THE REPUBLIC OF GRACE: INTERNATIONAL JANSENISM IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT AND REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

At the center of eighteenth-century international Jansenism were a group of émigré French priests living in the Dutch city of Utrecht where they coordinated the efforts of a learned and cosmopolitan group of clerics, university professors, and governmental officials – an international Republic of Grace – that both resembled and competed with the Enlightenment's Republic of Letters. It was a religious and intellectual community that was dedicated to reform within the Catholic Church, consciously pan-European in its outlook, and in the eighteenth century, threatened the political and religious foundations of Europe’s Old Regime. Jansenist religious reform, carried out in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, crossed from the religious sphere into the political, so that Jansenists viewed the French Revolution as the opportunity to complete the task of the Counter-Reformation Church. And, because this debate was waged in the eighteenth century, it utilized the century's most powerful tool for manipulating public opinion, the pen and printing press. Modeled on the studies of the eighteenth-century public sphere inspired by Jürgen Habermas’s *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, this dissertation argues that Habermas’ public sphere is far too limited in scope for he
claimed that the basis for its growth was bourgeois and secular in nature. The activities of the Jansenists, however, demonstrate a public sphere that was religious in nature – where faith mattered more than reason – well into the eighteenth and even the nineteenth century. Furthermore, this dissertation significantly adds to the intellectual and cultural history of eighteenth-century Europe and the origins of the French Revolution by analyzing the contributions made by the international Jansenist community to the revolutionary discourse of late eighteenth-century Europe.
Dedicated to Cathy and Theodore
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

HUA  Het Utrechts Archief

NNEE  Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth-century debate between European Jansenists and Jesuits was perhaps epitomized by their disagreement over the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Jansenism, a reform movement which began in the southern Netherlands, and spreading to France, the Dutch Republic, Italy, the Austrian Empire, and the Iberian Peninsula, was an attempt to restore the theological and ecclesiological purity of the Catholic Church based on the example of its pristine ancient and apostolic age. The devotion to the Sacred Heart, which began in earnest following the visions of the French Visitationist

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1 “The Lord then spoke to Samuel, ‘Grant the people all that they request.’” I Samuel 8:7
“Let the eyes of your hearts be enlightened so that you may know the hope that is his call.” Ephesians 1:18. All translations in this dissertation are the author’s, unless noted otherwise.
nun Marguerite-Marie Alacoque in the 1680s, was precisely the form of piety Jansenists opposed: it was new, not rooted in scripture, and baroque.\(^2\) And because it eventually came to be embraced by the Jesuit order and the papacy over the course of the eighteenth century, it was viewed by European Jansenists as a devotion which contributed to the papacy’s ultramontanist claims of infallibility. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the Portuguese Queen Maria I dedicated the newly constructed Basilica of the Estrela in Lisbon to the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, European Jansenists across the continent publicly attacked the devotional practice in eighteenth-century newspapers and pamphlets.

Prudently, the Jansenist publicists avoided attacking the Queen herself, especially since Jansenism enjoyed considerable prestige in Portugal after the Jesuits were banished from that country during the Marquis de Pombal’s “enlightened” ministry.\(^3\) Instead, the foci for their attacks was the basilica’s massive altarpiece which was unveiled in 1781, an allegory of the devotion to the Sacred Heart painted by the Italian Pompeo Batoni. Batoni’s painting, which measured over sixteen feet high, depicted the Sacred Heart elevated above an altar on which sat the Holy Sacrament. The heart is crowned with thorns and in the left foreground, Pope Pius VI gestures towards the Sacred Heart. Below the altar, Christ is in the center exposing his chest to the viewer, again emphasizing the

\(^2\) Soeur Alacoque did not invent the devotion to the Sacred Heart, it existed in various forms prior to her visions. However, her visions in which Christ implored her to spread the message of love for humanity which the Sacred Heart represented, transformed the devotional practice into a more formal devotional cult, see Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart; An Epic Tale for Modern Times* (Berkeley: 2000), 13-18.

devotion to the Sacred Heart. Batoni painted a symbolic representation of Charity, who nursed her infant while adoring the Sacred Heart, and personifications of the four parts of the world, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas (See figure)\(^4\).

\[\text{Figure 1: Batoni, Allegory of the Sacred Heart}\]

In response, the Jansenist newspaper, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, declared that the painting “merited suppression and proscription….” The main complaint of the Jansenist weekly, which served as one of the main organs of communications between Jansenists across Europe, was that by separating the Sacred Heart from either the Holy Sacrament, or from the body of Christ himself, the painting promoted a devotional practice which was not at all uniform and catholic, but particular. “It is no longer a question of being a Christian,” the paper continued, “but it is now necessary to be a Cordicole.” 5 The devotion to the Sacred Heart, argued the newspaper, only served to reinforce doctrinal errors created by “the ridiculous visions of Soeur Alacoque” in the minds of “the simple and ignorant” and therefore, the entire practice violated the regulations concerning both devotional practices and artistic expression in Session Twenty-five of the Council of Trent. 6

If Jansenists were sensitive to the image of Christ’s body separated into component parts, this was in part because they were themselves at the center of a schism in the Dutch Republic that divided the body of Christ, that is the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic” Roman Catholic Church, into two hostile camps.  In Utrecht, the traditional

5 *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, 27 Fevrier, 1782. Hereafter abbreviated as NNEE. The term cordicole was a pejorative applied to devotees of the Cult of the Sacred Heart. This passage, including the fear of the particularism of the cult, foreshadows Henri Grégoire famous critique of the cult in his book published in 1810, *Histoire des sects religieuses*, in a chapter entitled “Cordicoles” in which he quipped why there should not be a devotion “to the Savior’s feet, hands, or head?” Qtd. in Jonas, 139.

6 NNEE, 27 Fevrier, 1782. Here the article refers to the decree from Session XXV of the Council of Trent regarding the “Invocation and Veneration of Holy Relics and Sacred Images” which stated “If abuses arise, the Holy Synod wishes them vehemently abolished in order to prevent the representation and spread of errors and ignorance.” See, *Sacrosancti Œcu menici et Generalis Concilii Tridentini; Canones et Decreta*, (Bielefeld, Germany: 1868), 177.
capital of Dutch Catholicism, a protracted struggle between the Jesuits who had been dispatched by the papacy to minister to the Dutch Catholic Church in 1648 as a “missionary church,” and the Dutch parish clergy led to a rejection of the authority of the papacy’s right to govern the Dutch church independently of the Dutch secular clergy who in turn elected their own Archbishop of Utrecht in 1723. The exiled French Jansenist Bishop of Babylon, Dominique Varlet, performed the *sacre* for Cornelius Steenhoven and thus forged a link between French Jansenism and the Church of Utrecht. Having performed the ceremony against the express wishes of Rome, Varlet and Steenhoven were both excommunicated and Utrecht declared a schismatic church. Nonetheless, the election of Steenhoven provoked both a number of like-minded French clerics to immigrate to Utrecht, where they founded the International Jansenist community. Ecclesiastics across Europe sent sympathetic letters of communion to Utrecht attesting to righteousness of their cause. The support for Utrecht only intensified during the eighteenth century, especially following the convocation of the Provincial Council of Utrecht in 1763 that affirmed both their Catholicity and loyalty to Rome in spiritual affairs, while also defending their ecclesiastical independence. Repeated condemnations of Utrecht by the papacy, in spite of Utrecht’s continued profession of Christian loyalty and humility to the Bishop of Rome, became proof enough for Jansenists across Europe that Utrecht possessed the marks of the true church of “uniformity and universality” and that if there were a schism, then Rome, not Utrecht, was in fact responsible for the break.

This dissertation is a study of the International Jansenist community centered in Utrecht which was created from a loose network of correspondents from across Europe.
into a veritable community of clerics, university professors, government ministers and bureaucrats, and other sympathetic lay Catholics. In its origins, this community was dedicated to a construction of the Catholic Church based on its apostolic model, for which the defense of the ecclesiastical liberties of the Church of Utrecht and its reconciliation with Rome were essential elements. Jansenist reform was premised on a neo-Augustinian theology of selective grace and limited salvation combined with a conciliar ecclesiology that insisted that local bishops, priests and even the laity, at least when meeting in councils, held equal authority to the Pope. And it ultimately clashed with Jesuitical reform based on Molinist theology by which God generously offered grace and ultramontanist views of papal infallibility.\footnote{Briefly defined, in Augustinian soteriology, humans could desire to do good, but were unable to do so without efficacious grace, for which they were undeserving. The Molinist view held that the amount a sufficient enough amount of grace to merit salvation, should one choose to accept it, was freely distributed. For more detailed definitions, see Jean Delumeau and Monique Cottret, \textit{Le Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire} (Paris: 1971), 206-210.} By the end of the eighteenth century, under the leadership of French Jansenist expatriates in Utrecht, the loose network of defenders of the Dutch Church became an identifiable and cohesive intellectual community, a Jansenist “Republic of Grace” that both rivaled and complemented the Enlightenment “Republic of Letters” throughout the eighteenth century, creating a religious public sphere in which issues of Catholic doctrine and obedience were subjected as much to a test of reason as it was to a demonstration of faith. The Jansenist community maintained their movement’s religious and intellectual cohesion across Europe by publishing the \textit{Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques}, distributing books to coreligionists in countries such as France that rigorously censored Jansenist literature, and maintaining
an extensive network of correspondence. Finally, this Jansenist international community was dedicated to a uniquely Jansenist view of Tridentine reform that was based on a model of the church in its pristine apostolic age. But, while this reform was rooted in a historical model of the ancient church and part of a Catholic Reformation, it was also a distinctly eighteenth-century reform in which the laity, as part of a religious public sphere, were not to be just spectators, but directly engaged in the politics of religion in eighteenth-century Europe.

The connection between the Dutch clergy and Jansenism extended to the place of Jansenism’s founding, the University of Louvain in the Spanish Netherlands. Indeed, both the university and Utrecht stood at the literal and spiritual frontier of Catholic Europe. The university, founded in 1426 by papal charter and provided as a gift to the Estates of Brabant by the Burgundian prince John IV, became famous as a center for northern humanism and could boast having educated Erasmus of Rotterdam, Justius Lipsius, and Pope Adrian VI, formerly an Archbishop of Utrecht, whose brief papacy (r. 1522-1523) was perhaps best known for Adrian’s successful effort at keeping Erasmus within the Catholic fold in the early days of the Reformation. The intellectual renown of the university, and location in the margins of Catholic Europe, also placed Louvain at the center of the theological controversy surrounding Molinist and Augustinian forms of


9 Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform, 1250-1550; An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe (New Haven: 1980), 292. Adrian VI was also the last non-Italian pontiff until the election of John Paul II in 1978.
It was at Louvain where Cornelius Jansen, a professor of theology and later Bishop of Ypres, wrote his treatise on efficacious grace, *Augustinus*, published posthumously in 1640.

In *Augustinus*, Jansen hoped to define the Catholic position on grace and salvation that the Council of Trent had seemingly left ambiguous. The Sixth Session at Trent had asserted that justification came through works, and not as Luther said by faith alone, and that humans freely chose to do works or not. However, the same session also declared that the ability to perform saving works depended on grace, only the Council did not state if this grace was preordained by God or if humans could choose to reject God’s grace. In 1588, the Portuguese theologian Luis Molina published a treatise on grace which argued that while God provided “sufficient grace” to be freely accepted or rejected by humans, God’s foreknowledge of who would accept this grace was not predestination but a divine “middle knowledge.” Thus, humans could exercise free will to accept the sufficient grace by which it became possible to do works which justified salvation. Moreover, Molinism seemed particularly well-suited for the newly constituted Society of Jesus whose militant loyalty to the papacy and missionary zeal placed an emphasis on works in the world. For Augustinians, Molina’s version of grace was a neo-Pelagian refutation of Augustinian theology that held that humans were so depraved that only God’s grace could not be earned though works, but was freely given to an undeserving humanity. In response to Molina, and in violation of a papal ban on theological arguments concerning

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grace and salvation, Jansen claimed that humans depended on “efficacious grace” which could neither be chosen by will, nor earned, and only from which could humans perform good works. Jansen hoped to undo the damage he believed had been done to Augustinian theology by medieval scholasticism and Jesuitical Molinism which ultimately relied on humanity’s fallible will to merit individual salvation.  

From Louvain, Jansen’s theology spread to France where it developed into the Jansenist movement. In France, the movement received a spiritual and theological boost from the nuns of the Port-Royal convent, where the convent confessor, Jean-Ambroise Duvergier de Hauranne (better known as abbé Saint-Cyran), added a moral rigorism and retreat from the world for which Jansenism became well known. French theologians such as Blaise Pascal, Antoine Arnaud and Pasquier Quesnel further articulated Jansenist theology in apologetic writings and attacks on Molinist theology and Jesuitical piety. Finally, Jansenism combined with the Gallican ecclesiology of France that while recognizing the pope as a primus inter pares and the symbolic center of Christian unity, held that issues of church governance and doctrine were the collective responsibility of the local clergy, bishops and even the state.  

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visible and “militant” Church as it existed in the temporal, as opposed to the divine sphere, was “the Society of the faithful” by which the pope held a supervisory role. In 1682, the French clergy defined these as four Gallican liberties, which included the supremacy of the king in temporal matters, the superiority of councils of the papacy in determining matters of doctrine, the special independence of the Gallican church, which included liturgical independence from Rome, and finally, the right of the Gallican clergy to either concur or dissent from papal judgments through councils of the clergy.

The Jansenist doctrine of efficacious grace given to an elected few, however, combined with the moral rigorism, liturgical austerity, and penitential discipline in which the parish priest wielded significant authority over the individual penitent, challenged the authority of French sacral absolutism which had recast itself following the Wars of Religion as the sole arbiter of a particularly orthodox and ultramontane Catholicism. Ironically, then, while Jansenist Gallicanism claimed to defend the authority of the state over the church, in a settlement which should have benefited French absolutism, the particulars of post-Reformation absolutist politics in France meant that within the French kingdom, Jansenism became closely associated with resistance to both papal and monarchical absolutism. The eventual condemnation of Jansenism, in a series of papal

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14 François-Philippe Mésenguy, *Exposition de la Doctrine Chrétienne, ou Instructions sur les Principales Vérités de la Religion*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1741), 114. The three images of the Church, militant, suffering, and triumphant, corresponded with the temporal Church, the Church in its persecuted but pristine apostolic age, and the Church in Paradise respectively. Mésenguy’s work became one of the authoritative Jansenist catechisms of the eighteenth-century, see Chapter two below.
bulls which culminated in the Bull *Unigenitus* in 1713, was promulgated at the insistence of the French crown. French Jansenists appealed the validity of the bulls and indeed, the bulls were so loosely worded and executed that, in spite of papal condemnation, Jansenism would not only survive but also flourish.\(^\text{16}\)

The very elements of Jansenism that made it the enemy of divine-right French absolutism and baroque ultramontanist Catholicism – its conciliarism and rigorism – were also part of the appeal of Jansenism for Dutch Catholics living in Protestant republic in which, considering Catholicism’s status in the Dutch Republic as an illegal but tolerated (as long as it remained out of public view) church, made baroque forms of piety impractical at best. The Protestant Dutch Republic became “missionary territory” for the Catholic Church during the Dutch Revolt and subsequent recognition of independence from Catholic Spain by the Treaty of Münster in 1648. The papacy placed a Vicar-Apostolic, who served as an unofficial Archbishop of Utrecht, at the head of Catholic Church in the northern Netherlands in lieu of a Dutch episcopacy, which had essentially been left vacant since the various Dutch provinces united under the Union of Utrecht in

\(^{15}\) Van Kley, *Religious Origins*, Chapter One *passim.*

\(^{16}\) *Ibid.*, Chapter Two. Innocent X issued the first condemnation of Jansenism in 1653 with the bull *Cum Occasione*. The bull identified five propositions in Jansen’s *Augustinius*, which Jansenists denied were actually in the book. This was followed by Alexander VII’s *Regiminis Apostolici* in 1665 which included the Formulary requiring signatories to affirm fidelity to the papacy and that Jansen’s book did not accurately represent St. Augustine’s theology. Alexander’s Formulary was adopted from a version utilized by Cardinal Mazarin in France to suppress Jansenism. *Unigenitus* was issued by Clement XI at the specific request of Louis XIV. Specifically, the bull condemns 101 propositions Pasquier Quesnel’s *Moral Reflexions on the New Testament*, which amongst other items, urged the laity to read the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular in addition to reinforcing the Augustinian views of grace and salvation. French Jansenists claimed that in its condemnation of Quesnel, the papacy was condemning St. Augustine. They further claimed the bull violated the Gallican liberties of the French church; they insisted the papacy convene a general council in order to resolve the doctrinal issues raised by Jansenism.
In the parts of the Netherlands where the local secular clergy were unable to meet their pastoral obligations, Jesuit priests, although explicitly banished by the Dutch Estates-General, administered the sacraments to the Dutch faithful, bringing the Jesuits into direct conflict with the Dutch Vicar-Apostolics, many of whom, like Petrus Codde, who studied at Louvain, had close connections with Jansenism.

The secular clergy of the Netherlands elected Codde as their Vicar-Apostolic for the Dutch mission, a choice subsequently confirmed by the papacy in 1688 when Codde was granted the title of Bishop in partibus infedelium of Sebastapol. The choice of Codde and the timing of his election proved equally pivotal in the history of Dutch Catholicism. Jesuit priests, urging Dutch Catholics to demonstrate a more pronounced and public loyalty to the Church, had earned the scorn of the Dutch Calvinist town burgers. In 1685, as the threat of war with Catholic France loomed, the civic leaders of Leiden and Delft petitioned the Estates of Holland to curtail toleration for Catholics. In

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17 Because of diplomatic concerns between Rome and Spain, the Church refrained from bestowing the official title of Archbishop of Utrecht to the vicar-apostolic, preferring instead to grant him the sacerdotal powers of a titular bishop in partibus infidelium (in the lands of the infidel). In the papacy’s view, the concordat reached between Spain and the papacy in 1559, granting the Spanish emperor the right to redraw diocesan boundaries and to nominate bishops in the Netherlands was still valid. And, considering the status of the Catholic Church as a barely tolerated religion in the Dutch Republic, the papacy “suspended” the see of Utrecht to avoid upsetting both Spain and the Dutch. See, M.G. Spiertz, “Spanningen in de Noord-Nederlandse katholieke kerk,” in Spiertz, ed. Op weg naar een Rehabilitatie van Petrus Codde (Amersfoort: 1988), 12. Also, Theo Clemans, “De godsdienstige oriëntatie van de Noordnederlandse katholieken rond het midden van de achttiende eeuw,” in Jan Hallebeek en Bert Winrix eds., Met het oog op Morgen; Ecclesiologische beschouwingen aangeboden aan Jan Visser (Zoetermeer: 1996), 34-5. Thus, Sasbold Vosmer was selected the first Vicar-Apostolic for the northern Netherlands in 1598. In 1602, Vosmer was named the titular Bishop of Philippi, which for the Dutch Catholic Clergy made him the de facto Archbishop of Utrecht, see e.g. Gabriel Dupac de Bellegarde, Histoire Abregée de l’Église Metropolitaine d’Utrecht (Utrecht: 1765), 81. As will be seen below, Dupac’s history of the church in Utrecht was written with ecclesiastical polemics in mind, it remains a valuable and reliable source of information, q.v. Chapter Three below and Dale Van Kley, “Catholic Conciliar Reform in an Age of Anti-Catholic Revolution; France, Italy, and the Netherlands, 1758-1801,” in Van Kley and James Bradley, eds. Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe (South Bend, IN: 2001), 106.
September of 1687, there was wide-spread anti-Catholic rioting in the provinces of Holland and Friesland. Only the *stadhouder*, William III, prevented the spread of further anti-Catholic violence lest Louis XIV use the violence as a pretext for a war that William was reluctant to fight before he had secured his alliance with England, which became automatic when he took the English crown.\(^{18}\) William, nevertheless, acquiesced in the demands of the towns in 1687 by supporting the general “placard” of the Dutch Estates-General which banished all regular clergy including the Jesuits from the Republic.

The Catholic Church during Codde’s tenure as the Vicar-Apostolic was in an increasingly precarious position; as Dutch toleration seemingly wavered, Codde hoped to prove Catholicism presented no threat to public order. For Codde, the Jansenist emphasis on a quiet and internal form of spirituality, as opposed to the ostentatious baroque displays of piety embraced by the Jesuits, to say nothing of Jansenist ecclesiology which stressed the authority of local clergy as opposed to the papacy, provided the perfect solution for the “hidden” Church of the Netherlands. From the perspective of both the Estates-General and Codde, if Catholicism were to be tolerated in the Dutch Republic, it was preferable that this Church resemble a Dutch Catholic Church governed by the native secular clergy rather than the regular priests carrying Roman, or in the case of the Jesuits, even Spanish connotations. Yet, in spite of the placard of 1687, Jesuit priests continued to infiltrate the Republic, fulfilling the duties of the secular clergy such as hearing confessions, performing marriages, and saying masses, so that by 1702 of the some 400

Catholic priests in the Holland mission, fifty-nine of them were Jesuits and another sixty-two were of other orders, primarily Franciscans and Dominicans. Moreover the Jesuits were quick to inform the papal nuncio in Brussels that Codde and several of the Dutch secular clergy had preached sermons denouncing the Formulary of Pope Alexander VII that required church leaders to sign a formal condemnation of Jansen’s *Augustinus*. Responding to the accusation that Codde was part of a Jansenist movement considered a heresy by the papacy, Pope Clement IX summoned Codde to Rome to answer the charge, subsequently dismissing him as Vicar-Apostolic in 1702. The authority of the Vicar-Apostolic was transferred to the office of a Vicar-General, directly responsible to the papal nuncio in Brussels, and the connotations that the Vicar-Apostolic was the *de facto* Archbishop of Utrecht were abandoned by Rome.

The secular Dutch clergy were outraged at the assault on what they perceived as their liberties by the papacy. The Dutch clergy observed that as recently as 1559 (recent enough for ecclesiastical memory), the papacy upheld the rights of the local church to choose their own ecclesiastical leaders in the Germanic Concord signed with Phillip II. But in a sense, the Dutch cause helped to internationalize what had heretofore been the particular claims of the Gallican clergy. The Dutch clergy protested that Codde and the Dutch church, with their emphasis on the inner faith of the individual and the conciliar form of Church governance, were in fact the orthodox heirs to a tradition which

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19 M. G. Spiertz, “De katholieke geestelijke leiders en de wereldlijke overhead in de Republiek der Zeven Provincien,” in *Trajecta* 1 (1992), 20.

originated with the Gospels and more recently affirmed by the reforms of the Council of Trent. They spent the better part of the next twenty years (to say nothing of the entire eighteenth century) trying to convince the papacy of this contention, while in the hands of the pro-Jesuit and pro-ultramontane Vicar-General, Theodore de Cock, the influence of the Jesuits on the Dutch Mission increased as that of the secular clergy waned. In 1723, the secular clergy of the Dutch Republic took matters into their own hands, electing Cornelius Steenhoven as the Archbishop of Utrecht and putting into practice the conciliar theory which according to the Jansenist version, “rigorously conformed to the example established by Jesus-Christ and the Holy Fathers” and was the appropriate response to the “oppression of Rome.” Upon his consecration, which was performed by the French Jansenist and Bishop in partibus infidelium of Babylon, Dominique Varlet, Steenhoven issued a Pastoral Letter affirming the Utrecht Church’s right to elect its own prelate, its Catholic orthodoxy, and its loyalty to the papacy as the head of the spiritual church. The papacy responded by excommunicating Steenhoven and Varlet, creating a schism in which there were now two Catholic Churches in the Netherlands – both professing loyalty to unified Catholicism, but only one acknowledged by Rome.

The election of Steenhoven, however, begat the international Jansenist community which is the subject of this dissertation. Prior to 1723, there were already connections between French and Dutch Jansenists: Codde had studied in France, and the French Jansenist theologians Antoine Arnauld, Pasquier Quesnel, and Varlet – like Réné

21 Ibid., 79-90.

22 Dupac de Bellegarde, Histoire Abregée, 475.
Descartes and Pierre Bayle – escaped prosecution in France by seeking refuge in the more tolerant Dutch Republic. However, the combination of Jansenist persecution in France following the Bull *Unigenitus* with the sudden appearance of a church in Utrecht that conformed to Jansenist principles in every way convinced many Jansenists that the future of the movement now lay ironically enough in the Protestant Dutch Republic. Indeed, it was as if just as an old Jerusalem had been chosen by God on the margins of the Roman Empire, a new Jerusalem had been similarly selected on the margins of Catholic Europe. “What an example of courage you have provided us,” the Bishop of Montpellier wrote to Varlet, “I admire you more for the sweetness and patience by which you have borne these tribulations … [Christian] charity is engraved on your hearts.”

The small handful of French émigrés in the Netherlands coalesced into a recognizable community after 1723 and especially after 1725 when Jean-Baptiste Désessarts, a Jansenist deacon, and his brother secured two estates near the towns of Rijnwijk and Schonauwen in the province of Utrecht previously owned by the Cistercians of the Orval monastery in the southern Netherlands. In addition, French Jansenists founded a seminary in 1726 in the town of Amersfoort, also in the Utrecht province, for the training of French and Dutch clerics under the direction of Nicholas Le Gros, one of the heroes of the French Jansenist campaigns against *Unigenitus*.

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23 Het Utrechts Archeif (Hereafter abbreviated as HUA), Inv. 215, Mss. 3681, C.J. Colbert, évêque de Montpellier to Varlet: 4 Novembre, 1725.

24 HUA, Inv 215, Mss. 1826, “Titres de propriété et pieces administratives,” and Mss. 1835, “Titres de propriété et pieces administratives de Schonauwen.”

To Utrecht, French bishops, diocesan chapters, religious communities, and even Jansenist lay individuals sent letters of communion which in addition to the seminary teaching and establishment of the Utrecht Jansenist community served to convince Jansenists that Utrecht bore the marks of the true church and that blame for the schism lay in Rome. Support for the Utrecht church multiplied across geographical boundaries after Utrecht convened a diocesan synod in 1763. Called in order to censure the radical French Jansenist cleric, Pierre Le Clerc, the Provincial Synod again demonstrated to Jansenists the Church of Utrecht’s Catholic orthodoxy in spite of continued papal hostility.\textsuperscript{26} And, by the middle part of the century, Jansenism had spread far beyond the borders of France and the Netherlands; the Provincial Synod of Utrecht was greeted by letters of communion and support from Portugal, Spain, all parts of the Austrian Empire, Italy, and most parts of Catholic Germany.

