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and Ecclesiastical Politics in Early
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B. Robert Kreiser

CHAPTER IV



From Miracles to Convulsions

WHILE the *anticonstitutionnaire* party—lawyers and judges, priests and theologians—was raising serious questions about Vintimille's treatment of the Anne Lefranc case and attempting to combat his *mandement* in various ways, a strong and unfavorable public outcry against the decree was beginning to be heard in the streets of Paris. Beyond the world of erudite controversy, legalistic maneuvering, and polemical encounters, scurrilous satires and vicious lampoons were appearing which attacked the archbishop for his alleged insensitivity to the spiritual needs of the Paris faithful, for his failure to provide true pastoral care. Sarcastic songs and verses were recited or posted on walls all over the city.¹ Not that Vintimille had ever been held in very high esteem among his Parisian flock, who continued to compare him—unfavorably—to his predecessor, the pious Cardinal Noailles. Indeed, on his very arrival in the capital in 1729, some anonymous wit, alluding to the girth and the reported gluttony of the new prelate, scribbled some graffiti on the door of the archbishop's palace: "Saint Antoine [i.e., Noailles] est mort, il nous a laissé son cochon." Another wag added: "On ne trouvera pas un archevêque comme le cardinal, en vent-il mille."² Mocking references to "Archbishop Ventre-mille" had also abounded since Vintimille's first days in Paris. In addition to the mounting abuse being heaped upon him by his resentful flock, there were growing fears

¹ BA, MS 2056, "Pièces des vers sur le mandement de l'archevêque de Paris qui défend de croire aux miracles," *passim*. See also verses cited by Charles-Henri Manneville, "Une vieille église à Paris: Saint-Médard," *Bulletin de la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève et ses abords*, 4 (1903-1904), p. 226.

² Barbier, II, 82-83 (October 1729). For satires which greeted Vintimille's accession to the archdiocese of Paris, see BN, MSS Fr., MS 12800, fols. 340-44, and BPR, L.P. 444, Nos. 55-56, 79. Some of these have been published in Raunié, v, 172-76. Cf. also the famous *Sarcellades*, ou *Recueils de poésies burlesques sous le nom des habitans de la paroisse de Sarcelles, dans le diocèse de Paris*, a series of devastating lampoons, written in a local patois, which appeared in both manuscript and print at various intervals beginning in 1729; they were ostensibly prompted by the archbishop's dismissal of the Jansenist *curé* of Sarcelles (see BN, MSS Fr., MS 25564). The police *gazetins* (BA, MS 10161) also contain passing satirical references to Vintimille.

that Vintimille, not satisfied with interdicting the Pâris cult through a pastoral decree, was preparing to interfere more directly with the popular devotions at Saint-Médard by having the body of François de Pâris exhumed and reburied at the Hôtel-Dieu. Furthermore, according to a rumor circulating on the evening of July 25, the day after the formal publication of his decree at the parishes of Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Médard, the police were under orders to wall up the entire cemetery during the night.³ Although these rumors proved entirely groundless, they were yet further indication of what the people—dependent on the gossip mills for much of their news—were prepared to believe of Vintimille and the Paris authorities in the wake of the archbishop's recent pronouncement. A political and ecclesiastical *cause célèbre* to the *anticonstitutionnaires*, the Pâris cult was now to become a spiritual *cause célèbre* to the pious lay faithful whose religious values and expectations the archbishop of Paris had apparently violated and challenged.

Although from the perspective of François de Pâris' devoted followers Vintimille's decree may have appeared to be a callous and unconscionable act, from the archbishop's vantage point and from that of the Church his decree was perfectly consistent with official doctrine and episcopal practice. The Council of Trent, in the course of reaffirming as articles of faith the existence of saints and the importance and efficacy of venerating them, had also sought to regulate hagiological devotion.⁴ It had granted to the episcopate principal responsibility for "instruct[ing] the faithful diligently in matters relating to [the] intercession and invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, and the legitimate use of images." Concerned that cults accorded to unorthodox, unworthy, or even mythical figures be uprooted, that "all superstition . . . be removed, all filthy quest for gain eliminated, and all lasciviousness avoided," and that "the celebration of saints and the visitation of relics" be conducted in the proper spirit and with the appropriate sense of decency and decorum, the council stipulated that "such zeal and care should be exhibited by the bishops with regard to these things that nothing may appear that is disorderly or unbecoming and confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing disrespectful. . . ." To forestall or eradicate any such abuses and to ensure that its orders were "faithfully observed," the council decreed

³ Journal of De Lisle, July 1731, AN, U-376.

⁴ H. J. Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (London, 1941), pp. 215-17 (Session xxv, Dec. 3-4, 1563).

that no one is permitted to erect or cause to be erected in any place or church, howsoever exempt, any unusual image unless it has been approved by the bishop; also that no new miracles be accepted and no relics recognized unless they have been investigated and approved by the same bishop, who, as soon as he has obtained any knowledge of such matters, shall, after consulting theologians and other pious men, act thereon as he shall judge consonant with truth and piety.

Thus, as Vintimille protested on many occasions, in pronouncing against the Pâris cult, he was only fulfilling his episcopal duty and carrying out a responsibility spelled out explicitly in the Tridentine canons and decrees. Like many bishops before him, however, Vintimille was to find that any attempt to overturn popular modes of belief and practice was fraught with serious difficulties.

For over a century and a half since Trent, the Gallican Church had been preoccupied with establishing doctrinal orthodoxy and uniformity of religious practice, with codifying the official worship of the Catholic faith, and with eliminating all challenges to its undisputed sway as exclusive depository, interpreter, and dispenser of the divine mysteries. Through pastoral decrees, episcopal ordinances, and synodal statutes the bishops of France had undertaken a major campaign to purge the faith of all "profane" or "superstitious deviations" and to denounce all unauthorized, excessive, or ambiguous manifestations of popular devotion, individual and especially collective. With the sanction of the civil authority, they also attempted to impose on all the faithful a system of prescribed duties and periodic religious obligations, while suppressing certain "unorthodox" rituals, placing restrictions on pilgrimages, denying the veneration of uncanonized saints, and in general "turning collective Christians into individual ones."⁵ This process of regularization and purification (or "Christianization") was accompanied by a large-scale effort to raise the moral and intellectual level of the clergy, to reform the liturgy, to reconstruct and improve the condition of the

⁵ John Bossy, "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe," *Past and Present*, No. 47 (May 1970), p. 62. Writing of analogous developments in early modern England, E. P. Thompson speaks of the Church's efforts to "impose upon the people . . . a rigmarole best calculated to inculcate the values of deference and order . . . to enforce that particular ritual method of living which makes the people most serviceable and least disobedient to their masters" ("Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context," *Midland History*, 1 [1971-72], p. 51). In these efforts the Church received considerable support from the crown, as, for example, with the edict of 1671, which upheld the authority of the bishop to forbid the laity to go on pilgrimage without his express permission.

churches, and to undertake evangelizing missions among the benighted populations in the kingdom.⁶

In addition to trying to extend the Church's control over every sphere of religious life and to elevate the spiritual tone of its message and the quality of its messengers, a principal goal in all these efforts had been to overcome popular "ignorance" and "credulity," to transform the popular religious consciousness, and to foster a new sense of the sacred as well as a new order and respectability in popular religious activity. There was never any thought in all this of trying to eliminate all the "magic" from the Catholic faith. On the contrary, for in claiming dignity for itself and in seeking to justify its institutional authority, the Church had always pointed to its own comprehensive system of supernatural aids and its own peculiarly powerful and successful forms of magic, and it would continue to do so.⁷ However, in the process of attempting to suppress the extraecclesiastical sources of magic, of which it naturally disapproved, the clerical establishment displayed a certain psychological insensitivity to the practical concerns and aspirations of large numbers of the faithful. While the Church continued to sanction and dispense various "supernatural remedies" of its own, the ecclesiastical authorities had become less adaptable, less accommodating, less open to the myriad (but frequently uncontrolled and undisciplined) forms of popular devotion which over the centuries had helped sustain the ordinary believer during times of hardship and adversity. Although recent studies have shown that the official religion of the eighteenth century was not so cold, formal, or barren as has frequently been alleged, nevertheless, the Church of that period did provide less room for the kinds of para-liturgical spiritual activities which had traditionally appealed to the masses of Christians.⁸ As the Church tried to sub-

⁶ Louis Pérouas, "La pastorale liturgique au 17^e siècle," *Mélanges de science religieuse*, 23 (1966), pp. 30-44. See also the same author's "Missions intérieures et missions extérieures françaises pendant les premières décennies du 17^e siècle," *Parole et mission*, 7 (1964), pp. 644-59; *Grignon de Montfort, les missions* (Paris, 1966); and *Ce que croyait Grignon de Montfort et comment il a vécu sa foi* (Paris, 1973).

⁷ For an extended discussion of Catholic "magic," see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971), pp. 25-50. Cf. also the debate between Hildred Geertz, "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 6 (1975), pp. 71-89; and Thomas, "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, II," *ibid.*, pp. 91-109.

⁸ Pérouas speaks of "Une Eglise qui se sclérose" (*Ce que croyait Grignon*, pp. 10-12), while Pierre Deyon emphasizes the "contraste entre le dynamisme de l'Eglise catholique dans la première moitié du 17^e siècle et son engourdissement au 18^e!" (*Amiens, capitale provinciale: Etude sur la société urbaine au 17^e siècle* [Paris-The Hague, 1967], p. 425).

stitute a more formal, regularized religion for the one which these people lived and esteemed, as its institutionalized forms of worship became increasingly dissociated from popular forms of piety, the "moods of festivity and joyful ecstasy" as well as the spirit of creativity and spontaneity which characterized much popular observance were all but eliminated from "the religious life of official post-Tridentine Catholicism."⁹

The post-Tridentine Church no doubt achieved great success in its efforts to institute a whole range of liturgical, educational, and administrative reforms, to establish a more orderly, uniform system of worship, to create a more effective, centralized, and better disciplined hierarchical structure, and to impose on the people a stricter code of religious behavior and a system of parochial conformity.¹⁰ In general, however, the Catholic Reformation, accomplished principally by and for a spiritual, cultural, and social elite and placing particular emphasis on legislative, administrative, and institutional matters, had not fully penetrated the traditionalist popular mentality. Indeed, though the Church, supported by the intrusive surveillance of the secular power, did manage to establish a higher level of outward conformity to certain of its behavioral prescriptions, the ecclesiastical authorities encountered great difficulty in attempting to wean the people away from their customary patterns of religious observance.¹¹ Efforts to legislate changes in religious attitudes and to impose on the people new forms of thought and behavior went largely unheeded, not simply out of a spirit of defiance or perverse obstinacy on the part of the masses (though active,

⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkaus with Heiko A. Oberman, Vol. x of *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought* (Leiden, 1974), p. 309.

¹⁰ Jean Delumeau, *Le Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire* (Paris, 1971), pp. 256-92, provides a very useful summary and assessment of the Church's efforts at "Christianization." See also Louis Trénard, "Le catholicisme au 18^e siècle, d'après les travaux récents," *L'information historique*, 26 (1964), pp. 53-65; and *idem*, "La vie religieuse au 17^e siècle," *ibid.*, 31 (1969), pp. 23-29, 66-72.

¹¹ Delumeau, *Catholicisme*, pp. 323-30; *idem*, "Au sujet de la déchristianisation," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 22 (1975), pp. 52-60; and *idem*, "Ignorance religieuse et mentalité magique sous l'ancien régime" (Paper presented before the annual meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies, Ottawa, March 1972). On the vexed subject of "dechristianization," see also Gabriel Le Bras, "Déchristianisation: Mot fallacieux," *Cahiers d'histoire*, 9 (1964), pp. 92-97; René Rémond "La déchristianisation: Etat présent de la question et des travaux en langue française," *Concilium*, 7 (1965), pp. 131-36; and Michel Vovelle, "Etude quantitative de la déchristianisation au 18^e siècle: Débat ouvert, tabou ou dépassé?" *18^e siècle*, 5 (1973), pp. 163-72.

purposive resistance to the Church's strictures was certainly not uncommon), but largely because these people did not always comprehend the revised message now being preached to them and because they were fundamentally unprepared for the radical intellectual and psychological reorientation demanded of them. Despite the Church's efforts to define, to regulate, and to discipline all religious beliefs and practices, the lines dividing the orthodox from the heterodox, the sacred from the profane, piety from superstition, faith from credulity, tended to remain blurred and indistinct. The longstanding tensions—the cultural discrepancies—within Christianity between "popular" and "official" religion remained unresolved. Old beliefs and old routines continued to exercise a powerful grip on the popular mind, both rural and urban, well into the eighteenth century.¹²

The popular "style of religion," like the popular "world view," was never consciously articulated or formulated and never developed into a fully integrated or unified system.¹³ Though not always or even neces-

¹² Cf. Deyon, *Amiens*, pp. 385-90, 424-25, et passim; Kaplow, pp. 111-20; and Jeanne Ferté, *La vie religieuse dans les campagnes parisiennes (1622-1695)* (Paris, 1962), pp. 336-69. Among contemporary works on popular "superstition" the following are especially useful: [Jacques d'Autun], *L'incrédulité savante et la crédulité ignorante, au sujet des magiciens et des sorciers* (Lyon, 1671); Jean-Baptiste Thiers, *Traité des superstitions selon l'Écriture sainte, les décrets des conciles et les sentiments des saints et des théologiens*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Paris, 1697-1704); and Pierre Lebrun, *Histoire critique des pratiques superstitieuses* (Rouen, 1702).

