32 (2018), 66–85; F. Kostourou, 'Mass factory housing: design and social reform', *Design Issues*, 35 (2019), 79–92.

and physical condition of the inhabitants: public baths and washhouses, a subsidized restaurant and bakery, a library, a reading room and a school with evening classes for workers.²⁴ No drinking establishments were planned in the *cités*, reflecting moralizing fears of worker alcoholism.²⁵ As SOMCO's planning priorities and amenities clearly focused on morality, the omission of a church was striking. It was within this framing of a church as a missing amenity within a closed paternalist district that the first petitions for a church in the *cités* were written between 1857 and 1858.

The first petition was signed by over 600 men and women and was directed in 1857 to the state administrator of the Haut-Rhin department in which Mulhouse was situated, Prefect Jules Léonard Cambacérés.²⁶ The petitioners criticized paternalist planners omitting a church in favour of less-desired facilities: 'What use is a reading room without religious direction?' They implored the prefect to 'make arrangements for a church to be built in the district' by siphoning off '[a] quarter or even a sixth' of the government subsidy which the state had 'so nobly contributed to the establishment of this district' and which 'would suffice for the construction of a fairly spacious church'. The Second Empire state, closely aligned with the Catholic church in the 1850s, should therefore fund a new church if Mulhousian Calvinists refused to build one.²⁷

The petitioners finished by complementing the prefect directly. On the face of it, this seems ironic, as Cambacérés was a ruthless Bonapartist administrator, widely derided for spending little time in Alsace.²⁸ However, he had been appointed early in the Second Empire to replace an unpopular Protestant prefect.²⁹ On taking his post in December 1853, Cambacérés criticized earlier governments and bureaucrats for not understanding that 'Protestantism leads to the separation of Alsace from [...France]' and explicitly identifying the 'trace' of former independence in the ruling elite of Mulhouse.³⁰ This suspicion that state bureaucrats held towards the Calvinist elite in Mulhouse had become even more pronounced by 1857 when, due to its increased size and industrial importance, Mulhouse was made a sub-prefecture of the Haut-Rhin. A devout Catholic, Alfred de Jancigny, was appointed sub-prefect in November 1857.³¹ When de Jancigny wrote his first report to Cambacérés in April 1858, he commented: 'French sentiment does not exist in Mulhouse. This town is a vast factory, the owners of which belong, in their hearts, their minds and their language, to

²⁴Ott, *La société industrielle*, 480–4.

²⁵The *cités'* architect argued that reformed housing helped workers decide between 'the life of the cabaret or the life of the family'. É. Muller, *Habitations ouvrières et agricoles* (Paris, 1856), 7.

²⁶There were between 620 and 630 signatures. This included clusters of families: 9 Falks and 7 Biquets signed, for example. An 'H. Dollfus' could be a member of the fabricantocracy, or it may be a false name given by a worker. Archives départementales du Haut-Rhin (ADHR), 9 M 24, petition to Cambacérés, s.d. (1857).

²⁷The relationship between Napoleon III's Second Empire and Catholicism was complex, but during the 1850s it can be defined as an 'authoritarian alliance'. R. Price, *The Church and State in France, 1789–1870* (Cham, 2017), 129–60.

²⁸P. Leuilliot, 'CAMBACERES Jules Léonard', in J.-P. Kintz (ed.), *Nouveau dictionnaire de biographie alsacienne*, no. 6 (Strasbourg, 1985), 448. Cambacérés' trips to Paris were so frequent that the local police informed the prefect of widespread rumours that he hated Colmar and wanted a posting elsewhere. ADHR, 2 M 14, police to Cambacérés, 17 May 1856.

²⁹B. le Clère and V. Wright, *Les préfets du Second Empire* (Paris, 1973), 25, 91–2.

³⁰Quoted in C. Muller, *L'Alsace du Second Empire 1852–1870* (Pontarlier, 2015), 20.

³¹ADHR, 2 M 16, minister of the interior to Cambacérés, Nov. 1857. After retiring from public service as prefect of Ain in 1870, de Jancigny became heavily involved with Catholic charity in his home of Evreux, where he was president of the Catholic committee. *Journal d'Evreux et du département de l'Eure*, 9 Feb. 1898, 2.

a foreign and Protestant race.' De Jancigny also claimed there was a 'system of exclusion against Catholics' by the Calvinist industrial and municipal elite.³²

The petitioners therefore would have expected a sympathetic ear to the failings of Mulhouse's Protestants. However, they were unsuccessful in securing state support. It may be that the petition was never given full attention by the oft-absent Cambacérés, who was preoccupied with a series of political crises in 1857–58 culminating in his being dismissed in June 1858.³³ It is also likely that the January 1852 fund for housing projects was exhausted: SOMCO had spent the 300,000 Fr. it received in autumn 1853 and spring 1854, but was rebuffed when applying again in 1856, being told 'the government, in according 300,000 Fr...has arrived at the extreme limits of the offerings which it is able to make'.³⁴

With a lack of state support, a subsequent petition of October 1858 struck a different tone. It was addressed to Jean Dollfus by a teacher at the workers' school, Louis Gaeng, who lived on the Rue Napoléon in the first *cité*.³⁵ This was before Dollfus' tenure as mayor: Gaeng's petition was therefore focused on praise for the industrialist's past paternalism, writing 'You have given [the workers of Mulhouse...] public baths and wash-houses, established a beautiful promenade and finally built healthy and pleasant housing. The *cités ouvrières* will eternally repeat the names of their creators.'³⁶