The success of Jansenist appeals on behalf of Utrecht to create an international Jansenism was due to the ability of the Jansenist community in Utrecht to establish itself as an orthodox reform movement of the Catholic Reformation Church.\textsuperscript{27} It is one of the

\textsuperscript{26} On the Provincial Synod of Utrecht, see Van Kley, “Catholic Conciliar Reform.”

\textsuperscript{27} I use the term “Catholic Reformation” here purposefully. Catholic Reformation, as Hubert Jedin argued, denotes the response of the Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation which was focused on internal reform, as opposed to measures to combat the spread of Protestantism, which Jedin termed the “Counter-Reformation.” Jedin argued that each term described separate aspects of the total Catholic response to Protestantism. See Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” in David Luebke, ed. The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings, Blackwell Essential Readings in History (Oxford: 1999), 21-45. Subsequent historians have combined these terms into various rubrics, such as John W. O’Malley’s use of “early modern Catholicism” and R. Po-Chia Hsia’s “Catholic Renewal.” See O’Malley, “Was Ignatius Loyola a Church Reformer? How to Look at Early Modern Catholicism,” in \textit{ibid.}, 65-82 and Hsia, The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770 (Cambridge: 1998). The choice of “Catholic Reformation” over these other terms, however, places Jansenism where Jansenists identified themselves, as part of a theological and ecclesiological restoration and renewal of the Catholic faith, even in spite of papal condemnation. Unfortunately, the claim that Jansenists identity was part of an orthodox tradition still
primary claims of this study that the International Jansenist movement defined itself as a community dedicated to rescuing Tridentine Catholic reform from the hands of Jesuits who had corrupted the Church by manipulating the papacy with a desire to gain secular power and fooled a Catholic laity with lies and devotions to baroque superstitions, such as the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

In the historiography of Jansenism, the movement is more often defined in opposition to the Tridentine church. This is mostly due to the predominance of French Jansenism in historical scholarship. Indeed, most of the dramatic battles fought by Jansenists were fought within French borders and it was here that Jansenism had its broadest appeal. French Jansenism also became highly politicized during the eighteenth century as the judges and lawyers of the French judicial Parlements found a theological justification in Jansenism for their political resistance to royal absolutism.28 And, France never did accept the edicts of the Council of Trent in its complete form, a rejection that had as much to do with the Jansenist defense of Gallican liberties as it did with the crown’s desire to maintain control of the episcopacy through its granting of royal benefices.29 Furthermore, the success of French Jansenists through the judicial

carries a polemical burden within contemporary Catholicism, see Norman Ravich’s review of Dale Van Kley’s Religious Origins in First Things 70 (Feb. 1997) 50-52. However, my centering of Jansenism within an orthodox tradition has nothing to do with contemporary concerns but with certain methodological assumptions about the eighteenth-century intellectual phenomenon by which individuals and groups seized upon definitions of truth and reality independently of the authority of religious and political institutions, see Chapter One below.

28 The most detailed and complete study of Jansenism and judicial resistance to absolutism is in Van Kley, Religious Origins.

29 The reluctance of the French monarchy to accept the Tridentine reforms because of the relationship between royal patronage and the French episcopacy is the subject of Joseph Bergin’s The Making of the French Episcopate, 1589-1661 (New Haven: 1996).
Parlements to banish the Jesuits from France in the middle of the eighteenth century serves to add to the view that Jansenism entailed a rejection of Tridentine reform, since the papacy found the Jesuits to be useful agents of that reform. Thus, Jansenist efforts at diocesan, pastoral, and even lay spiritual reform on the level envisioned by the Session Twenty-Five, the final session of the Council of Trent has been largely left untouched in the scholarship of French Jansenism.

One of the goals of this study is to move Jansenism beyond studies conducted within a national context arguing that just as the broader Catholic Church claimed a universality which transcended national boundaries, so too did Jansenism as a self-defined part of the larger Church. While admittedly this conceptual “zooming-out” of the map of Jansenism from the national to the European view loses some of the sharper


31 Van Kley’s *Religious Origins* treats religion seriously as causal, but the focus still is on the persistence of religious politics in eighteenth-century France. The same claim could made for Catherine Maire’s *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la Nation; La jansénisme au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: 1998). William Doyle’s *Jansenism; Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (New York: 2000) could be said to overemphasis French Jansenism as a political movement at the expense of religion.

32 While Van Kley’s *Religious Origins* is probably the best study utilizing current scholarship of French Jansenism available, he does also claims that French Jansenism was part of a broader “Catholic Enlightenment.” Van Kley, *Religious Origins*, 6-7. His most recent scholarship has done much to establish Jansenism as an essential component of an international religious Enlightenment, with much of the political implication for Old Regime Europe as the Enlightenment brought to France. See Van Kley, “Catholic Conciliar Reform.” While several studies of Jansenism in nations other than France do indeed consider the Jansenist role in religious reform, none of these studies do so within a Tridentine context, preferring to portray Jansenism as a convenient religious solution to political “enlightened absolutism.” The case of Jansenism in the Hapsburg Empire is one such example, see Peter Hersche, *Der Spätenjansenismus in Österreich* (Vienna: 1977) and W.R. Ward “Late Jansenism and the Hapsburgs,” in Bradley and Van Kley, *Religion and Politics*, 154-182.
details, especially in the realm of national religious politics, the broader view also makes it possible to cast European Jansenism in the mold that Jansenists themselves created – a movement dedicated to a regeneration of ancient discipline and piety of the Church’s apostolic age, carried out by the authority of the Council of Trent, and centered on the example established in Utrecht.

Jansenism’s strongest claim that they represented the true spirit of the Tridentine Church stemmed from their conciliar views. Although Luther himself had called upon a council to judge the legitimacy of his theology, and indeed, like Jansenists upheld the superiority of conciliar opinions over those of the papacy, the Council of Trent seemed to affirm this idea, even to the point in Session Twenty-four where in Chapters One and Two, the Council enjoined local prelates to convene diocesan synods every year and provincial councils every third year in order to confirm and implement the Tridentine reforms.33 Yet, even at Trent, the tensions between conciliarism and papal infallibility became apparent when, in 1562, the general of the Jesuits, Diego Lainez asserted that the Pope alone had sovereign authority over the church. Eustache Du Bellay, the Archbishop of Paris responded, claiming that the Jesuit would “elevate [the Pope] as the bride of Christ by prostituting mankind.”34

As it so happened, while the Canons of the Council of Trent affirmed the legitimacy of church councils, the Tridentine Church – the institutional Church as

33 On Trent and conciliarism, see Alain Tallon, Le Concile de Trent, (Paris: 2000); for a broader view, see Francis Oakley, The Conciliarist Tradition; Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church, 1300-1870 (Oxford: 2003).

34 Quoted in Thierry Wanegffelen, Une difficile fidélité; Catholiques malgré le concile en France, XVIe-XVIIe siècles (Paris: 1999), 76.
opposed to the model established by the Tridentine canons – took a decidedly ultramontane turn.\textsuperscript{35} To be sure, several attempts at establishing a conciliar ecclesiology looked promising at first. In 1565, for example, Philip II of Spain eagerly ordered the Spanish prelates to convene provincial councils to promulgate further Tridentine reforms, such as the creation of diocesan seminaries. Those bishops who hesitated found themselves under considerable pressure from Spain’s “Most Catholic King.” However, Philip also appointed royal observers, members of the laity, to attend the provincial councils, whose task was to ensure that any steps towards religious reform conformed to the royal will first, and the Canons of Trent second. The Spanish episcopacy, reacting to the royal observers and what it perceived as unwelcome royal interference in the prerogatives of the Church, refused to hold any further provincial councils.\textsuperscript{36}

In Italy, the Archbishop of Milan, St. Charles Borromeo established the conciliar model for the entire Church; in the tenure of his bishopric (1565-1584) Borromeo convened eleven diocesan synods and six provincial councils. Yet, in many ways, the very success of the Tridentine reforms also meant that the brief movement towards conciliarism was to be short lived. The Council demanded, in the final session, that in order for the canons to become valid for the Universal Church, the papacy had to provide its unqualified approbation and, indeed, Pope Pius IV approved the Tridentine decrees

\textsuperscript{35} The distinction between the model of the church expressed at Trent and how this model was implemented as the “Tridentine Church” is best known from Yves Congar, \textit{L’Église de saint Augustine à l’époque moderne} (Paris: 1970).

\textsuperscript{36} On Philip II, the Council of Trent and Catholic reform, see Geoffrey Parker, \textit{The World is Not enough: The Imperial Vision of Philip II of Spain: The Twenty-Second Charles Edmondson Historical Lectures}. Baylor University, February 14-15, 2000 (Waco, TX: 2000), 37-42.
with the bull *Benedictus Deus*. This measure, promoted by the ultramontanist representatives at Trent, had the effect of placing the direction and responsibility for church reform firmly in the hands of the Papacy. 37 Indeed, the most significant products of the Catholic Reformation, the Catechism approved in 1566, the Breviary in 1568, the Missal in 1570, and the new version of the Vulgate finally approved in 1604, were all products of Rome. The Constitution of Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585–1590) established the modern Curial form of church governance, creating a series of Congregations, or administrative offices led by Cardinals, which centralized the process of Catholic reform. Finally, Charles Borromeo was canonized in 1610, not as a model of conciliarism, but as a model of piety and loyalty, which by the beginning of the seventeenth century, had become defined by Rome alone. 38

European Jansenists in the eighteenth century clearly believed that the Catholic Reformation Church, had failed to deliver substantial reform because laxity, corruption, and superstition permeated every aspect of the Church, from the papacy in Rome which was far too committed to temporal concerns at the expense of the spiritual, to the bishops who failed to ensure the proper discipline within their dioceses, to the poorly educated parish clergy who were unable to provide parishioners with even rudimentary biblical exegesis or catechizing, and to the laity who focused their devotions on false and superstitious (at least in the Jansenist view) practices. The solution, according to members of the International Jansenist community, was a rejection of the scholastic

37 Tallon, *Concile de Trent*, 81-82.
theology embraced by the Jesuits and real, practical reform directed at the parish level. It was not incidental that the early French Jansenist émigrés to Utrecht founded a seminary, for seminary education was one of the primary focuses of the European Jansenist reform, while the seminary itself was a creation of the Council of Trent. In order to restore the Church to its pristine condition, Jansenists argued that the fineries of scholastic inquiry were a distraction at best, and a tool of Jesuitical corruption at worst. Instead, Jansenist reform was premised on an education in ecclesiastical history, biblical criticism conducted in Hebrew and Greek, canon law, and homiletics – positive rather than scholastic theology.\(^{39}\)

This focus on clerical education which was practical as opposed to theoretical carried over in European Jansenism’s activities on behalf of Utrecht. Of course, defenders of the Church of Utrecht were convinced that Utrecht’s special place in the history of the Church was due to the grace of God alone; nonetheless, the Jansenist faithful who witnessed this truth also had very practical concerns for this church. They were confronted with its minority status within the Catholic population which in turn had a minority and ambiguous status within the Dutch population as a whole. Often down to earth issues had to take precedence over ideological and theological truths, such as when the Church of Utrecht created a new suffragan diocese in Deventer, in addition to the diocese in Haarlem and the archdiocese in Utrecht in 1758. By the middle of the eighteenth century, both the Archbishop of Utrecht and the Bishop of Haarlem were

\(^{39}\) On the definition of positive theology as opposed to scholastic theology, and the dominance of the latter in early modern Catholic seminaries, see Lawrence Brockliss, *French Higher Education in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: 1987), 228.
aging, and rather than risk another situation by which the Dutch church had no prelates to fulfill the episcopate’s functions, or to ordain new pastors, the church added a new bishopric to maintain episcopal continuity. But, it is also clear that the Dutch Jansenists chose Deventer because the creation of a new diocese there was least likely to raise the suspicion of Dutch civil authorities and not because Deventer fulfilled a special symbolic or missionary place in the spread of the Church of Utrecht.40

Another significant claim of this study is that the practicality of the Jansenists in Utrecht and the community across Europe, whether in terms in pastoral and spiritual reform, or in their political efforts on behalf of Utrecht, are evidence of a uniquely religious contribution to eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment. Indeed, historians of Jansenism have already analyzed the Jansenist contribution to a Catholic Enlightenment, as well as to the better-known and far more secularized Enlightenment of the philosophes, however inadvertent these connections might have been.41 If one of the hallmarks of the Enlightenment was in fact the rejection of a sort of scholastic rationalism, by which everything from the mundane to the metaphysical was open to intellectual inquiry, in favor of an Enlightened empiricism which eschewed the metaphysical in favor of understanding the world as it existed in the here and now,

40 HUA, Inv. 215, Mss. 2629, Dupac de Bellegarde, “Pièces sur un troisième évêque, 1754-1758.” In fact, there were so few Catholics loyal to Utrecht in Deventer that the second Bishop of Deventer elected in 1777, Nicolaas Nelleman never bothered to vacate his parish in Delft.

41 The scholarship of Dale Van Kley is an example of the place of Jansenism in the Catholic Enlightenment. As for the Jansenists and the philosophes, Monique Cottret’s recent study of French Jansenism argues that the Jansenist theology and Enlightened philosophy, even at the point of disagreement, shared many of the same ideological assumptions and that ideas flowed between one and the other unperceived through intellectual “capillaries.” See Cottret, Jansénismes et Lumières: Pour un autre XVIIIe siècle (Paris: 1998).
Jansenist reform which emphasized the practical concerns of faith was Enlightened enough.\textsuperscript{42} To be sure, the Jansenists tempered this practicality with a Cartesian rationalism of the duality of mind and body, but while Jansenist theology focused on the internal spirit, its program of reform concentrated on the external and empirical body of the Church.

To insert religious sentiment into an empirical intellectual tradition would be revision enough of the model of the Enlightenment; yet, it does not go far enough to explain the unique contributions of Jansenism in general, and the Utrecht-based international Jansenist community in particular, to the process of creating a Catholic Enlightenment in Europe. Even though there is a further parallel between the philosophes and Jansenists in that as the former appealed to the historical authority of ancient pagan Greece and Rome, and the latter based their reforms on the historical model of the ancient Church, it cannot be denied that Jansenists believed that even practical reform depended on the efficacious grace of a transcendent God. However, Jansenists also created a discourse which differentiated between God’s grace which worked on the internal spirit and was, therefore private, and the external and visible effects of that grace which were part of the public works of the church faithful.

Thus, Jansenist reform was part of an eighteenth-century religious public sphere. The concept of a public sphere, first articulated by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas in 1962, has had as much an impact on the intellectual and cultural

\textsuperscript{42} The definition of the Enlightenment as empirical over the rationalist has maintained a certain canonical place in eighteenth-century intellectual history. This model of the Enlightenment comes from Peter Gay, \textit{The Enlightenment: An Interpretation}, vol. 1, \textit{The Rise of Modern Paganism} (New York: 1966).
historiography of the eighteenth-century as has Peter Gay’s study, especially after the translation of Habermas’ work into French in 1978 and subsequently into English in 1989.\textsuperscript{43} Briefly defined, the public sphere was the intellectual space where private individuals, making use of Enlightenment reason and driven by the private concerns of a market oriented bourgeoisie, articulated personal judgments of public affairs. In other words, the emergent public sphere marked the beginning of participatory politics.\textsuperscript{44} I argue, however, that Habermas’s public sphere is far too limited in scope. Whereas he claimed that the basis for its growth was bourgeois and secular in nature, the activities of the Jansenists demonstrate the existence of an eighteenth-century public sphere based on religiosity – where faith and reason coexisted. And, while Habermas’s public sphere necessarily originated in the private world of the home as the bourgeois family developed into a legitimate subject of public discourse so that the private and public became distinct spheres, the Jansenist public sphere stemmed from private matters of faith.\textsuperscript{45}

Increasingly during the eighteenth century, European Jansenists drew sharp distinctions between the spiritual and the temporal affairs of the church, often equating


\textsuperscript{44} This basic definition is found in Habermas, 26-42 and Melton, 8.

\textsuperscript{45} Habermas, 44. Here, Habermas distinguishes between the private home of the bourgeoisie and the aristocratic and monarchic household which fulfilled both public and private functions. Sarah Maza’s \textit{Private Lives and Public Affairs; The Causes Célèbres of Pre-Revolutionary France} (Berkeley: 1993) is an example of historical scholarship based on Habermasian model by which the private world evolves into the public and political. Lynn Hunt’s, \textit{The Family Romance of the French Revolution} (Berkeley: 1992) offers a competing view in which familiar discourse persists well into the French Revolution.
the spiritual with the private sphere; “the Kingdom of God is within us,” wrote Blaise Pascal, one of Jansenism’s early theologians.46 And, for Jansenists, the ancient Church in its pristine condition functioned essentially in private. That is, Roman persecution of the early Church kept Christianity out of public view and made the religious experience a purely spiritual one. When the faithful entered into public view, as martyrs, this was to provide an example for the rest of the Church that matters of private faith could not be compelled or controlled by public authority.47 The Emperor Constantine’s conversion brought Christianity out from the Roman catacombs and into full public life as a state church. However, early Church writers, such as Isidore of Seville, also distinguished between the authority to establish internal discipline (potestas), which belonged to the Church, and the authority to regulate public religious practice (potentia), which belonged to the state.48 In Jansenist ecclesiastical history, however, the seeds of corruption were sown when the Church entered the public sphere. The remedy was a conciliar form of church governance so that those closest to the realm of individual private faith, the diocesan bishops and priests, were those who also determined universal religious discipline.49

The Jansenist experience in the Dutch Republic closely resembled that of the ancient Church. Indeed, one of the characteristics of Dutch society in general was that


47 This description of the early church comes from Claude Fleury, one of the great Jansenist ecclesiastical historians and will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three below. On the martyrs, see Claude Fleury, *Discours sur l’Histoire Ecclesiastique* (Paris: 1720), 37-38.


49 Fleury, *Discours*, 80.
matters of faith were relegated to the private sphere, in spite of the existence of a public Reformed Church, making the Dutch relatively tolerant of heterodox religious opinions as long as they remained out of public view. However, papal condemnation of the Church of Utrecht necessitated a public response. In other words, if the papacy insisted on absolute authority on both matters of internal spirituality and the external public forms by which the Church regulated discipline, then the only recourse of European Jansenists was to appeal to the higher authority of the private consciences of the Catholic faithful within the eighteenth-century public sphere.

This study provides a revision of Habermas in claiming that religious and Jansenist discourse made the private sphere a legitimate category of discussion independently of the rise of market capitalism. But as in the Habermas model, this religious private sphere developed into a public sphere that functioned autonomously from the absolute authority of the papacy. And, while in Jansenist theology, human reason was fallible due to sin, this did not disqualify individual humans from engaging in the rational-critical discourse of the public sphere, since Jansenist theological anthropology argued that God gave man a “reasonable soul.” Thus, quite independently of the bourgeois public sphere and the secular and enlightened “Republic of Letters” that governed the public sphere, the International Jansenist community centered in Utrecht


developed into a rival “Republic of Grace” which defended private faith in a religious public sphere. But Jansenist appeals to the public balanced faith with reason, so that this religious public sphere functioned according to specific rules of conduct which were the essential truths of the Christian faith. In other words, the Jansenist contribution to the public sphere was premised on a specific program of theological and ecclesiastical reform dedicated to a restoration of the Church to its ancient and pristine state.

This project focuses on the period from approximately 1750 to 1803, when the Jansenist “Republic of Grace” was fully developed. It is based on an extensive study of correspondence of the Jansenist International, the newspaper *Nouvelles Ecclésastiques*, and Jansenist books and pamphlets. Chapter One develops model of a religious public sphere, and the contributions to it made by the International Jansenists through newspaper publishing, distribution of books, networks of correspondence, and forms of sociability, including unique Catholic forms of sociability, such as the sacrament of communion. Chapter Two examines the symbolic role held by the city of Utrecht as a "New Jerusalem" in Jansenist discourse. Furthermore, I compare Jansenist descriptions of Utrecht with the language used by political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau to describe his birthplace of Geneva, arguing that both contributed to the development of a public sphere in which the dictates of the heart, be it through religious faith or emotional sentiment, were as important to the dictates of reason. Chapter Three is a study of Jansenist ecclesiastical histories, which were both an important genre of texts which appealed to individual faith and reason through a public forum and an expression of Jansenist views of the historical development of the private and public religious spheres.
Chapter Four takes up the connection between Jansenist reforms and the religious public sphere. Here, the focus is specifically on European Jansenist seminary reform, which was possible following the dissolution of the Jesuits in 1773. Both the campaign against the Jesuits and in favor of seminary reforms were conducted in the eighteenth-century public sphere, and Jansenists viewed the reforms as an essential tool for further guiding the consciences of the individual faithful. The Fifth and final chapter is a study of the Jansenist “Republic of Grace” during the Age of Democratic Revolutions, including the French Revolution in 1789. This study argues that the revolutions which convulsed the end of the eighteenth century irrevocably divided any connections between religious and secular public spheres, which had revolutionary events proceeded differently might have found room to coexist even in revolutionary France.

Ultimately, the revolutionary experience reoriented the relationship between the religious and enlightened public spheres so that towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church convened the First Vatican Council which essentially redefined the terms of private faith and the public church. The doctrine of papal infallibility, which became dogma at the council, essentially granted the papacy authority over both the private and public aspects of Catholic religious experience. The legacy of the Jansenist public sphere and the First Vatican Council will be the subject of this study’s conclusion. Ultimately, however, this dissertation is about a religious debate waged within the eighteenth-century public sphere; and this is where we will begin.
CHAPTER 2

VOICES OF THE FAITHFUL: THE JANSNEIST PUBLIC SPHERE

The Marxist structure of Jürgen Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere has been no impediment for historians looking for a theoretical model to analyze the intellectual and cultural development of eighteenth-century public opinion. Indeed, in the hands of contemporary historians, especially of the French case, the eighteenth-century public sphere has taken a variety of forms, few of them adhering to the class origins of Habermas’s original model.¹ Thus, many contemporary historians have treated the public sphere as a “normative ideal” describing the cultural and intellectual phenomena of the rise of literacy, the spread of popular literature, the emergence of the periodical press, and eighteenth-century forms of sociability, such as coffee house and salon culture, rather than as a specific social phenomenon rooted in an empirically identifiable middle-class.²

In other words, historians are certain that Habermas’s public sphere proved a formidable

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¹ A computerized search of JSTOR through just three scholarly journals: French Historical Studies, Eighteenth-Century Studies, and the Journal of Modern History for either “public sphere,” “public space,” or “public opinion,” combined with “eighteenth-century France” yields 310 articles, more than half published after the translation of Habermas’s work into English in 1989. Dale Van Kley reports that the ubiquity of the term “public space” at a conference held on the bicentennial of the French Revolution at the University of Chicago led Denis Richet to call for its banishment from historical jargon, see Van Kley, “In Search of Eighteenth-century Parisian Public Opinion,” in French Historical Studies 19 (Spring, 1995), 215. This article is a review of four studies which significantly alter the Habermasian model of a “bourgeois” public sphere.

² Keith Michael Baker, “Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France,” in Craig Calhoun, ed. Habermas and the Public Sphere (Cambridge, MA: 1992), 188.
cultural agent in Europe during the eighteenth century, even if those same historians are less convinced that the sole (or even dominant) participants in the public sphere were the market-driven bourgeoisie.

The public sphere as an ideal rather than as a social reality has been largely responsible for reviving historical arguments concerning the effects of eighteenth-century ideology and culture on Old Regime politics. Yet, this same approach has often led historians too far into the public sphere, often ignoring the private sphere from whence it came. This is particularly true when considering what Habermas argued was the vital component of the developing public sphere – first, it was necessary for private individuals to understand “the role of human beings pure and simple.” The eighteenth-century public sphere as an intellectual space in which individuals passed rational-critical judgments on public issues was comprised of individuals qua individuals and not larger corporate identities be they guilds, social orders, body politics, or even churches. To be succinct, to have an autonomous public sphere there first had to be a “psychological emancipation” of the individual within the confines of a private sphere. And, according to Habermas, because the bourgeois household was separated from the activities of the public market place, the most intimate private bonds, and thus the strongest sense of individual identity, came from the middle-class.

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5 Ibid., 46.
This chapter offers a revision of Habermas with a study of the mechanics of a distinctly Jansenist public sphere. Thus, like many other Habermas-inspired studies, it jettisons the class-based origins of the eighteenth-century public sphere. However, rather than simply offering alternative forms of public expression, bypassing the individual, this chapter will argue that Jansenists held a view of humanity based on a Cartesian version of Augustinian philosophy in which humans were as individualized as they were rational. From this point, Jansenists engaged in the types of activities familiar to readers of Habermas: forms of sociability, newspaper and book publishing, and direct appeals to public opinion. In other words, while this chapter offers a religious alternative to the sociological model of the public sphere, it keeps the remainder of Habermas’s pattern – private individuals engaging in rational and public discourse – intact.

Habermas claimed that the sixteenth-century Protestant challenge to the Catholic Church disrupted the state’s claim to divine authority, so that “religion…became a private matter.”\(^6\) This is as far as Habermas is willing to connect religion to either the private or public spheres. Certainly, the claim that religion’s single role for the creation of a public sphere was the creation of private faith ignores several aspects of Reformation and Counter-Reformation culture and politics: the intellectual bond between Protestantism and humanism, the early boost provided by printing to the doctrine of sola scriptura, the German political settlement of cuius regio, eius religio, and the rise of divine-right absolutism.\(^7\) Thus, the history of sixteenth-century religion is one in which


\(^7\)
religion appears simultaneously less private and more public than Habermas was prepared to concede. It is no surprise, therefore, that Habermas rejected religion in favor of socio-economic reality as the basis for his model of private individuals gathering in public space to articulate rational opinions without the interference of civil or religious authority.

