

WINNING THE CATHOLIC REFORMATION THROUGH THE CONVERSION OF
FEMALE PROTESTANTS: THE EDUCATION OF *LES NOUVELLES CATHOLIQUES*
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents Boon Soon and Le Won Kang

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the gendering of heresy and general ignorance in relation to the making of a centralized state in Catholic Reformation France. It studies the strategies of reformers and propagandists in France during the seventeenth century, whose main ambition was to extirpate heresy, namely, the religion of the French Reformed Church. In so doing, they targeted female Protestants in their efforts to establish a French state unified under the single religion of Catholicism.

Established in Paris in 1632, the Propagation de la foi (Propagation of Faith) began to spread out to other regions of France in the mid-seventeenth century. Until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the deliberation records of the meetings of the provincial *compagnies* reveal an intense focus to convert Huguenot girls and women. Taking into account the significance of the early modern family in the making of a moral society, the Propagation's plan to find new homes, often in the way of marriage, resonated with their ultimate objective and that of the French Catholic Reformation. Financial incentives drew in new female converts and at the same time allowed individual women and the families of girls to take advantage of the Propagation.

In addition, religious reformers who denigrated the early modern female body created a binary comparison such that pious women could take part in French Catholicism's war against Protestantism. Female missionaries, patrons, and maternal models defined, in opposition to idolaters and heretics, idealized aspects of femininity. Through a good upbringing or "education," France was poised to become the kind of

state that zealous Catholics envisioned. Early modern writers such as Fénelon could not emphasize enough a proper education for girls, whose primary teachers were their mothers. Parents and especially mothers, therefore, had the civic responsibility to raise their daughters well: to be modest and chaste. By reforming the family, reformers sought to make good Catholic daughters who would curtail the development of future generations of unruly Huguenot girls and women.

INTRODUCTION

The term “Catholic Reformation,” which was primarily defined as the Catholic reaction to the Protestant Reformation, has generated substantial discussions about how best to describe this era in Catholic history.¹ For all intents and purposes, the Catholic Reformation addressed a wide range of issues concerning the Catholic Church in relation to the condemnations, definitions, and decrees of the ecumenical Council of Trent (1545-1563), and at least half of them concerned the issue of institutional reform, which arguably began in the Middle Ages, specifically with Pope Gregory VII and the Investiture Controversy.² In addition to studying the intellectual and theological subjects of the elite, and the impact of the Council of Trent in the latter half of the sixteenth century, historians of early modern Catholicism have given attention to social and

¹ I have chosen to describe the movement for Catholic reform and response to Protestantism in early modern France as the “Catholic Reformation” as opposed to the “Counter Reformation,” which has traditionally been used to describe this age, mainly in relation to the Protestant Reformation. The naming of this historical period has been questioned at some length. For instance, see Wolfgang Reinhard, “Gegenreformation als Modernisierung?: Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977): 226-252 for his argument for “confessional age” to describe the Reformations; and Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999) on the long sixteenth century. In addition to “Counter Reformation,” “Catholic Reformation,” and “Early Modern Catholicism,” scholars have used the terms Catholic Renewal, Tridentine Era, Tridentine Age, and Baroque Catholicism to speak about Catholicism during the early modern period. For a summary of the debates and opinions about naming early modern Catholicism, see John W. O’Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000). In addition, the naming debate may have come full circle: “[T]he recent historiography of this period has, I think, done much to vindicate the older term Counter-Reformation, both because it acknowledges the novelty of the phenomenon and because it forces us to consider it comparatively. This was indeed a new phase in the history of Catholicism, and its manifestations can only be understood by thinking in terms of relationships, negotiations, and encounters.” Mary Laven “Encountering the Counter-Reformation,” in “Recent Trends in the Study of Christianity in Sixteenth-Century Europe,” intro. Craig Harline, *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006): 706-720. See p. 720.

² O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 16-18.

cultural matters to discuss spirituality, gender differentiation, ritual art, and “popular” and “local” religion.³

Both the Catholic reactions against Protestantism and the independent movements for Catholic reforms need to be studied together in order to get a full picture of the social and cultural changes associated with this period. I examine the institution of the Propagation de la foi (Propagation of Faith) as a way to understand gendered attitudes that reflect the current political, cultural, and social anxieties of the seventeenth century.⁴ A middle ground approach, which does not wholly dismiss either teleologically- as well as socially-driven elements of the study of history, is attractive to the examination of the Propagation, which benefits from an approach that endeavors to be mindful of the various aspects that shaped the early modern French worldview.⁵ For the most part, this dissertation is a study of the *mentalités* of Catholic propagandists who took action against

³ Laven, “Encountering the Counter-Reformation,” 709-710. These are problematic terms as they do not account for who belongs in these categories, especially unclear for Laven is the interchangeable use of the word “popular” and “people,” which may include laity and/or clergy. For her discussion on “popular religion,” see p. 10. Laven references William Christian’s work on what he calls “local” religion in the Castile region of sixteenth-century Spain. Despite official efforts to control the practice of Catholicism among lay people, local communities made vows with the Virgin Mary and built honorary chapels to contend with natural disasters and economic hardship. William A. Christian, Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

⁴ I translate *compagnie* as “society” and refer to the collective organization as the Propagation.

⁵ Joel F. Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-3. Moving away from confessional histories, scholars have broadened the scope of the Protestant Reformation by taking into account politics, gender, legal, and economic factors. Studying the “socialization” aspect of religious history takes into account the immediate and revolutionary change through the examination of major historical events. On the other side of the extreme, scholars of the *longue durée* approach associated with the French Annales School emphasize existing structures of history that supersede the narrow study of political and military events. The two polarizing historical approaches to the Protestant Reformation prompted Harrington to find a middle ground through his work on the institution of marriage. Though he speaks specifically about the historiography of the Protestant Reformation, his points also ring true for Catholic Reformation scholarship and early modern historical studies in general.

the growth of Huguenots in France during the seventeenth century, particularly, before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.⁶ The propagandists may not have been what Darnton calls “ordinary people” on the street, but at the same time, they were not the philosophers and theologians who controlled the currents of intellectual thought. The ideas of religious authorities did inform propagandists, however, so did notions about heresy, family, female piety and depravity, conversion, education, and motherhood.⁷ Social reform, which was closely aligned with the reformation of the political systems of the “public” and “private” realms, hinged on the Catholic education of the next generation.⁸ According to the definition of Habermas, the Propagation of seventeenth-

⁶ Later generations of the Annales School emphasized cultural history and the worldview of individuals to understand the historical significance of “not merely what people thought but how they thought – how they construed the world, invested it with meaning, and infused it with emotion.” Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 3. The Huguenots were the French Protestants or Calvinists of the Reformed Church of France. In derogation, the Catholics labeled them the members of the *Religion prétendue réformée* (RPR) or the Pretended Reformed Religion, and as *religionnaires*. In addition to the more frequently used reference *huguenots*, Catholics simply referred to them as heretics. In reference to the officers associated with the Propagation, I use the terms (assembly) members and propagandists.

⁷ Conversion, in a religious sense, generally refers to the interior change of an individual’s spirituality, with or without catechesis by a religious confession. Mass conversions, for example, required allegiance to the Catholic faith for the sake of European cultural domination in the New World, or political and social reasons in early modern Europe. I use the term “conversion” to describe the Catholicization of female Protestants by means of religious instruction, which for the Propagation meant entrance and completion of a three-month stay in their houses. Without evidence of spiritual change, it is not possible to assess the degree to which new converts experienced a change of heart in addition to a new religious identity.

⁸ Jürgen Habermas’s *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1989), or *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* in the original German, has elicited scholarly discussions from numerous areas of historical and sociological studies, including, but not limited to sociology, economics, law and political science, and social and cultural history. With historical specificity, Habermas contends that a bourgeois public sphere emerged in the eighteenth century, separate from the public authority of absolute rule. Dependent on the development of occupations of individuals of the private realm, namely, capitalism, Habermas posits a balance between public authority and the private sphere by the public sphere, which brought together private households to challenge public authority. The bourgeois outgrew their traditional roles as craftsmen and shopkeepers, and socially elevated themselves within their status, as the “reading public.” They created a civil culture of the public sphere that could challenge the public authority of the state. See pp. 23-26.

century France does not fit his criteria of a public sphere that engendered a critical public opinion, and thus, could challenge the public authority of the king and his court, or put more succinctly, the state.⁹ The institution did, however, create an opportunity for sociability among some reform-minded men and fewer still, some women. Together, they strove to initiate and implement social changes that placed the early modern family at the center of the moral and political state. An institutionalized locus for individuals to meet outside the private confines of their homes helped create a new public sphere invested in an ideology of a greater communal good, which reinforced the political agenda of absolutism in addition to the making of a reformed religious culture.¹⁰

After the civil wars of religion, both political and religious pundits agreed that erroneous beliefs had to be curtailed in order to achieve the social peace that was badly needed in the aftermath of turmoil in the latter part of the sixteenth century. The political

⁹ According to Habermas, real intimacy among individuals occurred outside the court of Versailles. *The Structural Transformation*, 31. I use the term “state” as a way to describe secular monarchical rule, the governing polity.

¹⁰ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 31. Absolutism is used and defined here as a way to describe the consolidation of the monarch’s political power from 1610 to 1789. Traditionally in reference to the consolidation of the state, absolute power in early modern France, beginning in the seventeenth century, was made up of vertical relationships in which the king held power and held together society through military power and control of bureaucracy. See J. Russell Major’s definition of absolute monarchy: “By *absolute monarchy* I mean one in which there were no theoretical limitations on the king’s authority other than those imposed by divine, natural, and a few fundamental laws, and in which the king controlled the vertical ties necessary to hold society together and had an obedient army and bureaucracy of sufficient size to enable him to impose his will under ordinary circumstances. Louis XIV achieved such a monarchy in the 1670s, but he had to purchase the cooperation of the leaders of society and cater to many interests to achieve this position, and there was subversive resistance to his rule.” *From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy: French Kings, Nobles, and Estates* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), xxi. For a study that challenges the idea of absolutism as bureaucratic centralization, see Helen Nader, *Liberty in Absolutist Spain: The Habsburg Sale of Towns, 1516-1700* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). In her municipal history of early modern Spain, Nader shows that in the kingdom of Castile, the kings decentralized administration through the sale of towns as a way to exercise absolute power. See pp. 3 and 129.

objectives set about through the exercise of absolute power also help us to understand the religious ramifications of employing rule for greater control and uniformity. Zealous Catholics and reformers projected greater centralized reform by demanding social and cultural unity within the state. Men like François Véron adamantly supported an eradication of heresy for the sake of political and social harmony. In the same vein, secular and religious authorities focused on rural areas to root out adapted religions and practices. In an effort to create a unified religious culture free of superstitious practices, these authorities began to reform rural areas, which they perceived as the root of such errors.¹¹ This came about with the Assembly of the Clergy's reception of the decrees of the Council of Trent.¹² The Church and state had their own ambitions in consolidating power over the state of France, but while they clashed over matters of jurisdiction, they both desired the eradication of heresy in order to do so. The proponents of Catholicism and social stability viewed the moral condition of individuals and the state, in other words, the private and public spheres, and public authority, as intertwining realms, and

¹¹ Robert Muchembled, *Culture populaire et culture des élites dans la France moderne: XV^e – XVIII^e siècle: essai* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978). For the English translation of the work, see *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400-1750*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

¹² The institutionalization of the French clergy began with the Assembly of Melun in 1579-1580, and met every five years until the French Revolution in 1789. They committed themselves to preserve and maintain their jurisdictions and clerical tax exemption within the state. By the seventeenth century, as a corporate body, the clergy continued to protect their jurisdiction, particularly against encroachment by secular courts. Opposed to Catholic Church's doctrinal and ecclesiastical reforms of the Council of Trent, the Assembly of the Clergy leaned more heavily on their Gallican right of jurisdiction. Parsons, *The Church in the Republic*, 223-224, 228, 232-233. The Catholic Church in France, through the Assembly of the Clergy, "received" the Tridentine decrees in 1615, but royal authority never officially ratified them. Henry Phillips, *Church and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

the king would do well to direct the state towards religious uniformity. How the French Catholic Church and the state would achieve this shared goal was another matter.

With support from the nobility, royalty, and the Assembly of the Clergy, the Propagation catered to the ambitions of the political and religious entities for greater centralization, which was a major hallmark of the seventeenth century. Unopposed to the state and instead, complicit in augmenting the authority of the governing polity, the propagandists of the various *compagnies* of the Propagation in Paris, Grenoble, Aix-en-provence, Lyon, and Montpellier acted upon the premise that there was a connection between girls' education and a successful Catholic Reformation, and they placed great importance on the conversion of Protestant girls and women, therefore. Female heretics, like idolaters and sorcerers endangered their families, communities, and ultimately, the state because they were the sole transmitters of what reformers regarded as false culture. Thus, propagandists feared leaving girls in the state of heresy because they would grow up to be dangers to their own families as heretical wives and mothers. Creating devoutly Catholic families, however, began by targeting the weakest among them, namely, the girls.

Historiography

I examine the direction of the institution of the Propagation as part of a movement that demonstrates a belief in the central, domestic female influence on religious reform. This dissertation specifically addresses the conversion of female Protestants in order to examine broader issues of gender and sexuality associated with social and cultural

reform. The targets of the Propagation were female Protestants, as the original *compagnie* in Paris had intended. Although the architect of the institution, Père Hyacinthe Kerver, desired to bring women of all backgrounds into the Catholic Church, his idealized vision was similar to those of François Fénelon and Madame Maintenon of Saint-Cyr, who mainly foresaw effective social change by reaching out to noble women. In the *compagnies* of the provinces, however, Père Hyacinthe's sentiments came closer to realization. There certainly were noble women and girls of upper-class families who had converted to Catholicism via the Propagation, but the majority of the conversions came from the poorer portions of society. The Propagation was ready to provide incentives in the way of financial rewards used for marriages, in which cases converts may or may not have been enticed by them. In addition, the spiritual drive for religious conversion, or even conversion based on other personal reasons, has to be considered.

As a matter of conscience and duty to God, religious belief has been historically regarded as a life-changing experience for Christians. From its earliest days, Catholicism has, for the most part, been defined by its celebrated martyrs, saints and doctors. Stories about the lengths to which early Christian martyrs sacrificed the comforts of their former lives in order to follow their hearts were told and circulated for inspiration. The writings of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, especially resonated with Christians. The saint's conversion story about how he went from an indulgent playboy to a man of religion became the ultimate experience that any Christian could hope to have.

As an interior experience, and in its most ideal form, religious conversion was isolated in the mind and spirit of the individual person, but in reality, it had social

consequences. The idea that conversion was a sincere transformation of heart offered a way for an individual to justify a significant change in personal as well as social identity. In other ways, religious conversion was a means to an end, and it had little to do with interior change. In the wake of the Reformation, religious affiliation became a part of one's civil duty. The confessionalization of states determined that subjects ascribe to the religion of their ruler, which concept may be put succinctly as *cuius regio, eius religio* or "whose region, his religion." Seeking to establish greater social control, confessional building was above all else a process of political, religious, and social reformations that took place in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although hearts and minds may not have been changed, civil obedience became a part of religious conversion.¹³ In France, absolutism directed the subjects to respect the religion of the king and demonstrate loyalty to him by converting to Catholicism. Forced religious conversion, however, as demonstrated by the mass conversions of Jews and Protestants in early modern France and indigenous peoples in New France, often generated religious

¹³ In thinking about the confessionalization of states, the multiplicity of religious experiences resulting from the reformations of societies and cultures must be considered in the politics of the making of churches. Examining how reformers transmitted their theology and how people perceived them may give an indication as to how to assess the success of the Protestant Reformation. Scholars have debated the subject of whether the Reformation succeeded in terms of social, political, and cultural movements. In *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), Gerald Strauss made the seminal point that in the eyes of reformers, the Reformation failed to reach the common folk; Thomas A. Brady Jr., *Protestant Politics: Jacob Sturm (1489-1553) and the German Reformation* (Atlantic Heights, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1995) qualifies the idea that the Reformation failed (or succeeded) by examining social movements experienced at the local, regional, and imperial levels; and Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, 1993) discusses the cultural adjustments that had to be made in terms of rituals in order for Protestantism to work in England after Henry VIII delivered the Act of Supremacy and subsequent Treasons Act in 1534, which demanded that subjects recognize his supremacy in religious matters. Similarly, in early modern Germany, Susan C. Karant-Nunn examines the tailoring of religious rites by reformers for the purposes of social discipline and control in *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

tensions instead of assuaging them. This was due to the fact that these threatening members of society could not be trusted with what they did in their homes. Forced conversion did not ensure that people's interiors, regarding the soul and household, actually reflected the outer show of a change in faith. This was a compelling reason for the private to be more public. Similarly, and perhaps even more intensely, the social anxiety towards females made the *nouvelles catholiques* of the Propagation especially unnerving to Catholics.

As such, those most susceptible to the Propagation of France were mostly female Protestants, but for the new converts, the institution could provide incentives in the way of personal freedom. The reasons that people would convert to Catholicism had to do with political compulsion as well as a desire for economic stability through the vehicle of marriage; but prepubescent girls on the verge of marriageable age particularly appealed to the Propagation and vice versa. Following one's desire was a choice that afforded young women a way to forge their own destinies. Historically, the most documented examples draw from women who discerned a religious life in the face of parental adversity. Catherine of Sienna in the fourteenth century decided to live an ascetic life in her parents' home against the wishes of her parents who intended her to marry. She neither took religious vows nor married, but she opted, instead, to take a private vow of virginity within the walls of her parents' home.¹⁴ As reasons for parental defiance, choices made in the name of religion, via conversion or religious profession, offered a way for women

¹⁴ Karen Scott, "Catherine of Siena and Lay Sanctity in Fourteenth-Century Italy," in *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: A Search for Models*, ed. Ann W. Astell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2000), 80.

to lead lives in ways that their parents did not approve. Supported by the Propagation, female Huguenots, who agreed to relinquish their beliefs and convert to Catholicism, may have well decided to abandon their religious identity for another in an attempt at a life of their own design.

The majority of the histories of the Propagation emphasize the nefarious activities of the institution. Emphasizing the suffering that Protestants endured in the hands of Catholics, the historiography on the *compagnies* and houses of the Propagation does not fully take into account the political and cultural contexts for the activities of propagandists. In the most recent and thorough institutional history of the Propagation, Catherine Martin provides another perspective on the Propagation, which reflects the broader political objectives of the state, and local authorities in creating new social connections for the recently converted who had to abandon their former ones.¹⁵ Martin's work provides details about the foundation of the societies and houses for converts by addressing the theological vision of Père Hyacinthe. In the course of the work, Martin demonstrates a mastery over archival material relating to the establishment and institution of the Propagation. She skillfully weaves together documents collected from Roman archives as well as national and departmental archives in France.

Influenced by the work of Louis Châtellier, Martin contends that Catholic sociability, rather than the actual feat of converting Protestants to Catholicism, was the end goal of *compagnies* of the Propagation. In order to achieve this goal, the various

¹⁵ Catherine Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation de la foi (1632-1685): Paris, Grenoble, Aix, Lyon, Montpellier. Etude d'un réseau d'associations fondé en France au temps de Louis XIII pour lutter contre l'hérésie des origines à la révocation de l'édit de Nantes* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2000).

compagnies supported marriages for a striking number of young girls. Martin discusses this phenomenon as a strategy to divide and conquer heresy by separating newly converted girls from their families. While this reasoning explains the results, it does not adequately explore the ideological reasons for why *compagnies* targeted young girls for abjuration and conversion. Furthermore, if female members of the family automatically went along with the religious conversion of the patriarch, as Martin states, then why did the *compagnies* bother to secure the fidelity of young female converts?¹⁶ In other words, why did anxiety still exist over the conversion of girls? Apart from disseminating the population of converts for the purpose of isolation from heretical ideas, why was marriage used as the main device? What about marriage ensured the desired effects of rehabilitation in the mindsets of propagandists? Understanding the threat of heresy in relation to gender will help shed light on these questions.

Excluding Martin's recent scholarship, region-specific studies exist on the institution of the Propagation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Historians of a particular confession have either lamented or justified the great injustices that Huguenots endured. In the late nineteenth century, Henri de Terrebasse published his examination of the Propagation in the Dauphiné region of France, mainly focusing on the eighteenth century.¹⁷ The work contains transcriptions of some of the key documents examined by Terrebasse. On the persecution of Huguenots, Terrebasse was on the other side of the spectrum by arguing that the primary objective of Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715)

¹⁶ Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 361.

¹⁷ H. de Terrebasse, *Les maisons de propagation de la foi* (Lyon, 1890).

and the Propagation was not Huguenot oppression. Instead, the Catholic and royal historian considers Protestant persecution as a bystander to the growth of government, and the bifurcation of politics along religious lines.¹⁸ In the early twentieth century, Pierre Barbéry produced a dissertation, which was later published, on the *compagnies* of the Propagation in Grenoble and Lyon.¹⁹ He compares the work of the *compagnies* against heresy with the destructive forces of war. Although he rightly points to the radical measures taken by the societies in Grenoble and Lyon, the author's critical stance paints the history of yet another oppressive Catholic institution while taking little note of historical context.

In the 1980s, Odile Martin and Kathryn Norberg examined the work of the Propagation in their monographs on Protestant conversion in Lyon and poor relief in Grenoble, respectively. Martin's work on Lyon focuses on the society of the Saint-Sacrement, and discusses the effect that the *compagnie* of the Propagation had on this other but similarly driven institution. She questions whether the conversion of Protestants was for the protection of Catholics or a means of justifying persecution of Protestants.²⁰ She proposes questions that are more historical and analytical than those of Barbéry or Terrebase. For example, she asks whether the goal of protecting society from corruptible ideas or the desire to prosecute Huguenots drove the society in Lyon.

¹⁸ Terrebase, *Les maisons de propagation*, 5-6, 217. Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 9n2, 10.

¹⁹ Pierre Barbéry, *L'Œuvre de la propagation de la foi à Grenoble et à Lyon; 1647-1792* (Montauban, 1913).

²⁰ Odile Martin, *La Conversion Protestant à Lyon; 1659-1687* (Geneva, 1986).

She shows that a little of both existed in the minds of *compagnie* members. Norberg summarizes the Propagation as a “notorious agent of religious prosecution” that assumed the facade of a charitable institution.²¹ Both scholars discuss the workings of the Propagation in their cities, but they do not address how the conversion of girls fit into the institution’s goal of ridding France of heresy.

Annick Gobeil shows that *nouvelles catholiques* at Caen endured a three-step process: exclusion, instruction, and socio-religious integration. Gobeil’s thesis examines Catholic sociability associated with the societies of the Propagation in Caen during the eighteenth century.²² She ties in the work of the Propagation with the growing eighteenth-century trend towards educating children in schools for the sake of preempting heretical ideas from taking root in young people. It is not clear, however, how the propagandists of the various *compagnies* came to target girls for conversion prior to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The scholars discussed above have shown that *compagnies* of the Propagation valued the religious instruction and conversion of Protestants by means of isolating children from their heretical parents. There remains a need to examine the institution against the backdrop of gender ideologies in the seventeenth century, before the advent of

²¹ Kathryn Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble, 1600-1814* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 52 and 65. Norberg does acknowledge the possibility of benevolent intentions of the Propagation in their forceful detention of children.

²² Annick Gobeil, “Les Nouvelles Catholiques de Caen et l’intégration socio-religieuse des protestants au XVIII^e siècle” (master’s thesis, Université de Sherbrooke, 2001).

schools for children (including girls) in France in the next century.²³ Various forms of politico-religious change mark the history of the seventeenth century in France: the formation of women's religious teaching orders such as the Ursulines, missions to New France, the rise of Catholic lay militants (*dévots*), the ministries of Richelieu and Mazarin, the reigns of Louis XIII (r. 1610-1643) and Louis XIV, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In the midst of all this, religious authorities began to consider thoughtfully the education of girls and women, and its potential impact on society. Steeped in political and religious agendas, the matter of ensuring the correct education of girls and women took shape alongside France's domestic and foreign missionary work.

The *Compagnies* of the Propagation

The extensive and infamous establishments that formed to fight heresy in France are known collectively as the *Compagnies de la Propagation de la foi*, as they were more widely known, and more formally as the *Compagnies de l'Exaltation de la Sainte-Croix*. While the local archbishops generally authorized the *compagnies*, the inquisitorial office of Rome controlled the one in Avignon. Although they followed a common constitution and vowed to work towards a final defeat of heresy, the *compagnies* varied, especially in their foundations and administration. Spread across France, the *compagnies* generally sought out, converted, and monitored mostly young girls who converted to the Catholic faith. The first *compagnie* of the Propagation was founded in 1632 and the first house of *nouvelles catholiques* or new female converts in 1634 in Paris. Houses of the

²³ A serious drive towards a "French civilization" began with the establishment of schools at the end of the seventeenth century. Muchembled, *Culture populaire*, 346.

Propagation were not religious houses, though some of them resembled secular convents in the day-to-day discipline required of their *pensionnaires* or residents. Each society and house had its own local history and took on a particular dynamic based on their resources and needs. At a basic level, the propagandists monitored and sought out potential converts, and those affiliated with the houses dealt with the actual task of conversion. Both the *compagnies* and houses of the Propagation, however, adhered to universal rules and constitutions drawn up in Paris, and worked in tandem for Catholic conversions albeit with different capacities.²⁴

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the *compagnies* of the Propagation arguably represented the grand ideals of the Catholic Reformation in France. Established throughout France, they comprised a unique movement that cannot be grouped with devotional sodalities or confraternities, or with official congregations, which demanded simple religious vows. The Propagation not only dedicated itself to reform by its mission statement, but the hard-lined stance of Catholic reformers vowed to tangibly chip away at the social problem of heresy through action and by seriously undertaking the task of eradicating Protestants. The *compagnies*, however, did not come by esteem with any measure of ease. The institution made several false starts in Paris and struggled to survive the highly politicized policies of Cardinal Jules Mazarin a couple of decades after its long-awaited establishment.²⁵

²⁴ For specific details on the foundation history of the *compagnie* in Paris, see Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*. This section of the introduction references the work of Martin unless otherwise noted.

²⁵ Mazarin was minister to Louis XIII and Louis XIV, from 1642 to Mazarin's death in 1661. Major describes Mazarin as a minister who went to any means to govern the way in which he desired. His

Mainly comprised of laity, the Parisian *compagnie* proceeded to organize itself for the purpose of combating heresy. The foundation of the *compagnie* in Paris succeeded mainly due to the perseverance of Père Hyacinthe. Between the years 1632 and 1635, Père Hyacinthe corresponded with religious authorities in Rome, and royal and ecclesiastical heads in France in his effort to establish an institution dedicated to the fight against heresy. The story of the foundation of the group in Paris offers a complicated and often frustrating process of roadblocks, such as Roman authorities forbidding the use of the name Propaganda Fide, the inspiration for Père Hyacinthe's proposed French institution. Thus, the first *compagnie* in Paris came into fruition officially as the Compagnie de l'Exaltation de la Sainte-Croix, established in September 14, 1632.²⁶ Regardless of much anticipation, Père Hyacinthe could not please all the parties involved in the approval process. In the next two years, the Propagation struggled to receive support from the Parlement of Paris, Church authorities in Rome, and the archbishop of Paris. In the end, the *compagnie* created its own identity that neither catered to the direction of ecclesiastical authorities nor adhered strictly to Jansenist or Gallican ideologies, though these currents of thought did not necessarily oppose the political impulse of the Propagation for social stability and Catholic uniformity.²⁷

unpopularity mostly dealt with his use of funding for his wars abroad, and when it came to domestic affairs, he was absent except when he had to manage the insurrections of the Fronde (1648-1653), which were directed at him and his policies. In the years leading up to the Fronde, Marzarin clashed with the Estates General and the Assemblies of the Clergy, as well as the nobles. In the end, the uprising "furthered the cause of absolutism." Major, *From Renaissance Monarchy*, 294-303. For the quote, see p. 302.

²⁶ At present, deliberation records do not exist for this *compagnie*. Also, the *compagnies* regarded themselves as *congrégations* in formal documents.

²⁷ At a fundamental level, both Gallicanism and Jansenism desired political stability. Tracing the history and development of Gallicanism from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Jotham Parsons

The network of the *compagnies* of the Propagation began to take root with the establishment of a branch at Grenoble. The second *compagnie* founded after Paris, Grenoble received its letters of patent in rapid fashion, on 31 May 1650. The *compagnies* themselves, and sometimes in combination with other institutions of new converts, created a vast network throughout France. With the *compagnie* at Grenoble as “the mother society” after the decline of the Parisian *compagnie* in the 1640s, the propagandists began to vigorously work towards their goal of eliminating heresy in the second half of the seventeenth century. The *compagnie* at Aix-en-provence, which began its operation in 1656, did not receive its letters until 1682. Marseille and Nîmes had their own *compagnies* separate from nearby Aix, though the existence of these branches is known only because propagandists of Aix mention them in their deliberations. Correspondence between these two *compagnies* and propagandists of Aix indicate that the *compagnie* at Nîmes operated at least since 1657 and at Marseille sometime between 1658 and 1661. Lyon received its letters in 1676, though it encountered difficulties with civil authorities well into the following year. The Montpellier *compagnie* established its branch and received its documents in the same year 1679.

contends that the “new Gallicanism” that emerged from the religious wars of the second half of the sixteenth century was no longer akin to theological or religious theories, but rather, a political theory that sought to reconcile the realms of church and state. The conflict between secular and ecclesiastical authority over matters of the Catholic faith generated disputes about jurisdiction and “...a theory of how to maintain stability and authority within a state.” Jotham Parsons, *The Church in the Republic: Gallicanism and Political Ideology in Renaissance France* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 9, 139. An intellectual as well as spiritual movement, Jansenism in the seventeenth century was made up of *dévots* who distrusted the authority of the French Catholic Church and the state to lead them to social and cultural stability. Analogous to the Catholic Leaguers of the sixteenth century, Jansenists called for renewed piety and stricter policies against the Protestants who challenged their religious truth. Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France: Voices from the Wilderness* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 9, 12-13.

Propagandists, made up of the clergy and laity, established *compagnies* of the Propagation in the provinces according to the vision of Père Hyacinthe, but they set about eradicating heresy in their own ways; certainly, the most ardent Catholics, many of whom were dismayed by what they regarded as mild policies by the state, joined the ranks. The Propagation encountered criticism and controversy, especially in accusations of kidnapping. The *compagnies* abided by the Propagation's mission to destroy heresy via the domestic conversions of Huguenots. They targeted mostly young women and sought to complete their reform process by marrying them to Catholic men. The relocation of the former Protestant girls and women, accomplished by a network in the southeastern part of France, made the Propagation seem more suspicious and secretive than it actually was, though it was not completely forthright regarding its activities. Thus, the institution created by Père Hyacinthe took on a life of its own once it spread to the provinces from Paris, taking cues from the original *compagnie* in Paris and the original institution at Rome. Each *compagnie* slightly varied in establishment and function, and so did its house(s).²⁸ The *compagnies* generally looked to relocate the newly converted, employing a divide-and-conquer strategy against heresy. The methods for carrying out the mission and levels of success all varied. For example, the *compagnie* at Aix-en-provence paid a great deal of attention to money for marriages of *nouvelles catholiques* or *nouvelles converties*, and similarly for apprenticeships for their masculine counterparts, *nouveaux*

²⁸ Each *compagnie* had a house and some had more depending on whether they established a separate house for boys.

converties.²⁹ Likewise, the *compagnie* at Grenoble separated newly converted young women (and some men) from their families.

Both laymen and clergy held offices of their respective *compagnies*. The bourgeoisie, nobles, and clergy, made up the social composition of the Propagation, and their distribution varied among the *compagnies*. At Paris, the clergy made up more than half of the group while the divisions were closer to even in the provinces. Bishops, abbots, canons, regulars, and priests comprised the majority in Paris. High ranking ecclesiastics made up the minority in the provincial *compagnies*. In Grenoble, for example, parish and other secular clergy made up the bulk of the clerics who made up thirty-eight percent of the total membership. The same held true for Lyon. The high clergy comprised only one percent of the forty-three percent of clergy. In Montpellier, eleven out of the thirty-seven percent of clergy were prominent ecclesiastics. Each member of the Propagation contributed an annual amount to their respective *compagnie*. With the exception of Aix, the records do not indicate how much the propagandists invested in their own institution. There, the contributions ranged from twenty *écus* and twenty-five *livres*, to 500 *écus* and twenty-five *livres*.

The Propagation thrived on the private donations of non-members whose contributions also varied. Lump sums were given to the *compagnies* as gifts. For example, the prince de Conti gave 2000 *livres* to the Parisian group. Confraternities

²⁹ Since marriages cost money, and took time to arrange, some of the newly converted girls were given opportunities to work in a craft, teaching, and domestic servitude. Still others became women religious, but this cost the Propagation even more money. In Grenoble, the majority of these female converts were domestic servants, while in Lyon, they became fabric makers. Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 382-385.

within communities, such as the Saint-Sacrement, supported the Propagation, and sometimes, donors opted to go through such groups in order to indirectly give to the institution, mostly likely because of the tentative nature of the Propagation's reputation. This was the case at the societies at Lyon and Montpellier, which consisted of a large number of bourgeoisies who relied upon public donations to their organization. Still another option for the Propagation to generate revenue was donations made for intentions during the Mass, in which case Catholics received prayers in exchange for some monetary sum. Furthermore, the Assembly of the Clergy supported the Propagation immediately after its inception. Each *compagnie* and/or house found varying success in acquiring financial donations from the Assembly for the purpose of obtaining conversions. Members of the monarchy, who realized the benefits to state formation, and in addition, perhaps, to salvation of individuals, also gave large sums of money towards specific goals associated with the *compagnies*. For instance, the prince de Conti and the queen mother, Anne of Austria, gave 3000 and 1500 *livres*, respectively, for the purchase of the land and jurisdiction that came with the castle of Pragela.³⁰

Deliberation records of the various branches of the Propagation show that notable members, but rarely the nobles, joined the ranks of the institution. Père Hyacinthe's organization of the officers of the Parisian *compagnie* set the precedent for the others. The roles of each officer were not always clear-cut and consistent among the different *compagnies*, but for the most part, formal duties were distributed among propagandists.

³⁰ Although it was a part of France since the Middle Ages, the city of Pragelas (Pragelato) became a part of the Turin province and the Piedmont region of modern-day Italy under the rule of the House of Savoy after the Utrecht Treaty of 1713.

The superior was the archbishop of Paris. He mainly took on an advisory role and he directly appointed others to monitor the work of the Propagation. The director managed the *compagnie* for an elected period of three years. The position was first held by Père Hyacinthe, but subsequently, it was mostly held by higher level ecclesiastics. Originally part of the superior's role, the act of abjuration by Protestants eventually became part of the director's responsibility. In addition, the director oversaw instruction for new converts, and their surveillance. In the provinces, the office of the governor was an important position for the elite who desired a way to enter the court. In charge of the administrative and financial aspects of the *compagnie*, the governor dealt with the material wealth of the institution, and he held the office for two years. The other and lesser elected offices demanded the tenure of one year, and included the positions of treasurer and secretary. In Paris, the treasurer had four administrators under his charge for the purpose of collecting money. The secretary had the task of documenting the meetings and keeping the registers up to date. Members of the Propagation elected their officers by secret ballot, and only by a majority vote would a person be able to hold an official position. Each office could only be held for three terms, the last of which could be won by a relative majority vote.

After Paris, the *compagnie* at Grenoble was the most important entity of the network of the Propagation since it was in close proximity to Paris and its outlying provincial areas. The *compagnie* in Paris began to decline before 1645. In addition, there were other distractions that impeded the mission in Paris: war against Spain, Jansenism, and the interior strife between the Church and State. Fortuitously for ardent

Catholics, the establishment of the *compagnie* at Grenoble revived the Propagation's mission to fight heresy. Through written correspondence, Grenoble organized a network within the Propagation for the *compagnies* to make a concerted effort to restore the social and cultural order through Protestant conversions. The passion of its members relied upon seventeenth-century eschatological ideas that produced social anxiety over the Turks in the east as well as the domestic problem of Huguenots within the state.

Devotion and enthusiasm for the Catholic religion, evident in varied degrees in each *compagnie*, were the driving forces for the *compagnies* of the Propagation. During the 1650s, the *compagnies* multiplied throughout the southern and eastern regions of France. The second half of the seventeenth century also witnessed a flourishing of the houses for *nouvelles catholiques*. Correspondingly, and perhaps even more so, houses of *nouvelles catholiques* varied widely as they were collectively part of a large network of different religious and secular orders. The houses garnered local public support and made cooperation between the *compagnies* and their houses that much easier.

The Houses of the Propagation

The houses or *maisons* associated with the Propagation did not really resemble any institution for women's rehabilitation at the time. The sisters who ran the house of *nouvelles catholiques* in Paris, established in 1634, treated the girls of the house as repenting prostitutes. But unlike prostitutes, newly converted girls eventually returned to society, and the sisters had the added responsibility to help them do so. The Parisian house did not consider itself a charitable institution nor did it resemble one. In pursuit of

Père Hyacinthe's two-part mission against Protestantism and converting individuals to the Catholic faith, the *compagnies* of the Propagation demanded abjuration from heresy and then commitment to Catholicism.³¹

The women religious who worked for the houses related to the *compagnies* went by the names of Dames de la Charité and Dames de la Propagation de la foi. Secular women associated with the houses went by Filles de l'Exaltation de la Sainte-Croix or Filles de la Propagation de la foi (also known as Soeurs de l'Union). The Filles de l'Exaltation de la Sainte-Croix who ran the house in Paris initially developed the model that other houses emulated. The 1675 constitutions for the Parisian house guided the women in charge of the *nouvelles catholiques* in Paris and in the provinces where propagandists established *compagnies*. The women who ran the houses took solemn vows, though for practical reasons they did not cloister themselves as nuns were required to do. The houses for the newly converted mostly took in young women and supported their instruction for religious conversion. The institutional history of the houses may be characterized as relationships between different religious orders loosely working together to tend to new converts, and this network burgeoned out of Paris.

The Paris house for *nouvelles catholiques* was located on Rue de Sainte Anne, and the house for *nouveaux catholiques* was located on the Ile de Notre-Dame on Rue de Seine, Faubourg Saint Victor. The house for boys opened in 1645 and modeled itself on the house for girls. Regarding the entrance of girls, the house accepted those who were at least twelve years old. Their stay lasted between three and six months, after which the

³¹ This section of the introduction references the work of C. Martin unless otherwise noted.

Propagation arranged new placement that took them out of the Protestant milieu. At first, the house in Paris only considered women of quality, but eventually, they began to welcome the *petite bourgeoisie*. The spirit of welcoming all girls from all backgrounds that eventually took hold of the houses of the Propagation may be attributed to the vision of Père Hyacinthe.

The Union Chrétienne established itself in Paris at the seminary at Charonne in 1661, and it became the mother house for the order in France even though it had already established a house in Metz in 1657. This was in large part due to the work of Madame Pollalion, formerly of the Dames de la Charité, who founded the Filles de la Providence. The women of Providence had expertise in fighting against heresy and the house of *nouvelles catholiques* sometimes called upon these sisters to run it. In 1673, the seminary at Charonne eventually became an official part of the Propagation as the Filles de la Propagation de la foi and functioned as a house for novices and a place of retreat, whereas the house on Rue de Sainte Anne welcomed new converts. The dual institutions that catered to *nouvelles catholiques* in Paris did not typify the other houses of the Propagation's *compagnies*. Other houses run by the Union Chrétienne firmly established themselves apart from *compagnies* of the Propagation. By 1685, they dominated the western half of France.

In regard to the houses in the provinces, again, the rules and guidelines expressed in Paris relied upon the direction of individual *compagnies*. In Grenoble, for example, the house took in children ranging from ages seven through eighteen, and accommodated both boys and girls in a single space. Impoverished girls managed to obtain financial

support in exchange for their abjurations and conversion in Aix. In Montpellier, the house came into existence before the foundation of the *compagnie*. In regard to gender distribution, there were far fewer houses for boys than for girls. At the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, there were three houses affiliated with *compagnies* of the Propagation and devoted to boys: in Paris, Grenoble, and Turin. The houses provided young boys an opportunity to learn to read and write. The Propagation, however, invested most of its attention in the other houses, which catered to the instruction of girls. There existed a more systematic program for girls, which consisted of a three-prong plan to promote female work, piety, and Catholic identity at the cost of distancing themselves from their life prior to religious conversion.³²

Through a program of work and devotion while isolated in special houses, the sisters sought to recondition female converts. Various ways to promote dedication to Catholicism were spread out in a daily schedule. The girls woke up by six in the morning and tidied their rooms, and prepared to gather together for morning prayers. The Mass for the community followed, though those who had not yet not abjured left after the first liturgical reading. From nine to eleven, the girls worked on various projects. For the purpose of instilling discipline, the *nouvelles catholiques* learned to do women's work such as making linens for the household. Afterwards, they gathered again to recall the Ten Commandments in song, and those who wanted reading lessons stayed while the rest could resume whatever project they were working on. Benediction, lunch, thanksgiving, and recreation were at noon. At half past one, girls could get writing lessons or do work

³² Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 374.

if they chose. The *nouvelles catholiques* read in silence while the sisters attended evening prayer. At four o'clock, everyone gathered for the chanting of hymns and canticles. In the next hour, the girls who had not yet abjured heresy received a lecture on disputations. At six, one of the sisters led the girls in the Rosary. Dinner and thanksgiving followed at seven. Before retreating to their rooms in silence, the girls worked on their tasks from eight until nine. Ten o'clock signaled bedtime and the end of the day.

Chapter Synopsis

“It is often more difficult to triumph over heresy than idolatry, and to destroy adopted opinions as purer and stricter than extravagant superstitions, which can only seduce the spirit and satisfy one’s love of self.”³³ With expressed sympathy for the Archbishop of Cambrai, Cardinal Louis François de Bausset of France wrote this statement in his three-volume biography of François Fénelon. More specifically, he refers to what he thought was the enormous task that Fénelon had before him during his tenure as superior to the sisters religious of the *nouvelles catholiques* in Paris. Indeed, without the option of direct military conquest, Catholic moralists had to resort to other means to root out heresy. The spiritual conquest of Huguenots in France during the seventeenth century became the main objective and common rhetoric for Catholic reformists who desired peace and stability in the realm.

³³ “Il est souvent plus difficile de triompher de l’hérésie que de l’idolâtrie, et de détruire les opinions adoptées comme plus pures et plus sévères, que des superstitions extravagantes, qui ne peuvent ni séduire l’esprit, ni satisfaire l’amour-propre.” Louis François de Bausset, *Histoire de Fénelon, archevêque de Cambrai*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1850), 49.

Catholic authorities and moralists, who were invested in the extirpation of heresy and idolatry in their lifetime, considered missionary work as the way to achieving religious and civil uniformity. This was welcomed by those who sought social well-being, in addition to Catholic homogeneity, after the French Wars of Religion that encompassed the greater part of the latter half of the sixteenth century. Despite state efforts toward religious toleration, regardless of sincerity or intent, Catholic zealots, supported by tenets of absolutism and inspired by the tenor of the sixteenth-century wars of religion, declared their own war on heresy in the seventeenth century via organizations such as the *compagnies* of the Propagation. The propagandists of Montpellier expressed in their meetings the overarching goal of the institution: rebuild a state that is unified in the Catholic religion. They concluded that the creation of a new society was simply inevitable as witnessed by the extent of Huguenot conversions to Catholicism as a result of the Propagation's work: "...in very little time, so great a number of conversions have occurred that all of France is being edified."³⁴ Although propagandists often exaggerated the success of conversion efforts, their recorded meetings reveal their ideologies and ambitions for societal change in the seventeenth century.

Holding close the ideologies and designs of Père Hyacinthe, who established the first *compagnie* at Paris, the provincial branches of the Propagation took to action in an adaptive manner. The deliberation records of the Propagation in the provinces are used to piece together mentalities and attitudes towards women and girls in seventeenth-

³⁴ "...dans tres peu de temps un si grand nombre de conversions que toute la france en seroit edifiée." ADH 48 H 1, 12 June 1680.

century France. These records are the minutes of meetings mostly held bi-monthly, which include potential projects and investigations, ongoing surveillance, and updates about new converts. The brief notes about the newly converted reveal possible reasons for their abjuration from Protestantism and conversion to Catholicism, though much of it must be considered as the perspective of propagandists. As such, the true motives of converts cannot be determined from the deliberations with great certainty, and historical agency will be attributed to the victims of the Propagation's work as much as possible.

Furthermore, this dissertation proposes to address a lack of attention to gender differences in narratives about the Propagation by considering the approach of propagandists towards female Protestants, and society's broader attitudes towards the early modern family and household in the age of the Counter Reformation in France. In order to understand the place of early modern French women within a politico-religious state, this study will examine the archival documents and publications of the seventeenth century, from the inception of the first *compagnie* of the Propagation up to Fénelon's treatise on the education of girls published just a couple of years after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Deliberation records of the provincial *compagnies* that remain extant are those of Grenoble (est. 1647), Aix-en-provence (est. 1656), and Lyon (est. 1659), and Montpellier (est. 1679).³⁵ The investigation of records from these places will illustrate

³⁵ The dates attributed to the foundations are based on when the *compagnies* recorded their first deliberations. Letters of patent came to the institutions earlier or later than some of their establishments: Grenoble (1650), Lyon (1676), Aix-en-provence (1682), and Montpellier (1679). The *compagnies* of Marseilles (est. 1658-1661), Avignon (est. 1659), and Nîmes round out the eight institutions associated with the Propagation de la foi in France. Deliberation records for these institutions, however, are unknown. The register at Avignon contains information about the institution in the eighteenth century. The few records of the activities of the *compagnies* of Marseilles and Nîmes are contained in the deliberations of Aix. Propagandists at Aix who happened to respond to correspondence by those at Marseilles and Nîmes

that members of the Propagation considered the conversion and marriage of Huguenot girls as key factors to consider in the elimination of heresy in France.

The deliberation records of the *compagnies* of the Propagation reveal a strategy against heresy based on the conversion of Huguenot girls. Although the Propagation targeted individual men, women, and people of all ages, young female converts made up the majority. The Propagation of France supported first and foremost the agenda to extirpate heresy, but the process by which the *compagnies* and houses came to support deliberate conversion campaigns that largely targeted girls happened over time. Fénelon's treatise may be regarded as the manifestation of the mission and goals of the *compagnies* of the Propagation in France. The archbishop's advocacy for a strict monitoring of girls during their formative years derived from his experiences with the societies that founded houses of *nouvelles catholiques* among other encounters with Protestant conversions.

