Sacred Identities:
The Politicization of Gender and the Indian Struggle for Independence

The Indian independence and nationalist movements which began at approximately the turn of the twentieth century and ended in 1947 revealed the importance of gender identity in politics as they appeared in concepts of dignity, honor, and sexual expectations for both men and women. These values and expectations were discussed in the discourses of important Indian nationalist leaders, including Gandhi himself, as well as the literature of some popular movements with a comparatively minimal impact on the success of the independence movements, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh party and other Hindu revivalist organizations. The Swadeshi movement in particular politicized gender with its use of a nationalistically symbolic feminine deity. Prescribed gender roles were not something new in India since they are outlined in Hindu religious texts as sacramental practices.[1] However, they were not necessarily critically important as political issues until they were made so by British propaganda, which used specific issues that pertained to Indian gender as a way to justify the Raj.[2] British imperial propaganda attacked the masculinity of Indian men as well as the dignity of Indian women. These gender themes reappeared in different forms throughout the Indian independence movements, and eventually became direct symbols for nationalism and national dignity, particularly among the Hindu majority.[3] While gender issues may have entered political discourse many times in history, the issue of Indian gendered politics during the period of mass independence movements and immediately following is a particularly useful era to study because very tangible consequences were shown immediately after Indian independence, during the communal violence of the Partition. Women were specifically targeted as victims of physical abuse, sexual violation, and other forms of degradation and humiliation during mass riots between Hindus and Muslims because gender and womanhood had been so politicized that physical attacks against them became symbolic metaphors for an insult against an entire community or nation.[4] While British gendered propaganda was not the sole culprit in the development of such a culture, British rule did elicit the conditions where such ideas could take hold in a forceful way.

British propaganda about the gendered inferiority of Hindus had deep roots in the nature of imperialism. Over the course of centuries, British global colonization catalyzed the evolution of an imperial ideology with highly influential ideas about race, nationalism, and gender. Issues of gender identity and sexuality became a focal point for the British as their culture became increasingly invested in imperialism in the nineteenth century. Faced with comparatively massive populations of purportedly inferior people, a colonial culture developed that imagined the sanctity of British femininity to be under attack by a vicious, wild, sexually unrestrained population of native Indians. This thread necessitated the figure of a virile, masculine British man in order to defend her. Eventually this imperial image evolved, and incorporated the idea that Indian men were weak and effeminate, necessitating that the masculine British rule over them. These imperial ideas contributed to the philosophy that justified British rule, while establishing the political implications of gender identity.[5]

These ideas about gender and the inferiority of Indians continued well into the twentieth century. One of the best sources from the period of Indian independence movements that compiled British propagandist ideas about the inferiority of Indians was the book *Mother India*, written by Katherine Mayo in 1927. It was highly controversial for the unashamedly imperial way that it described Indian culture. While Mayo herself was not a British citizen and did not work for the British government, British colonial authorities were well aware of its production and she admitted publically to having their approval and assistance.[6]

Mother India criticized many aspects of Indian life, but covered several issues with consistency. Each was regularly related back to the issue of the inability of Indians to rule themselves, therefore justifying British rule. These were the issues of gender and sexuality, which were frequently discussed in conjunction with the backwardness and ignorance of Indians as well as the uselessness of Indian religion, particularly Hindu polytheism. One segment read,

Superstition among the Indian peoples knows few boundary lines

of condition or class. Women in general are prone to believe that

disease is an evidence of the approach of a god. Medicine and surgery,

driving that god away, offend him, and it is ill business to offend the

great ones.[7]

This showed Indian women as ignorant due to their religion, which was condescendingly described as simply a superstition. It also portrayed women as ignorant and helpless on account of a society and religion that oppressed them with harmful expectations of their gender. The following excerpt expounded upon the idea of how poor motherhood affected the virility of Indian men:

Take a girl child twelve years old, a pitiful physical specimen in bone and blood, illiterate, ignorant, without any sort of training in habits of health. Force motherhood upon her at the earliest possible moment. Rear her weakling son in intensive vicious practices that drain his small vitality day by day. Give him no outlet in sports. Give him habits that make him, by the time he is thirty years of age, a decrepit and querulous old wreck – and you will ask what has sapped the energy of his manhood? … [8]

Here, a single conclusion was deduced from a set of conditions. Indian women were described as ignorant and weak, as well as oppressed, having been "forced" into motherhood, causing mothers to raise men weak in physique and character. These were conditions for which Indian society was ostensibly to blame. The argument continued until it essentially claimed that the Indian perception of imperial subjugation was a self-induced condition brought on by the fact that they had such incompetent, ignorant mothers that would raise emasculated and sickly men. The next logical step was, of course, that this made British rule all but a total necessity:

Given men who enter the world physical bankrupts out of bankrupt stock, rear them through childhood in influences and practices that devour their vitality…find them, at an age when the Anglo-Saxon is just coming into full glory of manhood, broken-nerved, low-spirited, petulant ancients; and need you, while this remains unchanged, seek for other reasons why they are poor and sick and dying and why their hands are too weak, too fluttering, to seize or to hold the reins of government?[9]

The British goal in casting a negative image of Indian sexuality was clearly to entrench British imperial dominance. Eventually these issues would resurface during the independence movements, as many Indian nationalists were cautious not to appear to lack strength or virility, and often expressed this concern in the same language used in *Mother India*. The issue went deeper than perhaps even the British or Katherine Mayo may have been aware, because many expressions of gender in Indian society were not simply cultural habits but religious issues as well.[10]

For instance, the types of behavioral expressions that the British may have interpreted as effeminacy from Indian men had a long history and were deliberately practiced. British culture traditionally associated passive behavior with femininity and aggressive or active behavior with masculinity, but this was actually the reverse in India, a cultural mistranslation that would have caused a "masculine" Indian to appear particularly "feminine" to a Briton. The Bhakti religious movement in Mughal India, for example, held that androgyny and passiveness was a liberating spiritual ideal for men. However, by the late nineteenth century, the effects of the British concept of gender had taken root, and through cultural propaganda many Indians were given an unwanted image of effeminacy.[11]

As well their criticism of male androgyny or femininity, British attacks on Indian women also struck at deep roots in Indian culture. In addition to the types of criticisms about the ignorance of mothers that produced weak offspring discussed in *Mother India*, several issues repeatedly came to the surface regarding women. Among the most significant were their ostensible mistreatment by Indian men and their oppression, suffering through things such as female infanticide and the practice of sati, or ritual widow suicide.[12] Often, cultural norms surrounding the expectations of women were more than just social tradition; they were tenets of Indian religion. Therefore, when the British attacked behavior and traditions relating to gender, they indirectly attacked other aspects of Hindu culture as well, particularly religion. According to one Hindu woman,

The observance of prescribed ritual, caste and gender norms that had

been spelt out by the *Vedas* and subsequent sacred law-codes, would

constitute the essence of a pious life or *dkarhma*. The woman enters

sansar through the sacrament of marriage, the only sacrament that is

available to her. For her, *sansar* is the unending flow of domestic work

and responsibilities, primarily connected with cooking, serving, and

child-rearing. Ideally, the woman should have no other religious activity…[13]

This illustrates the religious significance of women's social expectations. If motherhood and other domestic work were so important as to be called a sacrament for Hindus, then propaganda like *Mother India* was a direct insult to a Vedic religious culture that had existed in India for thousands of years.

The consequences of the cultural onslaught against Indian traditions initially worked in the favor of the British, but in time would backfire against them and eventually contributed to the independence movements following the turn of the century. As British involvement in India became more involved over time, an increasing number of Indians were incorporated into the colonial governments. They spoke English and adopted English traditions, forsaking their old Indian identity. Lajpat Rai, one of the leaders of Indian independence, described the trend:

They began to think like their English masters…He detested Indian

life and took pride in being Anglicised. Everything Indian was odious

in his eyes. The Indians were barbarians; their religion was a bundle

of superstitions; they were dirty people; their customs and manners

were uncivilized; they were a set of narrow-minded bigots who did

not know that man was born free.[14]

He continued to explain that disillusionment with English ways came about when those same anglophile Indian elites realized that they could never reach the same level of success or prosperity in the English-ruled institutions and society. They then started to turn to their anglicized notions of liberty and self-government.[15] While this development may have been particularly concentrated among the elites, many of those elites would have a key role in independence, including Gandhi, who was educated in law in England early in his life. This showed one of the main cultural factors that contributed to the onset of the Indian independence movements. British rule was changing Indian culture. Disillusionment with the Raj allowed many independence fighters to combine multiple cultures and unite them against British rule. One of those factors was the British political ideals of liberty and self-government that an increasing number of Indians were becoming aware of and adopting, as discussed by Lajpat Rai. The other feature was the revival of traditional aspects of Indian culture as a nationalist force. Many of these included traditional Indian ideas of gender that had been under siege during the period of British rule.

