Abstracts

Alain Cabantous
Violence and the Sacred, or Blasphemy during the French Revolution

During the French Revolution, the notion of blasphemy, initially considered to be of a religious nature and the result of personal judgement, entered the political field when it was tied to a new set of sacred values – the same values that give blasphemy its performative quality. This transfer was all the more astonishing given that the revolutionaries removed the crime of 'divine lèse-majesté' from the French penal code. In fact, as the chapter shows, many of the speeches that French deputies delivered during the years spanning the Constituent Assembly and the Thermidorian Convention used the term blasphemy for political purposes, imbuing concepts such as 'the nation' and 'the people' with a sense of sacredness and investing 'equality', 'happiness' but also 'virtue' with a transcendent meaning. The use of these concepts depended largely on the historical context such as the revolutionary wars and factional struggles. Particularly the trial of King Louis XVI made it possible for individuals to stigmatise political opponents opposing the trial as 'blasphemers'. The same accusation was later brought against militant atheists opposed to the cult of the Supreme Being. At the same time, when Catholic believers were faced with or looked back to the Revolution's anticlerical and dechristianising policies as well as its acts of sacrilegious violence, which were distinct from blasphemies though they often accompanied them, they had recourse to the traditional meaning of blasphemy. But whilst to them manifestations of verbal and physical violence equated an attack on and the scorning of God, His silence raised questions about the interpretations of these incidents and their meaning.

Julio de la Cueva
Blasphemy, War and Revolution: Spain, 1936

Blasphemy played an important role in the revolutionary situation that unfolded in the Republican zone after the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936 – 1939) on July 18, 1936. This zone witnessed the outbreak of intense violence against those considered enemies of the Republic and the revolution. The Catholic Church occupied a unique position among the targets of this revolutionary hatred. In fact, much earlier, the Church and Catholic religion itself had been singled out as enemies of the people within the anticlerical discourse that was common to the Spanish Left. The forms of violence used against the Church were

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diverse but interrelated; they included murder, iconoclasm and offensive speech. The chapter chronicles 26 cases from the province of Toledo, revealing how blasphemy, and the incitement to commit blasphemy, emerged as instruments at the service of revolutionary violence. It examines how the use of offensive language against the sacred evolved from being a spontaneous practice – a trait characteristic of lower-class Spanish men – to an intentional practice, aimed at deliberately subverting the moral integrity of the clergy and, indeed, serving as a hallmark of the antifascist, revolutionary identity. Like sacrilege, blasphemy came to be part of the new revolutionary normativity in a situation of extreme secularisation imposed by force.

Matthew Kerry
The Sound of Blasphemy in Early Twentieth-Century Spain: Vulgarity, Violence and the Crowd

In May 1909, Madrid's Chief of Police launched an anti-blasphemy campaign in Spain's capital. Two months later, Barcelona was rocked by the "Tragic Week" when a strike against the mobilisation of reservists led to several days of rioting, barricades and anticlerical as well as iconoclastic violence. This chapter uses these two moments to examine attitudes towards blasphemy in early twentieth-century Spain, drawing on Catholic publications, the printed press and testimonies from the Tragic Week. It approaches blasphemy as a speech act that formed part of the sonic environment of the streets of Madrid and Barcelona in 1909. For Catholic commentators, blasphemy was a sin, a vice and a symptom of growing Spanish apostasy, but blaspheming was not solely a religious matter. Intellectuals agreed with Catholics that blaspheming was a vulgar act that required cleansing from Spanish society and criticised blasphemy as a symptom of Spain's underdevelopment. Their attacks on blasphemy betrayed fears about an emerging mass urban society for they associated it with the urban environment, the working class and mass entertainment. During the Tragic Week, blasphemy functioned as a disinhibiting cry that facilitated violence, as an assertion of anti-religious identity, and as a form of sonic violence. The deafening din of the anticlerical mob – a menacing, enveloping soundscape that included blasphemous yelling and sacrilegious bell-ringing – assaulted the ears and provided acoustic confirmation of a world turned upside down.