Through the conversion of girls and women, the various *compagnies* in the provinces desired to remake a populace unified in the majority religion of Catholicism. Together, these seventeenth-century sources reveal anxieties about familial influence, particularly for young girls, and the recognition that a good moral society started with families headed by devout Catholic women. They provide a glimpse into a continuous process by which the *compagnies* and houses of the Propagation came to regard girls and

attest to their activity for the Propagation in the seventeenth century. These records reveal the existence of Nîmes as early as 1657, but not when it was actually founded. C. Martin found a record of names without dates pertaining to the *compagnie* at Marseilles which is listed as ADBR 150 H 15, but the archive was not able to locate it as of 29 January 2008. According to archivists, the file of documents must have been mislabeled after the archives digitized their records in 2006, or it was simply misplaced somewhere in the stacks. Only time will tell if and when it is ever found.

women as critical parts in the building of a desirable state. The following chapters will not only discuss the development of strategies to combat heresy, but also examine such changing attitudes towards girls' education alongside the context of broader social, cultural, and intellectual views on female piety and disorderly women.

The first two chapters speak to anti-heresy ideologies in Paris: the movement against Protestantism and the treatise by Fénelon, which mainly focused on noble Huguenot girls and women for conversion to Catholicism. Chapter I examines the work of the Propagation in light of missionary ideologies in France and New France. Religious authorities of Catholic Reformation France declared war on both idolatry and heresy in order to relieve social and cultural tensions. Difference and ignorance could not co-exist with Catholics in a Catholic state. As a result, native peoples, heretics, and the poor, especially the females, had to be set on the right path. In the same way that native women posed the greatest obstacle for missionaries who sought to bring Catholicism to indigenous peoples of New France, propagandists considered poor and heretical women the greatest impediments to their goals. The next chapter examines the role of women and motherhood, and the education of girls as outlined by Fénelon. The household, with the mother in charge of children's educations, played a significant role in the making of an ideal French society.

The last three chapters discuss the deliberation records of the Propagation in the provinces as they demonstrate the integration of the ideas formed in Paris. Chapter III examines the significance of the early modern woman within the agenda of propagandists. The antithesis of the corrupting Huguenot woman in the female paradox

was the pious counterpart, which devout female Catholics fulfilled. Chapter IV considers marriage as a device to control women and ease social tensions associated with unmarried women. Propagandists targeted poor women for conversion and marriage in order to create more Catholic families and diminish the number of Huguenot families. As such, the ultimate goal of converting women and marrying them off to Catholic men was to ensure that children be raised Catholic. The final chapter examines the roles and opportunities for female patronage in early modern society and in the *compagnies* of the Propagation. Patronage contributed to the work of the Propagation by creating “safer” households for new converts. Virtuous Catholic women benefitted society by helping create nurturing environments for girls who endangered themselves and others by their perceived ignorance of the true faith.

CHAPTER I
IN PURSUIT OF CONFORMITY: MISSIONARY WORK AND THE CATHOLIC
REFORMATION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

Over the last two centuries, the organization basically known as the Œuvre de la propagation de la foi, which began in France, has established itself as a global missionary cooperative dedicated to spreading the Catholic faith to countries near and far. Now as a branch of the Œuvres pontificales missionaires (OPM), the Propagation continues to set about evangelizing around the world.³⁶ On one of its websites, the organization defines the characteristics of an ideal missionary, the face of the institution:

Being a missionary is to be sent on behalf of the Church to proclaim and give witness of his or her faith in Jesus Christ and that of the Church; to be a messenger of joy, peace and hope of the Resurrection; to go to meet each other and respect our differences, [and] to bring the love of neighbor to all – all of the baptized are missionaries.³⁷

The last part of the OPM's statement upholds the idea that individual Catholics who work together have the potential to make a great difference in the world. This simple and somewhat naive thought describes the original conditions that resulted in the inception of

³⁶ The OPM espouses the belief in evangelizing according to the Gospel in Mt 28: 19: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them [...]." In addition to the Œuvre pontificale de la propagation de la foi, the OPM comprises of three other parts: the Œuvre pontificale de Saint-Pierre-Apôtre, Œuvre pontificale de l'Enfance missionaire, and the Union pontificale missionaire. Œuvres pontificales missionaires of Canada, "Accueil," Œuvres pontificales missionaires of Canada, <http://www.opmcanada.ca/> (accessed 11 May 2010).

³⁷ Être missionnaire c'est d'être envoyé au nom de l'Église pour annoncer et pour donner témoignage de sa foi en Jésus Christ et celle de l'Église; d'être un messenger ou une messagère de la joie, la paix et l'espérance du Ressuscité; d'aller à la rencontre de l'autre et de respecter nos différences; d'apporter l'amour du prochain à toutes et tous. Tous et toutes baptisés(es) sont missionnaires. Œuvre pontificale de la propagation de la foi of Canada, "Accueil," Œuvres pontificales missionaires of Canada, <http://www.opmf.ca/pages-fr/index.php> (accessed 11 May 2010).

a worldwide organization for evangelization. Established in Lyon by Pauline-Marie Jaricot in the early part of the nineteenth century, the society began as a way to centralize monetary contributions to be distributed for foreign missionary work.³⁸ Mademoiselle Jaricot brought together a group of her female friends to take part in a prayer group that donated small but regular amounts of money for missionary work abroad. She expanded her vision when she organized workers at her family's factory to gather for prayer and contribute to the foreign missions of Paris on a weekly basis. The organization rapidly grew at an exponential rate. The workers were placed in groups of ten wherein each member would help create another group of ten. By 1821, there were about 2000 members belonging to this quickly burgeoning organized group of lay Catholics. In the next year, an assembly of priests and laity gathered to officially institute the group in Lyon in order to facilitate the pooling of resources to help missions around the world. On May 3, 1822, they called themselves members of the Association de la Propagation de la foi dans les Deux-Mondes, which was the formal establishment of the present-day OPM.³⁹

³⁸ Born in Lyon on 22 July 1799, Mademoiselle Jaricot came from a wealthy family of industrialists. At the age of the seventeen, in 1816, her mother died. At this point, she sought to lead a life of mortification and she took a personal vow of chastity on Christmas Day of the same year. Further, as a means for self-sacrifice, she secretly adopted the lifestyle and dress of workers. Edward John Hickey, *Society for the Propagation of the Faith: Foundation, Organization and Success (1822-1922)*, (PhD Diss., Catholic University of America, 1922), 16-18 and Œuvre pontificale de la propagation de la foi of Canada, "Historique," Œuvres pontificales missionnaires of Canada, <http://www.oppf.ca/pages-fr/historique.php> (accessed 11 May 2010).

³⁹ Hickey, *Society for the Propagation*, 18-25 and Œuvres pontificales missionnaires of France, "Pauline Jaricot, une femme aux grandes intuitions...", Œuvres pontificales missionnaires of France, <http://www.mission.catholique.fr/qui-sommes-nous/notre-mission/pauline-jaricot-une-femme-aux.html> (accessed 11 May 2010).

The type of work and vision of the Propagation that began with an idea for a small prayer group of devout women at first glance seems to wildly contrast with the Propagation of the seventeenth century that has been infamously remembered for taking children from their parents. The two institutions with very similar names were neither related nor was one an extension of the other. The common names, however, cannot be attributed to mere coincidence. At a fundamental level, the institutions were quite alike in that they both sought conversions to Catholicism. The two separate establishments began as organizations aiming to propagate the faith among non-Catholics. Despite differing approaches and methods for achieving their shared albeit basic objective, the two foundations came out of a general missionary spirit and movement that intensified in France during the early modern period.⁴⁰

This spirit, which was part of France's era of the Catholic Reformation, came about as a general desire by religious authorities to combat ignorance in the world. This sentiment worked well within a developing absolutist state. In its effort to create a culturally unified society, political and religious institutions sought to control worship, practice, and common ideologies in accordance with an elite religious culture.⁴¹ For instance, the *compagnie* at Lyon discussed how to deal with heretics in the countryside. They ultimately decided that they required education and proposed to continue in their

⁴⁰ Hickey and M. Alexandre Guasco attribute Jaricot's inspiration for a society that helped foreign missions to the seventeenth-century organization. Hickey, *Society for the Propagation*, 12-17 and Guasco, *L'Œuvre de la propagation de la foi* (Paris, 1911), 9-13.

⁴¹ Muchembled's study discusses how religious authorities addressed ignorance in the countryside, but this thesis may be helpful in understanding other historical subjects of this time period. Indeed, Muchembled's work is helpful in understanding the approach of moralists and their attitudes towards native peoples abroad, the poor, heretics, and female Catholics and converts at home. *Culture populaire*, 225-228.

perseverance “to instruct little by little the aforementioned pretended religion.”⁴² Interior and exterior missions brought together two mechanisms for exerting cultural authority and helped articulate their expectations for social order prior to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Colonial missions to the New World quickly revealed to Europeans the difficulty of saving native souls, and reflected the problems with which French religious authorities struggled at home. Furthermore, both Catholics and Protestants required regulation by the absolutist government of the seventeenth century; meaning, the domestic missions not only targeted the ignorant and erring folk of France, but also Catholics whose strong political and religious identities served to strengthen their communities and society as a whole.⁴³ Catholic moralists and zealots who demanded the elimination of heresy targeted not only Huguenots but also Catholics who were endangered by the weakness of their status or sex, or both, which could be the case for most women. Women, therefore, endured the brunt of institutional measures, which in theory aimed to reform the French state.

French Catholicism after the Religious Wars

During the sixteenth-century wars of religion, French Catholics justified violence as a way to bring about religious conformity and unity. Most scholars who have written about the violent nature of sixteenth-century French society have focused on the

⁴² “...instruire peu a peu lad religion pretendue...” ADBR 150 H 1, 14 May 1656.

⁴³ Keith P. Luria, “Rituals of Conversion: Catholics and Protestants in Seventeenth-Century Poitou” in *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*, eds. Barbara B. Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 65-81.

historical events of this time from social and political standpoints. In order to understand the driving force behind what may appear to have been mostly gratuitous violence, scholars have placed religious devotion at the heart of sixteenth-century cultural frameworks.

Centuries before, in the Middle Ages, the ritual of transubstantiation during the Mass became the pivotal moment of worship. Theologians debated the moment of consecration in regard to the substance and accidents of bread and wine. Common people, as much as theologians, embraced the Eucharist and its mysteries. The sacred power of the Eucharist touched every aspect of life. Eucharistic devotion shaped the architectural space of churches; demanded a new feast day in the liturgical calendar and ritual procession of the Corpus Christi; necessitated new ritual objects such as the monstrance; solely nourished the bodies of women mystics; and created hostile enemies of Christians in the form of Jews.⁴⁴ As the most important symbol of Catholicism, the consecrated Eucharist elicited powerful reactions against it.

In the wars of religion that enveloped France in the latter half of the sixteenth century, the host became the key object for Protestants to desecrate and for Catholics to protect. In everyday life, Catholics and Huguenots used violence in order to express their

⁴⁴ For a history on the development of eucharistic devotion and how it became deeply embedded in Christian society and culture, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). The ways in which eucharistic devotion permeated the lives of the devout are numerous, and Rubin, in *Corpus Christi*, discusses a large number of them. For a perspective on medieval women's devotion to the Eucharist, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); and Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) discuss rituals of eucharistic desecration that created discourses of Jewish malfeasance targeted at harming the body of Christ as well as the bodies of Christians.

interpretations of their respective theologies. Cultural historians have pointed out that the violence held meaning for people of this age.⁴⁵ Such historians have not taken for granted the power of religious ideas and their pervasive nature in the making of social and political structures of the early modern era. Sixteenth-century people fought to re-establish order in their society and safeguard their salvation in the afterlife by restoring the Catholic faith to its former days of dominance. The French wars of religion manifested deeper personal battles for legitimizing religious identities of cultural and social significance.⁴⁶ The cultural worldviews of Catholics and Huguenots were important forces, leading people to violence such that the severely distressed mindset of people of the time has to be considered in assessing the violence.⁴⁷ For early modern people, the Devil existed among human beings on earth. This millenarian mindset compelled members of the Catholic League to justify violence against Huguenots. This is not to say that violence was acceptable in any form and manner. The famous St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, for instance, was regarded as an opportunity to rid the

⁴⁵ Religious violence was a way for Catholics and Protestants in the second half of the sixteenth century to legitimize belief systems, and Natalie Zemon Davis emphasizes that it was not an abnormal or pathological instances but rather part of cultural behavior. See "Rites of Violence," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 152-187 and 315-326. More specifically, preachers and their audience entangled themselves in the violence of the era. Larissa Taylor, "Dangerous Vocations: Preaching in France in the Late Middle Ages and Reformations" in Larissa Taylor, ed., *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2003), 91-124.

⁴⁶ Holt contends that the cultural wars between Catholics and Protestants came out of social and economic tensions during a time of restructuring in the upper echelons of society. Noble families with political ambitions took their opportunity for advancement during a time of decline for the aristocracy but prosperity for the nobility and urban elite. Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁷ Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: La Violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525-vers 1610*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champs Vallon, 1990).

realm of important Huguenot leaders by some ardent Catholics, though the king and polemicists on either side could not readily explain whether the king's involvement could be entirely justified even during tumultuous times.⁴⁸ The prospect of a world upside down, however, did matter and it justified people's reactions against Protestant reformers, their ideas and their followers. Since the late Middle Ages, eucharistic devotion characterized people's religious piety as well as their civil and monarchical devotion.⁴⁹ Piety mattered and ordinary Catholic folk elected to take part in the wars for the sake of fighting heretics who threatened the civil peace and the eternal salvation of true believers. According to Catholics, Calvin's re-conception of eucharistic theology no less called for a revolution that threatened to unravel the existing fibers of society.⁵⁰

Prior to the issue of the Edict of Nantes in 1598, several royal edicts attempted to bring about peace and proposed some form of compromise to embittered factions of society. Arguably, these edicts of religious tolerance were anything but measures that defined laws for Protestant inclusion.⁵¹ For example, the January Edict of 1562 that

⁴⁸ James R. Smither, "The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and Images of Kingship in France: 1572-1574," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22, no. 1 (1991): 27-46 examines writers of pamphlet literature who debated the state of the kingship after the assassination of Coligny and other Huguenots who got killed during the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. The majority of the pamphlets generally recognized the monarchical government as the true form of rule, though the king had to abide by the laws and traditions of the realm. In the matter of the king's hand in the murder of Coligny, writers came to the conclusion that the massacre was an aberration that did not demonstrate the model kingship.

⁴⁹ Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁵⁰ Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Devotion to existing eucharistic theology and "popular" liturgical culture united Catholic League members as a group. Ann W. Ramsey, *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation: The Catholic League in Paris and the Nature of Catholic Reform, 1540-1630* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1999).

allowed the assembly of Huguenots to delineate religious difference – and therefore social exclusion – and did not advance the notion of society accepting and integrating a second religion in France.⁵² Rather, it was a display of “absolutist moderation” that symbolized the monarch’s Christ-like decision for civic harmony advised by his council.⁵³ Furthermore, the edict placed Protestant synods under the protection of the monarch, thereby biding time and priming the state’s return to religious uniformity in accordance with Michel de l’Hospital’s mystical vision of social concordance.⁵⁴ In sum, the various measures for peace and edicts issued from the end of the first War of Religion in 1563 to the Edict of 1598 did little to achieve actual toleration in communities made up of both Protestants and Catholics.⁵⁵ Upon issue of the Edict of Nantes, a monarch-subject relationship and religious coexistence continued, allowing Protestants a sense of collective identity until its revocation in 1685.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Nicola M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) argues that Huguenots found themselves closed off from courts, councils and offices during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

⁵² Denis Crouzet, “A Law of Difference in the History of Difference: The First Edict of ‘Tolerance’” in *Religious Differences in France: Past and Present*, ed. Kathleen Perry Long (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2006): 1-18.

⁵³ Crouzet, “A Law of Difference,” 13.

⁵⁴ Crouzet, “A Law of Difference,” 14-17.

⁵⁵ Barbara B. Diefendorf, “Waging Peace: Memory, Identity, and the Edict of Nantes” in *Religious Differences in France: Past and Present*, ed. Kathleen Perry Long (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2006) 19-50.

⁵⁶ Keith P. Luria, “Sharing Sacred Space: Protestant Temples and Religious Coexistence in the Seventeenth Century” in *Religious Differences in France: Past and Present*, ed. Kathleen Perry Long (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2006), 71-92; and Amanda Eurich, “‘Speaking the King’s Language’: The Huguenot Magistrates of Castres and Pau” in *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World, 1559-1685*, ed. Raymond A. Mentzer and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 117-138.

The political and religious turmoil left behind by the wars of religion undermined the ability of the state to create and maintain stability. The politico-religious uncertainty at the end of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries prompted radical action to urgent problems. From this perspective, François Ravaillac was not just an uneducated religious fanatic who killed the king.⁵⁷ Regicide could be justified and even deemed necessary to Frenchmen such as Ravaillac who looked to the monarchy for an end to the violent times but only found disappointment there. The link between religious uniformity and political tranquility developed further in the seventeenth century. Louis XIV promoted the idea that collective political salvation led to individual spiritual salvation. The period between the issue and subsequent revocation of the Edict of Nantes paralleled the development of a close relationship between theology and political power: “Louis XIV demanded loyalty to the state first and foremost, and he demanded that religious practices demonstrate loyalty in their uniformity.”⁵⁸ The Crown demanded civil obedience in exchange for protecting the interests of the privileged class in the provincial areas.⁵⁹ In the aftermath of the Fronde, France entered a period of state consolidation. Absolutism in France, therefore, was a means to re-establishing control over the state after years of religious and political instability.

⁵⁷ Yves-Marie Bercé, *The Birth of Absolutism: A History of France, 1598-1661*, trans. Richard Rex (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

⁵⁸ Christian Jouhaud, “Religion and Politics in France during the Period of the Edict of Nantes (1598-1685)” in *Religious Differences in France: Past and Present*, ed. Kathleen Perry Long (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2006), 73-90. Refer to p. 90 for the quote.

⁵⁹ William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

The political conditions of the seventeenth century proved advantageous for the *compagnies* of the Propagation as their vision aligned with that of the state. Religious zealots of this time period inherited the work of their sixteenth-century predecessors. The cause remained the same: fight heresy for the sake of civil peace and people's souls. The war against heresy in seventeenth-century France relied upon abjurations and conversions to Catholicism, and militant Catholics came in the form of men and women in religious orders, and organized laity. The aftermath of the civil wars and regicide left seventeenth-century people clamoring for ways to appease the wrath of God. The mystic tradition of Barbe Acarie and St. Vincent de Paul's vision of public charity especially resonated with devout women seeking penitential asceticism.⁶⁰ Women's congregations and orders provided the loci for practicing ascetic ways of life and these religious ideas were transmitted to lay people. Furthermore, female congregations actively participated in the war against heresy by providing instruction to girls.

The Missionary Spirit of the Catholic Reformation

In 1624, prior to the founding of the Propagation in Paris, religious zealots sought a permanent solution to their heresy problem in France. The well-respected preacher, theologian, and royal *controversiste* or debater François Véron (1575-1649) argued for the establishment of the Congregation de la Propagation de la foi modeled after the

⁶⁰ Barbara B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

institution Propaganda Fide in Rome, Italy.⁶¹ The Roman society, and the kind of institution that Véron promoted in France, was made up of religious missionaries dedicated to the catechesis of those who lived in ignorance.⁶² In addition to Catholic instruction for idolaters and Protestant men, women, and children, the missionaries helped establish seminaries abroad. Véron, however, desired a religious congregation that specifically targeted heretics in Protestant areas in France. In his letter to Louis XIII, Véron proposes to eliminate heresy on a swift timetable and with all the advantages of a peaceful resolution:

Sir, I explain and deduce for Your Majesty an easy and assured way to extirpate, in four or five years, from your whole realm, heresy, the cause of all its troubles and seed of perpetual rebellions, and consequently for giving and maintaining a steady and assured peace in your State without the disagreements that war brings with it, without flow of blood by your generous nobility and your other subjects, and without diminution of your finances, to the eternal salvation of millions of your subjects that these new opinions we separated from the Church by the single establishment of the Congregation de la propagation de la foi or missionaries....⁶³

⁶¹ François Véron, *L'établissement de la Congregation de la Propagation de la Foy et des missionnaires genereaux des prelates de France, pour conferer avec les ministres, et prescher aux portes de leurs Temples, et es places publiques, par toutes les Provinces de ceste Monarchie, au salut des devoyez, et pour le repos de l'Estat* (Paris, 1624). The Roman "congrégation" was established in 1622 for the defense and spread of the Faith. Inspired by the Inquisition's reputation for repression, the Propaganda set out to evangelize by penetrating both political and religious realms of society mainly by initiating its work via colleges. See Giovanni Pizzorusso, "La Congrégation <<de Propaganda Fide>> et les Missions en Italie au Milieu du XVII^e Siècle" in *Les Missions Intérieures en France et en Italie du XVI^e Siècle au XX^e Siècle*, eds. Christian Sorrel and Frédéric Meyer (Chambéry: Université de Savoie, 2001): 43-61 for an informative yet concise history of the Propaganda.

⁶² Martin underscores the fact that Véron did not partake in the actual creation of the Propagation that came into being under the direction of Père Hyacinthe. For all his work to establish religious congregations for the purpose of combating heresy, Véron, indeed, did not directly give input into the Propagation that eventually received approval by the king. Nonetheless, he was an important figure who reflected political tensions of the time. *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 16-18.

⁶³ "Sire, j'expose et deduis à V.M. un moyen facile et asseuré pour extirper dans 4 ou 5 ans de tout vostre Royaume, l'heresie, cause de tous les troubles d'iceluy, et semence de perpetuelles rebellions, et consequemment pour donner et maintenir un repos ferme et asseuré à votre Estat, sans les incommoditez que Mars traîne apres soy, sans effusion du sang de vostre genereuse Noblesse et de vos autres subiets, et sans diminution de vos finances, au salut eternel de millions de vos subiets que ces nouvelles opinions on

In his proposal, Véron envisions an uncomplicated, thorough and permanent solution to France's religious conflicts and tensions by means of a grand-scale state project. Looking to the Roman institution as a precedent, Véron desired to enlist a group of qualified missionaries organized under a single entity. He urges the king to send such persons to deal directly with those who perpetuated Protestantism: "...the aforementioned missionaries, dispersed throughout France, fighting against heresy and ministers, and teaching erring people, with this liberty [letters of patent] in public places and places where they live..."⁶⁴ Furthermore, he stresses that the true value of his proposal lay in its simplicity. Arguing that one need not require any knowledge of theology, philosophy, Greek or Latin in order to understand his plan, he promotes swift action instead of intellectual debates about what to do about the Huguenots. In short, one only needed "eyes and a bit of judgment" to take care of the heresy problem.⁶⁵ With the cooperation of the king and pope, Véron argues, the state would be poised to bring about "the total destruction of heresy."⁶⁶

Véron fervently supported an organization of missionaries to combat heretics throughout France. Having traveled and seen firsthand the persistence of heresy in areas such as Saintonge on the western coast and Languedoc in the south, he insists on

separé de l'Eglise, par un seule établissement de la Congregation de la propagation de la foy, ou de missionnaires...." Véron, *L'établissement de la Congregation*, 3.

⁶⁴ "...lesquels missionnaires, dispersez partoute la France, combattent l'heresie et les ministres, et enseignent le peuple errant, avec ceste liberté es places publiques et lieux de leur demeures...." Véron, *L'établissement de la Congregation*, 4-5.

⁶⁵ "...des yeux et un peu de iugement...." Véron, *L'établissement de la Congregation*, 4.

⁶⁶ "...la destruction totale de l'heresie...." Véron, *L'établissement de la Congregation*, 5.

ecclesiastic changes in order to accommodate an increasingly alarming situation.⁶⁷

Véron, along with other distinguished learned men of theology in France, met with an assembly of ecclesiastics to discuss the merits of interior missionary work. These men proposed that the prelates of each diocese establish a congregation “to combat heresy and try to purge it from France.”⁶⁸ In similar polemical fashion, the religious authorities emphasized widespread penetration into Protestant communities in order to successfully rid France of heresy. Furthermore, the document points out that it was necessary to pool their energies together and cooperate for the greater good. The message of urgency and uniformity for religious missions in their own communities resonated with the times. Véron, therefore, urges that Protestants not only be instructed for conversion but be instilled with fear lest they relapse.⁶⁹ By compelling Huguenots to convert, he argues, they will let go of their former ways:

...Therefore, in order to see numerous conversions, it is necessary to join together salutary doctrine to a useful fear, so that together, the light of truth dissipates the shadows of error, and the force of fear ruptures the bonds of the wrong tradition.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Although the publication date of the book is unknown, the document is dated 14 November 1625. François Véron, “Approbation des Provinciaux et Principaux d’Ordres reguliers et seculiers, et offer de Missionnaires, â l’assemblee generale du Clergé” in *Le Pacifique de la France ou L’Union souscrite par les Ordres Reguliers et Seculiers, approuvé par l’Assemblée generale du Clergé, pour la reduction universelle de ceux de la Religion pretendü reformee; L’establissement de la Congregation de la Propagation de la Foy* (s.l.n.d.), 12. Addressing prelates, he expresses concern for Catholic priests being able to handle the growing number of Protestant ministers in “Requete presentee pour l’establissement de la Congregation par toute la France, pour la conversion des desvoyez, et la propagation de la Foy” in *Le Pacifique de la France*, 7-11.

⁶⁸ “...pour combater l’heresie, et essayer d’en purger la France.” François Véron, “La Congregation des Missionnaires, ou, de la Propagation de la Foy, Establie, et autorisee par l’Assemblée generale du Clergé de France” in *Le Pacifique de la France* (s.l., 1626), 14-15.

⁶⁹ Véron, *Le Pacifique de la France*, 5.

This sort of missionary fortitude was alive and well in the institution of the Propagation that eventually did come into being.

The *compagnie* of the Propagation at Paris brought together militant Catholics seeking to achieve a unified religion and state. In a letter titled *Explication des intentions de la Congregation de la Propagation de la Foy*, written after 1635, the anonymous author summarizes the limits of authority granted to the Propagation and the main tenets of its work.⁷¹ Invoking the protection of Cardinal Richelieu and citing the statutes of the Parisian *compagnie* of the Propagation, the author criticizes the faculty of theology in Paris for publishing work on the institution's affairs without consent and review by doctors of theology.⁷² The author seems frustrated and exasperated by the actions of the faculty whose actions could hinder and compromise the *compagnie* and its primary objective, which aimed for social improvement in France. In addition, it had letters of patent from the king, which his council had approved, and these were in addition to Cardinal Richelieu's "special protection."⁷³ The letter implores the cooperation of the faculty in Paris so that the *compagnie* could continue its holy and much needed efforts against heretics: "And everyone together, in this fine union and mutual affection, will

⁷⁰ "...donc pour voir des conversions nombreuses, faut joindre la doctrine salutaire, à une utile crainte, afin que conjointement la lumiere de la verite dissipe les tenebres de l'erreur, et la violence de la crainte rompe les liens de la mauvaise coustume." Véron, *Le Pacifique de la France*, 5.

⁷¹ *Explication des intentions de la Congregation de la Propagation de la Foy, sous le tiltre de l'Exaltation Sainte Croix, establee en cette ville de Paris, sous la protection de Monseigneur l'Eminentissime Cardinal Duc de Richelieu* (s.l.n.d.).

⁷² *Explication des intentions de la Congregation*, 2. Cardinal Richelieu was minister to Louis XIII of France from 1624 until his death in 1642.

⁷³ "Et Monseigneur l'Eminentissime Cardinal Duc de Richelieu l'a voulu honorer de sa protection speciale...." *Explication des intentions de la Congregation*, 6-7.

spread the glory of God, extirpate heresy, and exalt the Cross among those who do not want to acknowledge it.”⁷⁴ As the letter implies, in order for the mission of the *compagnie* to come to fruition, for social and cultural conformity, all Catholics had to band together and first conform to the work of the Propagation.

Religious authorities greatly underscored the concept of unity in the effort to extirpate heresy from the realm. Pope Urban VIII confirmed by papal bull the *compagnie* of the Propagation in Paris on June 3, 1634, but before receiving official recognition as the Compagnie de l’Exaltation de la Sainte-Croix, it instituted the rules and statutes established by Père Hyacinthe.⁷⁵ These regulatory guidelines provided the *compagnie* in Paris as well as future establishments in France a way to be unified: “Union being that which preserves the societies and division that which causes their ruin....”⁷⁶ Assembly meetings had to correspond to certain rules, and propagandists would have to manage their time and energy to the singular task of converting heretics:

In the assemblies, each [person] ought to report on what he will have done concerning conversions of heretics since the last [meeting]: by knowing whom he will have converted to the Faith, and which arrangements he found for others [and] which relationships each [person] made, the *compagnie* will deliberate on what will be done. And at the end of each assembly, the day, time, and place

⁷⁴ “Et dans cette bonne union et affection reciproque, tous ensemble avancer la gloire de Dieu, extirper les heresies, et exalter la Croix au milieu de ceux qui ne la veulent reconnoistre.” *Explication des intentions de la Congregation*, 8.

⁷⁵ *Commencement, institution, regles, et status de la congregation de l’Exaltation sainte Croix, pour la propagation de la Foy, establee en cette ville de Paris, le quatorzième Septembre de l’année mil six cens trente-deux* (Paris: Chez Sebastien Cramoisy, 1635).

⁷⁶ “L’union estant ce qui conserve les Congregations, et la division ce qui cause leur ruine....” *Commencement, institution, regles, et status*, 143.

where it will be necessary to be will be designated as well as the subject that we will discuss, and those who are present will inform those who are absent.⁷⁷

In addition, although Paris was the heart and soul of the Propagation, the organization could not do the work it had proposed without extension into the provinces. *Compagnies* throughout France needed to be established for proper surveillance of heretics and institutional efficacy.⁷⁸ Through written correspondence, *compagnies* set up in other places could keep Paris apprised of their activities.⁷⁹

The stress on uniformity and the implementation of protocols in each of the *compagnies* attest to the widening reach of French elite culture. Around the time of the Propagation's establishment in Paris, Cardinal Richelieu officially recognized the Académie Française in 1635, which had been founded the year before.⁸⁰ This learned group preserved the integrity of the French language by normalizing it and providing it with rules.⁸¹ Like the propagation of the Catholic faith, purification of the French language became a vehicle to combat ignorance in the realm. The prospect of achieving this goal prompted one of the founding members of the Académie Française, Guillaume

⁷⁷ "Es Assemblées chacun doit rapporter ce qu'il aura fait depuis la dernière touchant la conversions des heretiques: à sçavoir qui il aura converty à la Foy, et quelles dispositions il a treuvé és autres; lesquelles relations faites par un chacun, la Compagnie deliberera ce qui sera à faire. Et à la fin de chaque Assemblée, le jour, heure, et lieu où il faudra se trouver, sera destiné, comme aussi le sujet duquel l'on traittera, et les presens avertiront les absens..." *Commencement, institution, regles, et status*, 83.

⁷⁸ *Commencement, institution, regles, et status*, 135-141.

⁷⁹ *Commencement, institution, regles, et status*, 157-158.

⁸⁰ Jacques Véron, "L'Académie Française et la circulation des élites: une approche démographique," *Population* 40, no. 3 (1985): 455-471.

⁸¹ The members began with the task of writing a dictionary that they published in 1694. Currently, the Académie is working on its ninth edition. See <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/histoire/index.html> for an online version of the dictionary.

Colletet, to write a poem in honor of the Archbishop of Rouen.⁸² In it, he imagines a French state glorified by the work of men such as the archbishop:

Prelate, who far surpasses expectation
 So that everyone perceives your rare virtue,
 Who always holds vice underfoot,
 And triumphs everywhere over the monster of ignorance,
 Such that always in this way for the honor of France
 You tread straight ahead on the path within so tortuous an age.

Such favor from Heaven no other man has had.
 Your glory will take precedence over his
 Such that good results proceed from a good cause!
 All perfect, you produce perfect writings;
 When reading or listening to you, we must always be still.
 And though our Spirit presumes enough faith,
 In order for us to speak well, you are able to act;
 We should be able to behave and to speak like you.⁸³

⁸² Guillaume Colletet was born in 1598 and died in 1659. According to Gilles Banderier, “Un sonnet inédit de Guillaume Colletet,” *French Studies Bulletin* 27, no. 100 (Autumn 2006): 75-78, Colletet was the most notable man of seventeenth-century French literature. Some of Colletet’s work has been lost and his poems are scattered in different collections. Colletet held *fauteuil* or seat number 23 out of a possible 40 from 1634 until his death in 1659. For listings of past and present members of the Académie, see its website at <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/index.html>.

⁸³ “Prelat, qui de bien loins surpasse l’Esperance
 Que chacun concevoit de ta rare vertu;
 Qui tousiours tiens le vice à pieds abbatu,
 Et triumphes par tout du monster d’Ignorance.

Que si tousiours ainsi pour l’honneur de la France
 Tu vas droit au chemin d’un siècle si tortu,
 Quelque faveur du Ciel qu’aucun autre homme ayt eu,
 Ta gloire sur la sienne aura la preference.

Que d’une bonne cause il sort de bons effets!
 Tout parfait tu produis des Escrits tout parfaits,
 Te lisant ou t’oyant, tousiours il nous faut taire:

Et quoy que nostre Esprit presume assez de foy,
 Pour bien dire pourtant ce que tu scais bien faire,
 Il faudroit pouvoir faire et dire comme toy.”

Guillaume Colletet (1596-1659) wrote this after the inception of the Académie Française so the archbishops to whom he refers may be the following candidates: François II de Harlay (1614-1651), and François III de Harlay de Champvallon (1651-1671). However, only François III joined the Académie,

Profusely flattering to the archbishop, the poem expresses the rhetoric of the Catholic Reformation by French moralists. Colletet especially admires the religious man for his work against idolaters and heretics who undoubtedly succumbed to “the monster of ignorance.” Through the leadership of pious ecclesiastics, he contends, people could diverge from “a path within so tortuous an age.” Colletet seems to speak to Catholics as well: even Catholics could learn to be more devout. He tells readers not to be satisfied with the state of their faith but to learn from truly pious men like the archbishop.

The call for domestic missions resonated within the ranks of the Church. Religious men and women contributed their talents and services to the Propagation. In return, they won admiration and praise for their hard work and accomplishments towards the Propagation’s goals. For example, in a letter titled *Compliment fait à Monseigneur l’Eminentissime Cardinal de Retz*, Father François Hédelin, the abbot of Aubignac, wrote in praise of the Cardinal of Retz and the work of the Propagation in the diocese.⁸⁴ He wrote the letter in endorsement for the promotion of the cardinal to a parish in Paris, reminding readers how well the cardinal handled a difficult diocese. He said the success was brought about by the cardinal’s performance of a “miracle.”⁸⁵ Speaking with

though in 1671 when he was transferred to the archbishopric of Paris and several years after the death of the poet. Colletet probably wrote the poem for François III, though it is not certain if he had written it ahead of time and intended for it to be used to commemorate the archbishop’s eventual membership to the Académie. Thus, it may have been written for the archbishop beforehand but simply had been dedicated to him after the author’s death because the Académie could only elect and give François III a vacant seat (number 28) in 1671. Colletet, *A Monseigneur l’Archvesque de Rouen, ordonné par nos seigneurs du clergé pour preside en l’Académie française* [sic] *de la propagation de la foy* (s.l.n.d.).

⁸⁴ François Hédelin, *Compliment fait à Monseigneur l’Eminentissime Cardinal de Retz par Mr. Hedelin Abbé d’Aubignac portant la Parole pour la Congregation de la Propagation de la Foy* (s.l., 1652).

⁸⁵ Hédelin, *Compliment fait à Monseigneur l’Eminentissime Cardinal*, 2-3.

unabashed enthusiasm for the cardinal, Hédelin's religious zeal helped exaggerate and convince readers of the Propagation's progress.

Similarly, the archbishop of Lyon received merit for his role in helping further the Propagation's work there. In 1661, the *compagnie* at Lyon published a treatise espousing the important work of propagandists.⁸⁶ With exalting praise of Lyon's archbishop Camille de Neuf-Ville, the author Jaques Mabire narrates a world in imminent danger from heretical movements and their growth particularly in France. In addition to providing instruction to the people in his diocese, the author lauds the archbishop for a *reformation des moeurs* or "reformation of morals."⁸⁷ Enthusiasm for cultural change could only be fueled by religious zeal as illustrated by the author's thoughts about the current social and moral state of his time.

Mabire attributes the winning direction and progression of the Catholic Reformation to the endeavors of the Propagation. Calling it a "sacred project," the author finds two key comparisons between the institution of the Propagation and Jesus Christ.⁸⁸ Both assumed earthly forms for the sake of human beings and both sought to subdue human miseries in pursuit of salvation. The Propagation, according to Mabire, was not only a critical instrument in the eternal quest to save human souls, but a worldly entity that obeyed the will of God. In short, God established the institution of the Propagation

⁸⁶ Jaques Mabire, *Instruction familiere, en faveur des confreres de l'un et l'autre sexe, de la congregation de la Propagation de la foy établie à Lyon* (Lyon, 1661).

⁸⁷ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 7.

⁸⁸ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 12-13.

on earth for the purpose of conquering souls for the extension of the faith, the realm of Jesus Christ, and the Church.⁸⁹ For these reasons, Mabire urges people to tap into their hearts and enliven their zeal for the conversion of heretics so that they, in turn, follow the will of God.⁹⁰ Encouraging both men and women to enlist and actively participate in this holy confraternity, the author singles out from the population those who should help lead and shape reform: the responsibility of bringing cultural order lay at the hands of persons of “high virtue” and not the masses.⁹¹ Thus, Mabire did not call for a social revolution but rather an ordering based on religious uniformity. According to him, the feat would not be easy. The author considers the endeavor to convert heretics more difficult than the conversion of any other group of people. The heresy of Huguenots posed a formidable obstacle to the Propagation’s mission, but more importantly, Mabire contends, the heretics also stood strong by sheer quantity such that they outnumbered the just.⁹² Such a bleak and daunting picture of the state of the world enabled Mabire to convey a sense of great urgency and justification to solicit charity for a worthy cause.

Not every person could lead in an official capacity or effect authoritative change, but they could do their part however big or small. For example, with the goal of converting heretics in mind, Mabire explains how charity could operate as an extremely useful and vital means to this end. The Church requested works of charity and promised

⁸⁹ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 14-15.

⁹⁰ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 15.

⁹¹ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 15.

⁹² Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 22-25.

indulgences to confraternities for their pains. Both female and male members could receive salvific rewards by working towards the conversion of heretics.⁹³ On November 26, 1659, Pope Alexander VII conceded a bull of indulgences to the members of the Propagation at Lyon. He also offered plenary indulgences, the remission of all sins, to those of the confraternity who among many things strove for the extirpation of all heresies.⁹⁴ Aside from the spiritual benefits, charitable donation could help Catholics know their enemy. In the guise of generosity, Catholics who were true to their faith and the Propagation could make their way into heretical circles and report on their activities. Mabire reasons that since heretics declared war on God, Catholics should and could do whatever is in their means to infiltrate the enemy.⁹⁵ Therefore, there was a time and place for mild action and words, and a time and place for unbridled religious passion.⁹⁶ In fact, Mabire echoes the need for lay participation in his call for Catholic zealotry through repetition of the mantra, "...nothing is capable of stopping our zeal."⁹⁷ Assured by the perseverance of all Catholics and with the leadership of the Propagation, he imagines real social and cultural change will occur in a matter of time. Thus, the tenets of the Propagation, though rooted in the original institution in Rome, embodied the French missionary fervor of the seventeenth century.

⁹³ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 52.

⁹⁴ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 61.

⁹⁵ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 40-41.

⁹⁶ Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 43-44.

⁹⁷ "...rien ne soit capable d'arrêter nôtre zele...." Mabire, *Instruction familiere*, 48.

Looking at the setting in New France helps to understand the mentalities in France itself, including attitudes toward women. Missionaries who worked in foreign lands found camaraderie with those who fought for the triumph of the Catholic faith at home. In 1647, the *Compagnie de Jesus* or the Society of Jesus received an annual grant by Louis XIV through an *arrêt* or ruling by the Council.⁹⁸ There was plenty of support for the foreign missions in the way of royal and institutional aid. The council also decided to give exemptions to the missionaries in the form of freight charges for at least thirty tons. This included the men themselves, but also the cost of transporting munitions and arms.⁹⁹ Louis XIV further promised pensions for the religious in charge of the seminary of Missions Etrangères in Paris. Private donations by noble men and women (as Jaricot would do and help others do some centuries later) as well as thousands of *livres* from members of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement and the Assembly of the Clergy demonstrated how invested French Catholics were in reordering their world.

The missionaries fueled domestic interest in their work with published descriptions of the conversion efforts by the Jesuits in the *indes orientales* or East Asia and other foreign lands. They echoed the strategies and goals of the Propagation, which targeted female converts.¹⁰⁰ Written by Jesuit fathers and presented in Paris in April 1649, the updates on the foreign missions provide context to the politically-driven

⁹⁸ Guasco, *L'Œuvre de la propagation*, 9-10.

⁹⁹ Guasco, *L'Œuvre de la propagation*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Compagnie de Jesus, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé dans les indes orientales en ses trois provinces de Goa, de Malabar, du Japon, de la Chine, et autres païs nouvellement decouverts* (Paris, 1651).

religious zealotry of the era. In their report about the mission in Goa,¹⁰¹ the Jesuits express the conversion strategy that entailed children being separated forcibly from their parents:

The principal task of this Father [S. François Xavier] is to wrest away from the hands of their infidel parents the young children who are losing their father, to catechize, baptize, and then provide them employment and suitable conditions.¹⁰²

There is no mention of what happened to their mothers, and since these children were “losing their father,” the missionaries indicate uneasiness at the thought of leaving them to the care of their maternal parent. In the name of spreading the Catholic faith, Frenchmen regularly looked to kidnapping as a tactic, though it was not exactly condoned. At one point, P. Antoine Serqueira Portugais, described as a “very zealous man in the conquering of souls” was criminally charged for paying some rich merchants to snatch a child from his uncles.¹⁰³ Despite some scandal, the religious fathers boasted success in that region because they baptized three hundred children in the area. The missionaries justified their measures with fear for the eternal salvation of children, but the urgency appears to stem from concern for leaving children alone with their mothers.

Women posed a danger when left uncontrolled, which mainly stemmed from the absence of a male authority figure such as a husband. For example, the Jesuits’

¹⁰¹ It is a state along the western coast of modern-day India.

¹⁰² “La charge principale de ce Pere est de tirer de la main des parents Infideles les enfants de bas âge, qui perdent leur pere, les catechiser, baptiser, et puis leur procurer des emplois et conditions convenables.” Compagnie de Jesus, *Relation de ce qui s’est passé dans les indes orientales*, 36.

¹⁰³ Compagnie de Jesus, *Relation de ce qui s’est passé dans les indes orientales*, 37.

description of their missionary efforts in the Tunchin kingdom alludes to such unease.¹⁰⁴ The Jesuits complained about how the indigenous women outnumbered the men: “The natural [tendency] of the Tonkin is for an excellent standard, confidential persons are horrified by the plurality of the women,....”¹⁰⁵ The writer observes that the gravity of the situation not only unnerved the sensibilities of the French but also the native peoples of Tonkin. The disparate ratio of male to female upset the social balance and consequently endangered the society. The large number of women over men meant that there were too many unmarried women. The religious fathers associated single women with sexual promiscuity and thus, regarded them as a main source of sinful behavior. In the same manner, the missionary workers in New France also considered the indigenous women of Canada a serious block to their achieving success in the region.

Marie de l’Incarnation: Missionary for Women

The missions among native peoples reveal expressions of concern in regard to the dangers of indigenous females and consequently, an overall mentality concerning the conversions of the Huguenots of France. The missionary work of the Propagation and that of the Jesuits and Ursulines in New France during the seventeenth century resonated with one another, especially in their strategies for winning conversions.¹⁰⁶ According to

¹⁰⁴ Tonkin is located in the northernmost part of modern-day Vietnam.

¹⁰⁵ “Le naturel des Tunchinois est pour l’ordinaire excellent, les personnes privées ont en horreur la pluralité des femmes,....” Compagnie de Jesus, *Relation de ce qui s’est passé dans les indes orientales*, 93.

¹⁰⁶ The Ursuline sisters belonged to a relatively new female religious order of teachers who began as a simple group of charitable women in Italy and soon spread throughout France in the late sixteenth and

missionaries, women possessed uncontrollable natures that could only be tamed by Catholic religious education. As a result, they posed the greatest problem for the mass conversion of indigenous societies. At the other extreme, missionaries documented Indian women to whom Catholics could look up. The examples drawn from the Jesuit *Relations* and the personal letters of Mère Marie de l'Incarnation show how women occupied either side of the spectrum of religious piety, as models of or detractors from the Catholic faith.¹⁰⁷

The history of the colonization of Canada by the French is documented in the *Relations* of the Society of Jesus. These annual reports were published throughout Paris between 1632 and 1673, but they were not merely chronicles of events. The *Relations* described the evangelization of native peoples and the overall progress of the missions in Trois-Rivières in the region of Québec, and elsewhere in New France. They conveyed inspiring tales of self-sacrifice that tended to rivet the imaginations of religious men and women in France who eagerly awaited next year's news. The more or less forty-two

early seventeenth centuries. It became an official religious order in 1604. The first group of Ursulines, which included Mère Marie, arrived in New France in 1639. The Ursulines, as well as the Visitandines, sought an active vocation, but they eventually adopted enclosure. The Ursulines did teach within the confines of their convents. The women who desired to work in the open joined confraternities such as the Daughters of Charity, which struggled to be recognized as "daughters" who were unenclosed wealthy married or single women. After the great effort of their founder Vincent de Paul and the supervisor of the Parisian Daughters, Louise de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity was officially accepted in 1668. Susan E. Dinan, *Women and Poor Relief in Seventeenth-Century France: The Early History of the Daughters of Charity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 26-45.