One of the first and most important movements that publically incorporated gender into the politics of independence was the Swadeshi movement, because it would be represented by an anthem and figure that associated female imagery with nationalism. The Swadeshi, or Home Manufactures, movement aimed to break the stranglehold of British goods on the Indian economy with a variety of factors, including the boycott of British manufactured goods and the return of Indian traditional handicrafts and goods produced domestically. Swadeshi was essentially a response to the British economic system that maintained dominance over Indian industry. The movement began after the British partition of Bengal into two separate provinces, which was perceived by many Indians to be a pernicious attempt to pit Muslims against Hindus based on the dynamics of the populations that were divided. In spite of the fact that a boycott of British goods was a political issue that received the full endorsement of the Indian National Congress, the movement that represented it soon led to the politicization of gender and Hindu culture with the way it was represented and popularized. The significance of economic resistance was represented with a deistic woman, Bharat Mata or "Mother India," which had roots in Vedic religion.[16] The sentiment behind Bharat Mata was expressed in a religious, nationalist poem, "Bande Materam." As the movement flourished, the symbolism of "Bande Materam" had become so effective that the use of the phrase itself was actually outlawed by the colonial government. It developed into a cult of motherhood, using the iconic, deistic woman Bharat Mata as a representative of spirituality, Hindu nationalism, and also the Swadeshi economic movement simultaneously.[17]

These different aspects of Swadeshi, including religion, economics, and nationalism, were not all necessarily advocated by the same people, but rather, people that represented aspects of each attributed Swadeshi to their name. All of them were represented, however, by the movement's slogan "Bande Materam," therefore linking the poem's gendered and religious imagery to political issues. For example, Surendranath Banerjea, who would later become one of the influential personalities of the Indian National Congress, wrote about Swadeshi in his publication the *Bengalee* in 1902,

The agitation for political rights may bind the various nationalities

of India together for a time. The community of interests may cease

when these rights are achieved. But the commercial union of the various

Indian nationalities, once established, will never cease to exist. Commercial

and industrial activity is, therefore, a bond of very strong union and is, therefore, a mighty factor in the formation of a great Indian nation.[18]

This explanation of the national importance of Swadeshi's commercial success portrayed it as an economic issue. However, such an interpretation was not universal. For example, Bipin Pal, one of the leaders of the Swadeshi movement, argued that

Every object is a thought of God – materialized; every man is the Spirit

of God – incarnated. So is every nation the manifestation and revelation

of a Divine Ideal… Individuals are born, individuals die – but the nation

liveth for ever. The Deity, the divine-Ideal, the Logos of God, which Bande Mataram [hail to the motherland] reveals, is eternal.[19]

Bipin Pal's description of the values of Swadeshi illustrated how Indian politics could take on an extremely political quality, and a further investigation of the connections between these two quotations shows why the Swadeshi movement was so important to determine the way that gender was politicized. The biggest link between the way these two separate parts of Swadeshi were represented was the movement's popular symbol, the poem "Bande Mataram," and its figurehead, the female religious icon, Bharat Mata, which represented the economic and political aspect of the Swadeshi movement in addition to the religious and gendered aspect of it. "Bande Materam" was originally published in a novel by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, but became an anthem for Swadeshi, and eventually the unofficial anthem for much of India.[20]

An insight into the interplay between religion, gender, and nationalism can be gained by analyzing the text of "Bande Materam." The poem talks clearly about the symbol of a deistic woman that represents virtue in the following passage, "To thee I call, Mother and Lord!... Thine the strength that nerves the arm, thine the beauty, thine the charm. Every image made divine in our temples is but thine… Pure and perfect without peer, Mother, lend thine ear."[21] This shows a unity between the ideas of purity and motherhood, which was likely reminiscent of the Vedic concepts of motherhood and duty. These ideas were also paired with nationalism in the poem, which can be interpreted from the second stanza, as it used extremely geographical language in describing India as having "rich with thy hurrying streams, bright with thy orchard gleams, cool with thy winds of delight, dark fields waving, mother of might."[22] In these passages, the imagery of a deistic, divine mother was paired with landscape imagery which most likely represents the land of India in a nationalist sense.

The poem talks about defense of the mother image in a militant tone, which accounts for why Muslims such as Mohammed Ali Jinnah considered it to be hostile[23], as seen in the following passage:

Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands, when the swords flash out in

twice seventy million hands and seventy millions voices roar thy dreadful

name from shore to shore? With many strengths who art mighty and

stored… To her I cry who ever her foemen drave back from plain and sea

and shook herself free.[24]

Such language, speaking of millions of swords driving away the enemies of the divine mother figure, could easily have been seen by Muslims as deliberately aggressive, especially since Muslims were generally excluded from the primarily Hindu Swadeshi[25] movement and did not share the religious beliefs of the poem.

The poem became so popular that it would be sung at national events as an unofficial Indian anthem and became a central feature of the political tensions between Muslims and Hindus. The Indian National Congress wrote in a Working Committee statement in 1936 that "Bande Materam"

became [a symbol of] of national resistance to British imperialism

in Bengal especially, and generally in other parts of India. The words

"Bande Materam" became a slogan of power which inspired our people

and a greeting which ever reminds us of our struggle for national freedom…

The Committee recognize the validity of the objection raised by Muslim

friends to certain parts of the song… therefore, the Committee recommended

that wherever the Bande Materam is sung at national gatherings, only the first

two stanzas should be sung.[26]

In spite of the attempt by the Congress to mediate the religiously divisive impact of the poem's popularity, the response by the Indian Muslim community was extremely negative. In 1938, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, head of the Muslim League in India, said that it was

not only idolatrous but in its origin and substance a hymn to spread hatred

for the Musalmans. And they in their wisdom tried and are persisting now

and compelling the school authorities to sing Bande Materam at congregations and school gatherings although it is admitted that it is not a National Song…[27]

He then lamented the rule of the Hindu Congress and claimed that it was more offensive in its treatment of the Muslims than the British had ever been. Jinnah's remarks indicated the significance of the impact that "Bande Materam" had on the Indian political climate. Originating after the partition of Bengal as a response to British rule, "Bande Materam" became nationalized by Hindus and a symbolic feature of the political, and cultural, divisions that were growing between Hindus and Muslims prior to Indian independence.

The popularization and cultural importance of the "Bande Materam" poem was an instance of the politicization of gender being brought to the forefront of the Indian independence movement. The British government had fostered ill will, fanned communal tensions, and made itself the target of nationalist sentiment when it partitioned the Bengal province in India. The partition of Bengal was hardly a gendered political move, nor was the concept of a nationalist boycott of British goods. However, these two issues managed to be confronted by a Hindu culture that, whether or not those involved were aware of it, forced women's sexuality and honor into the public sphere of politics by making the icon of a deistic woman the symbol of a nationalist economic movement. This confrontation was a result of a history of British propaganda that insulted and repressed native forms of sexual identity, as well as British political actions, such as the partition of Bengal, which provoked the Swadeshi resistance movement[28]. This theme of politicization of gender would appear in a significant way in other instances throughout the independence movements and would contribute to a culture of womanhood that produced dire circumstances for many women during the partition as it made them a specific target for violence.