¹³ But cf. Thompson, pp. 51-55. In the absence of any single work of synthesis that provides for early modern France the integrated view of popular religious beliefs that Keith Thomas does for Tudor-Stuart England, one must piece together any analysis from various partial studies. In addition to the works cited above, nn. 7-12, the following have been particularly useful in dealing with this subject: Hervé Barbin and Jean-Pierre Duteil, "Miracle et pèlerinage au 17^e siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 61 (1975), pp. 246-56; Marie-Hélène Froeschle-Chopard, "La dévotion populaire d'après les visites pastorales: Un exemple, le diocèse de Vence au début du 18^e siècle," *ibid.*, 60 (1974), pp. 85-99; Thérèse-Jean Schmitt, *L'organisation ecclésiastique et la pratique religieuse dans l'archidiaconé d'Autun de 1650 à 1750* (Autun, 1957); Louis Trénard, "L'histoire des mentalités collectives. Les pensées et les hommes. Bilans et perspectives," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 16 (1969), pp. 652-62; *idem* and Yves-Marie Hilaire, "Idées, croyances et sensibilité religieuses du 18^e siècle au 19^e," *Bulletin de la Section d'histoire moderne et contemporaine du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, fasc. 5 (1964), pp. 7-27; M. Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1973); François Lebrun, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou aux 17^e et 18^e siècles. Essai de démographie et de psychologie historiques* (Paris-The Hague, 1971); Alain Lotin, *Vie et mentalité d'un Lillois sous Louis XIV* (Lille, 1968); Robert Sauzet, "Miracles et Contre-Réforme en Bas-Languedoc sous Louis XIV," *Revue d'histoire*

sarily incompatible with the "official" modes of belief, "popular religion" provided an alternative, and often more satisfying, means of dealing with the mysterious forces—malign and benevolent—in an uncertain, incomprehensible universe, an approach which could and frequently did bypass the institutional Church entirely and often disregarded its theology as altogether irrelevant. More (and perhaps less) than a formal creed or code, the religion of the masses represented the faith of living persons, a religion which they themselves experienced and which they ordinarily transmitted and preserved through oral tradition and daily practice. It was a religion which possessed its own logic and coherence and which they found particularly appropriate to their lives and to their way of apprehending the world. Involving a characteristic mixture of orthodox and "superstitious" (that is, para-Christian and pagan) activities and beliefs, this syncretic Catholicism corresponded to the spiritual aspirations and psychological needs of a people who did not always derive full emotional satisfaction from the formal

de la spiritualité, 48 (1972), pp. 179-91; *idem*, "Pèlerinage panique et pèlerinage de dévotion: Notre-Dame de Rochefort au 17^e siècle," *Annales du Midi*, 77 (1965), pp. 375-97; Marc Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault: Culture savante et traditions populaires* (Paris, 1968); Victor-Lucien Tapié et al., *Retables baroques de Bretagne et spiritualité du 17^e siècle: Etude sémiographique et religieuse* (Paris, 1972); P. Deyon, "Mentalités populaires, un sondage à Amiens au 17^e siècle," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 17 (1962), pp. 448-58; André Latreille, "Pratique, piété, et foi populaire dans la France moderne au 19^e et 20^e siècles," in *Popular Belief and Practice*, ed. G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker, Vol. 8 of *Studies in Church History* (Cambridge, Eng., 1972), pp. 277-90; Jean Chatelus, "Thèmes picturaux dans les appartements de marchands et artisans parisiens au 18^e siècle," *18^e siècle*, 6 (1974), pp. 309-24; R. Lecotté, "Méthodes d'enquêtes pour les cultes populaires," *Revue de synthèse*, 78 (1957), pp. 367-89; Gérard Bouchard, *Le village immobile: Sennely-en-Sologne au 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1972); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc* (Paris, 1966); Robert Mandrou, *De la culture populaire aux 17^e et 18^e siècles: La Bibliothèque bleue de Troyes* (Paris, 1964); *idem*, "Littérature de colportage et mentalités paysannes aux 17^e et 18^e siècles," *Etudes rurales*, 15 (1964), pp. 72-85; *idem*, "Spiritualité et pratique catholique au 17^e siècle," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 16 (1961), pp. 136-46; Geneviève Bollème, *La bibliothèque bleue: Littérature populaire en France du 17^e au 19^e siècles* (Paris, 1971); *idem*, *Les almanachs populaires au 17^e et 18^e siècles: Essai d'histoire sociale* (Paris, 1969); *idem*, "Littérature populaire et littérature de colportage au 18^e siècle," in *Livre et société dans la France du 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1965), pp. 61-92; Alphonse Dupront, "Formes de la culture de masses: De la doléance politique au pèlerinage panique (18^e-20^e siècles)," in *Niveaux de culture et groupes sociaux* (Paris-The Hague, 1967), pp. 149-70; *idem*, "Problèmes et méthodes d'une histoire de la psychologie collective," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 16 (1961), pp. 3-11; Henri Platelle, *Les Chrétiens face au miracle. Lille au 17^e siècle* (Paris, 1968); and Bernard Groethuyssen, *Origines de l'esprit bourgeois en France: L'Eglise et la bourgeoisie* (Paris, 1927).

services of the Church and the prescribed forms of liturgy they were authorized to practice. The fact that the official doctrine did not generally approve of their brand of Catholicism rarely deterred them. With remarkable earnestness and tenacity, and with great respect and reverence for supernatural power, they clung to a wide range of devotional activities, many of them initiated by the laity and practiced independently of any priestly sanction or mediation. They purchased their little books of piety (especially those which circulated in the famous *Bibliothèque bleue*),¹⁴ recited a great variety of prayers and formulae, participated in a comprehensive range of religious processions, rituals, and ceremonies, and collected relics, crosses, images, and other holy objects reputedly consecrated by prayers and benediction. In their attempt to maintain their religion of symbols, gestures, and actions—a religion of tactile, visual, and aural experiences and sensations—such items served as palpable objects of the faith, indicating, so to speak, the "real presence" of their belief, their direct contact or encounter with God.

For all the efforts of the post-Tridentine Church to channel the religious energies of the faithful in more orthodox directions, the *menu peuple* (even the most loyal, compliant, and conscientiously docile among them) had thus managed to cling to their own special sense of the sacred, a *crédulité ignorante* through which they expressed their aspirations as well as their profound disquietude. By means of such frequent reaffirmations of their faith, they could also feel hopeful of God's continuous protection, especially when they were faced with great danger, frustration, or misfortune. In a world that was penetrated and suffused with unseen supernatural influences, a world where regular medical practitioners were frequently unavailable or ineffectual and "incurable" illnesses and incapacitating disabilities were rife, recourse to the saints—wonder-working heroes both past and present—continued to be an especially important part of the popular religious culture. Indeed, as in the case of François de Pâris, the *menu peuple* continued with unbounded faith to venerate a whole host of individuals who had died in the odor of sanctity but who had not yet been beatified or canonized—except by popular acclaim—and hence had no status within the Church. To these pious folk the saints were familiar and easily accessible celestial friends, powerful and benevolent pro-

¹⁴ Among other things the *Bibliothèque bleue*, which included a substantial number of canticles, sermons, saints' lives, and descriptions of pilgrimages and processions in its stock of popular literature, defined for the use of the lower classes the corpus of a religion reduced to simplified prescriptions and requirements. See the works of Mandrou and Bollème cited in n. 13, above.

tectors, whose intercession they felt confident of obtaining. To them, moreover, sainthood still needed but one proof: the miracle, a phenomenon which had always exercised a tremendous fascination on the popular mentality and one which many of them claimed to have experienced themselves or at least to have witnessed with their very own eyes. Through the years certain shrines and sanctuaries acquired a popular reputation as sacred places where miraculous cures and other supernatural favors could be obtained by persons who declared their unbounded faith in God and their devotion to the individual saint who represented Him here on earth. The pilgrimage to these widely scattered holy sites, many of which had never obtained official consecration, was a principal outlet for popular piety and one of the most common examples of collective devotion in this period. Under the circumstances, therefore, most of the faithful regarded the formal canonization procedures of the Church as unnecessary, if not utterly irrelevant, to the establishment and acclamation of a true saint and to his or her continued veneration. What is more, they had demonstrated more than once that they were prepared to oppose episcopal efforts to stifle their devotions and to resist clerical encroachments upon the autonomy of their religious universe.

Such views, attitudes, and habits of mind were no doubt shared, at least in part, by a substantial proportion of the participants in the Pâris cult. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the faithful should have regarded Vintimille's *mandement* enjoining further observances at Saint-Médard as an unwarranted and disquieting intrusion on a sacred activity. It is no less surprising that the archbishop's decree should have failed to deter the deacon's legion of followers from proceeding with their devotions uninterrupted. The stage had been set for a major confrontation between two competing, and increasingly incompatible, modes of religious sensibility. Vintimille's particular concerns, even as revealed in his pronouncement of July 15, 1731, seem to have been focused on the need to preserve and protect his episcopal authority, including his responsibilities as supreme arbiter and "censor" of the faith of his flock—responsibilities which he saw being challenged. Only indirectly, if at all, did he reveal much concern for the spiritual or emotional requirements of those in his charge.¹⁵ His experience,

¹⁵ Throughout his long and extensive correspondence with Cardinal Fleury, Vintimille rarely expressed any concern about the pastoral duties of his office or about his possible failure to deal adequately with the spiritual requirements of the faithful. Respect, order, honor, obedience—these were what had continued to preoccupy the archbishop almost exclusively ever since his arrival in Paris. Cf. the indictment of Vintimille contained in the *IV^e Sarcellade* (1736), BN, MSS Fr., MS 25564, fol. 330.

outlook, and temperament had left him unprepared to cope with what he encountered at Saint-Médard. As the archbishop was to discover, however, such solid commitment as the people at Pâris' grave had already exhibited was not easily shaken. Indeed, the most direct and dramatic evidence of the popular attitude toward the decree—and, indirectly, toward Vintimille's precious authority—came at Saint-Médard itself, where the *mandement* had the exact opposite of its intended effect.

Whereas no more than two dozen alleged miracles had taken place between May 1727 and the spring of 1731, that is, between the death of François de Pâris and the appearance of the Anne Lefranc *Relation*, their number and their publicity increased dramatically in late July and August. Indeed, some seventy miracles reportedly took place in the course of 1731 alone, most of them occurring after the publication of Vintimille's controversial decree, which served to give Pâris' thaumaturgic powers greater notoriety than ever.¹⁶ A "general practitioner," the deacon had gradually acquired the reputation of being able to cure a wide variety of functional as well as organic disorders, including many diseases of an obviously somatic nature, none of which had responded to available medical treatment. The physical ills which he apparently healed or at least alleviated ranged from several kinds of nervous disorders and psychomotor disturbances to serious and debilitating diseases or infections, disfigurements from accidents, ill-mended fractures or dislocations, hideous sores and lingering cancers, blindness and deafness (complete as well as partial), and various degrees of contracture or paralysis. Relatively rare was the individual whose malady or disability was of quite recent origin. Many of M. Pâris' "patients" had been afflicted with their debilities from birth or at least since childhood; most had suffered for anywhere from several months to a few years. From the data that have survived, however, there appears to be no correlation between the duration of a person's reported affliction and the time required to obtain a cure. Although some patients were cured immediately the first time they appeared at Saint-Médard, and others required a few months, generally the times varied from several days to three or four weeks, the cures taking effect only by degrees or perhaps after a certain delay. Of course, many unfortunate people (how many we shall never know, since only the suc-

¹⁶ See *NNEE*, *passim*; BPR, L.P. 482, No. 2; and various *recueils des miracles* published throughout the 1730s. What follows is based primarily on these sources as well as on a large number of *anticonstitutionnaire* tracts and treatises.

cesses were recorded) were not cured at all, despite long and earnest supplications, while even among those who were "cured" the results were not always permanent. Neither the speed of the cure nor its completeness mattered very much to the faithful, however. A gradual improvement in the patient's condition over a long interval of time was often accounted a miracle. Some claimed to be cured when they had experienced only a temporary or partial remission of symptoms. These individuals remained convinced of the "cure" even after they had suffered a relapse. To be sure, certain of the ailments from which they had been suffering were what modern medical science would describe as self-limiting debilities, ones from which a natural or spontaneous recovery might ordinarily have been expected.¹⁷ Some were clearly chronic or periodic maladies, normally subject to intermittent or temporary remissions. Others were no doubt psychosomatic in nature.¹⁸ At a time when medical treatment frequently consisted of "bleeding, blistering, purging, cupping, [and] cauterizing," it is perhaps not surprising that some patients left alone as incurable by their doctors eventually recovered their health.¹⁹ Such retrospective observations and

¹⁷ Some contemporary medical writers were already ascribing many of these phenomena to natural causes (at times for polemical purposes, that is, in order to deny the "miraculous" character of the cures that did take place). See, for example, *Dissertation physique sur les miracles de M. Pâris, dans laquelle on prouve que les guérisons qui se font à son tombeau ne sont que les effets des causes purement naturelles, et qu'elles n'ont aucun caractère des vrais miracles* (n.d.).