The one thing that these workers lacked, for Gaeng, was a church 'where we would be able to pray...for your temporal and spiritual happiness and that of all of your respectable family...[and for] the prosperity of Mulhouse'. While he used '*église*' through his letter, Gaeng used '*temple*' when discussing how a new church would make inhabitants of the *cités* 'better Christians and better citizens'. '*Temple*', in French, typically refers to Calvinist buildings rather than Catholic ones, so its usage here suggests that the Catholic Gaeng was attempting to tie this proposed building to the Calvinist Mulhouse of Dollfus and his peers.³⁷ Gaeng also highlighted that the construction of a Catholic church by Protestant industrialists had recent local precedent: just 20 miles away in Wesserling, the Gros-Roman family funded the construction of a church for their workers between 1854 and 1856. The church, Saint-Philippe-Saint-Jacques, was named after the Protestant family firm's two directors.³⁸

Gaeng sent another petition to the recently installed sub-prefect de Jancigny on 10 November. He wrote 'we have made a petition to Monsieur Jean Dollfus, President

³²ADHR, 1 M 66, de Jancigny to Cambacérés, 4 Apr. 1858.

³³Namely, the defeat of the state candidate in legislative elections of 1857, then allegations of election fraud. Le Clère and Wright, *Les préfets*, 21, 30.

³⁴ADHR, 9 M 24, Billaut to Cambacérés, 2 Oct. 1856. Rejections elsewhere in France corroborate the idea that the fund had been exhausted by 1856–57. Archives municipales de Lyon (AML), 744 WP 075, Vaïsse to Rambaud, 22 Jun. 1857.

³⁵AMM, B 239, 'SOMCO: grande livre, 1862–66'. This petition was also signed by his two sons. One was later the organist of Bayonne cathedral, suggesting the strength of devotion in the Gaeng household. Archives Départementales des Pyrénées-Atlantiques (ADPA), 5 MI 102/37, register of marriages, 1866–75.

³⁶ADHR, 1 Z 504, Gaeng to Dollfus, 26 Oct. 1858.

³⁷The difference between '*église*' and '*temple*' is still debated today in Alsace-Moselle. See C. Lehmann, 'En débat: les protestants ont-ils des églises ou des temples?', *Le Nouveau Messager* (2019–21), www.lenouveaumessager.fr/articles/le-nouveau-messager-49-a-60/en-debat-les-protestants-ont-ils-des-eglises-ou-des-temple-lnm-50, accessed 20 Jul. 2023.

³⁸M.-P. Scheurer, 'IA68003096: église paroissiale Saint-Philippe-Saint-Jacques' (21 Sep. 2020), www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/merimee/IA68003096, accessed 16 Mar. 2023.

of [SOMCO]... a petition of which we make it our duty to make a double journey to you' which indicates either that Dollfus had not replied or that Gaeng was appealing to superior government forces. This was not a repeat of his first petition as it was now signed 'For the workers. The commission' and then Gaeng's name alongside those of three workers from the *cités ouvrières* who, like Gaeng, had also signed the 1857 petition to Cambacères. In addressing a letter to this devout Catholic administrator, the commission dropped any mention of 'temple', making its inclusion in the letter to Dollfus more convincingly a conscious choice. Work had just begun on both Saint-Étiennes in the city centre, and the impending demolition and reconstruction of the Protestant Saint-Étienne meant, the commission outrageously argued early in their letter, it would be simple just to rebuild the building as a Catholic church in the *cités*.³⁹ The petitioners also asked the sub-prefect to remind Emperor Napoleon III of the 'spontaneity and... friendship the workers of Mulhouse had named, on 10 December 1848, Mr Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, President of the Republic' and promised 'fervent prayers' for the Imperial family.⁴⁰

These early petitions reveal a great deal about the active participatory role in paternalist and political discourse that the Catholic inhabitants of the *cités ouvrières* thought they could play, whether this involved appealing to past paternalism of local Calvinists or trying to invite new support from the Catholic-sympathetic state. These petitions all emphasized the *cités* as separate and apart from central Mulhouse in terms of planning priorities; later petitioners took a different approach by treating the *cités* as part of a wider Mulhouse, the needs of its inhabitants as a wider concern for the city's authorities and inhabitants, and forming arguments based less on appeals to paternalism and more on a self-determined approach to the requirements of modern urban planning.

The second petitions, 1863–64

In the following years, more and more Catholic workers arrived in Mulhouse and construction both on the Saint-Étienne churches and the *cités ouvrières* progressed.⁴¹ The question of a dedicated church was raised again in March 1863 when the mayor of Mulhouse, Joseph Kœchlin-Schlumberger, received a fierce letter from the bishop of Strasbourg, André Raess.⁴² Some aspects of Raess' argument echo the first set of petitions. For example, he reminded the mayor of Napoleon III's professed devotion, quoting the emperor's desire that 'all French people are instructed in the truths of

³⁹ADHR, 1 Z 504, Gaeng to de Jancigny, 10 Nov. 1858.

⁴⁰This omitted the fact that Mulhouse witnessed protests during Louis-Napoléon's visits in August 1849 and August 1850 and that Mulhouse was one of only five French communes to vote 'non' in the plebiscite to ratify his December 1851 coup. F. Igersheim, 'Les fêtes politiques de la Deuxième République en Alsace (1848–1852)', *Revue d'Alsace*, 141 (2015), 225–57; ADHR, 3 M 14, summary of votes on the plebiscite in the Altkirch administrative region, Dec. 1851.