It is worth noting that the women involved in Indian politics were not passive actors in this cultural trend regarding the political expectations of their gender. Nationalist expectations of women appeared to be endorsed by many of the women whom they targeted. It should not be assumed that these sentiments about the role of womanhood were imposed on women who were hostile to them and desired to be liberated. Many Indian women had internalized cultural expectations of their gender and saw domesticity as their personal duty towards the family and community. On the national level, the issue of women's rights and movements for their education and political rights gained increasing public attention in the years leading up to Indian independence. As social reforms that progressively allowed women rights such as education gradually took place, it was expected that they would use those advantages in the service of their families and the nation. Mrs. P. K. Ray, president of the All-India Women's Conference on Educational and Social Reforms, stated at an annual meeting in 1931 that moral teaching was necessary for women who had a heavier responsibility during the period of change that India underwent in the years prior to independence, and stated that "If we wish to produce a real type of womanhood that will be a glory to our country in the future, we must remould [sic] and remodel our homes."[29] If a goal of women's education reform was to make womanhood better serve the "glory [of their] country," then gender politicization had clearly pervaded Indian culture to the extent that it influenced the women leaders who fought for women's rights.

Indian feminist movements, like political movements, were divided on religious grounds, and the Muslim feminists developed associations with a unique character separate from that of Hindu women. Nevertheless, they were similar in the fact that both emphasized subjects in education such as "domestic science" so that educated women could become more effective wives and mothers. However they were not inherently politicized to the same extent as the Hindu women's movements, since Muslim women's education did not necessarily aim indirectly to facilitate service to the country as did P.K. Ray and other Hindu reformers.[30]

The women's movements were organized separately from the political independence movements, and neither had total collaboration in their views or objectives. There were different branches of each, distinct from one another. According to Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the leaders of the Indian National Congress,

…it has not been possible to do justice to all aspects of the Indian struggle.

On analyzing, we find several streams of activity. There is the main stream

– the political movement, which is under the leadership of the Indian

National Congress… [as well as] other subsidiary movements like the

women's movement, the youth movements and the students' movements.[31]

All of these fell under the general influence of the Congress, but many other organizations did not, such as the revolutionary groups of Bengal or the Hindu Revivalists. Hindu Revivalism gained political momentum as an increasing number of

Hindus felt that the Congress and the powerful Swaraj Party, of which Gandhi would become the leader, were too pro-Muslim. One of the first such movements was called Hindu Mahasabha, and it challenged the Swaraj Party's position of non-violent resistance.[32] This effectively made them political rivals, yet the two groups, the Hindu Revivalists and the Swarajists, both utilized gender, albeit in unique ways, as part of their political platform.

Active, aggressive defense of India was one of the platforms of the Hindu Revivalists, and this eventually developed into a concept of masculinity that would combine manly duty with nationalism. This exposes another layer of gender in politics with the equation of masculinity with national duty. At a Hindu Mahasabha meeting in 1925, Lajpat Rai argued that passive resistance would weaken the unity of Hindus and harm progress towards independence. Another Hindu Revivalist argued that noncooperation "cannot breed the energy or resourcefulness and practical wisdom necessary for a political struggle," and yet another that "The Hindu race once so great and glorious is truly speaking 'nobody's child' now. The result is that it is usually the Hindus who fall an easy prey to the aggression of those more united and virile."[33] It is an interesting coincidence that such language is notably similar to British anti-Indian propaganda, such as that in *Mother India*, which criticized Indian men for lacking virility and strength. While this particular instance may be a coincidence, there is no mistaking the eventual importance of gender for Hindu Revivalists as time proceeded, which was shown clearly in some of their later publications. For example, *The Organiser* was a periodical released by the Hindu Revivalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sengh, which had the same founder as Hindu Mahasabha. One article published in 1947 included the following interpretation of violence against Hindu women in India:

Tens of thousands of our pious mothers and sisters who would faint at the

sight of blood were kidnapped and sold for so many rupees, annas, pies.

I have seen some of them recovered from that holy land. Their foreheads

bore tattoo marks declaring them 'Mohammad ki joru' [Mohammed's wife]...

Their [that of refugees in general] early and effective absorption in the

economy and society of the regions of their adoption is the primary duty

of every national of Hindustan. The task is not easy. It bristles with

difficulties. That is obvious. But no less obvious is the fact that the problem is a challenge to our manhood, no less than to our nationalism.[34]

This description was about the violence against women during the chaos of the partition. Protection of those women and the resettling of communities was described in such a way as to combine the issues of religion, nationalism, and gender. The article was written from the perspective of the Hindu Revivalists, and they believed that on account of both their "manhood" and their "nationalism" that the defense of Hindu women was necessary. Even after India had gained its independence, the issue of gender and nationalism remained firmly entrenched in politics. This politicization of gender was not, however, unique to the Hindu Revivalists. Potentially much more important was the way that influential leaders such as Gandhi described the expectations of gender. Even at the opposite ends of the political spectrum, gender was called upon as a justification for political ideas.

In *Hind Swaraj,* Gandhi described his vision for an independent India achieved through nonviolent resistance, and in it included a vision of what is or is not "manly" in politics. When he made reference to gender in *Hind Swaraj*, it came consistently in the form of a discussion regarding masculinity and manly strength. One of the arguments he made regarded British military protection of the Indians. He claimed that when the Indians allowed the British to protect them from other aggressive, militant Indian tribes it made the Indians "emasculated and cowardly," and that seeking protection by the English against fellow Indians was unmanly.[35] The next political issue that he discussed with reference to gender was the Indian reliance on the British court system in order to resolve disputes between Indians, which he also called "unmanly" and "cowardly."[36] Finally, as a tool for maintaining personal strength, he advocated chastity, giving the argument that "a man who is unchaste loses stamina," and "becomes emasculated and cowardly."[37] Based on *Hind Swaraj*, it is clear that Gandhi viewed loss of responsibility to the British as unmanly, as well as the loss of control over the self by giving into "animal indulgence," as he described sexual relations. The idea that any sexually active man is "emasculated and cowardly" may seem somewhat extreme, but the language he used to refer to gender is notably familiar. Such arguments were strikingly similar to those made by British imperial propaganda, especially in *Mother India*, which argued that Indian men were weak, emasculated, and lacked stamina and sexual discipline. While it is unlikely that Gandhi chose his words as a specific response to the British propaganda, such a similarity in language indicates that this was more than just a coincidence and that expectations of gender had ingrained themselves in an Indian understanding of politics, with the equation of masculine virility with fitness for self-government.

Gandhi's account of the expectations of women was also drawn into the realm of politics. Gandhi believed that women had a very important role to play in Swaraj and seemed to have believed firmly that the modesty and honor of women was of utmost importance. The following account shows his description of a woman's purity as being worth the price of her life.

> If the Swaraj is really drawing nearer, women will daily become more capable of protecting their honour… [If] there is such a thing as truth and purity in the world, I wish to state categorically that woman has within her sufficient strength to preserve her chastity… The power to die everyone has but few desire to use it. When someone wishes to dishonour a woman, when a man is in danger of being overmastered by lust, such a man and woman have a right to commit suicide… Even in the grip of no matter how strong a person, any man or woman can kill himself or herself by biting off the tongue or, if the hands are free, by pressing the wind-pipe… I urge every sister to pray thus on arising every morning: 'O God, keep me pure, give me the strength to preserve my chastity, strength to preserve it even at the cost of my life.[38]

This passage shows the power that lay behind expectations of women to preserve their honor. Seemingly contradictory to his overall philosophy of nonviolence, Gandhi preached that it was better for women to die than for them to sacrifice their honor or chastity. This statement is particularly chilling because for thousands of women, his advice of death before dishonor became a reality. In the communal violence surrounding the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, women suffered twofold because they were targeted by both sides in the conflict. They were subjected to humiliation and brutalization by opposing communities, usually Muslim against Hindu or vice versa, as well as by their own communities. It was a commonly held belief that sexually violated women would have to be killed, often by members of their own family or by suicide, in order to preserve the honor of the community.[39]

This violence represented the culmination of decades in which gender had been forced into the forefront of politics. The grim product of women's role as a symbol of nationalist honor was that individual women became a target instead of the nation's honor which they were seen to represent. Women's honor necessitated defense by men, and to do so asserted their manhood. Violence against women necessitated vengeance, fuelling communal strife.[40] Just as the Hindu Revivalist article had described, that violence was seen as a challenge to both manhood and nationalism. Even Gandhi made an exception in his philosophy of nonviolence when it came to the physical defense of women, arguing that any "man or woman who happens to be present [should run] to the rescue of the woman [in danger] and should [not] tolerate an outrage on her modesty… the man who allows the modesty of a woman to be thus outraged will be regarded as a coward."[41] A physical deformation, sexual violation, or other physical attack that branded and shamed a woman was intended as more than just as a personal attack against her but as an attack against the community that she was viewed to represent.[42] She was then often killed by her own community or forced into suicide in order to preserve the community's honor.