Christoffer Leber
Conflicting Narratives of Blasphemy, Heresy and Religious Reform: The Jatho Affair in Wilhelmine Germany

In 1911, the figure of Carl Jatho caused an uproar in Germany, especially among liberal and conservative Protestants. The reason for this was that the Lutheran Church of Prussia, Germany's largest state, had removed Carl Jatho, a charismatic pastor from Cologne, from his office on accusations of heresy. The decision was based on a newly introduced heresy law designed to regulate dissent within the Church's own ranks. The Jatho case triggered large protests not only among liberal Protestants, who admired the pastor as a religious reformer, but also among free-thinkers, secularists and monists. After all, Jatho radically broke with the conventions of the Protestant faith and integrated elements of pantheism, Monism and the contemporary Nietzsche cult into his spiritual teachings. Whilst conservative Protestants saw in Carl Jatho a heretic violating established religious ideas, freethinkers, monists and other secularists thus celebrated him as a pioneer of religious freedom and a modernizer of Christianity. This chapter argues that the debate over Jatho's dissenting views highlighted a long-smouldering conflict in Germany about freedom of belief, Protestant identity and confessional orthodoxy. This discussion took place against the backdrop of the 1871 imperial law prohibiting blasphemy and the 1911 heresy law that was the product of the Lutheran Church's efforts to suppress internal dissent.

David Nash
The Imagined Violence of Blasphemy in England

England substantially escaped the religious and political turmoil that was more commonplace elsewhere in nineteenth-century Europe. As a result, challenges to established religion were comparatively slight, and a vibrant anticlericalism was substantially missing from the country's history. This situation however bred a deep sense of providentialism, which had profound effects on how the authorities and the population at large viewed blasphemy and blasphemous incidents. With only events on the continent as exemplars, individuals regularly stated how England had been providentially spared the nightmare scenarios that unfolded elsewhere. This created a narrative that monarch, Church and government had provided political and social peace which had engendered prosperity for all; any threat to this set-up might create its downfall and a descent into continental-style revolution. Thus individuals had to explore in their own minds the imagined violence that blasphemy would create within society. In reply to this,

some nineteenth-century blasphemers indicted the God of the Bible as intemperate and prone to violence. The imagined fear of violence that might result from blasphemy also substantially influenced courtroom decisions and the pronouncements of judges that formed English Common Law into a series of precedents, which reflected the desire to prevent violence. Such attitudes also strongly influenced the actions of authority and policing agencies that regularly sought to define blasphemy as a public order problem.

Marco Emanuele Omes
Blasphemy, Religious Adherence and Political Loyalty in the Papal States (1790s through 1810s)

The specific set-up of the Papal States, whereby the pope was not just the spiritual head of a church but also a king with temporal power, ensured that politics and religion were closely intertwined. This interaction also showed itself during and especially after the occupation by French troops in the years 1798 – 1799 and 1808 – 1814, when political disloyalty was tied to forms of religious misbehaviour. Whilst the French were in power, acts of blasphemy and sacrilege, secular cults and ceremonies sacralising Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte were used to express patriotic attitudes and show opposition towards the papacy's political and theocratic power. After the papal restorations, however, they were used to stigmatise supporters of the erstwhile republican and imperial regimes as well as to reaffirm the pontiff's sacred authority. By considering the activities of different institutions instructed to enforce political and religious compliance (the Roman-based *Giunta di Stato*, the *Congregazione dei Disordini* and the tribunals of the Inquisition, the *Vicariato* and the *Penitenzieria Apostolica*), the chapter demonstrates the continuity in the doctrinal definitions of blasphemy across periods, the curious connection between blasphemy and the charge of lèse-majesté as well as the remarkable degree to which religion became politicised in the Papal States around 1800.

