In 1760 the monastery was nationalized and the following year, with the constitutional schism, the order’s chapel was made a parish church dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi. The organ was destroyed during the Revolution. The church’s communion vessels, the Pleyel piano firm, had designed and built, in 1857, a two-and-one-half octave pedalier (or piano pedalboard) which, instead of merely coupling the piano keys to a pedalboard, was completely independent, having its own strings, hammers, and mechanism. A set of thinner 8’ strings playing simultaneously with the 16’ strings produced a remarkably full sound.

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Franck’s Andantino in G Minor for organ dates from this year, as do the Cinq Pièces pour Harmonium, but the rest of his output was for voice and included a Messe solennelle for bass solo and organ, Trois Motets, Op. 4 (O salutaris, Ave Maria, and Tantum ergo); and a third setting of O salutaris, Op. 5, for soprano and tenor duet.

Among Franck’s acquaintances at the Jesuit College of the Immaculate Conception where he taught piano was a Jesuit priest, Louis Lambillotte. The good father, aptly described by Saint-Saëns as a “ridiculous composer” of “dreadful music,” who left an indelible impression on Catholic church music with such hymns as “Come, Holy Ghost” and “On This Day, Beautiful Mother,” also published this same year by Richault. The manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale (No. 8564) bears Franck’s registration for this four-manual instrument.

Sometime in the fall of 1857 Franck was appointed organist of a new church still under construction in the fashionable Faubourg Saint-Germaine. The church of Sainte-Clotilde, the first neo-Gothic church in France, was built over the course of eleven years, from 1846 to 1857, under the direction of two successive architects. The contract for a new organ had been awarded to Cavaillé-Coll in 1854, but work did not begin for more than a year, being delayed by the architects’ final plans for the case. Franck began his duties inauspiciously by directing the choir and playing a harmonium in a temporary chapel, Sainte-Valère.

By the end of September 1857 the case pipes were in place and the wind system installed but, while the action and console had been built, they still had not been delivered in time for the dedication of the church on November 30, 1857. Franck conducted the choir and orchestra for the elaborate ceremony; the music included a Messe by Adolphe Adam, a Prelude by Bach, O salutaris by François Auber, Ave Verum by Palestrina, a Dominum salvmum with quartet, choir, and orchestra, and, finally, the “Laude” from a Mass by Ambroise Thomas.

Sainte-Clotilde is unusual in that it has two rear galleries, one above the other. The lower is for the choir; the upper, much smaller, holds the organ console. For two years Franck, an organist without an organ, directed his choir from the lower gallery. By 1856 he had induced 20-year-old Conservatoire student Théodore Dubois to give up his post as organist of the Chapelle des Invalides, just a few blocks away, and come to Sainte-Clotilde as his organiste accompagnateur. The only instrument for accompaniment of the new church was a harmonium which was used until Joseph Mecklin installed an electro-pneumatic orgue-de-choeur in the front of the church in 1888.

Franck took his church duties seriously. Knowing he would soon have a new organ, he equipped himself with the organist’s most up-to-date practice instrument, a pedalier. Auguste Wolff, a partner in the Pleyel piano firm, had designed and built, in 1857, a two-and-one-half octave pedalier (or piano pedalboard) which, instead of merely coupling the piano keys to a pedalboard, was completely independent, having its own strings, hammers, and mechanism. A set of thinner 8’ strings playing simultaneously with the 16’ strings produced a remarkably full sound.

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In 1826 he was succeeded by his unmarried daughter, Céleste, the last of the illustrious family. She resigned the last day of the term (April 25, 1857) to make way for Paul Reverdy, brother of the painter Edmond. Céleste Franck was at the organ in the church in France, was built over the course of eleven years, from 1846 to 1857, under the direction of two successive architects. The contract for a new organ had been awarded to Cavaillé-Coll in 1854, but work did not begin for more than a year, being delayed by the architects’ final plans for the case. Franck began his duties inauspiciously by directing the choir and playing a harmonium in a temporary chapel, Sainte-Valère.