The conditions in which women were targeted for violence by both sides of the conflict during the communal riots of the partition shows the potential danger of the politicization of gender. Gender identities of both men and women may have been a relatively private affair earlier in Indian history, but British rule forced it into the realm of politics. The British used both the ignorance of women as people and as mothers, and the weakness of Indian men as justifications for rule. Then, British administrative decisions, such as the partition of Bengal, contributed both to resistance by Indians against their rule and increased tensions between Muslims and Hindus. Gendered ideals of politics were represented by many unique groups in India, as with the Swadeshi movement, Hindu Revivalists, women's reform movements, and even in Gandhi's ideals of nonviolence. The ultimate consequence of this was that women were trapped in a pattern of violence during the partition riots, where opposing communities would offend their dignity through physical assault, and their own communities would then kill them for having had their purity violated. In a broader historical context this shows one of the many dangers of imperialism and the harmful consequences it can have for a culture.

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Faith in Testimony to Faith in Tradition: The Debate Over Miracles and Convulsions in the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques, 1728-1750

Angela Haas

In 1748, the Scottish philosopher David Hume wrote that never in human history had there been a truly well-attested miracle. He claimed that the verification of a miracle would require manifold testimonies from men of "unquestioned good-sense, education, and learning," and of "credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind." [1] In addition, he maintained that the miracles would have to be "performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable." [2] However, the miracles reported at the cemetery of Saint-Médard left him somewhat baffled. Surprisingly, this particular set of events fit his criteria for a well-attested miracle. He admitted that these miracles were "proven on the spot, before judges of unquestioned integrity, attested by witnesses of credit and distinction, in a learned age, and on the most eminent theatre that is now in the world [Paris]." [3] Hume was thus left with no other choice but to rely on the *a priori* supposition that miracles were an "absolute impossibility." [4] Hume based his final judgment upon natural reason, which led him to reject human testimony in favor of the laws of Nature. Likewise, in the wake of the Saint-Médard episode, many who based their personal judgment upon Christian principles, rejected human testament in favor of the laws of God. The series of miracles and convulsions that erupted in the early 1730s in Paris sparked an elaborate debate regarding the authenticity of miracles, and the reliability of human testimony. This debate, as recorded in the Jansenist newspaper, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*,suggests that many people were not becoming more rational or less religious. In fact, they were internalizing their faith and thus, they ceased to rely on the judgment of others in matters of faith, and they began to rely more heavily upon Church tradition.

Miracles, Convulsions and the Saintly Deacon

On May 1, 1727 the Jansenist deacon François de Pâris died in Paris. Although he belonged to a wealthy family, [5] he was buried in the Saint-Médard cemetery in the impoverished Saint-Marceau quarter, as a display of his extreme piety and asceticism. Crowds of worshiping faithful, mostly common folk from the surrounding parishes, flocked to his tomb. After a few days, there were various reports of miraculous cures from blindness, deafness, paralysis and other afflictions, all of which were attributed to the saintly deacon. In the following years, news of these miraculous events spread, the number of visitors to the cemetery grew rapidly, and the number of miracles reported there increased dramatically. [6]

The development of a popular religious cult at Saint-Médard alarmed both ecclesiastical and royal authorities. In July 1731, some adherents of the cult began to experience convulsions, which resulted in physical and spiritual healing. While many disregarded the miracles and convulsions as ridiculous, others described them as "terrifying," "diabolical," "indecent," "obscene" and "scandalous." [7] In the wake of this outbreak of convulsions, both royal and Church officials became increasingly concerned that this cult posed a serious threat to social stability. This fear was exacerbated by the fact that the deacon had quickly become a saintly hero in the eyes of Jansenists. Pâris was an *appelant*, that is, he opposed the papal bull *Unigenitus*. Promulgated in 1713, this bull condemned conciliarism and predestination, among other unorthodox tenets commonly held by Jansensists. Thus, as an exceptionally pious *appelant*, François de Pâris was a perfect symbol of the Jansenist struggle against the monarchy and the Church. This struggle was fundamental to the development of religion and politics in eighteenth-century France. The royal and ecclesiastical anxiety caused by this affiliation of the deacon with the recalcitrant Jansenists resulted in severe suppression of the cult, including closing the Saint-Médard cemetery on January 27, 1732. [8] One sarcastic commentator posted a placard outside the cemetery that read: "By order of the King, it is forbidden for God to make miracles in this place." [9] As this placard suggests, instead of stifling the cult as the monarchy had hoped, this attempt at suppression increased enthusiasm.

Despite the closing of the cemetery, the convulsions multiplied. Now forced to meet in private, the convulsionaries' practices became more violent and bizarre. This included reciting prophecies, and various forms of masochism, such as beating, stabbing, choking, and even crucifying participants. [10] The afflicted prayed for God to give them the power to endure these tortures. They claimed to feel no pain and to suffer no injury. They considered the experience pleasurable and they found relief in this procedure. [11] Most participants of the cult seem to have been uneducated laboring poor. However, these laboring poor were also joined by nobles, clergy, merchants, financiers, cultivated men of letters, lawyers, and notaries. [12] Despite the cult's respectable social makeup, the extreme and controversial nature of their practices led the convulsionaries to lose much of their public support by the mid-1730s. [13] Despite manifold criticisms from the Church, the monarchy, and other contemporaries, the cult maintained a wide array of supporters, which ranged from common folk, to magistrates in the Parlement of Paris, to nobles at Court. [14] The rise of this cult also sparked an elaborate debate concerning the authenticity of miraculous events, and the legitimacy of evidence supporting these miracles.

The *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*: From Witness Testimony to Church Tradition

While written works supporting the miracles came in a variety of forms, from letters by theologians to widely-distributed works titled, *Collections of Miracles*, by the early 1730s, the most avid and widely-distributed support of these miracles was found within the illegally-published Jansenist newspaper, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*.The primary goal of the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* was to expose the injustices created by the papal bull *Unigenitus*. Although the papal bull *Unigenitus* had been promulgated nearly twenty years earlier, in the 1720s and 1730s the controversy surrounding it still raged in Paris. This bull denounced the works of the theologian Pasquier Quesnel as dangerous, and it condemned various ideas commonly held by Jansenists, including the doctrine of predestination and conciliarism.[15] *Unigenitus* also confirmed the hierarchy of the Church, placing the pope over regional bishops, the bishops over the lower clergy and, most controversially, spiritual power over temporal. Not only did Jansenists criticize *Unigenitus*, but so too did the magistrates in the Parlement of Paris, who resented the placement of the Church over the State. Many bishops criticized it because they resented the inference that the pope had the power to undermine the authority of the Gallican Church, while others rejected the bull on theological grounds. The bull was similarly rejected by nearly three quarters of the lower clergy, and consequently by their loyal congregations, who believed that it thwarted the spiritual authority of parish priests. [16] Thus, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* had the potential to reach out to a very large, diverse, and sympathetic audience.

Moreover, the *Nouvellistes* overtly proclaimed their goal to appeal to common folk, which further increased the accessibility and appeal of the paper to a broad readership. The opening article of the first issue proclaimed that while the "ordinary lay faithful" may have believed that the disputes about Unigenitus "concerned only opposing schools of thought better left to Theologians to fight over and unbecoming for simple laypeople to take part in," in fact, the dire circumstances made it necessary to "place the facts before the eyes of the Public." [17] The first issue made its intended audience very clear: "the Ecclesiastical News [is] particularly for the simple and for the people who cannot give all their attention to this great affair [the bull *Unigenitus*]." [18] The paper consistently used phrasing such as "People are saying," to sugget that they gathered their information from the people, which "gave credence to the opinions of ordinary people."[19] The *Nouvelles* exposed convoluted scandals with accurate, yet circumstantial evidence. It also provided detailed, clear explanations of complex theological issues, which "had the trick of flattering the reader's intellectual self-esteem." [20] While the paper was clearly read by many highly-educated individuals, it aimed to obtain the loyalty of the populace as a whole. This underground newspaper "became the tribunal of the public and the linchpin in the Jansenist propaganda effort to galvanize popular opposition to *Unigenitus*." [21] They focused very strongly upon the persecution of the Jansenists by the higher powers of Church and State in order to rally the lower classes behind the *appelant* cause. The *Nouvelles* exposed persecution, provided spiritual advice and made regular calls to their "Public" in hope of opening the eyes of those who were sleeping through the scandal around them.