Yet, removing religion from the dynamic of the public sphere hardly seems warranted. In the eighteenth century, the Jansenist “Republic of Grace” in particular developed a theological definition of the sacred and temporal that Jansenist theologians and apologists started to equate with distinctly private and public religious spheres. Drawing from an Augustinian theological anthropology of human nature, Jansenists articulated a soteriological foundation for an individual Christian identity in which grace formed an intimate and private bond between sinful humans and the divine redeemer—God’s efficacious grace made it possible for the individual to act in the spirit of Christian charity. In the name of charity, Christians could participate in the public life of the church, such as partaking of the sacraments, participating in councils, and providing testimonial witnessing on behalf of the true Church. In many ways, the Jansenist sense of charity performed the function of enlightened sociability. But, because humans fallen

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from grace were prone to sin, or concupiscent, the truth of grace and charity were under attack in the temporal world. Therefore, the Jansenist International was forced to defend matters of private spirituality in the temporal, or public sphere.

Of course, religion held a privileged position in early modern European public discourse, especially during times of religious and political strife such as during the French Wars of Religion, the Fronde, or the English Civil War. Yet there is a difference between public discourse and the public sphere. While the contestations in sixteenth and seventeenth-century France and England were certainly religious and public enough, contributors to these confessional debates more often couched their arguments as representatives of the indivisible body politic, rather than on behalf of a public assembly of individuals. Thus, for example, the pamphlets of the Catholic League during the French Wars of Religion collectively defended “our Salvation…our Religion, …our Catholic nation” from the Protestant heresy.  

The Jansenist public sphere was unique within Catholic Christendom in that it upheld individual faith and reason as a legitimate interpreter of religious authority, albeit one tempered by revelation from scripture and tradition. Nevertheless, the faithful who were well-instructed in matters of faith were equally capable of becoming witnesses to religious truth as was the ecclesiastical hierarchy. “Such is the design of Jesus Christ

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with the institution of communion,” wrote Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet in the preface for his
diocesan catechism, “it produces true piety in the heart, and it renders man capable of
profiting from the Divine plan in which they assist.”

Bossuet, better known as a
defender of divine-right absolutism, was certainly no Jansenist. He was, however, an
ardent supporter of the Gallican liberties of the church. Moreover, he institutionalized
the type of diocesan reform envisioned by the Council of Trent, which included the
commissioning of catechetical instruction of the laity. Bossuet’s catechism, first printed
in 1687, became a model for more thoroughly Jansenist catechisms.

Catechizing the Catholic faithful was an important aspect of Tridentine reform as
it sought to instruct the laity in proper devotional discipline as well as offer a counter-
measure to Protestant evangelizing. And, while Jansenist catechisms were no different
towards this purpose, they also were expressions of the Jansenist theology of the spiritual
private sphere and the temporal public sphere. Indeed, the very act of catechizing
stressed the role of an individual’s private faith, even to the point that Bossuet considered
the intimate private sphere of the home the primary source of instruction. “Mothers and
fathers…,” he wrote, “you are the first catechists of your children because you have
brought them to the Church and you inspire them to learn the holy Doctrine which the

9 Jacques-Benigne Boussuet, Catéchisme du Diocese de Meaux; Par le Commandement de
Messire d’illistrisssme et révréndissme Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, évêque de Meaux, Conseiller du Roi en
ses Conseils, ci-devant Précepteur de Monseigneur le Dauphin, premier Aumôier de Madame le Dauphine
(Paris: 1765), iii.

10 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 6066, Étienne Gourlin, “Table des catéchisms.”

Church has given you for them."\textsuperscript{12} This image of parents instructing their children in the Catholic faith, even if only an ideal, certainly resembles the intimate and loving family which generated, according to Habermas, the “cultivated personality” necessary to participate in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{13}

The Jansenist catechism also sought to develop the Christian individual identity with a theological anthropology of a human nature which was simultaneously burdened by sin and exalted by grace. But most of all, Jansenists viewed the human as unique in creation and reasonable by design. The catechism commissioned by Maria Carolina, the queen of Naples and Sicily and sister of Austria’s Joseph II, from the French Jansenist Pierre-Étienne Gourlin, stated that man was the most perfect creation (after the angels), because “man is capable of knowing . . . . Knowledge of man is one of the principal foundations of the Christian religion.”\textsuperscript{14}

Gourlin’s catechism was based largely on the catechism of the Diocese of Montpellier, whose bishop at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Charles Joachim Croissy de Colbert, was one of Jansenism’s important figures in the early eighteenth century. In 1717, Colbert was one of the four French bishops to formally appeal to a general council concerning the legitimacy of \textit{Unigenitus}, after the faculty of the Sorbonne declared the bull a rule of faith.\textsuperscript{15} He was also a correspondent of Dominique Varlet and

\textsuperscript{12} Bossuet, \textit{Catéchisme du Diocese de Meaux}, iv.

\textsuperscript{13} Habermas, 47.

\textsuperscript{14} Pierre-Étienne Gourlin, \textit{Institution et Instructions Chrétienne, Dédiée à la Reine des Deux-Siciles} (Naples: 1774), vol. 1, 94.
Cornelius Steenhoven, for whom Colbert helped solicit letters of communion upon Steenhoven’s election as the Archbishop of Utrecht and subsequent excommunication by the pope. These letters helped provide the Dutch archbishop with spiritual encouragement while providing the Utrecht church with a continued link with Catholic dioceses still in the fold of united Catholicism. And, Colbert directly contributed to the development of a Jansenist public sphere through a series of sermons and pastoral letters attesting to the truth of the allegedly Jansenist miracles occurring in Paris during the 1720s which, in spite of royal condemnation, continued to draw popular support and helped further the Jansenist cause.

The Montpellier catechism applied a distinctly Augustinian theology in its description of human nature. God created man “with a body of clay, and He gave life to this body by uniting it with a reasonable soul, for the soul is the foundation for the life of the human body.” And while the body could be corrupted, “the soul is indivisible and therefore incorruptible.” Humanity’s fall from grace was a result of concupiscence, a sin of the body, since “Eve allowed herself to be tempted by the demon … principally

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16 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 5607. Cornelius Steenhoven to Colbert, 16 Fevrier, 1725.


through pride, then curiosity, and then sensuality.”19 And, although the soul was “pure
and untouched,” it was equally damned “not by its nature “ but as a consequence of its
“union with the body” and could only be redeemed by grace.20

The duality of the body and soul in the Montpellier catechism was part of a
Christian tradition that was at least as old as Paul’s epistles.21 However, the designation
of a reasonable soul which was distinct from the body, condemned not by a sin of the
spirit but one of the material body, also reflected a Cartesian dualism that by the
eighteenth century stood in opposition to the orthodox Aristotelian scholasticism in
which body and soul could not be of separate substances.22 Reason was a product of the
spirit and the measure of truth, and not of the body. As the French theologians, Antoine
Arnauld and Pierre Nicole argued in their treatise on Cartesian philosophy and
Augustinian theology, “Saint Augustine maintained that reason, the judgment of truth and
the rules for discernment, are not a product of the senses, but of the spirit.”23 To the
extent that Jansenism had a systematic theology, it was provided by Arnauld and Nicole,
and it was firmly rooted in Cartesian reason which was a product of the spirit – a spirit
that was distinct from the senses and the body.

19 Ibid., 45.
20 Ibid., 48.
21 See for example, Romans 12: 1-2.
22 Jonathan Israel, Radical Enlightenment; Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750
(Oxford: 2001), 16. On Cartesian versus Aristotelian metaphysics see also, Charles Alan Kors, Atheism in
23 Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, La logique ou l’art de penser, ed. Charles Jourdain (Paris:
1992 reprint, s.l.: 1664), 274.
The Cartesian point was not lost on François-Philippe Mésenguy, whose catechism, *Exposition de la doctrine Chrétienne* was published in 1741 and placed on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1761. Papal condemnation, however, did little to dampen the appeal of Mésenguy’s catechism; in fact it probably bolstered its popularity within the International Jansenist community. Jean-Baptiste Mouton, one of the French Jansenists living in Utrecht, considered Mésenguy’s catechism, along with the Montpellier catechism, to be essential for “the first degree of religious instruction.”

Marc-Anton Wittola, the Austrian Jansenist and advisor to the Bishop of Passau, produced a German translation of Mésenguy’s catechism, a project authorized by Maria Theresa. He assured Dupac de Bellegarde in Utrecht that “the confessor to Her Imperial Majesty, and my good friend, has made it known that Her Majesty has infinite esteem for this work, and will permit me to produce a translation dedicated to her.”

Wittola proceeded to report that the Austrian Empress was so pleased with his translation that she sent a copy to her daughter, the Queen of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, and that Maria Theresa authorized an Italian edition. Indeed, if there were a single book responsible for shaping Austrian Jansenism, it was Mésenguy’s.

Mésenguy’s five-volume *Exposition* contained a single volume of discourses concerning matters of faith and Jansenist theology, followed by a four volume catechism

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24 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3606, Mouton “Liste de Livres à lire en différent genres,” 17 Fevrier, 1762.

25 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2583, Wittola to Dupac de Bellegarde, 22 Octobre 1767.


27 Peter Hersche, Der Spätenjansenismus in Österreich (Vienna: 1977), 40.
presented in the traditional question-answer format. The influence of Cartesian philosophy is evident throughout the work. Mésenguy titled the first discourse, a dialogue between “Eugène” and “Théophile,” “Knowledge of Ourselves and the Existence of God,” and the first point of knowledge was sensory awareness of the material body. “The body is, you see,” states Théophile, “is an admirable machine.” But, continues Théophile, “While the body is visible and external, would you not agree that you also think and hope?” He goes on to prove that the human mind is capable of abstract thought, through a demonstration of arithmetical reasoning. Humans are capable of taking a number, adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing it. Nor do these numbers have to correspond to anything material: “This number is neither 300 men, nor 300 books, nor 300 écus but the number 300 in general, applicable to anything that could be numbered.” Thus, Théophile claims to have proven that the body is only material, but the human capacity for nonmaterial abstract thought proves the existence of an intellect.28

Proof of intellect, demonstrated through the human capability for abstraction, was not quite the same as proof that humans were endowed with a soul. Yet, Mésenguy argued, humans also had a natural love of justice, and because God was the ultimate source of divine justice, than this proved evidence of the soul – humans could not dream of justice if there were no soul.29 Here, Mésenguy’s catechism echoed the opinion of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, a defender of both the Gallican liberties of the church and divine-right kingship, who claimed: “The end of religion, the soul of virtue, and the basis

29 Ibid., 15.
for Law, is charity.”

Justice and the law – public issues and charity, the public manifestation of grace, were all connected.

Ultimately, Mésenguy argued that “the body and the soul are two substances. One can, therefore, be separated from the other without losing its essential properties.”

The purpose of the soul was “the pursuit of truth, and never error.” And, although the soul’s love of justice contained a distinctly public component, true human happiness was essentially spiritual, private, and individual. Mésenguy’s catechism, echoing Pascal, stated, “Consider the King who has everything he could need, but wants everything he cannot get … he is ultimately unhappy. But the holy solitaire, who has nothing and expects nothing, gives everything up to God, he is truly happy.”

Of course, this idea of an inner spirituality was not the invention of the Jansenists; the Catholic Reformation was premised on this type individualism, whether it was the ecstatic visions of St. Teresa of Ávila, or the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Indeed, the theology of a personal connection with the divine could just as well be part of an ultramontane spirituality. “God loves you tenderly,” and proved it “a thousand times” when individuals participated in the sacraments, wrote Jean-Joseph Languet de Gergy, the Archbishop of Sens and the ultramontanist “scourge of French

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31 Mésenguy, vol. 1, 19.

32 Ibid., 29

33 Ibid., 109.

Jansenism.” Yet, Languet’s emphasis was distinct from the Jansenist, humans were created by God “to have or not to have what we want, to do what we choose and to choose what we do … [God] created us to be happy.” In other words, Languet made no attempt to distinguish between spiritual and material happiness, or between inner grace and reason and external concupiscence. At the same time, Languet’s focus on “happiness” demonstrated that ultramontanist thought was not without parallel to the Enlightenment itself.

There was a public side of Jansenist grace as well; the meaning of the Incarnation was to turn inner grace into a public church. Speaking of Pentecost, the Naples Catechism stated:

The law was only given to the Jews externally, as two tablets of stone; in its place the same law is engraved on the Christian heart … The ancient law would only make them slaves to external adherence, while the Holy Spirit by its interior virtue produces the true children of God through love … [The Old Testament laws] … are not accompanied by the interior grace of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, in Jansenist theology, the Old Testament was the story of a “carnal” people whose faith was only external; this prefigured the Christian church, comprised of the “people of spirit,” which was the visible expression of internal grace.

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37 Gourlin, *Institution et Instructions Chrétienne* [Naples Catechism], vol. 1, 474-475.

38 HUA Inv. 215., Mss., 3034-1, Jean-Baptiste Le Sesne des Ménilles d’Etemare, “Parallèle de l’Historie du Maccabees avec celle de Port-Royal,” s.d. Thus, the Jansenist view of Judaism as a carnal, material, or external faith, as opposed to Christianity which was spiritual, rational, and internal, offered a
The church, in Jansenist ecclesiology, was a society of these people of the spirit. While grace was ultimately interior and personal, the visible signs of that grace could only be known publicly – that is, through the sacraments of the church. The sacraments, according to the Naples Catechism, “signify the interior and invisible operation of grace.” 39 Therefore, the standard of interior faith was measured by public action. Jansenism made the exterior, public forms of religion a necessary aspect of private faith through participation in the church’s sacraments. “Men have been created to be incorporated in this Church,” wrote Mésenguy, “to adore it, to praise it, to participate in its actions of external grace.” 40

Thus, the church’s sacraments, especially the Eucharist, served as a model for a religious public sphere. 41 Individuals, out of the effects of a private and interior efficacious grace and a particular need to “nourish the soul” gathered in a public setting to participate in a public Mass which “unifies all Christians, each of them, into one body.” 42 The church, in the Jansenist definition, preserved the Cartesian duality of body and soul – individual souls gathered to become part of an external and visible “body of


41 Catherine Maire argues that the defining characteristic of Jansenism was the defense of the purity of the Eucharist, the only bond between God and humanity, from the “false reforms” of Molinist theology. Thus, the public side of Jansenism manifested itself to defend this intimate bond, see *De la cause de Dieu*, 16. This study only alters Maire’s definition by arguing that the Eucharistic sacrament also entailed a public side that was independent of the defense of the intimate bond.

Christ.” This also resembles the Habermasian model of individuals entering a public sphere.

The church, in fact, operated as a society in Jansenist ecclesiology. Certainly, both Jansenist and ultramontanist catechisms had similar definitions for the church: the Montpellier Catechism defined the church as “The Society of the Faithful who are united by the same profession of Faith, participate in the same sacraments, under the authority of legitimate pastors, of which the visible Head is the Pope, Bishop of Rome,” while Languet’s ultramontanist version defined the church as “The Assembly of the Faithful governed by our Holy Father the Pope and by the Bishops.”

Here, however, is where the similarities end, for the Jansenist emphasis clearly fell onto the church as a “Society of the Faithful,” while the latter emphasized the authority of the papacy as the head of the church.

It was at this point, the definition of the church, that Mésenguy, for example, hoped to catechize the faithful in Jansenist conciliarism. The church which was united by charity “invisible and spiritual in itself, took on visible effects” that were infallible. And, this infallibility was known by the marks of uniformity and unanimity – the best expression of which was the general, or ecumenical council. Mésenguy wrote:

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43 Pouget, Instructions Générales [Montpellier Catechism], vol. 1, 301, and Languet, Catéchisme du Diocèse de Sens, 29.

44 Mésenguy, Exposition de la Doctrine Chrétienne, vol. 2, 135-140.
The judgment of an ecumenical Council, if it is pronounced with liberty, with unanimity … in other words, by the concord of all, or nearly all … must be regarded as an infallible teaching of the universal Church, because a general Council, by virtue of the quality and number of judges who compose it is reputed, and is in effect the Tribunal of the universal Church that it represents; its decisions must be heard and followed as the voice of the whole Church.\textsuperscript{45}

Thus, the judgments of the council made in a setting by which individuals were free to express opinion became a binding truth on the universal church.

The members of the council did not, however, create truth but instead provided a witness to the truth which was universal. That is, like Rousseau’s “general will” in which the universal was inscribed on the hearts of all men, Jansenist truth manifested itself through unanimous witness. However, this unanimity could only exist in an idealized form; the church council was representative of the universal church. The French Jansenist, Vivien de la Borde, argued therefore, that to ensure a proper witnessing of the truth, the council had to follow canonical forms to guarantee absolute liberty and to protect the members from “domination.” Members should be able to speak with a “righteous heart” and “childlike candor.”\textsuperscript{46} However, should a spirit of domination of force prevail upon a council to elicit a unanimous response, or should the council itself disagree, than the decisions had to be turned over to an extraordinary “public witness.”\textsuperscript{47}

La Borde’s ecclesiology not only provided an institutional legitimization of a religious public sphere, but in an age of Jansenist and ultramontanist disputes, to say nothing of the

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 143.

\textsuperscript{46} Vivien de La Borde, Du témoignage de la vérite (n.p.: 1714), 87-89.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 96-97.
domination of the French crown over ecclesiastical affairs, ensured that the religious public sphere could become the only place where it was possible to discern the truth.

For ultramontanists, the church council resembled republicanism, and therefore ran the risk of plunging the church into the anarchy of a multiplicity of opinions. “The church must be concerned with more than the needs of men …,” wrote the Jesuit François-Xavier Feller, “if union between its members is to be preserved … it can only survive around a common center.”48 And, while Feller admitted that in an apostolic age the church councils were effective judges of dogma, this was an age when the “Holy Spirit” spread more readily, whereas in the contemporary age “the chaff mixes freely with the grain.”49 For Feller, and the ultramontanists, religious discipline could only be preserved with a papacy whose authority was as absolute in matters of faith as was the monarch’s in matters of state.

For Jansenists, then, the authority of the church council was derived from discussion, not from the institution itself. Thus, the council became like the Habermasian salon, whereby “the dictates of reason and not the authority of the speaker were held to be the sole arbiters of debate.”50 In its Jansenist form, this might be recast as the dictum that the discourse of the reasonable soul was the best judge of religious dogma, rather than the authority of ecclesiastical office. And, while Habermas allowed that the public sphere “did not equate itself with the public,” the public sphere still maintained a façade


49 Ibid., 509.

of inclusiveness by acting as the “its mouthpiece…[and] educator,” just as the Jansenist council claimed to represent the universal church.\textsuperscript{51}

This description of a Jansenist public sphere, especially one that is typified by an ecumenical council, is of course hypothetical since no general church council was called between the sixteenth-century Council of Trent and the nineteenth-century Vatican Council. This does not mean, however, that Jansenists bade their time mulling over church issues in private. One of the characteristics of the continental public sphere, according to Habermas, was that in France and Germany the public sphere first developed its sense of authority in cultural criticism, and only by the end of the century did this become more overt political criticism.\textsuperscript{52} Thus, for Habermas, Rousseau was important in France for providing a bridge between cultural and political discourse.\textsuperscript{53} The lack of direct political participation within representative institutions was no obstacle in France for the developing public sphere; nor would participation in ecumenical councils prove a hindrance for a bourgeoning Jansenist public sphere.

Indeed, the papacy’s refusal to convene a general council to debate the bull \emph{Unigenitus} provided Jansenists with the opportunity to create alternative forms of public discussion. The Jansenist weekly newspaper, the \emph{Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques} made its first appearance in 1728 as a defense of the so-called \emph{appellants} of \emph{Unigentius} to a general church council. The papacy’s refusal, combined with the French crown’s persecution of

\textsuperscript{51} Habermas, 37, emphasis in the original.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid.}, 85.

\textsuperscript{53} The process by which the Enlightenment created a “public” is the focus of Roger Chartier’s \textit{The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution}, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC: 1991).
Jansenists, led Jansenist writers publicly to list the grievances of their movement in full public view. As Arlette Farge has noted, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiasitques* was the first newspaper to appear in France to explicitly appeal to the tribunal of public opinion.\(^{54}\) And so it seems, that as the religious controversies surrounding Jansenism in France led to Jansenist challenges to the authority of the papacy and the divine-right monarchy, then in terms of political criticism, the Jansenist newspaper had a head-start on its Enlightened counterparts.

Habermas claimed that one of the prerequisites for the rational-critical discourse of the public sphere was autonomy and transparency – print in particular. For, in order for it to have the authority of reason (as opposed the authority of authority) it had to be autonomous from political or religious institutions.\(^{55}\) In France especially, where all printed material was subject to pre-publication censorship, the autonomy of clandestine literature had a significant impact on the eighteenth-century public sphere. As Robert Darnton, who has done much to illuminate the mechanics of the eighteenth-century clandestine book trade, has observed, clandestine authors “pried literature loose from its attachment to the state” which endowed these books with cultural and political authority.\(^{56}\)

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\(^{55}\) Habermas, 36.

Nearly all Jansenist literature was distributed clandestinely in France. In fact, for most of the eighteenth-century (until approximately 1774), French censors were far more concerned about the spread of Jansenist literature than they were about the literature of the Enlightenment. The *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* was an important part of this genre and the French police made suppression of the newspaper a priority, while their failures to do so became a source of fascination for the French reading public. For the authors, editors, and publishers of the *Nouvelles*, they almost challenged the authorities to stop them, publishing a schematic of their clandestine distribution network (see figure).

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57 Barbara de Negroni, *Lectures interdites; Le travail des cesneurs au XVIIIe siècle, 1723-1774* (Paris: 1995), 106. In spite of this, Robert Darnton chooses to focus primarily on works of “philosophical pornography,” completely ignoring the broad range of Jansenist and religious literature which were part of the clandestine book trade.

58 Farge, 36-38.

59 NNEE, 1731.
While this engraving certainly would not have been at all helpful to the police and the risks to the newspaper were minimal, it certainly was a statement about the impotence of royal authorities to prevent the spread of public religious discourse.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* had become a truly international newspaper covering religious events and news. Jansenists, sympathizers, and even court ministers from France, the Dutch Republic, the Austrian Netherlands as well as the rest of Austrian Empire, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal subscribed to the paper to keep abreast of religious news.⁶⁰ Count Patrice-François de

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⁶⁰ For a map of the distribution of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, as well as a list of international distributors, see Willem Frijhoff, “Les ventes de la vérité; La diffusion des *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*”
Nény, president of the Privy-Council of the Austrian Netherlands and a Jansenist sympathizer, read the newspaper, and he claimed to find it written with “enlightened and superior knowledge.”\(^{61}\) Count Georg Metternich (father of the more famous Prince Klemens von Metternich), who arrived in Brussels as First Minister in 1790 during the Belgian Revolution, must have been aware of the paper since he requested a direct subscription in 1791.\(^{62}\)

The international readership of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* was part of the communications network of the international Jansenist community in Utrecht, where Dupac de Bellegarde and Jean-Baptiste Mouton presided over a veritable distribution system of Jansenist books and pamphlets. It was a network every bit as sophisticated as the one described by Robert Darnton for the spread of “philosophical pornography;” it was certainly more high minded.\(^{63}\) To use a Cartesian metaphor, if the rationale of the international Jansenist community was to defend the rights of the Church of Utrecht, its body, the machine, was the distribution of books and other printed materials, including the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, to an international reading audience. Orders for the newspaper, or other books, often provided an entry for individuals into the International Jansenists’ community. Grégoire Falla, a priest in Val St. Lambert in the independent bishopric of Liège, for example, limited his first letter to Dupac be Bellegarde to a simple d’après les comptes de l’abbé Mouton, agent Jansenist à Utrecht,” in *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* 84 (2001), 104-107.

\(^{61}\) HUA Inv. 215, Mss, 2437, Comte de Nény to Dupac de Bellegarde, 12 janvier 1773.

\(^{62}\) HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3496, Josse Le Plat to Mouton, août, 1791.

\(^{63}\) Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 8-11 and 17-21.
request for some examples of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiasitques*.  

Falla reported on his favorable opinion of the paper, writing to Dupac de Bellegarde, “I have sent you twelve ducats for the following year. The surplus payment, I would like to go towards a subscription to the Works of M. Arnauld.”

From these beginnings, Falla became a regular correspondent to Utrecht Jansenists, and one of the movement’s loyal agents of the Utrecht cause in Liège.

Dupac de Bellegarde was born in Lyon in 1717. He studied theology and canon law at the college of Laon where his mentor, Jean-Baptiste le Sense de Ménilles d’Etemare had also taught the Jansenist theologians and catechists, Gourlin and Mésenguy. In 1754, d’Etemare moved to the Jansenist estate in Rijnwick, near Utrecht, and Dupac joined him shortly thereafter. D’Etemare and Dupac’s arrival in the Netherlands became a watershed moment in the history of the Jansenist movement. In France, beginning around 1750, ultramontanist bishops were ordering their clergy to deny administration of the sacraments to individuals who could not prove that they were not Jansenists, creating the “refusal of sacraments” controversy which did much to traumatize

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64 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2218, Falla to Dupac de Bellegarde, 2 Novembre, 1775.


66 Catherine Maire, *De la cuase de Dieu à la cause de la Nation; Le jansénisme au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: 1998), 120.

French Jansenists, further politicizing the movement there.\textsuperscript{68} Indeed, it seemed that by the end of the decade, the Jansenist torch had been, if not extinguished, considerably dimmed in France, while it burned brightly elsewhere. As a certain Madame de Maisy wrote to Dupac in 1768, “I have told many friends about your Church [of Utrecht], and all are penetrated with the joy and consolations that it brings us. Sadly, one would have to be transported to Spain, Portugal, or Germany to show this joy.”\textsuperscript{69}

It was because Dupac worked tirelessly to turn the cause of the Church of Utrecht into one of concern for all of Catholic Europe, and not just French Jansenism, that Utrecht became the center of an international Jansenist public sphere. One of his first significant activities was to collect the numerous Letters of Communion that had been sent to Utrecht’s archbishops since the election of Steenhoven in 1723, and to publish them in a printed edition. In the preface to this collection, the \textit{Recueil des divers témoignages} published in 1763, Dupac wrote, “Our point in this collection is to make Public the testimonials provided for the Church of Holland and her clergy.”\textsuperscript{70} The \textit{Recueil} was, in fact, published the same year that Utrecht convened its provincial council that furthered Utrecht’s cause by its demonstration of Utrecht’s Catholic orthodoxy and conciliarism, prompting one French Jansenist to promise that the council was “applauded

\textsuperscript{68} On the “refusal of sacraments,” see Van Kley \textit{Religious Origins}, 142-154.

