

## Théodore Aubanel, to 1860

At one point, the title of this work was to be *Theodore Aubanel: Doublecrossed by the Provençal Church*. That title clearly gave way to another. However, Aubanel— the finest of the Provençal lyric poets of his time, and perhaps of all time— was both doubly reproached and twice scorned by the censors of the very Church he so faithfully served in his private as well as his professional life.

In the century before Theodore's birth, the Vatican bestowed upon the Aubanel family's publishing house the title *Seul Imprimeur de Sa Sainteté*: Sole Printer for His Holiness, the Pope. The title was more honorific than remunerative, although it did tend to bring with it a number of printing contracts for religious works. Theodore and his brother, Charles, served together as managers of Editions Aubanel in 1860, when Aubanel's first volume of poetry was published. The *Revue des Bibliothèques Paroissiales*, which reviewed recent publications as to their acceptability for a Catholic library, marked works to be excluded from such libraries with a "cross." Aubanel's collection, *La Mióugrano entre-duberto*, was branded with an unprecedented two crosses.

Aubanel was sufficiently circumspect to have his first dramatic piece, *The Bread of Sin* (*Lou Pan dóu Pecat*), published in a limited edition, and to have it distributed only to trusted and understanding friends. The dramatic piece would have fared no better than did the first collection of poetry. *The Girls of Avignon*, his second collection of poetry, was published a quarter of a century after *La Mióugrano entre-duberto*. Clearly more passionate than its predecessor, it was barely off the press when a copy of it was slipped into the hands of the archbishop. The author was promptly summoned, and commanded not only to stop distribution of this "dangerous work," but to destroy all remaining copies. These events are all the more ironic in light of Aubanel's religious history and practices.

Aubanel was a "Christian gentleman," in every sense of the word. In addition to the religious publications of Editions Aubanel, he gave to the poor, took part in religious processions, defended members of the Church, and regularly received the sacraments.<sup>1</sup>

The branding of his first work as "dangerous" was cause for great pain to Aubanel.<sup>2</sup> His closest friends were under the impression that the anguish he experienced after the publication of his second collection of poetry is what caused his rapid decline in health and his death just months thereafter.

---

<sup>1</sup>