Every issue between 1730 and 1735, made some reference to the miracles at Saint-Médard. [22] The paper consistently encouraged readers of all social and educational backgrounds to use their own reason to assess the legitimacy of the miraculous events of their time. However, the way in which the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* encouraged readers to apply this reason changed over time. In the early years of the paper, it consistently stressed reliance upon human testimony as evidence for the miracles. However, from the mid-1730s to the early 1740s, hesitation grew over the reliability of such testimony, which led the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* to accept some aspects of the movement, and reject others. By 1750, the authors of the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* came to reject human testimony entirely, and they supplanted it with an exclusive reliance upon Church tradition.

As early as July 1728 the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* featured the miracles at Saint-Médard in a lengthy two-page article that included the names, ailments and accounts of cures that allegedly occurred at the deacon's tomb. [23] While between 1728 and 1729 the *Nouvelles* published only ten articles dealing with miracles, after the explosion of miracle reports at the cemetery of Saint-Médard the number shot up dramatically. There were twenty-four articles on miracles in 1731 alone, and another fifty-nine over the following two years. The majority of the articles dealt with miracles that occurred in Paris by the supposed intercession of François de Pâris. Other articles reported miracles that occurred outside the capital, and some were attributed to other saints. Many of these articles contained miracle accounts and witness reports, while others contained reports of various works written either to support or oppose these miracles. [24]

The author of an article on the biography of François de Pâris in June 1731 claimed that this work contained reports of events "so marvelous" and "so recent" that "it truly puts the criticism and malignancy of the century to the test," since it is "founded upon proofs so concerning, upon reports so evident, so sensible, so close to us, so difficult to contradict, and so easy to verify, that one cannot read it without being touched." [25] However, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* insisted thatit would only publish information about the cures once they had been "cleared up and confirmed." [26] An article published in August 1731assured readers that "the events under consideration had been occurring in full public view and were known all over

Paris.” [27] Clearly, there was a great deal of concern that the reports be veritable, or at least believable. The *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* called upon its readers to judge for themselves, providing them with the “obvious” and “incontestable” signs that these miracles were not only verifiable, but also a sign that God was supporting the *appelant* cause by bestowing them upon these “defenders of the faith.”

The *Nouvellistes* did not rely solely on the faith and credulity of their readers when discussing the miraculous nature of these events. Beginning in 1731 the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*consistently provided “incontestable evidence” for the miracles they reported. In August of that year the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* published an article, which contained twenty-two reports of miracles. These miracles resulted in cures from a variety of maladies including ringworm, asthma, habitual vomiting, and paralysis. [28] While each of these individuals had a unique story and ailment, the evidence supporting these miracleswas strikingly uniform. Each cure had a series of witnesses: those who attested to the person's prior ailment, and to the fact that these miracles were incurable, those who attested to seeing the miracle itself take place, and those who attested to the aftermath to ensure that the healing was complete. While some of the witness reports came from family members and random passers-by, others came from doctors and surgeons who affirmed the breach between the natural and the supernatural.

Perhaps the most important aspect of these reports is the degree to which the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* trusted witnesses. The paper consistently published the testimonies of those present at the time of the miraculous event. These reports also relied upon the testaments of those who were familiar with the cured person, or alternately, people who were associated with the Royal Court (nobles, servants of nobles, or anyone else associated with the nobility). The legitimacy of the reports was dependent on the credibility of witnesses. By providing the testaments of various doctors and surgeons, the newspaper called upon its readers to trust in the training and judgment of these experts. One article claimed that these reports were “so sensible, so close to us, so difficult to contradict, and so easy to verify,” that they “put the criticism of the century to the test.” [29] However, the evidence provided relied almost solely upon the principle that readers' fellow Parisians were reliable. Thus, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* did not encourage readers to rely purely on their faith, but to base their reasoning upon the testaments of their fellow man.

As this debate continued throughout the 1730s, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* continued adamantly to defend the trustworthiness of Parisians. For example, in May 1732 the paper condemned the Jesuit play titled, *Saint Déniche*. The playwright claimed that the actors were composing a “Jansenist Theater." Throughout the play, the actors mocked the credulity of those who believed in the miracles at Saint-Médard. This credulity was portrayed as the result of “seduction”and the miracles as “impostures payed for in a plot to seduce the people.” [30] Parisians were characterized as being “easy to seduce” and “heretical.” The author of the play's handbill stated that “a spirit of vertigo or fanaticism burned ALL THE BRAINS of this large city.” [31] However, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* contradicted this defamation and adamantly defended the reputation of the people of Paris, claiming that these “scandalous plays” were an insult to the “solid writings” and “evident miracles,” whichwere “demonstrated and known” in all of Paris. The paper claimed that these events “cannot be seriously and reasonably refuted.” [32] Despite the explosive criticisms of the Jesuits and other opponents of the miracles and convulsions, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* asserted that these events were evidently attested by the people of Paris, who were a thoroughly reliable source.

The *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* faced a multitude of critics for their support of witness testimony. However, most of these criticisms seem to have been limited to theological works with a relatively limited circulation. One of the most widely criticized miracles was that of Anne Lefranc, which occurred after the dismissal of her Jansenist-leaning *curé* from his postin 1730. After having suffered from blindness in one eye and partial paralysis for almost thirty years, she was miraculously cured at the cemetery of Saint-Médard on November 3. [33] The most ambitious critic wrote a twenty-four-page treatise opposing the miracle of Anne Lefranc titled, *Lettre à Monsieur ****. In this anonymous work the author disregarded the testaments of people and claimed that “It is not necessary to be convinced to speak with assurance, one can mislead without desiring to do so.” [34] In fact, he believed that those who supported the miracle had a good reason to mislead and “worry simple people”: to gain support for their Jansenist heresy. [35] The author of the letter concluded by claiming that those who support the miracles are of “a Sect that makes light of Religion, that buys miracles, and that pays in *deniers* counting the seduction of the Public.” [36] Thus, clearly not everyone during this period found the common people a reliable source of information, but rather, found them easily misled and gullible. Such criticisms tended to appear often in theological treatises and letters. However, perhaps the greatest difference between a treatise such as this one and the *Collections of Miracles* and the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* is that the latter two were far more accessible to the lower classes and far more widely distributed. That the more widely distributed—and, indeed, more widely read—works strongly supported the reliability of the populace may suggest that during this period there was a stronger tendency toward faith in human testament than against.

The Saint-Médard debate during this early period was two-sided: for and against. However, the outbreak of convulsions in July 1731 transformed this debate into a multi-faceted clash of theological and philosophical wits. In this dispute, each side attempted to assess the reliability of Scripture, the Church Fathers, and human testimony. In 1733, a single article of the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* boiled down the convulsionary debate to three basic arguments. The first group embraced every aspect of the movement, and believed that all aspects were divine. The second group rejected some aspects of the convulsionary movement, such as the violent outbursts and false prophecies, but accepted other aspects, like the miraculous healings. Finally, a third group rejected the convulsions entirely. Some believed that the entire convulsionary movement was an imposture (a stance held by most Jesuits who generally disdained all Jansenists). Others believed that the convulsions were the result of natural causes, and attributed them to a *maladie épidémique* [epidemic sickness] or overactive imaginations, inspired by their personal connection to Pâris. [37] It is important to note that the discourse surrounding the miracles and convulsions reflected a clashing of fundamental beliefs. Each group had a different perception of how individuals ought to apply their reason in matters of faith. While some accepted witness testimonies and found the convulsionaries to be trustworthy, others assumed that they were heretical impostors, or people with overactive imaginations who had forsaken reason for fanaticism. These groups disagreed over the degree to which individuals should base their faith on witness testimonies, Church tradition, and what the authors of the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* unfavorably referred to as “pure reason.”