¹⁸ On the general problem of "faith cures," see Louis Rose, *Faith Healing* (Harmondsworth, 1971). On the specific question of the Saint-Médard cures, see the interesting, though dated, analyses in Jean-Martin Charcot, "La foi qui guérit," *Revue hebdomadaire*, 7 (December 1892), pp. 112-32, and Julien Noir, "La foi qui guérit à Saint-Médard. A propos d'un portrait du diacre Pâris," *Bulletin de la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève et ses abords*, 6 (1909-12), pp. 69-82. Noir's article is based on an examination of an *estampe* of 1731 or 1732 showing a portrait of M. Pâris surrounded by a bay wreath with forty-one leaves, on each of which was related a brief account of a miracle obtained at the tomb. For an analysis of miraculous cures in various medieval contexts, see the articles by Finucane; Pierre-André Sigal, "Maladies, pèlerinages et guérisons au 12^e siècle. Les miracles de saint Gibrien à Reims," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 24 (1969), pp. 1,522-39; and Ernest Wickersheimer, "Les guérisons miraculeuses du cardinal Pierre de Luxembourg (1387-1390)," *Comptes rendus du 2^e Congrès international de l'histoire de la médecine* (Evreux, 1922), pp. 371-89.

¹⁹ Renée Haynes, *Philosopher-King: The Humanist Pope, Benedict XIV* (London, 1970), p. 123. Haynes's book contains an illuminating discussion of the monumental efforts of Cardinal Prospero Lambertini (Benedict's name before his elevation to the papacy) to codify Church doctrine and procedures on the questions of miracles and canonization (*ibid.*, pp. 96-150). Lambertini's efforts, which acquired a special urgency as a result of the phenomena then being observed at Saint-Médard, culminated in his famous *De servorum Dei beatificatione et bea-*

diagnoses are of course pretty much beside the point.²⁰ A whole range of illnesses and infirmities which had heretofore baffled the doctors had in fact been more or less cured at the deacon Pâris' grave, and to the average, unsophisticated mind of the eighteenth century, it was perfectly reasonable to account such cures as miraculous.

But the quantity and quality of these supposed cures left many observers, especially among the cult's numerous *constitutionnaire* detractors, more than just a little skeptical. Indignant opponents of these phenomena criticized the incomplete, partial, and gradual character of many of them. More significantly, they charged that the alleged cures were pious inventions, consciously contrived impostures.²¹ The frequency and seriousness of such charges, already made by Archbishop Vintimille in the Anne Lefranc case, prompted *anticonstitutionnaire* supporters of the cult to be scrupulously careful to check on all reports first before recording or announcing them.²² To protect themselves still further against accusations of fraud or excessive bias and credulity, they established in the sacristy of the church at Saint-Médard a "bureau of verifications," composed of a dozen or more medical experts who were assisted by various lay officials from the parish and by priests from the diocese. This panel of doctors and surgeons provided constant on-the-spot examinations to ascertain the nature of the disability when the sufferers arrived and to determine the character of the cure (if any) before they departed.²³ Though their activities were

torum canonizatione, 4 vols. (Bologna, 1734-38). Cf. also the analysis of Jean-Denys-Bernard Gorce, *L'oeuvre médicale de Prospero Lambertini (Pape Benoît XIV), 1675-1758* (Bordeaux, 1915).

²⁰ As Keith Thomas has observed, "The historian who attempts to investigate the working of the magical healers of an earlier age is . . . led into the paths of speculative psychology in which his competence must necessarily fail him." The study of the "mental and perceptual processes" involved in these supposed miracles "must be left to the psychologist and the psychic researcher." "But it is clear that these healing agencies were not necessarily ineffective or fraudulent" (*Religion and Decline of Magic*, pp. 211, 595). For a discussion of some of these issues, see the works cited in n. 18 above; see also the works cited in Finucane, p. 6, n. 36.

²¹ Cf. the views of the nineteenth-century critic, Picot, I, 235-36.

²² *Histoire des miracles et du culte de M. Pâris. Avec les persécutions suscitées à sa mémoire et aux malades qui ont eu recours à lui. Pour servir de suite à la Vie de ce saint diacre*, rev. ed. (1734), p. 140.

²³ Police reports of Aug. 6 and 15 and Sept. 24, 1731 (BA, MS 10196); [Poncet Desessarts], *XII^e Lettre de M.*** à un de ses amis, au sujet de la Consultation contre les convulsions* (1735), p. 25. Though the abbé Desessarts claimed that the unidentified "medical experts" were honest, conscientious, and completely disinterested observers, it is hard to believe they were not sympathetically predis-

denounced by the authorities,²⁴ those in charge of this makeshift, unofficial operation continued to carry out their responsibilities with great care, registering only those cures which appeared authentic and certain. They took depositions from as many eyewitnesses as they could find and even did follow-up investigations of the supposed *miraculés* after they left the cemetery—precautions which enabled them to dismiss all cases where there was any evidence of imposture and which also lent greater credibility to those that they did authenticate.²⁵

Little wonder that the crowds in attendance at Saint-Médard had begun to swell, that—*constitutionnaire* strictures notwithstanding—the expectation of miracles was more marked than ever.²⁶ More importantly, however, these crowds had also begun to change somewhat in their basic character. Most of the people who went to Pâris' tomb during the first years of the cult had come from various parts of Paris, especially from the parishes surrounding Saint-Médard. In addition, although bedridden invalids from nearby *faubourgs* were usually carried there on litters, many of the deacon's prospective patients, if their physical condition permitted, made their way to the cemetery alone and unaided. But in an increasing majority of cases the patient was

posed. The critical role of "medical expertise" in certifying cases of miraculous cures (or of witchcraft) is a subject that merits further study. The remarks of Michel de Certeau, "Une mutation culturelle et religieuse: Les magistrats devant les sorciers du 17^e siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 55 (1969), pp. 300-19, esp. pp. 309-10, are pertinent here: "Partisan ou critique, le médecin devient le recours. C'est l'homme de la 'science' et de l' 'expérience'—les deux ne faisant qu'un. Devant le diabolique, comme devant le miracle, son 'témoignage' ou son 'attestation' est nécessaire, et contre lui on fait appel non au théologien, mais à un autre médecin." Cf. Platelle, pp. 35-37.

²⁴ Duval (*prêtre habitué* at Saint-Médard) to Hérault or Fleury, Aug. 11, 1731, BA, MS 10196.

²⁵ See the abbé d'Étemare to Fouillou, Sept. 30, 1733, *ibid.*, MS 5784, p. 30. Cf. the remarks of A. Gazier, "Le frère de Voltaire," p. 634. Unfortunately neither these registrars nor the later compilers and publishers of the miracles ever indicated the nature of the criteria under which they were operating in their efforts to determine the authenticity of various cures. Hence it is impossible to know what proportion of the cures were actually recorded and how many were eliminated as nonmiraculous (or for what reasons); similarly we do not know how many would-be *miraculés* M. Pâris failed to satisfy and thus what proportion of the whole his successful "patients" represented.

²⁶ "Il y va plus de malades que dans un hôpital," remarked Marais in late August (iv, 272 [Aug. 22, 1731]). According to Barbier, on July 25, 1731, the day after Vintimille's decree was actually published, the crowds were so great that, "dès 4 heures du matin, on ne pouvoit pas entrer dans l'église de Saint-Médard, ni dans le petit cimetièrre où est le tombeau (ii, 170 [July 1731])."

now coming in the company of others, often in large entourages of fellow pilgrims, including family, friends, even acquaintances, who offered assistance where needed and also provided moral support and the strength of additional prayers. By midsummer, moreover, as word of François de Pâris' thaumaturgic powers spread beyond the capital and as the saintly deacon came to achieve a national reputation, substantial numbers of worshipers and would-be *miraculés* were arriving from ever greater distances, sometimes accompanied by a local notable or two. A few of those who undertook long and arduous journeys to reach the shrine were actually cured en route.²⁷

The changes at Saint-Médard were by no means merely quantitative. The posthumous activities of the deacon had also come to attract an increasingly diverse group of people, many of them in no particular need of a cure or in any way associated with individuals who were. Persons of quality and wretched commoners, the notable and the anonymous, rich and poor, young and old, men and women, the able-bodied and the crippled, the healthy and the sick, Parisians and provincials—all rubbed elbows with one another, most of them joining in common prayer and devotion and bearing public witness to their faith. To be sure, not all of those present at the cemetery had come for purely spiritual reasons or out of genuine religious conviction. Some people, no doubt dissatisfied with the drab, predictable, often miserable existence they led, must have welcomed the opportunity to add an element of novelty or excitement to their lives. In addition, they were very likely happy for the chance to see and to mingle with elements of French society that they rarely encountered, except at a distance. Like certain of the *menu peuple*, many of the individuals of rank and quality who attended and left their carriages blocking the adjacent streets came only as spectators.²⁸ Attendance at Saint-Médard was becoming the fashionable pastime for these people, many of whom, for want of something better to do, perhaps saw it as an entertaining distraction, a means of diversion from their ordinarily dull routines; here they could examine at first hand the spectacle about which all Paris had been buzzing. In addition to these curiosity-seekers, however, there were quite a few nobles and other individuals of social or professional standing who became devout participants in the Pâris cult.

²⁷ In addition to the sources cited in n. 16 above, see the daily police reports issued from Saint-Médard throughout this period; BA, MS 10196.

²⁸ The princess de Rohan, the duchess de Montbazou, and the count de Romeze were in attendance on September 29. At various other times such additional social luminaries as the countess de Grignan, the duchess d'Antin, the marchioness de la Branche, the duchess de la Trémoille, and the marquis de Seignelay made appearances at Saint-Médard (*ibid.*, *passim*).

Some, perhaps like des Grioux in Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* (published just at this time), had embarked on a quest for values and meaning in a world without established norms or ultimate values and may have thought to find these in the religious observances at Pâris' tomb. Others, already Jansenist or *anticonstitutionnaire* by conviction, had rather different reasons for partaking of the devotions. Whatever their motives or pretexts, the presence of these *gens de condition* was duly noted by those in attendance and lent a certain air of respectability and a special kind of excitement to the proceedings.

A number of these pious "persons of rank and quality" made significant contributions to the religious activities at the cemetery. The count de Clermont, for example, purchased dozens of portraits of François de Pâris that were being sold by local vendors and had them distributed to the faithful worshipping alongside him.²⁹ Several of his fellow nobles as well as numerous magistrates and lawyers from the Parlement of Paris assisted various patients who needed transportation to Saint-Médard or who required help once they got there. Many of them also served as witnesses to the cures effected at the deacon's grave.³⁰ Of all the important personages to participate in these services, however, perhaps the most notable was Marie-Thérèse de Bourbon, princess de Conti. The princess, who had been suffering for the past four or five years from progressive blindness which had not responded to medical treatment, made several appearances at Saint-Médard in the confident hope of obtaining a cure. On one occasion over four hundred people reportedly crowded around her as she leaned against the tomb; they all knelt with the princess, adding their prayers to hers.³¹ Although the cure they collectively besought through Pâris' intercession was not forthcoming, these visits of Mme. de Conti proved to be a moving ex-

²⁹ Police report of July 29, 1731 (*ibid.*).

³⁰ In fact, a very substantial number of the witnesses were persons of some social or professional standing. Among the some 370 notarized certificates referred to in the second *recueil des miracles*—which contains accounts of thirteen cures effected in 1730-31—nearly 40 percent are from individuals who may be characterized as *Noblesse, Clergé, or Professions libérales*. Another 40 percent can be described as *Maîtres et marchands* or *Bourgeois de Paris, roturiers sans profession* (the socio-professional categories are those developed in Adeline Daumard and François Furet, *Structures et relations sociales à Paris au milieu du 18^e siècle* [Paris, 1961]). Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine what proportion of all witnesses to the Pâris miracles—or of active participants in the cult—these figures represent; there were obvious propaganda advantages to including testimony from a disproportionate number of prominent or high-status individuals in documents such as these printed *recueils*.