\textsuperscript{69} HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2364, Mad. de Maisy to Dupac de Bellegarde, 25 Fevrier, 1768.

\textsuperscript{70} Gabriel de Dupac de Bellegarde, \textit{Recueil des divers témoignages de plusieurs cardinaux, archevêques, évêques, universités ... contre le schisme introduit dans cette église depuis le commencement de ce siècle, par les manœuvres des Jésuits & de leurs adhérens} (Utrecht: 1763), 1.
by the entire Church.”71 Dupac edited and oversaw the publication of the proceedings of the Provincial Council of Utrecht in 1764, which along with the Recueil, proved that the Jansenist Church of Utrecht intended full public scrutiny and discussion of Utrecht’s unjust separation from Rome.

Indeed, the size of the international Jansenist community, which until at least 1750 had been rather small, exploded both in numbers and in geographical space after the publication of the Recueil and the Acts of the Provincial Council of Utrecht. Like those who subscribed to the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques, requests for the Recueil and the Acts provided an entrée for individuals into the Jansenist community. Sebastian Schaaff, a Benedictine monk in the German city of Fulda, wrote to Dupac after reading the council’s acts: “My abbot and I are very pleased with your council, we are quite strongly disposed in your favor.”72 Schaaff became a regular correspondent of Dupac’s. The German monk asked Dupac for his advice on a book of metaphysics he was preparing, for which Dupac sent Schaaff the collected works of Descartes and Malebranche.73 Eventually, Schaaff became convinced that the Church of Utrecht could become a source of reconciliation between German Catholics and Protestants.74

It is indeed fair to claim that if Dupac did not create the international Jansenist community, more than any one else, he was responsible for its growth and cohesion

71 HUA Inv. 215. Mss. 2767, Augustin Clément to Petrus Meindarts, archbishop of Utrecht, 13 Septembre, 1764.

72 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2515, Sebastian Schaaff, O.S.B., to Dupac de Bellegarde, 13 Fevrier, 1764.

73 Ibid., 20 Septembre, 1765.

74 Ibid., 1 Fevrier, 1777.
during the latter half of the eighteenth century. A simple analysis of his correspondence is proof enough of this. The spread of the community with Dupac at its center is especially noticeable when his correspondence is compared with d’Etemare’s, even though the latter would not have denied that the rights of Utrecht had implications for the universal church.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total correspondents in France</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Correspondents outside France and unknown</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: D’Etemare’s correspondents by country of origin.75

Yet, a chart of Dupac’s correspondents from 1750 until his death in 1789 shows a significantly greater number and spread.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Total Correspondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Republic</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No place named</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian Empire (not including Aust. Netherlands)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German states</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian Netherlands, Luxembourg, Liège</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England and Ireland</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2: Dupac de Bellgarde’s correspondents by county of origin.\textsuperscript{76}

Over sixty per cent of individuals sending letters to Dupac in Utrecht came from countries other than France. And, while certainly not all could be considered Jansenists or part of the international Jansenist community, the majority were part of this community; in numerous cases Dupac sustained contact with these individuals. Certainly, these numbers illustrate the considerable growth and spread of the Jansenist community centered in Utrecht in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Dupac’s correspondence helped manage the business of the “Republic of Grace” by negotiating for a reliable means of distributing Jansenist books and the *Nouvelles*.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 79-102.
Ecclésiastiques through the European postal system. Like many institutions in early modern Europe such as tax collection, the post was a mixture of public service and private enterprise. European monarchs granted individuals a privilege that provided the right to distribute mail within a certain area and, in return, these individual postal directors were free to collect postage rates and to negotiate prices and contracts for items like newspapers that were published and distributed on a regular basis over a broader area. Economically, a newspaper publisher sought a postal director who could provide the greatest geographical area of distribution for the cheapest price, while the directors would hope the earn contracts for newspapers with a large readership.

In France, a clandestine network distributed the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques but in the rest of Europe, the paper could circulate through normal postal offices. And, the international Jansenists found postal directors who were willing to distribute the paper, even though it could not be considered financially lucrative to do so. “I have written to a friend at the Bureau of Posts in Vienna,” wrote Jan Gelders, the Director of Posts in Maseyck in the Austrian Netherlands to Dupac de Bellegarde, “and could offer him your paper at a very modest price, since our office will only earn one florin of profit per annual subscription.” Indeed, this was not a profitable enterprise for Gelders; at the beginning of his relationship with the Utrecht Jansenists, he only distributed seven subscriptions and it only rose to a peak of twelve in 1791. However, Gelders considered principle over

77 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2235, Gelders to Dupac de Bellegarde, 2 juillet, 1782.

profit, telling Dupac de Bellegarde that he hoped to be a part of the fight against the “designs of the detestable Jesuitical cabal.” 79

A similar commitment brought Girolamo Astorri, the Austrian Empire’s Director of Posts for Milan, but living in Rome, into the Jansenist “Republic of Grace.” Astorri contacted Dupac de Bellegarde in 1788, claiming “M. de Vecci [one of Dupac’s correspondents in Rome] has honored me by sharing some of correspondence. My position as the Intendant of Posts here in Rome could be to your double advantage.” He offered to act as a conduit for correspondence, books, and the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques between Utrecht, Italy and Vienna, all because Astorri hoped “to see the Church return to its true principles.” 80

Yet, the Jansenists’ principles did not mean that they were naïve about the realities of the eighteenth-century print market. Robert Darnton claimed that the spread of underground literature in France was driven more by the market concerns of “ideologically neutral” publishers, book-sellers, and printers – hence the success of philosophical pornography, since succinctly, sex sold.81 Indeed, even the authors of the “high” Enlightenment had to account for the vagaries of the European publishing market; some authors, such as Rousseau, paid meticulous attention to the publishing details of

79 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2235, Gelders to Dupac de Bellegarde, 2 juillet, 1782. Gelders further explained to Dupac that he had been a student at Louvain when “Jesuit persecusions” forced the resignation of Zeger Van Espen, a Gallican canonist, from the Faculty of Canon Law. As a result, Gelders quit his university studies “in disgust.”

80 HUA 215., Mss. 2038, Astorri to Dupac de Bellegarde, 11 Octobre, 1788.

81 Darnton, Forbidden Best-Sellers, 51.
their works, more often than not causing significant consternation for their publishers.\(^{82}\) Similarly, Dupac de Bellegarde and others within at the ‘Republic of Grace’ recognized the importance of print in shaping the religious public sphere, and like their secular counterparts, proved able manipulators of the European publishing market.

Still, the effort to get Jansenist books to a European readership itself became a tool in the Jansenist appeal to public opinion. For example, one of Dupac de Bellegarde’s most ambitious projects was to publish an edition of Antoine Arnauld’s complete works. The project, which took over two decades to complete, was finally published in forty-eight volumes between 1775 and 1785 by Sigismond d’Arnay in Lausanne, Switzerland. Dupac de Bellegarde’s edition was meant to respond to “the public curiosity about this great man and to conserve the place of these writings for posterity.” Arnauld provided the eighteenth-century a “public example of a vast genius, a profound Theologian, a Philosopher as brilliant as he was Christian, a sublime Metaphysician, Geometer, Grammariand, and Man of Letters.”\(^{83}\) Not surprisingly, the work became a target of the papacy and the Jesuits who attempted to prevent its publication. Yet, like the papacy’s condemnation of the Church of Utrecht itself, the Jansenist international turned proscription of the works of Arnauld into an indictment of papal and Jesuitical intrigue and tool for shaping the eighteenth-century religious public sphere.

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\(^{83}\) Gabriel Dupac de Bellegarde, introduction to *Oeuvres de Messire Antoine Arnauld: Docteur de la Maison et Société de Sorbonne*, vol. 1 (Lausanne: 1775), v-vi.
Like many publications of multi-volume works, the works of Arnauld were to be sold by subscription. In 1758, a “society of booksellers” in Rome published a letter announcing the forthcoming work and in 1759, they followed with a prospectus advertising the work. This was all accomplished, according to Dupac, with the full support of Pope Benedict XIV, who was more sympathetic to the Jansenist cause and well aware of the “profound danger to Religion” presented by “the conduct of the Jesuits.”

The death of Benedict XIV in 1758, however, and subsequent election of the Jesuit-friendly Clement XIII brought an end to the project in Rome. In turn, Dupac had the prospectus reprinted by d’Arnay in Laussane, appearing also in 1759 and bearing the false imprint of Avignon. In response, the Archbishop of Avignon issued an order threatening excommunication to any one reading or possessing the prospectus.

At this point, d’Arnay apparently halted work on the project, writing to Dupac:

“The project for printing the works of M. Arnauld is not at all forgotten; it is simply suspended…It can be restarted if the editor [Dupac] can provide some protections or guarantees in the interval.” Indeed, it seems as though Dupac had grown frustrated with d’Arnay’s hesitation since the Swiss publisher further protested, “Someone has communicated with Monsieur M. M. Rey of Amsterdam about printing the first editions of this project…he should be convinced, however, that the projected edition of Laussane

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84 Ibid., xi.

85 Avignon was one of the favorite choices of location for false imprints, and its choice sent a clear message that the work would be part of the clandestine literature of the eighteenth century, see Anne Sauvy, “Livres contrefaits et livres interdites,” in Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, eds. Histoire de l’édition française, vol. 2, Le livre triomphant, 1660-1830 (Paris: 1984), 113-114.
is not lost.”  

It is quite possible that Dupac tried to replace d’Arnay with Rey as the publisher of the Arnauld editions, since Rey’s location in Amsterdam would have made coordination between editor and publisher easier. And, because Rey was the publisher of Rousseau’s *Nouvelle Héloïse* and the *Social Contract*, he brought considerable experience and success in the clandestine book-trade to the Jansenist enterprise. 

If Dupac had indeed negotiated with Rey, for unknown reasons Rey did not publish the Arnauld editions. Certainly, whatever Dupac had planned, he was able to negotiate some favorable concessions from d’Arnay towards the end of the 1760s. And, although the correspondence between d’Arnay and Dupac is incomplete, it is probable that d’Arnay had already made a considerable financial investment in the Arnauld edition since merely printing a prospectus, considering the relatively high cost of paper in the eighteenth century, entailed a significant investment on the part of d’Arnay. In June of 1768, d’Arnay promised to begin again on the project by publishing a new prospectus. Moreover, d’Arnay promised Dupac that he would pay to have the editions printed “under your supervision, in Holland, France, or here where I promise I will allow nothing else to distract me.” 

Again in January, 1769 d’Arnay wrote to Dupac claiming that

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86 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2057, Sigismond d’Arnay to Dupac de Bellegarde, 29 Octobre, 1760.

87 See Birn, *Forging Rousseau*.


89 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2057, Sigismond d’Arnay to Dupac de Bellegarde, 28 Juin, 1768.
d’Aray was himself best suited to carry out the publishing tasks in a way that would best satisfy “public desire and the zeal by which you have carried out your work.”

Once d’Aray had again dedicated himself to the project, events within the Catholic Church seemed to have conspired to make the public appearance of Dupac’s edition of Arnauld possible – in 1773, Pope Clement XIV dissolved the Jesuit order.

According to Dupac in his introduction to the Arnauld edition,

> the destruction of the Society, as anticipated as it was important for Religion, removed all obstacles [for publishing the Arnauld works]. Those who are most zealous for sound doctrine and the progress of science will not cease to profit from these circumstances. They should consider this collection as one of the greatest opportunities provided by divine Providence for the renewal and reform of knowledge, and we hope with all of Europe for the strengthening of the work of the Holy Fathers … by presenting to the public, within the writings of M. Arnauld, the best and most necessary method.

Certainly, by 1774 all obstacles had been removed; d’Aray had negotiated with a Parisian bookseller to handle the subscription requests and he had found a secure route to smuggle the books into France, via Lyon. The works of Arnauld became Dupac’s magnum opus and praise for the editions poured in from other members of the Jansenist community. Wittola wrote to Dupac: “I thank God that the works of Arnauld will finally be printed. It is a particular consolation for me to know that you had the principle part in such an important work.” Charles Schwarzl, a professor of theology at Innsbruck, ordered the books, along with the completed works of Bossuet and a subscription for the

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91 Dupac de Bellegarde, *Oeuvres de Messire Antoine Arnauld*, xiv.

92 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2057, Sigismond d’Aray to Dupac de Bellegarde, 1 Fevrier 1774.

93 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2583, Marc-Anton Wittola to Dupac de Bellegarde, 16 Mai, 1774.
Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques with the first 300 florins he had been allocated for constructing a new library. As late as 1792, Dupac’s successor, Jean-Baptiste Mouton was fulfilling orders for the Arnauld works, and he often included free examples as parts of other book orders.

The publishing history of Dupac’s edition of Arnauld’s works reveals the extent to which the Jansenist “Republic of Grace” had entered the eighteenth-century public sphere. That Dupac related much of this history in his introduction to the volumes (although he omitted the details of his tough negotiations with d’Arnay) shows how he effectively managed to turn the struggle to publish the works in spite of occasional hostility by the papacy into an appeal to public opinion. It also demonstrates that Jansenists considered books and printing as vital to maintaining their communal identity as it was for the Republic of Letters.

Still, the heart of the Jansenist “Republic of Grace” was the correspondence carried out between its members. Dena Goodman has argued that correspondence was the means by which the intimate discourse of the salon translated into the public sphere. The Jansenist correspondence fulfilled the same function. The letters between Dupac and Mouton and supporters of the Church of Utrecht brought members of the Jansenist movement into informal communion with each other when the formal marks of Christian sociability, such as a general council were not possible. Members of the Jansenist

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94 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2524, Charles Schwarzl to Dupac de Bellegarde, 12 Juillet 1779.

95 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3610, “Journal des Livres et finance.”

community often shared letters with others, and thus increased their numbers. Rosalino Guertler, the confessor to Empress Maria Theresa of Austrian, initiated his correspondence with Dupac stating, “Père Oberhauser [a correspondent of Dupac’s in Fulda] has done me the honor of sharing some of your letters.” He proceeded from this tentative introduction to request a subscription to the Jansenist newspaper and to order the acts of the Council of Utrecht.  

Similarly, a certain B. Terme, a canon of the cathedral chapter of Vienna wrote “I have never had the opportunity to write to you, not having had the opportunity to make your acquaintance, but M. Wittola would surely speak favorably of me. Your untiring zeal to serve the Church edifies me; I could only hope with all my heart to imitate you.”

These letters then, as well as the other Jansenist publications, were ultimately issued both privately and publicly out of a spirit of Christian charity. In other words, the discourse of the “Republic of Grace” was significant not just because it fulfilled the criteria for rational discourse in a European public sphere. It was also based on a specific version of Christian theology, one centered on the doctrine of grace. Thus, one of the main arguments of this dissertation is that the forms of the public sphere, or rational discourse in a public forum, however important though these were, are ultimately the consequence of specific ideological or theological motivations. In other words, there is little in the Habermasian conception public sphere, to distinguish between Enlightened and Jansenist discourse. As this chapter has attempted to show, attention to the cultural

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97 HUA Inv. 215, Inv. 2256, Rosalino Guertler to Dupac de Bellegarde, 7 Mai, 1766.

98 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2544, B. Terme to Dupac de Bellegarde, 7 Octobre, 1776.
forms alone is insufficient to tell one ideology apart from another. Jansenists brought a specific discursive mode, a discourse of grace to the public sphere. This discourse would ultimately compete with other discursive strains: absolutist, ultramontanist, and enlightened, all of which shaped the Age of Enlightenment in Europe. Therefore, the next chapter will expand on the Jansenist concept of the public sphere through an examination of the discourse of grace.
CHAPTER 3

UTRECHT AND GENEVA: A DISCOURSE OF GRACE IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

When Jean Willemaers retired as the President of the Jansenist seminary in Amersfoort, on October 24, 1758, he chose as his valedictorian address the subject of chapters six and seven of the Book of Judges in the Old Testament, the story of Gideon’s defeat of the Midians. In the story, God had allowed the Midianites to conquer the Hebrew nation due to the transgressions of the chosen people. However, in Judges, God chose Gideon as a leader to free Israel through an armed insurrection. After assembling his army, God spoke to Gideon saying that he had too many soldiers; the Lord forced Gideon to dismiss all but 300 of his men “Lest Israel vaunt itself against me and say ‘My own power brought me the victory.’”¹ The Lord made it clear to Gideon that it would be God and God alone who would deliver Israel. The dismissal of the soldiers was not random, however; Gideon tested each of his troops in the manner prescribed by God, including testing the Hebrew soldiers at the waterside. God told Gideon that soldiers who “drank like dogs” from the water were unworthy, for only the soldiers who dipped their hands into the water maintained the alertness and cautiousness to be God’s soldiers. Thus, the message was that only the most fit were selected to represent God, God’s

¹ Judges 7:2
chosen people, and truth. Speaking before the Dutch seminary and leaders of the Dutch Catholic movement, including the Archbishop of Utrecht and the Bishop of Haarlem, the story was a reaffirming message of perseverance in the face of oppression when one is certain that they stand on the side of Truth. The Jansenist weekly, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* reported that Willemaers’ speech was precisely appropriate for “the situation of the Catholic Church, and in particular the Clergy of Holland.”

This chapter is an examination of the discourse and debate about religious truth in the Age of the Enlightenment. At the heart of Jansenist struggles against the papacy in Rome and the state in France was an underlying faith that they represented the side of truth. This was not, however, a two-sided debate between the papacy and Jansenists. In addition to the religious discourse of the eighteenth century, Jansenists also contended with Enlightenment materialism and empiricism that claimed to possess a secular version of a universal and unanimous truth in the form of reason. For Voltaire, the superiority of reason over faith was evident enough, as he famously quipped that “there are no sects amongst geometricians.” Following the Scientific Revolution’s opening assaults on traditional forms of received knowledge, the Age of Enlightenment became a period of increasing epistemological battles: between rationality and empiricism, faith and reason, and authority and individual perceptions of truth. My claim is that during the high Enlightenment the state’s monopoly on truth, embodied in the notion of “one king, one faith, one law” had broken down so that a variety of intellectual discourses contested the

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2 *NNEE*, June 5, 1759.

idea of what stood as the Truth. One of the most disputed truths of the eighteenth century was an epistemological battle – the nature of how individuals within a society came to discern truth itself – waged between the enlightened coterie of Voltaire and Diderot, the individually centered sentimentality of Rousseau, and Jansenist ecclesiology. The discursive struggle between these intellectual traditions will be the primary focus in this chapter.

During the Middle Ages, the authority to establish Christian truth in terms of doctrine and the power to force adherence to doctrine were divided between the Roman Church and the secular rulers of Europe. Isidore of Seville, writing in the seventh century, for example, claimed that while Rome held the authority (potestas) to determine doctrine, it was incumbent on the Christian monarch to utilize their secular power (potentia) to ensure lay and clerical obedience to Roman authority. In the early modern period, however, especially following the devastating Wars of Religion, the French crown – especially Louis XIV – proceeded to unite religious potestas with secular potentia by reifying the concept of the King as “the Most Christian King” who performs miracles by touching for scrofula and enforces religious orthodoxy within the Kingdom.

Unigentius, which condemned most of the fundamental tenets of Jansenism was fulminated not only “by the authority of Apostolic Judgment” but also on behalf of the “Most Christian” Louis XIV who “defends and preserves the purity of the Catholic faith”

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by waging war against Jansenism.\textsuperscript{6} By placing the preservation of Catholic truth into the hands of the crown, religion became a matter of the secular politics of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is my purpose to demonstrate that in spite of the eighteenth-century opposition between faith and reason, this duality of the divine and profane carried linguistically into the Age of Enlightenment so that theologians and philosophers alike used an increasingly similar language to explain fundamental truths about human nature and society.

These political, ideological and religious debates formed the Jansenist public sphere which placed the ability to derive a sense of Truth in the hands of private individuals. Appelants of \textit{Unigenitus} then appealed both to public opinion and reason that, in France, translated into calls for a “Sovereign Tribunal of the Nation”, which included lay and secular authorities such as the regional Parlements to examine and establish Christian truths that were “purely spiritual.”\textsuperscript{7} And, because the debate over faith and reason was discursively placed in secular terms in an autonomous public sphere, terms that the crown itself sought to monopolize, the cumulative effect was to contribute to the “desacralization” of the French monarchy over the course of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{8} Even where the Jansenists and philosophes disagreed, both discursive modes added to the steady erosion to the foundations of absolutism.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Clement XI, \textit{Unigenitus} in Andre Gazier, \textit{Histoire générale du mouvement janséniste} (Paris: 1924), 306, emphasis added.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Mairamberg, François de, \textit{Mémoire pour les Sieurs Samson, cure d’Olivet, Couet, curé de Parroi, chanoine de Jargeau, diocese d’Orleans…contre Monsieur l’évêque d’Orelans…Délibéré à Paris le 27 juillet 1730} (Paris: 1730), 2.
\end{itemize}
There is, of course, nothing particularly new or refreshing in the suggestion that the Christian faithful and the philosophes of the French Enlightenment found little upon which to agree. Quite to the contrary, the story of the defense of religion against the materialism of the Enlightenment, as well as attacks from those such as Voltaire to “ecrasez l’infame,” is as old as the eighteenth century itself. And, in spite of the attempt by Carl Becker to demonstrate that the philosophes, by replacing faith in a transcendent God with transcendent reason, owed more to religion than their irreligion, historians have been more drawn to the conclusions of Peter Gay’s interpretation of the Enlightenment as “modern Paganism.”

Thus Gay suggests that while “Catholic scholars of the early eighteenth century built a bridge between modern religion and modern philosophy… the image of a bridge is helpful but incomplete; it fails to evoke the essential hostility between eighteenth-century religion and eighteenth century secularism… .” Gay’s version of the Enlightenment has been more typically repeated than Becker’s, prompting one textbook author to state flatly, “the period was not a religious age.”

However, in spite the open hostility between religion, including Jansenism, and the Enlightenment, both parties, the philosophes and the Jansenists, also shared a common discursive bond. For, while Jansenists and philosophes railed against each other, they also held common enemies in the form of the monopoly of truth held by an

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11 Raymond Birn, Crisis, Absolutism, Revolution: Europe 1648-1789 (Fort Worth, TX: 1992), 236
absolute state and agents of the papacy with ultramontanist claims of papal supremacy over ecclesiastical affairs. Both the Jansenists and the Enlightenment resisted the irrational, fanatical, and secretive, making appeals to individual consciences to debate and discuss within a free and open society what stood for “Truth,” either secular or divine. Therefore, while acknowledging the critical differences between advocates of faith and partisans of reason, it is equally important to establish the common discursive ground held by Jansenists and philosophes alike. In other words, without challenging Gay’s assertion that the bridge between the two provides an incomplete picture of the period, that same bridge will prove to be strategically important for our understanding of the eighteenth-century intellectual history of both Jansenism and the Enlightenment.

The very idea of a unified Christian Truth in the Dutch Republic, and Europe for that matter, was hotly contested during the eighteenth century, and not merely between Catholics and Protestants. In fact, since “reasons of faith” yielded to “reasons of state,” Catholic and Protestant disputes had been relegated to the realm of a not too distant, but nonetheless distant past. However, within the Catholic Church the neo-Augustinian doctrine of Jansenism threatened new schisms within the Roman Church – threats that became reality in the Dutch Republic where there existed not one, but two Catholic churches. The larger of the two churches maintained allegiance to the papacy in Rome and the Pope’s agents in the Netherlands, again the Jesuits. The Protestant government of the Dutch state anathematized this distinctly “Roman” form of Catholicism. The smaller of the churches, the Oude Katholik church centered on the Archdiocese of Utrecht, while enjoying tacit toleration from the Dutch Estates General, was in turn disavowed by the
papacy over matters of ecclesiastical control and an implicit, if not explicit, adherence to the doctrines of Jansenism.

One of the fundamental Jansenist doctrines, and the primary cause of the ecclesiastical dispute in the Netherlands, was the emphasis placed on conciliar forms of church governance. Jansenists believed that when Jesus-Christ directly commissioned seventy-two of the faithful to bear witness to the message of Christ that this formed the basis for the secular clergy of parish priests that derived an apostolic authority that was equivalent to the prelates of the Church. Furthermore, Jansenism looked back to the model of the ancient church claiming that signs of Truth – the notae – could only be established when the church faithful spoke universally and unanimously. The earliest glosses of Augustinian theology, from authors such as Bede and Alcuin, remarked that the Truth was marked by unity and consensus. Thus, the bull *Unigenitus* became a catalyst in France for debates about Christian Truth and for demands for a collective body to resist the increasing absolutist agenda of both the state and the papacy in Rome.

These debates, however, did not remain confined within French borders; they became a part of the discourse utilized in the defense of the Old Catholic Movement in the Netherlands. As Jansenists continued to be a persecuted religious group in France, many fled to the tolerant Dutch Republic, where they found in Utrecht a church that

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became the model of Christian truth. For in Utrecht, the break with Rome had indeed placed ecclesiastical affairs in the hands of the clergy who, moreover, convened a Provincial Council in the eighteenth century to decide issues of doctrine and church governance. That the church in Utrecht maintained that they were in fact orthodox in their Catholicity while asserting their independence from Rome, with at least the tacit support of the Protestant state, only underscored Jansenist views that by the latter half of the eighteenth century, the hopes for establishing a church on the grounds of Truth lay in the Protestant Netherlands rather than Catholic France.