¹⁰⁷ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 73 vols. (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1898); and Guy Marie Oury, ed., *Marie de l'Incarnation: Ursuline : 1599-1672* (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1971). Jesuit priests Paul le Jeune, Barthélemy Vimont, Jérôme Lallemand, François Le Mercier, and Jean de Quens authored the reports on their own activities and status of the native peoples of New France. From 1633 to 1673, just about every year, they published the *Relations* on the missions of New France. Most of the annual reports were promptly published the following year while some were compiled into two-year accounts.

volumes of the Jesuit *Relations* that outline French colonial history give little mention to the Ursuline presence in Québec.¹⁰⁸ The Jesuit superior of missions to Canada, Paul Le Jeune, did write in the 1633 *Relation* that indigenous girls were in great need of women teachers. Eventually, in 1639, the Ursuline sisters traveled abroad to live among the peoples of the New World in order to carry out the mission to catechize native girls.¹⁰⁹

The women played a central role in the religious education of mainly Algonquian-speaking Indian girls in the town of Québec along the St. Lawrence River. They were part of the Jesuit missions that sought to convert indigenous peoples in Sillery, Québec, Tadoussac and Saguenay. Despite devastation by disease and war, the early missions showed promise; but in 1650, the Iroquois, who persistently opposed the French, drove out the priests and 300 Hurons, which effectively closed down the colonial and Jesuit missionary town of Trois-Rivières. Québec, however, remained a stronghold for colonial missionary efforts. The Ursuline sisters learned Algonquian languages, Huron, and other Iroquois languages, set up a school and convent, and survived the uncertainties of the colonial frontier. In addition to these accomplishments, as educators, the women engaged in strategies of Catholic evangelization whereby they sought to assimilate native girls into the European fold.

¹⁰⁸ Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Allan Greer, ed., *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* (Boston and New York: Bedford, 2000); and Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).

¹⁰⁹ In *Zwischen Kloster und Welt: Ursulinen und Jesuitinnen in der katholischen Reformbewegung des 16./17. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz: Zabern, 1991), Anne Conrad explores the phenomenon of active women religious of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Both the Jesuit *Relations* and Mère Marie's personal letters written to her son in France attest that indigenous women acted as impediments to the religious conversion of Indians. In the *Relations*, Indian male converts are praised for conforming to Catholicism and displaying exemplary behavior. In opposition to these men were native women. In colonial Peru, Elinor C. Burkett has shown that Spanish colonialism upset "critical and interdependent" sexual differences in labor.¹¹⁰ Spaniards regarded indigenous women as the submissive and passive sex. This double oppression of racism and sexism upset the structure of Indian societies and male-female relations.¹¹¹ Similarly, Karen Anderson argues that before the arrival of the Jesuits, Huron and Montagnais allocations of labor and other social responsibilities created sexual divisions that did not relegate women into the margins of society.¹¹² Indigenous systems of production created a community in which males and females complemented each other. Women were not equivalent to men, but rather they were part of a sexual group that required certain roles and duties in society.¹¹³ With the advent of the Jesuits came a disruption of these systems through European notions of gender inequality.¹¹⁴ Anderson contends that the Jesuits sought to "restructure the lines of power" by redirecting already existing fears, aggressions and

¹¹⁰ Elinor C. Burkett, "Indian Women and White Society: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Peru" in *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978): 101-128.

¹¹¹ Burkett, "Indian Women," 123.

¹¹² Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 224-225.

¹¹³ Eleanor Leacock, "Women's Status in Egalitarian Society: Implications for Social Evolution." *Current Anthropology* 19: 241-255, in Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 158.

¹¹⁴ Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 225.

hatred toward Catholic conversion.¹¹⁵ One way was through instructive stories of haughty and proud women circulated in the *Relations*, painting these women as the hindrance to the successful conversion of the native peoples.¹¹⁶ The process of colonization and religious conversion, therefore, involved the subjugation of indigenous women who resisted the identity of a submissive European woman.

The story of the marriage between Charles and Marie Meiaskawat, a model male convert and an uncivilized female Indian, illustrates the perspective of missionaries. The Jesuit Barthelemy Vimont narrates the story in the *Relation* of 1643-1644. The narrative states that Charles received his Catholic baptism with sincerity and then Marie followed suit. They decided to bless their marriage by the Church in 1643. The pivotal moment and moral point is when the priest asks Charles whether he takes Marie as his wife, but the groom stops the proceedings and asks Marie about the sincerity of her religious conversion:

“Wait a minute,” answered Charles. Then turning to his wife, he said, “So will you be as proud, disobedient and irascible as you were in the past? Answer me. For if you do not desire to be more modest, I do not take you for my wife, I will easily find another.” Quite embarrassed, she answered that she would be more modest in the future. “Speak up,” Charles replied, “we cannot hear you. When you are angry you cry out like a mad woman and now you hardly open your mouth.” This poor woman had to shout and protest publicly that she would be obedient to her husband, and in addition, that she would live with him in meekness and with every form of humility. “Good,” Charles said, “let us hope that you do what you say, otherwise you will give me reason to be angry and if I become angry, I will go to Hell and you as well.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 226.

¹¹⁶ Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 1-2.

¹¹⁷ “Attends vn peu, respond Charles, & se tournant vers sa femme; mais-toy, luy dit-il, seras-tu encore superbe, desobeysante, cholérique, comme tu as esté par le passé: responds moy; car si tu ne veux

The last line of Charles' speech reveals a gendered European discourse on notions of power that Anderson discerns in her work.¹¹⁸ European ideologies of a good wife consisted of a woman who publicly displayed docile behavior. The model Catholic wife embodied a gentle and humble character, and helped her husband achieve the eternal reward of heaven.

The ideal goal of the Jesuits was a sincere turn of hearts to the Sacraments such as Baptism and Marriage in order to save souls, and women stood to upset the mission by virtue of their base natures. Marie Meiasawat was a member of one of the three main Montagnais families at Sillery and the only one who refused to convert. Her obstinate behavior is attributed to an innate anger that could only be tamed by Catholic sacramental rites such as marriage: "God has visibly blessed this marriage and we have not seen a more considerable change than in this woman, who has now become a true lamb, and has very sound and affectionate feelings of devotion."¹¹⁹ This instructive moral tale illustrates the Jesuit hope to convert and tame indigenous women according to their notions of European femininity.

estre plus sage, ie ne t'agrée point pour ma femme, i'en troueray bien vne autre, elle luy répond toute confuse, qu'elle sera plus sage à l'aduenir: parle plus haut, replique Charles, on ne t'entend pas, quand tu te fasche, tu crie comme vne folle, & tu fais maintenant la petite bouche, il fallust que cette pauvre femme criast bien haut & protestast publiquement qu'elle seroit obeyssante à son mary, & viuroit avec luy dans la douceur, & avec toute sorte d'humilité: Voyla qui est bien dit Charles, pourueu que tu fasse ce que tu dis, autrement tu me donneras occasion de me fascher; & si ie me fasche, i'iray en Enfer, & toy aussi." Barthelemy Vimont, "Chapitre V: Continuation des Bons Sentimens et Actions des Chrestiens de Saint Joseph," in *Jesuit Relations*, vol. 25, 174-176.

¹¹⁸ See also Anderson, "Proud, Disobedient and Ill-Tempered," in *Chain Her by One Foot*.

¹¹⁹ "Dieu a beny ce mariage visiblement, & nous n'auons point veu de plus sensible changement qu'en cette femme, qui est maintenant deuenüe vn vray aigneau, & a des sentimens de deuotion tres-solides & tres-affectueux." Vimont, "Chapitre V," 176.

The story of Marie's taming illustrates what missionaries considered an outward manifestation of true conversion: European civility. Anderson argues that this story illustrates a transformation of relations between women and men from partnership to the subjugation of women by men.¹²⁰ Haughtiness, disobedience, and irascibility underscored the worst characteristics of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, Indian women embodied the most extreme versions of New World barbarism. European notions of women as the weaker sex, both physically and morally, made the uncontrolled female sex a danger to her husband and community. Women had the potential to pollute those around her because the female mind was deemed gullible and susceptible to evil. With a proper Catholic education, however, indigenous girls could learn to become civilized according to missionary standards.

In one of her letters to "a lady of quality," Mère Marie conveys to readers that indigenous girls fared well under the direction of the Ursuline sisters. As early as 1640, the school already had eighteen indigenous girls who attended school during the day, and more were on their way.¹²¹ Indian girls attended school with French girls, though Mère Marie does not mention them in her letters.¹²² She describes her impressions of her indigenous female students by giving examples of their progress at the convent. The first

¹²⁰ Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 30.

¹²¹ Marie de l'Incarnation, "Lettre XLIII," in *Marie de l'Incarnation*, 94-99.

¹²² Marshall explains that although school records were destroyed in the 1686 fire, French girls were most likely to have been in attendance at this time and certainly later on in the mission. Joyce Marshall, ed. and trans., *Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967), 380n 6.

“savage” student was Marie Negabamat, whose father Noël was a Catholic.¹²³ Upon arrival to the school, she fled right away to the woods and ripped the dress given to her by the sisters. However, Negabamat’s behavior improved and she became a model for the French girls by her show of *douceur* and *affabilité*.¹²⁴ Her conversion story followed a formula for describing female conversion: she turned from an angry and violent self to one of “gentleness” and “affability” upon true acceptance of the Catholic faith.

Although women were often placed on one end of the spectrum of spirituality, with correction, they had the potential of becoming shining gems of Catholicism. Both Vimont and Mère Marie perceived a successful conversion of a female Indian as a change in her ferocious behavior. As obstinate as indigenous women could be, they could also surpass men in piety. The most famous example is found in the hagiographical account of Kateri Tekakwitha.¹²⁵ She was born in 1656 to an Algonquian mother and to a father who was a Mohawk chief. Her mother was a Catholic kidnapped by her father and Tekakwitha eventually followed her mother’s religion. In 1677, she escaped her village and arrived in Caugnawaga (near Montreal). Jesuit fathers Choleneq and Chauchetière

¹²³ Marie de l’Incarnation, “Lettre XLIII,” 94-99.

¹²⁴ Marie de l’Incarnation, “Lettre XLIII,” 96.

¹²⁵ In 2006, the Mission San Xavier del Bac located in Tucson, Arizona, just southwest of the city’s center, commissioned a wooden statue of Tekakwitha. The four-foot statue stands inside one of the chapels, and depicts Tekakwitha in indigenous garb and clutching a cross to her heart with both hands. Having been beatified by Pope John Paul II, Tekakwitha awaits canonization.

wrote about her, reporting her propensity for an extreme ascetic life and her miraculous ability to heal others.¹²⁶

Like the celebrated holy Catholic women before her, the story praises Tekakwitha for her chastity and suffering. Medieval hagiographies often extol how women bravely escaped forced marriages by following their callings for God. Tekakwitha also endured such a fate. Her family began to search for young men whose families were closely allied with hers. In the custom of Iroquois marriage, the young man entered Tekakwitha's cabin in order to consummate the union. Tekakwitha exited and refused to enter the cabin again until her would-be-husband had left. Her desire for chastity resulted in community ridicule of her Algonquian heritage on her mother's side. When a Jesuit father came to the village, Tekakwitha insisted on receiving a Catholic education and baptism. The community derided her even more for this act by throwing stones at her. Tekakwitha was the first indigenous woman to take the vow of chastity, and along with this, her constant desire for God, and suffering for her faith made her an ideal example for female Indians.¹²⁷ From 1681-1695, there were reports about the miraculous nature of her deceased body. People who visited her tomb or touched her grave were cured. Notably, her holy body aided people of every socio-economic status: indigenous peoples,

¹²⁶ Christine Allen, "Women in Colonial French America," in vol. 2 of *Women and Religion in America*, eds. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 118.

¹²⁷ There seems to be a few anglicized versions of both her first and last name: Katharine, Kateri, Catherine, Tekakwitha, and Tegahkouita. I have chosen "Kateri Tekakwitha," the most common variation and the one used by Allen. Father Cholenec, "Document 18: Letter and Life of Katharine Tekakwitha, first to vow virginity among the Iroquois barbarians," in "Women in Colonial French America," 119-120.

poor French farmers, and the elite.¹²⁸ The Jesuit *Relations* circulated this story of the “native saint” not only in French, but also in Spanish, German, and Dutch.¹²⁹ The Fathers told a great success story of conversion and legitimated the work of French missionaries in the New World.

Similarly, Mère Marie gave high praise to indigenous women who embraced Catholic spirituality. She devotes many pages to the description of Thérèse, an indigenous girl who Mère Marie paints as a beacon of piety for her indigenous community of Hurons. Thérèse tried to speak about her genuine conversion to the Catholic faith to those in her village, but instead became a source of their amusement and derision. Therefore, she decided to retreat into a cell at the edge of the borders of the Ursuline convent in order to contemplate in solitude and pray for the conversion of her Huron community.¹³⁰ She began to attract other indigenous girls who wished to follow in Thérèse’s footsteps and thereby build their own cells. Moreover, at the Ursuline school, Thérèse learned to read and write, which was a strange sight for Mère Marie according to her own letters. Like indigenous male converts, Indian women whom missionaries admired worked hard to evangelize their partners, families, and communities. Both Kateri Tekakwitha and Thérèse left their villages after ardent attempts to proselytize their native peoples to the Catholic religion. Following the rhetoric of European notions of proper gendered roles, both Jesuits and Ursulines took notice of these women because of

¹²⁸ Allen, “Women in Colonial French America,” 118-119.

¹²⁹ Greer, *The Jesuit Relations*, 171.

¹³⁰ Marie de l’Incarnation, “Lettre LXV,” in *Marie de l’Incarnation*, 166.

their persistence and arguable obstinacy to pursue the Catholic faith. When female natives acted in a disorderly manner, which upheld and affirmed European gender roles and spread the faith, Catholic missionaries did not protest against such women. Furthermore, amazing conversion stories, especially those of Tekakwitha and Thérèse, functioned as morality tales and represented archetypes of native women. Although these women were extraordinary when measured against any standard of piety, they represented the hopeful outcome of successful missionary work.

Conclusion

The popular circulation of stories about pious indigenous females suggests ongoing concerns by French missionaries for the progress of Indian women, especially in the early missionary period of the 1640s. The story of Charles and Marie Meiasawat exemplifies a European perspective on the dynamics between an Indian husband and wife. The Jesuits regarded the powerful position that Huron women held in their longhouses as gender aberrant. Charles' speech to Marie before their final vows of Catholic marriage attests to a world turned right side up again. By reprimanding Marie before an audience and telling her how to behave after the marriage ceremony, Charles claimed power over their marriage merely by chastising his wife. The conversion stories about indigenous women collectively represented the Jesuit vision of bringing not only salvation but civility to New France. Thérèse's conversion story came at an opportune time when many indigenous women continued to live in what missionaries considered untamed states. Tekakwitha lived many years after the early missionary period of the

1640s, but she too epitomized a rare indigenous woman among unsaved female souls. These women were far and few between.

One of ways to penetrate the wild hearts of Indian women was through religious education taught by the Ursuline sisters. French missionary work during the seventeenth century relied upon gender ideals that closely tied in with early modern beliefs about education, piety and social harmony. The examples found in records about the foreign Jesuit and Ursuline missions illustrate social anxieties about uncontrolled women. Indigenous women of New France and elsewhere had the burden of proving themselves against their ethnic heritage and gender. Left to their own devices women acted out in anger and revealed a wild temperament, which were types of behavior associated with infidels, according to missionaries. With proper Catholic education, however, native women could join the ranks of the civilized and even the blessed.

The desire to control and subdue indigenous women reflected Catholic notions of piety and morality that paralleled fear of the corrupting influences of Huguenot women. The following chapter will discuss how religious authorities and institutions paid close attention to the Catholicization of the female population. French women, both Catholic and Huguenot, needed to rise above their natural intellectual limitations for the sake of their children and the state of France.

CHAPTER II
THE WOMEN OF FÉNELON: REMAKING SOCIETY THROUGH THE
EDUCATION OF GIRLS

A deliberation entry of the *compagnie* of the Propagation in Grenoble describes a woman whose story gave members cause to both shudder and applaud. Described only as a woman from Geneva, the entry states that she unfortunately left the Catholic Church and became a Huguenot. After a period of time, however, she recanted the Protestant religion and converted back to Catholicism after realizing the folly of her ways.¹³¹ The members praise themselves for being a force not only in this woman's life but also in that of her family, and the apparent progress of the *compagnie*. Moralists found reassurance in terms of the state of the world when Catholic women took care of their families and households. In the seventeenth century, the good education of girls and women led them onto the righteous path necessary for them to eventually raise morally upright children.

An education was crucial to the missionary work of eastern Christendom. In *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, fourteenth-century lawyer Pierre Dubois expresses the value of education in the making of good Catholics and the conversion of new ones through missionary work.¹³² Dubois' work illustrates the importance of a sufficient education for the sake of Roman Catholicism's posterity. He desired Roman Catholic warriors and their wives to populate the Holy Land and "fill it with people in so far as they are needed

¹³¹ ADI 26 H 101, 11 August 1657.

¹³² Pierre Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, trans. W. Brandt (New York, 1956), 117. The work was originally titled *De recuperatione Terrae Sanctae*.

for the conquest and maintenance of that land.”¹³³ Furthermore, the scholastic curriculum recommended by the document had in mind Catholic missionary work via education. In the Holy Land, new schools were to be built on the property of dissolved military orders.¹³⁴ He did not favor boys over girls so far as he recommended at least two schools for the boys and an equal number for the girls. Dubois did, however, require that the students be of noble birth and demonstrate some propensity for intellect. He prioritized the learning of Latin, and encouraged students to learn Greek and Arabic.¹³⁵ Dubois presents a broad and ambitious program of education for both boys and girls.

Dubois does make gender distinctions when speaking about the application of education. In his idealized and prescriptive tract, Dubois recommends that boys from the ages of four to six years start with the classical Latin grammar instruction of Donatus commonly taught in the Middle Ages. In addition, he puts emphasis on the scholastic method of logic by the fourteenth year.¹³⁶ Arguably, male children indoctrinated in the right way helped maintain the Catholic religion: boys who received a good education would develop strong faith and as such, they could grow up to attend university, obtain the bachelor’s, and vie for a benefice or other Church office. This recommended track helped complete the circular nature of an early childhood religious education. In other

¹³³ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, 84.

¹³⁴ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, 117.

¹³⁵ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, 118.

¹³⁶ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, 126 and 128.

words, as members of the Church these young boys had the potential to become the religious authorities who held the power to propagate the faith to others.

Education for the diffusion of the Catholic faith was also in the forefront of Dubois' mind as he imagined smart, poised, and pious women infiltrating noble societies. He states that female students should study medicine and surgery in order to make them attractive for marriage. In addition to possessing physical beauty, Dubois suggests that medical training and a skill for writing would make them desirable to princes. Strategically placed, these women would be in a position to aid the foundation that helped them achieve successful marriages to eastern Christians and Muslims.¹³⁷ As wives to powerful men, women could missionize from the top down. Women had the sole responsibility to educate her family, which included her husband and children, in the Roman Catholic faith. Thus, the education of girls was an investment in the propagation of the faith: "Wives with such an education, who held the articles of faith and the sacraments according to Roman usage, would teach their children and husbands to adhere to the Roman faith and to believe and sacrifice in accordance with it."¹³⁸ Finally, with the knowledge of medicine and surgical training, women could make themselves attractive to other noblewomen within their communities, and thereby spread their sphere of influence and network of important associations.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, 118.

¹³⁸ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, 119.

¹³⁹ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, 119-120.

The Reformations of the sixteenth century in Europe compelled religious authorities to rethink the role of education in women's lives. Reading became a point of social interest and policy as both political and religious leaders viewed it as a critical part of religious formation. Although Europe was not yet divided into nations, states did encourage concerted and widespread efforts for proto-campaigns for literacy.¹⁴⁰ Kings of state and Catholic authorities encouraged education by way of schools for girls who did not and could not receive instruction at home. Protestant countries especially took it upon themselves to encourage the education of girls, however insufficient. In sixteenth-century Germany, religious authorities instructed girls in a catechism that emphasized Catholic virtues such as prayer and memorization of key Bible passages. At the same time, the Protestant Reformation did not revolutionize attitudes towards female education in terms of modern sensibilities. Although the curriculum for girls included reading, writing and religious instruction, it also emphasized traditional domestic skills such as sewing. Meanwhile, Catholic authorities took longer to address women's education.

The *compagnies* of the Propagation that established houses for *nouvelles catholiques* abided by the *Constitutions pour la maison des Nouvelles-Catholiques de Paris*, which outlined the missionary goals and expectations for everyone in these houses,

¹⁴⁰ Harvey Graff considers statewide campaigns as promotions for widespread literacy. In *Labyrinths of Literacy: Reflections on Literacy Past and Present* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), Graff writes that in order to study literacy, a basic definition must be acknowledged. Graff works out a definition that considers a person literate based on primary levels of reading and writing. He forcefully argues against the historiographically-rooted notion of the dichotomy between literate and non-literate peoples in "Assessing the History of Literacy in the 1990s: Themes and Questions" in *Escribir y Leer en Occidente*, eds. Armando Petrucci and Francisco M. Gimeno Blay (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 1995): 5-46. He argues for the notion of multiple literacies and putting "literacy" in historical context.

especially those newly converting to the Catholic faith.¹⁴¹ The remedy for wayward children was proper instruction. The opening lines of the preface of the *Constitutions* express the troubling state of the female youth.¹⁴² It goes on to explain the cause and solution to the problem. The main explanation for the precarious nature of society's youth is bad parenting.¹⁴³ Only "holy teachings" could reverse and purify the damage done to children by their own heretical parents.¹⁴⁴ Regarding female instructors, the *Constitutions* explain that the role of the *soeurs* or sisters must be based on a charitable spirit in order to convert, instruct and aid the *filles* or girls entering the house.¹⁴⁵ More specifically, the sisters took on the task of protecting the girls from their own parents: "...they are to be hidden out of necessity, from the persecution by and the trickery of their heretical parents."¹⁴⁶ In fact, when parents of *nouvelles catholiques* visited, the sisters

¹⁴¹ *Constitutions pour la maison des Nouvelles-Catholiques de Paris* (Paris, 1675).

¹⁴² "...les ames qui s'en estoient separées par l'erreur et par le schisme, que d'y conserver les plus fideles de ses enfans dans l'integrité de la foy et dans l'innocence." *Constitutions pour la maison*, 3-4.

¹⁴³ "Ce feu de charité... et pour leur procurer des retraites salutaires contre les persecutions de leurs parens, et contre les artifices des heretiques, afin que dans ces refuges elles puissent recevoir la consolation et le secours qui leur est necessaire dans leur delaissement, purifier leur foy par de saintes instructions, et sanctifier leurs moeurs dans les exercices d'une veritable et solide pieté." *Constitutions pour la maison*, 4-5.

¹⁴⁴ "...saintes instructions..." *Constitutions pour la maison*, 5.

¹⁴⁵ "Le principal objet de leur charité, sera la conversion, l'instruction et l'assistance qu'elles s'obligent de rendre aux Filles, qui viennent dans la maison pour abjurer l'heresie, ausquelles elles redront toutes sortes de bons offices de charité Chrestienne, pour leurs besoins spirituels et corporels, et tâcheront de les consoler et fortifier dans leurs bons desseins, et mesme de leur procurer quelque etablissement, condition, ou retraite, où elles puissent estre à couvert de la necessité, de la persecution et des artifices de leurs parens heretiques." *Constitutions pour la maison*, 124-125.

¹⁴⁶ "...elles puissent estre à couvert de la necessité, de la persecution et des artifices de leurs parens heretiques." *Constitutions pour la maison*, 125.

had to regulate their visits by limiting their time together to no more than an hour.¹⁴⁷

This rule is also expressed in the *Commencement, institution, regles, et status*:

No girl newly converted to the faith will leave the house to go outside without the express permission of the woman in charge of the house, and having said to her what she wishes to do, and she will not speak to any heretic (the same goes for her non-Catholic parents) except in the presence of the aforementioned woman or one of her deputies.¹⁴⁸

Even brief conversations with their parents could undo any progress that the *nouvelles catholiques* made in the hands of the female religious. Thus, until the *nouvelles catholiques* were instructed and strengthened in the Catholic religion (and able to resist the lures of Protestantism), drastic measures had to be taken in order to keep the girls isolated:

If heretics are capable of shaking the firmness of the girls converted to the Faith by their threats and ill-treatment, they should no less fear the findings, and kind and friendly conversations that are used for reconciling the girls with them. We are not able to refuse the girls freedom to see their parents, but it is dangerous for them to have conversations with them too early on [in their stay at the house].¹⁴⁹

The precarious nature of proper instruction for girls prompted the Archbishop of Cambrai, Fénelon, to write on the subject and offer his vision on how to solve the

¹⁴⁷ “L’on n’y sera point plus d’une heure, sans une permission expresse de la Superieure, qui ne la donnera qu’avec conoissance de cause, et l’on y donnera ordinairement une compagne ou assistante, principalement aux nouvelles Catholiques, qui seront assistées si faire se peut des personnes les plus capables de la Maison, quand elles seront visitées de leurs parens heretiques.” *Constitutions pour la maison*, 36.

¹⁴⁸ “Aucune nouvelle convertie à la foy ne sortira de la maison pour aller dehors sans l’expresse permission de celle qui a la charge de la maison, et luy avoir dit ce qu’elle desire faire, et ne parlera à aucun heretique, mesme à ses parens de religion contraire, qu’en presence de ladite Dame, ou autre par elle députée.” *Commencement, institution, regles, et status*, 181.

¹⁴⁹ “Si les Heretiques sont capables d’ébranler la fermeté des Filles converties à la Foy, par leurs menaces et par leurs mauvais traitemens, ils ne sont pas moins à craindre par les recherches et par les conversations douces et amiables, qu’ils employent pour les rapprocher d’eux. On ne peut pas refuser aux Filles la liberté de voir leurs parens, mais il est dangereux de les engager trop tost à avoir des conversations avec eux.” *Constitutions pour la maison*, 53.

problem and henceforth change society for the better. In 1687, the supporter of the eradication of heresy, and female education and piety, published his treatise on the education of girls, which was a culmination of his experiences. Fénelon speaks to a social awareness of an ill-instructed female population, which was a crisis that posed a risk to the salvation of all.

Advocate for the Education of Girls

By the eighteenth century, girls in France were expected to receive schooling. Interest in providing girls some formal education started to take shape at the beginning of the seventeenth century with feminine religious congregations teaching at convent schools.¹⁵⁰ Teaching congregations quickly worked towards professionalizing their pedagogy and showed interest in developing suitable catechisms for instruction.¹⁵¹ Motives to initiate people into the Catholic religion drove proponents for improved female education.¹⁵² Advocacy for universal female education by moralists before the Enlightenment began with Fénelon's treatise. Although his work expressly spoke to noble girls and women, Fénelon recommends a moral and spiritual literacy that urges his audience to mind the humility of faithful living and the false merits of materialism.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Rapley, "Fénelon Revisited: A Review of Girls' Education in Seventeenth Century France," *Social History* 20, no. 40 (November 1987): 299-318.

¹⁵¹ Rapley, "Fénelon Revisited," 310.

¹⁵² Rapley, "Fénelon Revisited," 311.

¹⁵³ His call for widespread education for girls did not include commoners. Fénelon mostly refer to lesser and disadvantaged noble girls. His association with Madame de Maintenon and her institute for poor noble Protestant girls at Saint-Cyr outside of Paris helped him develop his treatise. By educating these girls in a curriculum of domesticity and limited reading, Fénelon proposed to instill humility and a sound work

A devout Catholic and religious authority, Fénelon was a product of the Tridentine Church, as depicted by his life and work. Fresh out of the seminary and theological school, he immediately and actively played a crucial role in the mission to stamp out Protestantism in the name of both the French Church and state.¹⁵⁴ In his first treatise, *Traité de l'éducation des filles* or *Treatise on the Education of Girls*, Fénelon focuses on the faith of girls. He recommends that girls not only learn the Catholic Catechism and basic tenets of the faith, but that they also acquire the fundamental skills of reading and writing. Undoubtedly, Fénelon lays out an idealist's curriculum for early childhood that affects both girls and their teachers, namely, their mothers. An examination of the treatise reveals two major facets of Fénelon's motives for his writing. First, his concern for the lack of girls' education is unique in that he advocates a program for all noble girls and addresses the greater challenges in intellectual and spiritual formation for poor girls. Next is Fénelon's desire to create a generation of faithful girls for the sake of posterity: "Teach a girl to read and write correctly. You will set her in the way of being able one day to teach her own children to speak well without any formal study."¹⁵⁵ In this way, throughout his treatise, Fénelon prescribes moral behavior for mothers and girls, the present and future makers of families.

ethic in girls, in stark contrast to court culture. Carolyn C. Lougee, "Noblesse, Domesticity, and Social Reform: The Education of Girls by Fénelon and Saint-Cyr," *History of Education Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 87-113.

¹⁵⁴ James Herbert Davis Jr., *Fénelon* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 11-13. The author provides a chronology of Fénelon's life along with some important historical events and highlights for context.

¹⁵⁵ François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, "The Education of Girls" in *Fénelon on Education: A Translation of the 'Traité de l'éducation des filles' and Other Documents Illustrating Fénelon's*

Fénelon's own educational experience and background contributed to his thoughts on learning. He was born on August 6, 1651, in the French province of Périgord near Sarlat. Fénelon was the second child of his father, Pons de Salignac, and his father's second wife, Louise de la Cropte de Saint-Abre. Although much is unknown about his early life, some records attest to his education. Born into a noble but impoverished family, Fénelon acquired knowledge of both Greek and Latin at an early age. He also developed a love for classical literature. It was not unusual that a younger son would join the priesthood, and since generations of family members held the bishopric of Sarlat in Aquitaine, it was appropriate that Fénelon should pursue a religious career. In 1663, at the age of twelve, Fénelon entered the University of Cahors, where he studied humanities and philosophy. Around 1666, Fénelon went to Paris and attended the Collège du Plessis for a while until his uncle the Marquis Antoine de Fénelon, bishop of Sarlat, placed him under the tutelage of Louis Tronson at seminary. In 1672/3, he entered the Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice.¹⁵⁶ Ordained in 1674/5, Fénelon quickly rose out of the ranks of ordinary priests to the doctor of theology from the Université de Cahors in 1677.

After one year, based on his fierce advocacy for the conversion of non-believers, Fénelon quickly developed a name for himself as a crusader for the Catholic faith. He was appointed Superior to the Congrégation des Nouvelles Catholiques located on the rue Sainte-Anne in Paris and remained in this position until 1689.¹⁵⁷ During his stint as

Educational Theories and Practice, trans. H.C. Barnard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 83.

¹⁵⁶ The dates are approximations since records attesting to Fénelon's biography are incomplete.

Superior, Fénelon actively partook in domestic conversion campaigns in the Poitou region using the model of foreign missionary work. In 1681, he accepted the benefice of Carenac from his uncle the Bishop of Sarlat. Five years later, François Fénelon decided to spearhead a regional project to convert Protestant women to the Catholic faith. In 1687, he completed his first publication, *Traité de l'éducation des filles*, which came about directly from his experience with new female converts.¹⁵⁸ Fénelon is remembered in history for many things. In spite of his political fallout and scandal in the 1690s – his association with Quietism, which the pope condemned in 1687, and Madame Guyon, and then the publication of *Télémaque*, which resulted in exile to the archbishopric of Cambrai – Fénelon's successes include his appointment as teacher to Louis XIV's grandson, the Duc de Bourgogne, and his work as the Archbishop of Cambrai.¹⁵⁹ In addition to strong opinions about political and spiritual matters, Fénelon began and ended his career with a strong passion for education. He composed many letters and works that reflected his great interest in education.¹⁶⁰ Fénelon's views on education and learning

¹⁵⁷ Archbishop de Harlay of Paris, who was a member of the Académie Française and a well-respected supporter for missions against domestic heresy, appointed Fénelon to the position. Bausset, *Histoire de Fénelon*, 46.

¹⁵⁸ Davis, *Fénelon*, 11-13.

¹⁵⁹ In 1696, Fénelon became the Archbishop of Cambrai. During the Quietist controversy and Madame Guyon's involvement in the heresy, Fénelon defended Guyon and refused to condemn her by signing the Articles d'Issy. The king ordered that Fénelon remain within the confines of his archdiocese. Then, Fénelon published *Télémaque* in 1699, which he wrote between 1683-84, in which he gave moral instruction to Louis XIV, and criticized the theory of absolute rule. He officially took on the responsibility of educating the prince in 1689, but after the Quietist controversy, Fénelon was relieved of this position. He did continue to instruct his pupil through letter correspondence until the prince's premature death in 1712. Fénelon himself died a few years later in 1715.

¹⁶⁰ "Throughout his professional career, from the time when he was appointed superior of the *Nouvelles Catholiques* to the death of the Duc de Bourgogne in 1712, Fénelon was closely concerned with education." H.C. Barnard, introduction to *Fénelon on Education*, xlii.

derived from his experiences at various places during his young lifetime. Furthermore, he was in awe of his instructor Tronson and greatly admired his own educational and religious formation.¹⁶¹ An interest in religious education, coupled with his domestic missionary work early in his burgeoning career, inspired Fénelon to produce his treatise on the moral education of girls.

Fénelon's education, his familial ties, class, and personal background together with a perceived religious crisis of seventeenth-century France fostered his religious zeal. All of these factors made him desirable to the monarchy and as such, he was allowed access into the royal circle. There, he made his acquaintance with the Duchesse de Beauvilliers, who urged him to write recommendations for her daughter's education. This later turned into his first published work, though he did not originally intend it for a public audience. Although the work speaks directly to ladies and mothers of quality, Fénelon observed not only the daughters of the Duc de Beauvilliers, but also the *nouvelles catholiques* at Madame Maintenon's institution for young disadvantaged noble women at Saint-Cyr.¹⁶² Thus, a wide range of experiences with female education informed him about the importance of the formative years for girls.¹⁶³ Fénelon's

¹⁶¹ Barnard, introduction to *Fénelon on Education*, viii-ix.

¹⁶² The work of Madame de Maintenon at Saint-Cyr inspired Abbé D.R. to dedicate a prescriptive work dedicated to the founder. *Instruction Chrétienne pour l'éducation des filles: tirée des maxims de l'Évangile, des SS. Pères, et des Conciles; dédié à Madame de Maintenon* (Chez Urbain Coustelier: Paris, 1687).

¹⁶³ Charles Defondon, introduction to *Fénelon, De l'éducation des filles: texte collationné sur l'édition de 1687 avec une introduction et des notes pédagogiques et explicatives à l'usage des institutrices et des instituteurs* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882), viii.

advocacy for piety and moderate behavior for females appealed to a society where the subject of girls' education began to pique the interests of religious institutions.

Recognizing that all females needed proper guidance, the houses of the *nouvelles catholiques* reached out to girls of all backgrounds according to Père Hyacinthe's vision. Noble girls with limited opportunities due to financial difficulties found relief through the Propagation. They entered the house of reform to better their lives in exchange for Catholic fidelity: "...Here, we receive girls and women of all ages, from different conditions, and from different nations in order for them to abjure heresy and be instructed in the truths of the [Catholic] Religion."¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, the constitutions reiterate the critical nature of providing correct instruction for the girls: "Instruction, which is to be continuous, is the most important activity at the House.... This spiritual nourishment is necessary mainly to souls returning from heresy...."¹⁶⁵ A fear and concern for the malevolent behavior of females compelled the society to strictly monitor both the sisters and *nouvelles catholiques*. There was a sense that individual behavior affected the entire body of the group. Undesirable influences could easily creep into the minds of females who were not yet sufficiently strengthened by their faith. Any missteps by those at the house, therefore, could compromise the progress and work of the others: "If any of the *nouvelles catholiques* commits some error in public or wrongs the community, it is

¹⁶⁴ "...l'on reçoit de toutes parts des Filles et des Femmes de tout âge, et de toutes qualitez et de toutes nations pour y abjurer l'heresie et pour y estre instruites des veritez de la Religion." *Constitutions pour la maison*, 5-6.

¹⁶⁵ "Le plus important de tous les exercices de la Maison, est l'instruction qui s'y fera continuellement...." Cette nourriture spirituelle est necessaire, principalement aux Ames qui reviennent de l'heresie.... *Constitutions pour la maison*, 25.

necessary to do penance and make amends with prudence and discretion at the first dining hall.”¹⁶⁶

Similarly, Fénelon asserted that women, all women, needed to be basically informed so as to defend themselves from false ideas that could harm their souls. While Fénelon’s subject matter was not new, he could be considered radical in writing to all women, not merely those of the highest noble stock.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Fénelon was a product of his world and he saw great limitations in the weaker sex. The description of women’s innate nature by Fénelon echoes a long-standing tradition of this theory. The superstitious and credulous nature of women may be found in early modern works such as *Malleus maleficarum*, a handbook for inquisitors in the fifteenth century. In order to discredit women and give reason to their susceptibility to evil, the inquisitors painted women as gullible. In much the same way, Fénelon describes the nature of girls – women were prone to believe any story without giving thought to its validity.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the Church needed to instruct its faithful, especially the women. He writes that women are superstitious because of their sex, but Fénelon believes that girls could be cured of

¹⁶⁶ “Si quelqu’une des nouvelles Catholiques fait quelque faute publique, qui maledisie la Communauté, on peut avec prudence et discretion luy en faire faire penitence et satisfaction au premier Refectoire.” *Constitutions pour la maison*, 35.

¹⁶⁷ There is a large body of work on the education of girls, dating as far back as St. Jerome. In the Middle Ages, there was a debate on giving women educational rights and liberties. Generally, men of the Renaissance produced many instructive works such as *The Book of the Courtier* by Baldesar Castiglione and Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Political treatises were popular and even Fénelon chose to write a book on the subject later in life in *Télémaque*, giving advice (and criticism) to the king. In the seventeenth century, Gustave Reynier also addressed the subject of women and education in *La femme au XVII^e siècle* and *Les femmes savantes de Molière*.

¹⁶⁸ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 53.

their propensities with “solid instruction.”¹⁶⁹ Although he held negative views about women’s nature, he also moves away from traditional discourses by asserting that the right education could remedy the innate weaknesses of women.

Social Reform According to Fénelon

Fénelon distinguishes his call for education for religious purposes from a commentary about women’s political and social identities. Convent schools such as those administered by the Ursuline order of sisters provided educational opportunities for girls. Catholic or convent schools came about a century later in the late seventeenth century. Girls memorized by rote and learned moral teachings. If girls learned the skill of writing, they could be a credible threat as it “would enable her to express her own ideas.”¹⁷⁰ In his treatise, Fénelon makes clear that the education of girls should not somehow alter their traditional social roles and disclaims his support for it as an effort to overturn the social order. In so doing, he recognizes public sentiment regarding women’s education and makes sure not to offend his contemporaries. His work, however, reflects Catholic Europe’s changing attitudes towards education and its use in religious conversion. Against this background, the education of girls must be examined within a larger framework of Catholic religious “campaigns” in France that sought to distinguish itself from Protestant ideas and more precisely, Calvinism.

¹⁶⁹ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 52.

¹⁷⁰ Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 123.

Fénelon calls for social awareness and a serious campaign to address the plight of female education. He recognizes the lack of attention paid to girls as he states in the first line of his treatise, “Nothing is more neglected than the education of girls.” He exhorts the progress of education as witnessed by the growth of masters, colleges, and printed books. He treads lightly on the intellectual capacity of women – he acknowledges that women have the potential for acumen, but in a form inferior to that of men. In addition, he considers women’s propensity for curiosity as a crippling trait. Fénelon also adds that women should not be involved in decisions of the state. He therefore advises that women should not and could not tackle the “more difficult branches of knowledge” such as politics and military studies, law, philosophy, theology or any of the mechanical arts. He argues that women’s physically weaker bodies cannot sustain the rigors of learning. Therefore, he recommends their course of study as an “exercise in moderation.” Fénelon concludes that all of these well-known qualities make women perfectly suited for household work.¹⁷¹

Women should pursue what Fénelon would consider the rigorous arts, but not in a formal manner. They could learn Latin, philosophy, the sciences, theology, and history if they chose for their own edification. Also, women were known to educate themselves in such disciplines so as to become better Catholics. Early modern men did not want to support women’s learning in case they stirred up society or created political upheaval.¹⁷² Perhaps this is the reason why Fénelon states that he is not proposing a kind of education

¹⁷¹ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 1-2.

¹⁷² Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, 118.

for women that would allow them access to the political arena. Instead, he supports a strict division of gendered work, but one no less noble than the other.

Fénelon generally upheld societal divisions and their maintenance. He regarded education within the framework of society's attitude and conception of a woman's place.¹⁷³ In his treatise, he discusses the extra burdens that noble women faced because of their social standing. Women were responsible for the dynamics of their home, but noble women experienced the added stress of delegating the work on their estates. He advised that women should speak to their servants in a kind and polite manner, but they should not become overly familiar with any of them. In addition, they should not scold servants who did not carry out a task accordingly because reprimands would be fruitless. Instead, women should rationally think about other ways to make their servants perform well. Fénelon denounces the use of force to compel servants, or for that matter, children, to learn. In regard to servants, women should speak to them tactfully, but with authority in order that they know what is expected of them.¹⁷⁴ Noble women should also learn about estate management, something of which peasants, farmers, stewards or housekeepers were keenly aware, he adds. Fénelon compares the management of estates with that of a small republic as good households were the constituent parts of the state.¹⁷⁵ He regards the household as the locus of serious women's work and urges women to educate themselves in the fundamentals of tending land: the price of corn, cultivation of

¹⁷³ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 89.

¹⁷⁴ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 79-81.

¹⁷⁵ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 76-77.

land, different kinds of estates, duties of a landowner, etc.¹⁷⁶ Fénelon admits that these subjects involve intelligent thought and are far removed from more enjoyable ways to pass time such as card playing or gossiping about fashion.¹⁷⁷ Thus, girls needed to be educated in order that they develop a mind able to learn about the important aspects of running a successful home.

A lack of discipline and purposeful daily rigor could ruin girls because of their own innate weaknesses. He starts his treatise by giving an example of what may happen to a girl left to her own devices. Since he originally wrote his recommendations for the Duchesse de Beauvilliers, he gives an example of a “high-born” girl. A young girl such as she did not take part in household management and did not exert herself in any kind of labor because of her social station. Thus, early on in her age, she may become bored. In addition, her mother may scold her or try to compromise with her so that she will do her bidding. If all else fails, the adult women around her may use compliments and flattery in order to sway her. This girl that Fénelon describes is a finite vessel: when she is filled with frivolous thoughts, there is no room for “serious interests.” In Fénelon’s opinion, frivolity goes together with idleness, the greatest threat to the soul.¹⁷⁸ Idleness could easily turn to boredom and thus, sleepiness, and too much sleep could weaken the body and make a girl susceptible to curiosity. Fénelon does not regard curiosity as an evil, but

¹⁷⁶ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 76. Lougee contends that Fénelon desired to professionalize women in agricultural management in response to what he perceived as a decline in the old nobility – they needed to better tend to their lands and maintain purity within the noble class of France. “*Noblesse, Domesticity, and Social Reform*,” 92.

¹⁷⁷ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 77.

¹⁷⁸ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 4.

states that only education will enable girls to learn how to control their flawed nature. Thus, those, like his fictitious girl, who have not received the proper education cannot contain their inquisitiveness and will easily fall into their own imaginations.

Young girls needed a delineated framework in order to ground themselves in reality. The most important consequence of imagination was that she could lose herself in fictitious novels and regard herself as a princess. As the future woman of the house, she needed to be grounded. An uncontrolled imagination would make household duties banal and pale in comparison to those frivolous yet exciting stories.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, he qualifies this by stating that it is even more dangerous when such badly educated girls speak about “serious matters,” such as religious matters, perhaps. The only way to combat the making of such women was through mothers who could educate their girls so that they did not grow up with an “insufficient intellectual aptitude for these curiosities.”¹⁸⁰ Thus, mothers needed to check their own behavior and demonstrate by both word and action that religious matters trumped all else.

Mother as Teacher and Role Model

Abbé D. R., who wrote the “Epître” (letter of dedication to Madame de Maintenon), gave the founder of Saint-Cyr and mistress of Louis XIV the highest compliment of being a wonderful mother figure. He praises her “caring and maternal

¹⁷⁹ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 5-6. The houses of the Propagation also frowned upon the *nouvelles catholiques* reading novels or comedic works that emphasized gallantry or romance. *Constitutions pour la maison*, 55.

¹⁸⁰ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 6.

charity,” which she bestowed on the girls of the institution and subsequently benefited all of France.¹⁸¹ Her effort with the young girls of Saint-Cyr, the author contends, works towards the religious king who desired “to entirely exterminate heresy in his whole realm.”¹⁸² Abbé D. R. found value in the work of Madame de Maintenon and his praise of her motherly role for the sake of the residents of her establishment reflected the focus and nature of the “education” there.

The *Instruction Chrétienne pour l'éducation des filles* emphasizes the significance of the Catholic mother's responsibility to her family. Referring to Church fathers such as St. Augustine, Abbé D. R. reminds readers that in order to remedy a corrupt society, families need to first sort out their own affairs, especially when it comes to raising children: “Good upbringing is the foundation of good lives....”¹⁸³ With correct doses of love, discipline, and attention, mothers could ensure that they raise Catholic girls who were pious and respectful of the feminine traits of chastity and modesty. Fénelon expressed the same sentiments, but he gave specific and practical instructions to mothers so that they could raise ideal Catholic daughters.

Mothers had the great responsibility to monitor the instruction of their girls for the sake of their family and society. Fénelon states that women had “the duty of educating her children – the boys up to a certain age and girls until they get married or take the

¹⁸¹ Abbé D. R., “Epître” in *Instruction Chrétienne pour l'éducation des filles*.

¹⁸² Abbé D. R., “Epître.”

¹⁸³ Abbé D. R., “La bonne education est le fondement des belles....” *Instruction Chrétienne pour l'éducation des filles*, 8-9.

veil.”¹⁸⁴ In a letter titled, *Avis á une dame de qualité*, Fénelon summarizes the ideas found in his longer treatise on girls’ education. It is uncertain to whom this letter was addressed and exactly when it was composed. Barnard argues that the letter was intended for the Duchesse de Beauvilliers and probably written before 1715, the year that the letter appears in a reprint of his *Traité de l’éducation des filles*.¹⁸⁵ The letter candidly reveals Fénelon’s thoughts on educational institutions of his time. Although he makes recommendations for education at home, Fénelon clearly reveals his preference for institutionalized schooling: “education in the most mediocre convent is better than this kind of home education.”¹⁸⁶ Fénelon favored girls entering convent life, but this sentiment did not change his opinion about home education for girls. In fact, he writes that the calling to holy orders is most important, but a righteous home life could be a precursor to actual convent life.¹⁸⁷ In so doing, he emphasizes the importance of the home as a holy place, which was not comparable to the convent in its most ideal form but could ready children for religious life. Fénelon explicitly writes about how girls should be raised from a very early age. He recognized early childhood as a critical stage for intellectual and moral development.