³¹ See esp. the police report of Aug. 17, 1731, BA, MS 10196. See also Barbier, II, 177 (August 1731).

perience for those in attendance and were later commemorated in a popular *estampe* sold around the parish and throughout the streets of Paris.³²

Even though personal attendance at the shrine was generally believed to be more beneficial (if not always fruitful), one did not necessarily have to be present at Saint-Médard to obtain a cure through the deacon Pâris. Some persons, totally incapacitated and unable to reach the cemetery under any circumstances, had friends or relatives go to the shrine and invoke the intercession of M. Pâris on their behalf. Others who could attend only briefly or irregularly actually "hired" residents from the parish (usually old women) to say daily novenas for them for a prescribed period of time—and for a specified sum of money.³³ Nor did one have to content oneself with utilizing these various surrogates or proxies, successful though they sometimes were. The ready availability of relics and other reputedly holy objects associated with the saintly deacon meant that M. Pâris could be spiritually present at great distances from his grave and could work his restorative powers on the lame and the infirm anywhere, provided they touched these various items to the affected parts of their bodies. Indeed, as the relics became more widely dispersed, the cult quickly spread offshoots throughout the kingdom, and miracles were soon being reported from Brittany to Provence.³⁴

Many devotees of the Pâris cult naturally had little or no choice but to avail themselves of these various alternative procedures for obtaining the deacon's assistance. Nevertheless, for most of his adherents Saint-Médard and its sacred shrine remained the center of interest, the site where the miraculous cures continued to proliferate and the faithful continued to congregate. Here they shared and sometimes exchanged various relics, manuals of piety, portraits of M. Pâris, and other assorted religious objects.³⁵ They scrawled prayers to and invocations

³² BA, MS 2056, fol. 328.

³³ See, for example, the case of Pierre Lero, who was one of M. Pâris' first successful *miraculés*. According to Lero's own testimony, he paid "12 sols à une pauvre femme demeurante sur l'étendue de la paroisse Saint-Médard . . . de faire des prières pour lui . . . sur le tombeau . . . pendant 9 jours" (1^{er} *Recueil des miracles*).

³⁴ See *Tables raisonnées et alphabétiques des "Nouvelles ecclésiastiques" depuis 1728 jusqu'en 1760 inclusivement*, ed. abbé de Bonnemare, 2 vols. (Paris, 1767), s.v. "Miracles."

³⁵ BA, MS 10196, *passim*. On August 2 the police reported that several priests were distributing—free of charge—bits of wool that had allegedly come from Pâris' mattress and pieces of wood from his bed (*ibid.*; see also BN, MSS Fr., MS 22245, fol. 186).

of the deacon, often on little scraps of paper, and posted them on the walls of both the church and the cemetery. They sang psalms, chanted hymns, or read aloud from pious books. They regaled one another with wondrous stories of cures already effected—stories which served as a source of renewed hope for those still suffering from their afflictions—or joined together in beseeching their beloved saint to work one on them. Finally, they gathered around the tomb with its raised marble slab, under which a few people would manage to crawl and on top of which several would usually be seated. Throughout most of the summer and fall, even when the crowds were tightly packed and access to the tomb became rather difficult, these remained generally orderly gatherings. The atmosphere of course was frequently tense with expectation, and great joy and excitement descended over the assembly whenever a cure was announced. People rushed to see the person cured and a chorus of worshipers chanted *Te Deums* in celebration of the miracle. Such cures, which had had a much more personal character prior to July 1731, now came to be regarded as collective accomplishments, achieved in response to collective prayers. Indeed, one of the most significant, albeit unintended, consequences of Vintimille's decree seems to have been to unite the cult's adherents more closely together and to instill in them an increased sense of sharing in a common purpose and a common experience.

The abandoned crutches and bandages and the dozens of candles burning in the church of Saint-Médard—the votive offerings of grateful devotees—bore mute testimony to the great works which “Saint” François de Pâris had accomplished and would continue to accomplish for some time to come. M. Pâris did not, however, confine his posthumous activities exclusively to the alleviation of bodily afflictions, even though these healing events represented his primary field of action and received the greatest amount of attention. He was also credited with effecting the sudden, unexpected conversions of “dead souls,” of atheists like Boindin de Boisbessin, skeptics like the counselor Carré de Montgeron, and libertines like the Chevalier de Folard.³⁶ Some of these nonbelievers had gone, like many others, merely out of curiosity but stayed on to become devoted participants in the cult. The “admirable

³⁶ On Boindin de Boisbessin, see *ibid.*, MS 12800, fols. 390-91, and his own *Lettre . . . par laquelle il rend compte à M*** de la manière dont Dieu l'a appelé du pyrrhonisme à la véritable religion, à l'occasion des merveilles opérées au tombeau de M. de Pâris* (12 février 1734). On Carré de Montgeron, see Ch. IX below. On Folard, see BN, MSS NAFr., MS 11635, fols. 157, 160, et *passim*, and Jean Godefroy, “Le chevalier de Folard et les Bénédictins de Saint-Germain-des Près,” *Revue Mabillon*, 26 (1936), pp. 114-33, 154-66.

renewal of piety and faith” represented in these various conversions to “the cause of Truth,” noted one *anticonstitutionnaire* writer, was “an edifying and consoling spectacle” for the crowds gathered around the deacon's tomb.³⁷

In addition to the miraculous cures and conversions, Saint-Médard was also the scene of “miraculous punishments” meted out to certain individuals who had come to deride the cult and its devoted practitioners. One case in particular produced an extraordinary sensation. On the afternoon of August 4, Gabrielle Gautier, sixty-year-old widow of Pierre Delorme, visited the cemetery “in a spirit of mocking incredulity.” Feigning paralysis, Mme. Delorme placed herself upon the tomb and pretended to solicit the intercession of François de Pâris. Her action was almost immediately punished, as she was suddenly struck down with real paralysis of the entire right side of her body. Carried off to the Hôtel-Dieu in the midst of a large and excited crowd, who spread the news of this novel portent throughout the parish and beyond, Mme. Delorme quickly repented of her blasphemy. Three days later she confessed her sins in a declaration made before two notaries and in the presence of twenty-six witnesses, including three counselors from the Parlement of Paris, two canons of Notre-Dame, and her own confessor, the avowed Molinist, abbé Chaulin. While printed copies of the declaration were soon circulating in the streets of Paris and large crowds were paying daily visits to the paralyzed widow, Vintimille intervened “to arrest this confusion.” The archbishop revoked Chaulin's powers of preaching and hearing confession in the diocese on the grounds that the priest had authorized Mme. Delorme's declaration in patent disobedience of contrary orders given by the superiors at the Hôtel-Dieu. For her part, the widow Delorme was placed under arrest and kept imprisoned until the following April when, under duress, she was forced to retract her declaration. By that time, however, the published documents had already reached several editions and made a tremendous impact on the public.³⁸

³⁷ *Entretiens sur les miracles*, p. 110.

³⁸ *Déclaration faite par Gabrielle Gautier, veuve de Pierre De Lorme, des dispositions dans lesquelles elle est allée au tombeau de M. de Pâris* (7 août 1731); *Relation de la manière dont Gabrielle Gautier . . . a été frappée d'une paralysie subite . . . , avec un détail des circonstances les plus singulières qui ont précédé et suivi cet événement, recueillies par M. Chaulin, prêtre, docteur en théologie de la Faculté de Paris, confesseur de la malade* (4 décembre 1731); Barbier, II, 171-76 (August 1731); Marais, IV, 268 (Aug. 13, 1731), IV, 272 (Aug. 22, 1731). Vintimille's secondhand account of this entire incident differs markedly from the generally accepted one (letters to Fleury, Aug. 8 and 10, 1731, BM, MS 2357, pp. 469-74).

Although additional *punitions miraculeuses* (or “countermiracles”) of varying degrees of severity were visited upon a number of others who sought to defame the memory of M. Pâris,³⁹ none was to achieve the notoriety of the Delorme case. In the meantime, while God was supposedly showing His great displeasure with these acts of blasphemous mockery, the deacon’s devoted adherents, too impatient to await divine justice in other cases of irreverence or profanity, were taking their own direct action against several of the cult’s more troublesome detractors. The faithful were unwilling to tolerate any slurs whatsoever on their saint’s holy name and engaged in many a lively public dispute on this matter.⁴⁰ Anyone who dared to challenge the authenticity of the miracles ran the risk of a physical beating at the hands of Pâris’ more zealous followers. Indeed, on more than one occasion they demonstrated quite graphically the fierceness with which they were prepared to defend their cult. Most of these incidents took place at Saint-Médard and involved hostile ecclesiastics, several of whom suffered rather severe thrashings and barely escaped serious bodily harm.⁴¹ In the most spectacular incident, this one at the Palais de Justice, an abbé who had uttered some disparaging remarks against M. Pâris found himself beaten up and his priestly cloak torn off before he was chased away amid loud hoots and jeers.⁴²

The faithful made it clear that they did not appreciate the presence of unfriendly elements at Saint-Médard. Nor did they take very kindly to the presence of the police in their midst. Almost from the beginning of the Pâris cult the activities occurring in and around Saint-Médard had attracted the attention of Hérault’s men and even that of the lieutenant-general himself.⁴³ Since 1729, in addition to the regular contingent of officers and spies who patrolled the neighborhood along the rue Mouffetard and adjacent streets, at least one guard had been stationed near the cemetery and assigned the task of reporting daily on all

³⁹ See *Lettre écrite au sujet de la mort surprenante du garçon chirurgien de Monsieur Lombard, nommé Jean de la Croix (16 janvier 1732)*. The sudden, unexplained death of the young surgeon’s aide was widely attributed to his “outrageously blasphemous mockery” of the Pâris cult. Other somewhat less spectacular incidents occurred between 1731 and 1737 (see Mathieu, pp. 405-11).

⁴⁰ See, for example, police report for Jan. 13, 1732, BA, MS 10196.
⁴¹ Reports for Aug. 3, 5, and 6, and Sept. 24, 1731 (*ibid.*); Journal of De Lisle, July 11, 1731, AN, U-376. One incident involving a Capuchin priest gave rise to a series of pointed satirical verses (Mathieu, p. 222 and n. 1).

⁴² Barbier, II, 185 (August 1731). In recounting this incident the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* observed, no doubt with some relish: “ce n’est point là l’esprit des Défenseurs de la Vérité; mais qui peut retenir ce qu’on appelle le peuple!” (Oct. 2, 1731, p. 186).

⁴³ Dorsanne, II, 499.

that happened, identifying those in attendance, and including women, they were participants in the religious services or just curious on-lookers. Yet, even though the police continued throughout this period to exercise an intrusive surveillance of local activities, their impact had remained rather limited. For months now the handful of guards posted at the cemetery had faithfully discharged their responsibility—as they would for years to come—but with little or no discernible effect on the religious observances. To be sure, so long as the royal government did not attempt to enforce with legal sanctions Vintimille’s July 15 proscription of the cult (the only official pronouncement to date), and so long as the public assemblies at the cemetery remained basically orderly and peaceful, there was not much the police could do. For the time being, therefore, their continued surveillance and occasional harassment remained little more than a minor irritant to the faithful, a ubiquitous and unpleasant reminder of the official attitude of disapproval toward the cult activities. But the mere presence of these officers failed to interrupt the routine of the people worshipping at M. Pâris’ tomb.

One function which did keep Hérault’s men somewhat busy during this period was the occasional arrests of individuals who hawked various proscribed articles in the cloisters and environs of Saint-Médard.⁴⁴ Although there is no evidence of actual manipulation of the cult for financial gain, the religious devotions had in fact given rise to a certain degree of commercial exploitation.⁴⁵ A host of shrewd and enterprising peddlers installed themselves just outside the cemetery and at other strategic locations in the neighborhood, selling a wide variety of merchandise. A number of these vendors specialized in the sale of assorted relics, some of which they claimed to have obtained from M. Pâris’ very deathbed. Others peddled *estampes*, hymns or canticles, Jansenist pamphlets, and, when it became available in midsummer, copies of a pious biography of the saintly deacon.⁴⁶ Still others sold small packets of

⁴⁴ Arrests are reported, for example, in BA, MS 11154, fols. 207-11, 213-17, 307-24; Ravaissou, XIV, 285, 306, *et passim*; NNEE, Jan. 24, 1732, p. 15, March 5, 1732, p. 44, *et passim*; Barbier, II, 168-69 (July 1731), and II, 212 (November 1731); and Marais, IV, 314 (Oct. 31, 1731).

⁴⁵ BA, MS 10196, *passim*, but esp. reports for July 30, and Aug. 4, 6, and 7, 1731.