⁴¹Mulhouse continued to serve as what Paul Leuilliot termed 'America' for those searching for work in surrounding Alsace. P. Leuilliot, 'L'essor économique du XIXe siècle et les transformations de la cité (1815–1870)', in G. Livet and R. Oberlé (eds.), *Histoire de Mulhouse* (Strasbourg, 1977), 173. In the period 1850–1910, while the department of the Haut-Rhin witnessed a population growth of 19%, Mulhouse's population increased by 90%. Patrick Madenspacher, 'Mulhouse (arrondissement)', in R. Oberlé and L. Sittler (eds.), *Le Haut-Rhin: dictionnaire des communes. Histoire et géographie économie et société* (3 vols., Mulhouse, 1981), 938.

⁴²AMM, M2 Ac 1, Raess to Kœchlin-Schlumberger, 24 Mar. 1863.

religion'. He also compared the insufficient provision of Catholic churches in Mulhouse to another Alsatian town, as Gaeng had. Here, Raess argued that Strasbourg, having a similar Catholic population to Mulhouse, had no fewer than 10 parish churches.

However, in drawing this parallel, the bishop was making less a case for similar paternal intervention and, rather, had been accusing the Mulhouse city council of skewed priorities regarding their municipal budget. The Strasbourg council, in building three new churches in recent years and currently working on two more, did 'not neglect the needs of the Catholic population' as in Mulhouse. This was, therefore, a religious authority writing to a municipal authority, but couching this part of his argument very much in terms of municipal planning priorities and budgeting rather than spiritual benefits. Unlike the early petitions, which had viewed the question of a church as a question for paternal provision in the *cités*, the bishop also made a clear case for the wider political and planning implications for the whole of Mulhouse. The current provision meant that, for inhabitants of the *cités ouvrières* and suburbs beyond, a walk to one of the two existing churches was between two and three kilometres: a round journey of five or six kilometres with no promise of being able to enter the overfull churches on arrival. This was 'too painful a distance for the factory worker who, tired, exhausted by the painful week's work, asks to rest on Sunday'. They might not attend church, which would be catastrophic given the potential threat of 'socialist and revolutionary' ideas spreading in Mulhouse's workforce. Heading off any potential defence the mayor might make about the limits of Mulhouse's budget, Raess argued that the establishment of the *cités ouvrières* had shown that the Mulhousian council did not back down from meeting the most pressing of needs. Here, Raess was forgetting, omitting, or ignorant of the fact that the *cités* were a private paternalist initiative and not subject to the municipal budget, despite having some clear linkage to the city council (the mayor reading this letter, Kœchlin-Schlumberger, was one of SOMCO's shareholders for example).

Kœchlin-Schlumberger wrote an apologetic reply in May, saying the priest attached to Saint-Étienne, Joseph Uhlmann, had already raised the matter with him, but he defended himself based on the limits of the municipal budget and the recent expenditure on Saint-Étienne.⁴³ The pressure from the clergymen Uhlmann and Raess had clearly rattled the mayor though. At the city council meeting of 11 June 1863, Kœchlin-Schlumberger told the councillors that 'although the new Catholic church [i.e. Saint-Étienne] is very large it does not suffice to satisfy the needs of the population'. While he acknowledged that it would be 'impossible' to fund the construction of another new church, he instead proposed investigating a renovation of the old church of Sainte-Marie instead.⁴⁴ He had an estimate from the city surveyor that the work would cost no more than 16,000 Fr. and the assembled councillors approved further investigation.

The pressure on Kœchlin-Schlumberger by this June council meeting was not just from the bishop's March letter. On the same day he replied to Raess, he received a separate petition which, while directly echoing some of Raess' arguments and therefore suggesting some co-ordination, was a very separate proposal. This petition came from a group of six Catholics of a range of professions, including builders, a merchant and a brewer, announcing the formation of an association (*société*) on

⁴³ AMM, M2 Ac 1, Kœchlin-Schlumberger to Raess, 20 May 1863.

⁴⁴ ADHR, 2 O 1326, extract of Mulhouse city council meeting, 11 Jun. 1863.

behalf of the workers to build a church between the *cités ouvrières* and the Rue Franklin to the south. When this group wrote to both the sub-prefect de Jancigny and to the mayor Kœchlin-Schlumberger, they were directly asking for municipal support and donation of land to build upon, rather than a speculative appeal to paternal beneficence.⁴⁵ However, this association's petition had no more success in making the case for a third church than the bishop's had. Kœchlin-Schlumberger rejected this new petition on the grounds of 'the considerable expenses [already] made by the town to satisfy the needs of the Catholic religion'.⁴⁶ This refusal did not deter the group, who replied and emphasized a similar argument to Raess in terms of the wider impact of there being no church in the industrial north of the city compared to the centre and south-west, saying it often took up to half an hour to get to the existing churches, with no guarantee of entrance.⁴⁷ Like Raess, they then applauded the construction of a *salle d'asile* (nursery) and school in the *cités* as a sign that 'you understand the needs of the vastness of our city' and asked they apply this 'so laudable system' to the Catholic populace's needs, despite the fact that the *cités* were mostly privately funded.