Wherever life called her, a girl required religious education at home. He perceived early childhood as the most important point in a child’s life, when mothers

¹⁸⁴ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 75.

¹⁸⁵ Barnard, introduction to *Fénelon on Education*, xlvi.

¹⁸⁶ Fénelon, “Advice from M. de Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, to a Lady of Quality, concerning the Education of her Daughter” in *Fénelon on Education*, 1-2.

¹⁸⁷ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 90.

could instill the best qualities and knowledge of a moral person. He states, “In order to remedy these evils it is a great advantage to be able to begin the education of girls from their earliest childhood.”¹⁸⁸ Thus, he addresses mothers on the nature of children’s minds and recommends ways for parents to take advantage of their impressionable age.

As children, Fénelon suggests, both boys and girls are developmentally equal. He sees a window of opportunity in youth and instructs mothers to take advantage of their children’s innate weaknesses.¹⁸⁹ He provides his opinion on developmental psychology by stating that children learn even before they are born. He encourages mothers not only to look after the intellectual development of their girls because physical health promotes qualities in an “obedient, patient, strong, happy, serene” child. A combination of these techniques will produce goodness in a child.¹⁹⁰ Once children are able to reason, Fénelon strongly urges mothers to instill in their children a love of truth and a disdain for pretense.¹⁹¹ In short, the treatise is about the education of mothers as much as it is about girls.

Fénelon seems to imply that mothers are able to program their children in a way that makes them appreciate goodness and truth. He describes how a child’s brain is soft and pliable to the whims of their environment.¹⁹² Since children have a natural

¹⁸⁸ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 6.

¹⁸⁹ Starting in the third chapter of his treatise, “Quels sont les premiers fondements de l’éducation,” Fénelon refers to *les enfants* or children and moves back and forth regarding children’s education in general and specific education for girls. See Fénelon, *Œuvres*, ed. Jacques Le Brun (Gallimard: 1983).

¹⁹⁰ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 9.

¹⁹¹ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 9.

predilection towards curiosity, Fénelon urges mothers to take advantage of this state by instructing them well. He advises that mothers not leave their children alone.¹⁹³ He observes that children are naturally curious and he explicitly states to mothers that they need to recognize this and orders, “Do not fail to profit by it.”¹⁹⁴ At the same time, he presents mothers with this conundrum: “You should not even refrain from giving them some warning in general terms against certain faults, even though by so doing you risk opening their eyes to the weaknesses of people whom they ought to respect.”¹⁹⁵ For Fénelon, there existed a delicate balance between instruction and corruption. By scolding and pointing out faults, mothers could strengthen the character of their children, but at the same time, they could inadvertently expose them to bad behavior, the very thing that they desired to ward off from an impressionable child. In addition, Fénelon advises mothers to monitor with whom their children come in contact: immoral people may impart “mocking and farcical ways” to children. Fénelon states that children have a natural tendency to imitate others, and when they encounter people who do not uphold good behavior, they may easily acquire bad habits.¹⁹⁶ Mothers especially needed to be watchful in regard to their own conduct as children noticed even the subtlest of faults.¹⁹⁷ Thus, mothers had to lead by example. Fénelon adamantly places emphasis on the

¹⁹² Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 9-10, 15.

¹⁹³ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 27.

¹⁹⁴ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 12.

¹⁹⁵ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 13.

¹⁹⁶ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 14.

¹⁹⁷ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 17.

formative years of children and regards children with good habits and character as products of good mothers.

In addition to behavioral instruction, Fénelon urges mothers to help their children acquire basic literacy. Assuming that mothers could read, he urges them to make sure children understand biblical texts, suggesting that they make the task of reading some sort of game.¹⁹⁸ He suggests that children cannot handle a wealth of information and may be easily distracted into boredom by intensive learning. Rather, he advises mothers to trick their children into reading: “The child should be given a well-bound book, with a gilded binding if possible, with attractive pictures and clear print. Whatever pleases the imagination facilitates study. You should choose a book containing short and interesting tales.”¹⁹⁹ Fénelon, however, rejects fairy tales as reading material since they are stories derived from pagan mythology.²⁰⁰ Instead, he recommends biblical fables such as the story about Joseph and his brothers. Storytelling was an art and took some skill to achieve. With these things in mind, Fénelon recommends that mothers emphasize suspense and intrigue by reading fables bits at a time, often stopping right before the end in order to generate interest in the story.²⁰¹

In addition to mothers reading to children, children had to also learn to read and eventually to write. Reading at this time consisted of reading aloud. Fénelon cautions

¹⁹⁸ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 23.

¹⁹⁹ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 23.

²⁰⁰ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 34.

²⁰¹ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 34.

mothers to help loosen children's tongues by only encouraging and not forcing the development of reading skills. After they progressed in reading, the next point of instruction was writing. He even tells them to let children merely handle paper and perhaps write for fun. In this portion of his treatise, Fénelon criticizes the philosophy of education in France. He states that amusement and the irksomeness of study are completely separate in traditional education for children.²⁰² He finds that too much of either one will lead children astray. His idea that studies should be creative for children connotes a modern attitude towards elementary education. At the same time, Fénelon reiterates his gendered seventeenth-century perspective on children's education. Forms of amusement for girls had to be limited because of their sex. For example, girls could not associate with boys or play too roughly lest they display immodesty.²⁰³ Fénelon's opinion of elementary instruction relates an overarching theme of moderation. He did not believe that any form of extremity could benefit a child. For instance, he even comments on the diet of children and warns that even "highly-seasoned food" could ruin a child.²⁰⁴ Along these lines, Fénelon advocates letting children enjoy the simplicities of life, thereby instilling moderate tendencies. On pleasure, he discusses its potential damage to both physical and spiritual health.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 23-24.

²⁰³ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 25.

²⁰⁴ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 26.

²⁰⁵ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 26-27.

Fénelon explains why childhood is such a critical time for a child's ability to learn. The susceptible nature of children allowed evils such as passion and pride to seep into their minds. He analogizes instruction with "a seed planted in them [children] which grows and sometimes brings forth fruit when experience comes to the aide of reason and the passions cool down." He states that "[children] hear everything and feel nothing," suggesting that words alone cannot reform a child who has already developed bad habits. With the right vigilance, mothers could not only prevent such wantonness from corrupting their children, but in addition, with the right balance of resolute yet amusing instruction, their children could reap all the benefits of their youth.²⁰⁶ Fénelon's idea that children need to understand and feel righteousness was derived from the French Church's attitude on conversion to Catholicism.

As a proponent and leader of campaigns aimed at converting Protestant women to the Catholic faith, Fénelon recognized the value of learning for the sake of religious conversion. Conversion campaigns compelled both Protestant and Catholic groups to articulate their religious doctrine in their rituals. For example, Protestants embraced the ritual of burial as a means of differentiating and expressing points of religious doctrine. In Germany, Lutheran preachers could not perform the rite of burial in the Catholic tradition since they could not lead people in the prayers for souls in purgatory.²⁰⁷ The rejection of the church grounds as sacred space further differentiated Protestants from Catholics. This careful and deliberate discernment helped define the Protestant faith.

²⁰⁶ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 27-29.

²⁰⁷ Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450-1700* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

Similarly, in early modern France, Catholics carefully defined the idea of conversion so as not to echo Huguenot beliefs. Advocacy of emotional conversion by the grace of God came too close to the Calvinist belief.²⁰⁸ Accordingly, Capuchin missionaries described Catholic conversion as both intellectual as well as emotional. Those who campaigned for Protestant conversions to the Catholic faith zealously challenged Calvinist doctrine and pointed out inaccuracies in the Huguenot Bible.²⁰⁹ Thus, the sincere feeling of conversion along with reason signified true conversion. Understanding one's religious faith, an idea akin to Thomas Aquinas' scholastic method, played a key role in religious conversions in France.

Influenced by conversion campaigns in France, Fénelon stresses the importance of instilling true knowledge in the seminal stages of girls' lives. Since children loved stories, Fénelon recommends mothers make their teachings of Biblical accounts amusing. Tales about Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph and Moses were essential to a child's instruction for two reasons. First, they showed how a single person could make a difference in the world and point out "how important they are, how unique, wonderful, true to life, full of splendid movement." Thus, God's children reflected the goodness of God. Next, these stories of individuals were the stories of a child's religious heritage. Fénelon writes that children will relate to these stories and at the same time, the stories will impart important knowledge about Catholicism. He gives another example of instructing children on the difficult but essential concepts such as the Holy Trinity.

²⁰⁸ Luria, "Rituals of Conversion," 76.

²⁰⁹ Luria, "Rituals of Conversion," 76.

Telling a child that God is comprised of three persons will be heedless, he argues. Facts remained in children's minds, but they did not rest in their hearts: "...he [a child] may retain it in his memory; but I doubt whether he will understand its meaning."

Alternatively, mothers should tell the story about the baptism of Christ in which the Trinity is present at the same time. In so doing, the child would understand the meaning of the Trinity and never forget the important Catholic belief in the doctrine.²¹⁰

In everyday life, Fénelon suggests that mothers give daily religious affirmation to their children. For instance, if they hear of a man's death, mothers should help their child relate death to the concept of the soul and eternal life. Fénelon writes that children's minds are unstable and cannot link complex thoughts together. Thus, mothers need to help a child realize religious connections in day-to-day life.²¹¹ Conveying the idea of the soul is an important point of instruction for Fénelon. He again supports mothers taking opportunities during their child's formative years: "Watch for any opportunity which the child's mind offers you; try in various ways to discover how best the great truths may gain access to his brain."²¹² In specific reference to girls, Fénelon tells mothers to remember that they should approach their daily religious lessons with caution as girls are overly curious and easily led astray by their own nature.²¹³ He suggests that stories of martyrs and early Christians may help to glorify shunning one's body for one's faith.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 35-36.

²¹¹ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 41.

²¹² Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 42.

²¹³ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 48.

When explaining the idea of a soul to girls, specifically, Fénelon is hesitant about forcing girls to delve into its philosophical nuances while being resolute in their knowing the concept. He suggests making the point “clear and intelligible to her, as far as is possible.” Although he upholds feminine attributes and argues for their own place in society, he reveals that he finds religious instruction far more important. He states that girls are too encouraged in keeping good appearances. He points out that by explaining the soul to girls, mothers allow them to look beyond their physical body and may even “inspire her with contempt for it by showing her something better in herself.” That “something better” refers to her eternal soul.²¹⁵ With a firm belief in God, Fénelon encourages everyone, including women, to display courage and dismiss feelings of fear and sadness in order that they show others the workings of their faith: “When one is a Christian – of either sex – it is not permissible to be a coward.”²¹⁶

Fénelon proposes that girls learn apologetics because they are especially vulnerable to Protestant ideas. Since he believed that girls were gullible and prone to believing in tales, he cautions mothers especially about the dangers posed by Calvinist ideas. Mothers, therefore, had to work extra hard to clear their daughters’ minds of baseless stories. He warns mothers not to force their children into knowing religious stories because in so doing, it may make them callous to the Truth.²¹⁷ He also tells them

²¹⁴ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 47.

²¹⁵ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 42-43.

²¹⁶ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 55-56.

²¹⁷ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 38.

that they should not criticize those falsities in case they reiterate their existence. Instead, he instructs mothers to simply point out that such stories hold no value when one utilizes their faculties of reason and perceive their lack of foundation. In Fénelon's mind, such a tool of reasoning would make girls impervious to Calvinist ideas. He did advocate a response to Calvinist criticisms regarding images, belief in saints, prayers for the dead and indulgences. The most basic apologetic ideas consisted of understanding the Seven Sacraments, and the authority of the clergy and of the Pope, who resides at the Holy See, and the relationship of lay people to the Church.²¹⁸ By instilling in girls the right intellectual tools, they could determine falsities by means of their virtue and through the use of reason.²¹⁹

Instead of simply listing what girls should know about their faith, Fénelon emphasizes an application of knowledge. The only thing that Fénelon wished girls to memorize was the catechism of the Catholic Church.²²⁰ For Fénelon, the catechism contained all that needed to be known about Jesus Christ, the Gospels, and the Church. The Ten Commandments and the Gospels were important for girls to know, but it was more imperative that they believed in them.²²¹ He desires for girls to enjoy the ceremonies of their faith, but to know that "ceremonies are not religion itself."²²² Thus,

²¹⁸ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 53-54.

²¹⁹ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 47.

²²⁰ Barnard states that Fénelon recommended the recently published *Catéchisme Historique* by Abbé Fleury because Fénelon found that the Council of Trent's Catechism was too theological and thus, too difficult for most people to comprehend. Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 37n20.

²²¹ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 58.

²²² Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 58.

he exhorts understanding the mystery of the incarnation, which he felt too difficult a concept for children, and the history of the life of Christ. He advocated imitation of Christ's teachings and acts, wholly embracing the idea that Christ was the ultimate role model for human beings. For example, he states that lessons may even be learned from Christ's life as a carpenter.²²³

By acquiring basic literacy skills, girls could learn their catechism and receive the Sacraments, which could arm their minds with Truth. For Fénelon, a child's intelligence indicates his or her readiness for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Children may receive their First Communion only when he or she reaches "the age of reason."²²⁴ They had to understand the purpose and nature of the Sacraments before receiving them by reciprocating God's grace: "The only purpose of confession then is conversion and self-correction; otherwise the words of absolution, however powerful they may be according to Christ's institution, remain mere words owing to our indifference."²²⁵ He cries out for the early Christian days when men and women could demonstrate their mettle as they endured persecution for their faith. Fénelon states that persecution is not a reality in his own time, but struggles exist in the form of desiring greater piety. In the early modern age, he argues, challenges lay in the reality of a corrupted world. Fénelon insists that mothers inform children of the role of the Devil in this world, so they will be able to

²²³ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 56.

²²⁴ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 64.

²²⁵ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 61.

denounce and reject all things evil and full of pomp.²²⁶ Upon receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, children could become soldiers of Christ.²²⁷ The rejection of worldly things allowed ordinary people to begin to understand the life of the religious man, who choose the holiest life.²²⁸ He also suggests that children read the prayers for the dying not only to understand the Sacrament of Extreme Unction so that they may also glean the role of the Church in the salvation of souls.²²⁹

For more effecting teaching, Fénelon suggests the use of pictures or music in instruction. He highly regards the use of engravings and images in order to teach the history found in the Bible.²³⁰ Vibrant colors and realistic pictures could pique children's imaginations and thus, help them stick in their minds. As for music and poetry, Fénelon is a bit more cautious of their use. He explains how the ancients suffered by listening to the wrong type of music: men in the ancient world often felt languid after listening to effeminate music. It could be too pleasurable and render people into a state of idleness and dull their intellect.²³¹ However, when used properly, music and poetry could inspire a soul to virtue. Fénelon asks mothers to recall how missionaries converted heathen peoples to the Catholic faith. The use of music was the key to their instruction and even

²²⁶ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 59.

²²⁷ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 60.

²²⁸ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 59.

²²⁹ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 61.

²³⁰ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 40.

²³¹ Fénelon, "The Education of Girls," 87.

“had the power to raise the soul above base thoughts.”²³² Thus, Fénelon advises mothers not to deny girls access to music and singing since alienating them will only impede the education process.²³³

Conclusion

Fénelon observed the fruits of a well-educated girl in Marguerite de Navarre, the sister of Francis I. He read her *Mémoires*, focusing on the part where she recalls her mother speaking to her as she would do with any adult. However, she did not experience an ordinary childhood and Fénelon seems to realize this as he mentions her being privy to state secrets. He must have known about her controversial spiritual life, but here, he expresses admiration for her education and resulting literary prowess. Furthermore, Fénelon lauds Marguerite and her mother, the queen mother, Louise of Savoy for being virtuous women, whom he perhaps envisioned as he wrote about the ideal mother-daughter relationship.²³⁴ He implies that all girls may aspire to be like Marguerite, not necessarily to be a princess, but a well-learned individual who was appreciative of a good education.

Although Fénelon was regarded an authority on education in his own time, it is uncertain how many mothers implemented his philosophies. In this regard, what was the

²³² Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 87. The instruction of native peoples in the New World varied in the seventeenth century. However, Spanish missionaries initially approached the Christian instruction of Indians as they would children. Fénelon reveals how dear he finds conversions to Catholicism. Native American conversions went down in history as the largest mass conversion of peoples the Church had seen thus far.

²³³ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 88.

²³⁴ Fénelon, “The Education of Girls,” 83.

importance of Fénelon's work, both in practice and in theory? Fénelon's rather demanding expectations from mothers and daughters could not have been fully achieved. However, his educational theories, the role of mothers and female education did make a lasting impression. The nineteenth-century writer Louis Aimé-Martin read Fénelon's work and also advocated the idea that thoughtful and educated mothers could produce the same type of daughters.²³⁵ He states that the question of educating women was no longer an issue, but Aimé-Martin argues that material indulgency and vanity prevented women from reaching their full intellectual and moral potential.²³⁶ These were some of the very problems that Fénelon had written about in his treatise. In addition to its substance, Fénelon's treatise is unique and fascinating in light of his personal background, the society in which he lived, and his involvement with the Propagation. There is an urgency and passion in the tone of his work, reflecting his commitment to the betterment of society by means of strengthening the faithful.

As a religious authority and experienced educator, Fénelon wrote his treatise in response to the religious crisis and perceived Huguenot problem, which seemed to be intensifying. He also typifies a man of seventeenth-century ideas relating to the proper social, cultural and religious space for women. Fénelon was inspired to write his treaty by the Duchesse de Beauvilliers who asked for his advice on how to raise her daughter. He completed it in December 1685 and his work was later published in March 1687. The

²³⁵ Louis Aimé-Martin, "Of Present Education and Its Insufficiency," in *Classics in the Education of Girls and Women*, ed. Shirley Nelson Kersey (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1981), 255. Originally in *The Education of Mothers: Or the Civilization of Mankind*, trans. Edwin Lee (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1843).

²³⁶ Aimé-Martin, "Of Present Education," 256.

education that Fénelon speaks of is not philosophy, law, theology, military art or politics, but rather, behavioral and moral lessons for girls.²³⁷ Therefore, although Fénelon supported some form of instruction for girls, he was not in favor of girls learning the strict disciplines of academia. He desired first and foremost that girls acquire basic skills of reading in order for them to learn about their Catholic faith.

Fénelon's personal and professional background directly affected the mission of the *compagnies* of the Propagation. His recommendations affected the girls and women in the houses of *nouvelles catholiques* in addition to female Catholics in general. Fénelon's particular interest in female education stemmed from his early experiences during the formative years of his ministry, which had deeper roots in the state's prerogatives concerning religion. His desire to catechize and convert people to Catholicism is evident in this particular treatise. These were typical ideas for religious authorities at this time and place. However, his work may be described as bold because he calls for a large-scale movement for the instruction of girls. Despite their natural and biological weaknesses he believed that girls should be intellectually armed against heresy. An architect of a social and cultural movement for female education, Fénelon voiced opinions that ranged from commentary about the power of parental authority to frivolous reading material for burgeoning female students. His treatise is a specific and rigorous program for both girls and their mothers meant to create generations of strong Catholic families.

²³⁷ Davis, *Fénelon*, 42-43.

Conversely, spiritually unfit mothers could corrupt a girl. The concern for visits by heretical parents is repeated time and again throughout the *Constitutions*. Female Protestants, in particular, figured prominently in the domestic religious crusade of propagandists. Mothers had great influence over their children, and fiercely Protestant mothers posed a danger not only to her daughter, but also to her entire family and ultimately society. Although early writings on the Propagation exhorted the eradication of heresy, it was not until the founding of the houses of *nouvelles catholiques* that religious zealots began to articulate and implement the strategy and device for fighting heresy.

The *Constitutions* of Paris and Fénelon's treatise spoke to noble girls and women, albeit the disadvantaged nobility. The first couple of chapters have shown that in the age of absolutism, greater political, social, and cultural centralization addressed the society at large as well as the micro version of the household. Complicit in the state's political vision, *compagnies* of the Propagation endeavored to eradicate heresy, thereby bringing cultural uniformity to society. The interior mission comprised of an aggressive position against heretics in addition to penetrating the minds of children through Catholic education. The subsequent three chapters will discuss how the *compagnies* in the provinces took the ideologies of Paris and applied them to combat heresy in their own regions where propagandists fought against Huguenots on their own terms.

CHAPTER III
SUSPICIOUS WOMEN, PARENTING AND RELIGIOUS CONVERSION IN
HOUSEHOLDS

In 1656, Jacques-Benigne Bossuet wrote in his rules for the sisters of the Propagation at Metz, “[The sisters] will have an affection of a mother for the *nouvelles catholiques*, putting up with their weaknesses....”²³⁸ Bossuet expresses a sentiment that embodies one of the primary directives of the Propagation. By separating girls from their heretical mothers, the institution proposed to provide new, more adequate maternal figures for young females. This idea of bettering the lives of girls by means of Catholic conversion aligned with seventeenth-century assumptions about family life, household obligations, and good parenting. Furthermore, in contrast to secular rhetoric and measures that championed the role of male heads of household, the deliberation records of the Propagation show that religious authorities and propagandists both feared and revered the influence of women in shaping the moral course of their families.

The subject of early modern family dynamics necessitates a discussion of “family” and parent-child relations during the old regime. Half a century ago, in *L’enfant et la vie familiale sous l’Ancien Régime*, Phillipe Ariès argued that emotional ties between parent and child, as twentieth-century people recognize them, did not exist in the Middle Ages and throughout most of the early modern period. The medieval worldview,

²³⁸ “Elles auront pour les nouvelles catholiques une affection de mère, s’accommodant à leurs foiblesses....” Jacques Bossuet, “Réglement du séminaire des filles de la propagation de la foi, établies en la ville de Metz” in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IX (Besançon, 1836).

constructed by a value system centered mostly on livelihood, allowed the development of parent-child relationships far removed from modern notions.²³⁹ Until the eighteenth century, Ariès argues, adults did not discern a separate childhood and parents did not emotionally invest in their children. Subsequent studies on early modern families have reacted for and against the viewpoint of Ariès, and much of these historical analyses through lenses of “domination or affection” neglect a broad understanding of family dynamics. While maintaining the significance of family structures in the past, scholars who have added nuance to Ariès’ theory have emphasized the different kinds of bonds between family members.²⁴⁰

Although much of what Ariès says about early modern childhood and family has been disputed, he led the way in showing that families of pre-industrial Europe experienced change in their domestic spheres as often as they did in their public spheres. The two realms intertwined and study of their interplay has shown the significance of the

²³⁹ Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973). Originally published as *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Plon, 1960) and translated by Robert Baldick as *Centuries of Childhood; A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Knopf, 1962).

²⁴⁰ Scholars of late medieval and early modern family life have shown a lack of nuclear mentality, opting instead for descriptions such as “unstable family” or “disaggregated family.” See David Herlihy, “Mapping Households in Medieval Italy,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 58, no. 1 (April 1972): 1-24 and Micheline Bauland, “La famille en miettes: sur un aspect de la démographie du XVII^e siècle,” *Annales: Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 27, no. 4 (1972): 959-968. The idea of family as a social system includes emotional as well as economic incentives for togetherness. The family as a social system contained a group of kin living together in a structural household that provided mostly sexual, emotional, social, and economic support. See Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage: In England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 21-23. For understanding family dynamics over time, see Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, “Reciprocal Bonding: Parents and Their Offspring in Early Modern England,” *Journal of Family History* 25, no. 3 (July 2000): 291-312. Her approach focuses on reciprocity as a way to show the complexities of power within early modern family exchanges.

domestic world in constructing social history.²⁴¹ Linda A. Pollock puts into perspective the direction of familial studies: "...a family is not one thing or the other, that is, either a center of emotional intimacy or a center of discord and power play; rather, a family is different and many things at various times."²⁴² The state and household similarly played out tensions as the state both championed and distrusted the private realm, domesticity and motherhood. Proponents of family values expounded the significance of the social and cultural environment of children. The terms "family" and "household" are not interchangeable and their use among scholars differs according to their scope of analysis and subject matter.²⁴³ While recognizing diversity within households and families, when speaking about the family in early modern France, moralists referred to what Jean-Louis Flandrin calls the conjugal family and its domestic servants.²⁴⁴ The basic and ideal

²⁴¹ Mary S. Hartman asserts that the late-marriage system beginning in the early modern era transformed society by altering domestic power relations thereby ushering in the modern era. She emphasizes domestic changes in the making of the modern world and in so doing she criticizes social histories that only explore extra-domestic changes and movements. She contends that her work is not revisionist but rather synthetic, setting a much-needed foundation for social analysis on the topic of domestic history. Although she notes cultural history's contribution to analyzing women and their part in history, she maintains that demographic, family, and women's history needs to be part of standard social histories. *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²⁴² Linda A. Pollock, "Rethinking Patriarchy and the Family in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Family History* 23, no. 1 (January 1998): 4. See also Laurence Fontaine and Jürgen Schlumbohm, "Household Strategies for Survival: An Introduction," *International Review of Social History* 45 (2000): 1-17 for an overview of historical approaches to examining strategies of survival within families and households.

²⁴³ Pierre Goubert, "Family and Province: A Contribution to the Knowledge of Family Structures in Early Modern France," Gerald Denault, trans., *Journal of Family History* 2 (September 1977): 179-195. Joseph S. Freedman, "Philosophical Writings on the Family in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe," *Journal of Family History* 27, no. 3 (July 2002): 292-342.

²⁴⁴ Jean-Louis Flandrin, "Reproduction and Sexual Life" in *Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household, and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 174). The ideal family was the "natural" family that God had ordained. Flandrin asserts that theologians were not ignorant of familial realities but that they referred to a conjugal family and household servants in their work.

description of a family would be a nuclear unit, namely parents and their offspring. These individuals could comprise a household, though it could also include servants, grandparents, and grandchildren.

The household environment as a suitable place for fostering younger generations developed along with greater moral scrutiny in parenting with heavy emphasis on children's behavior. In the remaining decades of the old regime, praise of fatherhood and motherhood served a political agenda and resulted in programs designed to promote and reward commendable parenting.²⁴⁵ Championing paternal virtues starting in the second half of the eighteenth century followed seventeenth-century laws that favored patriarchal domination in the family and household.²⁴⁶ The manly image of a dutiful paternal figure in the king, which contributed to the divinely-ordained theory of absolute rule, reinforced the role of male heads of households as controllers of unruly bodies in the private realm, which was a "limb" attached to the public realm and the greater state of France.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Jennifer J. Popiel, "Making Mothers: The Advice Genre and the Domestic Ideal, 1760-1830," *Journal of Family History* 29, no. 4 (October 2004): 339-350. Advice manuals geared towards mothers created a discourse centering on morally conscious mothering. Leslie Tuttle, "Celebrating the *Père de Famille*: Pronatalism and Fatherhood in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Family History* 29, no. 4 (October 2004): 366-381. Tuttle examines the state's efforts to create a collective ideal of the model father.

²⁴⁶ From 1666-1683, the state declared that men who proved to have fathered ten or more living offspring were entitled to certain benefits depending on their social status. Non-noble fathers could receive exemption from civic duties and noble fathers could receive sizable pensions. Tuttle distinguishes the French state's paternalist attitude from its patriarchal stance observed a century before: "...the royal government interceded in family life to support the notion that good fathers had obligations to their children in addition to power over them." Tuttle, "Celebrating the *Père de Famille*," 368.

²⁴⁷ Jeffrey Merrick, "The Body Politics of French Absolutism," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, eds. Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 19-21 and 32.

Early modern French notions about family as the fundamental part of the body politic were shaped by the humanist and jurist Jean Bodin (1529/30 – 1596). Born into a wealthy bourgeois family in Angers, Bodin found a patron in the city's bishop, Gabriel Bouvery, who enabled Bodin to enter the local Carmelite house of Nôtre Dame at the age of fifteen or sixteen.²⁴⁸ The monastery sent Bodin and three others to study in Paris. Although he was learned in the traditional curriculum of medieval scholasticism, in Paris, Bodin discovered the newer school of humanism, which is often associated with Luther and the Reformation in Germany.²⁴⁹ The sixteenth-century jurist lived and wrote during

²⁴⁸ M. J. Tooley, introduction to *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), vii.

²⁴⁹ The phrase *ohne Humanismus keine Reformation* expresses the idea that without humanism, the Protestant Reformation could not have occurred. Scholars who study early modern intellectual history have discussed at some length this subject, emphasizing and distinguishing this perceived causal relationship. There are three general observations that ought to be considered before broaching the statement *ohne Humanismus keine Reformation*. The first and most obvious point to address about this statement is the doubt that any absolute and extreme statement could stand on its own. The bold, and perhaps dated, interpretation of early modern history has prompted scholars to nuance and delve deeper into the ideas and characteristics of humanists, reformers and the connection between the two groups. Second, it is difficult to compare and contrast humanism and the Reformation when the latter grew and gained speed out of political circumstances (confessionalization), while the former is even less definable by the fact that it characterizes an intellectual and pedagogical movement. Humanist ideas responded to medieval scholasticism and helped promulgate new plans of study in academia. And finally, there are similarities or rather, overlaps between humanist and reformist ideas in the form of their emphasis on the revival of learning based on the ancients. Christian humanism may appear to be the link between humanists and the reformers. However, the ultimate goal of humanists, whether Italian or Christian, was the end of barbarism in learning or in short, a rejection of scholasticism as Erasmus has asserted in his work. The ideas of humanism and the religious reform movement in the early sixteenth century diverged from this point as the Reformation came to engender and embody the political agendas that resulted from the confessionalization of states. Modern understandings of the humanist influence on the ideas of the Reformation carefully distinguish Luther from humanism, and more generally, the humanist culture from that of the religious and political movement of the Reformation. In general, scholars have moved away from the idea of *ohne Humanismus keine Reformation*. Historians James Overfield, Charles Nauert and Erika Rummel show that the stereotypes and the categories associated with the descriptions of humanism, scholasticism and Reformation only give a rough sketch of the intellectual landscape of the sixteenth-century. They cannot be simply broken down and defined by a few outspoken individuals nor can they be simply reduced to movements. Instead, these scholars show the historical complexities between and amongst the encounter of new ideas with those of the more traditional methods of scholasticism. For discussions about early modern intellectual developments, see Charles G. Nauert Jr., *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); James H. Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1984); and Erika Rummel, *The*

the French Wars of Religion, which shaped his notion of sovereignty, and a general desire for social order. During his three-year stay in Paris, Bodin left the Carmelite order, which was the same year the Parlement of Paris determined that some of his former brothers too freely discussed religion, and subsequently burned them for their errors. It is uncertain whether Bodin was a part of the group of errant monks, and if so, it is just as murky as to why he did not receive the same fate as his colleagues.²⁵⁰ Having renounced his vows, he turned instead to the study of law. He studied the tenets of Calvinism, however it is doubtful that Bodin actually converted to the Protestant faith. Bodin came back to Paris in 1560, a couple of years prior to the start of the religious wars in France. In the politically tumultuous environment, Bodin developed and wrote his *Six Books of the Commonwealth*. Notions about the significance of the body physical in relation to the social and political derived from the work of Bodin.²⁵¹ Asking and answering the

Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a more traditional argument for humanism's role in Luther's education and the Reformation, see Bernd Moeller, "The German Humanists and the Beginnings of the Reformation" in *Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays*, ed. and trans. H.C. Erik Middlefort and Mark U. Edwards Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 19-38, in which he puts theology in its political and social context.

²⁵⁰ Tooley, introduction to *Six Books*, viii.

²⁵¹ James R. Farr, "The Pure and Disciplined Body: Hierarchy, Morality, and Symbolism in France during the Catholic Reformation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1991): 391-414. In "The Social Theory of Jean Bodin," *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 7, no. 4 (December 1946): 267- 272, Eva J. Ross contends that political scientists consider Bodin's distinctions between sovereignty, state, and government his greatest contribution. In the *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (*Six livres de la république*), first published in 1576, Bodin asserted the absolute nature of the royal sovereignty over its subjects, though he did support the place of laws and traditions in actual governing. As the highest power of the state, the sovereign was above all people and things, even societal law. There were exceptions and limits to sovereign authority. Natural laws such as the right to private property were beyond the scope of sovereign power. Opting for any type of government depended on the state, but sovereignty remained albeit distributed differently. Thus, states could choose from monarchies, aristocracies, or democracies. Bodin's political theory of absolute royal sovereignty was well-received by the public. The work was published multiple times throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in both French and Latin, and it was also translated into English and Spanish.

question of what makes a state, Bodin reveals the influences of Aristotle's *Politics* and the method of "induction from the known relevant facts," which meant taking into consideration the current state of the world by reading the accounts of global travelers and historians of the day.²⁵² Only then, for Bodin, could one gain a true political understanding of the world.

In this context of the body public, Bodin asserted that the family lay at the heart of society as the basic unit of the state. Bodin starts the *Six Books of the Commonwealth* with a definition of the commonwealth as "...the rightly ordered government of a number of families, and of those things which are their common concern, by a sovereign power," and underscores the part about it being rightly ordered.²⁵³ A true commonwealth, as Bodin saw it, could not and did not guarantee economic security or happiness for every individual. Instead, individuals, the citizens, would find happiness in the well-being of the commonwealth because "the conditions of true felicity are one and the same for the commonwealth and the individual."²⁵⁴ Bodin considers more valuable potential intellectual and contemplative happiness as opposed to day-to-day things that only brought about fleeting contentment. Citizens of a commonwealth could rely on their sovereign state to protect them and ensure justice throughout the realm.²⁵⁵ Whether in good or bad economic times, the sovereign brought moral and political authority to the

²⁵² Tooley, introduction to *Six Books*, xvi-xvii.

²⁵³ Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, trans. M.J. Tooley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), bk.1, chap.1, 1.

²⁵⁴ Bodin, *Six Books*, bk.1, chap.1, 2.

²⁵⁵ Bodin, *Six Books*, bk.1, chap.1, 5.

commonwealth, and by extension, to the citizens, and in so doing, true sovereignty facilitated true happiness.

Championing the moral and political rectitude found in good paternal leadership, Bodin describes the structure of the nuclear family as a way to make parallels to the sovereign state. In Chapters 2-5, the author again opens with a definition: “A family may be defined as the right ordering of a group of persons owing obedience to a head of a household, and of those interests which are his proper concern.”²⁵⁶ Calling the family the source, origin, and “principal constituent” of the commonwealth, Bodin attributes the right construction of families as not only an analogy to the making of a state, but he considers it the basic unit of society, and thus, the most important part of the commonwealth. Obedience to the head of the family, namely, the husband, is a central aspect of Bodin’s system of domestic government. Calling obedience and reverence of a wife to her husband “both divine and positive law,” Bodin asserts that a husband should have complete “power, authority, and command” over his spouse.²⁵⁷

In the same regard, a father had divinely and legally ordained control over his natural children. Bodin expected complete devotion of children to their fathers such that they should give up all of their material goods and even their lives should necessity demand.²⁵⁸ In terms of what children should expect from their fathers, Bodin lists education and instruction. Abuse of power seems a natural course of action given that

²⁵⁶ Bodin, *Six Books*, bk.1, chap. 2-5, 10.

²⁵⁷ Bodin, *Six Books*, bk.1, chap. 2-5, 11.

²⁵⁸ Bodin, *Six Books*, bk.1, chap. 2-5, 11-12.

fathers have absolute paternal authority of his children. Bodin, however, assures his readers that the laws of the state would curtail any mistreatment of fathers towards their children. Only in the most extreme cases, Bodin contends, should magistrates intervene in domestic affairs. He takes for granted that any father in his right mind would have affection for his children and as such, this natural paternal drive would ensure that the father would do well by his own family: “The affection of parents for their children is so strong, that the law has always rightly presumed that they will only do those things which are of benefit and honour to their children.”²⁵⁹ He gives fathers the benefit of the doubt even in cases of child abuse as far as the willful killing of their children, stating “...for the law presumes he would only commit such an act upon good and just grounds.”²⁶⁰ Total paternal authority over the household extended to slaves and servants. Though Bodin does not support the institution of slavery, he seems satisfied in admitting that it was just a part of the condition of the world, and that it reflected the need for true sovereignty and commonwealths, which would rightly order the world.²⁶¹

Writing in the seventeenth century, the Jesuit Jean Cordier echoes Bodin’s structure of the familiar household. At the academic level, philosophers took notable interest in writing about the family and household in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁶² Cordier describes family relations among husbands and wives, parents and

²⁵⁹ Bodin, *Six Books*, bk.1, chap. 2-5, 14.

²⁶⁰ Bodin, *Six Books*, bk.1, chap. 2-5, 14.

²⁶¹ Bodin, *Six Books*, bk.1, chap. 2-5, 14-18.

children, and parents and servants in *La famille sainte*, which was published in 1643 in Paris.²⁶³ For Cordier, a family consisted of people who resided together under a single roof. His work prescribes ways for all members of a family to benefit from each other and to simply get along within the boundaries of their respective familiar roles.²⁶⁴ As a micro-society, the household required guidance by leaders.²⁶⁵ Therefore, for Cordier, the key to successful family life rested upon the leadership of parental units in a given household. As masters of the house, the father and mother were responsible for impressing values upon their children as well as their servants by themselves setting virtuous examples. Everyone had a station in life, endowed by God, and Cordier tells his readers that “you ought to be content with the status that Providence has ordained for you.”²⁶⁶ As such, parents had the task of running their households, however big or small, with the notion that they held servants as well as children under their care. That they could learn and develop according to their social and cultural environment burdened parents with an awesome responsibility to the impressionable in their care.

²⁶² Freedman, “Philosophical Writings on the Family.” Freedman analyzes writings which included published, manuscript, and instructive materials and arrives at the conclusion that philosophers during this time thought the early modern family small and nuclear.

²⁶³ Jean Cordier, *La famille sainte ou il est traité des devoirs de toutes les personnes qui composent une famille* (Paris, 1643). According to the catalog of the BnF, there were a couple of subsequent publications in French in 1656 and 1666 following its original printing in 1643.

²⁶⁴ Cordier, *La famille sainte*, 632.

²⁶⁵ Cordier, *La famille sainte*, 643.

²⁶⁶ “...vous devés vous contenter du rang que sa providence vous a ordonné.” Cordier, *La famille sainte*, 632. On the subject of care and education of children as holy duties of parents, see Flandrin, “Reproduction and Sexual Life,” 174-180.

Family and Household Threats

Although servants are rarely mentioned in the records of the Propagation, the few examples that remain attest to the significance of servant-master relations, and the implications of personal religious beliefs upon a family unit. In an entry made on 12 March 1679, Montpellier propagandists noted the conversion of a daughter of a servant: “Mr. Beros has been given charge of writing to Bishop of Usez about taking care of the conversion of the daughter of François Angla, stableman of Mr. de Saussan....”²⁶⁷ In a similar case in Lyon, Mr. Bachelard referred his female servant to the Propagation.²⁶⁸ As much as servants could put the souls of members of a household at risk, heretics could lead their servants astray. In Lyon, propagandists discussed the importance of keeping tabs on Catholic servants who were part of Protestant homes: “Ecclesiastics are requested to inform all of the confessors of their knowledge to urge Catholic servants not to serve in heretical homes.”²⁶⁹ Years later, they reminded confessors of the two parishes St. Nisier and St. Pierre to keep servants who remained in such precarious conditions in the Catholic fold.²⁷⁰ A case in point was the condition of a servant of Madame d’Argencour

²⁶⁷ “Mr Beros a esté chargeé d’ecrire a Mr l’eveque d’Usez de prendre soin de la conversion de la fille de François Angla palefrenier de Mr de Saussan....” ADH 48 H 1, 12 March 1679.

²⁶⁸ “Mr. Bachelard est prié de recommander Madlle Vilasse Estienne de Bousson sa servante.” ADR 45 H 12, 15 December 1664.

²⁶⁹ “Messieurs les ecclesiastiques sont priés d’avertir tous les confesseurs de leur congnoissance d’exorter les serviteurs et servantes catholiques de ne point servir dans les maisons des heretiques.” ADR 45 H 12, 19 March 1668.

²⁷⁰ “Monsieur de Seve est prié de représenter a Mr le Sacristain de St. Nisier a Monsr le Curé de St. Pierre et a Messrs les vicaires desdites parioisses quil est tres important qu’ils prennent la peine de visiter quelque sois les serviteurs et servantes catholiques qui demeurent chez les heretiques comme aussy d’a faire en sorte que les confesseurs desdites deux parioisses exhortent fortement dans les confesseurs

of Montpellier as described by propagandists. Since she was not a Huguenot, a female servant did not receive fair treatment by the Protestant family that she served: “There is a servant at the home of Madame d’Argencour who is pressed to become Huguenot and is treated badly because of it.”²⁷¹ The marriage of servants, especially female servants, could resolve the problem of religious differences: “Mr. de Citrane is in charge of speaking to the lawyer Mr. Cabassol about the marriage of his female servant, and he will be abjuring his heresy.”²⁷² In this way, the *compagnies* of the Propagation could prove useful to servants in religiously mixed households, and perhaps even turn some of their masters.

Members of the Propagation offered incentives for servants to convert or stay the course of Catholicism. A thirteen-year-old female servant expressed her desire to convert in Aix-en-provence.²⁷³ It is not clear whether she received support for her conversion by propagandists, but most likely, she initiated an interest in conversion in order to get married. Even more ambiguous is a case in Lyon where a member of the Propagation went to see a female servant who was in need of shoes.²⁷⁴ The personal religious loyalty of servants mattered because they were part of the family and had close interactions with

lesdits serviteurs et servantes a perseverer en la religion catholique apostolique et romaine.” ADR 45 H 12, 30 August 1666.

²⁷¹ “Il y a une servante chez Madame d’Argencour qu’on presse de se faire huguenote et est mal traitée a cause de cela.” ADH 48 H 1, 4 June 1679.

²⁷² “Monsieur de Citrane à esté chargé de parler a Monsieur Cabassol avocat pour le mariage de sa servante et lui sera abjurer son erezie.” ADBR 150 H 1, 28 October 1657.

²⁷³ ADBR 150 H 1, 13 July 1659.

²⁷⁴ “Monsieur Morin est prié voir un fille qui est en service chez Monsr Carret qui a besoin de souliers.” ADR 45 H 12, 22 November 1666.

other members of the household, but religious affiliation really mattered because of their close proximity to the children.

The concern for the religious formation of children compelled propagandists to press for household conversions. The *compagnie* at Montpellier created a financial incentive plan for new converts to the Catholic faith. The first subsection of the “Instructions pour les gratifications que l’on fera aux nouveaux convertis” or “Instructions concerning gratuities that we will make to new converts” describes the amount of *livres* that ought to be given for the conversion of entire families.²⁷⁵ An entire family, according to the rubric, consisted of the *chef de famille* or “head of the family,” namely, the husband and father, his wife, and their children.²⁷⁶ Though financial awards could range from forty to sixty *livres* for converted families, the total sum could not exceed a hundred *livres*. Like marriage incentives given to young women at Montpellier, propagandists recognized that their offer could be perceived as a bribe and therefore result in conversions solely enticed by the reception of gifts. Propagandists desired to curtail the abuse of individuals and insincere religious conversions simply based on the desire for money. In the third subsection, propagandists state that they do not wish for hasty conversions by individuals who may have been driven by the Propagation’s gifts. In order to curb and decrease the number of relapsed converts, propagandists opted for family conversions, which required a greater level of commitment: “...it seems that the most assured precaution which we can take to prevent this abuse is the conversion of

²⁷⁵ ADH 48 H 1, “Instructions pour les gratifications que l’on fera aux nouveaux convertis.”

²⁷⁶ ADH 48 H 1, “Instructions pour les gratifications.”

whole families.”²⁷⁷ Furthermore, family conversions gave propagandists the assurance that children would be raised in the safety of a Catholic environment.

The deliberation records of the assemblies of the *compagnie* of the Propagation at Grenoble emphasized the ongoing and impending dangers that newly converted boys and girls faced in the form of heretical resistance. The *compagnie* at Grenoble fiercely embraced the drive towards Protestantism’s eradication in France. Right from the start, the assembly members expected and steadied themselves for an aggressive conversion campaign. Looking toward the meetings of the Council of Trent as models, assembly members realized their predicament of their predecessors in their own time and space: “Trent has discussed the expected threats...”²⁷⁸ The threat posed by heretics necessitated, as the assembly argues, provisions and refuge for girls desiring to convert to Catholicism. The example of Margueritte Callon is given. Though the deliberations do not convey why she required protection, they do state that she was a *nouvelle catholique* who had to take refuge in the house of orphans in Grenoble.²⁷⁹ During November’s meeting in 1647, the assembly members expressed the dire need to protect those who had converted to the faith.²⁸⁰ At the same time, they relayed an urgency to protect the public from heretics.²⁸¹ In order to secure as many conversions as possible, the propagandists of

²⁷⁷ “...il semble que la precaution la plus assurée que l’on puisse prendre pour prevenir cet abus est la conversion des familles entieres.” ADH 48 H 1, “Instructions pour les gratifications.”

²⁷⁸ “Trent à esté deliberé qu’attendu les menaces....” ADI 26 H 101, 16 March 1647.

²⁷⁹ ADI 26 H 101, 16 March 1647.

²⁸⁰ ADI 26 H 101, 22 November 1647.

²⁸¹ ADI 26 H 101, 16 March 1647.

Grenoble investigated and invested in whole families. In so doing, this *compagnie* of the Propagation gained the most, in terms of conversions, for their efforts.

Two years after the establishment of the Propagation at Grenoble, the members took on the practical challenges that came with running an institution. The assemblies addressed the logistics of providing education for *nouvelles catholiques* in the houses.²⁸² Propagandists reported that there was *une homme capable* or “a suitable man” for teaching, and Madame de Revel wrote a letter to find this instructor for the children. In addition, the *compagnie* recognized a need to separate the girls from the boys.²⁸³ In Grenoble, it was decided that women religious would teach young girls.²⁸⁴ There was a great financial burden in accepting and housing *nouvelles catholiques*, but the *compagnie* was able to secure a place at the house of the Soeurs de Sainte Gloire.²⁸⁵ The space was important, according to deliberating members, as children needed a separate place to sleep and learn.²⁸⁶ The house took in mostly orphaned children, and the *compagnie* worked to find financial aid for children who promised to abjure heresy and convert to Catholicism.²⁸⁷ During their meetings, the members discussed individual cases and proposed giving money to promising converts: “It has been resolved that we will discuss

²⁸² ADI 26 H 101, 4 June 1649.