Despite increasingly diverse and vicious criticisms, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* held that the convulsions were merely an extension of the earlier miracles at Saint-Médard. One article noted that even the closing of the cemetery did not stop these convulsions, which proved the divine force responsible for them. Thus the convulsionary movement was considered to be very extraordinary “by virtue of the new circumstances that join them to the actions that are already known.” [38] The article listed the various miracles that had occurred as the result of these convulsions, including “sublime discourses of piety” spoken by simple and uneducated people, beautiful prayers, complete cures for some people, and significant relief from pain for many others, as well as the dramatic conversions of unbelievers. It was admitted that some of the convulsionaries had falsely predicted certain events that never came to pass, and spoken of “frivolous and sometimes shocking things.” [39] However, these were far fewer than the valid miracles and he resented the fact that some had attempted to relate them to *fanatiques* of other periods.

Throughout the following decade, however, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* slowly became more reliant on Church tradition as they grew more skeptical of the trustworthiness of the movement's adherents. By the middle of the 1730s, the cult of François de Pâris had lost its most powerful supporters, including most members of the Parlement of Paris, and most Jansenists as well. These supporters abandoned the cause primarily due to the violent actions of individual convulsionaries. Nevertheless, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* continued avidly to support the cult, believing that despite extreme manifestations, the convulsionary movement still contained something praiseworthy. During this period the paper's view of the cult fell between undoubted support and full condemnation, and it began to rely more heavily upon Church tradition and doctrine to distinguish true convulsions from false ones. Throughout the mid 1730s, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* began to report works that relied more on tradition, and less on witnesses. In 1734, the paper published a letter written by the theologian M. Le Gros, in which he claimed that it was "very unjust to scorn them, or to judge the Convulsionaries in general," since these convulsions took a variety of forms. [40] He proclaimed: "Let us research ... the truth; let us use God to dissipate the clouds; let us attach ourselves to the RULES, which are not subject to illusion." [41] He called on his readers to rely on Church tradition to discern the real convulsions from the false ones. Not only was this author calling upon his audience to base its judgment upon tradition, he was also suggesting that perhaps witness testaments were not entirely reliable, but rather they were "subject to illusion."

Throughout the 1740s, tradition continued to supplant human testimony as the authenticating force for miracles and convulsions. In January 1742 an article was published condemning the latest work of Carré de Montgeron, a magistrate in the Parlement of Paris. Montgeron was amongst the cult's most celebrated defenders and his work supported the convulsionary movement with few reservations. The *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* was critical of this work because "in critical times, and in events filled with obscurity" it failed to address how essential it was to follow "the Rules of Scripture and of Tradition." According to this article, Montgeron was not mindful enough of those who had the misfortune "to separate themselves from these sacred Rules." Furthermore, he failed to mention the mix present within the movementand thus, the article claimed, these facts "should render us circumspect and precautioned." [42] Because Montgeron was "very affectionate toward convulsions" and believed in the virtues "of the greatest number of convulsionaries," the criticism continued, this led to "an involuntary exaggeration." [43] In concluding the article, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* claimed that certainty depends on good judgment and the use that one makes of that judgment. Thus, to depend on impressions and instinct is to substitute these for the rules of tradition. [44]

The authors of the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* were openly criticized for their position on Montgeron's work. The fact that these criticisms were published in full in 1742 suggests that contributors were still in the process of reconsidering their stance and that they had not definitively rejected the convulsions. After critics published a second letter criticizing the paper's position on this work, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* decided to "abandon judgment to the public." [45] By 1740 the debate over this issue had become exceedingly complicated. Nevertheless, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* still refused to condemn the convulsionary movement in its entirety.

This support was, however, growing increasingly thin. Throughout the following decade, the paper's tone toward the convulsionaries grew increasingly critical. In 1743, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* praised a work titled *Response to the Complaint of legitimate defenders of the Convulsions* that condemned the violent actions of the convulsionary movement as contrary to at least five of God's laws. The paper declared this work "so clear, so solid, so instructive, so conformed to the Rules and to the principles that one has always followed in the Church;" the article continued, that"on the one hand, it will give rise to no reasonable retort, and on the other hand ... it will irrevocably fix all incertitude on the object of this appalling controversy." [46] Thus, by the mid 1740s the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* both openly condemned the violent manifestations of the cult, and boldly asserted that Church tradition took precedence over all other forms of evidence.

The very last article in which the convulsionaries received a significant mention was written in December 1750. The article was a review of a theological work published in 1749 titled *Preservative against false principles.* This work rejected individual authentication of miracles in favor of Church tradition. The theologian asserted that "(t)he cause of truth does not at all depend upon people. It draws all its force from the foundations on which it pleased God to rest them, and which are none other than Scripture and Tradition." [47] This theologian constructed his arguments using Scripture and tradition. He also applied the voice and rules of the Church as well as its communal preaching. In its review of this theological study, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* affirmed its position that Church tradition was the only source to which one should refer when analyzing religious matters. [48]

Between 1728 and 1750 the paper came full circle. In just over two decades, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* slowly shiftedfrom supporting individual testaments, and encouraging their readers to do the same, to rejecting any evidence that was not firmly grounded in Scripture and Church tradition. However, this was clearly not the immediate result of the cult's bizarre turn toward spiritual violence. The *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* never condemned the entire convulsionary movement. The paper continually held that the convulsions were divine, but that some people acted outside the divinely-imposed regulations. As late as 1749 the paper published a letter written by the bishop of Auxerre, in which he claimed that the biggest problem with Montgeron's work was that it failed to recognize that the *secours* posed "a very great risk to one's health, when one is not bound to convulsions." [49]The condemnation was not of the violent actions of the convulsionaries per se, but of violent actions by people who pretended to have convulsions. The *Nouvelles*' support of this stance suggests that it was not the actions of the convulsionaries which turned the paper against their cause. On the contrary the paper seems to have no longer trusted that these people were not convulsionary impostors. The *Nouvelles* *ecclésiastiques* concluded this article by claiming that "We benefit from this occasion to exhort anew and with the most vivid instances the people who well wish to contribute to the *Mémoirs*, to make us pass on only facts that are absolutely certain." [50]From this period on, evidence that was "absolutely certain" was found not in witness reports, but in hagiographies, Biblical narratives, and theological treatises. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Nouvellistes replaced the authority once given to the people with Scriptural precedence and tradition.

Conclusion: The Paper, the People, and the Internalization of Piety

Although the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* came to reject the violent actions of the convulsionaries by the 1740s, the larger editorial shift away from reliance on witness testimony cannot simply be explained as a side effect of convulsionary extremism. Human testimony only gradually faded from the articles of *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques.* The papercontinued to print reports of miracles through the early 1740s, with the last recorded report in 1746. Like the earlier reports, they aimed to prove the authenticity of these miracles by means of witness reports. Between the mid 1730s and the mid 1740s, these reports decreased dramatically. Between 1733 and 1736 there were forty-one articles in the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* that contained miracle reports, while between 1743 and 1746 there were only eight. [51]Thus, during the same period in which the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* slowly grew more critical of the convulsionary movement due to its increasingly apparent break with Church tradition, it also slowly came to ignore the once celebrated miracles based upon witness testimonies. Since miracle accounts continued to be published until 1746, it is clear that this shift from a reliance on human testimony to a reliance on Church tradition was not the immediate result of convulsionary extremism, which arose in the early 1730s. Furthermore, the primary editor of the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, Jacques Fontaine de la Roche held his position from 1728 until 1762, which makes it extremely unlikely that this shift was the result of a shift in newspaper personnel. [52]

In recent years, historians such as Catherine Maire and Dale Van Kley have argued that the lack of reception to these events and the decline of support for the cult was the result of the rise of incredulity throughout this period. [53] While a failure to report miracles may have been the result of a variety of factors, including a general shift toward incredulity, sometimes deemed "dechristianization," it may also indicate a shift among those whose faith remained intact. That is to say, perhaps some people were actually becoming more incredulous of their fellow man than of supernatural phenomena. In the last few decades, historians have begun to stress a general trend of internalization of piety in eighteenth-century France. Most notably, John McManners has both combined and challenged various aspects of the "dechristianization" thesis. He claims that much of the evidence used by historians such as Michel Vovelle and Pierre Chaunu to support this thesis, in fact, indicates a "refinement in the religious outlook.” [54] His study affirms that the people of eighteenth-century France slowly rejected some of the more ostentatious and public forms of piety. However, McManners believes that this abandonment indicates an internalization, rather than a depletion of piety. He combines some elements of the “dechristianization” thesis with other developments such as the increase in family affection and concludes that people's views toward death were becoming increasingly internal and personal, and that religious rituals surrounding death were becoming increasingly private and “lonely.” He believes that this indicates a shift toward the internalization of piety in eighteenth-century France. [55]

The decline of religious associations is one of many signs of this internalization. These religious associations “exposed the idea of the corporate life and responsibility of Christians and their hope for a corporate salvation.” [56] Throughout the eighteenth century, this hope waned. The desire for corporate salvation was displaced by an internalized view of individual salvation, based upon personal adherence to Church rules and attention to Scripture. The shift toward Church tradition and away from individual testimony in the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* suggests another manifestation of this trend. Throughout the eighteenth century, many French people came to rely less on corporate salvation, and to believe that their personal salvation was not inextricably linked to that of the community. Likewise, it appears that the Nouvellistes came to believe that an individual’s judgment should not rely on that of others.