Kœchlin-Schlumberger died just weeks after this reply in October 1863. In his place, the industrialist and head of SOMCO Jean Dollfus was elected mayor of Mulhouse, muddying the division between a private paternalist housing scheme and public urban works priorities even further in the minds of future petitioners. It was just two months later that, in December 1864, the priest Joseph Uhlmann wrote his own arguments 'based on reason' for a new church, explored at the start of this article. Uhlmann opened his letter to Dollfus by referencing 'the last conversation I had with you regarding the need for a new Catholic church', suggesting this letter came within a longer dialogue between paternalist and priest, as Uhlmann had already been pressuring Dollfus' predecessor. Uhlmann reminded Dollfus that the mayor had 'admitted to [him] that the churches for worship and moral instruction of our population are insufficient' and that Dollfus had 'kindly told [him] that [he] would not refuse [his] assistance to the work' but that it would have to wait at least eight years. Uhlmann disagreed and therefore formed his arguments 'based on reason' not just to convince Dollfus but also the municipal council who managed the public budget.

Uhlmann's use of population estimates, architectural dimensions and spatio-temporal calculations for how long it took to walk from the *cités* to the overcrowded existing churches was another demonstration, like the petitions a year earlier, of urban planning language suffusing the appeal for a new church. But he then moved onto direct, repeated flattery of Dollfus' personal prestige and paternalism in a similar way to earlier petitioners. If Jean Dollfus, a 'man of progress', supported a new church, his name would 'live in the centuries that follow us, in the hearts of thousands of grateful men'. Uhlmann continued:

This would be a glorious revolution in the development of Mulhouse; it would be a new free-trade in terms of progress in the field of fine arts; it would be one more beam added to the lustre of your name... The hive will be more dear to the bee who will attach itself more strongly to the prosperity of his home in his work and in his wise administration.

⁴⁵ADHR, 1 Z 504, petitioners to de Jancigny, 20 May 1863; ADHR, 1 Z 504, petitioners to Kœchlin-Schlumberger, 20 May 1863.

⁴⁶AMM, M2 Ac 1, Kœchlin-Schlumberger to petitioners, 2 Sep. 1863.

⁴⁷AMM, M2 Ac 1, petitioners to Kœchlin-Schlumberger, 23 Sep. 1863.

This multi-pronged charm offensive was personal, civic and religious: personal in that it spoke to Dollfus' paternalism but also his role in the 1860 Cobden–Chevalier free trade treaty between Britain and France; civic, in that it focused on the glory of Mulhouse as an industrial power and the ways the church could help that; religious in the focus on the moralizing and transformative impact of Christian worship on the worker bees who might otherwise lack attachment or loyalty.⁴⁸ This was therefore much more than the first set of petitions' appeals to past paternalism alone and, instead, was framed as making a case for urban planning priorities in Mulhouse which would elevate the city's reputation and industrial prosperity.

Clearly, the unrecorded conversations we cannot access between Uhlmann and Dollfus provide the background to this letter. What is more, just as Koechlin-Schlumberger had died in the middle of negotiations with one set of petitioners, Joseph Uhlmann died suddenly in early 1865. An obituary writer praised Uhlmann for knowing how 'to gain and maintain the trust of the municipal authorities, all Protestants, ... by the righteousness of his intentions, by the frankness of his words, and also by the tact, that discretion which made him seize the favourable moment and to only advance them then'.⁴⁹ While the priest's death stymied any sustained momentum for a church in the *cités*, Dollfus did not let the issue lie. He commissioned the city surveyor Jean-Baptiste Schacre to develop a preliminary draft project for a church in the *cité*.⁵⁰ Schacre presented this in July 1867, with a simple design akin to his work at the Catholic Saint-Étienne.⁵¹ This church was to be on land which Schacre noted on an October 1868 plan 'the city of Mulhouse proposes to acquire' from Jean Dollfus in the heart of the western *cité*.⁵² Meanwhile, Dollfus harried the slow work on restoring Sainte-Marie which by the summer of 1869 had cost 20,818.05 Fr.⁵³ In November of the same year, Jean Dollfus legally donated the plot of land in the *cités* to the city of Mulhouse to advance the building of the third Catholic church by the city council.⁵⁴ But by the point of his donation in late 1869, the political gravity of Mulhouse and Dollfus' own popularity had suffered the first of three seismic shifts that signalled a crisis of paternalism and a subsequent shift in the dynamism behind the church project.

The crisis of paternalism and the final petition, 1869–77

The three years 1869, 1870 and 1871 each witnessed successive blows to Dollfus and the industrial elite's grip on power in Mulhousian politics. First, despite being the state's official candidate, Dollfus lost an election to be a deputy to the national *corps législatif* in early 1869. This was in part due to many of his peers supporting a

⁴⁸Cobden described Dollfus as '[t]he leading promoter' of the free trade movement. 'Richard Cobden to William Gladstone, 30 March 1860', in A. Howe and S. Morgan (eds.), *The letters of Richard Cobden*, vol. IV: 1860–1865 (Oxford, 2015), 37–8.

⁴⁹Delarue, *Notice nécrologique sur M. l'abbé Uhlmann* (Mulhouse, 1865), 7.

⁵⁰Schacre had designed both Saint-Étienne projects in the late 1850s.

⁵¹AMM, 597a 5, J.-B. Schacre, 'Construction d'une église catholique, avant-projet', 12 Jul. 1867.

⁵²AMM, 597a 5, J.-B. Schacre, 'Plan', 20 Oct. 1868.