⁴⁶ An excellent collection of contemporary *estampes* may be found in BA, MS 2056. Most of the books being sold at Saint-Médard (and circulated all over the kingdom) were inexpensive pocket-size works, specifically intended for popular consumption. None of these, of course, had been regulated for their orthodox content, since every step in the production of such works—from composition to publication to distribution—involved a clandestine operation.

irt taken from around François de Pâris' grave or containers of water supposedly drawn from a well at the deacon's last residence on the rue des Bourguignons. One resourceful scribe, later joined by two other copyists, set up a table inside the cemetery on which he composed and tirelessly wrote out dozens of prayers; he sold these to the faithful at prices scaled according to the length and quality of the particular prayer. Although the police subjected many of these hawkers to occasional harassment and intimidation and even took some of them into custody while confiscating their wares, most of these vendors no doubt still turned a tidy profit for their efforts.⁴⁷

These assorted salesmen were not the only ones to benefit financially from the money which the masses of pilgrims brought into the community. The nearby cafés and cabarets swarmed with people eager for something to eat or drink and a convenient place to sit down and talk. Shopkeepers in the area likewise did a thriving business, as did those with rooms to rent to the weary pilgrims who had traveled considerable distances to visit the shrine. This sudden prosperity also proved a great boon to the church of Saint-Médard, its coffers now filled as never before. However, although vast numbers of the local population rejoiced in the notoriety and spiritual and financial benefits the cult had thus conferred upon the parish and its residents, the ecclesiastical officials at Saint-Médard did not share in this general enthusiasm. On the contrary, for the observances at M. Pâris' tomb had for many months been taking place in an atmosphere of mounting parochial tensions and embittered relations between the *curé* and his parishioners—a situation which the astonishing success of the Pâris cult had served only to exacerbate.

The trouble at Saint-Médard, initially unrelated to the observances of the Pâris cult, began in October 1730, when, as part of his campaign to purge the diocese of "subversive" and "insubordinate" parish priests, Archbishop Vintimille obtained the dismissal of the abbé Pommart, *curé* of Saint-Médard, along with two of his colleagues, the abbés Blondel of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont and Sallart de Lormois of La Villette. All three priests, whom Cardinal Fleury reportedly described as members "of a cabal which was [acting] no less against the State than against the Church,"⁴⁸ were canons-regular in the Congregation of Sainte-Geneviève, from which they had originally been appointed to

⁴⁷ Not all vendors were arrested since, as Barbier pointed out, some were "femmes des soldats aux gardes [qui] . . . n'avoient rien à craindre des archers du faubourg Saint-Marceau, par suite de leurs maris" (II, 169 [July 1731]).

⁴⁸ *NNEE*, Nov. 17, 1730, p. 244.

their respective benefices. Their formal dismissal had thus devolved upon their superior, the abbot of Sainte-Geneviève, who was initially reluctant to do the archbishop's bidding.⁴⁹ Prodded and pressured by Fleury and by Secretary of State Maurepas, who commanded him to cooperate with Vintimille, the abbot finally agreed to discharge the three *curés* and to name three other members of his congregation to fill their places.⁵⁰ The archbishop, in concert with the abbot, then exiled the priests to three separate monasteries, without even formally charging them.

While Pommart and his colleagues were protesting the legality of these revocations, Vintimille and the abbot of Sainte-Geneviève were busy examining candidates for the three vacant posts. After several *génovéfain* priests under consideration as replacements for the deposed *curés* declined to accept the appointments,⁵¹ three men were finally found who agreed to serve. The priest selected to replace Pommart at Saint-Médard was the abbé Jacques Coëffrel, formerly *curé* of Saint-Georges-sur-Loire, a staunch and imperious *constitutionnaire* who was expected to bring order and respect for authority back to the beleaguered parish.⁵² However, the almost universally hostile public reaction which greeted this whole affair, from Pommart's dismissal to Coëffrel's appointment, guaranteed that these expectations were not to be realized.

Father Pommart's faithful parishioners resented what they regarded as the unjust and arbitrary removal of their legitimate pastor, to whom they felt a strong attachment. The worthy Pommart, *curé* since July 1723, had worked very hard on behalf of the appeal, had been close to François de Pâris in the deacon's last years, and had enthusiastically supported the Pâris cult. More important, perhaps, he had also been a dedicated priest and a model pastor, one whom the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* later singled out for his deep devotion to the moral, spiritual, and material welfare of his flock.⁵³ It was this dedication which seems to have won him the love and respect of most of the faithful in his charge, who refused to recognize the new appointee as their rightful *curé* and declined to attend his installation ceremonies, which took place in early December.⁵⁴ In this opposition they received strong en-

⁴⁹ Vintimille to Fleury, Oct. 20, 1730, BM, MS 2357, pp. 241-42.

⁵⁰ *NNEE*, Nov. 17, 1730, p. 244.

⁵¹ A certificate of refusal from Fr. Simon de Lespine, *curé* of Nanterre, may be found among the *pièces justificatives* published with the miracle of Louise Coirin (Louis-Basile Carré de Montgeron, *La Vérité des Miracles* [1737], I, v-vi).

⁵² Brongniart, pp. 73-74.

⁵³ See his obituary, July 17, 1754, p. 114.

⁵⁴ Even more dramatic evidence for the popular attitude on this matter may be found in an undated report from the police officer Pillerault: "Un particulier

couragement from the sacristan and the *marguilliers* (churchwardens) of the parish. The outspoken Collet Desroches, elected in February 1726 to the office of sacristan, a post which involved responsibility for taking care of the church and its sacred furnishings, was in the forefront of the resistance to Pommart's dismissal from the very first. While encouraging the faithful to boycott Coëffrel's formal investiture, which had to be conducted by clergy from outside the parish, he went so far as to refuse to provide the new *curé* with the vestments for the performance of Mass.⁵⁵ The sacristan was to persist in these and other obstructive tactics for some time to come, causing Coëffrel more than a little inconvenience and discomfort.

In addition to the resistance from the parish faithful and the sacristan, Coëffrel was also faced with opposition from several holdover priests, most of them *anticonstitutionnaires*, who likewise felt a keen sense of loyalty to the abbé Pommart and who resented having to take orders from a superior whose views on ecclesiastical matters were diametrically opposite to theirs.⁵⁶ But by far the most hostile reception accorded the new *curé* came from the churchwardens, or lay administrators, of Saint-Médard. As was common in the *ancien régime*, certain leading families with long ties to the parish and with strong feelings of common interest and a self-conscious sense of solidarity had established virtual dynasties on the *conseil de fabrique* (lay council or vestry). The influential Bouillerot family, an old, established line of modest, respectable master tanners, with strongly Jansenist leanings, dominated the *fabrique* of Saint-Médard at this time and led the resistance to Coëffrel's accession.⁵⁷ Offended at Vintimille's having dismissed Father Pommart without consulting with them or giving them any prior warning, they attacked the revocation as invalid and contrary to the

nommé le Sr. Moreau, maître fourreur, est venu dans le corps de garde à Saint-Médard, dire au Sr. Guignard, sergent et ces gardes en se raillant de M. le Curé, nous navon que faire de curé ny prestres dans notre paroisse, car nous avons résolu entre nous danvoyer nos confessions par lettre à M. Paumard notre curé et il nous renvoye de mesme l'absolution de la pénitence" (BA, MS 10196).

⁵⁵ Brongniart, p. 74.

⁵⁶ A number of these *prêtres habitués*, including the abbés Le Leu and Le Clerc, canon and *curé*, respectively, from the diocese of Laon, had taken up residence in the parish of Saint-Médard after having originally been banished by their own bishops (Vintimille to [Hérault ?], Jan. 17, 1731, BA, MS 10196).

⁵⁷ Of the some fifty to sixty current or former churchwardens who comprised the *conseil de fabrique* as of 1731, eight were members of the Bouillerot family. On the role of the *fabrique* in the *ancien régime*, see Bernard Plongeron, *La vie quotidienne du clergé français au 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1974), pp. 149-52.

rights of the parish and the parishioners.⁵⁸ They also insisted that they would continue to recognize M. Pommart as their legitimate pastor and would always regard the abbé Coëffrel as an intruder and a usurper.⁵⁹ Finally, they announced their determination to go about the business of administering the temporal affairs of the parish as if the post of *curé* were vacant. Nor were these merely idle threats. Within a short time of Coëffrel's installation the *marguilliers*, in violation of longstanding ecclesiastical procedures, refused to provide him with an inventory of the parish holdings. A few weeks later, on December 26, they convoked a general assembly of the *fabrique* at which they elected a new *commissaire des pauvres* without involving Coëffrel in their decision. The *curé*, who was celebrating a High Mass at the time, had not even been informed that such a meeting was scheduled to take place.⁶⁰ The *marguilliers* followed this highly irregular procedure a month later with still another one, when, on January 21, 1731, they elected several new members to their company without inviting Coëffrel to participate in any of their discussions.⁶¹ Though the *curé* appealed for assistance to Vintimille and, through the archbishop, to police lieutenant Hérault and Cardinal Fleury, there was little that the authorities outside the parish could do to stop the Bouillerots and their colleagues, who had only just begun to fight.

Not long after making this series of defiant gestures toward Coëffrel, the *marguilliers* took the dramatic step of lodging a complaint with the *Grand Conseil*, formally protesting the "arbitrary and despotic" dismissal of the abbé Pommart and calling on the council to reinstate him in the parish. The churchwardens' *appel comme d'abus* was supported by a legal brief drawn up the previous December by a panel of nine *avocats* who, basing their arguments on two conciliar *arrêts* of 1679, denied the authority of the archbishop of Paris and the abbot of Sainte-Geneviève to remove a canonically installed *curé* without specifying the grounds for the dismissal or revocation.⁶² Vintimille him-

⁵⁸ Petitions to that effect were circulated throughout the parish and obtained widespread support from the faithful (BA, MS 10171).

⁵⁹ BA, MS 10178 (no fol.); "Mémoire à M. le Lieutenant de Police," Dec. 28, 1730," *ibid.*, MS 10171, 5^e Dossier. Cf. the attitude of the churchwardens of Saint-Etienne (NNEE, Nov. 17, 1730, p. 244).

⁶⁰ This action incensed both Coëffrel and Vintimille, the latter appealing to Hérault to "faire bâtonner et biffer la délibération prise" (Dec. 31, 1730, BA, MS 10196; see also Vintimille to Hérault or Maurepas, Jan. 17, 1731, *ibid.*). The police lieutenant, of course, did no such thing.

⁶¹ This action did win them a stiff reproach from Hérault (NNEE, Feb. 18, 1731, p. 35).

⁶² The *consultation* had actually been prepared on behalf of all three deposed

self-took offense at this appeal and the challenge to authority which it represented. Deeply disturbed at the spirit of "defiance, indiscipline, and disorder" that was rampant in Saint-Médard and concerned about the disrespectful and insubordinate attitude displayed toward Coëffrel, the archbishop demanded that Cardinal Fleury intervene in the case on behalf of the *curé*.⁶³ After extended discussion, the *Grand Conseil* eventually rejected the *marguilliers'* petition. Nevertheless, despite repeated royal commands that they acknowledge the legitimacy of Coëffrel's position and "show him the proper respect and deference owing to someone of his rank,"⁶⁴ the churchwardens persisted in their refusal to do so. They continued relentlessly to challenge the decisions of the authorities, royal, diocesan, and parochial, and even risked prison rather than relinquish their autonomy or abandon what they saw as their rights.⁶⁵

Although the *marguilliers* had lost their appeal, they did not give up the struggle. Their conflict with Coëffrel over various issues of parochial governance was thus to rage on virtually unabated for the next several years,⁶⁶ embittering relations within the parish and eventually becoming caught up in the other fierce debates which had already begun swirling throughout the capital and especially around the tomb of François de Pâris. Indeed, Coëffrel's attitude toward the Pâris cult contributed in no small measure to exacerbating the parochial tensions at Saint-Médard and to elevating the local "tempête sous un clocher" to diocesan, even national, significance.

Almost from the outset, Coëffrel had demonstrated his opposition to the religious devotions at M. Pâris' tomb. Shortly after his arrival the new *curé* expressed the view to his parishioners that "there would soon be an order to close the cemetery."⁶⁷ This barely veiled threat, like others made throughout 1731, was not carried out for quite some time. Nevertheless, the churchwardens and a large proportion of the parish faithful would not abide this ecclesiastical intruder's interference with the observances at "their" holy shrine. Their opposition to Coëffrel on this score was no doubt motivated largely by spiritual considerations: they were concerned primarily with the threatened disruption

curés from Sainte-Geneviève and contained a strongly Richerist defense of the rights of the "second order" (BA, MS 10178). Cf. discussion in *NNEE*, Nov. 29, 1730, p. 252, and that in Brongniart, p. 73.

⁶³ Vintimille to Fleury, April 18, 1731, BM, MS 2357, p. 350, and Vintimille to Fleury, June 9, 1731, *ibid.*, pp. 381-82.

⁶⁴ *Arrêt du Grand Conseil*, June 11, 1731, BA, MS 2056.

⁶⁵ Brongniart, p. 79.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-81; Mousset, pp. 81-92; and Manneville, pp. 74-76.

⁶⁷ Cited by Mousset, p. 83.

of the worship services which the *curé's* offensive remarks seemed to betoken. But a significant element of parochial chauvinism was also clearly involved here. Save for an almost forgotten (and unpleasant) incident in the early days of the religious wars, the parish of Saint-Médard had no prior claims to fame or notoriety. An obscure backwater in a poor, generally overlooked corner of Paris, it had not previously been a pilgrimage center nor was it a site where miraculous cures were known to have taken place. By obvious implication, the parish owed its sudden emergence from obscurity to François de Pâris, whose presence in their midst evoked a strong sense of local excitement and communal pride among the faithful. From the first these people had eagerly rallied around their saint, proudly revered him as a local folk hero, and enthusiastically embraced the cult established in his honor—as they would continue to do for a long time to come.