²⁸³ ADI 26 H 101, 4 June 1649.

²⁸⁴ “Dames Relligieuses [sic].” ADI 26 H 101, 4 June 1649.

²⁸⁵ ADI 26 H 101, 23 July 1649.

²⁸⁶ ADI 26 H 101, 23 July 1649.

²⁸⁷ ADI 26 H 101, 4 June and 23 July 1649.

at another time giving two *écus* to a Huguenot girl who promises to become Catholic.”²⁸⁸ The deliberations also show solicitations for financial aid. In 1650, through the efforts of Revel, the *compagnie* at Grenoble received 1,500 *livres* from the state.²⁸⁹ In addition to the king’s help, the *compagnie* turned to the Church. The propagandists mainly wrote letters to prominent locals in order to ask for financial contributions. This included the bishops of the region: “Mr. Roux is in charge of informing the bishops of the province to get some charity.”²⁹⁰

In the first fifteen years of the existence of the Propagation at Grenoble, it made headway in establishing itself as a formidable enemy of heresy. By the end of this period, the *compagnie* and house of the Propagation had been running for a few years, having raised the resources to become a powerful force in Grenoble. It gathered and kept copious records about individuals and families. Surveillance of townspeople and residents of nearby places paid off immensely for Grenoble’s *compagnie*. Propagandists found a place of refuge and instruction for those seeking conversion to Catholicism, and they received support from local and state authorities. The *compagnie* also arranged for individual girls to find safe haven at the house and opportunities to marry. It continued their work in the town and achieved greater and more frequent success. During this time, Grenoble could note plenty of abjurations and thus, plenty of support and success.

²⁸⁸ “Il a esté resolu qu’on delibera une autre fois sur la proposition de donner 2 ecus a une fille huguenotte qui promet de se faire catholique.” ADI 26 H 101, 6 March 1650.

²⁸⁹ ADI 26 H 101, 28 June 1650.

²⁹⁰ “Monsieur Roux se charge decrire a Monsieurs les Eveques de la province pour avoir quelques charites.” ADI 26 H 101, 4 June 1651.

Perhaps the publication of the *Journal des Conversions* raised the curiosity and interest of locals who sought to contribute their money to what seemed a worthy and effective institution.²⁹¹

In 1661, the *compagnie* of the Propagation at Grenoble published a summary of their activities in order to bolster their reputation and validate their mission to support Protestants seeking abjuration from heresy. The document shows that the *compagnie* regarded the Protestant milieu as a direct threat to society's well-being. During the holy jubilee year, it proclaimed to strengthen the Church by two means: extirpate the heresy of Protestantism among them and destroy the Ottomans on the eastern borders of Europe.²⁹² The propagandists took the former goal of the Church as its own agenda in an effort to receive indulgences given the jubilee year of religious celebration. The publication is broken up into monthly chapters, and conversion stories highlight each month. The report presents a favorable outlook on the progress of the *compagnie* and praises its importance in aiding the conversions of Protestants in Grenoble.²⁹³ The document lists several different cases of domestic struggles that centered on religious identity. It reveals a significant aspect about the strategies against Protestantism, namely, conversion of whole families.

²⁹¹ *Journal des conversions qui ont été faites, et des graces dont Dieu a favorisé la Compagnie de la Propagation établie à Grenoble, durant le cours de l'année mil six cens soixante-un* (s.l., 1661), 1-20.

²⁹² "Cette année en laquelle la Sainte Eglise a donné aux Fielles un Jubilé universel, pour obtenir des graces du Ciel pour l'extirpation de l'Herésie, et la destruction de la puissance Ottomane...." *Journal des conversions*, 1.

²⁹³ *Journal des conversions*, 18.

The recognition that family mattered in the business of conversion is emphasized throughout the report. In its summary for “February,” propagandists noted the conversion of several families. A notable case is that of Sieur Bertrand Perol, a civil servant of Orange. The *compagnie* report describes Perol as sixty years old and a recent convert to the faith on 10 February 1661. His wife, one of his sons, and two of his daughters had converted the preceding year.²⁹⁴ It went the other way for Sieur David Bayle. According to the Propagation, he abjured from heresy and converted to Catholicism only after carefully researching the truths of the Church.²⁹⁵ Upon his conversion, Bayle became an active supporter of the *compagnie* and convinced his wife, six of his sons and one of his daughters to convert as well.²⁹⁶ Conversion of individuals, therefore, had an impact on families.

The Propagation recognized potential families for conversion as well as successful stories of religious conversion. An entry for February 1, 1659 states that the propagandists considered a man, referred to only as a “gentleman,” for financial aid in exchange for Catholic conversion: “Recall the matter regarding a gentleman, his wife, and five children who would like to convert. It has been deliberated that we will offer him the services and aid of the society, and in addition, take in one son and one

²⁹⁴ *Journal des conversions*, 2.

²⁹⁵ *Journal des conversions*, 7.

²⁹⁶ *Journal des conversions*, 7.

daughter.”²⁹⁷ In August of the same year, the assembly began to section off parts of the deliberation record for only accounting the “abjurations.”²⁹⁸ One entry notes Sieur Bourbaisse de Condourcet and the positive effect he had on those around him. He converted his wife and eight or ten other families, and even his father-in-law.²⁹⁹ The conversion of individuals had long-ranging effects that often resulted in the conversion of family members or in the case of Condourcet, entire families. *Compagnie* members such as Madame de Revel kept watch, monitored progress, and reported on the status of families.³⁰⁰ The records list a number of families making abjurations. For example, in the entry for March 2, 1667, the assembly members wrote that a family whose abjuration from Protestantism continued to remain strong.³⁰¹ A few months later, propagandists followed up on a family in Geneva who abjured from heresy.³⁰² Familial conversion provided a greater yield of new converts. Propagandists often noted such conversions along with the number of individuals who abjured the Protestant faith. In the case of one family, propagandists succeeded in converting the seven members of a family.³⁰³ The *compagnie* discussed and remarked on the families in need of its aid. After proposing a

²⁹⁷ “Sur ce qui a esté remonstré qu’un gentilhomme sa femme et cinq enfans se vouloient convertir. Il a esté deliberé qu’on luy offrira de la part de la compagnie de la servir et secourir et mesmes de retirer un fils [sic] et une fille.” ADI 26 H 102, 1 February 1659.

²⁹⁸ ADI 26 H 102, 23 August 1659.

²⁹⁹ “...et plus de huict ou dix familles vont le suivre... son beaupere est aussy converty a la foy catholique.” ADI 26 H 102, 23 August 1659.

³⁰⁰ ADI 26 H 102, 16 June 1665.

³⁰¹ ADI 26 H 102, 2 March 1667.

³⁰² ADI 26 H 102, 14 May 1667.

³⁰³ ADI 26 H 102, 22 June 1668.

family's desire to convert and discussing ways to aid its needs, often referred to as "protection," assembly members agreed to offer the services and resources of the Propagation to the family: "It has been proposed that there is a family from Lauson that made a profession to Protestantism that desires to make abjuration..... It has been decided that the *compagnie* will take this family under its protection."³⁰⁴ The drive of the *compagnie* to convert families may be evident in its numbers, and the work of the Propagation was rewarded by the abjuration of many families. More specifically, the *compagnie* attributed the root of the ongoing problem of the spread of Protestantism to improper education of children by their parents. In January of 1661, confraternity members as well as those of the community helped make living arrangements for a group of young boys to live away from home.³⁰⁵ This group converted to Catholicism the year before and the *compagnie* feared their relapse when "in the hands of their parents."³⁰⁶

Combating Dangerous Parenting

Upon first glance, the conversion of fathers appears as the paramount goal for the Propagation. Indeed, it placed great importance on converting and retaining Catholic heads of households. When it came to the conversion of mothers to Catholicism, however, the Propagation displayed an urgency to take swift and immediate action.

³⁰⁴ "A este propose quil y a une famille de de [sic] Lauson qui desire faict profession de la Religion Prétendue Réformee qui desire de faire abjuration.... A esté aresté que la compagnie prendra ceste famille sous sa protection." ADI 26 H 102, 28 August 1668.

³⁰⁵ It is not certain whether the Propagation seized the boys though they were most likely coerced by incentives rather than taken by kidnapping since they were not *enlevés* according to documentation.

³⁰⁶ "...dans les mains de leurs parens..." *Journal des conversions*, 1.

Although no edict specifically attests to the critical nature of the education and religious affiliation of mothers, the deliberation records of the Propagation substantiate their significance. In the deliberations of the assemblies at Grenoble, the members noted that reformed mothers could be a force of good for their children: “Jean Galliard. After, the daughter of the mother who recently presented herself to convert will have made her declaration. We will provide the means for placing her most reasonably that it could be between now and Easter.”³⁰⁷ In July of 1676, the *compagnie* regarded a royal edict on the instruction of children: “A girl should be raised and instructed according to the religion of her father until the age of twelve following the form of the edicts of his majesty.”³⁰⁸ The dangers posed by mothers to their children also appear in the records: “Mr. Hermel is asked, with Mr. Cotton, they are asked to provide the young boy Burguet enter into apprenticeship in painting instead because of the danger at his mother’s home.”³⁰⁹ The right formation of children, especially girls, remained solely in the hands of women, and most Huguenot women could not be trusted to care for their children.

In order to make a lasting social imprint, propagandists strove to isolate and separate Huguenot families from one another, children from their parents, and even more specifically, mothers from their daughters. This was most apparent with the actions of

³⁰⁷ “Jean Galliard. Après que la fille de la mere qui s’est nouvellement présentée pour se convertir aura fait sa declaration on pourvoira aux moyens de la placer le plus convenablement quil se pourra entre i[c]y et pasques.” ADI 26 H 104, 24 January 1676.

³⁰⁸ “Laquelle a la forme des edits de sa majesté doit estre elevés et instruite a la religion de son pere, jusques al’aage de douze ans.” ADI 26 H 104, 31 July 1676.

³⁰⁹ “Monsieur Hermel est prié avec Monsieur Cotton sont priéz de procurer que le petit Burguet entre en apprentissage de pintre au plutot a cause du peril ou il est chez sa mere.” ADR 45 H 12, 8 February 1666. “Pintre” has been understood as *peinture*.

those at the *compagnie* at Grenoble. Throughout France, the *compagnies* of the Propagation adopted the *Commencement, institution, regles, et status*, which outlined ideological and practical goals of the group in Paris, and for the provincial branches that would establish themselves in the near future. In order to avoid any misunderstandings or potential scandals, the Propagation stipulated that women could not be forcibly brought to the houses: “Married women will not be allowed to be received without consent from their husbands, and girls, already being subjects to their mother and father, without knowing their wishes....”³¹⁰ Although the regulations of the institution explicitly state that family members had the option of allowing their wives or female children to convert to Catholicism, the *compagnies* of the Propagation regularly skirted the matter of consent. Deliberation records show that girls entered the house voluntarily and with parental accord, but also by means of urgent placement. The conditions for taking a girl from her parents often included irrational mothers who posed a danger to her own daughter’s body and soul. Highlighting this issue is the disputed reception of two girls into the house of *nouvelles catholiques* shortly after the establishment of the *compagnie* at Paris. The problem centered on whether the girls were *enlevées* or kidnapped. Incorporated in the story is an extract of the judgment of the *Conseil d’Estat* that explains how civil authorities understood what had happened, including the events leading up to the alleged abduction.

³¹⁰ “Les femmes mariées ne pourront estre receuës sans le consentement de leurs maris, et les filles estans encore subiectes à pere et à mere, sans sçavoir leur volonté...” *Commencement, institution, regles, et status*, 169.

The brief description found in this documentary source relates the precarious nature of the institution's work. The report disclaims any illegal activities by describing how the house for *nouvelles catholiques* complied with their statutes and protocol for receiving two girls.³¹¹ Isabelle and Louyse de Framerye were two young girls, ages thirteen and eleven, respectively, from Paris. The propagandists sought the girls to convert them to Catholicism from the Protestant faith. The girls decided that they would convert secretly since they were sure that their mother would disapprove. Not only did their mother condemn their conversion, but according to the details of the report, she violently lashed out at them, physically beating the girls and dragging them by their hair.³¹² The girls wanted to leave their mother on account of such abuses and so Damoiselle Milotet received them into the house. Perhaps these were rebellious children who used the Propagation as a way to be independent of their parents, or the institution exploited the children knowing well that children of this age would be attracted to such freedom. Or perhaps they did not get along with their stepfather, and by extension, their mother who married him. They allegedly sought voluntary entrance into the house, but the girls' family charged the Propagation with kidnapping. Strong opposition to the girls' conversion and the belief that they were kidnapped prompted their stepfather along with his brother to go so far as to aggressively harass Milotet.³¹³ After consideration of the facts, such as the allegation that "their mother tormented them on account of religion,"

³¹¹ *Commencement, institution, regles*, 185-188.

³¹² *Commencement, institution, regles*, 188.

³¹³ *Commencement, institution, regles*, 191.

the Council decided that the house and its associated members acted within the limits and rights of their constitutions and statutes.³¹⁴

Although propagandists won the judgment against the actions of their institution, the records of the case show that civil authorities cautiously supported how the Propagation obtained conversions. Kidnapping was a serious civil offense and the actions mandated by the Propagation came under study. Legal opinion found that the kidnapping of the girls could be justified and the judgment gave instructive advice for the bailiff to tread carefully between the lines of social regulation and outright abduction.³¹⁵ The Framerye case established that motherly abuse could provide ample reason for the removal of children from their homes.³¹⁶ Along this train of thought, therefore, the bailiff who acted on behalf of the Propagation did not wrong the girls but instead rescued them from harm. The judgment in favor of the Propagation set a precedent and tentative boundaries in regard to the methods of persuasion for the conversion of girls. As such *compagnies* of the Propagation received royal support and a legal judgment on its side albeit with an ambiguous order for restraint, considering the final judgment, when it came to child abduction:

³¹⁴ "...leur mere les tourmentoit pour raison de la Religion." *Commencement, institution, regles*, 191-192.

³¹⁵ *Commencement, institution, regles*, 191.

³¹⁶ For a nineteenth-century case on a mother reporting her daughter of kidnapping, see Sylvia Schafer, "Between Paternal Right and the Dangerous Mother: Reading Parental Responsibility in Nineteenth-Century French Civil Justice," *Journal of Family History* 23, no. 2 (April 1998): 173-189. There are similarities in terms of how unsuccessful bad mothers were in civil court. For Schafer's Madame E and the mother of the two Framerye girls, their questionable mothering disallowed kidnapping charges to be made against their daughters' alleged assailants.

This having come to the attention of the king and his council, his majesty has given the following judgment in favor of the Congregation and of this holy institute to stop new converts to the faith who will be received there by order of the Congregation from being kidnapped only and they are able to enjoy, without restraint, the freedom of conscience, which is allowed in this kingdom.³¹⁷

Even with qualifications, the judgment demonstrated to religiously zealous propagandists that more than ever, France needed an institution such as the Propagation during what they perceived as a social crisis of faith. This case of the alleged kidnapping of two girls demonstrates how bad parenting, especially mothering, could justify the removal of children from their homes. Did propagandists simply fabricate bad Huguenot mothers as a way to take children, or did they evaluate such women based on actual statements given by their children? Or perhaps they imagined the protests from mothers, who understandably objected to the “kidnapping” of their children, as proof of an abusive female Huguenot. For propagandists, objection to Catholic conversion was not in the best interest of children. In other words, a truly fit mother would allow her children to pursue the righteous path. Subsequent incidents that followed the case of the Fraymerye children followed a similar pattern of blaming the Huguenot mother when Propagandists took their children.

On March 9, 1669, the *compagnie* of the Propagation at Grenoble noted that a young girl who had resided in the house of *nouvelles catholiques* had to be taken from

³¹⁷ “...ce qui estant venu à la cognoissance du Roy et de son Conseil, sa Majesté auroit donné le suivant Arrest en faveur de la Congregation, et de ce saint Institut, pour empescher qu’à l’advenir les nouveaux convertis à la foy qui y seront receus par l’ordre de la Congregation ne soient enlevés, et qu’ils y puissent jouir librement de la liberté de conscience, qui est permise en ce Royaume.” *Commencement, institution, regles*, 185.

her mother because the daughter was “in danger of reverting back to sin.”³¹⁸ This example of the Propagation’s work illustrates its mission and capacity to carry out its goals. It sought to convert Protestants and keep them in good stead. In addition to illustrating the power and authority that the institution wielded, the case exemplifies a gendered discourse that peppers entries in deliberation records, which is to say that the records often reported that unfit and corrupt mothers threatened the souls and bodies of young girls. Marie de Landreville of Grenoble experienced the same sorts of obstacles in the form of parental resistance to her conversion process. Having endured both “caresses and threats” by her parents during their visits to her at the house of *nouvelles catholiques*, Landreville eventually succeeded in receiving absolution from heresy owing to the intervention of the *compagnie*.³¹⁹

The story of Marie de Landreville stands apart from the other conversion reports simply because it is lengthier and focused on details. According to propagandists, her parents tried to dissuade their daughter from converting to Catholicism. The *compagnie* exalts Landreville’s conversion process and the manner in which she abjured heresy. The report describes Landreville as an extraordinary young woman of fifteen years who elected to join the house of *nouvelles catholiques* despite interference from her parents. Her sincere desire to embrace the Catholic religion impressed members of the Chambre de l’Edict such that they took action against her mother.³²⁰ Landreville’s mother

³¹⁸ “...en peril de retourner au pesche....” ADI 26 H 103, 9 March 1669.

³¹⁹ “...caresses et menaces de ses pere et mere....” *Journal des conversions*, 10.

³²⁰ *Journal des conversions*, 10.

displayed such relentless opposition to her daughter's abjuration that members of the Chambre decided to imprison her in order to contain her *l'esprit farouche* or "ferocious nature," the same rhetoric missionaries used to describe idolatrous indigenous women.³²¹ Only by physically separating mother and daughter could Landreville remain peacefully in the house and continue her conversion process to Catholicism.

The corruption of children by their heretical mothers became a regular concern in families made up of Catholic fathers and Huguenot mothers. Reports and comments by propagandists reveal that these mixed marriages alarmed them because of the potential for heretical ideas penetrating the vulnerable minds of children. In the deliberation records of the *compagnie* at Montpellier, many of the entries refer specifically to the threat that Huguenot mothers posed to their children.

Mixed Marriages and Huguenot Mothers

Early modern religious authorities considered both heresy and idolatry as deceptive religions that enveloped feeble minds. Morality literature that asserted women's propensity for moral and intellectual weakness became the basis for gendering heresy female. Protestant men who possessed the female quality of feeble mindedness, therefore, professed the errant faith, according to Catholics.³²² Early modern portrayals

³²¹ "...et des violence que sa mere continuoit encor à luy faire à leur conspect, l'envoyerent sur le champ en prison, d'où elle n'est pû sortir qu'à la tres-humble supplication de cette fille, qui par ce moyen a entierement captivé l'esprit farouche de sa mere, laquelle a depuis agreé qu'elle demeurast dans lad. Maison des Nouvelles Converties...." *Journal des conversions*, 10.

³²² Natalie Zemon Davis, "City Women and Religious Change" in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 65-95 and 290-296.

of heretical women, however, reveal a fear of female Huguenots as carriers of false ideas. Reminiscent of ferocious indigenous women of New France, propagandists regarded Huguenot wives in France along the lines of this discourse. Inherently the weaker sex, women easily succumbed to corruption. Furthermore, these same women, in their sinful condition, sought to instill wayward behavior in others.

The discourse of women as endangered and dangerous created a standard of the obstinate Huguenot women. On 7 May 1679, the propagandists remarked that a man feared the wrath of his wife who presumably professed the Protestant faith. In order to return to the Catholic Church, the man claimed that he would rather be incarcerated than deal with the repercussions of his angry Protestant wife: “A man named Pages said that he wants to return to the Church, but fearing his wife he asks to be put in prison in order to excuse himself from her...”³²³ The Protestants, therefore, created a topsy-turvy world in which husbands feared abuse by their wives for making decisions for himself. Spouses were not the only ones to fear their Huguenot wives. The propagandists of Montpellier painted fierce women adamant in their erroneous ways, consequently threatening other family members and the society at large.

Article 39 of the royal declaration of 2 February 1669 stated that children who had at least a Catholic father had to be raised in the faith of the paternal parent:

Those children whose fathers are Catholic and the mothers of the Pretended Reformed Religion, and those whose fathers are dead and they died after relapsing [into the Pretended Reformed Religion] will be baptized and raised in the Catholic Church, even though the mothers are of the Pretended Reformed

³²³ “Le nommé Pages dit qu’il veut revenir à l’Eglise, mais craignant sa femme il demande d’être mis en prison pour s’excuser envers elle.” ADH 48 H 1, 7 May 1679.

Religion. Similarly, the children whose fathers are dead, and they shall have died in the said Catholic religion, shall be brought up in the said religion, for which purpose they shall be placed in the hands of their mothers, tutors or other Catholic guardians, at their [the guardians'] request. These shall be expressly forbidden to take said children to temples and to schools of the said Pretended Reformed Religion. In addition, we prohibit (in conformity with the Statute of our Council of State of 24 April 1665) all people to bring up children in the said Pretended Reformed Religion nor induce them to make any declaration of change of religion before the age of fourteen years for males or twelve years for females; and [one must] wait for them to reach said age. We ordain that said children who are born to a father of the aforesaid Pretended Reformed Religion shall remain in the hands of their parents of the said Pretended Reformed Religion; and those who shall be in charge of them [are] obliged to give them a hand, by the usual and customary means.³²⁴

The declaration supported efforts by propagandists to make sure that children were raised Catholic. The religion of a child depended upon the father's religious affiliation, whether he was a Catholic who relapsed into heresy or decidedly converted to Catholicism. As long as the father was Catholic at some point in his life, the article suggests, his children had to be raised Catholic. However, the *compagnie* at Montpellier, which was established in 1679, seemed to be more disturbed than relieved by the royal declaration, which supported the domestic missionary vision of the Propagation. On 28 May 1680, propagandists observed that "Huguenots outnumber Catholics" and feared the corruption

³²⁴ "Que les enfans dont les peres sont Catholiques, et les meres de la Religion P.R. et ceux dont les peres sont morts, et mourront cy-aprés relaps, seront baptisez et eslevez en l'Eglise Catholique, quoy que les meres soient de la Religion P. Reformée; Comme aussi les enfans dont les peres sont decedez, et decederont à l'avenir en ladite Religion Catholique seront eslevez en ladite religion; auquel effet ils seront mis entre les mains de leurs meres, tuteurs ou autres parens catholiques, à leur requisition; Avec defenses tres exprees, de mener lesdits enfans aux temples, ni aus escoles desdits de la Religion P. Reformée. Comme aussi faisons defenses (conformément à l'Arrest de nostre Conseil d'Estat du 24 Avril 1665) à toutes personnes, d'enlever les enfans de ladite Religion P. Reformée, ni les induire, ou leur faire faire aucune declaration de changement de Religion avant l'âge de quatorze ans accomplis pour les masles, et de douze ans accomplis pour les femelles; et en attendant qu'ils ayent atteine ledit âge. Ordonnons, que lesdits enfans nais d'un pere de ladite Religion P.R. demeureront és mains de leurs parens de ladite Religion P. Reformée. Et ceux qui les detiendront, contraints à les tendre, par les voyes ordinaires et accoûtumées." *Declaration du roy portant revocation de celle du 2 avril 1666 et reglement des choses qui doivent estre observeés pour le regard des affaires de la Religion pretenduë reformée.*

of the Catholics who lived among a growing population of heretics.³²⁵ On 12 June 1680, the general Assembly of the Clergy of France discussed the growing Huguenot problem and the utility of propagandists at Montpellier. In these memoirs, Article II discusses an increase of “the newly corrupted” due to mixed marriages.³²⁶ The article proposes that measures supported by the king should be made in order to combat marriages with heretics: “...it will be necessary to obtain from his Majesty prohibitions for the ministers to marry the newly corrupted....”³²⁷ The Propagandists keenly embraced the cause to remedy situations in which children were susceptible to their Huguenot mothers. With regulations about the raising of children according to the religion of the father and the realization of increased religious falsification via marriage, propagandists focused their energies on monitoring children whose mothers and grandmothers were Huguenot. The deliberation records reveal that propagandists distrusted Huguenot women, whom they did not trust to look after their children’s salvation let alone abide by the law. Obstinate in their heresy, the propagandists viewed Huguenot mothers and grandmothers as disorderly women.

The propagandists of Montpellier operated much like the other *compagnies* in the sense that they sought familial conversions, endeavored to protect children and women from heresy, and financially supported marriages of newly converted girls. In their royal

³²⁵ “...les huguenots sont en plus grand nombre que les catholiques.” ADH 48 H 1, 28 May 1680.

³²⁶ “Memoires a nosseigneurs de l’assemblée generale du clergé de france pour l’avantage de la religion catholique envoyez par la congregation de la propagation de la foy etablie par lettres patentes de sa Mrs en la ville de Montpellier,” ADH 48 H 1, 12 June 1680.

³²⁷ “...il seroit necessaire d’obtenir de sa Majesté qu’il fut fait defenses aux ministres d’epouser les nouveaux pervertis...” ADH 48 H 1, 12 June 1680.

letters of patent, propagandists stated that a large number of heretics lived in the diocese of Montpellier and the *compagnie* continued to make progress in the region.³²⁸ Added to this familiar discourse on the Huguenot threat was the recognition that the poor in town needed attention. The deliberation records of the *compagnie* at Montpellier date from 31 January 1679 to 3 September 1681. Fifty-one years of the activities of the propagandists remain unaccounted for to date. The *compagnie* re-established itself in 1752 and there is a second set of entries that date from 21 May 1752 to 24 October 1793.³²⁹ Although propagandists of Montpellier resembled the other *compagnies* in terms of their motivations and operation directives, their intense focus on Huguenot maternal figures differentiates them from the others.

Immediately after its inception, propagandists acted on behalf of children due to their proximity to female parents. On 15 February 1679, during the *compagnie*'s second assembly meeting, propagandists noted that a twelve-year-old child was taken from her mother and relocated to a place in order to allow him to convert to Catholicism in *les bons sentimens* or "good conscience."³³⁰ They proposed that the boy remain at the new place until he turned fourteen. Although his parents were recognized as Catholics, propagandists took the child declaring that "he has been separated from the proximity of

³²⁸ "Lettres patentes du Roy portant établissements d'une congregation de l'exaltation Ste. Croix en la ville de Montpellier pour la propagation de la foy du mois de septembre 1679" in ADH 48 H 1.

³²⁹ The *compagnie* became secularized in 1792. Annette Philippe, Isabelle Bonnot, and Liberto Valls, *Série H: Clergé Régulier*, vol. 1 (Conseil Général de l'Hérault Archives Départementales, 1994), 151.

³³⁰ ADH 48 H 1, 15 February 1679.

his mother.”³³¹ The propagandists saw something dangerous in the mother, though they do not directly state what compelled them to take such drastic action on behalf of this particular child. In the same meeting, propagandists reported that four children who wanted to become Catholic required the aid of the *compagnie*. These children, one boy and three girls, came from a Huguenot family, but their father, who was a Huguenot, died and their mother wished to convert to Catholicism. Even so, the mother stayed somewhere else, separated from her four children. A month later, a propagandist reported on a girl who told them how dangerous her mother was: “...her father has been Catholic since he professed [the religion], and it is her mother who corrupts her. She has a sister who is six or seven years old who will have to be looked after in order to prevent her from going morally astray when she comes of age.”³³² These early deliberation records of the *compagnie* at Montpellier show that propagandists expressed anxiety over the fate of children in what they believed to be precarious household environments. Desiring to enforce the law and make sure that children “were raised in the Catholic religion that their father professes,” propagandists scrutinized Huguenot mothers.³³³

Although a household of Huguenot parents together posed a grave threat to their own children, propagandists singled out mothers as the more serious danger in any given family. Several places in the deliberation records describe children endangered by their

³³¹ “...il y auroit a faire pour le tirer d’aupres de sa mere...” ADH 48 H 1, 15 February 1679.

³³² “...son pere a esté catholique tant qu’il a recu et que c’est sa mere qui la pervertie, elle a une soeur de six a sept ans sur laquele il faudra avoir loeil pour empecher qu’elle ne soit pervertie quand elle sera en âge.” ADH 48 H 1, 25 March 1679.

³³³ “...fussent elevées a la religion catholique que leur pere professe...” ADH 48 H 1, 28 May 1680.

own mothers. As expected, the propagandists often cited the well-being of the child as the reason of their involvement.³³⁴ In a brief entry, propagandists remarked that a Catholic man allowed his children to be Protestant and the reason for this, they argue, is simply that “his wife is Huguenot.”³³⁵ Defying the law and their husbands, Huguenot females not only resisted conversion to Catholicism but often took their children with them on their errant path. Though the declarations of April 1666 and February 1669 stated that the children had to follow the religion of their fathers, propagandists found situations in which they suspected or confirmed Huguenot mothers neglecting to follow the rules. One notable case states that Mr. Verchand made his abjuration from the Huguenot religion but could not control the actions of his wife in deciding her fate and that of their daughter’s: “...his wife nevertheless remains in the aforesaid religion taking one of their daughter’s into sin...”³³⁶ Although the law stated otherwise, children seemed to follow the religion of their mothers. The records reveal a stereotype that Huguenot mothers took their children to temple with them in spite of restrictions against that very act.³³⁷

In the same deliberation entry regarding Pages and his overbearing wife, a female child by the name of Jeanne had to deal with her menacing heretical mother. Daughter of Sieur Cavalier, a Huguenot, Jeanne was allowed to be baptized in the Catholic Church

³³⁴ ADH 48 H 1, 3 and 17 November 1679, and 23 July 1680.

³³⁵ “...sa femme est huguenote.” ADH 48 H 1, 22 May 1679.

³³⁶ “...sa femme neantmoins qui a resté dans lad’ religion mene avec elle au presche une de ses filles...” ADH 48 H 1, 8 September 1680.

³³⁷ ADH 48 H 1, 22 January 1681 and 20 August 1681.

around the age of fifteen.³³⁸ Propagandists reported that she attended church with diligence. Described as a young girl on her way to becoming a devout Catholic, the Propagation proposed to intervene and change her living situation on account of the corrupting influence of “the wife of the aforementioned Cavalier.”³³⁹ This woman may or may not have been Jeanne’s natural mother. Nevertheless, as the mother figure of Jeanne, Cavalier’s wife posed a danger to her by resisting Jeanne’s efforts to become Catholic. Propagandists monitored female guardians of children, whether they were natural mothers or not, and took measures to convert them.³⁴⁰

Huguenot Grandmothers, Widows and Single Women

In addition to the mothers, propagandists targeted grandmothers, widows, and single women as grave threats to the children whom they raised. They worried at great length about grandmothers who sometimes took part in raising their grandchildren, and in any case, caused problems for the conversion of children whom propagandists sought to turn. Huguenot grandmothers caring for children generated social anxiety because of

³³⁸ ADH 48 H 1, 7 May 1679.

³³⁹ “...la femme dud’ Cavalier...” ADH 48 H 1, 7 May 1679.

³⁴⁰ In early modern adoption records, women had to agree to feed and care for their adoptive children. This meant providing for their immediate needs as well as setting them up for their future at least by teaching them a trade and educating them in the Catholic religion. Kristin E. Gager, “Women, Adoption, and Family Life in Early Modern Paris,” *Journal of Family History* 22, no. 1 (January 1997): 5-25.

their religious leanings, but such fears became elevated due to cultural biases against old women and their association with witchcraft.³⁴¹

Bodin published his *De la démonomanie des sorciers* or *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* in 1580, and the work found immediate publishing success with at least twenty-three editions, and translations into German, Italian and Latin.³⁴² Popular during the height of the witch craze in western Europe, Bodin offered a guide to identifying the nefarious activities of witches, and he proposed legal measures of punishment.³⁴³ He wrote the work in order that people be able to tell the good from the bad, or “...tell the

³⁴¹ Lyndal Roper takes into account demographic and economic circumstances that incubated terror in the form the witch craze in baroque Germany. A serious fear for early modern people was that former mothers, often entrusted with children in old age, did the opposite of what was traditionally expected of them as woman and mother. See *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004). See also Marja van Tilburg, “Tracing Sexual Identities in ‘Old Age’: Gender and Seniority in Advice Literature of the Early-modern and Modern Periods,” *Journal of Family History* 34, no. 4 (October 2009): 369-386. Taking the general observation that people profane others in order to legitimate and uphold their beliefs, Keith Thomas and Charles Zika propose that belief in the demonic cannot be regarded as the result of unreason. In his *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), Thomas examines astrology, witchcraft, magical healing, divination, ancient prophecies, ghosts, and fairies as part of systems of belief for intellectual and practical ends: “Religion, astrology and magic all purported to help men with their daily problems by teaching them how to avoid misfortune and how to account for it when it struck. To stress this point is not to trivialize religion or to reduce it to a mere system of magic.... But it remains true that at the popular level magic’s role was much more limited than that of religion” (636). In his study on the transition from magic to science, he finds commonality in how both areas challenged religious authorities. Zika turns to visual evidence in *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003). He contends that images of witchcraft have been scarcely consulted in understanding the human experience of early modern Europeans. The images of witches worked within a framework of gender and sexuality, namely, gender disordered. They served as ways to advertise the undisciplined and uncontrolled aspects of female sexuality, but they also functioned as a way to entertain fantasies of unbridled passion. In addition, connections between witchcraft and cannibalism, which Europeans associated with indigenous peoples of the New World, developed the early modern notions of savagery on both sides of the Atlantic.

³⁴² Jonathan L. Pearl, introduction to *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995).

³⁴³ In his usual style, Bodin first defines his understanding of the concept at hand, in this case, a witch: “...one who knowingly tries to accomplish something by diabolical means.” He devotes the rest of his work to explicating the definition. He cites ancient philosophers, biblical texts, theological works, histories and accounts of accused witches, *Malleus maleficarum*, and legal renderings. Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, trans. Randy A. Scott (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995), bk.1, chap. 1, 45.

children of God from witches.”³⁴⁴ Bodin explains that idolatry in the New World was the result of Satan’s deception rampant in that part of the world. According to Bodin, Satan tricked the foolish into worshipping idolatry through what appeared to be God’s work in female virgins.³⁴⁵ Bodin raises the point that errant ways need to be curtailed at least for the sake of posterity since erring men and women impressed their diabolical ways upon their children.³⁴⁶ A lack of sexual regulation in older and single women, in the minds of moralists, could only lead to depravity in the souls of the children. Legal and moral authorities therefore regarded with suspicion women without husbands, as female-centered households symbolized instability in the domestic and social realms.³⁴⁷ Fear of the spread of Protestantism in tandem with a distrust of female authority in a society favoring patriarchal households resulted in the Propagation stepping in for the sake of children.

The *compagnie* took away two children who appear to have been raised by their Huguenot grandmother. Propagandists helped the girl receive baptism at Nîmes and they

³⁴⁴ Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, trans. Randy A. Scott (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995), bk.1, chap. 3, 63.

³⁴⁵ In his discussion about how to differentiate between good and evil spirits, Bodin refers to idolatry in the New World, Book 1.3, 63.

³⁴⁶ Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, bk.1, chap. 1, 50. See *Culture populaire* in which Muchembled contends that reformers and persecutors of witches targeted women, usually older, poor, and widowed in rural areas in their overarching effort to establish an elite culture and thereby quash rural areas that acculturated religion at the end of the sixteenth century. These women, for pragmatic reasons, had to be reformed: “. . . these old women, or those who resembled them, were the principal agents of the transmission of superstitions, of magical beliefs. . . . They diffused the popular culture. . . .” For See pp. 329-330, and for the quote, 334.

³⁴⁷ Notwithstanding the obstacles of gendered ideologies, single female parents found success in securing guardianship over their children by relying on circumvention of the courts through negotiation and strategies involving other family members. Corley, “Preindustrial ‘Single-Parent’ Families.”

were in the process of finding work for the thirteen-year-old boy as a *laquais* or footman in order to pry them away from their grandmother.³⁴⁸ In the Montpellier records, there are several cases where children ended up in the hands of their grandmothers. For example, Claire Charlotte lived with her grandmother after her father passed away.³⁴⁹

Therefore, the Propagation decided to intervene for the welfare of the child:

Claire Charlotte, age six, whose Catholic father is dead, runs great risk of becoming Huguenot while at her grandmother's house. There is someone who is offering three *livres* per month to support her in providence. The *compagnie* has deliberated on giving another three *livres* to pay for her entire lodging care.³⁵⁰

Propagandists sought to remove children living with their grandmothers with great urgency, whether a child was Catholic or Huguenot. In one case, a grandmother helped orchestrate the escape of her granddaughter who was under the watch of propagandists. A thirteen-year-old girl named Anne Ferriere and her father converted to Catholicism and kept by Madame de Poussan who was the wife of a goat herder. Propagandists reported that the girl disappeared somehow and suspected that her grandmother, a Huguenot, had something to do with her sudden departure. They took seriously this oversight on their part and proposed finding the goat herder's wife and threaten imprisonment if she withheld any information pertaining to the disappearance of the granddaughter.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ ADH 48 H 1, 15 February 1679.

³⁴⁹ ADH 48 H 1, 4 June 1679.

³⁵⁰ "Claire Charlotte agée six ans dont le pere est mort catholique court grand risque d'estre huguenote estant chez sa grandmere qui l'est. Il y a une persone qui offre trois livres par mois pour l'entretenir dans la providence, la compagnie a deliberé de luy donner autres 3 livres pour payer entierement sa pension dans la providence." ADH 48 H 1, 4 June 1679.

³⁵¹ ADH 48 H 1, 27 February 1680.

Propagandists considered the possibility of involvement by grandmothers, acknowledging Huguenot grandmothers as impediments to conversion. This was assessed in a report on the progress of the Propagation at Montpellier to the Assembly of the Clergy in 1680. In Article XI of the “Memoires a nosseigneurs,” propagandists wrote that a young girl in Montpellier had a grandmother posed a danger to her. According to an account by religious authorities, her story is as follows:

It has come to pass in the city of Montpellier that a young girl of an honest family age eleven and twenty days named Pasturel whose Huguenot father has passed, has declared, with eagerness and extraordinary zeal, that she would like be Catholic. She asks that she be able to remain at the home of her paternal uncle who is Catholic. She has been taken by force from her Huguenot grandmother notwithstanding the tears and cries of this poor child who has touched deeply all the Catholics of this city.³⁵²

The emotional heartache caused by the Propagation notwithstanding, propagandists placed blame on the grandmother whose obstinacy forced the removal of her granddaughter. As such, the article continues by adding that children who display a strong desire to convert should be allowed to do so: “If this manner of behaving was known to his Majesty we should hope that he will not refuse a supporting declaration only when children, some of them young, are indicating they ardently desire to convert.”³⁵³

³⁵² “Il est arrivé ces jour passes dans la ville de Montpellier qu’une jeune fille d’honneste famille agée de onze ans et vingt jour nommée Pasturel dont le pere est mort de la RPR, ayant déclaré qu’elle vouloit estre catholique qvec un impressement et un zele extraordinaire et demandant pouvoir demeurer dans la maison de son oncle paternel qui est catholique, elle a esté emmenée par force chez sa grand-mere huguenote nonobstant ses pleurs et les cris de ce pauvre enfant qui ont touché sensiblement tous les catholiques de cette ville.” ADH 48 H 1, 12 June 1680.

³⁵³ “Si cette maniere d’agir estoit connue a sa Majesté on pourroit esperer qu’elle ne refuseroit pas une declaration portant que lors que les enfans quelques jeunes au’il soient temoigneroient desirer ardemment de se convertir.” ADH 48 H 1, 12 June 1680.

The archetype of the Huguenot mother created anxiety among propagandists such that single mothers could not be trusted to care for their children by themselves. In early modern society and culture, widowed women could not assume the role of patriarch, though they did have to manage the household. Early modern widows transgressed gender boundaries as they became the sole controller of property and children of the household.³⁵⁴ For the most part, however, household units remained patriarchal and as such, extended male family members and other kinship ties resulted in both helpful and problematic interjections for women.³⁵⁵ Still, without a husband, widowed women had the power to make certain household decisions on their own. As such, propagandists could not rely upon the conversion of women as a result of familial pressure. If not incentive in the way of financial assistance, propagandists found other means to win over new converts. In the case of the widow, it was the threat of removing her daughter: “Mr. de Ratte is in charge of speaking to the widow Colas who has relapsed in order to try and bring her back [to the Catholic faith] and if she refuses, he will inform Mr. de Montpellier

³⁵⁴ In managing the household, widows struggled with traditional notions about female weakness and social expectations of heads of households. Barbara B. Diefendorf, “Widowhood and Remarriage in Sixteenth-Century Paris,” *Journal of Family History* 7 (Winter 1982): 379-395. Although patriarchy in theory supported model male-dominated households, legal records have shown that some women achieved household independence and even skirted the law in their own cases. On the subject of village culture and the dynamics of discourse, on how women empowered negative discourses of traditionally feminized rituals of laughter and ridicule for their benefit, see John Cashmere, “Sisters Together: Women without Men in Seventeenth-Century French Village Culture,” *Journal of Family History* 21, no. 1 (January 1996): 44-61. On how mothers specifically enjoyed legal success despite obstacles in the form of misogynist discourses of the early modern era, see Christopher Corley, “Preindustrial ‘Single-Parent’ Families: The *Tutelle* in Early Modern Dijon,” *Journal of Family History* 29, no. 4 (October 2004): 351-365 and Gager, “Women, Adoption, and Family Life.”

³⁵⁵ Julie Hardwick, “Widowhood and Patriarchy in Seventeenth Century France,” *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 1 (Autumn 1992): 133-148.

to inflict punishment as a final resort.”³⁵⁶ She told them that she wants to die a Huguenot. Perhaps the propagandists would have been less aggressive in keeping her Catholic had she been childless. The widow Colas had a daughter whom she could corrupt should she be left to her own devices and so the Propagation proposed to help break them apart. They reported that the daughter was Catholic since her father was alive, and has been attending church.³⁵⁷ According to the law, the widow had to let her daughter follow the Catholic faith of the girl’s late father. Given the widow’s admission of relapse, the propagandists planned to take her daughter away from her with the justification that the widow could corrupt her child. They hope to arrange a new “parent” for her at the home of Mr. Sabatier.³⁵⁸ The propagandists planned to speak about removing the girl to the widow Colas’ brother Mr. Moles, who works at the paper mill. They proposed such a hard-lined approach towards this widow because of her status as a single mother. The propagandists realized that the widow did not have much legal say over the matter, but they certainly acknowledged that the mother had influence in shaping the mind of her daughter.

The *compagnie* recognized that widows had power over the direction that their family would take in terms of religion, and so gave them the opportunity to profit from the *compagnie*, which was often generous to those whom they wanted to convert. One

³⁵⁶ “Mr. de Ratte est chargé de parler a la veuve Colas relapse pour tacher de la rammener et si elle refuse il en avertira Mr. de Montpellier a fin de la faire punir.” ADH 48 H 1, 26 February 1679.

³⁵⁷ “Mr de Ratte est aussy prié de parler a une fille de cette veuve qui estoit catholique du vivant de son pere et qui va encore a l’eglise par maniere d’acquit, et luy dira que si elle veut quitter sa mere qui la peut pervertir....” ADH 48 H 1, 26 February 1679.

³⁵⁸ “Mr. Sabatier son parent la receura chez luy.” ADH 48 H 1, 26 February 1679.

widow whose husband was Huguenot asked the *compagnie* at Montpellier for one hundred *écus* for the conversion of her children whose religious allegiance followed that of their father's.³⁵⁹ On 9 April 1680, propagandists wanted to approach the widow of Xavier Perruguier who had died a Huguenot. Before his death, he apparently spoke to propagandists for the opportunity of an *emprunt* or loan after this death.³⁶⁰ They proposed a loan without interest and even suggested that the *compagnie* pay for the accrued interest. They desired to speak to the widow and offer monetary assistance in the range of two to three hundred *livres* in order to convince her to let her Huguenot children convert to Catholicism. Although the propagandists and the father spoke about arrangements for his family after his death, widows could ultimately decide in matters relating to her family and household, which made them a target in the eyes of the Propagation.

Women showed themselves fickle when it came to religious allegiance, giving propagandists more reason to distrust female guardians of children. A woman by the name of Anne Desfours abjured from heresy in 1656 when she married. When her husband died, she “returned to sin,” even though she had professed Catholicism three years prior.³⁶¹ Furthermore, propagandists argue, Desfours exposed her youngest daughter to the dangers of Protestantism. Her daughter Anne Gervais, who was baptized around the age of fifteen, fell into sin on account of her mother's relapse. Desiring to win

³⁵⁹ ADH 48 H 1, 14 May 1680.

³⁶⁰ ADH 48 H 1, 9 April 1680.

³⁶¹ “...est retournée au presche...” ADH 48 H 1, 7 May 1659.

back the girl, propagandists spoke to her older sister and resolved to provide aid when needed. This entry illustrates that Huguenot widows such as Desfours could not be trusted to honor the religious preference of their husbands, as designed by law. Desfours is depicted not only as an obstinate Huguenot female but also crafty enough, perhaps, to seduce her husband to the worst ends. If her husband foolishly condoned letting his children become Huguenot, propagandists reasoned, he must have done so “in order to please his Huguenot wife.”³⁶²

The fear that Huguenot mothers would lead their children down a life of sin compelled propagandists to closely monitor children under the care of heretical maternal figures. In the minds of propagandists at Montpellier, mixed marriages between Catholic fathers and Huguenot mothers tilted the odds in favor of heresy by which children suffered at the hands of their mothers. Propagandists must have hoped for mixed marriages in which the Catholic partner prevailed. The story of Jeanne and Pierre was such an ideal marriage.

An Ideal Mixed Marriage

On Tuesday, March 25, 1649, at ten o'clock in the morning, on the holy day of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, Pierre Port-Combet went out to work close to his home in an area called Plantés near Vinay. By laboring on this day, Combet transgressed legal regulations concerning religious days supported by both the church and state.

³⁶² “...si Gervais catholique laisse aller les enfans au presche pour complaire a sa femme huguenote.” ADH 48 H 1, 7 May 1659.