⁵³ADHR, 2 O 1326, Dollfus to sub-prefect of Mulhouse, 16 Aug. 1869. The renovation would not be finished until 1875. E. Meininger, *Essai de description, de statistique et d'histoire de Mulhouse* (Mulhouse, 1885), 29.

⁵⁴AMM, PIE 2, notary to mayor of Mulhouse, 2 Dec. 1869.

protectionist in opposition to his own free trade stance.⁵⁵ But Dollfus was also attacked by those whose *boulangeries* and restaurants had been challenged by the subsidized equivalents in the *cités ouvrières*. One pamphleteer, referring to Dollfus as ‘Mai...tre’ (moving from the anticipated ‘maire’ (mayor) to the sinister ‘maître’ (master)) also named him ‘*le Dictateur-fleur*’, claiming his ‘beautiful words’ expressing love for the workers masked his true intention: ‘to arrive simply and noiselessly at a second feudalism’. ‘To those inhabitants of the *cités ouvrières* he promised a Catholic church’ the author wrote, mocking this as a hollow promise by continuing that it was ‘public notoriety’ that Dollfus also planned to encircle the entire quarter in a wall and place inside a ‘vast brothel (for love...of the workers)’.⁵⁶ Dollfus was soundly defeated, being out-voted two-to-one in the working-class north of Mulhouse.⁵⁷

The second change came with unprecedented worker strikes in July 1870. Workers organized and submitted demands for improved conditions to their employers, with Jean Dollfus receiving one such list on 9 July from 2,000 workers.⁵⁸ The outbreak of war between France and Prussia on 19 July and general disruption led these demands to develop into waves of successive strikes across multiple factories in the days that followed, with one employer’s concessions at his factory only leading to neighbouring workers striking to achieve the same victories. In the words of historian Paul Leuilliot, industrial paternalism had been successful in staving off earlier class conflict but ‘the strike of 1870 marked the late awakening of worker consciousness’ in Mulhouse.⁵⁹

The third change to the political landscape of Mulhouse came after the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine into the German Empire as the new territory of the Reichsland after the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Many of the Mulhouse industrial elite took the ‘*option*’ to retain their French citizenship on the basis that they would relocate to France.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Chancellor Bismarck embarked on his *Kulturkampf* in the following years: a series of increasingly hostile anti-Catholic policies, including restricting education, censoring the Catholic press, expelling Jesuits and, in the new Reichsland territory, shutting down clerical attempts in Strasbourg to organize resistance.⁶¹ Catholics in Alsace – three-quarters of the population – felt this was a ‘religious-national attack’ and responses varied from mass Marian apparitions and pilgrimages in 1872 through to greater political mobilization.⁶² When the Reichsland

⁵⁵A. Brandt and P. Leuilliot, ‘Les élections à Mulhouse en 1869’, *Revue d’Alsace*, 100 (1960), 108–9. Dollfus’ unpopularity due to his free trade position was long-simmering. D. Todd, *Free Trade and its Enemies in France, 1814–1851* (Cambridge, 2015), 222–3.

⁵⁶AMM, 66 TT B 4, ‘Cher concitoyen!’, 1869.

⁵⁷Brandt and Leuilliot, ‘Les élections à Mulhouse’, 112–18.

⁵⁸ADHR, 1 Z 513, workers to Dollfus, 9 Jul. 1870.

⁵⁹Leuilliot, ‘L’essor économique’, 173.

⁶⁰B. Vaillot, ‘L’exil des Alsaciens-Lorrains. Option et famille dans les années 1870’, *Revue d’histoire du XIXe siècle*, 61 (2020), 103–22.

⁶¹Otto Pflanze describes the *Kulturkampf* as not just a ‘conflict between church and state’ but also encompassing clashes between ‘Catholic doctrine and German idealism, faith and materialism, conservatism and liberalism, traditionalism and modernism, universalism and nationalism, particularism and consolidation’. O. Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany*, vol. II: *The Period of Consolidation, 1871–1880* (Princeton, 1990), 179. For the experience in Alsace-Lorraine, see D.P. Silverman, ‘Political Catholicism and social democracy in Alsace-Lorraine, 1871–1914’, *Catholic Historical Review*, 52 (1966), 41–2.

⁶²D. Klein, ‘The Virgin with the sword: Marian apparitions, religion and national identity in Alsace in the 1870s’, *French History*, 21 (2007), 411–30; D. Klein, ‘German-annexed Alsace and Imperial Germany: a

was finally permitted to elect representatives to the Reichstag in 1874, 11 of the 15 elected deputies were from the pro-Catholic ‘clerical’ group, including two bishops and five priests.

Stripped of a sympathetic central Catholic state, as had been the case under Napoleon III, and increasingly hostile to a Calvinist elite they viewed as complicit in the annexation, Catholics in Mulhouse became increasingly politicized and gravitated around one of these clerical deputies who was elected in 1874, Landelin Winterer.⁶³ In the chaos following the annexation, Winterer had been named *curé* of Saint-Étienne in Mulhouse on 14 August 1871, without the authorization of the new German authorities, who were then unsuccessful in blocking his canonical installation on 27 August.⁶⁴ It was around Winterer that a ‘veritable Catholic elite’ rose in Mulhouse and he would later be described by the *Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1881 as one of the ‘firebrands of the Catholic party’.⁶⁵