In addition to experiencing a tremendous sense of local pride and spiritual uplift, feelings which they must have been anxious to sustain, the people of Saint-Médard were no doubt also eager to retain the assorted monetary benefits which had recently begun accruing to the parish. As we have seen, the influx of worshipers into the area had made a major impact on the economic well-being of many individuals in the *faubourg* Saint-Marceau. Shopkeepers, café-owners, vendors, and a whole host of other residents had profited materially from the cult. Like these various private citizens, the churchwardens recognized the pecuniary rewards the cult had bestowed upon Saint-Médard. As administrators of the temporal affairs of the parish, with particular responsibility for overseeing its usually overburdened finances, the churchwardens looked upon the cult as a fiscal godsend. So long as the many hundreds of pilgrims continued to make their way daily to the shrine, the collection boxes in the church would remain filled, and the parish would be solvent and hence better able to handle its numerous financial obligations.⁶⁸

The parishioners and churchwardens of Saint-Médard thus had a major stake, material as well as spiritual, in the continued survival of the Pâris cult and in preventing either Father Coëffrel or Archbishop Vintimille from interfering with the services at the cemetery. Consequently, they continued to ignore official strictures against the cult and to publicize their deacon's celestial achievements, while promoting the

⁶⁸ There were some critics who charged that the *marguilliers'* support of the cult was motivated by pure cupidity. See "Le chef d'oeuvre d'un inconnu ou chanson nouvelle sur l'air des pendus," verse 6, in Hyacinthe Bougeant, *Relation des miracles de saint Pâris avec un abrégé de la vie du saint et un dialogue sur les neuvaines* (1731); and Ravaisson, xiv, 286n.

unauthorized observances at his tomb. In this effort they had the tireless support of Collet Desroches, Coëffrel's arch-nemesis. Deliberately disregarding the *curé's* instructions, the sacristan persisted in encouraging and receiving Mass stipends or honorariums—fees paid for the celebration of Mass for the individual intention of the donor—which he registered at the sacristy. Even after Coëffrel had obtained Desroches' dismissal in late June for insubordination,⁶⁹ the *marguilliers* managed to replace him with another like-minded officer. During the months of July and August the new sacristan, following the procedures of his defiant predecessor, was reported to have registered some 500 to 650 requests for Masses daily.⁷⁰ He also took a major role in the conduct of the devotional services, in the registration of miraculous cures, and in the maintenance of an orderly routine at both the church and the cemetery. In short, given the official parochial opposition at Saint-Médard to these observances, the actions of this handful of proud and tenacious local notables who stood up to the abbé Coëffrel did much to sustain the life of the Pâris cult.

However important, even indispensable, were the efforts of the churchwardens and sacristans at Saint-Médard, their actions would certainly not have been enough to maintain the cult's existence in the face of concerted official hostility had it not been for the resolute and energetic support of the *anticonstitutionnaire* parish clergy. Indeed, the continued activities at the deacon's tomb, conducted in open and deliberate defiance of Vintimille's decree and Coëffrel's animadversions, had the explicit encouragement of a substantial number of *curés* and parish priests from throughout the diocese of Paris. Though the devotees of the Pâris cult still comprised a formally leaderless body, the Paris clergy had come to play a central role in publicizing and sanctioning their activities. In authorizing the veneration of M. Pâris and thereby giving credibility to his thaumaturgic powers, these priests undoubtedly helped strengthen the hope of patients seeking cures through the deacon's intercession and ensured that the number of pil-

⁶⁹ Vintimille himself had become quite concerned with Collet Desroches' activities at Saint-Médard and had been trying for some time to get the government to expel the sacristan from the parish (see Vintimille to Hérault, May [23], 1731, BA, MS 10196, and Vintimille to Fleury, June 9, 1731, BM, MS 2357, p. 381). Despite an initial reluctance, Cardinal Fleury finally agreed to do so, and Desroches was banished from Paris (Fleury to Vintimille, June 11, 1731, BM, MS 2357, p. 383; and Vintimille to Fleury, June 19, 1731, *ibid.*, p. 395).

⁷⁰ Anonymous, undated letter to Hérault, cited in Mousset, p. 84. Novenas had also become so numerous that they were now being registered at the sacristy as well, along with the Masses.

grims continued to swell.⁷¹ Nor did the parish clergy limit their encouragement to mere words. Many ecclesiastics went to the cemetery themselves, often accompanying their parishioners to the shrine.⁷² To judge from the daily police reports from Saint-Médard, the clergy of Paris, both regular and secular, figured very prominently among the participants in the devotions at the deacon's tomb.⁷³ Those present, sometimes as many as forty or fifty at a time, met together regularly in the sacristy or under the charnel house, where they discussed various spiritual matters.⁷⁴ Fulfilling their role as priests, they frequently led their fellow worshipers in reciting prayers on behalf of would-be *miraculés* who besought God, through M. Pâris, to work a cure on their wretched bodies. In addition, some celebrated Mass in the church. Others delivered sermons extolling the virtues of the saintly deacon and exhorting the faithful to model their lives after his. Still others became involved with the verification and registration of cures which Pâris by his intercession had already managed to obtain.⁷⁵

To be sure, much of the vitality of the Pâris cult continued to derive from the dedication and initiative of its lay adherents, many of whom had required little or no priestly prompting before they became devoted adherents of the deacon. Nevertheless, the active, legitimating presence of these numerous ecclesiastics probably served to inspire attendance at the cemetery by additional faithful from Paris and vicinity who might otherwise have hesitated to come because of the refusal of their local priests to grant them permission to do so. The mere presence at Saint-Médard and throughout the diocese of large numbers of sympathetic clergy must have given many such people the

⁷¹ Several *miraculés* testified that their *curés* had specifically urged them to invoke the deacon Pâris (see, for example, the cases of Marie-Anne Tridan, Jeanne-Marguerite Dutilleux, and Marguerite Giroust, found in the third and fourth *Recueils des miracles*, published in 1732).

⁷² The *NNEE* cited the remarks of one Paris *curé*, M. Penet of Saint-Landry, who spoke to his flock in glowing—even hyperbolic—terms of the “truly edifying spectacle” he had witnessed at Saint-Médard: “Ces miracles sont si déclarés et en si grande abondance,” he observed, “que l'on ne voit rien de pareil depuis le commencement de l'Eglise, et que cet événement nous retrace ce que Jésus-Christ faisoit de son temps. Quoique ce Bienheureux ne soit pas encore canonisé, il paroît qu'il a une grande puissance auprès de Dieu: C'est pourquoi je vous exhorte à avoir confiance en lui, et à aller à son Tombeau” (Aug. 10, 1731, p. 159; italics added).

⁷³ See, in particular, the police reports of July 27, July 31, and Aug. 3, 1731, BA, MS 10196.

⁷⁴ Police report of Aug. 18, 1731, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ On these and other priestly activities at Saint-Médard, see *ibid.*, *passim*.

courage to withstand the intimidations of hostile *curés* and confessors. As a result, some actually went to Saint-Médard in blatant defiance of their parish clergy's admonitions against participating in the observances conducted there. A group of disobedient pilgrims from the town of Saint-Denis, for example, issued a blistering attack on their *curé* shortly after he had delivered a sermon denouncing the miracles and person of François de Pâris:

We who are writing to you are neither theologians nor philosophers. Thank God, we know neither Greek nor Latin. But we do know French; and it is [precisely] because we understand it well that we are extremely shocked by your harangues against the memory of a man whose holiness God has manifested by so many prodigies. We complain all the more about your blindness because it is completely willful. Only the hardhearted can possibly oppose the marvels which are bursting forth at the present time.

You say that M. Pâris is damned. It is not enough to assert it; you must prove it. Have you had direct communication from God, or were you present when He judged M. Pâris, so that you can say so assuredly and in such an audacious tone that he is damned? Where do you get such temerity? . . . It is an [act of] cruelty, inhumanity, and barbarity to damn men whom the Church has not yet separated from its communion. . . .

[No matter what you say,] we shall continue to go to Saint-Médard, while waiting for the Archbishop to join us there.⁷⁶

Although the defiant insolence of this letter would be difficult to match in any other document from this period, these people from Saint-Denis were by no means alone in their disobedience. The parish clergy at Saint-Sulpice, a *constitutionnaire* stronghold in Paris, had reportedly threatened to withhold absolution from anyone who went to pray at M. Pâris' tomb. Their parishioners, however, do not seem to have heeded these warnings. Similar results obtained elsewhere in the city. At Saint-Barthélemy (Anne Lefranc's parish), when M. Gouffé, Lair's replacement as *curé*, denounced the deacon Pâris as a heretic and therefore unworthy of reverence and went on to declare Saint-Médard off limits to his parishioners, they simply ignored him.⁷⁷ As Barbier observed, "the people, once impressed, are not easily turned

⁷⁶ Letter to M. Lenoir, *curé* of Saint-Michel, Oct. 12, 1731, *ibid.*, MS 2056, fols. 204-205.

⁷⁷ Journal of De Lisle, July 20 and 22, 1731, AM, U-376. But cf. Vintimille to Fleury, July 22, 1731, BM, MS 2357, pp. 443-44.

around,"⁷⁸ especially, he might have added, since there were refractory priests in abundance all over the city who were eager to support them in their disobedience.

The crucial role which the *anticonstitutionnaire* Paris clergy played in stimulating and sustaining interest in the Pâris cult and in effectively nullifying Vintimille's *mandement* of July 15 is undeniable. But in all of their quite substantial activity on behalf of the Saint-Médard devotions, these priests were by no means acting as wholly disinterested observers or without any thought of partisan advantage. Indeed, although there is little question as to the sincerity of their support for and participation in the cult, and although any suggestion of conscious demagoguery would be difficult to document, one cannot ignore the fact that there was enormous political capital to be made from encouraging the faithful to worship at Pâris' tomb and from publicizing the miracles which took place there. And these ecclesiastics, frustrated by their long and fruitless sparring with Vintimille over the archbishop's refusal to recognize the Pâris miracles, had determined to exploit these phenomena to the full. Much of their "propaganda" campaign came to be centered on the parish level and was directed at the large body of faithful who, though involved in the Pâris cult, had not yet associated the cause of M. Pâris with the *anticonstitutionnaire* point of view.

The great majority of those who continued, despite many obstacles, to make their way to Saint-Médard were still not especially preoccupied with or even capable of understanding the various doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions that had been exercising their more learned and more sophisticated fellow Catholics for the previous two decades. Popular devotion to the memory of François de Pâris began innocently enough and remained essentially independent of any strong or particularly noticeable attachment to the appellant cause to which the deacon had dedicated his last years. To the worshippers at his grave, who from the outset were only vaguely, if at all, aware of Pâris' political persuasions, the cemetery would always remain first and foremost a place of pilgrimage, a source of joyous renewal and vital spiritual sustenance. For them, attendance at Saint-Médard represented a response to the spiritual appeal made by M. François from beyond his grave. They saw the deacon's tomb as the site where miraculous cures performed by their great *ami des pauvres* served as infallible testimony to his saintliness, even though he had not obtained formal canonization. For many of these people the deacon's miracles would never lose their "nonpar-

⁷⁸ II, 170 (July 1731). Referring to M. Pâris, Barbier had earlier remarked that "le peuple le sanctifiera sans cour de Rome, si cela continue" (II, 167).

tisan" character; for them the impulse behind the public observances would continue to be primarily, if not exclusively, a deeply religious one. As we have seen, however, the Paris faithful were by no means oblivious to the ecclesiastical controversies raging throughout the diocese, even if they still did not comprehend many of the issues in dispute. For some years their *anticonstitutionnaire* parish priests had been endeavoring to open their eyes to the seriousness of the debate while trying to win popular sympathy for the appellant cause.⁷⁹ The growing incidence of miracles, along with Vintimille's ill-advised decisions to ignore and then to suppress the Pâris cult without a full-scale inquest, had enabled the appellant clergy to modify and expand its campaign of popular politicization. These *anticonstitutionnaire* ecclesiastics, while they were preaching their sermons to captive congregations, hearing confessions, offering spiritual counsel to those afflicted with various physical ailments, and encouraging attendance at Saint-Médard,⁸⁰ also undertook to "translate" the Pâris cult into political terms for their parishioners, to demonstrate the close connection between the miraculous cures and the deacon's staunch opposition to the bull *Unigenitus*, and in general to raise the level of popular political consciousness.⁸¹ Their task proved to be an easy one, for they appear to have found a most willing and susceptible audience among the large numbers who had already embraced the Pâris cult.⁸² These people were well prepared to view the miracles as a proof for the Jansenist cause, to see Saint-Médard as the place where God manifested His holy truth, and to identify their François de Pâris, the saintly *ami des pauvres*, with the *anticonstitutionnaire* François de Pâris, *défenseur de la foi et martyr pour la Vérité*.⁸³ While the miracles worked through the dea-

⁷⁹ See, in particular, the *Avis aux fidèles de l'Église de Paris, sur ce qu'ils ont à craindre de la part des confesseurs qui acceptent la Constitution "Unigenitus"* (1730), a tract which was so outspoken in its attack on the *constitutionnaires* that the *Grand'Chambre* issued an *arrêt* on Jan. 12, 1731, ordering it suppressed (extended summary and comment in *NNEE*, Jan. 7 and 19, 1731, pp. 7-8, 14-15). Cf. discussion in Chs. I and III, *passim*, above.