However, this trend seems to have extended beyond the publishers of the Nouvelles. This paperwas widely-distributed and attempted to appeal to a wide range of readers in order to convert them to the cause of the *appelants.* While it is impossible to tell exactly how well these works were received, to some extent the numbers speak for themselves. That between 4,000 and 6,000 copies were distributed to eager readers each week suggests that the message being expounded was more or less accepted. As the historian Robert Scribner has suggested, propaganda in any age is unlikely to stray far from the most general values and concerns of its intended audience. [57] Furthermore, there is evidence that people felt a great deal of attachment and loyalty toward the paper. For example, when the archbishop Vintimille demanded that his pastoral letter condemning the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* be read from the pulpit in all of the capital's parishes, twenty-one priests refused. [58]Even the cooperation of the clergy could not ensure that of their congregation. When in May 1732 the recently appointed curé of the Jansenist parish of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas tried to read Vintimille’s mandamus against the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* during his homily, the entire congregation left the church “leaving the curé to listen to himself.” [59] Many people who had exposure to the newspaper clearly accepted and even defended the message of the editors. The paper was overtly polemical and its information sometimes bordered on gossip. Nevertheless, "it was gossip powerfully slanted, a weekly foray of revenge against the majority party in the Church which was victorious in everything except winning the hearts of the public." [60] As the historian Dale Van Kley has noted, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* "found—indeed, even created—its own public." [61] While the "public" regularly evoked in articles may have been initially rhetorical, over time the *Nouvelles* managed to procure a real one. The *Nouvellistes* tried ostensibly to arouse as much support as possible for the *appelant* cause, and thus, they attempted to take positions to which they believed their audience would be receptive.

Furthermore, since the journal published extensive criticisms of their own positions, often without refutations, it is apparent that they were aware of, and responsive to their audience. After the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* published its condemnation of Montgeron's work in 1741, it received a series of criticisms, which were reported in a series of articles later that same year. The paper dedicated an entire four pages to a letter written on behalf of the author of *Reflections on the Miracle at Moisy*, in which the author insisted that the miraculous cures that occurred as the result of convulsions were no less divine than those that had occurred at the cemetery of Saint-Médard a decade earlier. He claimed that it was "a false maxim to claim that it is always necessary to prefer the certain to the uncertain." [62] In July of 1742, apparently jaded by the debate and these criticisms, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* decided "to abandon judgment to the public." [63] This concession was the result of various criticisms from other highly learned writers, which suggests that the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* did attempt to match its stances to those of the "public."

Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the Nouvellistes were not exclusively responsive to their learned readers. In at least one case, the number of miracles reported in one year resulted in a increase in enthusiasm for the trustworthiness of individual testimonies in the following year. Between 1731 and 1734, the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* printed an average of twenty-five articles on miracles each year. These numbers dropped significantly in 1735 and 1736, and these two years combined produced only nine articles on miracles. However, the next year the number shot up again, from three in 1736 to fifteen in 1737. The preliminary discourse for the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* published in January 1738 contained the most avid defense of witness testimony in the history of the paper.The *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* looked forward to a time when,

far from treating healed people as criminals of the State, far from exiling the witnesses of their healing, both are heard without partiality by those to whom we know it pertains, that (without needing to know how to read) the most simple, the least instructed amongst the Faithful informs himself with care in his Province, in his city, in his Parish, in his family, in his neighborhood. That he sees if his compatriot, his friend, his neighbor, his relative did not suddenly recover his sight, his speech, his hearing, the usage of his limbs, or the reestablishment of health that all human resources could not have rendered him, and that it was done by the invocation of an *appellant* and by the application of his relics. In a word, that one has recourse with honesty and simplicity to this *report* so decisive and so persistent that God surrendered to himself, in returning it to his Truth, which has been cast into obscurity by the Constitution, BY MEANS OF THE TESTIMONIES: all the clouds dissipate. [64]

While the surge of miracle reports in 1737 resulted in increased enthusiasm for the reports in 1738, this enthusiasm was short-lived. From this time on there were no more energetic defenses of the testimonies of the people. Between 1738 and 1746, there was an average of four articles on miracles reported each year. As the number of miracles reported decreased, so too did the enthusiasm of the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* for witness testimonies. In the 1740s, references to the miracles and the testaments of witnesses disappeared from the preambles and they focus exclusively upon *Unigenitus* and the persecution of the Jansenists. By the 1750s, when the miracle reports had ceased entirely, the preambles focused almost exclusively on Biblical stories. Instead beginning the year's issue with a call to the public to judge the marvels around them, they begin with moral lessons of Scripture and they consistently related their hardships and successes to those found in the Bible. [65] The entire tone of the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* seemsto have followed the ebb and flow of popular enthusiasm for miracles and witness reports. Thus, there was a symbiotic relationship between the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* and its intended audience, the common lay faithful.

The *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*'support of witness testimonies seems to have correlated with the people's enthusiasm for them. There is no indication that the newspaper singled out certain miracles and failed to report others. Since the *Nouvellistes* continued to report some miracles throughout the 1740s, it is unlikely that they would not have reported all of the miracles, as they had a decade earlier.A combination of factors, including an editorial shift in the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, the paper's large and receptive audience, and a general decrease in witness reports of miracles, all between 1728 and 1750, indicates that the intended readers of the Nouvelles ecclésiastiques, that is the common lay faithful, were becoming less credulous of human testimony. Furthermore, these factors suggest another shift taking place alongside “dechristianization”: a shift away from reliance upon the judgment of others in matters of faith, and toward reliance upon Church tradition. The increased stress of individual judgment based upon Church tradition in the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* was part of the larger trend toward internalization of piety throughout the eighteenth century.

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Lettre à Monsieur ***: Au sujet du concours qui se fait à Saint Médard, & d'un Ecrit intitulé,

Dissertation sur les Miracles, & en particulier sur ceux qui ont été operez au Tombeau de M. de

Paris, en l'Eglise de S. Médard de Paris; avec la Relation & les preuves de celui qui s'est fait le

troisième Novembre 1730, en la Personne d'Anne le Franc de la Paroisse de S. Barthelemy,

Paris, 1731.

Nouvelles ecclésiastiques ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la constitution Unigenitus. Paris &

Utrecht, 1728-1803.

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[1] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Stephen Buckle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 102.

[2] Hume, *Enquiry,* 102.

[3] Hume, *Enquiry*, 109.

[4] Hume, *Enquiry*, 110.

[5]Robert B. Kreiser, *Miracles, Convulsions, and Ecclesiastical Politics in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 82-83.

[6] Kreiser, *Ecclesiastical Politics*, ix-xi.

[7] These are descriptions from various police reports, quoted in Brian Strayer, *Suffering Saints: Jansenists and* Convulsionnaires *in France, 1640-1799* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 245.

[8] Kreiser, *Ecclesiastical Politics*, ix-xi.

[9] Catherine Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard: miracles, convulsions et prophéties à Paris au XVIIIe siècle.* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1985), 112.

[10] Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires*,15-16.

[11] Kreiser, *Ecclesiastical Politics*, 269-271.

[12] Kreiser, *Ecclesiastical Politics*, 251-252.

[13] Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires,* 155.

[14] Kreiser, *Ecclesiastical Politics*, ix-xi.

[15] Conciliarists believed that the highest authority in the Church was an ecclesiastical council, not the pope.

[16] William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (New York: Saint Martin’s Press, 2000), 45-46.