Truth in Jansenist form ultimately depended on the “efficacious grace” of God; humanity in their neo-Augustinian theology was limited in its ability to come to the truth. Blaise Pascal, perhaps the greatest of Jansenist apologists, although he never formally identified with the doctrine, commented in his *Pensées*,

\[T\]here are in faith two equally constant truths. One is that man in the state of creation, or in the state of grace, is exalted above the whole of nature, made like unto God and sharing in his divinity. The other is that in the state of corruption and sin he has fallen from that first state and has become like the beasts. These two propositions are equally firm and certain.\(^{14}\)

While in a state of pure grace, that is man at creation, discerning truth was possible and coterminous with humanity in the paradise of Eden. But, original sin placed humanity into a state of concupiscence, ultimately separating man from the divine and absolute truth. Only the efficacious grace of God could raise humanity from the abyss and enable it to perform acts of “charity.” Cornelius Jansen in his exegesis and defense of this neo-Augustianism, *Augustinius*, then drew on both the patristic theology of the Bishop of

Hippo and also the Gospel when Jesus said, “without me you can do nothing.”

And for Pascal, “God…makes the soul aware that he is its sole good…Self-love and concupiscence, which hold it [love for God] back are intolerable. Thus God makes the soul aware of the underlying self-love that is destroying it, and that he alone can cure.”

Without God’s efficacious grace, therefore, man was neither able to act with charity nor discern Christian truths. At best, according to Pascal, man in the secular world can only alleviate the angst that came with man’s depravity with diversions that provide a temporary salve for the soul, but only further obfuscate divine truth. Again, Pascal asserted that “the less [man] was diverted the happier he would be, like the saints and God … but is man not happy, who can delight in diversion? … because it is from somewhere else…he is dependant, and always liable to be disturbed by a thousand and one accidents, which inevitably cause distress.” Happiness and truth in Jansenist thought came from God and God alone. At its best, the profane world offered diversions, at worst it offered further despair due to man’s sinful nature; only the efficacious grace of God could provide happiness and lead man to the ultimate truths.

Pascal’s writings carried with it a political indictment – for ultimately, political power was laid on a foundation of human concupiscence and diversions – true power came from God. “There is something so obvious as the vanity of the world,” Pascal


16 Pascal, 150.

17 Ibid., 37.
wrote, “should be so little recognized that people find it odd and surprising to be told that it is foolish that it is folly to seek greatness.”\textsuperscript{18} Yet, the needs of the absolutist state, such as France, demanded the greatness of servants of the state – most of all from the king. In the seventeenth century, Jansenist piety called for a retreat from the world and the solitaires of Port-Royal offered a threat to the crown that claimed to rule due to both temporal and divine-right. However, as the crown forced the registration of Unigenitus as a matter of law, the folly of the temporal world turned to “horror” as the “friends of Truth,” as appellants of the bull called themselves, had to flee to “foreign countries…for establishing their doctrine.”\textsuperscript{19} The church in Utrecht as a place of refuge, therefore, created a space for Jansenists to promote their belief in Christian truth unmolested from the concupiscence of secular powers in France.

Utrecht represented independence for the Jansenists. That it was located in a Protestant republic only served to underscore its similarities to the pristine ancient Church that spread under the persecution of the Roman Empire in Jansenist ideology. Freed from control of secular powers, Jansenists were free in Utrecht to participate in and bear witness to Christian Truth. However, the church in Utrecht was not viewed as a creation of the Dutch clergy, or French Jansenist supporters; as in all things, the Utrecht church was a visible sign of God’s efficacious grace. Therefore, when clergy from across Europe wrote letters of communion to the Archbishop of Utrecht, the church was described in typically Jansenist terms that equated truth with grace. Thus, Laurent

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{19} NNEE, \textit{Suite des Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques}, 1728.
Blondel wrote to Utrecht from Paris in 1726, “Beautiful Church!…Given by God himself, and not by the hands of men…consecrated for conforming to the forms of the Ancient Church and not in accordance with the new rules of cupidity and the spirit of domination.”

Tolerated by an officially Protestant state, the church in Utrecht found itself relatively free from secular control, and perhaps more important, from the influence of the Jesuit order.

That the church in Utrecht represented the True Church, however, was ultimately beyond humans to discern for themselves. Because human nature, in the Jansenist neo-Augustinian theology, was prone to sin, it was also, therefore, liable to misinterpret or even ignore truth. Pascal applauded the use of human reason, but at the same time, he also highlighted the limits of reason in man. Christian Truth transcended reason because it approached the divine that was ultimately beyond rational comprehension for humans.

Yet, the individual person of faith could discern truth through grace. That is, although God and man were separated through sin, God’s grace would provide visible signs of truth through figures and miracles. In France, therefore, the status of Jansenists as a persecuted Christian minority, rather than create despair amongst the faithful, only affirmed the veracity of Jansenist theology because Jesus, as the true Son of God also suffered persecution. This Jansenist doctrine of figurism was indeed an important epistemological basis for knowing the truth and as persecution intensified in France, Jansenists became only more convinced of their possession of truth – especially when the

20 HUA Inv. 86, Mss.19, Laurent Blondel to Cornelius Johannes Barchman Wuytiers, 1725.

21 For example, Pascal’s Pensées called the two “excesses…to exclude reason and to admit nothing but reason.” Pascal, 55.
Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques began to report that a series of miracles had been performed at the gravesite of a Jansenist deacon at the Saint-Médard church.²²

The doctrine of figurism and the miracles of Saint-Médard were part of the image of Utrecht as the true church, especially when Jansenist clergy solicited letters of communion from Jansenists throughout France and Europe after Utrecht’s break from Rome. In fact, the deacon, François de Pâris, whose grave became the source of the Saint-Médard miracles, circulated such a letter for the Archdiocese of Utrecht in 1726 that was signed by forty members of the French clergy. God’s grace, therefore, also established the True Church in Utrecht and made it possible to be recognized as such by individuals. So, when Léon Le Chevalier, a Jansenist prior in the community of Saint-Maur-sur-Loire, wrote to Utrecht in 1727, he noted “the miracles … by which God has made manifest for the justice of your cause.” To which he added that without the same miracles to elevate the otherwise “feeble voices” of the Jansenist faithful, they could not speak about Utrecht as the true church.²³

Grace made it possible to know truth not only through miraculous deeds and revelation, but also through acts of Christian charity. The doctrine of efficacious grace held that humans could not act charitably, that is without concupiscence, without the gift of God’s grace. Signs of charity were therefore signs that God had bestowed his grace. The letters of communion were not just testaments from witnesses to the truth; they also

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²³ HUA Inv. 86, Inv. 20, Le Chevalier to Cornelius Johannes Barchman Wuytiers, 1727.
marked acts of charity directed towards the church in Utrecht. However, Jansenists in Utrecht claimed an even greater sign of Christian charity when French émigré clergy in Utrecht helped the archdiocese to survive the attrition of its clergy after the Codde had been deposed as archbishop. Without an archbishop for twenty years, the Utrecht church had no method for the ordination of new clergy. The influx of Jansenist prelates from France was the only procedure for creating new clergy for the Dutch church until the ordination of Cornelius Steenhoven as archbishop in 1724 – an act that finalized the split between Utrecht and Rome. The ordination of priests was not merely a matter of survival, however, but it was also “an act of singular charity by the celebrated Defenders of Truth [the French Jansenist émigrés] who had been obliged by persecution to seek refuge” in Utrecht.  

Defenders of the Utrecht church described the ordination of the Dutch clergy as an act of charity – a sign of grace – as if the divine purpose behind *Unigenitus* and the exile of the French Jansenists to Utrecht was in order to establish the true church not in France, but in the Netherlands.

In a sense, the political and social philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau recast the marks of truth of Pascal and the Jansenists in secular terms. What Pascal called concupiscence, Rousseau termed self-interest; where one looked to Christian charity, the other to civic virtue. Similar to the Jansenist interest in establishing the true church, Rousseau was concerned about the true form of government based on morality and virtue. And, just as Utrecht provided a model for the Jansenists, Rousseau also looked across French borders to his birthplace of Geneva as the model of a political and social

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24 Dupac de Bellegarde, 456, emphasis added.
organization. Rousseau’s Geneva was more than a society founded on rational principles, Geneva offered the basis and model for government where, rather than acting out of self-interest, citizens were bound together by a common bond of basic civic virtue. That the oligarchic Geneva of the eighteenth century little resembled Rousseau’s idealized society mattered little to him; Rousseau waged battle against the ills of society and politics in France from a position of moral authority as a “citizen of Geneva.”

Rousseau dedicated his *Discourse on Inequality*, written for the Academy of Dijon’s essay contest about the nature and origins of social inequality, to Geneva. In his dedicatory introduction, Rousseau outlined his views of the perfect state, explaining that had he chosen to live anywhere he would have chosen to live “peacefully in sweet society with my fellow citizens, and taking my example from them, exhibiting towards them humanity, friendship, and all the virtues, and leaving after me the honorable memory of a good man and an upright, virtuous patriot.” The true ends of the state were for Rousseau, to build a sense of civic virtue amongst its citizens and where human bonds were strengthened by this civic virtue. The greatest danger to the state was self-interest, especially commerce and greed. Rousseau noted in the *Social Contract*:

> The word ‘finance’ is the word of a slave; it is unknown in the true republic. In a genuinely free state, the citizens do everything with their own hands and nothing by the means of money…the better a state is constituted, the more public business takes precedence over private in the minds of the citizens.  


Rousseau viewed finance, human self-interest, as a secular form of concupiscence, thus the true state placed public business – a secularized form of charity – as the true ends of the state.

Where Rousseau and the Jansenists parted company, however, was ultimately over the source of truth. Both Pascal and Rousseau viewed human reason as limited; the dictates of the heart were ultimately the correct path to truth. For Pascal, it was grace that moved the heart to acts of “charity.” Rousseau’s truth, however, was individualistic and sentimental in that the individual heart was unique and therefore, truth was particular. Rousseau’s autobiography – his unique expression of truth – was admittedly full of factual errors, but he asserted “I cannot go wrong about what I have felt, or about what my feelings have led me to do…The true object of my confessions is to reveal my inner thoughts exactly in all the situations of my life. It is the history of my soul…”28

Rousseau claimed that reason, society, and self-interest, could ultimately mask the truth, but a sincere examination of the heart could reveal truth, and this truth could be positively known and evident to each individual through individual reflection.29 The guarantor of truth for Rousseau was the self, originating from each human heart and emotion, while Pascal’s truth held God as the final arbiter.

Ultimately, therefore, Jansenist versions of truth were only individually knowable by God’s grace through visible signs that overcame man’s faulty reason and

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concupiscence. For the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment – especially Voltaire – however, this Jansenist theological epistemology was the source for eighteenth-century social problems and conflicts. Voltaire and the French writers who followed his lead sought to extricate humans from the stain of original sin by creating an epistemological foundation for truth that was based in the secular virtue of rationality and not religiosity – or for that matter sentimentality. In Voltaire’s deism, God was a benevolent creator who either endowed man with a moral law – philosophy – or a natural law that for Voltaire was religion.\(^{30}\) Anything beyond this definition was for Voltaire superstition; God certainly did not perform miracles to elucidate truth for a handful of believers and many of Voltaire’s attacks on organized religion were directed against the Jansenists. In fact, Voltaire held no theologian in greater contempt than Pascal.\(^{31}\) The last of Voltaire’s *Letters on England* – his first major philosophical work published in 1734 - is a lengthy polemic directed a Pascal whom he called a “sublime misanthrope.”\(^{32}\) Of Pascal’s faith in God’s revelation through miracles – including the supposed miracle that cured the fistula in the eye of Pascal’s niece at Port-Royal – Voltaire was scornful. He noted that “what is far from probable is that God, who does not perform miracles for the purpose of spreading our religion over nineteen-twentieths of the world, where that religion is either unknown or regarded with horror, would have really disturbed the course of nature on


behalf of a young girl.”\textsuperscript{33} Jansenists saw God as the author of a visible truth; Voltaire saw at best, God’s creation, nature.

Voltaire hoped to free man from the bonds of organized religion by positing nature as the arbiter of truth. And without original sin, humanity was neither as depraved nor as confused as Pascal believed. Countering Pascal’s sin of concupiscence and Rousseau’s sentimentality, Voltaire proposed “that love of self is equal in all men and as necessary to them as the five senses, that this self-love is given to us by God for the preservation of our being.”\textsuperscript{34} Individual desires, therefore, formed the basis for action for Voltaire – there was nothing inimical about acting out of self-interest – even though he similarly expressed doubts that this philosophy would be well-received. In the article “Amour-propre” in his Philosophical Dictionary, Voltaire noted, “This self-love [amour-propre] is the instrument of our conservation; it resembles the instrument that perpetuates the species; it is necessary, it is dear to us, it gives us pleasure, and it must be hidden.”\textsuperscript{35} Voltaire, and other Enlightened materialists held to an empirical epistemology – based on John Locke’s \textit{tabula rasa} – that claimed that knowledge, including truth, was not a function of the intellect or soul, but of sensation and experience. For Voltaire, man was not any freer of will than a hunting dog, because both man and a dog are ultimately driven by desire – not Christian grace. Again in his dictionary, Voltaire asserted, “Very well, you [man] are a thousand times freer than he [a dog] is, you have a thousand times


\textsuperscript{34} Voltaire, \textit{Letters on England}, 122.

\textsuperscript{35} Voltaire, \textit{Dictionnaire Philosophique}, 38.
greater power of thought than he has, but you don’t have a different kind of free will.”

Certainly in these terms, enlightened empiricism was not that different from Jansenist predestination as both served to place limitations on the freedom of the will. While the source of this limitation was different – Voltaire claimed it was self-love and Jansenists from grace – both ran contrary to the primary claim of the Jesuits and Molinism that offered that man was ultimately free to choose between good and evil, sin and salvation. And, while the materialists and the Jansenists would disavow each other, they were also drawn together epistemologically in a debate over the place of humanity in a world the way it “was” versus as it “ought” to be.

For materialists, including Diderot along with Voltaire, the greatest harm done to society was in the name of religious fanaticism. Voltaire’s campaign against fanaticism are of course well documented, and they ranged from his defense of the Protestant Calas family in France – unjustly accused of the murder of their son because he converted to Catholicism – to the fact that Voltaire was stuck by a fever each year on August 24, Saint Bartholomew’s Day. Religious tolerance was a cardinal virtue for Voltaire because intolerance tore societies apart. “If there were one religion in England,” Voltaire noted,

36 Ibid., 257.

37 Jansenist attacks against enlightened materialism were based on the implication that man’s actions were determined by animal instincts, that is self-love, and not by the efficacious grace of God. The result, according to Jansenists, was that this materialism “degraded humanity…[and] destroyed the primary truth written on our hearts by the hand of the Creator.” NNEE, 3 April, 1759. Voltaire, however, noted that the only thing the Jansenists and Jesuits ever agreed upon was mutual condemnation of materialist philosophy, see Voltaire, Dictionnaire Philosophique, 156.

38 On Voltaire, the so-called Calas Affair, the campaign for religious toleration, and the French public sphere, see Sarah Maza, Private Lives and Public Affairs; The Causes Célèbres of Pre-Revolutionary France (Berkeley: 1993), Chapter One.

“there would be danger of despotism, if there were two they would cut each other’s throats, but there are thirty, and they live together in peace and happiness.”

Religious claims to possess an absolute truth, and the zeal to force that truth onto others could only lead to civil unrest and civil war for Voltaire. Diderot went even further than Voltaire by ultimately rejecting the notion of absolute truth in Rameau’s Nephew, save that of desire, “drink good wine, blow yourself out with luscious food, have a tumble with lovely women, lie on soft beds. Apart from that the rest is vanity.”

Humans, driven by self-love and desire, ultimately deprived of free will, therefore could make no claims on an absolute truth nor have any basis for establishing, a priori, society as it “ought” to be.

Unlike the philosophes, the Jansenists fell short of a full expression of the freedom of thought. Their own attacks on materialist beliefs were certainly proof of that; the condemnation of Helvetius’s materialist work, De l’Esprit, by the Parlement of Paris was cause for celebration in the pages of the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques. However, this is not to say that Jansenism was universally intolerant, even in France. But, it was in Utrecht, rather than France, where Jansenists most vocally expressed the cause of

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40 Denis Diderot, Rameau’s Nephew, trans. Leonard Tancock, (London: 1966), 65. It should be noted that Diderot hid this manuscript from public view, not wanting it published until after his death, if at all. He was certainly sensitive to the potential dangers posed to the philosophes should the crown and church get hold of this manuscript.

41 NNEE, 3 April 1759. It is worthwhile to note that the authors of the article in the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques credited the largely pro-Jansenist Parlement of Paris with the banning of De l’Esprit. The book in fact had been granted a royal approbation by the crown’s Director of the Book-Trade, Malsherbes, an friend of the philosophes himself. The book, however, created a public scandal and the Parlement’s actions to ban the book forced the crown to withdraw its approbation. Thus, the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques were able to claim the Parlement of Paris, rather than the crown, was the true defender of public virtue in the latter half of the eighteenth century in France.

42 Cottret, 195.
toleration. Forced to contend with the fact that they were free to establish their model of the true Catholic church in the Protestant Dutch Republic that offered refuge to beleaguered French Jansenists, it would have been at best, impolite, and at worst, politically disastrous for the Utrecht church to decry other religious faiths. Indeed, part of the struggle of Jansenism in the Netherlands was a struggle to preserve the integrity of private faith.

Jansenist defenders of the true church in Utrecht, however, drew similar conclusions as the *philosophes*. They not only claimed that religious intolerance was detrimental to society because of political circumstances, they also drew a philosophical justification as well. Although these same Jansenists did, in fact, claim to possess an absolute truth in their view of the church, they also rejected religious fanaticism and the idea that these truths could be forced onto the individual believer. Because they held that the truth could only be known to those who received God’s grace, they then agreed that there were no grounds for forcing the truth on others who had no free will to accept that truth. However, reason also had a role in Jansenists epistemology as grace guided reason to know truth. Therefore, while the *philosophes* would claim that self-love was more reasonable than religious justification, and the Jansenists held precisely the opposite view, a particularly Cartesian reason that still held God to be a final arbiter of truth, both parties claimed that reason and not fanaticism was a basis for establishing tolerant and stable social norms. Jesuit attacks on the Utrecht church, for example, were not

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motivated by religious truth, or even political exigency, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* reported, but “for serving to satisfy their passion.”\(^{44}\) Passion, which in Jansenist discourse was differentiated from faith, was held by those outside of the truth; only those receiving grace could know truth. In other words, the “Republic of Grace” believed that misdirected Jesuitical zeal, rather than reason, led to their attacks on the church in Utrecht.

Although Jansenist reason depended on faith, the goal of Jansenists in Utrecht was to establish the model of the true church that formed a foundation for a Christian society. One of the fundamental Christian beliefs was that the Church represented the body of Christ in the form of an institution made up of the faithful, as Saint Paul wrote to the Romans.\(^{45}\) Although grace was conferred individually, the Christian faithful were obligated to be part of the church as a corporate body. Not even the Reformation challenged this aspect of Christian theology; while denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, Calvin claimed that the individual was still tied by the bonds of Christian communion.\(^{46}\) Therefore, the Utrecht Jansenists viewed the church in Utrecht as not only a model of the true church, but also a model for the Christian faithful to interact as a social body.

The concept of society and sociability was equally a part of Enlightenment philosophy. Although Enlightenment materialists rejected the notion of a universal

\(^{44}\) *NNE*E, 10 April, 1758.

\(^{45}\) Rom 12:3-8.

religious truth beyond, at least in the case of the deists, the existence of a benevolent creator, human interaction in the social sphere was no less important. Countering Pascal’s view that society only offered a diversion to human depravity, Voltaire commented, “As for me, when I look at Paris or London I see no reason for falling into this despair Pascal talks about. I see a city not looking in the least like a desert island, but populous, wealthy, policed, where men are happy as nature permits.”

Furthermore, according to Voltaire, self-interest facilitated sociability; mutual need brought humans together in society, not Christian charity. Society was equated with private life for the *philosophes*, for in an absolute state where the crown claimed a monopoly on public truth that it preserved through a hierarchical corporate social structure, it was only in private where rational humans acting on an equal basis could determine reason.

Paris was the capital of the Enlightened Republic of Letters where, through salon culture and networks of correspondence, the *philosophes* were offered the opportunity to act on a basis of equality and autonomy in their pursuit of reason and truth.

This autonomy allowed the *philosophes* the freedom to speak about truths that were anathematized by the crown and church in public discussion. The enlightened salons and dinner parties were, in effect, open forums by which the *philosophes* could speak without recrimination. A description of a dinner at Voltaire’s estate at Ferney

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provides one example of how conversation ran at his table. An English visitor at Voltaire’s estate wrote home to England: “Says he, you know Gentlemen that sitting together at table opens ye heart and makes one more sprightly and sociable.” Following the meal, he continued, “A little Dog happening across the room stopped before Mr. Voltaire, wagged his tail and seemed to notice him very attentively – on which Mr. Voltaire turned…and as I thought a little abruptly…asked what do you think of that little dog? Has he a soul or not?”

In Voltaire’s home, social settings offered an opportunity to test truths; or more likely in Voltaire’s case, to challenge the truths that others claimed to hold. In either case, only in private could such views be expressed openly without fear of reprisals from the state.

In spite of Pascal’s dim views of human society, eighteenth-century Jansenists also embraced the concept of sociability as a means of establishing truth, especially when professing the truth might prove dangerous as in France. “The cause of the clergy of Holland,” reported the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques, “is not a particular cause: it is one of all defenders of ancient doctrine that has spread over the entire Christian World.” For the defenders of the church in Utrecht, the truth was only valid as a collective truth, for it could only be evident as a truth to the entire – that is universal – church. An important aspect of Jansenist ecclesiology was adopted from French Gallicanism as promoted by the French theologian Edmund Richer that held that ecclesiastical councils, not the

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51 NNEE, 10 July, 1758.
papacy was the method by which doctrinal truth was established.  Like the salons of the Enlightenment, the church council offered the opportunity for autonomy and equality by which Christian truths were established.

Sociability in the eighteenth century depended on openness as reciprocity governed each individual within the society placing them on an equal basis – if not in abilities, in their standing within the community. In other words, factionalism and cabals were the enemies of sociability. To defend the autonomy of the church in Utrecht while maintaining their catholicity, the Jansenists apologists for the independent church were forced to defend themselves against charges of creating a schism within the Universal Church. These charges were potentially damning for the Jansenists as their claim on Utrecht as the model of Christian truth was dependant on the fact that they were in fact the keepers of Catholic orthodoxy. They accomplished this by accusing the Jesuits as the party responsible for the schism. Just as the seventeenth-century *frondeurs* led a royal revolt by blaming the king’s evil minister, Cardinal Mazarin, rather than the king himself so too did the Jansenists in Utrecht protest their loyalty to the papacy by claiming that Jesuits and their supporters in the curia unduly influenced the Pope. The condemnations of the church in Utrecht were, therefore, the result of a “powerful cabal of Catholics” as the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* reported. And, the Jesuits were responsible for “creating the veil of injustices…against the clergy of Utrecht.”

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53 NNEE, 7 August 1754.
54 NNEE, 10 April, 1758.
Utrecht, Dupac de Bellegarde, even noted in his history of the Utrecht church that the original deposition of Pieter Codde as the Archbishop of Utrecht, the catalyst for the break between Utrecht and Rome was invalid as the act itself was performed without consulting the clergy of the archdiocese and in secret collusion between the papacy and the Jesuits in the Netherlands. Thus, the Jesuits explicitly, and the papacy by implication, denied the clergy of Utrecht the right to demonstrate their adherence to the true doctrines of the church by acting in secret rather than openly as demanded in a society of equals within the universal church in the quest for Christian truths.

Separation from Rome, therefore, was a tragic but necessary result of Jesuit intrigues against the clergy of Utrecht. However, the Archdiocese and its supporters held firm to their faith that it was they, and not their ultramontanist opponents who possessed the truth. The Jansenists laid claim to the fact that it was only in Utrecht where Jansenist clerics were offered full opportunity to bear witness to the truth without recrimination. For example, the obituary of the Archbishop of Utrecht, Pierre-Jean Meindarts, elected archbishop by the clergy in 1739, printed in the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* noted that before his death in 1767, Meindarts was able to preach for forty-five minutes on the anniversary of his investiture as archbishop. This could be contrasted with the situation in France, where dying Jansenists were often denied final sacraments in what became a major public scandal; the ability to preach openly and to have Jansenists honored, rather than persecuted only served to reinforce the Utrecht church as one of openness and

55 Dupac de Bellegarde, 324.
56 *NE*, 23 May, 1768.
Christian sociability. The openness and autonomy of the salons offered the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment a similar sense of refuge from persecution where public speech in France was policed by the crown.\(^{57}\)

In the efforts of the Archdiocese of Utrecht to establish ecclesiastical control over its own clergy, at the expense of the Jesuits, the Dutch church adopted the Gallican ecclesiology of the French Jansenists. As more French émigrés flocked to Utrecht to avoid persecution in their native country, conciliarism became more identifiable as a means of defending the church in Utrecht as the true church. Therefore, when the clergy of the Archdiocese of Utrecht convened a provincial council in 1763, Jansenists across Europe applauded the act as a sign of Utrecht as the true Christian church.

The cause of the council itself was to enforce ecclesiastical discipline on a French émigré living and preaching in Utrecht, Pierre le Clerc, who took Jansenism where the Jansenists themselves always feared it would go, to the brink of Protestantism. Le Clerc’s errors included denying the authority of the papacy and the traditional foundations of the church by advocating the rejection of anything not found directly in scripture.\(^{58}\) Therefore, the council that met to condemn Le Clerc’s doctrinal errors offered the Jansenists in Utrecht to an opportunity to establish the veracity of their church by proclaiming their Catholic orthodoxy – but through the means of an open council that represented both the clergy and the episcopacy of the Dutch church. The council became, as Dupac de Bellegarde asserted, “the means for conforming to the true intentions of

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Jesus-Christ for maintaining adherence to the doctrine of the true Church."