These three shifts – the criticism of Dollfus’ promises of paternalism during his electoral humiliation, the disruption of strikes and war to the hegemony of the industrial elite and the political rise of the *curé* Winterer in Mulhouse under the *Kulturkampf* – all help explain the final success in securing a church for the *cités ouvrières*. It was in the aftermath of his 1869 election defeat that Dollfus donated the land within the district for a church. While this was disrupted by the strikes and the war, Winterer tried to keep the momentum up: a day after his formal installation in August 1871, he petitioned the mayor and municipal council for renewed progress on this offer of donated land, but his requests were unsuccessful and became even more difficult as the *Kulturkampf* began in force from 1872.⁶⁶

Dollfus, who resigned as municipal councillor and stepped away from local politics in 1874, stood for election to the Reichstag in January 1877 as a ‘*protestataire*’ deputy, part of the group of political group in Alsace-Lorraine which opposed the German annexation.⁶⁷ He won an endorsement from Mulhouse’s Catholics by pledging not to vote against Catholic deputies in the Reichstag on questions of religion or salaries: consequently, he won 7,000 votes in the urban area of Mulhouse where municipal elections had only collectively garnered 1,500 a few months earlier, due to Winterer’s co-ordinated abstention campaign until Catholics were better represented in local politics.⁶⁸ Support for Dollfus was also driven by anti-German sentiment. While these Catholic workers wanted greater representation in Mulhouse, they uniformly resented German infractions from the new state. In early 1874, workers from Dollfus’ company, Dollfus-Mieg et Cie, had written an article for *L’Industriel Alsacien*, declaring ‘We are French and we wish to remain French; and if

process of colonisation?’, in R. Healy and E. Dal Lago (eds.), *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe’s Modern Past* (London, 2014), 96.

⁶³When standing for election, Winterer argued priests ‘must appear in political assemblies because political assemblies make church laws’. Silverman, ‘Political Catholicism’, 45–6.

⁶⁴C. Muller, ‘Plutôt noir que rouge: l’abbé Henri Cetty, vicaire à Saint-Etienne Mulhouse (1878–1886)’, *Annuaire Historique de Mulhouse*, 9 (1998), 81.

⁶⁵Tournier, ‘Salut par les œuvres’, 74; Silverman, ‘Political Catholicism’, 48.

⁶⁶Muller, ‘Plutôt noir’, 82.

⁶⁷Dollfus had also remained active in French politics, trying to set up an Alsatian colony in Alsace in 1873 with architecture inspired by his *cités*. A. Ofrath, ‘Alsace in Algeria and the notion of “failure” in settler political culture, c. 1870–1960’, *Historical Journal*, 66 (2023), 1087–8.

⁶⁸Muller, ‘Plutôt noir’, 83; R. Wagner, *La vie politique à Mulhouse de 1870 à nos jours* (Mulhouse, 1976), 41.

that is not possible, we at least do not wish to be Germans or vote for Germans.⁶⁹ Dollfus won in the 1877 election, and his strongest performance was in the *cités ouvrières*: of 923 eligible voters on Rue de Strasbourg (formerly Rue Napoléon), over 60 per cent voted with all but three of these 555 votes cast going to Dollfus.⁷⁰

Winterer had been key in rallying this support for Dollfus. Just as he had seemed willing to work with Uhlmann in the 1860s, Dollfus also saw in Winterer an ally. The two men not only firmly opposed the annexation but also shared a fear of the rising threat of socialism. They envisaged different solutions to the threat: despite the strikes of 1870, Dollfus still saw paternalism as key to social peace, while Winterer believed renewed religious fervour was the only path.⁷¹ A combined solution of a church in Dollfus' paternalist quarter united both ideals. In November 1877, 20 years after the first petition, a final petition arrived at the city council. It was larger than any previous petition, counting 2,012 signatures across 19 separate documents, each with the same list of demands written in French and German.⁷² The opening paragraph explicitly discussed the new city council budget and argued for the need for church construction to be a central aspect of this: a clear and direct engagement with urban planning rather than paternalism. Later, one paragraph of the petition directly mentioned Jean Dollfus and his renewed promise to donate land in the *cités* for a church.

A Catholic planning victory or a reminder of old hierarchies?

The council approved the petition and allocated 50,000 Fr. in October 1878 to study the practicalities of building the church.⁷³ On the surface, this seems a victory for Catholic urban planning pressure which earlier petitioners had been looking for. However, when it came to deciding on architectural form and size of the church, the elite saw a chance to re-establish the hierarchies of Mulhouse's older industrial paternalism. Dollfus was adamant that the new church should necessitate no demolition of any existing houses of his *cités* and, given his originally donated plot had now been partially built on, he donated another small tract of land in 1879 in the west of the larger of the two *cités* for the construction – much further from the Rue Franklin border area between the first *cité* and the old city that the 1863 petitioners had argued would best suit a new church (see [Figure 1](#)).⁷⁴ The time it took to walk from the Rue Franklin to this church would be roughly the same as to Saint-Étienne and longer than to Sainte-Marie: this was firmly to be a church for the inhabitants of the *cités* ,

⁶⁹Silverman, 'Political Catholicism', pp. 54–5. Throughout the 10 years that Dollfus served as deputy in the Reichstag, he convincingly defeated all non-Mulhousian official candidates that the German state put up against him, even when they represented the democratic-socialist party. This long-standing anti-German sentiment has been used to explain the delay of socialism in Alsatian politics under the Reichsland until the 1890s. A. Carrol, 'Socialism and national identity in Alsace from Reichsland to République: 1890–1921', *European History Quarterly*, 40 (2010), 59–60.