Despite this knowledge, Combet set out to work on a willow tree. With each cut made on the tree, blood oozed out from the branches. Combet ran to fetch his wife Jeanne Pélion so that she could see what had happened to him: he was covered in blood. Pélion went back with Combet to the willow tree where she found large drops of blood in places where her husband had made cuts on the tree.

This incident developed into a local civil investigation and became a point of interest for the propagandists of the Grenobloise *compagnie*. The different versions of the miraculous event, as told by Combet and other witnesses³⁶³ weave together a narrative that makes significant points about the religiosity of seventeenth-century French Catholics. The tale of the presence of the Virgin Mary could only stoke the fires of the zealous members of Grenoble's Catholic community who already kept close tabs on Huguenot individuals and their activities. The miraculous event, however, also held the potential to bring about scandal and ridicule to the Church.³⁶⁴ The man at the center of the story was a Huguenot. If he fabricated the entire tale, Combet could potentially make a great mockery of Catholic culture.³⁶⁵ Combet's encounter with the supernatural,

³⁶³ Combet's wife Pélion and two of his cousins gave statements on what he said, and described his condition and general appearance shortly after the event transpired. A year later, Pélion sat down to tell the second miracle that happened to her husband. In so doing, the first story is retold. Jeanne Pélion is also referred to as Jeanne Pelhion and Jane Pelhon, but this dissertation will refer to her by the modern form of her name as found in Franclieu.

³⁶⁴ Craig Harline, *Miracle at the Jesus Oak: Histories of the Supernatural in Reformation Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 2003). Craig Harline's work on the Jesus Oak miracle in seventeenth-century Belgium illustrates how the miraculous could play an integral part in the everyday lives as well as administrative aspects of Catholics.

³⁶⁵ In the sixteenth century, Catholics and Huguenots justified violence as a means of expressing religious legitimacy. Huguenots desecrated sacred Catholic objects such as crucifixes and the communion wafer as a priest held it up during the rite of consecration and transubstantiation of the Catholic Mass. Catholic identity and culture depended on upholding traditional elements of worship during the age of the Catholic Reformation. See Davis, "Rites of Violence."

therefore, resulted in civil inquiry and judgment. The official depositions of Pélion and his cousins testified to the alleged miracle after the fact, though they could attest to Combet's appearance and state of mind. After reviewing the testimonies and making further inquiry into the matter of the miracle, the prosecutor of Vinay deemed Combet's alleged miraculous experience as false and forced him to pay a fine of three *livres* for breaking the law regulating work on holy days. On December 17, 1649, Combet accepted the ruling.³⁶⁶ Seven years later, Combet alleged another encounter with the Virgin Mary. That same year, the propagandists of Grenoble deliberated on purchasing the site of the miracle and proposed to build a chapel for worship there.

Given the ideologies and goals of the Propagation, members of the *compagnie* could not pass on the opportunity to appropriate the miracle for their cause. In addition to being an engaging tale, Combet's encounter with the supernatural provides much fodder for historical analyses of the politico-religious culture of early modern France. Elements of the story and the events that ensued support social ideologies of members of the Propagation who demonstrate in their deliberation records a wariness of Huguenots, overindulgent praise of devout Catholic women, and concern for their community's welfare. In short, the miracle of the willow makes up the backdrop to the social vision of religious authorities and patriarchs of elite culture, many of whom enlisted to serve in *compagnies* of the Propagation.

³⁶⁶ ADI 1 H 143, "Plainte faite par honneste Pierre Champier...."

In addition to converting Huguenot families, zealous propagandists decided to eliminate heresy and bring about religious uniformity by creating new Catholic families. The depictions of Combet and Pélion attest to the mentality of religious authorities who stress the conversion of Protestant women to Catholicism in the hope of strengthening the community of the faithful.

The Bleeding Tree and the Ideal Catholic Wife

The contrasting portrayals of Pierre and his wife serve to underscore their differing religious backgrounds. After several years, Combet's story continued on to another chapter. The society in Grenoble would not have wanted to erect a chapel and resurrect the story of a miracle that did not have a happy ending of sorts. Perhaps if Combet was a young unmarried Huguenot man, his tale would have ended here and been dismissed as a ploy to discredit and humiliate Catholics who believed in the supernatural, and an effort to distract the authorities from the fact that he had unlawfully worked. He was, however, an older Huguenot man married to a Roman Catholic woman, a devout woman, as the records indicate. Her perspective and role in the making of the miracle story sheds light on what society members considered an ideal Catholic woman and wife. The lone female figure in the set of documents relating to the miracles at the willow is depicted as a virtuous woman. In her own deposition, Pélion remembers telling her husband that he should not work on a holy day as he prepared to leave: "You should not

work today, which is a good day!”³⁶⁷ Like any devout Catholic of the time, Pélion wished to observe the holy day of the Annunciation. Her husband, nevertheless, went out and cut the branches of the tree near their home. Except for the exhortation against her husband working on a holy day, her statement corresponds with that of Combet. Pélion ceases to be an incidental character in the events surrounding the miracle and becomes a central figure in a separate document that recounts the second miraculous incident at the tree.³⁶⁸ Though the events of the second apparition by the Virgin Mary might have been recounted as an oral history, Pélion gave her official declaration to Père Nicolas on April 28, 1686 about thirty years after her husband had died. Added embellishments resulted in the augmentation of Pélion’s virtuous character and Combet’s lack thereof. They indicate the voice of the priest and the metamorphosis of the osier story into something that resembles a medieval *exemplar*.

The tale, written down much later, recalls the original events of 1649, on the holy day of the Annunciation, with more dramatic effect, creating a protagonist and antagonist in Pélion and Combet. The second time around, Pélion’s faithful devotion gave her the wisdom to recognize the miraculous and at the end of it all, her virtuous nature rescued her husband from eternal damnation. The report describes the wife in extreme contrast to her husband, whose lack of true faith allowed him to be the cruel and insensitive buffoon portrayed in this passage:

³⁶⁷ “Vous ne devrez pas travailler aujourd’huy qui est un bon jour....” ADI 1 H 143, “Plainte faicte par honenste Pierre Champier....”

³⁶⁸ ADI 1 H 143, “A l’honneur de Jesus et de sa tres Sainte Mere....”

In honor of Jesus and of His very holy Mother – Amen. In the year 1649, as God would allow it to rain, He would then allow this willow to expel tears of blood with each cut that Pierre Port Combet (a Huguenot living in an area called Plantés, who had disdain and scorn for the Holy Virgin, and intended to work and cut his willow tree on the day and feast of the Annunciation of the Holy Virgin, despite the vexation against this by Jeanne Pelion his faithful, pious and virtuous wife of the Catholic, apostolic and Roman faith) made to it. [The tree], more sensitive than the heart of this infidel, [bled] so much that the aforementioned Pierre Port Combet and his clothes were entirely saturated and stained from this blood, as well as the sickle that he used, and which remained so extremely penetrated that it was impossible for his aforementioned wife to remove any of it despite some diligence.³⁶⁹

Pélon is described in her declaration about the apparition of the Virgin Mary as the “faithful, pious and virtuous wife [of Combet]” who could be described as such because of her devotion to the “Catholic, apostolic and Roman religion.”³⁷⁰ In contrast, Combet is referred to as a miscreant who broke the law in spite of his wife, as the “Huguenot living at an area called Plantés, who had such disdain and scorn for the Holy Virgin to such an extent that he set out to cut his willow tree on the special day and feast of the Annunciation of the Holy Virgin.”³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ “A l’honneur de Jesus et de sa tres Sainte Mere comme ainsy soit qu’en l’année mils six cent quarante neuf, il aurait pleu à Dieu de permettre que Pierre Port Combet huguenot de religion et habitant du lieu appele les Plantes auroit en dedain et mepris de la sainte vierge, entreprit de travailler et tailler un sien armarinier le jour et fête de l’annonciation de la sainte vierge nonobstant la contrariété de ce par Jeanne Pelion sa fidele, pieuse et vertueuse femme et de religion catholique apostolique romaine, et aurait ensuite permis que cet osier plus sensible que le coeur de cet infidele jettasse des larmes de sang par chaque taille qu’il en faisoit si abondamment que ledit Pierre Port Combet fut luy et ses habits tous teints et taché de ce sang ainsy que la serpette dont il se servait qui en demeura si fort penetrée, qu’il fut impossible a Jeanne Pelion sa ditte femme de l’en jamais oter qu’elle diligence quelle y apporta.” ADI 1 H 143, “A l’honneur de Jesus et de sa tres Sainte Mere....”

³⁷⁰ “...sa fidele, pieuse et vertueuse femme et de religion catholique apostolique romaine....” ADI 1 H 143, “A l’honneur de Jesus et de sa tres Sainte Mere....”

³⁷¹ “...huguenot de religion et habitant du lieu appele les Plantes auroit en dedain et mepris de la sainte vierge, entreprit de travailler et tailler un sien armarinier le jour et fête de l’annonciation de la sainte vierge....” ADI 1 H 143, “A l’honneur de Jesus et de sa tres Sainte Mere....”

The document on the second apparition analogizes holiness to wisdom and heresy to ignorance. Upon seeing her husband covered in blood, Pélion first thought that the Virgin Mary sought to punish her husband who had disrespected the holy day. Her husband explained that he was not wounded and implored Pélion to come see the bleeding branches. In the midst of the excitement, the passage notes that Pélion could recognize the miraculous nature of what her husband described because of her strong faith: “At the same time, this good woman did not fail to convey to him this miraculous event, which was appropriate.... This good woman, meticulous on account of her holy curiosity, went with him towards the miraculous willow tree....”³⁷² After that fateful day at the tree, Combet, who understood that what had happened to him was miraculous only because of his wife, showed reverence to the tree but failed to completely realize the magnificence of the Catholic religion. In short, he did not convert to Catholicism in spite of all that had happened to him. He failed to see the light of truth even years after the original miracle, and stories of extraordinary healings and resuscitated life were reported.

Combet’s conversion to the Catholic faith transpired only after another visit by the Virgin Mary, who spoke to him. She came in the form of a voice this second time around. In March of 1656, the same month of the miracle seven years before, as Combet tended to his oxen, he heard the Virgin Mary ask him if many people came to visit the willow in reverence to the miracle. Combet casually answered that sufficient amounts of people came and experienced their own miracles, but all the while he was distracted by

³⁷² “Lors cette bonne femme poussée d’une sainte curiosité s’en alla avec luy vers cet osier miraculeux.... Cette bonne femme ne manqua pas de réfléchir sur luy de cette aventure miraculeuse dont il convint luy-meme....” ADI 1 H 143, “A l’honneur de Jesus et de sa tres Sainte Mere....”

his oxen. The Virgin Mary, frustrated with the child-like demeanor of Combet, exhorted him to stop touching his oxen and spoke seriously about the consequence of remaining in error: "...The moment of his death was drawing near, and if he should not change religions, he would be in one of the greatest firebrands that ever was in hell, and if he should change religions, she would protect him when facing God..."³⁷³ After this experience, Combet was not completely convinced about what he saw and heard, and so he still wavered on the subject of conversion. Having spoken about his encounter with the Virgin Mary, Combet dawdled. The passage suggests that the devil was a real danger and obstacle to eternal salvation, and Combet's fear of conversion was the work of evil. Combet did not act on the Virgin Mary's warning for five months, at which time he developed a fever and called a priest from the monastery at Vinay the day before the day of Assumption. On his deathbed, Combet abjured heresy and declared his conversion to the Catholic faith on the holy day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. He received the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, and then died nine days after contracting this illness.

The conversion experience of Combet highlights several points of the missionary vision of the Propagation. The Virgin Mary appeared to an ignorant Huguenot in order that he could find the right path to salvation, and due to a blind and stubborn allegiance to heresy, he could not grasp the purpose of the miraculous apparition at the osier. Furthermore, even though his devoutly Catholic wife realized the meaning behind the appearance of the Virgin Mary, Combet lived in such error that he could only recognize

³⁷³ "...le temps de sa fin s'approchait, et que sil ne changeoit de religion il serait l'un des plus grands tisons d'enfer, qui fut jamais, et que s'il en changeoit, elle le protegerait devant Dieu...." ADI 1 H 143, "A l'honneur de Jesus et de sa tres Sainte Mere...."

the amazing event of 1649 in a superficial manner. The account of the second apparition more boldly underscores the virtuous wife Pélion and the erroneous Combet. Despite the Virgin Mary's direct intervention for the sake of Combet's soul, his heretical ways were so deeply rooted that he only converted to the Catholic faith upon his deathbed. The road to Combet's religious conversion was long and difficult to realize, but if it were not for a dutifully Catholic wife, he would never have recognized the bleeding tree as a miracle that was meant to change his life and secure his eternal place.

Thus, pious women had an important role in shaping the family's religious devotion. For most people, the Virgin Mary did not intervene. Church authorities had to rely upon wives and mothers to lead their husbands and children along the true religious path of the Catholic religion. Faithful women and conversion of women to the faith could reshape society by creating a strong Catholic milieu. This was the vision of members of the Propagation. Women rested at the heart of society, and the *compagnie* at Grenoble appropriated the story of the miraculous tree to advance their goal of creating a religiously unified state.

Conclusion

Family mattered in the early modern era. They mattered particularly in the formation of religious identity and affiliation. Husbands and fathers succumbed to the religious allegiance of family members or the religious majority within a given household. The case of Perol illustrates this possibility. The conversion of the male head of household, however, often did result in conversions of the rest of the family members.

The household was the basic unit of society and shaped individuals, communities, societies, and the state. Strong ties held individuals to their families. Members of the Propagation understood this all too well as they separated recent converts from their families in order to sustain their conversion rates. Converting children, moreover, ensured future generations of Catholics. Propagandists actively sought to reform society through religious education and the reformation of the minds of children and girls in particular.

In this way, the duties of a devout Catholic wife and mother were essential in reshaping the core components of society and the keys to rehabilitating what they perceived as broken families and communities. By themselves, children encountered difficulties when standing up to their parents, as the *compagnie* realized. The story of Marie Landreville's conversion reveals two archetypes. Landreville herself was the ideal convert who the *compagnie* could rely upon to become a good Catholic wife and mother. Her mother, however, was the least desirable female. She posed a danger to her own daughter as demonstrated by her wild behavior, the trait of an unfit Huguenot mother. In contrast, Jeanne Pélion's ideal behavior, as told in the miracle story of the osier tree, illustrates the effects that a good Catholic woman could have on her family. Not only did Pélion save her husband's soul from eternal damnation, but she helped realize a wonderful miracle story for the community to embrace and inspired the Catholic faithful. She embodied the ideal Catholic wife. Her steadfast devotion to the Catholic faith, despite being married to a Huguenot, allowed her to recognize the significant message of

the bleeding tree. The moral of the story was that finding suitable marriage partners was crucial.

The various efforts and strides made by the *compagnie* at Grenoble illustrate a fierce loyalty to the idea that children were the future. In keeping with this notion, propagandists also provided marriage allowances to newly converted females. It is unclear whether the Propagation members offered the prospect of marriage as an incentive for conversion or whether girls converted to Catholicism in order to marry. The motives of either party cannot be determined with certainty. What the records do indicate is a preoccupation of propagandists to help new converts find marriage partners upon their abjuration from Protestantism and conversion to Catholicism. Orphaned children needed a place to live but more importantly, correct instruction to set them on the right path. As time progressed, and the *compagnie* garnered more financial support, the house for *nouvelles catholiques* reached out to mainly Huguenot girls, often promising money in exchange for conversion. These examples go to show that conversion itself was not the end goal of the propagandists. Abjuration of the Protestant faith and conversion to Catholicism was a means of tapping into the ultimate objective of re-creating a society stripped of any remnants of heresy.

The notion of the dangerous Huguenot women, in relation to their families, compelled propagandists to single out female Protestants in their ambitions for reform within the basic unit of society on their way to reworking the state. The accounts of the Propagation portray women as the potential key to the creation of a homogenous Catholic society in France. Documents relating to the Propagation, from its inception at Paris, to

the writing of Fénelon's treatise on the education of girls, indicate a development of female caricatures intended to illustrate the significance of women in the strategy to reinvent French society. Whether by good or bad example, the ways in which females are portrayed in the deliberation records of the Propagation point to the anxieties of religious authorities and Catholic militants who were determined to reform society by creating devout families of the faith. The antithesis of the corrupting Huguenot mother in the female paradox was the virtuous Catholic woman. In order to further ensure the success of their work, *compagnies* of the Propagation spent a great deal of time and energy arranging marriage partners for *nouvelles catholiques* ready to rejoin society and the Catholic milieu. This strategy was especially evident in Aix-en-provence and Montpellier.

CHAPTER IV
MARRIAGE AND *LES NOUVELLES CATHOLIQUES*

Decades after the establishment of the *compagnies* of the Propagation, propagandists were validated by the recognition of the utility of their helping newly converted girls to get married. The efficacy of this strategy prompted Monseigneur François Nicolini of Avignon to support marriages of *converties* under his jurisdiction:

Monseigneur François Nicolini, vice legate, ought to be considered one of the more distinguished benefactors of this house. He has done and obtained plenty of good and charity here, and it is he who has conferred the privilege of female teachers in favor of converted girls marrying in 1682.³⁷⁴

Further on, the record expresses the practical challenges that come with facilitating marriage for *nouvelles converties*, namely, significant financial resources. Fighting heresy required a serious investment in newly converted girls, and various *compagnies* throughout France made this commitment based on the firm belief that the reformation of women would assure the kind of French state that militant Catholics desired.

Society's concern for female moral rehabilitation derived from the corruptive and corrupted nature of women. Even the most outwardly devout and gifted nun, a pious bride of Christ, had to continually demonstrate extraordinary spiritual gifts as those ordained by God and not by the guiles of demons.³⁷⁵ In day-to-day life, ritualized

³⁷⁴ “Monseigneur François Nicolini, vicelegat, doit estre considéré comme un des plus insignes bienfaiteurs de cette maison, il y a fait et procuré beaucoup du bien et des aumosnes cest luy qui a accordé le privilege des maitreses en faveur des maris des filles converties en 1682.” ADV 113 H 1, “Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam Bienfaiteurs de la Maison,” no. 21.

³⁷⁵ Nuns, who took vows and lead a contemplative conventual life, were required to have male confessors. High profile women religious such as St. Theresa of Avila or France's own Marie de

discourses based upon boundaries between male and female, pure and impure reinforced prescriptive and critical literature on morality.³⁷⁶ The welfare of society depended upon an ordering of female bodies, categorized and differentiated by concepts of female morality. Moralists both lauded and condemned women of high culture.³⁷⁷ Common women, especially the impoverished, however, gravely required moral direction. Social hierarchy, religion, and sex determined virtuosity or lack thereof. Thus, there existed several levels of depravity.

These wretched members of society had to be helped in order for the propagandists of *compagnies* of the Propagation to reach their goal of eliminating heresy. The poor had an aptitude for being corrupted, which built upon ignorance and weak-mindedness. Poor women struggled with the added misfortune of being female in the early modern era. Impoverished unmarried women endangered their salvation and those of others when they turned to prostitution. Preachers targeted prostitutes at their place of work and urged them to amend their ways.³⁷⁸ Poverty and prostitution troubled communities who worried about the souls of their community members. Alleviation of poverty and wayward women, therefore, engaged charitable institutions and individuals

l'Incarnation had their confessors to keep their religiosity in check, and both women found themselves defending what they believed to be instructions to them from God.

³⁷⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Ark, 1985).

³⁷⁷ Farr, "The Pure and Disciplined Body," 392.

³⁷⁸ Although it was legalized by 1621, prostitutes of Seville treaded the line between social deviance and acceptance. Mary Elizabeth Perry, "Deviant Insiders: Legalized Prostitutes and a Consciousness of Women in Early Modern Seville," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27, no. 1 (January 1985): 138-158.

during the medieval and early modern periods. As the spread of contagious disease was a metaphor for the social disorder brought about by female prostitution, so was heresy a public moral threat brought about by women of the Huguenot religion.³⁷⁹ Containment of heresy, therefore, had to begin with the containment of women.

Each *compagnie* financially supported new converts interested in Catholic marriage partners, but the propagandists of Aix-en-provence noticeably invested more time and money in the marriages of their *nouvelles catholiques*. Martin contends that the *compagnie* at Aix was not as concerned with the care of converts as much as the others since it opted to support marriages instead of taking girls in for instruction, abjuration, and conversion.³⁸⁰ While this may be true, the marriage strategy of propagandists at Aix did not stray from the overarching ambition of the Propagation, which aimed to relieve female converts of a difficult situation. In their pursuit of the destruction of religious dissent, providing financial support to young women was part of the mission of the Propagation. Admittedly, however, and at face value, the records of Aix exaggerate the use of marriage as a device against heresy. When put in context of other deliberation records and gender history, the marriage aids given to the girls at the *compagnie* at Aix reveal attitudes about marriage as a way to combat the growth of Protestantism in France. The impetus for this particular strategy relied upon traditional ideologies and anxieties

³⁷⁹ Perry, "Deviant Insiders," 156-157. Both metaphors have a history of polluting effects. The late medieval heresy of Lollardy took on its name in reference to the biblical imagery of tares corrupting good wheat if not torn out of the ground from its roots. Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation 1399-1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

³⁸⁰ Propagandists at Aix-en-provence decided not to establish a house for *nouvelles catholiques* but instead, provide rented rooms to converts, as most of them were very poor girls. Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 358 and 380.

about unmarried women who often shared the depraved state of those living in poverty and ignorance.

Public Safety and Enclosed Women

Members of communities and religious institutions have historically reached out to sinful women in the name of charity. In the medieval period, houses for *repenties* helped communities deal with anxieties related to prostitution and the population of unmarried women who lived among them. Spiritual virginity could be regained when women rehabilitated themselves in houses of reform.³⁸¹ Time spent enclosed assured the public that these women learned to lead pious lives. Strict enclosure symbolized female virtue. Separation from the public protected women from the corruption while protecting the public from the vices of women.³⁸² In the early modern era, female bodies continued to concern religious authorities on the local level as well as the state level. Propagandists in the seventeenth century targeted impoverished women for conversion in order to create Catholic families and diminish Huguenot families while fulfilling the practical needs of women.

³⁸¹ The Avignonesse *repenties* took their rehabilitation process so seriously that they became nuns. They followed the Augustinian rule and looked to Mary Magdalene for inspiration. Joëlle Rollo-Koster, "From Prostitutes to Brides of Christ: The Avignonesse *Repenties* in the late Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 109-144.

³⁸² The strict enclosure of nuns required women to take vows and live under monastic rule. Pope Boniface VIII published the decree which begins with the word *Periculoso* in 1298, but the actual fulfillment of his vision varied by region. Commentators on the *Periculoso* debated about the judicial as well as spiritual benefits of the enclosure of nuns. In the early fourteenth century, initial commentators Guido de Baysio and his student, Joannes Andreae, emphasized that female frailty created gender differences, which necessitated the enclosure of nuns but not monks. Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators, 1298-1545* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 57-58.

Studies on body politics of the early modern period reveal that social anxieties were gendered female. In *Gender and the Politics of History*, Joan Wallach Scott explores gender as a legitimate discourse of power and knowledge.³⁸³ For Scott, gender is a category of analysis that adds to existing historical approaches. It is, therefore, not so much a study about women and men, but about the knowledge that people have of sexual differences. Specifically, politics is constructed through gendered meaning and identity, a dynamic force that constructs power.³⁸⁴ Such analysis reveals gendered states by the study of both male and female meanings; in Scott's work, it is politics. Scott shows that gendered sexual differences are not natural, but rather the results of social phenomena.³⁸⁵ Thus, rather than acknowledging the subordinate state of women, Scott persuades scholars to consider more the processes by which women came to be regarded. Recent early modern studies on the remaking of the state suggest explanations for how social anxieties developed and how these tensions reflect existing notions according to early modern notions of sexuality, femininity, and difference.

In an examination of English print culture, Frances E. Dolan shows the making of state identity based on seventeenth-century literature that designed an enemy that embodied uncertainty, Catholicism, and femininity. Dolan focuses on three subjects that created print attention: the Gunpowder plot (1605), Henrietta Maria's Catholic influence, and the Popish plot and the Meal Tub Plot (1678-1680). The perseverance of

³⁸³ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

³⁸⁴ Scott, *Gender*, 45.

³⁸⁵ Scott, *Gender*, 4.

Catholicism, like femininity and women, threatened social order and authority. The inability to easily and positively identify the Catholics living among English Protestants manifested itself in vituperative discourses and representations of Catholicism as a threat to political stability. The gender metaphor had an overt religious connotation, especially in the representation of Henrietta Maria as the Virgin Mary: a mediator and mother for the English people. Protestants anxiously considered her position of power and influence – she had easy opportunity for corrupting the king and thus the nation.³⁸⁶

Dolan explores the interplay between religion, politics, and society of the seventeenth century in a way that shows the processes by which society constructed an enemy. Working with the notion of uncertainty as the subject of inquiry, Dolan considers the study of “national” identity closely tied to constructive discourses of boundaries:

[T]he national is not necessarily a bigger topic than the domestic, or even a wholly separate one. Working on Catholicism has returned me to constructions of the domestic and the familiar, which prove to be inseparable from constructions of the difference and threat of Catholicism. For Catholics were not less threatening because they were so similar and well known, but rather more so... Since the familiar was consistently construed as dangerous to whatever extent Catholicism was associated with it, it was associated with risk as much as with security.³⁸⁷

Dolan found that Catholics, like all women, lived alongside a thin line between good and evil. The Reformation and Protestant majority in England constructed a new domestic enemy. The rise in anxiety stemmed from the inability to distinguish the adversary who

³⁸⁶ Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

³⁸⁷ Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 2.

occupied both private and public spheres, and was basically pervasive throughout English society.³⁸⁸

Ulrike Strasser looks at both gender and sexual identities within the context of state formation. Strasser argues that notions of virginity gendered the state female, while the concept of purity, derived from notions of virginity, directly formed the modern state. In the era of Reformations, states controlled marriage and valued it as a means to regulate sexual intercourse: “Female virginity was a key component of both ecclesiastical and secular reforms of marriage and sexuality.”³⁸⁹ They limited the female body to an object that engaged in sexual activity or refrained from it; thus, the female body was useful for either sexual or social reproduction.³⁹⁰ Strasser contends that those who conformed to the state’s regulation of female sexuality could gain opportunities of power: “Nuns still were among the most powerful and influential women of the early modern state; because of the Catholic Reformation’s preoccupation with chastity and the Virgin Mary, some rose to greater prominence than they had previously enjoyed.”³⁹¹

By championing the chastity of women religious, the state relegated the status of prostitutes to one of greater depravity. Strasser points out that nuns and prostitutes had more in common than not:

³⁸⁸ Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 3-4.

³⁸⁹ Ulrike Strasser, *State of Virginity: Gender, Religion, and Politics in an Early Modern Catholic State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 12, 21.

³⁹⁰ Strasser examines Munich, which was part of the early modern Catholic state of Bavaria of the Holy Roman Empire. Strasser, *State of Virginity*, 12.

³⁹¹ Strasser, *State of Virginity*, 13.

Nuns and prostitutes wore special clothes, eschewed matrimony, and inhabited separate institutional spaces. The two groups of unmarried women enjoyed a certain amount of power and independence, yet they were simultaneously deemed servants of the common good and the larger community on behalf of which they carried out their respective tasks.³⁹²

Meanings associated with both religious women and prostitutes derived from gendered notions about the public and private spheres of society. Religious houses as well as brothels were thought to provide social services to their communities. The regulation of women's sexuality involved a language and symbols of meaning. Thus, religious houses and brothels served to illustrate society's perception of a female dichotomy. There were those who fully lived and participated in the world and fleshly desires, and those who renounced the world and vowed lives of asceticism. Brothels were public places and thereby physically and sexually open to men and their lustful desires.³⁹³ In contrast, religious houses contained enclosed women untouched by the corruption and licentiousness of the world.

Mary Laven complements Strasser's work in Germany by means of her examination of convents and the state in Venice, Italy. In the late Middle Ages, in an effort to re-form and reinvigorate Venetian society and economy, the government turned to the regulation of family.³⁹⁴ Legalists and moralists delineated normality in the community by listing illicit sexual crimes. Among these were sexual offenses against God such as fornication with nuns. The sacred nature of the bodies of female religious

³⁹² Strasser, *State of Virginit*y, 70.

³⁹³ Strasser, *State of Virginit*y, 62.

³⁹⁴ Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

remained into the sixteenth century. Anxiety over what could happen in convents enabled Venetians to consider two kinds of women:

On the one hand, these virgin colonies were construed as bastions of chastity and prayer, a precious spiritual resource which served to counterbalance the worldliness of the laity. On the other, they were perceived as places of vice and indiscipline, a spiritual liability which put the salvation of the whole republic in jeopardy.³⁹⁵

The state had ambitions to establish a moral economy by controlling the corruptive factors. Women represented the best and the worst forms of human spirituality. The state sought to control its female residents prior to the Protestant Reformation, but the impetus for reform in convents began as early as the sixteenth century.³⁹⁶ In 1509, state legislature criminalized women who violated the sanctity of convents and in 1521, three women magistrates of the *provveditori sopra monasteri* enforced earlier senatorial laws. They probed for information about women's behavior inside convents and sought to completely limit contact between the nuns and the secular world. The decisiveness with which the state regulated its religious sisters and houses points to anxieties produced by an unstable European climate. Social order was inextricably tied with the civic rule, and the state and convents of Venice shared political systems, propelling nuns into the forefront of "civic culture."³⁹⁷

The social elevation of sexual purity and religious spirituality associated with conventual life were intensified by the existence of their counterpart, namely prostitutes.

³⁹⁵ Mary Laven, *Virgins of Venice: Broken Vows and Cloistered Lives in the Renaissance Convent* (New York: Viking, 2002), xxii.

³⁹⁶ Laven, *Virgins of Venice*, xxiii.

³⁹⁷ Laven, *Virgins of Venice*, 63.

In Renaissance Venice, the Four judged criminal and sacrilegious sexual encounters between nuns and their lovers. Fornication and adultery co-existed within a society that brought criminal charges to these very indiscretions and religious sins. Sex crimes resulted in penalties of varying degrees when they threatened society, with family households as the basic element of that society. When sexual encounters were made public, they threatened society, a society in which God was an integral part of day-to-day life. Sexual indiscretions by nuns and their partners were grave crimes against social order, but more pointedly, they offended God by corrupting a bride of Christ.³⁹⁸ The double offense of clergy-lay sexual relations further emphasized the need to regulate and maintain the pure body of women religious.

Early modern preservation and renunciation of virginity categorize these two groups of women together. Laven tells the story of two prostitutes who attended the Mass for the feast of the Purification of the Virgin in 1612 at Santa Maria Maggiore in Venice. While the two prostitutes attended the Mass, the enclosed nuns made their own prayers to the Virgin Mary in the adjacent cloistered setting.³⁹⁹ She argues that by celebrating this particular holy day and seeking close proximity to the religious women of the convent, the two women of vice looked to regain something of themselves: "...they hoped to tap into the virginal assets of the nunnery, and so set their own spiritual accounts aright."⁴⁰⁰ This scene recalls the physical as well as spiritual separation

³⁹⁸ Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros*, 73.

³⁹⁹ Laven, *Virgins of Venice*, 64.

⁴⁰⁰ Laven, *Virgins of Venice*, 65.

between religious women and prostitutes. However, Laven is able to bring both groups of women “together” into a sacred space.

Both Strasser and Laven provide convincing narratives of ideologies and discourses for the strict observance of religious houses for women in Munich and Venice. They illustrate the importance of studying the gendering of women in relation to religion, society and the state. Their examination of gender in relation to politics in the era of the Reformations shows that the notion of women’s virginity existed as a means to generate a discourse. In both of their works, Strasser and Laven contend that civic authorities stepped in to maintain social order by regulating the sexual activities of religious and common women. The symbols for chastity and purity were represented by enclosing convents and dissolving brothels. More broadly, social anxiety could be quelled when women were well-regulated by male authorities, by a father, paternal or religious, or a husband.

Extirpation of Heresy via Marriage

Early modern women lived along the social boundaries of uncertainty until placed in regulated settings of convents, and family or marriage households. *Aut maritus aut murus* (either a husband or a convent) remained a strong ideological force in the seventeenth-century. This derived from social anxiety towards unattached women – women not under the control and guidance of male supervision. The ideals of a patriarchal society of early modern Europe relied upon fathers, husbands, and abbots with

the responsibility of keeping women and curtailing sexual promiscuity among them.⁴⁰¹ Specifically in married and convent life, women witnessed stricter laws in these choices. Early modern rhetoric and restrictions by institutions limited women's choices, but women often worked against them and around them by utilizing other means of power available to them.

When the clergy of France accepted the provisions of the Council of Trent, they endeavored to re-elevate the Sacrament of Marriage. Men and women no longer required parental consent for marriages, according to canon law, but France elected to impose civil regulations of marriages due to heavy importance placed on inheritance transfers.⁴⁰² French lawmakers enacted a series of edicts that regulated family dynamics in what Sarah Hanley calls the Family-State compact. Legalists challenged their rivals from the ecclesiastical courts by taking jurisdiction over matters of marriage, female reproduction, inheritance, and marital separation. From 1530 to 1639, *arrêts* or legislation by legists developed a family model based on male authority and hegemony over family. In exchange, *arrêts* set precedents by which marriage regulations, rape convictions, and

⁴⁰¹ Familial, household, and social order went hand-in-hand, and it hinged upon the control of women's sexuality. See Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top" in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 124-151, 310-315; Cynthia B. Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 252-260.

⁴⁰² The clergy of France brought forth an *arrêt* that required priests of France to publicize *bans de mariage* or marriage announcements in their parishes. *Arrest du conseil d'estat du Roy, Qui décharge les Curez de ce Royaume des assignations à eux données à la requeste du Traitant des droits de Controole, avec défenses à luy et ses Commis, d'exiger ledit droit de Controole, desdits Curez pour les publications des bans de Mariage, et autres affaires purement Ecclesiastiques, à peine de deux mille livre d'amende, dépens dommages et interests* (Paris: Chez Antoine Vitré, 1674). Asserting that the Protestant Reformation in Germany did not initiate a bureaucratic trend over the control of marriage, Harrington notes that Catholic states, such as France, moved towards greater secularization in *Reordering Marriage and the Society*, 101-66. In regard to France, see pp. 162 and 166.

hereditary laws favored contesting males. Although French law limited women's formal legal channels, women found informal avenues to change their circumstances. Hanley gives agency to women by contending that women developed a "counterfeit culture." For example, women circumvented the compact by seeking the aid of midwives who appeared as witnesses in familial cases. Instead of suffering civil prisons, women opted for the imprisonment of convents. They appealed their cases to the public by way of pamphlets and broadsheets. Though some women found ways to navigate through restrictions that came with marriage, moralists valued institutionalized marriage as a way to regulate women, families, and ultimately society.⁴⁰³

In their efforts to unify and order society under a single Catholic culture, zealous Catholics, often in opposition to civil authorities, set out to reform women via marriage. Female depravity, in conjunction with poverty, challenged lay and ecclesiastical moralists. Prostitution threatened to plague communities who associated women with social disorder.⁴⁰⁴ In seventeenth-century France, *compagnies* of the Saint-Sacrement established places where people could receive treatment for physical as well as moral ailments. They actually resembled prisons more than therapeutic centers of retreat. Operating under the guise of charity, various establishments sought to fight heresy by placing people in controlled environments such as hospitals. In these places of

⁴⁰³ Sarah Hanley, "Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France," *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 4-27.

⁴⁰⁴ In early modern Marseille, the Hôpital du Refuge took in women incarcerated for sexual misconduct. The accusations made against women point to a network of witnesses made up primarily of neighbors, friends, and family members. Successful imprisonments of women relied upon the evidence of witness testimonies that corroborated some compelling disruption of a household and thereby the public peace. Georg'ann Cattelona, "Control and Collaboration: The Role of Women in Regulating Female Sexual Behavior in Early Modern Marseille," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 13-33.

involuntary rehabilitation, the zealous members of the Saint-Sacrement sought to reform society one *filie debauchee* or “depraved girl” at a time. The majority of those imprisoned were Protestant girls. Members of the Saint-Sacrement valued marriage as a way towards a moral reformation.⁴⁰⁵ In 1687, the *compagnie* of the Holy Sacrament at Lyon proclaimed that girls should marry for the sake of improving society.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, the Council of Trent’s sacralization of marriage started to be realized in the seventeenth century with the help of institutions such as the Saint-Sacrement and the Propagation.

The Saint-Sacrement and the Propagation were separate groups of *dévots*, but sometimes worked together, and the members of one were often participants in the other. The aggressive tactics and zeal of the members of the Saint-Sacrement received public criticism, and the king eventually tempered his support. These militant Catholics, however, had other avenues by which they could carry out their mission to eradicate heresy. In 1663, the brothers of the Saint-Sacrement joined the Propagation when the monarchy suspended their activities due to abusive behavior.⁴⁰⁷ In the region of Provence, the societies were one and the same.⁴⁰⁸ Corresponding with Saint-Sacrement members in Paris, laity and ecclesiastics made up the majority of the societies in Provence – societies were founded in Aix-en-provence in 1639, Arles in 1640, Toulon in

⁴⁰⁵ Jean-Pierre Gutton, *Dévots et société au VII^e siècle: construire le ciel sur la terre* (Paris: Editions Belin, 2004), 53, 125.

⁴⁰⁶ Gutton, *Dévots et société*, 140.

⁴⁰⁷ Norberg surmises that members of the Saint-Sacrement stopped their work and joined instead the Propagation since their deliberation records cease in 1666, three years after their disbandment by the monarchy. Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble*, 64.

⁴⁰⁸ Céline Borello, “L’utilisation du secret dans la lutte contre l’hérésie” en Provence au XVII^e siècle,” *Rives nord-méditerranéennes* 17 (2004): 105-128.

1642, and Avignon in 1650. A short time thereafter, *compagnies* of the Propagation established themselves in the region, for example, Aix-en-provence in 1656 and in Avignon in 1659.⁴⁰⁹ The region of Provence was particularly invested in policing and fighting heresy. The two main objectives of the *dévots* were those of the original Roman foundation *De propagande fide*: the conservation of the Catholic faith at all costs and spreading the faith among heretics. In Aix, the sixteenth-century *parlement* (parliament) expressed strong disdain towards heretics and hostility towards the Edict of Nantes.⁴¹⁰ In Provence and elsewhere in France, societies of *dévots* met, often secretly, to work together for the cause against heresy. Through surveillance and pressure, and money, propagandists succeeded in winning over converts.

The traditional connotation associated with charitable donation took on new meaning given the spirit of the French Catholic Reformation. Private charity and social welfare cannot be distinguished in seventeenth-century France.⁴¹¹ The opening pages of the deliberation records at Aix convey the mission of the Propagation: “the congregation established in this city of Aix for the exaltation of the holy Cross, propagation of the faith, and extirpation of heresy.”⁴¹² Similarly, the propagandists at Lyon expressed the

⁴⁰⁹ Borello, “L’utilisation du secret,” 113-114.

⁴¹⁰ Borello, “L’utilisation du secret,” 110-111.

⁴¹¹ In Catholic Reformation Grenoble, the concept of poor relief developed a specific religious connotation and aid relied upon private donations of zealous Catholics. Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble*. Starting in 1520, Catholics and Protestants prioritized their charities on relieving the working poor, leaving vagrants and beggars to fend for themselves. Catholic charitable institutions maintained “redemptive” and “supportive” individuals, those who required conversion and those who required poor relief. Brian Pullan, “Catholics, Protestants, and the Poor in Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 3 (Winter 2005): 441-456.

⁴¹² ADBR 150 H 1.

same sentiments.⁴¹³ The often aggressive and cruel tactics employed by the institution of the Propagation involved helping remove children from their homes and relocating them to other towns and/or regions. In Grenoble, propagandists campaigned in relentless manner for the conversions of the people in the valleys of Pragela and Queyras, historically known as Waldensian areas and presently called the Vaudois region of France.⁴¹⁴ The battle for souls in the valley of Pragela was met by marked resistance and self-initiated exiles by most of its inhabitants. In 1682, tensions culminated into violence by royal order and resulted in conversions made under severe duress.⁴¹⁵

Although the incident in Grenoble was not a typical result of the activities of the Propagation, the militant nature of the institution and its members cannot be denied. Uprooting heresy also involved surveillance of heretical individuals and research of literature.⁴¹⁶ At the same time, the propagandists engaged in traditional charitable activities such as providing sustenance to the poor. The aggressive stance of propagandists should not be seen as an exceptional or separate part of the Propagation. The apparent contrasting and opposite facets of the institution were rather part of a single mindset. The impetus behind battles against Huguenots, reminiscent of sixteenth-century

⁴¹³ ADR 45 H 12, 4 May 1659. At the top of their deliberation records, each *compagnie* expressed the goal of eliminating heresy, but propagandists at Grenoble and Lyon convey a certain exigency for the destruction of French Protestantism. Their proximity to Geneva most likely accounts for the sense of greater urgency.

⁴¹⁴ Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble*, 69-70.

⁴¹⁵ Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble*, 73-74.

⁴¹⁶ In Lyon, propagandists kept apprised of Huguenot literature such that individual members were assigned to the task. Mr. Combet initially received the assignment, a couple of months after the *compagnie*'s inception. ADR 45 H 12, 13 July 1659 and 20 July 1659.

wars of religion, charity for the poor, lodging for orphans, education and marriage of newly converted girls converge when taken into account the end goal of propagandists, namely, a society unified and defined by Catholic culture. The way in which *compagnies* of the Propagation sought to achieve this is revealed by its interest in aiding newly converted girls.

Poor Relief and Marriage Aid

On February 12, 1661, propagandists at Grenoble reported an extraordinary story of a man's conversion and sought to verify the truth of the matter. Assembly member Monsieur l'abbé de Brossac recounted something that would validate the work of propagandists. A *cavalier* or knight of the Compagnie de cavalerie de Grimaldi named Goirdan had converted to Catholicism upon marrying his Catholic wife.⁴¹⁷ The impetus for the man's religious conversion is only mentioned in passing: the Catholic "girl" whom the man married.⁴¹⁸ By simply marrying a woman of the Catholic faith, the Catholic milieu not only rid itself of a heretical Protestant but received a devoutly religious Catholic man. This was the ultimate and ideal vision for propagandists of the Propagation. If the story had stopped here, it would have been a happy one that illustrated how devout Catholic women had the power to destroy Protestantism from within, in the private realm of the household, as was the case with Pierre Combet and Jeanne Pélion. The man, however, "returned to preaching," which he presumably did

⁴¹⁷ ADI 26 H 102, 12 February 1661.

⁴¹⁸ "...avoit fait professé de la religion catholique ayant epousé une fille catholique...." ADI 26 H 102, 12 February 1661.

before marrying his wife, and soon thereafter he seemed to be a path towards Protestantism again, and ready to take his wife with him.⁴¹⁹ After some convincing, he experienced yet another change of heart that compelled him to become a religious and priest of the Order of Cordeliers, the French Observant Franciscans. The account of the man's conversion experience is reminiscent of those found in the hagiographic literature. This fantastic story had even the assembly members wondering if it could be at all true, and so they wanted to confirm the details of the story. Whether the story was true or exaggerated, it illustrates a few things. First, Catholic women, if not married to another Catholic, were in danger of being corrupted by their Huguenot husbands. Second, Catholic women could save their husbands. The potential happy ending halfway into the story did come true, and ultimately, with even more gusto than the propagandists could have imagined. If not for her, Goirdan would not have been exposed to the Catholic faith, which he embraced by seeking the faith's highest calling. Finally, it was a triumph of Catholicism, of Catholic truth inspiring someone, a former Protestant, no less, to join a religious order. Goirdan could have stayed married to his wife and chosen either Protestantism or Catholicism. Instead, he went the far extreme of becoming a religious in order to pursue his seeming passion for preaching, which he also could have done as a Huguenot. Why he chose Catholicism is a mystery, but a choice about which propagandists could happily conjecture. This was a true win for propagandists since they could not be sure whether the incentives they offered convinced Protestants to relinquish their former beliefs in most cases.

⁴¹⁹ "...depuis est retourné au prescher..." ADI 26 H 102, 12 February 1661.

The idea of sincerity in religious conversion was an issue in the seventeenth century. Starting with the conversion stories of the Saints Paul and Augustine, Christians have marveled at the transformative power of God working in human beings. The purity of their conversion experience was, as Keith Luria describes, “individualized, voluntaristic and untainted by material interests.”⁴²⁰ The Reformations of Europe left little room for conversion to be a private matter between an individual and God. Confessionalization of states and absolutist policies of France required allegiance to kings through religious conformity.⁴²¹ In the 1680s, religious and political authorities alike turned to coercion as a means to rid France of heresy. The Catholic history of conversion could not be ignored and indeed, dialogue concerning the divine justice of forced conversion surfaced along with efforts to nuance traditional understandings. While Aquinas asserted that non-Christians were ignorant involuntarily, heretics actively and knowingly disobeyed divine truths.⁴²² Catholics in late seventeenth-century France reconciled and pushed the limits of religious conversion by associating it with political loyalty. Between individual consciences and divine truth was the king. In this reasoning, God allowed the king to support the right religion so new converts had to trust in royal

⁴²⁰ Keith P. Luria, “Conversion and Coercion: Personal Conscience and Political Conformity in Early Modern France,” *The Medieval History Journal* 12, no. 2 (2009): 221-247 and for this quote, see p. 222.

⁴²¹ Keith P. Luria, “The Politics of Protestant Conversion to Catholicism in Seventeenth-Century France” in *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, ed. Peter van der Veer (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 23-46; “Rituals of Conversion;” and *Sacred Boundaries: Religious Coexistence and Conflict in Early-Modern France* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

⁴²² Luria, “Conversion and Coercion,” 227-228.

authority in matters political as well as religious.⁴²³ Coerced conversion, whether through force or other compulsion became an acceptable means of dealing with heretics. Similarly, the Propagation offered monetary assistance to new converts and for all intents and purposes, bribed them for their conversion to Catholicism.

In their efforts to bring about conformity, propagandists began to vigorously arrange marriages for young *nouvelles catholiques*. An assessment of the number of marriages that the societies of the Propagation arranged for their female converts relies upon the deliberation records that have endured. The records indicate that propagandists devoted time and energy on behalf of marriageable converts, but whether the marriages actually happened cannot always be determined. In Grenoble, the *compagnie* of the Propagation there proclaimed that it had helped marry two hundred thirty young women between the years 1647-1685, though the actual deliberation records do not produce corresponding figures.⁴²⁴ The exact figures, though significant for understanding the operation of the *compagnies*, do not need to be determined in order to speak to marriage as a crucial part of the Propagation's agenda.