Again, it was a truth not only for Utrecht, but the Universal Church. The council pronounced against each of Le Clerc’s errors one-by-one in order to establish their adherence to Catholic doctrine. Moreover, the descriptions of the council emphasized that Le Clerc stood alone amongst the Dutch clergy in his views. Le Clerc was singled out as a radical voice, moreover, as a French Jansenist who, unlike those such as Dupac de Bellegarde, remained outside of the fold of the Utrecht church. To be schismatic was bad enough, and the Utrecht church fought that charge, but Le Clerc “has confounded the notion of schism with that of heresy.” Although the Utrecht Jansenists understood that without full communion with Rome the Catholic Church was divided by a schism, although it was Rome and not Utrecht that was to blame, this was not the same as being a heretical church. Jansenists in Utrecht hoped that God’s grace would demonstrate the truth of their ways and expose the errors of their enemies who prevented reconciliation with Rome through misrepresentation of the Jansenist movement and lies as the Jansenist newspaper reported, “It remains our sincere hope that Our Holy Father [the Pope] will finally recognize all the atrocities and slanders by which the Jesuits have stained black this respectable church to the eyes of the Universe.”

59 Dupac de Bellegarde, 606.
60 NNEE, 21 May 1764.
61 NNEE, 28 May, 1764.
62 NNEE, 21 May, 1764.
63 NNEE, 22 October 1764.
The Utrecht Jansenists, however, maintained their faith that it was they, and not the Roman church that represented Christian truth, in spite of Le Clerc’s doctrinal errors, and the papal condemnation that met the provincial council. As the council published its decrees for the Dutch church and distributed them to the local clergy, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* reported that these “decrees became not only known, but also unanimously accepted by the clergy of Holland.” 64 The decrees published locally for the Dutch clergy became known across Europe when an edition of the Acts of Council of the provincial council were published in France in June, 1764. 65 The *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* reported only favorable reception of the Acts – save that of the Jesuits and the papacy – claiming, “public acceptance of the Acts is truly worthy of the glorious centuries of the church.” The Jansenist newspaper went further to say that papal condemnation of the Acts constituted an “abuse of power” as Rome ignored the “marks of charity” manifested by the Utrecht church. However, the letters of communion sent to the Utrecht church after the council by prelates from across Europe were evidence enough of the “Glorious witness that [Utrecht] has received from all parts of the Catholic Church.” 66 In other words, the Archdiocese of Utrecht was confirmed as the true church as it bore the visible signs of God’s grace to act with Christian charity, and these acts were recognized universally and unanimously not only by the clergy in the Netherlands,

64 NNEE, 11 June, 1764.

65 The Dutch clergy were reluctant to make the council’s decrees public, refusing to publish them in Dutch. However, Dupac de Bellegarde, hoping to use the example of the Utrecht church as an example for the church in France pushed their publication in French, also soliciting laudatory statements about the provincial council from members of the clergy in France, see Van Kley, “Catholic Conciliar Reform,” 57.

66 NNEE, 22 October 1764.
but by the Catholic clergy across Europe. That the papacy and Jesuits did not accept the
truth was unfortunate, but no longer necessary to the Jansenists. The Pope preferred to
mask the truth and to hide behind the trappings of power: “the beauty of the edifice of a
divine cult, the pomp of Processionals, and other vanities.”67 The *Nouvelles
Ecclésiastiques*, therefore, explained the papal condemnation with a terminology
reminiscent of Pascal and established that the torch of Christian truth had passed to the
Protestant Dutch Republic.

However, by the latter half of the eighteenth century, the terms used by Jansenists
were no longer the sole propriety of Pascal, for they also echoed the social and political
philosophy of Rousseau. The connections between Pascal’s and Rousseau’s views of
individual truth have already been briefly investigated, however, these commonalities
also apply to both Rousseau’s and the Jansenist views of proper ends of a true social
structure. Like Pascal, for example, Rousseau believed that power used deception and
deceit as a mask for real truths.68 For Pascal, the obfuscation of truth was an essential
quality of power, for it contributed to social order by preventing the human monarch
from dwelling on even his own depravity. For Rousseau, however, the powerful used
deceit to hide the truth in order to keep human in a state of subservience. Tracing the
development of human societies from a state of nature, Rousseau claimed that social rules
developed not for their utility, but to justify possession of what others were deprived. In
other words, according to Rousseau – society was nothing more than forced inequality

67 NNEE, 19 November, 1768.

68 Harvey Mitchell, “Reclaiming the Self: The Pascal-Rousseau Connection,” in *The Journal of
the History of Ideas* 54 (1993), 641.
justified by the powerful over the weak.\textsuperscript{69} In Rousseauan terms, therefore, the papacy’s refusal to recognize the truth evident in the church in Utrecht was not a diversion, as Pascal might have claimed, but in fact, part of the politics of power.

The solution for Rousseau was the society of free citizens of under the terms of the social contract. In such a society, like the church that represented the Body of Christ, communal interaction was in fact, an act of exaltation of that society.\textsuperscript{70} Thus, built on a foundation of mutual and civic virtue the citizens under social contract could deliberate on matters of public policy. However, this was not a majority rule – as is well known with Rousseau – but the measure of truth came from the “general will,” that is the unanimous consent of the governed. Rousseau, unlike the materialists with whom he contended, claimed that because the truth was not to be found through self-love, but civic love, there could be, therefore, only one unerring truth. Rousseau noted, “From the deliberations of a people well informed, and provided that they have no communications among themselves [lest they create factions], the great number of small differences will always produce a general will and the decision will always be good.”\textsuperscript{71} In a truly open society, Rousseau claimed, there could be only one truth and a properly educated populace will always be in unanimous consent with that truth. And, as noted earlier, Rousseau’s model for this society was his birthplace of Geneva.


Utrecht was for the Jansenists what Geneva was for Rousseau, the foundation of truth – albeit a true church rather than republic. The provincial council of 1763 had acted just as Rousseau had claimed it should in a true society, unanimously – only in Utrecht, charity and grace replaced civic virtue as the mode by which individuals came to the truth. And, while the church in Utrecht embraced a form of sociability, it was of a nature that instead of preserving inequalities, fostered free and open communication between members of that church. However, there existed a critical difference between Rousseau’s Geneva and the Utrecht of the Jansenists. Rousseau was basically an empiricist; Geneva could only exist in Geneva. Conditions of geography, Rousseau claimed, impacted the natural development of the state. “Differences between soils, climates, and seasons,” Rousseau wrote, “would have forced men to adopt different ways of life.” Rousseau’s true republic, therefore, was a function of a geographical imperative, while Utrecht on the other hand, founded on universal Christian truths, was an equally universal model of these truths that made Jansenism a movement that transcended national boundaries to become an international religious movement.

Jansenist discourse, then, overlapped with Enlightened discourse in the eighteenth century. Monique Cottret terms these overlapping ideologies as “capillary” and it is a fitting metaphor, for just as liquid moves by capillary action unnoticed to the eye, so too did Enlightened and Jansenist discourse. This is far from claiming that Jansenist or authors of the Enlightenment purposefully drew from each other, for it remains certain

72 Rousseau, Discourse on Inequality, 110.
73 Cottret, 217.
that they remained bitter enemies over the course of the eighteenth century. However, it
is my claim that because both traditions pitted their own versions of truth against the
absolutist French state and Roman papacy, that the two discursive forms in fact
resembled each other as much as they differed.

Both the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment and the Jansenists in Utrecht
supported an open society dedicated to freedom of conscience. Moreover, the Jansenist
movement took shape culturally along similar lines as the Republic of Letters. Just as the
*philosophes* sought each other and established networks of correspondence with each
other, so too did the Jansenists in Utrecht. Thus, the rules of eighteenth-century
sociability applied to both groups. And where the Enlightenment itself could not agree –
as between Voltaire’s materialism and Rousseau’s sentimentality – the Jansenists meshed
grace that predestined the will with the notion of unanimous recognition of universal
truths. Thus, the Jansenist movement in Utrecht looked quite similar to the Republic of
Letters so that it is fair to say that competing and overlapping with the Enlightenment
was a Jansenist Republic of Grace that was as international in its scope and reformist in
its character as that of the *philosophes*. Both “republics” became a vital part of the
eighteenth-century intellectual, cultural and religious dynamic. To claim similarities
between the two, however, is not to claim equality in terms of ideology. Thus, while the
Jansenist Republic of Grace resembled the Enlightened Republic of Letters, Jansenist
discourse was ultimately derived from a fundamental religious belief almost exclusively
rejected by the *philosophes*. The activities of the Jansenists in Utrecht, however,
demonstrate a public sphere that was religious in nature – where faith and reason cooperated during the European Age of Enlightenment.
In the middle of the second century, a controversy concerning the date Christians celebrated Easter gripped the early church. The dioceses of the eastern churches conformed to the Hebrew calendar, observing the Easter feast on the “fourteenth day of the moon” whether or not that day fell on a Sunday. The western tradition, and the one practiced in Rome, was that the celebration should always occur on Sunday. Saint Anicetus, the Bishop of Rome, ordered that the so-called quartodecimans conform to the practice of celebrating Easter on Sunday. Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Ephesus, convened a council of the bishops in Asia Minor, and they drafted a letter to Rome claiming that they only followed the custom established in their churches during the first century. Anicetus met with Polycarp in Rome around 150, but was unable to persuade Polycarp to abandon their tradition. Nonetheless, the ecclesiastical historian Claude Fleury observed, “[Polycarp] departed from [Anicetus] in peace, and this peace was common throughout the church, even between those churches that celebrated Easter the fourteenth day and the others.”¹ However, the peace only lasted some forty years; in 190, Pope Victor excommunicated the quartodecimans. Yet Victor’s conduct was condemned by a number

of bishops, including Saint Irenaeus, who although deploiring the quartodeciman practice, claimed that the dispute “could not be allowed to cut so many churches from the body of the universal church.”\(^2\) For Fleury, the “Easter Controversy” signified that even in cases as important as the Easter observance, matters of external discipline should not be allowed to threaten the unity of the Church. The Utrecht Jansenists certainly recognized the importance of this lesson and they considered Fleury’s *Histoire Ecclésastique* a fundamental text for helping the faithful discern sound doctrine.\(^3\)

Fleury’s *Histoire Ecclésiasitques* was a thirty-six volume history of the church of which Fleury wrote the first twenty volumes before his death in 1723; Jean-Claude Fabre completed the last sixteen volumes. Fleury claimed that he did not write for “theologians or men of letters … but in a plain language for those who have faith, good sense, and a love for the truth.”\(^4\) In other words, Fleury intended his work for a broader reading audience, indeed for the public sphere. For those who could not afford the multi-volume work, Fleury composed the *Discours sur l’Histoire Ecclésiastiques* in 1720, an abridged version consisting of a single volume of 350 pages. Fleury clearly hoped to popularize the lessons of church history, including even the young; thus he wrote a *Catechisme Historique* 1701 in which he presented the Catholic catechism through historical lessons

\(^2\) Ibid., 599.

\(^3\) See for example, HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3033, “Plan d’Etude dresse en 1748 par M. l’Abbe d’Etemare, pour M. le Chevalier de ...” and Inv. 215, Mss. 3606, Jean-Baptist Mouton, “Liste de Livres à Lire”

– a method Fleury claimed not only provided better evidence of Christian doctrine, but also adhered to “a more natural way of teaching”\(^5\)

The lessons of history held more than a didactical purpose for eighteenth-century Jansenists. As much as Jansenism looked forward in terms of establishing reform, their model was that of the pristine Christian Church in the apostolic age. Thus, Jansenism was a theological and ecclesiological movement which encompassed a specific historical philosophy and methodology. As we shall see in the next chapter, Jansenist historicism and history writing stood as cornerstone of Jansenist reform, just as their histories were an important genre of books circulating in the Jansenist public sphere. This chapter, then, is an examination of the Jansenist philosophy of history.

To be sure, Christianity itself as an Abrahamic religion was rooted in a sense of history in that Christians participated in God’s divine plan which was known through revelation. As Reinhold Niebuhr wrote, “Christianity embodies the whole of history in its universe of meaning because it is a religion of revelation which knows by faith of some events in history, in which the transcendent source and end of the whole panorama of history is disclosed.”\(^6\) In other words, the life and death of Jesus Christ was both an event in historical time and a transcendent moment in which the entirety of revealed truth stood fixed in historical time. As Marcel Gauchet asserted, the significance of the Incarnation – God as man – was that by “legitimizing humanity,” Christianity was a


religion of both “being-in-time” and “being-in-the-world.”

This religion in the world contributed to what Gauchet labeled “disenchantment,” and indeed, because it also existed as a religion in time, history served as a sort of disenchanted revelation.

Jansenist historians, of course, drew their historical philosophy from Augustine’s City of God. For Augustine, the saeculum, or the historical present that situated humanity in time between the Fall and the ultimate redemption at the end of time. Thus, the concept of the saeculum legitimized a version of sacred history that was fixed in the temporal sphere. Moreover, Augustine asserted that the Christian society of the City of God, as opposed to the terrestrial city on earth, was a part of the final redemption of man. For Augustine, sacred was temporal history. Jansenist historians adopted the dichotomy of Augustine’s sacred and temporal history, the City of God and the Terrestrial City in their view of inner faith and the visible Church, and between private and public sphere.

Early Christian apologists did much to establish the new faith as one that was historical. Because pagan society equated antiquity with authority, as Jaroslav Pelikan noted, the early apologists such as Eusebius went to great lengths to demonstrate that Christianity was part of an ancient tradition. The question of history and authority were very much at the heart of the Protestant Reformation and the subsequent Catholic response. Although the Protestant doctrine of sola Scriptura challenged Catholicism’s

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authority of tradition, this did not mean that Protestantism was less historically-minded than Catholicism, only that for Luther there was a clear distinction between the authority of scripture, as divinely revealed tradition, and “human traditions … opposed to Gospel and faith.”

Nor did the Catholic Church deny the authority of Scripture, but in Session Four of the Council of Trent it also held firm to the doctrine that the Church alone had received the Gospel as written and as “unwritten truths” which were handed down through the ages, thus the Church alone had the right to determine truth based on both Scripture and Tradition. In a sense, the Catholic Church, putting to use Erasmus’s dictum that old tradition was preferable to one only “a decade old,” responded to Luther by denigrating sola Scriptura as an innovation which would under crumble under the weight of centuries old tradition.

Similarly, Jansenists based their history writings on the premise that old was better than new. Fleury, in his Discours, claimed that “new doctrines are particularly false: the truth has always been taught by the universal Church.” However, rather than directing this claim against Protestants, Jansenists assailed the Jesuits as those responsible

10 Qtd. in ibid., vol. 4, Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700), 146.

11 Ibid., 276. Pierre Le Clerc, the radical French Jansenist living in Utrecht argued that no tradition should be accepted as a point of faith unless it could be confirmed by Scripture. His views on Scripture, not to mention his views on the Papcy and episcopacy, approached the Protestant teachings to the point that the Provincial Council of Utrecht held in 1763 was convened to condemn Le Clerc and reassert the Jansenist view that Scripture and Tradition were indeed two valid sources of authority. See Chapter Two above and Dale Van Kley, “Catholic Conciliar Reform in an Age of Anti-Catholic Revolution,” in James E. Bradley and Dale Van Kley, eds. Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe (Notre Dame: 2001), 56.


for introducing doctrinal novelties, such as the doctrine of papal infallibility, Molinist views of limitless grace, and the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Indeed, according to Dupac de Bellegarde, Jesuitical envy prompted their persecution of the Church of Utrecht which stood as the model of ancient piety in an “age of moral decadence,” at the root of which was the Jesuit Order “more loyal to the singular person of the Holy Pontiff than to the Universal Church.”

In Jansenist polemics, concupiscence pitted against Christian charity offered the explanation for Jesuitical innovation, jealousy, and persecutions of Utrecht. Indeed, this was also the Jansenist philosophy of history: that the primary force in history was the struggle between those devoted to Christian charity which was ancient, universal, and eternal, and partisans of concupiscence who embraced the novel, particular, and temporal. The historical progress of Christianity, according to Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, was marked by “A reign of charity … and its unrelenting persecution by the corrupt principles which can be found in the hearts of all men.”

Although not a Jansenist, Jansenist writers often appropriated Bossuet for the cause. Certainly, Bossuet’s view of history as one based on charity and corruption followed the Augustinian model of two cities. However, in the hands of Jansenist ecclesiastical historians, this philosophy of history served not only as a description of past events, but also a prescription for the plight of Utrecht and the Jansenist movement. In other words, like the philosophes of the 17th century, the Jesuits and their opponents were caught up in a cosmic battle between good and evil, light and darkness.

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14 Gabriel de Dupac de Bellegarde, Recueil des divers témoignages de plusiers cardinaux, archevêques, évêques, universities ... contre le schisme introduit dans cette église depuis le commencement de ce siècle, par les manœuvres des Jésuits & de leurs adhérens (Utrecht: 1763), 2-3.

15 Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Discours sur l’Histoire Universelle; Pour expliquer la suite de la Religion et les Changemens des Empires, 12 ed. (Amsterdam: 1730), 231.
Republic of Letters for whom “history became not past but present politics,” the Republic of Grace created a historical model of the pristine church which they turned into criticism directed against ultramontanism.  

The use of history as a response to a contemporary struggle means that the Jansenist approach to history reflected the progress of their conflict with the Jesuits and Papacy. Indeed, there were three distinct phases of Jansenist history writing which corresponded to three chronological phases in the history of Jansenism. This does not mean that elements from one period were not evident in another; these were not mutually exclusive approaches to ecclesiastical history. But, there is a clear difference in the Jansenist histories, so that although all Jansenist history illustrated the basic philosophy that charity and concupiscence were causative in history, individual works from the different phases each concentrated on different subjects and historical sources to reflect contemporary concerns. The first phase, an “age of erudtion,” characterized Jansenist history writing in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth; this phase fit within the age of French classicism. However, after the bull *Unigenitus* became a rule of faith and of law in France, Jansenists developed the identity of an unjustly persecuted minority. Thus the second phase of Jansenist history writing turned polemical and moralistic, forming an “age of figurism” by which Jansenist historians looked for direct parallels of the persecution of the early Church to justify contemporary resistance. Finally, the last phase, which corresponded with the internationalization of the movement

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centered on the Church of Utrecht, became an “age of empiricism,” in which Jansenist historians took a more empirical approach to history. Jansenists constructed a historical defense of the rights of Utrecht based on reconstructing the sources which affirmed those rights. The study below will not be a comprehensive study of Jansenist history – this is a topic worthy of a study all to itself – but instead will present a number of examples of Jansenist history writing from each phase.

The first phase of Jansenist history writing dates roughly from the movement’s origins in the middle of the seventeenth century until the promulgation of the bull Unigenitus in 1713. Although the papacy first sought to root out Jansenist ideals with the Formulary of Alexander VII in 1665, it was Unigenitus which really drew a sharper distinction between Jansenist and ultramontanist versions of Catholicism. Therefore, prior to Unigenitus, Jansenist histories, while bearing some distinctly Jansenist and Gallican elements, such as emphasizing the history of conciliar movements, also resembled the histories written by more “orthodox” Catholic movements. The end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century was the apogee of French literary classicism, and as Marc Fumaroli described it, this was the end of an age of eloquence that bridged Renaissance humanism with enlightened empiricism. The emphasis in the French classical age was placed on style as much as on content, if not more so. And, according to Fumaroli, the Jesuit Order defined the French classical style to the point that even ardent Gallicans adopted it, lest they find themselves excluded from the erudite discourse of the age. These first Jansenist histories were part of this “age of eloquence.”
Eloquence and erudition were the standards for history writing at the end of the seventeenth century. As Bruno Neveu observed, the audience for these works was not public opinion, but “savant opinion.”

This was also the period in which Catholic ecclesiastical history distinguished itself as a genre which was distinct from chronicles or apologetics. These histories endeavored to cover the entire chronological spread of the Church in the temporal sphere – to provide a narrative of an unbroken religious tradition founded in antiquity and handed down through the Catholic Church. The historical works written during this period proved to have a lasting importance in the field of history. The French Jansenist, Sébastian Le Nain de Tillemont’s (1637-1698) ecclesiastical histories provided most, if not all, of the material on the early church utilized by Edward Gibbon as he prepared his *History of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in the eighteenth century.

The Bollandists, a Jesuit congregation founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century in what was then the Spanish Netherlands, dedicated themselves to writing an authoritative lives of the saints, the sixty-three volume *Acta Sanctorum*. More than hagiography, the *Acta Sanctorum* annotated and catalogued each of the saint’s writings, extant images, and the Catholic traditions and scholarship concerning each saint. In France, the Benedictine congregation of Saint-

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19 Ibid., 79.

20 There is a surprising dearth of scholarship on the Bollandists. The most authoritative and complete English language study remains, Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Work of the Bollandists through Three*
Maur was similarly devoted to the study of ecclesiastical history, and their most famous congregate, Jean Mabillon, is considered the father of modern ecclesiastical history. Mabillon insisted that the Church’s tradition must be verifiable, and he earned the enmity of the papacy by criticizing the veneration of relics which could not be confirmed as authentic.  

Mabillon and Bousset corresponded with each other and it is likely that the Maurist’s rigorist approach to historical scholarship had an impact on Bossuet’s *Discours sur l’Histoire Universelle*, first published in 1681 as a treatise for the education of the Dauphin. Bossuet introduced the subject of history to the Dauphin, writing “[A]lthough history might be not useful for all men, it is absolutely necessary that Princes should read it. There is no better method for them to learn to distinguish passion from necessity, fact from conjecture, and good from bad advice.” Although Bossuet’s historical treatise was addressed to the Dauphin, this only enhanced its popularity in this period of French classicism. By 1720, the book had been printed in twelve editions. As late as 1769, Pietro Gazzaniga, a professor of theology at the University of Vienna called Bossuet’s “admirable discourse” an essential text for establishing “the truth of the Christian Religion.”

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22 Bossuet, *Discours*, 5.

23 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2234, Pietro Gazzaniga to Dupac de Bellegarde, 18 Novembre 1769.
Certainly, the standard Jansenist ecclesiastical history from this “age of eloquence” was the multi-volume *Histoire Ecclésiastique* by Claude Fleury. Fleury, who was born in 1640, served as the confessor to the young Louis XV during the regency government of the Duke d’Orleans until Fleury’s death in 1723. Again, like Bossuet, Fleury was not a Jansenist but a “fellow-traveler” in whom European Jansenists found an ally. Fleury wrote history with a combination of the breadth of coverage and erudition of other late seventeenth-century histories, the skepticism of Mabillon, and a Jansenist theological emphasis on charity and concupiscence and ecclesiological focus on conciliar movements. And, while his ecclesiastical history certainly reflected the erudition of the age, he also (as noted earlier) intended the work to be read by the lay person. Indeed, he lived to see the promulgation of the bull *Unigenitus* and thus the Jansenist appeal to public opinion. Fleury then published his *Discours sur l’Histoire Ecclésiastique* in 1720 which was a condensed version of the multi-volume work and more suitable for public consumption. Indeed, Fleury’s historical writings reflected both the seventeenth-century classical age and the enlightened age of the eighteenth.

The historian, according to Fleury, established the succession of traditions established by the ancient church handed down through the centuries, and defended these

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24 The rival to this claim must be the historical treatises of the Italian scholar, Luigi Muratori, who along with Zeger Van Espen helped internationalize Gallican ideals. Muratori’s great influence on Italian and Austrian Jansenism certainly made it easier for Utrecht to find supporters in these areas. On Muratori, see Bruno Neveu, “Muratori et l’Historigraphie Gallicane,” in *Érudition et Religion*, 103-161.

traditions from “novel and extraordinary things.” But, the historian’s task was also to incorporate the history of the “profane world … those exterior and sensible things,” because, Fleury added, “the history of religion cannot be just a list of the dates of the election of popes, the recounting of miracles, or martyrs. Everything religion touches must be explained for good history.” Most of all, Fleury wrote, the historian had to balance faith with skepticism: “There are sincere Christians who are credulous.” But for the historian “a sense of criticism is necessary; one can show respect for tradition, but still examine every tradition and belief … Other than the existence of God, one can and must question everything in order to know if they have been subjected to a false faith contrary to God’s plan.” For example, like Mabillon, Fleury claimed that the veneration of relics had been abused; to know the true relics from false, one had to prove provenance. “It is essential to trace their origins exactly,” he wrote, “and to know through whose hand they have passed. If this cannot be proven with satisfaction, they should be treated as false relics.”

Fleury cautioned that the historian should avoid conjecture and account for different historical contexts, claiming “Erasmus blindly rejected St. Augustine because his style seemed different.” It hardly needs to be said that for Jansenists, Erasmus’s conclusions about Augustine were ill-informed. Most of all, Fleury urged the reader of

26 Fleury, Discours, 6.
27 Ibid., 10.
28 Ibid., 14-15.
29 Ibid., 87.
30 Ibid., 17.
history not to judge the past texts, especially those established Christian truths, based on present-day utility:

When reading the books of the ancients and moderns, even of the Evangelists, this thought sometimes enters our heads: such beautiful maxims, but are they practical? Can humans reach such perfection? Here is the reply; that which is real is possible, and some men, with the grace of God, can become practically like the saints, who were only men themselves.³¹

Thus, the lesson for the reader of Fleury’s works was that a study of history helped develop solid Christian morality.

One of the historical maxims Fleury hoped to establish in his ecclesiastical histories was the Jansenist claim that the Church in the apostolic age was not only governed by councils, but was governed largely by provincial and national councils, often convoked by the secular prince. Although this historical claim was largely uncontested as historical fact, Fleury added to this by also demonstrating that the end of conciliarism prompted a general decline in the Church, the State, and in general Christian morality. Indeed, prior to eleventh century, the primary means of establishing ecclesiastical discipline were through provincial councils and synods.³² Embellishing the point for the reader, Fleury wrote that “the holding of provincial councils was once as ordinary as saying Mass on Sunday, only violent wars and the arrogance of the prelates have

³¹ Ibid., 34.

³² For example, prior to the so-called Papal Revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, what there was of canon law in the Church were the canons and edicts of the localized provincial councils and synods. However, the adoption of Gratian’s Decretals as a universal law code for the Church reduced the necessity and efficacy of local councils to adjudicate church matters. See Harold J. Berman, Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition, (Cambridge, MA: 1983), 199-204.
interrupted them.”