⁷⁰AMM, 66 TT 64, electoral report, 10 Jan. 1877.

⁷¹Dollfus argued for paternalism which improved the moral and physical condition of workers in a Reichstag speech in November 1878. 'A speech in the Reichstag', *The Daily Graphic* (New York), 13 Nov. 1878. The same year, Winterer published a tract that argued 'Socialism can do nothing against the work of God'. L. Winterer, *Le socialisme contemporain* (Paris, 1878), 187–95.

⁷²AMM, M2 Ac 1, petitions for a church in the *cités ouvrières* , 22 Nov. 1877.

⁷³AMM, A 532, J. Klink, *Le centenaire de l'Église Saint-Joseph de Mulhouse 1883–1983* (Mulhouse, 1983), 7.

⁷⁴AMM, PIE 2, notary confirming Dollfus' donation, 20 Apr. 1879.

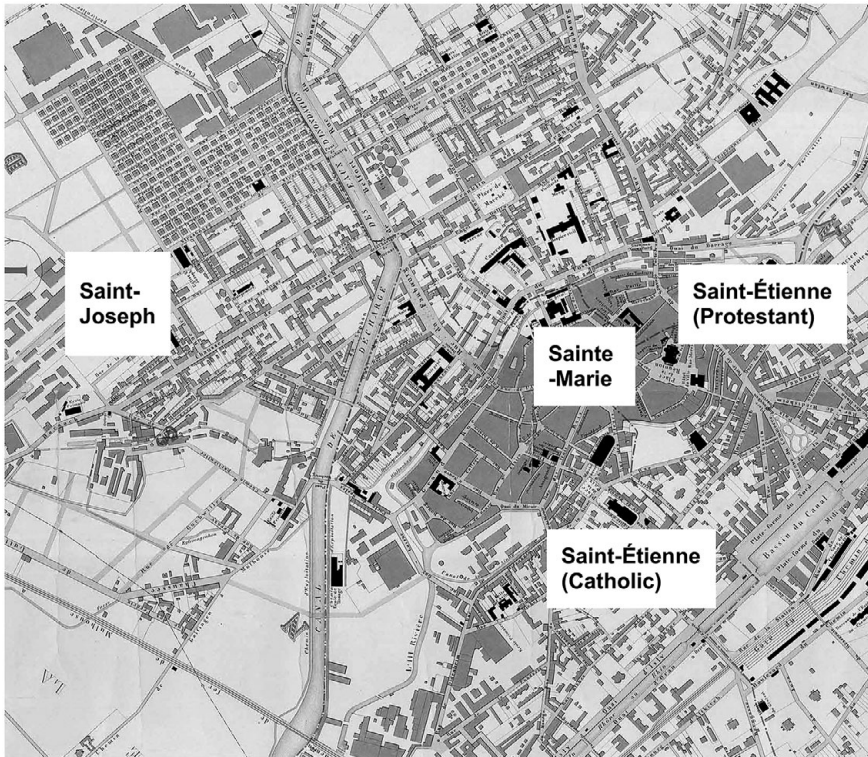


Figure 1. Extract from AMM N 18, Plan de Mulhouse (1886) indicating the location of the four churches in Mulhouse. Saint-Joseph is located at the western-most extreme of the second *cit e ouvri re*. Note the distance from the city centre to this new church.

located in the *cit es*. A competition was launched to find a design that was cheap (not exceeding 120,000 Fr.) and quick (a maximum of two years' construction).

The municipal commission tasked with choosing the design was made up of three Protestants and one Catholic: Winterer was actively excluded from discussions.⁷⁵ Six designs were submitted to the commission: five neo-Classical and one neo-Gothic. This included one from the 'Alsatian Violet-le-Duc', Charles Winkler, who had offered his services in 1877 before a commission had even been formed.⁷⁶ The Bavarian-born Winkler was making a name for himself in Alsatian church architecture, restoring the Benedictine abbey at Ottmarsheim (1875) and the church at Thann (1875–95), while building new neo-gothic churches at Froeschwiller (1876) and Morschwiller-le-Bas (1877–78).⁷⁷ But, despite the priest Winterer's preference for some of the grander, more traditional designs like Winkler's, the winning choice was eventually the cheapest one, by the Mulhouse architect Jules Scherr.⁷⁸ Scherr

⁷⁵Klink, *Centenaire*, 9.

⁷⁶AMM, M2 Ac 1, Winkler to mayor of Mulhouse, 10 Sep. 1877.

⁷⁷F. Igersheim, 'Charles Winkler, architecte des monuments historiques et conservateur', at <https://docpatdrac.hypotheses.org/jep-2013/jep2013-7-winkler>, accessed 10 Aug. 2023.

⁷⁸Klink, *Centenaire*, 9; 'N crologie, 28 Sep. 1910', *Bulletin de la Soci t  industrielle de Mulhouse*, 80 (1910), 59.