Marriage mattered to the members of the Propagation. Why did they boast and inflate their numbers? Did a higher number of marriages convey to others, such as critics of the institution, that the *compagnie* was carrying out its intended mission? The operation of propagandists may have been measured not only by the number of conversions achieved but also by the number of marriages of the newly converted. The

⁴²³ Luria, "Conversion and Coercion," 234-235.

⁴²⁴ Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 380-381.

desire to isolate and separate the newly converted from their families and communities provides an obvious explanation for the propagandists' interest in seeing *nouvelles catholiques* marry. This point, however, does not explore how marriage specifically functioned as a solution for propagandists in an era when the family and household comprised the basic unit of French society. A broad survey of the deliberation records of the *compagnies* of the Propagation show that propagandists became intricately involved in the initiation, progress, and success of marriages of newly converted girls.

The proceedings of the *compagnie* of the Propagation at Aix are filled with accounts of marriage aid proposed or given to newly converted girls. A typical example of financial support for *nouvelles converties* to marry at Aix lists the amount of money proposed to be given to a new convert, the name and age of the girl when known,⁴²⁵ her place of residence, and the stage of her rehabilitation from heresy via abjuration and conversion. Offers to support marriages of newly converted girls happened at different points along the conversion process. Propagandists considered marriage aid for a young woman in conjunction with abjuration and conversion, or after conversion altogether. Oftentimes, unmarried women proposed to propagandists the possibility of abjuration and conversion in exchange for marriage aid. Propagandists did not always report the execution of marriages of the women promised aid or these women did not often succeed in finding partners for marriage of whom the Propagation approved. In any case, the deliberation records of the Propagation, especially those of Aix, speak to early modern ideologies concerning public sentiment in regard to poverty and unmarried women, and

⁴²⁵ Many of the entries note "une jeune fille" without reference to a family name or age.

the history of these women themselves. These vignettes from the records of Aix reveal that the institution of the Propagation desired to fight heresy by making newly Catholic young women ready for marriage.

Discussion of the financial state as well as the allocation of their money helps fill the deliberations records for the *compagnies* of the Propagation. Support for lodging and marriage aid for young female converts forced the *compagnies* to function partly as a charitable institute. The propagandists at Montpellier recognized the financial burdens that came with the work of the Propagation. Formed in 1679, the *compagnie* at Montpellier knew what to expect having had the opportunity to learn from the experiences of those in Aix, Lyon, Grenoble, and Paris. Propagandists at Montpellier laid out an organized and detailed plan for how to approach heretics. They proposed limits to the amount of aid that they would give to potential converts, which the Director would determine based on the case.⁴²⁶ This depended on whether the husband converted with this wife and children. Propagandists agreed that forty to sixty *livres* would be sufficient for the conversion of an entire family.⁴²⁷ When only the children of a family entered the houses of new converts, the propagandists suggested that the father of newly converted children would get some something, perhaps towards a daughter's dowry.⁴²⁸ Most of the entries speak to a relationship between propagandists and a marriageable girl,

⁴²⁶ “ADH 48 H 1, “Status et reglemens de la congregation de l’exaltation Ste. Croix pour la propagation de la foy establee en la ville de Montpellier au mois de janvier 1679,” Article V.

⁴²⁷ ADH 48 H 1, “Instructions pour les gratifications que l’on fera aux nouveaux convertis.”

⁴²⁸ The houses in Lyon were separate: one for girls and another for boys. ADH 48 H 1, “Instructions pour les gratifications qu l’on fera aux nouveaux convertis.”

but the financial aid that the Propagation offered must have persuaded their father (and/or mother) to turn over their daughters.

In exchange for their gifts, propagandists expected a commitment to the Catholic faith. They did not regard their work as strictly charitable, though they considered it social reform. As such, they understood the need to help new converts marry in their endeavor to rid their state of heresy:

...It is necessary then to be mindful that we give a girl aid that will be used to marry a Catholic; likewise, we will give a boy [aid] that which will be of use in marrying a Catholic girl, or to their procuring some other establishment of which the principal goal is to help assure their conversion.⁴²⁹

The propagandists went as far as drawing up a template for recording *gratifications* or bonuses given to the newly converted.⁴³⁰ Fighting heresy cost money and propagandists at Montpellier readied themselves for it.

The Propagation at Aix imagined the impoverished children succumbing to Protestantism since Lourmarin had a large Huguenot population. The *compagnie* emphasized arrangements of new lodgings in order to create a “better condition” at the expense of the *compagnie* for those seeking Catholic instruction, abjuration from heresy, and conversion to Roman Catholicism.⁴³¹ In particular, the *compagnie* at Aix spent a great deal of its capital in order to remake their society and do their part for the

⁴²⁹ “...il est necessaire alors d’observer que ce que l’on donne a une fille soit employé a la marier avec un catholique, pareillement que ce que l’on donnera a un garson serve a le marier avec une fille catholique, ou a leur procurer quelqu’autre etablissement dont la fin principale soit d’assurer leur conversion.” ADH 48 H 1, “Instructions pour les gratifications qu l’on fera aux nouveaux convertis.”

⁴³⁰ ADH 48 H 1, “Formulaire de l’estat des gratifications accordées aux nouveaux convertis du diocese de [—].” There is a blank space at the end intended to be filled in with the name of a diocese.

⁴³¹ The rhetoric of providing “la meillure condition” is used repeatedly. For examples, see ADBR 150 H 1, 26 November and 24 December 1656.

propagation of their faith. It was so commonplace that propagandists noted their strategy in the case of marriage support for Anne and Magdeleine Mercadiere. They each received ten *écus*, which was a sum that “the *compagnie* is accustomed to give.”⁴³²

Aid in the form of apprenticeships supplied the incentives for young men to turn to the Propagation. Plenty of boys abjured and converted to Catholicism in Aix, and propagandists arranged work for young boys for their cooperation.⁴³³ Most *garçons* received aid from the *compagnie* by way of monetary support for apprenticeships. Jacques Salemer received thirty *livres* for an apprenticeship by which he will be able “to learn a trade.”⁴³⁴ The *compagnie* offered his sister, Jeanne, the same amount but for marriage.⁴³⁵ Like the amount of financial support provided for newly converted girls, the amount paid to *nouveaux converties* apprenticeships varied. Pierre Ginoux received forty-five *livres* for his apprenticeship, while the *compagnie* provided thirty *livres* for Jean Giraud and twenty *écus* for Esprit Vian.⁴³⁶ The varied amounts may be on account of newly converted boys enlisting in different trades, which are not specified in the records. While the *compagnie* at Aix gave newly converted *garçons* opportunities for

⁴³² “A este deliberé de donner pour marier Anne et Magdeleine Mercadiere du lieu de St. Christel nouvellement converties les dix escus pour chascune que la compagnie a ascoustumé de donner en semblabler occasions desquelles doibvent exposer deluy hommes cathollique [sic] de Reyllane.” ADBR 150 H 1, 27 December 1659.

⁴³³ The deliberation records of Aix (1656-1672) report that propagandists tried to help twenty-three boys find work whereas they looked for domestic employment for only six girls. Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 386.

⁴³⁴ “...apprendre un mestier.” ADBR 150 H 1, 23 December 1663.

⁴³⁵ The records do not state whether they are brother and sister, but since neither are reported as married and are discussed as members of a single family, they are probably around the same age and are related as siblings. See ADBR 150 H 1, 12 and 23 December 1663.

⁴³⁶ ADBR 150 H 1, 28 June 1671, 27 March 1672, and 13 February 1667, respectively.

apprenticeships or other work, propagandists sought to help young women marry Catholic men. Only in rare instances did the *compagnie* support marriages for formerly Protestant men. On 24 April 1667, the *compagnie* decided to give thirty-six livres to Anthoine Guanier for his abjuration and marriage.⁴³⁷ More frequently, the *compagnie* provided young men with money for apprenticeships and often paid for their lodging. On 23 February 1659, the *compagnie* gave two *écus* travel money to a twenty-four-year-old newly converted man from Auvergne who had lodging and potential work at Lyon.⁴³⁸

The propagandists of Aix sought to find suitable husbands and supported marriages for newly converted girls, and financed newly converted boys in occupational opportunities. Both types of aid went towards investments into male and female converts. In addition to furnishing new Catholics with enough financial freedom to be independent of their heretical parents, placing the new converts into marriages and work places created the added advantage of environments for surveillance against relapses. In addition, women and men getting married benefitted society because matrimonial unions could help counter corruption, including sexual promiscuity, especially among the poor. The majority of the new converts came from humble families or impoverished states. There were some young daughters of lesser nobles who turned to the *compagnie* for

⁴³⁷ ADBR 150 H 1, 24 April 1667.

⁴³⁸ Mr. Blanc received a letter from his friends in Lyon who expressed interest in lodging the newly converted in Aix. ADBR 150 H 1, 23 February 1659.

marriages with men who had comparable backgrounds.⁴³⁹ Although these girls received the attention of propagandists, the records indicate that common girls received the bulk of the marriage support from the provincial *compagnies*. This may be attributed to the fact that common folk statistically outnumbered the privileged few. Furthermore, propagandists emphasized conversions of common folk because they posed a greater danger to themselves and others due to what propagandists perceived as their poor, and presumably ignorant, states.

Poverty unnerved members of the Propagation and caused them to take action, often to the benefit of *converties*. Early modern moralists regarded the impoverished as the ignorant, which made them gullible to false ideas. In his work against witchcraft, Bodin described how the poor were especially susceptible to satanic spells.⁴⁴⁰ Propagandists frequently called for urgent aid due to extremely impoverished conditions. In Grenoble, the laity, both men and women targeted poverty by creating institutions specifically addressing the material and spiritual undernourishment of the community's poor.⁴⁴¹ Due to their "extreme poverty," the *compagnie* at Aix deliberated on providing something for the family made up of a newly converted man, his wife, and two

⁴³⁹ Martin states that these women had difficulties in finding suitable marriage partners after their families abandoned them on account of their conversion to Catholicism. *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 379-380.

⁴⁴⁰ Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, Bk. 1, Chap. 3, 68.

⁴⁴¹ The Holy Sacrament and the Propagation for men, and the Madeline and Orphan hospices for women are examples.

daughters.⁴⁴² Perhaps the Propagation thought to quickly act on behalf of the family because of their dire situation. This should not be discounted. The more sinister intentions, however, should not be ignored as well. Family conversions simply produced the high numbers that propagandists desired. Propagandists certainly manipulated people's circumstances to their own ends. However, the people who were in need cannot be reduced to passive bystanders to the Propagation's war on heresy. The impoverished could benefit from the *compagnie's* willingness to assist the poor and help turn them away from heresy. The circumstance of poverty gave both propagandists and poor individuals a compelling reason for giving and receiving, respectively, financial aid: "Given their poverty, it is deliberated that it will give thirty *livres* to Feraud of Lourmarin, his wife, and newly converted family for them to subsist."⁴⁴³ For poor families that needed aid in troubled times, the *compagnie* offered a way for survival and some reprieve during difficult times.

Propagandists also perceived the poor as so feeble-minded that heretical ideas could easily manipulate them. On 23 April 1679, propagandists at Montpellier noted a Huguenot hospital that "could corrupt or let die without administration of last rites" the poor that went there.⁴⁴⁴ There was a strong sense of protecting the poor from the errant ideas of heresy that had everything to do with their salvation. Propagandists feared that

⁴⁴² "Que Monier de Nismes nouveau converty habite en ceste ville ayant party pour faire venir sa fille quil a encore a Nismes que sa femme et lautre fille quy sont en ceste ville estants en extreme necessite la compaignie les doit adcistre en quelque chose." ADBR 150 H 1, 26 March 1657.

⁴⁴³ ADBR 150 H 1, 26 December 1666.

⁴⁴⁴ "...il pourroit pervertir ou laisser mourir sans sacremens...." ADH 48 H 1, 23 April 1679.

the poor at the Huguenot hospital would pass into eternal life without receiving the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. For the same reasons, the Propagation objected to the poor being buried in Huguenot cemeteries.⁴⁴⁵

Concern for eternal salvation prompted the *compagnie* to help those who required aid for Catholic interments. In 1659, a man known simply as Joseph received a fair amount of attention from propagandists of Aix. The *compagnie* first noted Joseph and his gravely ill and impoverished state:

Mr. de Mimata has made known to the assembly the conversion of Joseph [—]. Mr. Tellier of this city judges him to be very ill, and in great danger, extremely poor and sickly. It will be necessary to give him some aid in case of death by providing clergy for his funeral.⁴⁴⁶

In exchange for his conversion, Joseph was eligible to receive charitable donations for his burial from the *compagnie* should he pass away. Furthermore, propagandists agreed to give three *livres* to Joseph. The *compagnie* presumably followed through in its arrangement with Joseph who died shortly after his conversion. Two weeks after the first note on Joseph, the *compagnie* decided to give an *écu* for the habit of the man who provided the coffin in preparation for the interment of Joseph's deceased body.⁴⁴⁷ Thus, the threat of death without the final Sacrament and improper burial prompted propagandists to care for the sick.

⁴⁴⁵ ADH 48 H 1, 7 May 1679.

⁴⁴⁶ “Monsieur de Mimata a fait scavoit à lassamblée la conversion de Joseph [—]. Mr. Tellier de cette ville lequel se treuve bien malade, et en grand danger fort pauvre et incommodé. Il sera necessere luy bailler quelque secours mesmes en case de mort fere fournir des clerges pour les funerailhes.” ADBR 150 H 1, 14 septembre 1659. Presumably, the blank space in the record was set aside for his family name, which the secretary could fill in at a later time.

⁴⁴⁷ “A esté deliberé qu’il sera fait mandat d’un escu pour payer l’habit de penitent quy à este foury a feu Mr. Joseph coffrier pour l’enterrement de son corps.” ADBR 150 H 1, 28 September 1659.

In the deliberation records of Lyon, propagandists especially paid close attention to girls sick either at hospital or at the home of a trusted Catholic community member. For example, in one dated entry, two of Lyon's propagandists attended to the needs of two girls in poor health. Mr. Hermel went to see Claudine Coursant, who came to his attention for her being ill. The secretary remarked, "Mr. Morin is pleased to aid Catherine Julien, who is not well."⁴⁴⁸ On Sunday 3 August 1659, the *compagnie* gave three *livres* to *une femme huguenotte malade* or "an ill Huguenot woman," though it does not state whether she converted to Catholicism based on the monetary gift.⁴⁴⁹ More often, propagandists gave aid to newly converted young women. Jeanne Françoise Fournier from Geneva who was staying with Dame Laurence received three *livres* on account of her bad health.⁴⁵⁰ Anne Roch received six *livres* from Mr. de Meaux, which covered a month's pension at the Hotel de Dieu.⁴⁵¹ Propagandists visited sick girls at the Hotel Dieu perhaps in anticipation of a willingness to convert to Catholicism.⁴⁵² The records of Lyon reveal that the *compagnie* provided money to physically ailing girls who also decided to abjure from heresy. Mr. Courier saw Susanne du Four on 14 November

⁴⁴⁸ "Monsieur Morin est prié d'assister Catherine Julien qui est malade." ADR 45 H 12, 28 July 1664.

⁴⁴⁹ ADR 45 H 12, 3 August 1659.

⁴⁵⁰ ADR 45 H 12, 14 September 1659.

⁴⁵¹ ADR 45 H 12, 2 March 1665.

⁴⁵² ADR 45 H 12, 11 August 1664.

1661 and she made her abjuration from heresy at the church of the Visitation in 1661.⁴⁵³ She continued to get support from the *compagnie* for the next few years, but the entry does not indicate whether Susanne received support because of a chronic illness.

The bulk of the deliberation entries of Aix reveal many more conversions of female Protestants in addition to young Huguenot boys, to whom the threat of poverty played an important role in the forging a relationship between propagandists and new converts. Poverty coupled with a willingness to abjure heresy and convert to Catholicism, therefore, compelled the propagandists to give assistance to girls of the *compagnie* at Aix:

...There is a girl of the religion in shape for being married and abjuring heresy, and she asks for some assistance from the *compagnie* on account of her poverty. The *compagnie* has deliberated that the girl is in the state of abjuring heresy. Ten *écus* will be given to her on the conditions of the preceding deliberation.⁴⁵⁴

Poor girls, therefore, threatened society, by their unmarried and impoverished state. The solution for removing the female threat from the public was by facilitating their marriage. Thus, propagandists often gave monetary support to cases that offered to reform young women. In another entry, the *compagnie* remarked on the character of a poor woman who found her way to it: “The *compagnie* will pay subsistence of three *livres* to this woman from Geneva.”⁴⁵⁵ She encountered some doubts about her conversion from royal

⁴⁵³ Though the space left for the date of the abjuration has been left blank, she most likely made her abjuration on or very close to the date of this record entry. ADR 45 H 12, 5 December 1661.

⁴⁵⁴ “...il y à une fille de la religion en estat d’estre mariée et d’abjurer l’heresie et qu’elle demande quelque adcistance de la compagnie attandu sa pauvreté. La compagnie a deliberé que la fille estans en estant d’abjurer l’heresie il luy sera bailler dix escus aux conditions de la precedante deliberation.” ADBR 150 H 1, 9 March 1659.

⁴⁵⁵ ADBR 150 H 1, 9 May 1660.

authorities, but the *compagnie* planned to assure them that “this poor woman... is [a] very honest woman and without reproach.”⁴⁵⁶ Perhaps the authorities had it right in questioning the intentions of women who abjured heresy and converted to Catholicism. Offers of money for conversion must have attracted women who needed monetary assistance or wanted a way to escape their families and start anew, and establish an identity of their own.⁴⁵⁷

Poverty compelled young women to ask the *compagnie* of Aix for financial assistance, and the prospect of them getting married invited propagandists to help. In one particular entry, parents of a young ten-year-old girl promised to give her to the Catholic Church in exchange for a contribution towards her marriage:

Mr. President du Thollonet made known to the assembly that he has been advised that there is a Huguenot girl around the age of ten whose parents gave [to the *compagnie*] in order to be instructed and to abjure heresy in regard to which has been deliberated that we will make known to the parents of the aforementioned girl that when she is older, the *compagnie* will contribute towards her marrying about which we will make known to Mr. Mitre.⁴⁵⁸

This case illustrates that the *compagnie* preferred to help young women get married. Whether the parents forced their daughter to convert to Catholicism for the incentives cannot be known for sure. The record does indicate that the *compagnie* offered money

⁴⁵⁶ “...cette pauvre femme de laquelle ils les assureront quelle est tres honneste femme et sans reproche.” ADBR 150 H 1, 9 May 1660.

⁴⁵⁷ In *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1958), Erik H. Erikson examines Martin Luther’s adolescent struggles with authority and his emotional conflicts.

⁴⁵⁸ “Monsieur le presidant du Thollonet a faict scavoit à lasssemblée qu’il à esté adverty qu’il y a une fille a rell aux aagée d’environ dix ans huguenaude que ses parans donneront pour estre instruite et abjurer lheresie surquoy à este deliberé qu’on fera sçavoit aux parans de laditte fille qu’estans elle plus avancée en eage la compagnie contribuera pour la marier dequoy on advertira Monsieur Mitre.” ADBR 150 H 1, 8 June 1659.

for marriage in the near future. Perhaps the parents had heard about the work of the Propagation and came to expect the propagandists to offer marriage assistance for *nouvelles converties*. On 9 February 1659, the *compagnie* simply states that there is a girl from the valley who wants to make her abjuration of heresy.⁴⁵⁹ Although the records do not state that this girl asked for aid to get married, she probably approached the *compagnie* for some form of help since this pattern may be gleaned over and over again in the deliberation entries at Aix. Furthermore, the correlation between abjuration and conversion, and marriage support attracted young women to the Propagation.

At the *compagnie* in Aix, abjuration from heresy and conversion to Catholicism meant that propagandists would give *nouvelles converties* money for their marriages. In one instance, two girls offered to convert to Catholicism, and the *compagnie* responded by deciding to give “any certain sum on the part of the *compagnie*.”⁴⁶⁰ Another Protestant girl expressed her readiness for marriage, stated her intention to abjure from heresy, and asked the *compagnie* for some kind of monetary aid.⁴⁶¹ Women proposed conversion in exchange for marriage assistance by the *compagnie*, but like many of the entries, the realization of requests made in the deliberations cannot always be determined.⁴⁶² One entry suggests that women had to ask the *compagnie* for their money: “Mr. Bonardi has pointed out to the *compagnie* that there is a newly converted woman

⁴⁵⁹ ADBR 150 H 1, 9 February 1659.

⁴⁶⁰ ADBR 150 H 1, 18 October 1657.

⁴⁶¹ ADBR 150 H 1, 12 January 1659.

⁴⁶² The *compagnie* noted women who asked about receiving money for marriage, but it is uncertain how successful these women were in actually obtaining financial aid. ADBR 150 H 1, 8 August 1660 and 12 September 1660.

who married a Catholic [man] [and] asks that the *compagnie* supply her six *livres*....”⁴⁶³

The prospect of marriage gave women, who were mainly constricted by social, cultural, and financial obstacles, the opportunity to forge their own way in life, away from their parents who would otherwise dictate their daughter’s future.

In general, however, the propagandists seemed eager to support the marriage of newly converted young women. For example in the month of January 1661, the *compagnie* offered to give two women ten *écus* and fifteen *écus* should they decide they would marry.⁴⁶⁴ The difference in monetary allowance depended on the circumstances of the newly converted girls. Another explanation may be attributed to the restrictions of funds, and the amount of donations the *compagnie* received and could allocate to *nouvelles converties* within a given scale of time. It is more plausible that the varying range of marriage allowances had to do with the negotiating power of the newly converted girl, which may explain why the *compagnie* decided to give one hundred *livres* for the marriage of a girl named Moneau, daughter of a minister from Geneva.⁴⁶⁵ Since her father was a minister, Moneau’s conversion could have been viewed as a major triumph. Although her age is unknown, she was presumably a young woman who may have sought a way to skirt the authority of her father and his religion. The next month, on 27 February, the assembly members proposed to arrange new living quarters for

⁴⁶³ “Monsieur Bonardi a remonstet a la compagnie quil y a une femme nouvellemeant convertie qui est mariee avec une catholique demande que la compagne luy fournisse six livres....” ADBR 150 H 1, 12 December 1660.

⁴⁶⁴ ADBR 150 H 1, 9 January 1661 and 29 January 1661.

⁴⁶⁵ ADBR 150 H 1, 9 January 1667.

Moneau at the home of the widow de Bernard.⁴⁶⁶ A year later, the Propagation was still caring for the lodging of Moneau.⁴⁶⁷ After this point, the deliberations do not speak of her. If she did get married, the Propagation would have noted the aid that it most likely would have given to her. Another possibility is that her family took their daughter back.

The business of arranging marriages for these *nouvelles converties* involved negotiation not only between the girls and the *compagnie*, but also by potential marriage partners. For instance, in 25 November 1668, the *compagnie* decided to give Guillot twenty *écus* (sixty *livres*) for her marriage.⁴⁶⁸ In one entry, a potential husband for a *nouvelle convertie* demanded more money for his marriage to Anne Guillot who he perceived was of a lower status, because he “would not be pleased with a lesser wife.”⁴⁶⁹ It may well have been that the future groom felt that he deserved more for the marriage, but we have here another kind of example of individuals taking advantage of the Propagation. As for Guillot, she would not have been in a position to financially negotiate this marriage had it not been for the Propagation’s interest in her getting married. As a result, the *compagnie* decided to give Anne Guillot a hundred *livres* instead of the initially proposed sixty *livres* in order for her to get married. Eagerly anticipating marriages for young women, propagandists found ways to support potential female converts who crossed their path.

⁴⁶⁶ ADBR 150 H 1, 27 February 1667.

⁴⁶⁷ ADBR 150 H 1, 8 January 1668.

⁴⁶⁸ ADBR 150 H 1, 25 November 1668.

⁴⁶⁹ “...ne vouloit pas se contenter d’une moindre femme.” ADBR 150 H 1, 10 February 1669.

The propagandists at Aix worked diligently to place girls into marriages after their conversion. It tended to accommodate *nouvelles converties* who may have had prospects for marriage emerge suddenly. Propagandists supported the marriage of these girls and did whatever they could within their financial means: “The *compagnie* approves the expedited mandate for the marriage of two newly converted girls...”⁴⁷⁰ Propagandists went so far as to find suitable marriage partners for newly converted girls: “It is deliberated to give ten *écus* to a girl from la Coste at which time we will find a match to marry her.”⁴⁷¹ Although most *nouvelles converties* received the opportunity to receive aid for marrying Catholic partners, the *compagnie* also offered marriage assistance as an added incentive for girls to convert to Catholicism. On 12 December 1663, the *compagnie* decided to give thirty *livres* to a woman should she convert to the Catholic faith and at which point she “will be arranged in marriage.”⁴⁷²

Support for *nouvelles converties* to find Catholic marriage partners derived from a fear that they would marry Huguenot men. Poor Catholic girls had limited options for marriage partners due to financial strains.⁴⁷³ On 29 October 1663, the *compagnie* remarked that a poor Catholic girl (not a *nouvelle catholique*) from Lourmarin planned to marry a Huguenot. This prompted the Propagation to give the girl five *écus* and to

⁴⁷⁰ “Que la compagnie approuve le mandat expedie pour le mariage de deux filles nouvellement convertis...” ADBR 150 H 1, 26 April 1665.

⁴⁷¹ “A esté delibere de donner les dix escus a la fille de la Coste lors quon trouvera un parti pour la marier.” ADBR 150 H 1, 8 April 1668.

⁴⁷² “...sera colloquée en mariage.” ADBR 150 H 1, 12 December 1663.

⁴⁷³ ADBR 150 H 1, 8 May 1667.

arrange marriage with a Catholic man in another town.⁴⁷⁴ For the *compagnie*, the fight against heresy meant creating Catholic families and discouraging additional Huguenot ones. This domestic mission by the *compagnie* did not discriminate against female Protestants in terms of social status, but younger girls eligible for marriage worked best for the society's intents and purposes.

The activities of the *compagnie* drew women who were enduring hardships that often came with their gender and social status. Women who demanded aid from the *compagnie* mainly came from impoverished states, but the records reveal that women with various obstacles used the Propagation in order to better their lives. Single mothers turned to the Propagation in order to get some basic needs met: "...there is a very poor Dutch woman who has a small child and a daughter who asks the *compagnie* to supply her something..."⁴⁷⁵ It is uncertain whether the woman had to abjure and convert to Catholicism in order to receive any help.

Other cases of conversions by single women do not indicate whether women were lacking financial resources. Citing reasons of abandonment or absenteeism, these women took the liberty of asking propagandists for aid. On 24 August 1664, the *compagnie* decided to give fifteen *livres* to a woman who had been abandoned and desired to convert to Catholicism.⁴⁷⁶ Though it does not specifically indicate who had abandoned her, it was most likely her husband. In this case, she would have been wanting for some

⁴⁷⁴ADBR 150 H 1, 29 October 1663.

⁴⁷⁵ "...qu'il y'a une femme ollandoise quy à un petit enfant et une fille fort pauvre quy demande à la compagnie de luy fornir quelque chose...." ADBR 150 H 1, 8 June 1659.

⁴⁷⁶ ADBR 150 H 1, 24 August 1664.

monetary support. A woman by the name of Guiran asked the *compagnie* at Montpellier to help educate her son since his father is Huguenot and absent.⁴⁷⁷ The sincerity of desiring conversion, of course, should not be dismissed and this reasoning may explain the other cases above. With a focus on female agency, however, the possibility of a symbiotic relationship between propagandists and women remain.

Women may have been able to use the *compagnie* of the Propagation in order to gain some maneuvering room in their marriages. The deliberation records reveal women citing abusive husbands opposed to their wives converting to Catholicism. Turning to the propagandists for help may have helped a woman in Montpellier return to the Catholic Church: “The druggist Mr. Fequet’s gardener, who corrupted herself in order to marry, desires to return to the Church, but she does not dare, if only for the threat, in the presence of her husband from whom she dreads ill treatment if she abjures on her own.”⁴⁷⁸ On the margin of the page, the secretary wrote that the woman had already converted twice from each religion – she had been Catholic twice and Huguenot twice.⁴⁷⁹ The motives behind the gardener’s frequent wavering between the religions cannot be known. She converted at least once in order to marry her husband, but reasons for the others are not recorded. Nevertheless, her actions reveal a consciousness of religious conversion for personal gain.

⁴⁷⁷ ADH 48 H 1, 12 March 1679.

⁴⁷⁸ “La jardiniere de Mr Fesquet droguiste qui se pervertir pour se marier desire de retourner a l’Eglise, mais elle n’ose si on ne la menace en presence de son mary de qui elle apprehende un mauvois traitement si elle abjure d’elle mesme.” ADH 48 H 1, 8 July 1679.

⁴⁷⁹ ADH 48 H 1, 8 July 1679.

The curious case of the gardener points out the potential for shifts in power within early modern households. On 25 March 1679, a Montpellier woman alleged that she needed protection from her heretical husband.⁴⁸⁰ The propagandists reported that there was a woman who became Protestant in order to marry her husband, but that she “nonetheless retained her Catholic heart.”⁴⁸¹ Every now and then she attended the Mass and on these days, when she disrobed, her husband took her clothes and mistreated her.⁴⁸² The propagandists decided that they would take action on behalf of this woman. Upon further examination of this woman’s story, the propagandists proposed that they need to make sure that her husband does not impede his wife abjuring from heresy.⁴⁸³ In another case, in July of the same year, the wife of Butetier, who was in the process of abjuring and converting needed protection from her husband.⁴⁸⁴ In this case, propagandists threatened her husband to the extent of making him leave town.⁴⁸⁵

Conclusion

The *compagnie*’s interest in converting the poor members of society resulted in taking care of mostly female Protestants. Early modern marriage was a desirable gain and conversion a tolerable loss for those who could not afford to get married otherwise.

⁴⁸⁰ ADH 48 H 1, 25 March 1679.

⁴⁸¹ “...a conservé neantmoins son coeur catholique....” ADH 48 H 1, 25 March 1679.

⁴⁸² ADH 48 H 1, 25 March 1679.

⁴⁸³ ADH 48 H 1, 25 March 1679.

⁴⁸⁴ ADH 48 H 1, 8 July 1679.

⁴⁸⁵ ADH 48 H 1, 8 July 1679.

Cases in which women received money in exchange for religious allegiance came in the form of marriage offers. Though the *compagnie* justified their program for reforming children by using the rhetoric of protecting feeble minds, their targets willfully sought the aid of the *compagnie* of the Propagation to their own advantage.

Although husbands headed the early modern family, virtuous wives affected the dynamic and most importantly, the salvation of family members. This idealization of the roles of women in relation to their family and community prompted members of the Propagation to support the marriages of young women who were within their reach. Propagandists valued marriage as a device to control women in society and ease social tensions associated with poor single women. Marriage was perceived as a functional institution that protected women, and women could capitalize on this assumption. Those of marriageable age turned to the Propagation for monetary support, and promised abjuration and conversion in return. Married women could take control of their personal salvation by seeking the protection of propagandists from their allegedly abusive husbands.

In addition to giving way to a tightening of patriarchal authority during the seventeenth century, marriage was a natural means of creating a network of vigilance and therefore the ideal situation to place newly converted young women. Individuals could not live autonomously. By joining a family, women placed themselves under greater scrutiny. The family was part of a community made up of neighbors, friends, and other members of the extended family. By expediting the marriage of *nouvelles converties*, propagandists attempted to create a self-sufficient system for monitoring heretical

relapse. The ultimate purpose for converting women and marrying them off to Catholic men, therefore, was to ensure that children be raised Catholic. Devout Catholic women could also be entrusted with young new converts.

The next and final chapter examines Catholic women involved in the Propagation and devoted to the cause of extirpating heresy. Their resourcefulness and charity to their respective *compagnies* and houses of the Propagation enabled the institution to continue and thrive.

CHAPTER V
FEMALE INITIATIVE, PATRONAGE AND SPONSORSHIP VIA *COMPAGNIES* OF
THE PROPAGATION

Previous chapters have discussed how propagandists emphasized the role of family and motherhood to such an extent that they could justify removing new female converts from domestic situations that exposed them to heresy. Surveillance and disagreement over the potential harm that Huguenot family members, especially females, could wreak on the souls of *nouvelles catholiques* and those of society helped create a discourse in which Catholic families would plant the seeds for an orderly and righteous state. Although the institution of the Propagation articulated the eradication of heresy as its overall mission, the execution of the goal rested on the regional branches of the Propagation themselves. For example, the deliberation records of the *compagnies* of the Propagation at Aix-en-provence have shown that propagandists actively relied upon marriage as a way to help young girls and women form their own families. As new converts, these married women and mothers could produce Catholics to come. Without the aid of the Propagation, they would otherwise have been in danger of heretical ideas, according to early modern mindsets. New female converts abjured and converted to Catholicism upon the reception of financial support or marriage incentives. Women turned to the *compagnie* for help, though propagandists did inquire and approach many of them for abjurations. In the same spirit, propagandists at Lyon turned to lodging as a way to remedy their anxieties associated with the progress of *nouvelles catholiques*.

Fervent religiosity found its way into the female population, though women did not have access to all of the channels to convey their devotion. The most detailed example found in the deliberation records of the Propagation is Madame de Revel of Grenoble. Her work for the *compagnie* at Grenoble appears not only in the deliberation records there, but also in the accounts of Lyon, Montpellier and Aix-en-provence. A devout and zealous Catholic, Revel used her status and the influence given to her by birth to facilitate the rearrangement of new converts throughout France. More generally, women patrons supported the isolation of new female converts by way of monetary donations for new residential arrangements. The records of the *compagnie* of Lyon illustrate particularly well female involvement in the Propagation's concerns for housing converts. The sponsorship of women significantly contributed to the work of the Propagation as some tasks could only be left in female hands. Such was the responsibility of teaching young girls. The participation of pious females in the creation of a Catholic state worked in tandem with the movement of female religious devotion that characterized the seventeenth century.

Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation

The end of the sixteenth century was a time in which women religious catechized the faithful and took upon themselves a mission for education along with their male counterparts the Jesuits. This seemed to contradict the will of the Tridentine decrees on marriage and monasticism that compelled enclosure for female religious orders,

championing women's roles through marriage or monasticism.⁴⁸⁶ For nuns under careful male watch, the Church arguably promoted them when it entrusted certain women, religious sisters, with teaching and converting other females.⁴⁸⁷ One of the most prominent teaching congregations, the Ursuline sisters, concentrated on the instruction of girls.⁴⁸⁸ Their teaching successes gained them a reputation worth emulating. By 1630, they had eighty houses, forming new *congrégées* when the towns demanded their work.⁴⁸⁹ The life and work of Mère Marie de l'Incarnation provides an example of a woman who embraced an interior life while actively engaged in teaching. Although hers is an extraordinary portrayal of an individual, Mère Marie's life exemplified new opportunities for seventeenth-century women. In convents, therefore, the same religious authorities who endorsed quiet female devotion also desired and expected the active participation of women in the realm of religion. It was far from a liberating era for women, but the seventeenth century offered some new opportunities in the way of religious devotion, which made lasting effects on social and cultural fronts.

⁴⁸⁶ The council met between 1545 and 1563 in multiple sessions to both affirm decrees from earlier Lateran councils and reassess those of others. In chapter 5 of the canon "On Regulars and Nuns" in the twenty-fifth session, the council called for the *clausuram sanctimonialium* (enclosure of female religious). It threatened superiors and bishops with the punishment of anathema if they did not comply with the council's orders. Norman P. Tanner, ed., "Decretum de regularibus et monialibus" in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Volume Two – Trent to Vatican II* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 776-784.

⁴⁸⁷ Elizabeth Rapley, *Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 7. Barbara B. Diefendorf objects to historical portrayals of the Catholic Reformation as a "tightly organized, hierarchical, and authoritarian movement whose repressive tendencies were particularly evident where the policing of women's religious order was concerned." In regards to Paris at least, she presents evidence that religious houses in the seventeenth century operated under loose supervision and relied on lay patronage for foundation and survival. "Contradictions of the Century of Saints: Aristocratic Patronage and the Convents of Counter-Reformation Paris," *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 469-499. See p. 471 for the quote.

⁴⁸⁹ Rapley, *Dévotes*, 52.

Whether indigenous or French, women struggled against efforts by male religious authorities to impose measures meant to control their public activities. While the Church imagined women religious retreating into convent life, many secular women started to teach school and ultimately dominated the field.⁴⁹⁰ A teaching apostolate did not agree with the life of cloistered nuns. Therefore, those who wished to teach and lead something akin to religious life formed themselves into groups of *filles séculières*.⁴⁹¹ Their devotion to charitable work as nurses and teachers fulfilled a religious calling, but they also served to improve social welfare. In New France, the presence of *dévotés* such as Marie Rousseau, Madame de la Peltrie and Jeanne Mance unsettled religious authorities, such as Father Le Jeune, because the frontier environment did not offer enough devices of control over these women.⁴⁹² His sentiments derived from the social anxiety that centered on female vulnerability to corruption. Religious authorities perceived Catholic instruction as the remedy to bringing about order to society, as illustrated by Mère Marie and her Ursuline sisters who suffered and diligently worked to convert female natives and turn them into something close to decent Catholic French girls.⁴⁹³ Letters written by Mère Marie attest that indigenous women acted as impediments to the religious conversion of Indians, as already discussed. Without Catholic initiation and catechism, native women could not control themselves or be controlled. At the same time, indigenous women

⁴⁹⁰ Rapley, *Dévotés*, 6.

⁴⁹¹ Rapley, *Dévotés*, 7, 22.

⁴⁹² Leslie Choquette, “‘Ces Amazones du Grand Dieu’: Women and Mission in Seventeenth-Century Canada,” *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 627-655. See pp. 649-653.

⁴⁹³ Marie de l’Incarnation, “Lettre XLIII,” 94-99.

could be a model of religious conversion when given the right education and thus, regulated accordingly.

Moralists asserted that women's piety should be both feared and revered. This ideological dichotomy promulgated religious authorities to push for both education and marriage for women in both New France and France. Elizabeth Rapley contends that seventeenth-century French women experienced misogynistic and anti-feminist attitudes by a patriarchal society. However, she argues that some Catholic women managed to find a place in such a world, in which they served Catholics: "...The feminine religious life became a nucleus of real, though always discreet strength."⁴⁹⁴ Although the women exceeded the men in numbers, their power lay not only in dominating spiritual life but also in their life outside the convent walls.⁴⁹⁵ The *dévotés*, or devout women, sought to help counter the religious crises by means of catechizing others. The zeal and enthusiasm of these unmarried and sincerely religious women eventually inspired them to join official orders.

This new development was not supported by the Catholic Church, and while certain women circumvented strict enclosure, others experienced the restrictions of conventual life, which reinforced negative views about women. Increased limitations and new liberties allotted to women underscored a female paradox in the seventeenth century. Male authorities placed women between holiness and sin. Although women had the potential to achieve great states of piety, they in turn could more easily fall into a state of

⁴⁹⁴ Rapley, *Dévotés*, 5.

⁴⁹⁵ Rapley, *Dévotés*, 6.

debauchery. At the same time, a spiritual movement of women in seventeenth-century France manifested itself through new female teaching congregations and religious orders. Women, therefore, posed a risk to society, and communities gambled daily simply on the moral state of the women among them.

Dévots and the Catholic Reformation

The word *dévo*t conjures up specific associations related to the Catholic Reformation in France during the sixteenth century: the militant laity, the Catholic League, and the wars of religion. The Latin word *devotus* has been used since 1190 to talk about an individual devoted to God.⁴⁹⁶ The careful use of the description, reserved largely for League members, is attributed to the politically zealous nature of its members during the sixteenth century. Historically, the piety of the group has not been emphasized as much as its radical activities.

The seventeenth century featured the height of the Marian sodalities, when the Jesuits established themselves in major cities such as Naples, Vienna, Munich, Madrid, Antwerp, Louvain, and Paris, such that “the seventeenth century was the century of the *dévots*.”⁴⁹⁷ The Jesuit fathers familiarized themselves with townspeople, set up schools in the centers of town, and generally publicized Marian devotions through processions and festivals of music and theater.⁴⁹⁸ Louis Châtellier has shown that *dévots* needed not

⁴⁹⁶ Gutton, *Dévots et société*, 5.

⁴⁹⁷ Louis Châtellier, *The Europe of the Devout: The Catholic Reformation and the Formation of a New Society*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 47.

⁴⁹⁸ Châtellier, *The Europe of the Devout*, 50-55.

engage in violence in order to demonstrate religious enthusiasm. He contends that a new post-Tridentine Catholic culture emerged out of popular Marian devotional sodalities guided by the Society of Jesus. Prior to the Reformation, reform-minded Catholic authorities such as Peter Canisius regarded the Marian sodalities as ways to transform society, though some considered that “extended functions to the laity” and a call for a priesthood of all believers bordered on heresy.⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, Châtellier found that sodalities held a fair amount of power such as the making of future clergy, though each region varied due to socio-economic and local political conditions.⁵⁰⁰ The Jesuit fathers and the sodalities appealed to the sensibilities of lay people who desired to improve the conditions of their society by strengthening religious morality.

Religious zeal in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century shows itself in acts ranging from extreme acts of violence to simply membership in Marian devotion. The word *dévo*t could very well mean religious fanaticism, and the works of scholars have shown that this indeed applied to many militant Catholic groups. Members of the *compagnies* of the Propagation may also be considered in this category of fervent religious laity. The seventeenth century realized major activity for the *dévots*, and the Propagation was a part of this era’s zealous movements. Mostly comprised of lay and clerical men, the Propagation allowed women to express their enthusiasm for their beliefs to some degree, and female participation varied according to local *compagnies*. In sum, the seventeenth century realized and recognized female religious works and Catholic

⁴⁹⁹ Châtellier, *The Europe of the Devout*, 9-13.

⁵⁰⁰ Châtellier, *The Europe of the Devout*, 73-85.

zeal, both of which Madame de Revel, an extraordinary female propagandist, embraced for the sake of ridding not only her community of Grenoble but all of France of heresy.

Madame de Revel, an Ideal Female *Dévote* and Propagandist

Another local woman of Grenoble became associated with the osier miracle. Madame de Revel, who composed a poem about the tree, endeavored to secure the locus of the Virgin Mary apparition, and as a result, the miracle, in the name of the Propagation. A prominent widow, devout Catholic, and member of the Grenobloise *compagnie*, Revel pursued her interests, though bound by the limits placed on her gender. An exemplary *précieuse dévote*, she managed to work for a cause while maintaining the ideals of feminism of a woman of her station. Revel's influence on the *compagnie* of the Propagation at Grenoble may be gleaned throughout its deliberation records.

On March 11, 1656, Madame de Revel proposed that the *compagnie* of the Propagation in Grenoble acquire the place of the osier miracle and the existing chapel at Vinay for fifty *écus*.⁵⁰¹ She proposed that she make the offer not in her name but rather with the declarations of the *compagnie*.⁵⁰² The *compagnie* decided in favor of the purchase according to her wishes:

It was decided that concerning the honor and glory of God and Our Lady, the aforementioned *compagnie* accepts the said proposal and for this offer has appointed Canon Balme, director of the society, for and on behalf of it to deliver to the said Madame de Revel all the documents of declarations conforming to her

⁵⁰¹ This is referring back to the miracle of the osier discussed in chapter 3. ADI 26 H 101, 11 March 1656. For a transcription of documents relating to the miracle at the osier, see Madame de Franclieu, *Le miracle de l'osier d'après les documents originaux* (Grenoble, 1892). She has corrected all of the texts to the modern French spelling of words. For this passage, see p. 23.

⁵⁰² ADI 26 H 101, 11 March 1656 and Franclieu, *Le miracle de l'osier*, 23.

righteous intention; and besides that, Mr. Marron (priest and pastor) of Polliennaz will be asked to acquire the said property and to take care of the construction of the said chapel.⁵⁰³

The following year, in the summer of 1657, the building of the chapel was well underway. In early June, the propagandists accepted the proposal made by Madame la Marquise de Vinay for *compatronage* [sic] or co-patronage with the *compagnie* to build the chapel that was already under construction.⁵⁰⁴ At the end of the month, after examination and negotiation of the contract, and permission from the archbishop, the *compagnie* accepted Vinay's proposal for the chapel.⁵⁰⁵ The following month, the archbishopric noted the proposal for the chapel that would be built and maintained with the annual income of 100 *livres* by Vinay.⁵⁰⁶ By 1664 the chapel of Notre Dame de l'Osier had been well-established such that the chapel received a royal decree attesting to the installment of the Augustinians of Chaussés.⁵⁰⁷ As proprietors of the apparition site, propagandists could utilize the amazing story of Pierre's experience for its own ends. The *compagnie* at Grenoble was most likely eager for the acquisition of the place of the willow tree that witnessed miracles and supported the building of a chapel. The

⁵⁰³ "A este arresté que sagissant de lhonneur et gloire de Dieu et de Nostre Dame que ladite compagnie accepte ladite proposition et pour ce offert a commis Monsieur le chanoyne Balme directeur de la compagnie pour et au nom dicelle passer a ladite dame de Revel tous actes de declarations conformes a sa juste intention et en outre que Monsieur Marron pretre cure de Polliennaz sera prie de faire laquisition de ladite place et prendre soin de la construction de ladite chapelle." ADI 26 H 101, 11 March 1656. See also Franclieu, *Le miracle de l'osier*, 23.

⁵⁰⁴ ADI 26 H 101, 2 June 1657 and Franclieu, *Le miracle de l'osier*, 26.

⁵⁰⁵ ADI 26 H 101, 30 June 1657 and Franclieu, *Le miracle de l'osier*, 27.

⁵⁰⁶ On July 1, 1657, the donation of Madame de Vinay is officially noted in ADI 1 H 141, "Au nom de Dieu a tous present et advenier soit notoire...."