Manfred Sing
The Politics of Religious Outrage: The Satanic Verses and the Ayatollah's Licence to Kill

When it was first published in 1988, Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* caused an uproar among the international Muslim community. The chapter traces these worldwide protests and probes the failed attempt by British Muslims to put the author on trial for blasphemy. It argues that the blasphemous content of the novel is questionable because it took up a central motif of the Quranic text

in a literary form, exploring the boundaries between revelation, poetry and diabolical seduction. Criticism of the novel, however, ranged from accusations of historical falsification, obscenity and mixing the sacred and the profane, to disturbing the public peace and even racism – claims through which British Muslims tried framing themselves as a religious and political minority. Blasphemy allegations served, then, not only to question the impartiality of the secular order, but also to debate legal grey areas, social inequality, political representation, cultural rights and power imbalances. Additionally, the chapter offers a new look at Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini's licence to kill Rushdie, his publishers and aides, usually known as "*fatwa*," which it reinterprets as a deliberate act of vigilante justice and cultural as well as political self-empowerment. Paradoxically, Khomeini's actions produced the kind of modern (secular) state sovereignty that he claimed to reject for Islamic reasons. Even so, Khomeini's call for the use of extra-legal force to protect "the highest Islamic sanctuaries" became a forerunner of blasphemy accusations against the Prophet Muhammad that have since found numerous imitators for political and other reasons.

Marcin Składanowski
Pokémon in the Church: The Case of Ruslan Sokolovskiy and the Limits of Religious Performance in Contemporary Russia

An analysis of blasphemy in Russian public life shows that anti-church protests are generally political protests. However, in recent years Russia has witnessed a protest that was a form of public blasphemy but devoid of any political meaning: the art performance of blogger Ruslan Sokolovskiy. In 2016, he was accused of offending the feelings of religious believers after he had searched for Pokémon in the Church 'On Blood' ('*na Krovi*', full name: Temple-Monument on the Blood in Honour of All the Saints who Shone in the Russian Land) in Yekaterinburg. The chapter analyses the nature, context and consequences of Sokolovskiy's intervention. It shows how the artist aimed to check whether said game, when played in a church, would result in legal consequences. In the video he made and broadcasted on YouTube, Sokolovskiy resorted to expressions and actions generally deemed blasphemous such as when calling Jesus a "rare Pokémon". Later, he even labelled his performance openly anti-church and antireligious. In 2017, Sokolovskiy was sentenced to three-and-a-half years' imprisonment and ordered to remove all videos from the internet offending the feelings of believers. Sokolovskiy's case serves as an example to examine how the contemporary Russian Federation deals with actions said to offend religious feelings. It sheds light on existing legislation, its versatile interpretation, selective and po-

liticised implementation as well as on its role in shaping the image of the Orthodox Church in contemporary Russian society.

Laura Thompson
Protecting Muslims' Feelings, Protecting Public Order: Tunisian Blasphemy Cases from the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

In 1857, a Tunisian Jew was prosecuted for having allegedly committed a blasphemy; in 1904, a young Muslim reformer living in Tunis suffered the same fate. The chapter argues that both men were targeted for acts that were both public and repeated (as opposed to simple "slips of the tongue") but also because each belonged to a minority group, whose religious and social identities put them just far away enough from a particular norm to be prosecutable. Their prosecutions helped a transitional state such as nineteenth-century Tunisia, part of the Ottoman Empire and then of France, to reassert control over the public sphere. More generally, the chapter argues that actors supporting and criticising blasphemy prosecutions in Tunisia for the past two centuries have repeatedly returned to a formulation of blasphemy as an affective crime. In fact, since the nineteenth century, politicians, plaintiffs, foreign travellers and journalists have frequently framed blasphemy as prosecutable because it hurts Muslims' feelings and as a result destabilises public order. Thus the chapter shows how alleged Tunisian blasphemers have consistently been accused of inflicting a violence that is deeply and physically experienced, teasing out a productive comparison with the affective consequences of hate speech crimes.