⁸⁰ See, for example, police interrogation of Marie Tassiaux, Jan. 18, 1732, BA, MS 11210, fols. 253-54.

⁸¹ Several priests argued the need to "discerner les abus de l'autorité d'avec l'autorité toujours sainte et respectable. . . . Il faut obéir à Dieu plutôt qu'aux hommes" ([Philippe Boucher], *Lettres de M. l'abbé De L'Isle à un ami de Paris, sur les miracles qui s'opèrent par l'intercession de M. de Pâris*, 2nd ed. [Utrecht, 1732], p. 160).

⁸² As Marais observed, "Ceux qui vont à son tombeau disent que c'est le tombeau de la Constitution" (iv, 272 [Aug. 22, 1731]).

⁸³ *Histoire des miracles et du culte de M. Pâris*, pp. iv-v. See also Fourquevaux, iv, 372, and *Réflexions sur les miracles que Dieu opère au tombeau de M. Pâris* (n.d.), p. 33.

con's intercession continued to serve the simple, straightforward functions of curing diseases and ailments, of relieving pain and discomfort, and of providing hope and consolation to the faithful believers, these cures, like the cult being observed to Pâris' memory, had also begun to assume in the popular mind a very definite ideological coloration.⁸⁴

While the *anticonstitutionnaire* parish priests were working to convert parishioners to their cause, and while sizable crowds continued to attend Pâris' tomb, Jansenist theologians and pamphleteers began redoubling their efforts to sustain the propaganda campaign first announced in the *Dissertation sur les miracles*. Indeed, through both pulpit and press the opponents of the Bull stepped up their efforts to exploit the miracles and to give them greater publicity throughout Paris and in the provinces. Having already blatantly violated Vintimille's interdiction of the cult, they now proceeded to ignore other provisions of the archbishop's July 15 decree. Unauthorized accounts of various cures, accompanied by copies of the signed and notarized testimony of witnesses, started to appear in print in considerable numbers. News of the miracles was thus spread more quickly than ever and the *anticonstitutionnaire* message broadcast to the general reading public along with it.

The publication of Vintimille's *mandement* also prompted the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* to display considerably more interest than before in the miracles of François de Pâris. At first, as with the Anne Lefranc affair, the editor had hesitated before reporting any detailed news of the miraculous cures, in large part because certain leading Jansenist theologians continued to harbor serious doubts and reservations, refus-

⁸⁴ One has only to look at the various prayers being offered in François de Pâris' honor to get a sense of how successfully the *anticonstitutionnaires* had "politicized" the cult. One worshiper beseeched the Lord to have pity on "votre Église affligée de tant de maux, tourmentée de tant de persécutions, agitée de tant de disputes" (cited in Manneville, p. 223). Another referred to the "Vérités de foy pour la déffense desquelles votre bienheureux serviteur s'est immolé comme une victime de la pénitence" (BA, MS 10196). Other examples may be found in the 3^e *Recueil des miracles*, pp. 43-44, 53, 58, and in the 4^e *Recueil des miracles*, p. 29. A number of popular songs and verses also demonstrated the ever closer alliance being effected between the followers of M. Pâris and the opposition to the bull *Unigenitus*. On Aug. 30, 1731, for example, the following poem appeared on the doors of parish churches throughout the capital: "Humble et vrai pénitent au sortir du berceau/ Pâris ne peut que prier et se taire./ De la Bulle il pleura le ténébreux mystère,/ Pour elle, à Dieu, s'offrit victime volontaire./ De la Bulle appelant descendit au tombeau,/ Mais un prodige nouveau/ Sa cendre aujourd'hui salutaire/ De la Bulle devient le terrible fléau" (cited in Manneville, p. 225). For an anti-Pâris verse composed in response to this one and posted the next day on the deacon's tomb, see *ibid.*

ing to see in the manifestations at Saint-Médard any definitive sign from God in justification of their appeal and in some cases doubting the miraculous character of the cures reportedly being effected there. Not until late June, when the journal enthusiastically announced the publication of the first biography of M. Pâris and pronounced it "very edifying for the appellant cause," did the editor overcome his own hesitations and begin to take cognizance of the miracles.⁸⁵ Cautiously he announced his intention of publishing information on the cures "once they have been cleared up and confirmed."⁸⁶ By August the journal, now seconded by an impressive array of notable *anticonstitutionnaires*, including the venerable Bishops Colbert and Soanen,⁸⁷ was positively exultant:

. . . here is [the] most efficacious and most complete refutation of the *mandement* [of Msgr. Vintimille]. God himself is providing it by means of the miracles which He has not ceased operating at the tomb of the Saintly Deacon and which He has seemed to increase all the more because of the efforts to hinder them.⁸⁸

What is more, while clandestine Jansenist presses in Paris and elsewhere had already begun publishing detailed "relations" of miracles, the gazette now for the first time followed suit. In one issue devoted almost entirely to the subject, the *Nowvellistes* reported a summary of nineteen miracles, "proofs of which had come to [the editor's] attention since the previous May."⁸⁹ The journal was nevertheless still determined to proceed cautiously. Aware that some might yet balk at the idea of invoking such phenomena in support of the *anticonstitutionnaire* cause, the editor felt obliged to stress the well-attested character of the miracles and to reassure "those who are too far away to enter into this discussion" that they need not "suspect us of having wished to deceive them inasmuch as the events under consideration

⁸⁵ June 27, 1731, p. 125.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁸⁷ The first reference to the Pâris miracles in Colbert's correspondence occurred in a letter to Bishop Caylus of Auxerre, July 12, 1731 (*Oeuvres*, III, 497). In subsequent letters to virtually every one of his correspondents, the bishop of Montpellier dwelled on this subject at some length; in the process he struck a note of increasingly heightened optimism, displaying a sense of impending victory over the *constitutionnaires*. Like Colbert, Soanen had become extremely enthusiastic, indeed eloquent, in extolling the miracles and praising their utility for the cause of the appeal (see, for example, his letter to Colbert, July 10, 1731, *Vie et lettres*, I, 472). See also the letters from an unknown Paris correspondent to the abbé Joubert, Colbert's *grand-vicaire*, especially those of June 30, 1731, and Aug. 12, 1731, BA, MS 5307, fols. 64-65, 66-67.

⁸⁸ *NNEE*, Aug. 26, 1731, p. 165.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

had been occurring in full public view and were known all over Paris."⁹⁰ The miracles reported in that number of the gazette took up virtually the entire four pages. Brief reports of other cures continued to appear sporadically in succeeding issues, usually couched in terms that made the editorial point of view of the *anticonstitutionnaire* party quite clear. The awesome tales which had until then been disseminated by word of mouth or by separate "relations," would thereafter be recounted in the pages of the most important organ of Jansenist propaganda and were thereby transmitted throughout the kingdom. If the archbishop of Paris and his *constitutionnaire* colleagues were determined to place their authority and that of the Church against these divine manifestations, then the *Nowvellistes* were not about to shrink from the challenge.

In the meantime, as the political ferment continued to increase, the progress of events at Saint-Médard had begun to take a new and far more fantastic course. In mid-July, shortly before Vintimille's ineffectual prohibition of pilgrimages to M. Pâris' tomb, dramatic things had started happening at the cemetery. Until then the manifestations which had been occurring since the deacon's death, though unauthorized, had not been especially unusual or extraordinary. Popular cults and miraculous cures were not totally foreign even to the "enlightened" eighteenth century. Large-scale public outbreaks of convulsions, however, were quite another matter. The first convulsive agitations at the shrine occurred quite unexpectedly, in the very midst of the miracles, although for some time prior to their outbreak several cures had been accompanied or preceded by painful or distressing movements and sensations (*vives douleurs*), which occasionally persisted even after the apparent healings had been effected.⁹¹ How and when the actual convulsions began cannot be determined with certainty. It is nevertheless possible to follow their early development.

The first recorded instance of convulsions seems to have been those of a certain Aimée Pivert, who came to Saint-Médard already suffering from some kind of nervous disorder, perhaps epilepsy, for which she sought a cure.⁹² On July 12, 1731, when placed on Pâris' tomb, she

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Cf. letter to abbé Joubert, Jan. 25, 1732, BA, MS 5307, fols. 68-69.

⁹¹ *Recherche de la vérité, ou Lettres sur l'oeuvre des convulsions* (1733), p. 5.

⁹² Individual fits and seizures of various kinds were apparently a not uncommon feature of *ancien-régime* culture, leading one historian to suggest that "a profound hysteroid tendency [may have been] characteristic of the Old Regime, at least in the lower classes" (Jean-Pierre Peter, "Disease and the Sick at the End of the 18th Century," in Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (eds.), *Biology of Man in History* [Baltimore, 1975], p. 117). Peter's suggestion needs—and merits—

experienced involuntary spasms or convulsions and amazing contortions of her limbs, almost, some claimed, as if she were possessed. Her agitations recurred every day with the same intensity until August 3, when she went away perfectly "cured."⁹³ A few weeks later, in mid-August, the same strong, uncontrollable movements appeared in two young Parisian girls and in a deaf-mute from Versailles named Cathérine Bigot.⁹⁴ Mlle. Bigot reportedly experienced a partial recovery of both her hearing and her speech as a result of the convulsions—a claim which was subjected to an immediate challenge.⁹⁵ In any event, in the days and weeks that followed, a handful of other individuals—some of them no doubt epileptics—were similarly overcome by spontaneous paroxysms of the body. But the convulsions did not become more widespread until the end of August, when the most famous of the early convulsionaries (as they came to be called), the abbé Bescherand of Montpellier, made his first appearance at Saint-Médard.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Bescherand was responsible for turning the cemetery into the *lieu de supplice*⁹⁶ for which it has since been so notorious. Afflicted from youth with a severe atrophy of the left leg, Bescherand went by carriage twice a day to Saint-Médard in order to pray for a cure, whereby he might demonstrate both the reality of the miracles and the injustice of Vintimille's recent decree.⁹⁷ After he lay down on M. Pâris' tomb, and while those present prayed fervently on his behalf, Bescherand was seized with sudden and violent convulsions, made contorted grimaces, uttered occasional exclamations or screams of pain, and sometimes foamed at the mouth. Along with these frenzied writhings of his whole frame, witnesses reported seeing his entire body "forcibly lifted into the air," despite the efforts of several attendants who grasped him firmly by the arms and endeavored to hold him down. These various movements, or "hysterical attacks," usually continued for hours on end. Those persons assisting Bescherand and attending to his needs asked him from time to time to indicate the

further investigation; what bearing, if any, his observation has on the subject of the convulsionaries of Saint-Médard also remains to be explored.

⁹³ *Recherche de la vérité*, p. 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ See Montgeron, "Idée de l'oeuvre des convulsions," II, 5-21 (along with sixteen pages of *pièces justificatives*). The challenge was made by Hérault (letter to Fleury or Chauvelin, Sept. 10, 1731, AAE, M&D, France, MS 1270, fol. 259).

⁹⁶ Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, *Histoire physique, civile et morale de Paris*, 6th ed., 8 vols. (Paris, 1837-39), v, 36.

⁹⁷ Augustin Noyon, "Un miracle du diacre Pâris: La guérison de l'abbé de Bécherand (1731-1732)," *Etudes*, 156 (1918), pp. 412-32. On Bishop Colbert's own view of his much-disputed role in prompting Bescherand to go to Saint-Médard, see letter to Mme. de Coetquen, Oct. 5, 1731, *Oeuvres*, III, 506.

different areas of his body where he felt pain, and they would rub dirt from Pâris' grave all over the affected parts to relieve his discomfort.⁹⁸ The bewildered police agents stationed at the cemetery to ensure that law and order prevailed made frequent reports on the abbé's "startling and extravagant performances" and commented almost daily on his "terrifying," "scandalous," or "diabolical" demonstrations.⁹⁹ Bescherand regularly submitted himself to medical examinations in the sacristy, and several sympathetic doctors declared that he had derived great benefit from his efforts, that "the sinews had recovered their natural elasticity."¹⁰⁰ Partisan claims that Bescherand's cure was progressing slowly, but surely,¹⁰¹ were hotly disputed by the *constitutionnaires*, who derided the abbé's "indecent and obscene cavorting" as a "kind of farce" and an "illusion."¹⁰² They also pointed out that Bescherand was still lame, and that he limped around as much as ever. Whatever the truth of the matter, the abbé continued for months to make his twice-daily appearances. Almost oblivious to changes in the weather, he persisted in his regular "spectaculars" even into the winter. Indeed, so assiduous was he in his attendance and so adept did he seem in his "performances," that the spectators began to wonder whether they were watching a saint or someone possessed.¹⁰³ Diabolical or divine, his convulsions soon proved "contagious."