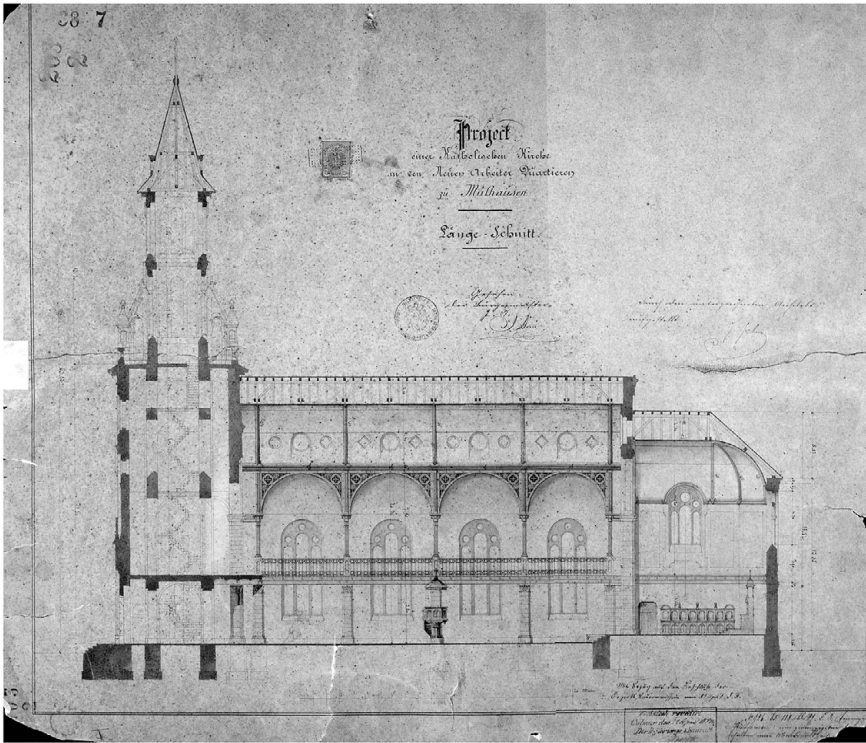


Figure 2. AMM, Service d'architecture de Mulhouse, Project einer katholischen Kirchen in den neuen Arbeiter Quartieren zu Mülhausen Länge-Schnitt (c. 1880). The exposed metal skeleton which shocked early visitors is clear in this cross-section.

designed a church with little outward ornament and with a metal skeleton to reduce costs, which he left uncovered in large areas of the interior.⁷⁹

On Palm Sunday 1883, Saint-Joseph was finally opened, almost 30 years after the construction of the first set of houses in the *cités*. Although, to Winterer's frustration, the bells were not yet installed in the tower, many of the *cités'* inhabitants gathered to celebrate.⁸⁰ The exposed metal skeleton interior, which was left unpainted until 1884, shocked both the working-class parishioners as well as the *curés* subsequently posted there as it reminded them of the inside of a textile factory where most of the inhabitants of the *cités* spent their week (see Figure 2).⁸¹ Equally, given the small patch of land which Dollfus had donated, the church had been built without a *parvis* in front of it, which restricted the ability for workers to gather after a mass. Nonetheless, it was a church which soon became the basis for a distinctly working-class Catholic associational life. By the 1890s, it was the centre of a *cercle d'ouvriers*

⁷⁹AMM, Service d'architecture de Mulhouse, Project einer katholischen Kirchen in den neuen Arbeiter Quartieren zu Mülhausen Länge-Schnitt (c. 1880).

⁸⁰AMM, A638, L. Winterer, *Die St-Josephskirche in den Arbeiter-Cités zu Mülhausen* (Rixheim, 1883), 11.

⁸¹R. Oberlé and M. Stahl, *Mulhouse, panorama monumental et architectural des origines à 1914* (Mulhouse, 1983), 240.

under the banner of *Notre-Dame de l'Usine* (Our Lady of the Factory), echoing the groups of the same name around Lille who were detested by northern socialist parties for poaching worker support.⁸²

After a quarter of century of pressure and shifting dynamic of political power at the local and national level, the Catholic inhabitants of the *cités ouvrières* had their church. Despite the co-operation between Dollfus and Winterer in pushing forward the eventual construction, this church was one which was not only built simply, at low cost, and quickly. It was a distinct reminder in terms of its situation and its appearance of older paternalist relationships between Calvinist employers and Catholic workers. While it would be tempting to dismiss the earlier petitions for their lack of short-term success, what this article has argued instead is that these early petitions revealed the perceived fluidity and flexibility of modern city planning to consider religious individuals or groups as exerting power and agency. That the petitioners felt they could form an argument 'based on reason' about wider planning concerns, or to appeal to past paternalism, or to play off pre-existing confessional tension between central and local state, shows the vibrancy of petitioning as an avenue for the articulation of planning priorities. The momentum behind these early petitions from parishioners and clergy was catalysed by the political crises of 1869–71, winning the industrial paternalist Jean Dollfus fully to the cause even if only to serve his own political ambitions. Winterer, as a priest and active politician in the Reichsland-era of Alsatian history, kept this momentum running through the Kulturkampf years. As Butler argues regarding Ireland, the planning priorities of religious groups and planning authorities were not always opposing, even if the context for concepts of urban governance were different, and this was clearly the case with Dollfus' and Winterer's anti-socialist alliance in the late 1870s. And yet, the outcome in the construction of Saint-Joseph is not one of a complete victory for Catholic petitioners over reluctant Calvinist industrialists: the architectural form and place in the urban environment of this new church was a way for this increasingly threatened industrial and municipal elite to cling onto past generations' paternalism, now supplemented by Catholicism, to head off the threat of further destabilization to the political status quo.

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⁸²H. Cetty, 'Les œuvres ouvrières de Saint-Joseph de Mulhouse', *Revue catholique d'Alsace* (1 Feb. 1897), 144–53; C. Willard, 'Les attaques contre Notre-Dame de l'Usine', *Mouvement social*, 57 (1966), 203–9.

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