[17] Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 95.

[18]Nouvelles ecclésiastiques ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la constitution Unigenitus, January 1728, *Discourse*, 2. From this point forward the title will be shortened to *NNEE*.

[19] Bryan Strayer, *Suffering Saints:* Jansenists and Convulsionnaires *in France, 1640-1799* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 172.

[20]John McManners, Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France: *Volume II,* The Religion of the

People and the Politics of Religion (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 426.

[21] Strayer, *Suffering Saints*, 172.

[22]Cyril B. O'Keefe*, Contemporary Reactions to the Enlightenment, 1728-1762: A Study of three critical journals: the Jesuit* Journal de Trévoux, *the Jansenist* Nouvelles ecclésiastiques, *and the secular* Journal des Savants (Geneva: Slatkine, 1974), 21.

[23] Strayer, *Suffering Saints*, 245.

[24] Calculations are based upon how many entries there were under the title “miracles” in the *Tables de Matières* of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* for the years 1728-1762, 297-313. This does not include the numerous entries of a similar nature found under “convulsions” and “M. de Pâris” for the same years.

[25] *NNEE*, June 17, 1731, 125.“Elle contient de si grands éxemples de vertus, des faits si merveilleux & si récens, une penitence si rare, des caracteres de prédestination si marques; elle est tellement à l'épreuve de la critique & de la malignité du siècle, fondée sur des preuves si intéressantes, sur des témoignanges si évidens, si sensibles, si près de nous, si difficiles à contredire, & si aisés à vérifier, qu'on ne peut la lire sans en être touché.”

[26] Ibid.

[27] Quoted in Kreiser, *Ecclesiastical Politics*, 172-173.

[28] *NNEE*, August 26, 1731, 165.

[29] *NNEE*, June 17, 1731, 125.

[30] *NNEE*, May 16, 1732, 93. The playwrights portray the miracles as the effect of "séduction"and as "impostures payées par une cabale pour séduire le peuple."

[31] Ibid. "C'est ce qu'on appelle à Paris être catholique & archicatholique; un esprit de vertige ou de fanatisme a brouillé TOUTES LES CERVELLES de cette grande ville."

[32] Ibid.

[33] Kreiser, *Ecclesiastical Politics*, 125.

[34] Lettre à Monsieur ***: Au sujet du concours qui se fait à Saint Médard, & d'un Ecrit intitulé, *Dissertation sur les Miracles, & en particulier sur ceux qui ont été operez au Tombeau de M. de Paris, en l'Eglise de S. Médard de Paris; avec la Relation & les preuves de celui qui s'est fait le troisième Novembre 1730, en la Personne d'Anne le Franc de la Paroisse de S. Barthelemy*, Paris, 1731, 2. "Il n'est pas nécessaire d'être convaincu pour parler avec assurance, il ne faut qu'avoir beaucoup d'envie de tromper."

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 24. "Vous rougirez enfin d'une Secte qui se jouë de la Religion, qui achete les miracles, & qui paye à deniers comptans la séduction du Public"

[37] *NNEE*, December 4, 1733, 197.

[38] *NNEE*, December 6, 1732, 224. "Elles sont devenues très-singulieres dans plusieurs Convulsionaires, par les nouvelles circonstances qui se sont jointes aux mouvements extraordinaires déja connus."

[39] *NNEE*, December 6, 1732, 224.

[40] *NNEE*, March 8, 1734, 41. He claims that it is "très-injuste de mépriser, ou de juger en général les Convulsionaires."

[41] Ibid. "Recherchons ... la vérité: prions Dieu de dissiper les nuages: attachons-nous aux REGLES, qui ne sont pas sujettes à illusion."

[42] *NNEE*, January 21, 1742, 9. The author claims that they cannot help but see an author who "dans des tems critiques, & dans des événemens remplis d'obsucrités, n'a

pas senti combien il est essentiel d'une part de ne se conduire que suivent les Regles de l'Ecriture & de la Tradition; & combine d'autre part les égaremens de ceux qui ont eu le malheur de s'écarter de ces saintes Régles, doivent nous rendre cironspects & précautionnés.”

[43]Ibid. “C'est ainsi que dans ce qui est dit en plusieurs endroits des vertus *du plus grand nombre des Convulsionnaires*, des personnes d'ailleurs très-favorables, & même, s'il est permis de s'exprimer ainsi, très-affectionnées aux convulsions, trouvent une éxagération involontaire sans doute, mais réelle.”

[44]Ibid., 9-10.

[45] *NNEE*, July 1, 1742, 102.

[46]*NNEE,* June 14, 1743, 85. The author claims that this work is “si claire, si solide, si instructive, si conforme aux Règles & aux principes que l'on a toujours suivis dans l'Eglise, que nous croyons pouvoir espérer d'une part qu'elle ne donnera lieu à aucune réplique raisonnable, & de l'autre, qu'elle fixera irrévocablement toute incertitude sur l'objet de cette affligeante controverse.”

[47] *NNEE*, December 4, 1750, 195. “La cause de la Vérité ne dépend point des personnes. Elle tire toute sa force des fondemens sur lesquels il a plu à Deu de l'apuyer, & qui ne sont autres que l'Ecriture & la Tradition.”

[48]*NNEE*, December 4, 1750, 195-196.

[49]*NNEE*, September 11, 1749, 148. The bishop claimed that there was “*un très-grand risque pour son salut*, quand on n'est pas attaché aux convulsions.”

[50] Ibid. “Nous profitons de cette occasion pour exhorter de nouveau & avec les plus vives instances les personnnes qui veulent bien nous fournir des Mémoires, à ne nous faire passer que des faits absolument certain.”

[51]These numbers are based upon those entries found under “miracles” in the *Tables Matières* for the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques,* which covers the period 1728-1762, pp. 297-313. The earlier set of years specifically excludes the years of 1731 and 1732 before the closing of Saint-Médard, when the number of reports was extremely high, since it would skew the degree to which articles on miracle reports had declined. The latter set of years was chosen essentially because it shows how uncommon these articles were in the last three years of their being reported by the *Nouvellistes.*

[52] O'Keefe, *Contemporary Reactions*, 10-11.

[53]Van Kley, *Religious Origins*, 98-99. Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires*, 220-221.

[54]John McManners, *Death and Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes To Death in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 242. On dechristianization see Pierre Chaunu, *La Mort à Paris, XVIe, XVIIe, et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1978) and Michel Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIIIième siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978).

[55] Ibid., 463-465.

[56] McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, 233.

[57] Robert Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1-13.

[58] O'Keefe, *Contemporary Reactions*, 21.

[59] Van Kley, *Religious Origins*, 96.

[60] McManners, *Church and Society II*, 425.

[61]McManners, *Church and Society II*, 425 .

[62]*Lettre sur le 2e Tome de M. de Montgeron censurédans les Nouvelles Ecclesiastiques du 21 Janvier 1742,* in *NNEE*, 1742, p. II."C'est une fausse maxime de prétendre qu'il faille toujours préferer le certain à l'incertain."

[63] Ibid., 102.

[64] *NNEE*, January, 1738, 1-2. "Que loin d'enlever comme des criminels d'Etat les personnes guéries, loin d'éxiler les témoins de leur guerison, les uns & les autres soient entendus sans partialité par ceux à qui il appartient d'en connoître, comme l'éxigent les loix civiles, l'équité naturelle & les SS. Canons...Que (sans qu'il soit besoin de savoir lire) le plus simple, le moins instruit d'entre les Fideles s'informe avec soin dans sa Province, dans sa ville, dans sa Paroisse, dans sa famille, dans son voisinage; & qu'il voie si son compatriote, son ami, son voisin, son parent n'a pas subitement recouvré la vue, la parole, l'ouïe, l'usage de ses membres, ou le rétablissement d'une santé que toutes les resources humaines n'avoient pu [sic] lui rendre, & cela par l'invocation d'un Appellant, & par l'application de ses Reliques: en un mot qu'on ait recours avec droiture & simplicité à ce témoignage si décisif & si persévérant que Dieu se rend à lui-même, en le rendant à sa Vérité proscrite en

obscuroie [sic] par la Constitution, AD TESTIMONIUM: tous les nuages se dissiperont."

[65] See the preambles for the years 1740-1753 in *NNEE*.

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