According to Fleury, the fragmentation of secular political authority and jurisdictional conflicts between Church and State which characterized the history of medieval Europe meant that the Church “confused the two powers” of temporal and spiritual authority. This confusion between the secular and spiritual Church became manifest with the promulgation of the pseudo-Isidoran Decretals in the middle of the ninth century. These documents, also known as the False Decretals, were forged letters from a number of popes from the first three centuries of the Church, and in essence, invented a tradition by which the Church has been granted temporal powers over its territories, creating a forged jurisdictional claim for the growth of the papal monarchy. For Fleury, the False Decretals marked the beginning of a state of perpetual decay within the Church. “Bishops,” he wrote, “became nothing more than feudal lords … this has been the primary cause of ignorance and the corruption of Christian morality.”

Rather than viewing the centralization of the external Church, that is the growth of the papal monarchy, as providential, Fleury saw decline.

Fleury’s concentration on a state of perpetual decline in church history places him historiographically into what would become, in eighteenth-century France, a more radical “commonwealth” tradition. The commonwealth historical tradition in France borrowed from English republican that emphasized the roots of representative governments in the English constitution and it became part of a French critique of absolutism (more on this

33 Ibid., 142-143.
34 Fleury, Discours, 100, 104.
The commonwealth tradition held that at its roots, the origins of civil society were democratic in nature, and that usurpation of these democratic processes by monarchs both violated an ancient constitutional form and turned the political history of monarchies into a narrative of decline. For Fleury, the Church had a similar pristine founding moment – the apostolic age – which had since dissipated due to a decline, not in political institutions, but in general Christian morality.

Church history, however, also offered a solution for the decline of morality; Fleury’s ecclesiastical history established the pattern by which future generations of Jansenists could turn the past into present politics. For example, Fleury noted that the Council of Sardica, which was jointly convoked in the fourth century by the western and eastern Roman emperors to clarify some of the Nicean edicts concerning ecclesiastical discipline, interpreted the Nicean canons on the election of bishops to mean that bishops guilty of “avarice and ambition” could be removed by diocesan synods – which could even include the laity. In other words, Fleury claimed that the ancient ecumenical councils placed the primary responsibility for local discipline, even of the prelates themselves, into the hands of the community of the faithful. This indeed formed a defense that the Church of Utrecht was not only justified by rejecting the Vicar Apostolic and electing their own archbishop, but was in fact acting according to the most revered traditions of the Church.


Fleury, however, insisted that not all traditions should be carried into contemporary practice; the case of relics discussed above is one such example. Another concerned the validity of frequent communion, which the Jansenists roundly condemned. The Jesuits claimed that a confession was valid if the penitent was motivated by a fear of damnation – attrition – and that confession because sin was hurtful to God – contrition – was unnecessary. The penitent found their path from attrition to contrition, the Jesuits asserted by partaking of the sacrament of communion as frequently as possible. Jansenists responded that this was an example of the Jesuitical abuses of the sacraments in the name of casuistry. Indeed, Catherine Maire claimed that the Jansenist movement “truly began” with the publication of Antoine Arnauld’s attack on Jesuit moral laxity, *La Fréquente Communion*, in 1643. Fleury, however, had to admit that Basil of Amasea, martyred in the fourth century, promoted the practice by which Christians should participate in the Eucharistic celebration as often as possible. But, Fleury also claimed that the historical context mattered; this was a tradition suitable for a persecuted church, not the contemporary church. “We should not forget these were times of persecution,” Fleury noted, in which the celebrations were held often in private, often in people’s homes, where accepting and hosting guests entailed community and communion. But in the eighteenth century where the Church occupied its own sacred space, Fleury wrote “this practice would be superfluous.”


Fleury’s ecclesiastical histories not surprisingly prompted critics, defenders, and imitators. The papacy placed Fleury’s *Historical Catechism* on the Index of Forbidden Books and a number of pamphlets and treatises accused Fleury of harboring Protestant sympathies. In response to these, many of which were published after Fleury died, abbé Osmont du Seller published a defense of Fleury, claiming that all Fleury established in his histories was the need for reform. This did not constitute Protestantism, he argued, since “The Council of Trent has also affirmed this … All M. Fleuri [sic] has done has been to examine the general sources for abuses in the Church … if he is to be criticized it should be based on his merits as a historian, not for his purpose.”

Indeed, du Seller claimed that Fleury anticipated these sorts of attacks by comparing Fleury to Moses, writing that “Moses did not conceal either the crimes of his people, nor their faults.” Du Seller’s image of Fleury was that he was an eighteenth-century Moses who brought the law (of history) to a people who worshipped false idols – that is to say false traditions.

Seller’s defense of Fleury suited Jansenist history writing after the promulgation of the bull *Unigenitus* in 1713. To be more specific, by the time Cardinal André-Hercule de Fleury (no relation to the historian) as head of the Royal Ecclesiastical Committee forced *Unigenitus* onto France as a rule of faith and of law, Jansenists had developed an identity as a persecuted minority who stood for truth which was nevertheless disregarded by an ignorant majority. Jansenism was a stage in history which was prefigured by

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40 Ibid., xvi. Here, du Seller is quoting Fleury directly on Moses, see Fleury, *Discours*, 172. Fleury, however, did not compare his work with that of Moses, the “sacred historian.”
Moses’s reception of sacred law while the Hebrews worshipped the Golden Calf; they were the eighteenth-century Daniels in a lion’s den; they were the spiritual heirs to the Christian martyrs whom like the Jansenists, suffered from Roman persecution.

The Jansenist histories written and published after 1730 reflected this persecution as did the idea that the tribulations of the true faith would be tested by persecution. Thus, *Unigenitus* prompted the second phase of Jansenist history writing, the age of “figurism.” Figurism, was a doctrine of Scriptural interpretation which Catherine Maire defined as a “typology … constituted by a chronological correspondence of the two testaments in Christ.” In other words, it was a method of reading Scripture so that the “Old Testament was a figure for the New.” 41

Thus, as Bossuet’s catechism taught, the Temple of Solomon was a figure for the Catholic Church, and the schism of the Ten Tribes under Jeroboam in the Book of Kings was a figure for heresy within Christendom. 42 After *Unigenitus*, Jansenists extended these biblical figures into their contemporary age; God even affirmed these parallels by performing a number of miracles at the Jansenist cemetery of Saint-Médard. 43 Figurist writings provided justification for the truth of Jansenism in the face of persecution and an explanation for why their version of Christian

41 Maire, 166.


truth remained the opinion of a minority. The Jansenist history writer in this phase looked to the stories of Scripture and early Christianity for figures that described the present state of the movement.

“One of the great mistakes in studying history of Empires,” wrote Jean-Baptiste Le Sensne des Ménilles d’Etemare, “is the neglect the role of Religion.”

D’Etemare, a leading French Jansenist, found refuge in Utrecht in the middle of the eighteenth century and he helped to create the “Little House” at Rynwyck which became a de facto seminary for exiled French clerics. At Rynwyck, d’Etemare stressed ecclesiastical history as part of the pastoral training of the clergy. D’Etemare, one of the “great men of the movement” and one of the most militant figurists, viewed the role of God’s grace and the history of the world as one and the same.

Like Pascal, d’Etemare left little in terms of published and comprehensive historical works; d’Etemare’s history was written a fragmented series of “reflections” while in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the “Republic of Grace” widely disseminated d’Etemare’s figuristic history in the pages of the Nouvelles Ecclésaistiques and through their correspondence.

History for d’Etemare was cyclical. Empires rose according to God’s plan for humanity; however concupiscent humanity always failed to maintain the moral standards

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44 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3020, “Réflexsions sur l’Histoire”

See Chapter Four below.

46 Maire, De la cause de Dieu. 88-96.

47 On the dissemination of d’Etemare’s writings, see Bruno Neveu, “Port-Royal à l’âge des lumières,” in Érudition et Religion, 290-292. Copies of d’Etemare’s manuscripts spread as essentially unpublished literature, and extant copies are still found at the Het Utrechts Archief, the Bibliothèque de Port-Royal in Paris, and the municipal library of Troyes in France.
ordained by God, and thus Empires also always fell. In the first empire, according to 
d’Etemare, the Assyrians received God’s favor through Jonah, “a figure for the future 
conversion of the Gentiles,” but because Assyria resorted to their “original state of 
excess,” God’s vengeance destroyed their Empire, which was succeeded by the two 
kingsdoms of Judah and Israel.48 Yet again, these kingdoms “plunged into idolatry” and 
God punished them as well; “Had God not allowed the descent of the Holy Spirit and the 
conversion of the Gentiles,” d’Etemare wrote, “the true spirit of piety would have been 
lost amongst the Jews … and the world would have ended and been judged.”49
D’Etemare’s historical reflections continued to analyze the rise and fall of the Empires, 
“which would all be destroyed, one after another, until the time marked by providence 
when the Immortal Empire of Jesus Christ would bring the end of all the realms of the 
earth.”50

D’Etemare’s writings clearly added millenarian expectations to a figuristic 
interpretation of history. For d’Etemare, the promise of Christianity meant, of course, 
individual salvation, but it also signified historical salvation and a release from cyclical 
history. “Since Jesus Christ, everything changed,” he wrote, “The Justice of God became 
popular … Faith for the Christian is what the Law is for the Jew.”51 In other words, in 
figuristic history, the history of Christianity focused on grace and faith, not the external

48 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3020, “Réflexions sur l’Histoire”
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3034-1, d’Etemare, “Parallèle de l’Histoire du Macabees avec celle de 
P.R.”
forms of religion which in the Old Testament, Jansenists called “carnal” observance of
the law. Internal faith, therefore, could transcend the materialism of this world and also
the cyclical rise and fall of empires, until the heavenly kingdom reigned on earth. For
d’Etemare, the story of the Maccabean rebellion against the Selucids was a figurisitic
parallel for eighteenth-century Jansenism; it was a figure for the historical dynamic by
which the true observance of the law (which in Christianity would become observance of
true faith) struggled against the persecutions of the material world and the concupiscent.
For example, D’Etemare referred to the Hellenization of the Jews in II Maccabees:

Disdaining the temple and neglecting the sacrifices, they [the Temple priests]
hastened, at the signal for the discus-throwing, to take part in the unlawful
exercises on the athletic field. They despised what their ancestors had regarded as
honors, while they highly prized what the Greeks esteemed as glory.\(^{52}\)

Thus, the sin was the pursuit of material glory, rather than respect for tradition. “This is a
figure for the Jesuits,” d’Etemare proclaimed.\(^{53}\)

Bonaventure Racine’s thirteen volume “abbreviated” ecclesiastical history,
published in 1748 similarly placed an emphasis on cyclical history, and he also drew a
sharper distinction than d’Etemare on the history of the external and internal, or spiritual
Church. “The interior state of the Church is where the Holy Spirit fills the spirit with
Christian virtue, particularly charity.” But, according to Racine, because this state was
constant, although he admitted rarely found in humans, the focus of history should be
placed on the exterior and visible Church, which included “the doctrine taught by the

\(^{52}\) II Maccabees 4:14-15.

\(^{53}\) D’Etemare, “Parallèle de l’Histoire du Macabees.”
Apostles and developed by the Holy Fathers … forming the chain of Tradition.”⁵⁴ For Racine, the “Demon” constantly worked to corrupt the Church, not just “with violence against the Church, but also with seduction.”⁵⁵ Seduction manifested itself as heresy, and for Racine, the theme of ecclesiasitical history was the persistence of heresy and the efforts to maintain orthodox discipline. “The corruption of nature is the primary cause of heresy,” Racine wrote, but they also were the result of those “who confound corporeal ideas with the spiritual.” But, because the spiritual truth was hard to establish, especially by a singular individual, Racine argued that only “an assembly of the faithful” could discern the seduction of the Demon from true faith.⁵⁶ Therefore, Racine wrote ecclesiastical history as the history of the church councils’ fight against heresy. For Racine, like Fleury, history was marked by decline as doctrinal error compounded doctrinal error. “The scandals of the each century are always enriched by those which came before,” he wrote, while the “Children of God live without interruption, in perpetuity until the end of time.”⁵⁷ In other words, the persecutions and seductions of true faith worsened though history; indeed, Racine considered Luther the worst heretic of all, but his heresy was compounded by the lowest state of “ignorance,

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⁵⁵ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 156 and 381.

⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. 7, 673.
ambition, impudence, libertinage, and impiety that the Christian Republic ever witnessed.”

D’Etemare’s figurism and Racine’s “Demon” make it easy to dismiss this phase of Jansenist history as an embarrassment in an otherwise Enlightened Age; certainly it lacked the breadth and erudition of Fleury’s ecclesiastical history. Nor does this often figuristic interpretation of history seem particularly conducive for the development of a religious public sphere devoted to a rational-critical discourse about religious events, historical or otherwise. While there should be no doubt that Unigenitus traumatized the Jansenist movement to the extent that it caused a rhetorical retreat into a figurisitic interpretation of both the past and the present, this does not necessarily exclude these writings from the development of rational discourse. For one, d’Etemare’s approach to history not only continued to develop the Jansenist critique of the Church as an institution which was in decline, but he also contributed a missionary zeal to this critique. In a sense, d’Etemare’s critique could be considered no less urgent than Voltaire’s admonition to “Eradicate the Infamous!” Indeed, no less than Voltaire shared d’Etemare’s cyclical view of history by which glorious ages were destroyed by a decline in spirit and morals.

Thus, as Monique Cottret argued, both the figuristic histories of the Jansenists and the

58 Ibid., vol. 8, 49.

59 The locus classicus for the interpretation of eighteenth-century, figuristic, and convulsive Jansenism as an embarrassing “dried-up” version of the classical seventeenth-century movement is, Charles Augustin Saint-Beuve, Port-Royal, 10 vols. (Paris: 1926), first published in 1840.

secular histories of the *philosophes* contributed to the spirit of criticism and view of history mobilized against the decaying structures of the Old Regime.\(^{61}\)

Yet, contemporary historians have overemphasized the role of figurism in Jansenist thought, and this privileges the Gallo-centric view of Jansenism.\(^{62}\) However, the increasing importance of Utrecht as the center of an International Jansenism, and the center of a religious public sphere also shifted the Jansenist view of history to one which was more triumphal and more empirical. The emergence of the Church of Utrecht as one devoted to true piety and conciliar forms offered some hope for the International Jansenist community. Still, it faced real persecution from Rome which challenged Utrecht church’s historical right to select its own leaders. Therefore, Utrecht required a defense which was both legalistic and historical, thus the last phase of Jansenist history writing displayed an empirical, even modern approach to history writing.

Keith Michael Baker noted that in eighteenth-century France, “history … provided the essential ideological resources for political contestation.”\(^{63}\) History provided eighteenth-century writers with a discursive and analytical model with which they challenged the claims of the French monarchy that it ruled by divine-right. Historical jurisprudence, the legal philosophy that “basic legal norms” were discovered


\(^{62}\) Catherine Maire claims that figurism was not just one Jansenist trope of the eighteenth century, but the trope by which Jansenists interpreted religion and politics. Thus, there was simply no connection between Jansenism and the Age of Enlightenment. Jansenists even interpreted and acted in the French Revolution, according to Maire, based on figurisitic and millenarian ideals, so that she reduces the religious events of the Revolution as a debate over sacramental theology. Suffice to say that one of the claims of this dissertation is that Maire overemphasizes the role of figurism, neglecting more rationalist and even empirical aspects of eighteenth-century Jansenism.

from a historical context, as opposed to the positive law of the lawmaker, or through natural reason and law, became the dominant legal philosophy in seventeenth century England.\textsuperscript{64} It spread into France in the eighteenth century; Montesquieu’s \textit{De l’esprit des lois}, for example, staked a claim for a monarchy that was balanced with legislative and judicial institutions based on a historical analysis of French legal traditions. Moreover, much of Montesquieu’s famous work drew from Fleury’s histories.\textsuperscript{65} The influence of Montesquieu and Fleury on later eighteenth-century Jansenist histories put these works fully in the English commonwealth tradition that, by the 1750s, had become fully part of a Jansenist tradition of political criticism.

It was the so-called Refusal of Sacraments controversy that, in France, that most directly turned Jansenist historical discourse from one of erudition to one of criticism and resistance. The controversy, which roiled French politics in the middle of the eighteenth century, began when, in 1749, the Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont ordered that suspected Jansenists had to prove that they had last confessed to an orthodox (that is, not a Jansenist) priest before receiving their deathbed sacraments. The lawyers and jurists of the \textit{Parlement} of Paris took up the cause of the beleaguered Jansenists, viewing the Refusal of Sacraments as an extension of absolutist efforts to replace France’s fundamental laws, including the traditional liberties of the Gallican Church vis-à-vis the Papacy, with the absolute, but nonetheless arbitrary, royal will. In 1753, the French


parliamentarian, Louis Adrien Le Paige published his *Lettres Historiques*, claiming that the *Parlements* were founded at the same time as the French monarchy itself and that the *Parlements* were, historically, legitimate defenders of France’s fundamental laws, which he distinguished from the “momentary will” of the monarchy. Utilizing the methods of historical jurisprudence, Le Paige turned history into legal polemics, and indeed, legal polemics into historical scholarship, arguing that that the function of the *Parlements* was to resist legislative innovations and to preserve legal customs and traditions.\(^{66}\) The emphasis in the French legal and historical treatises on the continuity of tradition, as opposed to political innovation, became a valuable trope in the defense of the traditional rights of the Utrecht church against a papacy that, like the French crown, seemed to insist that the dictates of Rome’s “momentary will” were superior to the ancient and pristine traditions of the early Church.

The historical defense of Utrecht came from Dupac de Bellegarde himself; his *Histoire Abregée de l’Église Metropolitaine d’Utrecht*, first published in 1765 attempted to prove that the Church of Utrecht had historically been governed autonomously by its own clergy and that these rights had been taken away by Rome. Thus, when the clergy elected their own archbishop in 1723, they were only reclaiming a historical privilege that had once been considered valid. Dupac’s history begins with the foundation of the Church in Utrecht by Saint Willibrord in 695, but he does not linger on the medieval history of the diocese. Indeed, Dupac quickly tells the reader that since the fifteenth

century, the archbishops of Utrecht had been elected by their clergy, a right confirmed by
Charles V when the Netherlands was part of the Spanish Empire, and confirmed as well
by Pope Paul IV when he gave Phillip II permission to create new dioceses in the
provinces.\textsuperscript{67} Dupac supported both these claims with a number of direct references a
variety of papal bulls and treatises of canon law.

But, if Dupac’s purpose was to show the history of the Church of Utrecht as part
of orthodox Catholicism, he also portrayed it as part of the history of the Netherlands.
That is Utrecht was as Catholic as it was Dutch, and therefore, the same justification for
the Dutch revolt against Spain served to justify Utrecht’s resistance to Rome – both
fought against foreign oppression. “It is certain that the love of liberty,” Dupac wrote,
“and the desire to throw off the yoke of Spanish tyranny were the primary causes of the
Revolt.” And, Dupac added, as soon as Utrecht joined the United Provinces in the Union
of Utrecht in 1566, William I ordered that no religion should “suffer violence or insults.”
According to Dupac’s history, those provinces and towns which in fact persecute
Catholics reacted against “papal superstition” and of course, “the foreign Jesuits.”\textsuperscript{68} As
for the Dutch government, “Persuaded that it would be infinitely more advantageous that
Catholic were governed by their own clergy than by foreigners sent by the Court of Rome
… looked favorably on the election of the Archbishop by the clergy in 1723.”\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{67} Gabriel Dupac de Bellegarde, \textit{Histoire Abrégé de l’Église Metropolitaine d’Utrecht;
Principalement depuis la révolution arrivée dans les VII Provinces-Unies des Pays-Bas sous Phillippe II
jusqu’à présent.} (Utrecht: 1765), 6-9.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 27-37.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 49.
Ultimately, Dupac portrayed the Church of Utrecht as one which coexisted harmoniously within its Protestant country so that the only cause for trouble between the Dutch and Catholicism resulted of the pretensions of a foreign and Jesuit “Machiavellianism.”

Dupac’s history of the Church of Utrecht is as useful for the contemporary historian as it is disappointing as a polemic. In other words, while there was a clear bias to the work, Dupac’s history lacks the figuristic drama of the histories of the earlier part of the century and he placed his emphasis on faithfully reconstructing the sources which attested to the Utrecht’s orthodoxy. Certainly, Dupac does refer to the miraculous cure of a paralytic woman in Amsterdam who allegedly walked after a Mass presided over by the Archbishop of Utrecht. But, Dupac did not dwell on this episode, he described it in less than a page, concluding simply that the episode only further “manifested the piety and Catholicity of the Archbishop.”

One of the most remarkable aspects of Dupac’s history was not the polemical quality or eloquence of the narrative itself, but the number of sources Dupac utilized in his work. In fact, the edition opens with a complete bibliography of primary sources, listed both alphabetically and placed into different categories: such as “Treatises in Favor of the Archbishop and His Suffragans” and “Treatises in Favor of the Chapters,” and the text itself was amply supported with numerous footnotes and references, including even the complete texts of numerous documents written in favor of the rights of Utrecht. Because the cause of Utrecht was a concern of this world, Dupac’s history of the Church

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70 Ibid., 78.
71 Ibid., 545.
of Utrecht grounded in an empirical approach to history. Most of all, Dupac and the Utrecht “Republic of Grace” had an historical awareness that could be considered modern. Sources were important, to the point that Dupac and his compatriot in Utrecht, Jean-Baptiste Mouton, made a conscientious effort to preserve all the letters sent to Utrecht (fortunately) as both a continuing testimony for the truth of Utrecht and indeed as a record of posterity. “We should start to seek out the other letters and writings in other places,” Mouton wrote to Dupac, “after the Council [of Utrecht] this would be a great project for affirming the witnesses in favor of Utrecht,” Mouton even claimed that it would be possible to publish a second and third volume of the *Receuil des Temoignages*.72

Ultimately, Dupac wrote history suited for rational discourse in a public sphere. He suppressed eloquence and polemics for a more empirical truth based on primary sources, thus both the history of the Church of Utrecht, and even the *Receuil* provided a way to submit an empirical truth to be scrutinized by a public readership so that the public might come to its own conclusions. This did not abandon Jansenist ideals of earlier phases of history writing, rather it endorsed the Jansenist view that the truth was constant and had no need to fear public scrutiny. But Dupac’s approach also reflected a shift in Jansenism which more directly engaged the public sphere. Nor was Dupac’s approach the only example within the Jansenist International; this empirical shift formed a significant aspect of Jansenist reform, from their approach to history to the education of

72 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2404, Mouton to Dupac de Bellegarde, 5 Âout, 1764.
the clergy in their pastoral duties. Indeed, the next chapter will examine how this shift in history writing impacted Jansenist views of clerical education.
CHAPTER 5
CREATING REFORM: JANSENIST PASTORAL EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Two days after Christmas in 1767, a few of the Jansenist luminaries in Austria met at the Augustinian monastery of Saint Dorothea in Vienna. Guests of the abbot, Ignatz Müller, who was also the confessor for the Empress Maria Theresa, included Pietro Gazzaniga, the Director of Students of the seminary at the University of Vienna; two other members of the university’s theology faculty; and Anton de Haen, the Dutch professor of medicine and court physician. Other than the clerical status of most of the guests, not to mention the location, the gathering might have resembled any one of the salons of the Imperial capital, or Paris for that matter.\(^1\) However, the conversation was not just a free exchange of ideas or witty banter; there was real business at hand. Pope Clement XIII, a strident opponent of reconciliation between Rome and Utrecht, had become increasingly frail from old-age. The Viennese Jansenists hoped to formulate a strategy to promote the election of a pope more favorable to the rights of Utrecht before the next conclave. According to the meeting’s report, the conclusion was that before

\(^1\) On Müller and the Jansenist Abendgesellschaft of Vienna, see Peter Hersch, Der Spätenjansenismus in Österreich (Vienna: 1977), 129-130
reunion of Rome and Utrecht could occur, “the suppression of the Jesuits will be essential, no other way is possible to have Utrecht recognized by Rome.”

Clement XIII died in 1768 and the Cardinals elected Lorenzo Ganganelli as his successor. Ganganelli represented a more moderate faction within the Curia, one which hoped to maintain a peace between the ultramontanist devout and those states which had already expelled the Society of Jesus, especially France and Spain. It appears that in the course of conclave, representatives of Spain elicited a promise from Ganganelli to dissolve the Jesuits. Still, the new pope moved with considerable hesitation; it was not until 1773 when Pope Clement XIV, the name chosen by Ganganelli, issued the bull Dominus ac redemptor noster suppressing the Society of Jesus in its entirety. Early in 1774, Dupac de Bellegarde traveled from Utrecht to Rome hoping that the suppression of the Jesuits might be enough to have Utrecht welcomed back into the Catholic fold, only to find upon his arrival to the Eternal City that Clement XIV had died and the fervently anti-Jansenist Pius VI had been chosen to succeed him. The Church of Utrecht’s hope for an accord with Rome dissipated.

The Jesuits, however, remained dissolved until 1814. Moreover, the dissolution of the order provided the Jansenist International with the opportunity to initiate one of the most important features of their program of reform – the reform of seminary education in Europe. Indeed, the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques already had proclaimed after the expulsion of the Jesuits from France in 1762 that one of the most significant benefits

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2 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2631-1 “Résultat de la Conference tenue à V., le 27 Dec. 1767”
would be that seminarians could study in the “spirit of piety and true Ecclesiastical Science”

This chapter is an examination of Jansenist “ecclesiastical science,” in other words, of Jansenist clerical education. The provision of Session Twenty-Five of the Council of Trent to create diocesan seminaries was viewed as one of the most important aspects of the Council’s efforts to combat the spread of Protestantism. Yet, for the Jansenists, Jesuit dominance over education in Europe meant that the Tridentine reforms remained unfulfilled in the eighteenth century. Within the theology faculty of the University of Vienna, for example, the chairs of Scripture and Canon Law, which the Augustinian order created, were held by Jesuits who instead taught courses in moral theology. “It only remains to be seen,” wondered the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* “if the students there will disabuse themselves of the convenient morality of the Jesuits and abandon their lessons altogether.” Moreover, the Jansenist paper claimed that the Jesuit influence on education was so harmful that after the expulsion of the society from France, students from Jesuit seminaries should be barred from readmission in other schools. “One cannot introduce into a living Corps,” the paper proclaimed, “cadavers which cannot be revived.”

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5 NNEE, 31 Juillet, 1765.