During the rapid diffusion of this behavior, crowds of people, becoming more numerous with every passing day, began to be seized by similar frenzied paroxysms. Men, women, and children took part in the proceedings, crowding onto the tomb and filling the cemetery with "tears, groans, and frightful screams."¹⁰⁴ Some adepts would leap into the air only to fall swooning on the ground, repeating the process several times in succession—an exercise which usually left them panting and gasping for breath. The astounding gymnastics of other convulsionaries led their associates to place mattresses and cushions around Pâris' tomb as a precaution against their injuring themselves. The names of the marquis de Légal, Giroust, Maupoint, Langlois, and other "regulars" now joined that of Bescherand in the daily police reports from Saint-Médard. Initially only those who were suffering from some

⁹⁸ Hérault to Fleury or Chauvelin, Sept. 10, 1731, AAE, M&D, France, MS 1270, fol. 258.

⁹⁹ BA, MS 10196, *passim*, but esp. report of Sept. 13, 1731.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. discussion of his condition in BN, NAFr., MS 3333, fols. 137-41, 151.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Colbert to Caylus, Oct. 3, 1731, *Oeuvres*, III, 505.

¹⁰² Hérault to Fleury or Chauvelin, Sept. 10, 1731, AAE, M&D, France, MS 1270, fol. 258.

¹⁰³ Marais, IV, 303 (Sept. 30, 1731).

¹⁰⁴ See police report of Sept. 13, 1731 (BA, MS 10196).

disability experienced the convulsions; and at first they occurred—or at least began—only when the individual was actually touching the deacon's tomb. More and more, however, persons without any bodily infirmities were suddenly seized with agitations, and frequently they were overcome even though not on the grave site. As the "contagion" extended and grew, the tomb and the area surrounding it were sometimes completely covered with shaking and writhing bodies. Individuals began having convulsions of varying degrees of severity in the church, in nearby houses, even in the streets. Some continued to experience such movements upon returning to their homes. Even the curious spectators were occasionally overcome with assorted spasmodic contractions.¹⁰⁵ Whatever the causes of these phenomena and however they were produced—whether or not the behavior was self- or group-induced, learned or involuntary, conscious or unconscious, the result of imitation, suggestion, "sympathetic contagion," or an epileptic seizure, the effect of hyperventilation, sensory deprivation, overstimulation, or organic neuropathy, a sign of God's hand or that of the devil—the displays and activities of these new "convulsionaries" soon gave rise to a growing theological debate.¹⁰⁶

Constitutionnaire detractors, already critical of the numerous incom-

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ They also gave rise to a spate of satires. One morning in the late fall someone posted the following notice at the entrance to the cemetery:

"Avis au Public,
"Messieurs et dames,

"La grande troupe des sauteurs et voltigeurs du Sr. Pâris, qui n'a jusques à présent cherché que le plaisir et l'édification de ceux qui luy font l'honneur de venir la voir, donnera son spectacle régulièrement soir et matin pour la commodité du public.

"Le Sr. Bécheran le Boiteux, qui a ici l'honneur de divertir avec succès et applaudissement les princes et les princesses, les seigneurs et dames de la Cour, continuera jusqu'à extinction de forces ses exercices ordinaires, et pour la satisfaction des curieux fera plusieurs fois ce nouveau saut périlleux en ne se soutenant que sur ses deux pieds et à l'aide de trois personnes seulement. . . .

"Le reste de la troupe n'oubliera rien pour mériter l'estime et la bienveillance de ceux qui honoreront son spectacle."

(*Apologie des miracles faits ou à faire au tombeau de M. de Pâris* [Brussels, 1732], p. 72; also cited in Mousset, pp. 63-64, and Noyon, p. 425.) The Jesuit playwright, Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant, who was the reputed author of the above piece, also produced several highly successful plays satirizing convulsionary "theatrics," most notably, *Le Saint déniché, ou la Banqueroute des marchands de miracles, comédie* (The Hague, 1732), and *Les Quakres françois, ou les Nouvelles trembleurs, comédie* (Utrecht, 1732); cf. also his *La Femme docteur, ou la Théologie tombée en quenouille, comédie* (Liège, 1731).

plete, imperfect, or gradual cures which the appellants had claimed to be miraculous, seized on the convulsions as a means of stepping up their attacks on all of the observances at Saint-Médard.¹⁰⁷ They expressed outrage and alarm at the increasingly violent nature of the manifestations at the deacon Pâris' tomb. They contended that such violence proved that God was nowhere present at Saint-Médard. What is more, they accused pretty women and shapely young girls of deliberately allowing themselves to become indecently exposed for long periods, and in full public view, while they experienced their convulsions—further evidence of a malign presence at the cemetery.¹⁰⁸ Other critics, while condemning these phenomena, ascribed them to purely natural causes or dismissed them as the product of derangement, overactive imagination, or willful fraud on the part of the convulsionary adepts, who were out to draw attention to themselves.¹⁰⁹ One writer went so far as to denounce Bescherand as a mountebank and an impostor.¹¹⁰

Forced on the defensive by these various charges, several Jansenist apologists rushed to embrace the convulsions and to argue the fundamentally divine character of these manifestations. While acknowledging the extraordinary, almost incredible nature of the developments at Saint-Médard and the difficulty of reaching a definitive judgment on all the phenomena observed there, they denied that any deceit or imposture was involved.¹¹¹ In a series of anonymous pamphlets¹¹² they

¹⁰⁷ *Dissertation physique sur les miracles de M. Pâris, dans laquelle on prouve que les guérisons qui se font à son tombeau ne sont que les effets des causes purement naturelles, et qu'elles n'ont aucun caractère des vrais miracles* (n.d.); *Essais de physique, où l'on démontre par les règles de la nature comment se font les convulsions qui attaquent les malades au tombeau de M. Pâris et sur le chemin qui y conduit* (n.d.); *Lettres au sujet des choses singulières et surprenantes qui arrivent en la personne de M. l'abbé Bescherand à Saint-Médard* (1731).

¹⁰⁸ Anonymous police *mémoire*, late November 1731 (BA, MS 10196).

¹⁰⁹ According to the author of the *Essais de physique*, the convulsions "ne sont que les effets d'une imagination blessée, ou qu'ils sont tous volontaires et étudiées" (p. 6). Cf. the anonymous *Observations de médecine sur la maladie appelée Convulsion* (1732), published with *Approbation* and with the *Privilège du Roy*: "La convulsion n'est autre chose qu'un mouvement tonique dérangé" (p. 7).

¹¹⁰ *Lettres au sujet des choses singulières et surprenantes, passim*.

¹¹¹ See *Extrait d'une lettre de M. Petitpied, du 13 janvier 1732, à madame de . . .* (n.d.). See also two letters written by the abbé d'Etémare on Jan. 25, 1732, one to Mme. de Montagny, the other to Bescherand himself (BPR, L. P. 480, No. 60).

¹¹² *Dissertation, où l'on montre que des miracles opérés par degrés, ou accompagnés de douleurs, n'en sont pas moins de vrais miracles, et ont été regardés comme tels dans l'antiquité* (25 octobre 1731); *Réflexions sur les miracles que Dieu opère au tombeau de M. de Pâris, et en particulier sur la manière étonnante*

also sought to demonstrate that the so-called *vives douleurs* and the other movements and physical sensations accompanying an increasing number of miracles were a quite normal adjunct—and even a precipitant—of certain kinds of cures. To buttress their argument several pro-convulsionary Jansenists embarked on an extensive research project in which they focused on precisely this subject. They combed through canons, doctrinal pronouncements, and theological treatises as well as numerous ecclesiastical histories and saints' lives, looking for evidence of other cures accompanied or occasioned by convulsions which the Church had accepted as miraculous. One writer claimed to have discovered at least two dozen such instances.¹¹³ Far from unprecedented, therefore, "miraculous convulsions" were well within the orthodox Christian tradition.

Not surprisingly, such demonstrations, which left aside the question of *convulsions non-guérisantes* and ignored a number of other disputed matters, failed to convince the *constitutionnaires*. They also failed to persuade an important segment of Jansenist theologians who had likewise raised some serious objections to the goings-on at Saint-Médard, particularly to the dramatic displays of the abbé Bescherand. These Jansenists, who included the influential abbés Duguet and d'Asfeld, maintained that the actions of the convulsionaries represented a distortion (*déformation*) of the message of the Pâris cult. They regarded Bescherand's behavior and that of his cohorts not only as potentially damaging to the *anticonstitutionnaire* cause but also as insulting to the majesty and dignity of God.¹¹⁴ They accused the convulsionary abbé of having "tempted God" with his theatrics; "God," they contended, then "took revenge against Bescherand by visiting him with convulsions."¹¹⁵ Like the *constitutionnaires*, they denied that Bescherand had shown any improvement in his lameness. They also questioned whether any miraculous effects could ever be expected from such wild agitations as the convulsionaries were exhibiting at Saint-Médard. The growth of such anticonvulsionary sentiment among this "traditionalist" faction of Jansenists marked the beginning of what

et extraordinaire dont il les opère depuis six mois environ (n.d.); *Entretiens sur les miracles* (1732).

¹¹³ Letter to an unknown correspondent, Nov. 12, 1733, BA, MS 5784, p. 88. See also *ibid.*, MS 5307, fols. 64-109, *passim*. D'Emmare and his colleagues frequently cited the example of Saint Martin of Tours, whose miracles (as reported by Gregory of Tours) were frequently "accompagnés de douleurs" (*Dissertation, où l'on montre que des miracles . . . , passim*).

¹¹⁴ Dedieu, "L'agonie du jansénisme," p. 195, n. 68.

¹¹⁵ See d'Emmare to Sartre, July 13, 1733, BA, MS 5784, p. 57.

was eventually to become a tense, fratricidal struggle inside the *anti-constitutionnaire* camp, a struggle which would prove significant for the future development of the Pâris cult. For the moment at least, the tone of the debate remained calm and civil; the opposing sides continued to air their views largely through the exchange of private correspondence. But that, too, would change before another full year had passed.

Despite mounting criticism from the *constitutionnaires* and growing uneasiness in certain Jansenist circles, a substantial proportion of *anti-constitutionnaires* remained as committed as ever to the Pâris cult. Likewise, the deacon's faithful adherents continued to pursue their devotions uninterrupted. Even so, the appearance of Bescherand and the other convulsionaries had introduced an element of dramatic, even "theatrical," spectacle into the observances at the deacon's tomb, thereby effecting a major change in the public devotions and producing a marked impact on the subsequent history of the cult. Amid increasing religious exaltation and growing public excitement, the scene at Saint-Médard had turned in recent months from relatively peaceful, orderly gatherings to far more disorderly, tumultuous ones.¹¹⁶ Every day from well before dawn to well after dusk hundreds of people, many of them totally unconcerned about weather conditions,¹¹⁷ made their way to Saint-Médard. While new "patients" arrived daily to join the ones already searching for cures, and while new convulsionaries added their agitated gestures and frenetic screaming to those of Bescherand and company, the number of curious spectators soon began to outstrip the number of convulsionaries, would-be *miraculés*, and other worshipers pressing to reach the deacon's tomb. The police frequently remarked on the noisy, jostling, tightly packed throngs which now crowded into the tiny cemetery. Long lines of people queued up daily, trying to reach the tomb itself; scores of onlookers filled the galleries which ran along the churchyard. So great were the crowds in regular attendance—*un monde infini* was the police description on December 8—that they began spilling over into the nearby alleys and streets,

¹¹⁶ This change is reflected in two different contemporary *estampes* depicting the scenes of devotion at the shrine, one by Jean Restout (set probably in early September) and another by an unknown artist (set apparently in the late fall).

¹¹⁷ In November, with the onset of cold, inclement weather, someone erected a large canvas covering above the deacon's grave to provide protection from the elements for those who continued to sprawl on top of the tomb (police reports of November 16 and 21, BA, MS 10196). A short while later, several people began assuming daily responsibility for cleaning the mud and the water from around the tomb (report of Jan. 9, 1732, *ibid.*).

FROM MARRIAGES TO CONFESSIONS

disrupting activity throughout the neighborhood and rendering some sections of the *faubourg* virtually impassable.¹¹⁸ The challenge to Msgr. Vintimille's authority as well as to that of the *curé* of Saint-Médard was now more manifest than ever; so, too, was the challenge to law and order. The archbishop, whose provocative intervention in July had disastrously misfired, had already begun clamoring for the crown to intervene at once. Until then uncertain on what pretext to try to put a stop to the activities at Saint-Médard, Fleury's government thought it had at last discovered the means by which it might be able to dispose of the Pâris cult without too much difficulty. The issue for the cardinal-minister had once again become one of restoring public order by police action. However, knowing as he did the political, religious, legal, and jurisdictional delicacy of the matter, he would have to proceed very cautiously. Both the strategy and the tactics he adopted were ultimately circumscribed, if not determined, by the realities of recent ecclesiastical politics.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *passim*.