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In 1760 the monastery was nationalized and the following year, with the constitutional schism, the order’s chapel was made a parish church dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi. The organ was destroyed during the Revolution. The church’s communion vessels, borrowed to use at the last mass celebrated in the Temple for Louis XVI the morning of his execution, are on display in the sacristy. When the church was reopened after the Concordat its pastor had previously been at Saint-Jean-en-Grève. That church having been demolished, he brought numerous furnishings from it and added the appellation of Saint-Jean to that of Saint-François.

Some installed a two-manual, 13-stop organ in 1818 and Gervais-François Couperin was appointed organist, holding this post simultaneously with that of Saint-Gervais. On his death in 1826 he was succeeded by his unmarried daughter, Célise, the last descendant of the illustrious family. She resigned the last day of 1829 and nothing is known of her successors until the appointment of Cézar Franck in 1851.
I. Ordinary of the Masses for the church year;
II. and III. Roman Hymnal with each hymn harmonized for organ
in a comfortable key for the (unison men's) choir and in a higher
key for three or four voices;
IV. and V. 1. Proses and Sequences; 2. Antiphons for the major
feasts of the Blessed Virgin; 3. Various hymns for Benediction;
and 4. Fauxbourdon.

The theory behind this note-for-note harmonization of Gregorian
chant has long been outdated and the practice of plainchant accompa­
niment has gone through several stages of theoretical develop­
ment. The Preface to this Chant Grégorien is the only prose that César Franck ever published, sufficient reason to include it here in
its entirety.

PREFACE

It is generally agreed that the correct accompaniment of plain­
chant is difficult. Most of the melodies used in church have
shown a special character, so far removed from present-day musi­
cal thought, that in order to harmonize them it is necessary to
isolate them as much as possible from our leanings toward mod­
tern tonality. This is to impart to Gregorian chant its own tonality
and, consequently, preserve its character. This difficulty has
been serious enough to cause many otherwise capable music­
ians to doubt their ability to accompany plainchant and despair
of reaching agreement between two seemingly inaccompanied
zymentary elements. We admit that restoring the use of such pristine
melodies was not intended to make the role of the organist eas­
er and that, even momentarily giving up the sonority of unac­
companyed chant, we must relinquish recently developed musi­
cal skills, including counterpart. However, the organ is su­
 universally used as an accompanying instrument today that
there is a pressing need to provide some written accompaniment
for those who must accompany choirs in Gregorian chant, lest
the organ become an obstacle rather than a help at the hands of
the less skilled.

However, it is necessary to guard against systematization and
archaism. It is also necessary to have a clear idea of the musical
resources of a parish, so as to provide solutions at the level of the
least trained organists. We have tried to adhere to these two points,
since there is not space in this short foreword to give a

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Gradual. The first number is for the edition in modern (round)
notation, the second, for the edition in Gregorian (square)
notation.

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Franck began composing small organ pieces which were published
after his death as the second volume of L'Organiste. The Franck
family, now consisting of two sons and a daughter, spent their vaca­
tion with the family of Auguste Sanches, a wine merchant in
Azille. He was the amateur organist of the local church and asked
Franck for some easy organ pieces he could play. From time to time
Franck obliged.

This same year Louis Niedermeyer published Trois Antéennes in
the music supplement of his journal, La Maitrise. Brief pieces
which could be played as versets by organists who could not impro­
vise, the Quasi lent, Allegretto, and Lent et tres soutenu appeared
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The new organ at Sainte-Clotilde was finished and playing in
August; Cavaille-Coll sent his final statement to the architect on
August 20, 1859, and the inauguration was set for December 5. It
was decided that Lefebure-Wély would share the dedicatory recital
with Franck who now set himself to arranging his part of the pro­
gram. On September 13 he completed a Pièce symphonique
(L'Organiste, Vol. 2, No. 26) and may have considered playing it.
He almost certainly composed his Final in B-flat at this time, or
earlier, as it was mentioned in reviews of the recital and dedicated
to Lefebure-Wély.

The first two performances on the organ of Sainte-Clotilde were
not by the titulaire but by Lefebure-Wély. The first was a private
demonstration for the Empress Eugénie's sister, the Duchess of
Alba, and other ladies of the imperial court, and the second, on
September 29, was a society wedding performed by the Bishop of
Carcassonne.