⁵⁰⁷ ADI 1 H 141, "Louis par la grace de Dieu...."

miraculous apparition of the osier stood to not only inspire conversions to Catholicism but also invigorate the religious spirit of the faithful. Although the miraculous presence of the Virgin Mary in the branches must have elicited much attention, the personal conversion experience of Combet stood to fan enthusiasm among the public as well. In addition to bolstering the Catholic religion in the region, the pilgrimage site reaped financial benefits as well.⁵⁰⁸

Madame de Revel was from a prominent family, and she married into yet another one, but her widowed life allowed her the liberty to participate in religious causes. Her religious devotion and faith compelled her to actively work against heresy in Grenoble for most of her life. She was equally devoted to developing a strong Catholic heritage in Grenoble as illustrated by her interest in acquiring the site of the osier miracle for the Propagation. She even wrote a poem about the miracle in which she lauds the Virgin Mary. The poem consists of four stanzas in printed form, though the place of publication and date are unknown. In the last stanza of the poem, she surmises the purpose of the Virgin's apparition, interpreting its grand vision for seemingly troubled times:

I return to you, dear Osier
 Silent, you know how to preach the Faith,
 And your blood at this place will drown out heresy
 In your simple branches likely to make knots
 We come to affix both our hearts and our vows
 Having been hung on the altar of Mary, we remain.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸ Martin states that the *compagnie* reported 3000 *livres* in gross revenue from this “profitable investment,” *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 348.

⁵⁰⁹ “Cher Ozier ie reviens à toy,
 Muet, tu scais prescher, la Foy,
 Et ton sang en ce lieu va noyer l’heresie
 A tes simples rameaux propres à faire noeuds
 Nous venons attacher & nos cœurs & nos vœux

Revel regarded the *osier* as a sign that the work of the *compagnie* in Grenoble and throughout France not only held supernatural blessings but ran parallel to the plans of God. Her vigorous devotion to the mission of the Catholic faith emerged out of familial relations and the appeal of Catholic militancy that witnessed a trend during her lifetime.

The life and work of Madame de Revel generated some scholarly interest during the twentieth-century. In 1932, during a meeting of the *bibliophiles dauphinois* (book collectors of the Dauphiné region), a member noted a paper on Revel:

Mr. Royer is reading a report regarding Madame de Revel, born Jeanne Dominique de La Croix de Chevières, widow of a prosecutor of the Parlement of Dauphiné, whose reputation for intelligence had gained in Paris. She was a relative of Scarron, Claude de Chaulnes, [and] Pierre de Boissat. She rhymed with ease, and many of her poems were inserted into manuscript collections or printed. Someone of great devotion, she was a propagandist of the miracle at the Osier and a founder of the work of the Propagation de la foi at Grenoble. Two letters recently entered at the Grenoble Library and carrying her signature are related to this work. In it, she reports the closing of a Temple in Pragela and the conversion of a Genevan (1660).⁵¹⁰

This short description of Madame de Revel offers a short and accurate depiction of her life. This early twentieth-century portrayal might just as well have been a seventeenth-

Pour rester appendus à Autel de Marie.”

Madame de Revel, *Apostrophe à cet Ozier Miraculeux* (s.l.n.d.), 2.

⁵¹⁰ “M. Royer lit une communication sur Madame de Revel, née Jeanne Dominique de La Croix de Chevières, veuve d’un avocat général au Parlement du Dauphiné, dont la réputation d’esprit avait gagné Paris. Elle fut en relations avec Scarron, Claude de Chaulnes, Pierre de Boissat. Elle rimait avec aisance et plusieurs de ses poésies sont insérées dans des recueils manuscrits ou imprimés. D’une grande dévotion, elle fut une des propagandistes du miracle d’Osier et une des fondatrices de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi à Grenoble. Deux lettres récemment entrées à la Bibliothèque de Grenoble et portant sa signature sont relatives à cette œuvre. Elle y signale la fermeture d’un Temple à Pragela et la conversion d’un Genevois (1660).” It seems that Royer attributed Revel to the organization the Œuvre de la propagation de la foi, which was founded in the nineteenth century. Louis Royer, “Séance du mardi 3 mai 1932,” *Petite Revue des Bibliophiles Dauphinois* 3 (1929-33): 156-158. For the quote, see p. 157.

century one. She is identified by her marital status, kinship ties, social status, and her admirable devotion to the Catholic faith. The short blurb does not diminish her significant role at the *compagnie* and her contributions to the fight against heresy, but it does not fully consider Revel in the broader context of the seventeenth century.

A more recent biographical sketch of Madame de Revel offers more information about the devout seventeenth-century Frenchwoman and attempts to relate her to his readers. Writing in the early 1980s, Georges Mongrédien lauds the life and work of Revel.⁵¹¹ First, he lists her among some of the most prominent *précieuses dévotes* or pious ladies of distinction of the seventeenth century. Then he gives a brief account of her familial background. She was a *Grenobloise* of a prominent, wealthy, and noble family. Born Jeanne-Angélique La Croix de Chevrières in the year 1613, Revel was the daughter of nobleman Félix de La Croix, lord of Chevrières and count of Saint-Vallier. Henry IV (r. 1589-1610) bestowed upon her uncle Jean de La Croix the bishopric of Grenoble. At the age of thirteen and a half, she married Félicien Boffin who became *avocat général* or prosecutor of the Grenoble Parlement on July 28, 1626. Boffin was the son of Thomas Boffin, baron of Uriage.⁵¹²

Mongrédien's admiration for Madame de Revel is revealed throughout his description of her life and travails. Being of noble stock, Revel was obliged to consent to a marriage of convenience, Mongrédien empathizes: "The poor girl was obviously

⁵¹¹ This article was published posthumously one year after Mongrédien's death. Georges Mongrédien, "Une précieuse dévote: Madame de Revel," *XVII^e Siècle* 33, no. 1 (January-March 1981): 9-24.

⁵¹² Mongrédien, "Une précieuse dévote," 9-10.

sacrificed for the sake of powerful financial interests.”⁵¹³ Furthermore, Mongrédien portrays Revel’s husband as extremely authoritarian who freed his wife from the “ill-matched union” when he died prematurely in the year 1643.⁵¹⁴ She had eleven children with him and remained a widow after his death. Mongrédien describes her family as militantly Catholic and attributes Revel’s propensity for charitable works to her background and education. Revel’s most notable work of charity was the foundation of the *Filles repenties* in Grenoble in 1631. Working with her brother Jean and other pious women, Revel helped establish a house for orphans three years later. Mongrédien writes that the era in which Revel lived was “an active atmosphere of the Catholic Reformation.”⁵¹⁵

As a young widow and a prominent member of society, Madame de Revel could devote her time, energy, and finances to the things that mattered to her. Early modern women who found themselves widowed at an early age had to deal with the complications that came with their new household status. Widowhood conferred on women a different social, cultural, and legal status in their communities. Widows took charge of their households, but “they did not simply replace their husbands.”⁵¹⁶ They transgressed gender boundaries by becoming female heads of households, thereby

⁵¹³ “La pauvrete était manifestement sacrifiée à de puissants intérêts financiers.” Mongrédien, “Une précieuse dévote,” 10.

⁵¹⁴ “Fort autoritaire and cette union mal assortie.” Mongrédien, “Une précieuse dévote,” 10.

⁵¹⁵ “...une atmosphère active de Contre-Réforme catholique.” Mongrédien, “Une précieuse dévote,” 10.

⁵¹⁶ Julie Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 129.

upsetting the patriarchal society of family dynamics.⁵¹⁷ At the same time, widowhood offered more choices in both their public and private lives. Widows could dictate their preferences in remarriage, financial spending, and household and business decisions.⁵¹⁸

The *dévotés* of the seventeenth century used resources available to them for their own sakes. Marian sodalities established by Jesuits throughout Europe allowed militant Catholic men to express their strong religious beliefs and engage in activities for the sake of their cause. There were fewer organized opportunities for women to express religiosity in the seventeenth century, though they found ways to do so. *Compagnies* of the Propagation became an avenue for women interested in taking part in the fight against heresy. In Grenoble, Revel became a prominent member of the *compagnie* there. Her greatest project was the foundation of a house of the Propagation in Grenoble. Members of what was to be the *compagnie* of the Propagation came together on February 17, 1647 with Revel's brother Président Jean de la Croix de Chevrières of the Parlement of Grenoble.⁵¹⁹ Three years later, the *compagnie* received the official royal patents for its foundation of the house on March 30, 1650. Thus, another chapter of the life of Revel began to take shape after she became widowed.

⁵¹⁷ Hardwick, "Widowhood and Patriarchy."

⁵¹⁸ Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy*, 130. See also Diefendorf, "Widowhood and Remarriage;" and Sherrin Marshall Wyntjes, "Survivors and Status: Widowhood and Family in the Early Modern Netherlands," *Journal of Family History* 7 (Winter 1982): 396-405.

⁵¹⁹ He was a member of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement and helped found the *compagnie* of the Propagation in Grenoble along with his sister. While Madame de Revel helped manage regular, everyday business, Président de Chevrières handled *compagnie* business at a more official capacity. He held various offices from the time of the *compagnie*'s inception to 1660. See Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 262-263, 308.

Using her position of wealth and power, Madame de Revel worked diligently for the *compagnie* at Grenoble. The noble women of Grenoble played an especially large part in the work of the Propagation. Lacking a female religious order to care for the *nouvelles catholiques*, lay women took charge instead.⁵²⁰ Revel's literary gift and her social connections made her a useful member of the Propagation.⁵²¹ She traveled back and forth more frequently, from Grenoble to Paris, after becoming widowed.⁵²² From 1650 to 1653, Revel and her brother the president took an extended stay in Paris, and during this time, they represented the *compagnie* at Grenoble. On its behalf, they appeal to the Assembly of the Clergy for aid that the *compagnie* could provide to new converts.⁵²³ She helped prominent women to abjure heresy and convert to Catholicism, such as Madame de La Suze on July 20, 1653.

⁵²⁰ Martin has noted the women and their duties, which the women established at the first election of the separate assembly on June 12, 1665. As the "primary assistant," Madame de Revel took care of finding lodging for girls sent away to other *compagnies* and those received by them in Grenoble. She mostly helped with finding housing and generally assisted the others, but towards the end of her life in 1681, she assumed the work of secretary. As testament to the family's devotion, her sister-in-law Madame la Présidente de Chevrères was the superior. These two were the only women to attend the assembly meetings for the assembly meetings of the men. Other positions included bursar, sacristan, and nurse, and still others took care of clothing and work for the girls. *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 305, 311-312.

⁵²¹ Personal charm and literary prowess afforded noblewomen certain social and political advantages. Sharon Kettering describes lesser nobles such as Madame de Venel who found favor in royal households as ladies-in-waiting and other domestic service. Being the right fit with family members secured those coveted positions. Among other things, feminine charm could be the deciding factor. See "The Household Service of Early Modern French Noblewomen," *French Historical Studies* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 55-85. Praise for the use of language by women of court began to take shape in the seventeenth century when men of letters debated the corruptive effect of Latin on the mother tongue of French. For this reason, some argued, women spoke pure and unadulterated French. Dena Goodman, "L'orthographe des dames: Gender and Language in the Old Regime," *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 191-223.

⁵²² Mongrédien, "Une précieuse dévote," 17.

⁵²³ Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 259-260.

On a day-to-day basis, Madame de Revel's role for the *compagnie* at Grenoble largely consisted of gaining conversions. She devoted herself to facilitating the abjurations of young women. The *compagnie* charged her with making arrangements for new female converts: lodging and marriages. As the lifeline to the other *compagnies*, after Paris, propagandists enjoyed dictating the fates of new converts should they be placed under the care of a *compagnie* outside their own town. Revel became one of these propagandists who held such power. Propagandists from other regions consulted her on the placement of their new converts: "Madame de Revel is in charge of writing to the Propagation of Lyon regarding the placement of the young Giroud here."⁵²⁴ Grenoble and Lyon often corresponded over the placement of converts. With the help of Revel, female converts found refuge: "Jeanne Barthelemy of Grenoble, sent by Revel, has been placed at the home of Mademoiselle de Raud on 30 April."⁵²⁵ Over the course of the *compagnie*'s existence, her influence may be gleaned by numerous entries that display the vigor of her activities until her death in the year 1687.⁵²⁶

Often, Catholic militancy in the seventeenth century did not leave much room for women's membership, but due to her strong familial connections, Madame de Revel partook in the Propagation and the movement against heresy. The deliberation records

⁵²⁴ "Madame de Revel s'est chargée décrire a la propagation de Lyon pour y faire placer la petite Giroud." ADI 26 H 104, 11 July 1676.

⁵²⁵ "Jeanne Barthelemy de Grenoble envoyée par Madame de Revel a esté mise chez Mdle. de Raud le 30^e avril." ADR 45 H 12, 2 May 1661.

⁵²⁶ Martin has counted 1,100 times that Madame de Revel's name appears in the registers. Revel's name is mentioned the most during her stint with the Propagation. Her brother's name, which comes in at a distant second, appears sixty times. *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 258. See also Mongrédien, "Une précieuse dévote," 24.

that list the work attributed to Revel of Grenoble show that she played an integral part in keeping the *compagnie* in good working order. Revel played a significant and active role not only in her local *compagnie* but in the overall network of the Propagation. Thus, she wielded considerable power and authority in society. She helped establish the *compagnie* in Grenoble and continued to work diligently for the cause against heresy. While she used her widowed status and wealth to her advantage, society only accepted her influence and power because she remained within the confines of its gender ideals. Revel's active membership in the Grenoble's *compagnie* of the Propagation provides an opportunity to discuss relations of power, and women's participation in the social and religious realms of early modern France.

Female Patronage

Within the last two decades, scholars of early modern France have demonstrated cases in which noble and non-noble women navigated themselves through an increasingly patriarchal society. Women of the seventeenth century found access to political, economic and religious dimensions of society despite greater restrictions on them. Noblewomen had access to political power through informal channels. Alongside their husbands, wives of nobility contributed to the advancement of their family economy by networking and arranging social events.⁵²⁷ By creating patron-client relationships, these women determined their own fates as well as those of their families. Women also

⁵²⁷ Sara Chapman, "Patronage as Family Economy: The Role of Women in the Patron-Client Network of the Phélpeaux de Pontchartrain Family, 1670-1715," *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 11-35.

found access to economic holdings to which they considered themselves entitled by means of legal maneuvering. Though marital separations did not commonly occur in the early modern age, a surprising number of women sought and won their cases for legal separation in court.⁵²⁸ By working with the system at hand, women of various social standings achieved their goals and improved the conditions of their lives according to their own terms.

Despite official limitations placed on women through the closing of convents, restricting marital laws, and limited opportunities for work, seventeenth-century women asserted themselves in compelling and often successful ways. Patronage, it seems, allowed women entry into exclusive places. In a political context, patronage describes the obligatory relationship between a patron and client. Sharon Kettering asserts that the obligatory nature of patronage differed from other ties such as kinship and friendship.⁵²⁹ Often in reference to noble relationships, patronage relied mostly on materialistic forms of reciprocity. Along with self-interest, a client's ideology and political allegiance could factor into the making or breaking of patronage relationships. Various possibilities existed and whatever the circumstances, patron-client ties afforded reciprocal benefit. In seventeenth-century Paris, women in the upper echelons of society sought out the spiritual economy of convents through patronage. These women gained access to a holy

⁵²⁸ Overall, the women who sought marital separations opted for a legal separation of financial holdings from their husbands by claiming that the patriarch of the household neglected and abused his moral and economic duties. They could then thereby preserve the household and maintain their livelihood by controlling the finances. Julie Hardwick, "Seeking Separations: Gender, Marriages, and Household Economies in Early Modern France," *French Historical Studies* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 157-180.

⁵²⁹ Sharon Kettering, "Patronage in Early Modern France," *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1992): 839-862. For a summary of her take on patronage and the historiography on the topic, see p. 844.

and private space reserved for women who took vows.⁵³⁰ Indeed, it was patronage that allowed a way for women to participate in the work of the Propagation.

Without the patronage of women, propagandists would have lacked considerable monetary resources to attract prospective converts. Female converts, especially, required greater attention as many of them needed financial assistance and housing. In addition, patronage allowed women who desired to tangibly express their support and personal devotion to their faith. Deliberation records show that along with the triumph of new converts, private individual support enabled the house of *nouvelles converties* to thrive. Early in 1661, Madame de Lescot offered to donate annually money for the purpose of sponsoring the education of a *nouvelle catholique* at the Grenobloise house:

Regarding Madame de Lescot having offered to give thirty *livres* each and every year to be used to instruct one of the newly converted girls, it has been decided that we will use this money to instruct Louise Reillerie, an orphan and convert of a Bollanges [family] in this town.⁵³¹

By enabling propagandists of the Propagation to carry out its mission of eradicating heresy, women participated in a campaign that reflected a broader religious dynamic that

⁵³⁰ For more information on religious and civil limitations placed on women, refer to the three articles cited below, which together offer a broad range of perspectives, archival evidence, and interpretations. In “Contradictions of the Century of Saints,” Diefendorf describes socialization in Parisian convents by aristocratic women who sought access to the spiritual economy in exchange for their patronage. The nobility and the state cooperated with one another in order to serve their own agendas and interests. Hanley, “Engendering the State.” James B. Collins contends that women continued to choose their work, as well as their marriage partners, despite formal laws that suggest otherwise in “The Economic Role of Women in Seventeenth-Century France,” *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 2 (Autumn 1989): 436-470.

⁵³¹ “Madame de Lescot ayant offert de donner trente livres chacune annee pour estre employée a faire instruire une des filles de nouvelles converties est estre desliveré que lon emploiera cest argent pour faire instruire Louise Reillerie orfeline et convertie fille d’une Bollanges de cest ville.” ADI 26 H 102, 25 January 1661.

originally spread from Jesuit fathers to the laity throughout Europe in the earlier part of the seventeenth century.

Women got involved in the betterment of their communities. In addition to Revel's efforts for the *compagnie*, Grenoble benefitted from the work of women who elected to take part in bettering the lives of those less fortunate. The two main hospices, the Madelines and the Orphans, catered to those who had no family members upon whom they could rely. The group of zealous and pious noble women concerned for the prostitutes and orphans in these institutions became "mothers to the poor."⁵³² Specifically for the Propagation, elite women in Grenoble offered monetary assistance and lodging. Taking their cue from Grenoble, pious women throughout the network of the Propagation contributed to the success of their local *compagnies*, though most of them may not be so visible in the historiography of the Propagation.

The conversion of females required propagandists not only to provide some means and incentive for new converts, but to monitor the women closely after their abjuration and conversion. Spiritual vulnerability to heresy also came about with physical vulnerability. When a *nouvelle convertie* became sick, society members went to visit and made the assembly aware of her current state.⁵³³ When a newly converted girl fell gravely ill, the *compagnie* donated money to her. Jeanne Seguine of Roque received two *écus* after the *compagnie* heard that she was confined at hospital.⁵³⁴ In the spirit of

⁵³² Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble*, 22.

⁵³³ ADBR 150 H 1, 12 September 1660 and 26 September 1660.

⁵³⁴ ADBR 150 H 1, 13 March 1672.

charity seen in Grenoble, in the city of Aix-en-provence contributions by way of money and lodging helped the Propagation receive young women for conversion. The critical nature of local patronage to the *compagnie* is duly noted in the deliberation records themselves. On 11 October 1671, propagandists expressed how vital contributions were to the success of the institution at Aix-en-provence. They remarked that their new converts needed support, at least one *écu*, for their abjuration.⁵³⁵

In the deliberation records for Aix-en-provence, several examples highlight how women took part in the *compagnie*'s mission to convert heretics. Women's participation in the spiritual economy of their town came in the form of charitable donation. On June 8, 1659, a Dutch woman with an infant and daughter asked the *compagnie* for help. Propagandists described her as *fort pauvre* or an extremely poor woman. With urgency, the *compagnie* furnished the Dutch woman with six *livres* on account of Damoiselle de Blain's patronage.⁵³⁶ On a more regular basis, propagandists approached local women for contributions toward the conversion of girls.⁵³⁷ In particular, Madame de la Coste made several contributions of six *livres* to the *compagnie* and allowed newly converted women to stay at her home.⁵³⁸ On 14 December 1670, Madame de la Coste made a large, lump-sum donation in the amount of six hundred *livres* to the *compagnie*.⁵³⁹ The

⁵³⁵ ADBR 150 H 1, 11 October 1671.

⁵³⁶ ADBR 150 H 1, 8 June 1659.

⁵³⁷ ADBR 150 H 1, 28 November 1660 and 26 June 1667.

⁵³⁸ ADBR 150 H 1, 28 November 1660, 10 February 1664, 23 March 1670, April 1670.

⁵³⁹ ADBR 150 H 1, 14 December 1670.

compagnie planned to spend the contribution by allotting an annual pension of thirty *livres* “destined for the house of new converts to the treasury of the *compagnie*.”⁵⁴⁰

In addition to providing financial support for marriages, the *compagnie* needed to arrange alternative lodging for newly converted young women. Women often received money for lodging with locals who offered their homes until a more permanent arrangement could be made. When a *nouvelle convertie* stayed with a female Catholic patron, the new convert could be insulated from corruptive ideas such as those of the Huguenots. The danger, for propagandists, was real. They monitored both Catholics and new converts whose residence created a precarious situation. The *compagnie* intervened with monetary aid for two Catholic girls whose living situation seemed unappealing to propagandists: “Mr. Courier provided 3 *livres* 10 *sous* for Claudine Jaquelenne [and] 2 *livres* 10 *sous* for Pennette Guillet, who were both at the house of Huguenots, likely to corrupt themselves.”⁵⁴¹ More frequently, the *compagnie* strove to monitor and assess the environment of their recent female converts: “Mr. Charbonnier is requested to get information regarding a heretical shoemaker of whom a girl convert named Jeanne Françoise Pitet remains.”⁵⁴² In order to help remedy this potentially dangerous circumstance, the *compagnie* enlisted the help of female donors and patrons.

⁵⁴⁰ “...destiné a la maison des nouveaux converties au tresorie de la compagnie....” ADBR 150 H 1, 14 December 1670 and 11 October 1671.

⁵⁴¹ “Monsieur Courier a fourny 3 livres 10 sous pour Claudine Jacqueline 2 livres 10 sous pour Pennette Guillet qui estoient toutes deux chez des huguenots prette a se pervertir.” ADR 45 H 12, 13 April 1665.

⁵⁴² “Monsieur Charbonnier est prié de s’informer on demeure un cordonnier heretique chez lequel demeure une fille convertie nommee Jeanne Françoise Pitet.” ADR 45 H 12, 24 November 1664.

The Propagation, therefore, opened up a new opportunity for women to showcase their piety and loyalty to the Catholic religion. In Montpellier, women did not donate so much of their money to the Propagation mission. Rather, they participated in other ways. By contributing something to the cause of eradicating heresy, women could express their religiosity and participate in the Propagation's mission. The women involved in the work of the *compagnie* elicited praise from propagandists: "During the assembly, a good young woman, very zealous, came to give notice that there is a woman aged ——— perilously ill who asks for a cleric, desiring to die in the Catholic religion...."⁵⁴³ The surveillance of women by other women furthered the *compagnie*'s mission to convert Huguenot families. On 6 August 1681, Madame la Marquise de la Roquete reported to propagandists of Montpellier that Françoise Chambonne, wife of Jean Bounard, a Huguenot, should be given assistance since she has abjured from the Protestant faith.⁵⁴⁴

New Lodging in Lyon

The *compagnie* at Lyon attempted to ensure their female conversion rates through various forms of assistance as seen with the other *compagnies*. Potential female converts sought out propagandists and offered to convert to Catholicism in exchange for *quelque charité* or "some charity."⁵⁴⁵ Women like Mademoiselle Feautrier desired help from the

⁵⁴³ "Pendant l'assemblée une bonne demelle. tres zelée est venue donner avis qu'il y a une femme agée ——— dangereusement malade qui demande un ecclesiastique desirant mourir dans la religion catholique...." ADH 48 H 1, 19 February 1681. There is a blank space left where the secretary presumably forgot to go back and fill in the woman's age.

⁵⁴⁴ ADH 48 H 1, 6 August 1681.

⁵⁴⁵ ADR 45 H 12, 14 March 1661.

compagnie because of her dire financial situation: “Mr. Ferrus, with Mr. Severat, requested to speak with Mademoiselle Feautrier, who wants to convert from evil to good and for this had to be lodged.”⁵⁴⁶ When infirm or generally impoverished, women could become vulnerable to heretical ideas.⁵⁴⁷ For this reason, propagandists took time and effort to speak with such women in order to convince them to convert. In addition, records reveal that women received marriage aid for going through the conversion process: “The *compagnie* should give a note of 50 *livres* for the marriage of Susanne Bouchet.”⁵⁴⁸ What makes the deliberation records of the Lyon *compagnie* stand out from the others, however, is the emphasis on housing arrangements for female converts made possible by female sponsorship of their stay.

Facilitating the lodging of new converts was the most important duty of the Lyon *compagnie*. In securing support for the *compagnie*, the male propagandists required the assistance of local religious institutions and their heads: “The gentlemen have carefully considered the proposal by Monseigneur of St. Just. We humbly remind him of the support that he promised for the *compagnie*....”⁵⁴⁹ Propagandists also had to think about other means of supporting new converts. Acquiring a house was the more satisfactory option. In the same deliberation record aforementioned, propagandists noted that most of

⁵⁴⁶ “Monsieur Ferrus est prié, avec Monsr. Severat, parler a Madle. Feautrier qui veut se convertir de mal en bien et pour ce eut aller en pention.” ADR 45 H 12, 22 June 1665.

⁵⁴⁷ ADR 45 H 12, 2 March 1665.

⁵⁴⁸ “La compagnie a fait donne un billet de 50 livres pour le mariage de Susanne Bouchet.” ADR 45 H 12, 28 November 1661.

⁵⁴⁹ “Messieurs ayant meurement consideré la proposition de Mondrsr de St Just. L’on humblement remetré des soins quil promet pour la compagnie....” ADR 45 H 12, 5 December 1661.

them preferred the *compagnie*'s own house. Finding a place at which new converts could reside became a priority for propagandists: “[They] want to take the trouble of renting a house and gathering charity from confraternity members for furniture of the aforesaid house without sacrifice to the regular charity that they give for the maintenance of new converts.”⁵⁵⁰ Monetary allowances for new converts remained a concern for propagandists in Lyon as seen elsewhere in *compagnies* of the Propagation. In Lyon, however, lodging became a particular focal point for propagandists, especially when it came to housing female converts.

The *compagnie* at Lyon benefitted greatly from supporters who offered their homes for the good of the mission of the Propagation. The deliberation records reveal that propagandists believed that new female converts needed to abandon any hint of heretical influence that could deter the progress of religious conversion. Separating new female converts from Huguenot influences became a primary directive for the *compagnie* at Lyon. Propagandists elected to help girls live elsewhere if they encountered heretical influences at home: “Mr. Bachelard is charged with requesting Mr. Bouillet to use his care to make Claudine Rimbs leave the home of heretics where she is lodged.”⁵⁵¹ With the help of local women, the *compagnie* could house recent converts: “It has been determined to pay Jeanne the widow who lodged the young woman de Sales and a young

⁵⁵⁰ “...vouloir prendre la peine de louer une maison et de recevoir les charités de Messrs les confreres pour lameublement de la dite maison sans que ce la prejudicie aux charités ordinaires quils font aux nouveaux convertis pour leur entretien.” ADR 45 H 12, 5 December 1661.

⁵⁵¹ “Monsieur Bachelard s’est chargé de prier monsieur Bouillet d’employer ses soins pour faire sortir Claudine Rimbs de chez les heretiques ou elles estre loger.” ADR 45 H 12, 24 September 1668.

boy.”⁵⁵² Female patrons of Lyon did donate money to the cause of converting women, though they appear few and far between in the deliberation records: Mademoiselle Garbusat has given eleven *livres* to the new female convert Jarbé.”⁵⁵³ Again, opportunities for female participation in the *compagnie* at Lyon mostly came in the form of housing young women who abjured heresy. The deliberation records of Lyon show that housing new female converts enabled the mission of the Propagation by allowing new female converts to stay with complying women in their homes: “...Claudine Courant staying at the home of Mademoiselle le Roux en Bourgneuf....”⁵⁵⁴

As propagandists at Aix-en-provence offered marriage aid for converting, propagandists of the *compagnie* at Lyon approached women with lodging as an incentive. This is not to say that propagandists at Aix did not concern themselves with proper housing for new female converts.⁵⁵⁵ The deliberation records of these two *compagnies* reveal that propagandists greatly relied upon one form of method over another in order to retain female conversions. Another similarity between the *compagnies* was that women sought out the Propagation, though new housing appears not to have been something that drew female converts as much as marriage allowances did in Aix. Women received housing arrangements by expressing their interest in conversion: “Mr. Chausse is asked

⁵⁵² “Il a esté resolu de payer la dame Jeanne vesue qui a logé la damelle. de Sales et un petit garcon.” ADR 45 H 12, 1 December 1665.

⁵⁵³ “Mademoiselle Garbusat a donne 11 livres a Jarbé nouvelle convertie.” ADR 45 H 12, 3 January 1661.

⁵⁵⁴ “...Claudine Courant demeurant chez Mdle le Roux en Bourgneuf.... “ ADR 45 H 12, 3 August 1659.

⁵⁵⁵ ADBR 150H1, 13 February 1667.

to see Marie Pantère a Huguenot born in Annonay who desires to convert – she [is of] the age to convert.”⁵⁵⁶ Propagandists spent a great deal of time inquiring about potential places at which female converts could reside.⁵⁵⁷ In Lyon, the Ursuline sisters near St. Barthelemy offered yet another source of lodging for female converts.⁵⁵⁸ The difference between non-religious female patrons and the Ursuline sisters was that the latter got paid a pension for providing lodging. A typical contract between propagandists and the Ursuline sisters stipulated that the sisters would house a new female convert from one to three months for a payment, and in the case of 13 December 1660, the sum was forty *livres*: “Mr. Marin has paid the sisters of St. Ursula near St. Just the sum of forty *livres* for lodging for three months for Magdeleine Merisson and for a month for Catherine Pelissary....”⁵⁵⁹

By the 1660s, the role of the Ursuline sisters for the Propagation in Lyon became crucial to the mission of converting girls. Propagandists relied heavily on Ursuline sisters for not only lodging but also for the education of female converts. On 5 December 1661, the *compagnie* noted the role that the sisters played as well as female patronage:

On the proposal made by the abbot of St. Just, general vicar and director of this *compagnie*, if it would be better, for the benefit of the new converts, to have a house into which they withdraw until they are well informed of the mysteries of

⁵⁵⁶ “Monsr. Chausse est prié voir Marie Pantère née d’Annonay huguenotte qui desire se convertir elle loge se convertir.” ADR 45 H 12, 28 February 1661.

⁵⁵⁷ ADR 45 H 12, 17 November 1659.

⁵⁵⁸ ADR 45 H 12, 17 May 1660 and 4 October 1660.

⁵⁵⁹ “Monsieur Marin a payé aux dames de Ste. Ursulle prés St. Just la somme de quarante livres pour la pention de 3 mois pour Magdeleine Merisson et pour un mois pour Catherine Pelissary....” ADR 45 H 12, 13 December 1660.

our faith, particularly the girls. In view of the same, which advantages that are presented for this end such as the charity of Mademoiselle de Potes that offers each year the sum of two hundred *livres* [or] Madame de Monteson from Anticaille, superior of the second monastery of the women religious of the Visitation de Sainte Mary, who offers four female religious in order to employ their care and charity for the instruction of new female converts and for those who will convert, and the sum of eight hundred *livres* for the support of these four females religious for two years.⁵⁶⁰

The female patronage mentioned above enabled the *compagnie* at Lyon to carry out its work. For example, Mademoiselle de Sales arrived in Lyon with her brother, and in need of a place to live. Right away, propagandists could offer lodging for Mademoiselle de Sales with Madame de l'Anticaille of the convent of the Visitation de Sainte Mary.⁵⁶¹

Perhaps the involvement of women in the lodging of new female converts allowed them to play a more public role in Lyon than elsewhere. Male propagandists discussed asking the archbishop for permission for a *confrerie des dames* or a confraternity of women to meet together at the chapel of Sainte Catherine.⁵⁶² According to their rules, widowed and married women of the Assemblée des Dames could participate in works of charity under the supervision of the *compagnie*.⁵⁶³ In 1667, propagandists “were asked to

⁵⁶⁰ “Sur la proposition faite par Monsr l'Abbé de St Just vicaire general et directeur de cette compagnie, s'il seroit mieux pour l'avantage de la nouveaux convertis d'avoir une maison pour les y retirer pour jusques a ce qu'ils soient bien instruits des mysteres de notre foy et particulierement les filles, veu même quelles avantages qui se presentent pour cet effect comme de la charité de Mademoiselle de Potes qui offre par chaque annee la somme de deux cent livres Madame de Monteson superieure du 2e monastere des dames religieuses de la Visitation de Ste Marie, de l'Anticaille qui offre quatre religieuses pour employer leurs soins et charités pour linstruction des nouvellement converties et de celles qui se convertiront et la somme de huit cent livres pour l'entretien de ces quatre religieuses pendant deux années.” ADR 45 H 12, 5 December 1661.

⁵⁶¹ ADR 45 H 12, 22 September 1664.

⁵⁶² ADR 45 H 12, 18 January 1663. Martin also discusses this in *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 303.

⁵⁶³ For an excerpt of the 1685 rules for the women, see Martin, *Les compagnies de la propagation*, 303.

continue their care” of the assembly of women.⁵⁶⁴ The deliberation records of the Propagation at Lyon notes the assembly of women and its members Madame Delaigue, Madame de Renaud, Madame de Glarin, Mademoiselle Boulouson, Mademoiselle Buillioud, Mademoiselle Dupré, Mademoiselle Dupressin and Mademoiselle Roger.⁵⁶⁵ Propagandists noted that there were eight women in this meeting and that it began on Thursday 3 March 1667, but there is little information on this assembly or what these women actually did for the Propagation as there are no deliberation records for the female assembly.⁵⁶⁶ The deliberation records of the Propagation do show that the assembly met a second time, on 14 March 1667, and that the women nominated Madame Delaigue as president, Madame Roger as *conseillere* or adviser, and Mademoiselle de Pressins as secretary and trustee.⁵⁶⁷ Male propagandists oversaw the nominations and continued to guide the assembly of women:

Mr. de Seve reported that last Tuesday, on the 14th of the current [month], the women assembled for the second time and appointed Madame Delaigue for president, Madame Roger for advisor, and Mademoiselle de Pressins for secretary and trustee in the presence of Mr. de Seve and Mr. de Severat, who were asked to continue their assistance to the aforementioned assembly of women.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ “...sont priez de continuer leur soins...” ADR 45 H 12, 28 February 1667.

⁵⁶⁵ ADR 45 H 12, 7 March 1667.

⁵⁶⁶ ADR 45 H 12, 7 March 1667.

⁵⁶⁷ ADR 45 H 12, 21 March 1667.

⁵⁶⁸ “Monsieur de Seve a raporté que mardy dernier 14e du courant les dames s’assemblerent pour la seconde fois et nommerent Madame Delaigue pour president, Madame Roger pour conseilere et Madlle. de Pressins pour secretaire et depositaire en presence de monsieur de Seve et monsieur de Severat qui sont pries de continuer leur assistance en ladite assemblee des dames.” ADR 45 H 12, 21 March 1667. The spelling of people’s names vary slightly, i.e. Pressin and Pressins.

Unlike Madame de Revel of Grenoble, the women of Lyon probably did not have as active or as independent a role in the affairs of their *compagnie*. The women of the assembly appear in the deliberation records as patrons of new converts. They helped the Propagation by assuming responsibility for converts such as Robert the tailor. Assemblée des Dames member Madame de Glarin assumed care for the new convert as he was “remitted in the hands” of this woman of the assembly.⁵⁶⁹ As the *compagnie* at Lyon focused largely on lodging female converts, assembly women also concentrated their effort on protecting women from heretical influences. Propagandists first gathered resources to support the removal of a female convert from a potentially dangerous situation, namely the corrupting influences of heresy. In September of 1668, Mr. Bachelard turned to Mr. Bouillet for aiding Claudine Rimbs as she resided with Huguenots.⁵⁷⁰ In less than two months, propagandists successfully removed Claudine from her home and placed her in a living situation more pleasing to the *compagnie*. Having extracted the convert from a precarious residence, propagandists needed further help in monitoring and preventing heretical relapse. The president of the assembly helped survey the progress of the female convert: “Mr Bachelard reported that Claudine Rimbs left the Huguenot home and that she lives close by Madame Delaigue, president of the women’s assembly.”⁵⁷¹ By situating converts among devout Catholics, propagandists created a system that would yield more enduring conversions. The activities of these

⁵⁶⁹“...remise entre les mains de Madame de Glarins.” ADR 45 H 12, 5 March 1668.

⁵⁷⁰ ADR 45 H 12, 24 September 1668.

⁵⁷¹ “Monsieur Bachelard a raporté que Claudine Rimbs s’est retirer de chez les huguenots et qu’elle demeure pres Madame de Laique.” ADR 45 H 12, 5 November 1668.

women and the nature of their participation in the Propagation cannot be determined, but their mention in the deliberation records attests to their significance and value to the *compagnie* at Lyon.

Conclusion

Except for the recognition of the work and personal piety of Madame de Revel, female supporters of the state's domestic religious mission have received scant attention in the writing of the institutional history of the Propagation. The actions of women in support of the organization that are illustrated in the deliberation records of the *compagnies* fit within broader cultural and social trends of the Catholic Reformation. Early modern notions about female education, family, household, and devotion influenced propagandists on how to proceed with their mission. For example, in Lyon, propagandists desired to relocate female converts. Targeting such converts necessitated the aid of women. These unofficial propagandists effected change in their communities by taking female converts into their homes. The case of Revel exemplifies a new female religiosity reflecting fervent lay devotion and Catholic piety. In addition, women of wealth and status found they could express religious enthusiasm through traditional patronage and charitable donations to their respective *compagnies*. By sponsoring new female converts, however, women contributed to their cause in ways that only they could, that is, in ways that men could not.

The role of women in the Catholic reform movement of the seventeenth century contributed to the overall success of institutions dedicated to the eradication of heresy in

France. Gender differences informed religious authorities such that they both idealized and vilified female religiosity. Thus, while propagandists distrusted women and regarded their vulnerability as an obstacle on the path towards true religious devotion, they also had to trust them to steer new female converts in the right direction. Entrusting women with the education of other females empowered women, for instruction of girls could only come from women. The idea of re-lodging female converts in Lyon aligned with the notion of mothers being educators of their children, especially of their daughters. Religious authorities against the persistence of heresy in France favored the transformation of society beginning in the home.

CONCLUSION

The incentives given to Protestants to abandon their former beliefs reveal the gendering of heresy and unruly behavior, and the centrality of the mother in reshaping society. These sentiments derived from social tensions regarding notions of difference in the early modern period. The resolution of these conflicts centered on reforming women in their households, and included communities of women in convents as well as brothels. A source of extremes, cultural constructions of femininity teetered between virtues and vices. Huguenot women threatened their households because reformers relied upon mothers as the transmitters of erroneous, as well as true, cultures. By targeting the reformation of young Protestant girls, *compagnies* of the Propagation targeted the source of heresy – the impediment to social and political stability.

Although the French government under Louis XIV eventually revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had assured freedom of worship to Huguenots, decades before, the *compagnies* of the Propagation had launched their own assault on what they perceived as the growing threat of heresy. Furthermore, before the establishment of the *compagnies* in Paris and elsewhere in France, militant Catholic authorities such as François Véron wrote in favor of a complete and systematic eradication of heresy. He imagined a French state free of bloodshed and dissent upon the extirpation of the heretical religion that Huguenots upheld. A concerted effort, he argued, gave France the best chance of achieving this peace, and religious as well as political uniformity. Under Bourbon rule, zealous

Catholics initiated the Parisian *compagnie* of the Propagation in 1632 and founded the first house of the *nouvelles catholiques* in 1634.

Early modern mentalities towards women and poverty influenced the Propagation's choice of target and method of reform. Stricter marriage laws and society's efforts to enclose women into some kind of household explains one part of the Propagation's initiative. Society problematized unmarriageable women and deemed them a burden on its moral economy. Religious authorities placed these women in what they perceived as the controlled environment of a household (family or religious). Discourses on the dangers that women posed on society have long existed. For instance, in the sixteenth century, there was a social concern for the spread of syphilis and so mixed baths were prohibited; thus, prostitution and unmarried women posed a health threat to the body at large. The incarceration of women accused of prostitution resulted from their perceived threat to the public body at large. The *dévots* in seventeenth-century France, likewise, took forceful and concerted measures to ensure their own public safety.

The other part may be explained by the emphasis on cultural and social centralization during the seventeenth century. While people of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries experienced unity in collective superstitions, the seventeenth century witnessed a drive towards institutionalized religion. This was brought about by the reception of the Tridentine Reforms, and resulted in religious conformity in the vision of elite culture. In the seventeenth-century era of Catholic reform, the *compagnies* of the Propagation formed to meet in part the needs of such Catholics. Either way, secular and religious authorities aimed to resolve social and cultural tensions by shifting their focus onto the

women they believed to be corrupting and disorderly, namely, the Huguenot women of France.

Propagandists desired to recreate a state based on the culture of Catholicism, and in order to do this, they had to reach burgeoning generations. Though they targeted children for conversion, they mainly reached out to women and young girls whose familial role as mothers could makeover future members of society. The ideal Catholic woman raised her daughters to be modest, and these pious Catholics, in turn, would go on to raise their own soldiers of the faith. In his 1687 publication *Traité de l'éducation des filles*, Bishop François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon attempts to convince readers of the worth of a good female education. He emphasizes a traditional, domestic role for women, but he also gives value to women's work. Fénelon states that men's work in public affairs was important and virtuous, and a good home and woman positively affected men and their work. Private life affected public life and consequently, society. Thus, it was important for women to keep a home conducive to keeping men content. As the source of an idyllic, Catholic society, Fénelon rationalizes that girls must be brought up to be morally upright women. Their future as good wives depended on their education, and the making of a virtuous woman depended upon an early education in the Catholic faith. The centrality of the family for the sake of holiness and for the welfare of the state, according to Cordier and Bodin, resonates with the prescriptions for mothers by Fénelon.⁵⁷² With the great task for the care of children came the equally great power of

⁵⁷² The fair number of publications of Bodin's work, and the more modest figure for Cordier's, make it likely that Fénelon read them, and applied their viewpoints to his treatise on the female education.

access and potential to morally endanger them. Religious ideas concerning family served the ideologies of militant propagandists of the Catholic faith. Distrust of the corrupting influence of mothers and mother figures intersected with early modern notions of morality and sexuality in relation to the private and public facets of society. Though propagandists made progress and considered their work integral to the defeat of heresy, they could never find true success given their perceptions of gender differences. The propagandists at Montpellier illustrate this case in point. Royal decrees of 1666 and 1669 forced children to be raised in the Catholic faith as long as their fathers were Catholic. These, however, failed to give comfort to propagandists and instead, they prompted doubts about female Huguenots complying by the law, and taking care of their children. These women, painted as obstinate as the indigeous women in the New World, posed the greatest danger to the making of a state desirable to both political and religious authorities.

After 1685, persuasion took on another dynamic. In the spirit of in-“toleration” or reluctant coexistence, the French Catholics sought to bring about religious uniformity through missionary work, education, and even bribery prior to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. After the revocation, Protestantism became illegal in the French state. Those Huguenots who did not flee to neighboring states such as Germany had to convert, at least in an outward sense, to Catholicism. The heresy problem, however, did not disappear overnight. The revocation legalized the work of the Propagation, and did not radically change its basic purpose to facilitate the process of Huguenot conversions to Catholicism. It did, however, change the dynamics of the institution, which came into

existence by the perception that Catholics had to curtail the growth of heresy that was officially allowed in the realm. The Catholic men and women who contributed to the various *compagnies* heeded a pressing calling to rid the state of Protestantism. Arguably and for all their intents and purposes, the propagandists failed in their mission to fight heresy in France. They did not penetrate every household and could not declare with certainty that every mother would educate her child in the Catholic religion. It was not until the late nineteenth century that mothers would even figure into legal documents concerning parental authority.⁵⁷³ However, as early as the seventeenth century, motherhood found itself judged by authorities who realized the power of parenting in the making of families and the greater society. After the revocation, I imagine that the propagandists continued their work, but probably without the same feeling of urgency and excitement that their former quasi-secretive society offered before 1685.

⁵⁷³ By 25 July 1889, civil law could divest parents of their children based on an assessment of their moral character, but since the law recognized only fathers as parents, the new enactment did not technically apply to mothers. Schafer found that despite the *legalese*, poor single mothers legally figured in as parents only to be stripped of their rights by reason of moral endangerment. See “Between Paternal Right and the Dangerous Mother.”

REFERENCES

List of Abbreviations**Archives**

ADBR	Archives départementales, Bouches de Rhône
ADH	Archives départementales, Hérault
ADI	Archives départementales, Isère
ADR	Archives départementales, Rhône
ADV	Archives départementales, Vaucluse

Libraries

BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
BML	Bibliothèque municipale, Lyon
BMG	Bibliothèque municipale, Grenoble

Primary Sources**Archival Documents**

- ADBR 150 H 1: Deliberation records (1656-1672)
 ADH 48 H 1: Deliberation records (1679-1681)
 ADI 1 H 141: Augustines and the miracle of the osier
 ADI 1 H 143: Augustines and the miracle of the osier
 ADI 26 H 101: Deliberation records (1647-1659)
 ADI 26 H 102: Deliberation records (1659-1670)
 ADI 26 H 103: Deliberation records (1668-1670)
 ADI 26 H 104: Deliberation records (1671-1679)
 ADR 45 H 12: Deliberation records (1659-1669)
 ADV 113 H 1: Eighteenth-century deliberation records; administrative records

Rare Books and Documents

Arrest du conseil d'estat du Roy, Qui décharge les Curez de ce Royaume des assignations à eux données à la requeste du Traittant des droits de Controole, avec défenses à luy et ses Commis, d'exiger ledit droit de Controole, desdits Curez pour les publications des bans de Mariage, et autres affaires purement Ecclesiastiques, à

peine de deux mille livre d'amende, dépens dommages et interests. Paris: Chez Antoine Vitré, 1674. BnF F-47068 (5).

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Commencement, institution, regles, et status de la congregation de l'Exaltation sainte Croix, pour la propagation de la Foy, établie en cette ville de Paris, le quatorzième Septembre de l'année mil six cens trente-deux. Paris: Chez Sebastien Cramoisy, 1635. BnF E-5359.

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