6 NNEE, 1 Avril, 1762.
The members of the second order clergy had an undeniably important role in Jansenist ecclesiology; they believed the second order clergy originated when Jesus Christ directly commissioned the seventy-two disciples, and thus the clergy held a direct apostolic authority.\(^7\) The parish priest also had a significant role in the development of a religious public sphere. Roger Chartier argued that within the enlightened public sphere, the role of the *philosophe* was to manipulate cultural discourse into political commentary on behalf of a public that was separated from direct political participation.\(^8\) It is my contention that the International Jansenist community envisioned an analogous function for the priest – that is to act as an agent of the religious public sphere on behalf of the faithful who were otherwise excluded from church politics. Indeed, Jansenist rationalism contended that if individual reason was a gift of God’s grace, but was nonetheless fallible as a consequence of human concupiscence, then individual reason required affirmation through the revelation of scripture and tradition. Thus, Jansenist theology provided the priest with an essential role in the development of an eighteenth-century religious public sphere.

The object of Jansenist seminary reform, therefore, was to better educate the clergy in their pastoral functions by explicating scripture and tradition for the laity; in other words, they emphasized pastoral and positive theology over scholastic and moral theology. Pastoral theology stressed the skills and knowledge necessary for the priest to

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function within a parish. It deemphasized theological rationalizations in favor of practical skills. Pastoral theology stressed biblical exegesis, church history and canon law, while scholastic theology focused on dogma, apologetics, and moral theology which in most Catholic seminaries reduced to a study of casuistry. By the eighteenth century, positive theology had virtually disappeared from the seminary curriculum in France, largely due to the Jesuit influence on education and the Jansenist connotations associated with pastoral theology. To Jansenists, of course, the Jesuit emphasis on moral theology only underscored the need for greater emphasis on the pastoral aspects of theological education.

Jansenist education preserved the Cartesian dichotomy between reason and the senses. However, whereas the Jansenist sense of Christian individuality hailed human reason as evidence of God’s grace for humanity, the curriculum bore a more distinctly Augustinian influence – that is, humanity’s limited ability to make use of that reason. Jean-Baptiste le Sense des Menilles d’Etemare, one of Jansenism’s most notable pedagogues wrote, “There are two ways God speaks to men, through natural enlightenment and revelation … In a state of innocence the voice of reason had total force. But since the fall, God has determined another way.” Metaphysics, d’Etemare continued, “may have been Adam’s religion before the fall,” but in humanity’s present state, the clearest path to truth was through a study of revelation, scripture and tradition,

or biblical exegesis and church history. Still, d’Etemare stopped short of a total rejection of metaphysical inquiry in favor of the sort of empiricism which Peter Gay claimed characterized the Enlightenment. Voltaire, for example, who claimed to admire Descartes for his mathematical methodology, also derided him for abandoning the empiricism of math for philosophy: “His philosophy was nothing more than an ingenious novel, at the best only plausible to ignoramuses.” For d’Etemare, however, the metaphysical writings of Arnauld and Descartes stood as the foundation of a sound general education.

Clearly, theological education could only to a degree become more empirical in its methodology, as discussed in Chapter Two, the Jansenist doctrine of grace and revelation carried the authority of an absolute rationalist truth. Still, like Jansenist history writing, their approach to clerical training reflected a marked shift towards a study of religion as it existed in the temporal world. Thus, just as Voltaire and other philosophes dismissed metaphysical philosophy as irrelevant for an enlightened age, so too did Jansenists dismiss scholastic theology in their reforms. The abbé Guion, a Jansenist theologian teaching at the diocesan seminary in Troyes, argued that “scholasticism is a vestige of the barbarity of the Middle Ages and it merits destruction, just like the Gothic

10 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3033 “Plan d’Étude dresse en 1748 par M. l’Abbé d’Étemare, pour M. le Chevalier de …”.


13 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3033 “Plan d’Étude dresse en 1748 par M. l’Abbé d’Étemare, pour M. le Chevalier de …”.

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taste in architecture which has been banished by [contemporary] architects and masons who are clearly wiser than most theologians.”\(^{14}\) And, as the *philosophes* demanded an enlightened pedagogy based on utilitarian principles, so too did Jansenists. The *Encyclopédie*, for example, claimed the benefits of education were that it made one “useful to society” and that “the state would collect the fruits of the proper education of its citizens.”\(^{15}\) For Jansenists, “Education makes one agreeable, polite, it ennobles sentiments … it makes man useful to himself, his fellowman, his patrie, his Church and in some fashion, the entire world.”\(^{16}\) Thus, for both the *philosophes* and the Jansenist International, education had advantages for the community in this world, whether or not that community was defined as a secular or religious body. In the end, however, Jansenists considered the Enlightenment as much a part of the problem in general education as the Jesuits, as one anonymously written Jansenist treatise observed: “I know of someone who published an edition of Cicero’s works, and only 500 copies were printed, and they cost 150 *livres* in France … Yet the book shops are full of trifles – the Republic of Letters will read itself into inaction.\(^{17}\)

\(^{14}\) HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 1830, abbé Guion, “Memoire sur les defauts de l’enseignement de la Theologie aux seminaire, et plan d’un ouvrage qui remedei à ces defauts.”

\(^{15}\) César Chesneau Du Marsais, “Education” in Denis Diderot et Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, eds. *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 5 (Paris: 1775), 397. The author of this article, and most of the *Encyclopédie*’s articles on grammar, Du Marsais, studied for the priesthood with the Oratorians, but abandoned his theological studies for the law, which he also never completed. However, he still became a well-known tutor and polemicist. And, while Diderot thought him an atheist, Du Marsais had several close Jansenist associates and wrote a treatise on the Gallican liberties of the Church: see Silvia Berti, “César Chesneau Du Marsias entre gallicanisme et ‘philosophie’: l’*Exposition de la doctrine de l’Église gallican par rapport de la Cour de Rome* (1757)” in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 241 (Oxford:1986), 237-251.

\(^{16}\) HUA Inv. 215, Mss 1829, “Sur les avantages de l’étude et leur decadence en France.”

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The Jansenist community in the Netherlands always intended educational reform to be part of broader religious reform. As soon as the Désessart brothers secured the use of the estate in Rynwyck, the property held dual functions as both a place of refuge for French Jansenists, and also a seminary for the training of French priests in Jansenist theology, which was an extension of the Jansenist seminary in Amersfoort. The French theologian Nicolas Le Gros directed the “little seminary of Rynwyck” until his death in 1751, after which it was led by d’Etemare who arrived in 1754. There was some conflict about the purpose of the seminary; the French Jansenists clearly viewed the seminary as one for the universal church, especially for France after most Jansenist seminaries had been closed after *Unigenitus*. The Bishop of Haarlem, however, objected that diocesan funds would be used to train French and not Dutch clerics; the bishop threatened to cancel a bursary provided a French student at Rynwyck unless there were more Dutch students enrolled. It was a matter that remained unresolved until d’Etemare’s death in 1771, when Dupac de Bellegarde sold the Rynwyck estate and moved into the city of Utrecht itself, merging Rynwyck’s educational function with the seminary at Amersfoort. Still, Rynwyck became the model for Jansenist educational reform.

Student life at Rynwyck was little different from that of their counterparts in the orthodox Catholic seminaries. Students rose early in the morning to attend Mass at 5:00 am. Following the Eucharistic celebration, it was customary for Nicolas Le Gros to

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17 Ibid.

18 Bibliothèque Arsenal, Mss. 4984, “Relation de ce quis s’est passé à Rynwyck pendant le séjour qu’y a fait M. du Trembaly en 7bre et 8bre, 1762.”

19 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2404, Mouton to Dupac de Bellegarde, 9 Mars 1760.
speak on a topic of moral theology, usually explicating a paragraph from Pasquier Quesnel’s *Moral Reflections on the New Testament*. Le Gros was one of the more “democratic” of the French Jansenist conciliarists following the promulgation of *Unigenitus*. Once established in the Netherlands, Le Gros’s conciliarism became even more vigorous, to the point that Le Gros justified clerical and lay resistance to ecclesiastical authority should it become despotic.20 Certainly Le Gros’s ecclesiology would have permeated his talks to the seminarians. Only after the morning’s worship and lecture – and only at this point the seminary’s regulations make clear – could students draw books from the library for morning study and meditation. The day was divided into periods of classroom study in the morning, and recitations and private study held both before and after the evening meal. Unlike other seminaries, in which the recitations consisted of a series of “particular exams” meant to encourage the rote learning of texts, the Rynwyck recitations were meant to encourage depth of knowledge.21 Sundays, of course, were reserved for worship and prayer. The only break for students was a respite from afternoon recitations, usually Monday afternoons, during which the seminary directors encouraged students to “promenade as a company in the vicinity of the maison” in order to build a sense of community.22


22 Bibliothèque Arsenal, Mss. 4984, # 68-70, “Reglement pour la maison de Rynwyk.” According to Dominique Julia, the weekly promenade at the Saint-Sulpice seminary in Paris seems to have caused some consternation for the seminary directors, who had to balance the need to allow students some small
If the day for seminarians was not much different in Rynwyck, than in Paris for example (noting the exception of the Jansenist recitations), the course of study was remarkably different. It was, in the view of both the instructors, students, and supporters, better designed to equip the cleric for his pastoral duties – to create, in essence, an agent of the Jansenist public sphere. And, although the Rynwyck seminary preserved an adherence to the scholastic tradition in spite of the general Jansenist distaste for Aquinas, scholastic inquiry was tempered with standard Jansenist texts more grounded in the more modern and rationalist Cartesian philosophy. “We read the *Summa* of St. Thomas,” one student reported, “and we nourish this study with the works of Bossuet, Arnauld, Nicole and Pascal” – precisely the sorts of books prohibited from most of the French seminaries. Indeed, the study of moral theology was quite different in Rynwyck. The Jansenist students divided their lessons into three categories: Scripture, dogmatic theology and ecclesiastical history. And, the reading of Scripture was the basis for the latter two. “One could consider two lessons from reading Holy Scripture,” again one anonymous student wrote, “They contain the revelation of dogmas and the rules of morality, so in this way moral theology is part of dogma. And, they are part of God’s plan for His people and therefore ecclesiastical history. This last branch is a considerable object of our studies – and holds a distinguished place”

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23 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 1828, “Lettre à un Ami sur le Plan d’Étude de Theologie de la Maison de Rynwyck.” On the prohibition of Jansenist books, see Julia, 155.

24 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 1828, “Lettre à un Ami sur le Plan d’Étude de Theologie de la Maison de Rynwyck.”
chapter, Jansenist ecclesiastical history made a significant contribution to the
development of an eighteenth-century religious public sphere. It is not surprising,
therefore, to find ecclesiastical history featured in the Rynwyck curriculum.

More innovative, however, was the Jansenist approach to biblical study and
criticism. The Fifth Session of the Council of Trent ordered that dioceses establish
prebends for the teaching of scripture, and Richard Simon founded a French school of
biblical scholarship at end of the seventeenth century. Yet, training in scriptural
interpretation and exegesis for the parish clergy was still in its infancy well into the
eighteenth century. According to Lawrence Brockliss, the study of scripture and biblical
exegesis was traditionally a specialized course for the higher theology faculties at
universities, and generally taught only superficially at seminaries – the University of
Paris only added an oral exam in scripture after 1673 and it was only one exam out of
six. At the Jansenist seminary, however, Scripture formed the only basis for the study
of dogmatic and moral theology (and quite likely contributed to the criticism that
Jansenism was crypto-Protestantism). As the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques reported
approvingly of the seminary reforms of the Italian Bishop of Bergame: “With regards to
Moral Theology … [he orders] that the lessons must be taken from Scripture, and then
from the Holy Canons and Fathers of the Church; they [the seminarians] must reject all

25 On Richard Simon, see Justin Champion, “Père Richard Simon and English Biblical Criticism,
1680-1700,” in Everything Connects; in Conference with Richard Popkin, James E. Force and David S.

26 Brockliss, 233-234.
innovations.” The innovations, of course, referred to any number of Jesuitical teachings, from Molinist views of grace and salvation, to the infallibility of the papacy, that the Jansenists considered a desertion of the church’s apostolic foundations.

For Jansenists, the suppression of the Jesuits in France meant that their theological “innovations” were removed from French seminaries, collèges, and universities – although in places such as Bourges, Nimes, Avignon and Aix, the Dominicans assumed control of the seminaries there. Thus, any Jansenist efforts to refocus clerical training from the scholastic to the pastoral would be limited to either diocesan seminaries with friendly bishops, or to the Oratorian institutions. And, although the Oratorians themselves promoted a pastoral pedagogy, and the number of institutions they controlled was not insignificant, the Oratorians were not always sympathetic with other aspects of Jansenist ecclesiology and theology. Thus, even in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Jansenist educational reform had relatively little success in France.

As Dupac de Bellegarde contributed to shifting the focus of the Jansenist International from France to the universal church, he also made the reform of clerical education part of the International Jansenist public sphere. For the “Republic of Grace,” reform was a logical step towards the recognition of Utrecht as the model of the pristine apostolic church; a properly educated clergy was better able to provide a faithful testimony on Catholic truths. Thus Dupac promoted the Jansenist pedagogy of Rynwyck

27 NNEE, 1 Septembre, 1766.
28 Brockliss, 480-481.
29 Julia, 155.
to others within the Jansenist “Republic of Grace.” Sebastian Schaff, the Benedictine monk in Fulda wrote to Dupac, “I have only had time to quickly read all the works you have sent me, however, they please greatly, especially the plan for the Study of Theology at Rynwyck.” Moreover, Schaff added with a bit of pride perhaps, “All Germans share your ideas on theology … for the Jesuits, all theology consists of scholastic questions and relaxed morality … we teach only dogmatic theology and ecclesiastical history, these are solid principles.” Schaff requested that Dupac send him additional copies of the plan which Schaff promised to translate into Latin and German, promising that “you can be assured of a very good reaction to a German translation.”30 Indeed, this example also demonstrates the operation of the Jansenist public sphere in its most basic form: a proposal of reform based on the transmission and translation of texts, which are then rendered to a broader reading audience.

While the Jansenist efforts to reform education were part of their reform of the universal church, it was in the Austrian Empire of Maria Theresa and Joseph II where it was most successful, and the most politicized. Here, the Jansenist pedagogy combined with state-building enlightened absolutism of the Hapsburg monarchs – a confluence of eighteenth-century religious and political reform.31 Beginning during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa (r. 1740-1780), and accelerating under Joseph II, education was

30 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2515, “Schaff, O.S.B. to Dupac de Bellegarde,” 8 juillet, 1767.

31 On the reforms of Joseph II, known as Josephism, in general, see T.C. W. Blanning, Joseph II, (New York: 1994). On the reform of the church, see P.G.M. Dickson, “Joseph II’s Reshaping of the Austrian Church,” The Historical Journal 36 (March: 1993), 89-114. Dickson’s study of the ecclesiastical reforms of Joseph claims that the reforms, especially the abolition of monastic property, were driven by he need to generate additional state revenues. This undoubtedly was factor, but does not explain the additional expenditures Josephist reforms incurred, such as the building of state schools (see below).
one of the cornerstones of Austrian enlightened absolutism. In fact, in many parts of the Empire, the state built new schools and primary education became compulsory – intended as both a carrot in terms of improving social conditions and a stick by adding another layer of social control over the populace.\textsuperscript{32} Moreover, the Hapsburg reforms (eventually becoming known as Josephism) reflected the internationalization of Gallican ecclesiastical liberties as the crown sought to gain greater state control over the Church. Eventually, this would include redrawing diocesan boundaries and confiscating the property of the contemplative monastic orders, both of which would foreshadow events during the French Revolution. Finally, as part of broader educational and clerical reform, following the suppression of the Jesuits, the crown began an experiment in ecclesiastical education in which the state oversaw seminary and university education in theology and canon law. Starting in 1765, the first state-run “General Seminary” was erected in the city of Pavia, located in the Hapsburg Italian territory of Lombardy. In 1769, the Empress turned over the control of clerical education to a State Council of Ecclesiastical Affairs which reported directly to the Chancellor Prince Wenzel Anton Kaunitz. Under the direction of Franz Joseph Heinke, the council’s charge was to create a standardized curriculum for the training of priests throughout the Empire, a task which included approving the books students could read, drafting content of the oral exams, and ensuring that the clergy would adhere to the principles of Gallican liberties and the validity of state-control over the “external” aspects of the Church.\textsuperscript{33}

The immediate cause of the Imperial educational reform in religion was a report drafted by Leopold Ernst Count Firmian in 1769 for Maria Theresa. Firmian, the Prince-Bishop of Passau, called attention to the fact that in his diocese, superstitious belief and heresy permeated almost all aspects of popular faith. Firmian predicted that unless his parish clergy were better able to explain doctrine and discipline to the faithful through proper seminary training, he would be powerless to prevent a further descent into false practices, or worse, Protestant evangelizing. Although Firmian himself was not part of the Jansenist “Republic of Grace,” (there are no extant letters from Firmian to Utrecht), Marc Anton Wittola, the translator of many Jansenist texts into German and a dedicated member of the Jansenist community, was Firmian’s counselor.

Wittola himself was educated by the Jesuits before he enrolled at the University of Vienna in 1754 to take a doctorate in theology. At the university, Wittola, and the Swiss priest Melchior Blarer distinguished themselves as dedicated students and clerics, and they both attracted the attention of the Dean of the theology faculty, Ambros Simon Stock, who instructed the two students in Jansenist theology and ecclesiology. Upon receiving their doctorates, Stock helped both students find positions: Blarer was sent to the seminary Bohemian seminary in Brno, and Wittola to Passau. Both Blarer and Wittola corresponded with Dupac de Bellegarde, and Blarer eventually came to the Dutch Republic to teach at the seminary at Amersfoort. However, both had earned a reputation

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34 Melton, *Compulsory Schooling*, 201.

35 Hersche, *Spätenjansenismus*, 76.
as Jansenist radicals due to their youthful exuberance and passionate adherence to Jansenist ideals.\(^{36}\) In fact, it appears that when Ambrose Stock died in 1772, Wittola was Joseph II’s choice to succeed him. However, Pietro Gazzaniga reported that “sadly, M. Wittola has acted imprudently and he too freely expresses his support for the cause of Utrecht.”\(^ {37}\) Both the Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Giuseppe Garampi, and the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Anton von Migazzi, objected strenuously, convincing Maria Theresa to support a compromise candidate. Karl Martini, from Tyrol took over the theology faculty, but he proved to be less a compromise candidate and more favorable to the Jansenist cause than anticipated. Martini backed Joseph II’s transfer of the canon law curriculum from the theology faculty to the law faculty because the Emperor considered the latter being more favorably disposed to his statist agenda.\(^ {38}\)

In 1777, Wittola began to act as an agent of Joseph II’s reforms when the Imperial Ecclesiastical Council sent Wittola to investigate the seminaries of the “Montagnards” of Moravia and Bohemia.\(^ {39}\) Far from Vienna, or Hapsburg Italy where the General-Seminary in Pavia was well-established, ecclesiastical discipline proved hard to establish on the frontiers of Catholic Central Europe, as did loyalty to the crown. Indeed, it appears that Joseph’s own governors in the provinces proved as resistant to Josephist reform as the ultramontanists. On his first mission to Moravia in 1777, after the

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 251-260 and 274-290.

\(^{37}\) HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2234, Pietro Gazzaniga to Dupac de Bellegarde, 8 juillet, 1773.

\(^{38}\) Vanysacker, *Garampi*, 155.

\(^{39}\) HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2583, Wittola to Dupac de Bellegarde, 14 Janvier 1779.
dissolution of the Jesuits, Wittola reported that Jesuits not only preached openly but had also convinced the Imperial governor to ban all books from the province, except those approved by the Jesuit priests. Moreover, Wittola reported to Dupac de Bellegarde, “These Jesuits have created a sort of Inquisition which is even more dangerous because there is no established procedure or process. And the secular powers only encourage violence and the barbarous zeal that [the Jesuits] inflict on a people who are largely ignorant in matters of religion.” And if “the people” were ignorant of the true doctrine of the Church, Wittola only blamed the education at the seminary in Olmütz, which was “has no library and is dominated by Jesuitical beliefs.”

The government in Vienna responded to Wittola’s report by turning the Olmütz seminary into the second General-Seminary in the empire. The government appointed Melchior Blarer, Wittola’s classmate at Vienna, the Spiritual Director, and another member of the Jansenist International, G. Carl, the Director of the Faculty. In fact, Dupac de Bellegarde offered Carl a position in Amersfoort; Carl rejected the offer, stating he was too old to take on such a journey. But he did recommend one of his students, Christopher Hauke, who also declined because, “like a good priest, he did not want to follow his vocation in a country in which he did not speak the language.”

Eventually, Blarer accepted the position, and Carl returned to Vienna in 1786 to become the Director of the University library in Vienna.

In spite of some success in Vienna itself, as well as in Pavia and Olmütz, the path of educational reform in the Austrian Empire was not always clear. Indeed, both before

40 Ibid., 28 Octobre 1777, and 16 Mai 1778.
41 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2109, Carl to Dupac de Bellegarde, 5 Juillet 1786.
and after the dissolution of the Jesuits, ultramontanism remained a considerable foe of the Jansenist International, and in the Empire, this was directed by, in Wittola’s words, “a Jesuitical triumvirate” of the Cardinal Garampi, Cardinal Migazzi, and Johann Kerens, the Bishop of Wiener Neustadt, who was himself a Jesuit prior to becoming a bishop. Indeed, opposition to Joseph II’s reforms only intensified after the dissolution of the Jesuits when ultramontanists became convinced that a Jansenist-Enlightenment conspiracy to destroy the Church had permeated the top echelons of the European monarchical courts. Originally, Migazzi was a Jansenist supporter, and he proved instrumental in the restructuring of the Vienna theology faculty with sympathetic professors and an increased emphasis on pastoral theology. However, soon after he became a cardinal, Migazzi became an outspoken critic of both Jansenism and the Josephist reforms. Indeed, Gazzaniga, one of the Jansenist professors recruited by Migazzi, noted the connection between Migazzi’s promotion and newfound orthodoxy: “Since receiving the hat, [Migazzi] has abandoned us, and he is now completely for the Jesuits.”

The strong ultramontanist presence in Vienna forced Gazzaniga and other reformers in the Empire to constantly defend their views, books, and lectures at the university as part of an orthodox spirit of reform. Yet, with state support, they remained generally confident, as Gazzaniga noted sardonically, “While they still accuse me of

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43 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2234, Pietro Gazzaniga to Dupac de Bellegarde, 28 Septembre 1771. Dries Vanysacker claims that Gazzaniga himself turned against the Jansenist International after 1782 when Joseph II nationalized monastic property. Vanysacker cites no source for this claim, however, his correspondence with Dupac de Bellegarde broke off at this time even though Gazzaniga lived until 1799, see Vanysacker, Garampi, 167-168.
heresy, and have taken this calumnious charge all the way to Her Majesty [Maria
Theresa], I have had many long audiences with her and she has had the good nature to
clear me of all charges."\textsuperscript{44} For the most part, the “Jesuit triumvirate” failed to prevent the
institution of Jansenist education reforms within the central European territories of the
Austrian Empire. This is not to say, however, that the Imperial government found
enacting seminary reform a simple process.

Nowhere did the Emperor and his Jansenist supporters find reform more difficult
than in the Austrian Netherlands. Here, the Jansenist and Josepist reforms met fierce
resistance, especially when Joseph II tried to create a General-Seminary at the University
of Louvain in 1787. Violent reaction to the reforms became known as the “Little
Brabant” Revolution, and many of the issues surrounding the reform of religious
education in this part of the Empire foreshadowed the debate surrounding the Civil
Constitution of the Clergy in France after the start of the French Revolution.

Like in Austria, the ultramontanists in the southern Netherlands were under the
strong leadership of a cardinal, in this case, the Archbishop of Malines, Johann Heinrich
von Frankenberg. Like Cardinal Migazzi, the Jansenist “Republic of Grace” initially
viewed Cardinal Frankenberg as an ally. The \textit{Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques} praised
Frankenberg when he was nominated to head the archdiocese by Maria Theresa,
especially after Frankenberg initiated reforms within the diocesan seminary which
included an in-depth study of Scripture as the foundation of Church dogma.\textsuperscript{45} However,

\textsuperscript{44} HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2234, Gazzaniga to Dupac de Bellegarde, 11 Septembre 1767.

\textsuperscript{45} NNEE, 1 Aût, 1762.
in the same year that the Jansenist newspaper published their article, the ultramontanist papal diplomat, Cardinal Garampi, visited Malines and formed a friendship with Frankenberg. By the time Frankenberg became a cardinal in 1772, he had become a fierce opponent of Jansenism and by 1780, he stood as the most vocal opponent of Josephism in the Austrian Netherlands. In 1782, Frankenberg and Garampi convinced the papacy to provide direct financial support to a newspaper published in Liège, the *Journal historique et littéraire*, edited by the ex-Jesuit priest François-Xavier Feller. The virulently anti-Jansenist Feller offered Frankenberg a regular forum for publishing ultramontanist views. In the southern Netherlands, the Jansenist public sphere faced a significant rival.

The University of Louvain itself was an institution of no small consequence. It was the first university founded in the Netherlands and celebrated theologians and philosophers such as, Erasmus, Justin Lipsius, and Pope Adrian VI were all educated there. If Utrecht was a new Jerusalem for the Jansenist International, Louvain was its Bethlehem; it was the Louvain theologian Cornelius Jansen who provided the first theological tenets of the movement which bore his name. It was also where the Louvain professor of canon law, Zeger Van Espen, adopted the principles of Gallican ecclesiastical liberties in a defense of the Church of Utrecht. In 1730 the Jansenists at the university even endured a sort of “Massacre of Innocents,” when the government, at the urging of the Jesuit confessor to the devout Maria Elizabeth, the Hapsburg governess of

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46 Vanysacker, *Garampi*, 188.
the Austrian Netherlands, required that all theology faculty and students swear an oath to adhere to *Unigenitus*, effectively purging the university of any Jansenist influence.

But, Jansenism made its way, slowly to be sure, back into the university. The faculty learned after the purge in 1730 that safe theology was good theology and Louvain’s reputation as the theological center of the Counter-Reformation Church dissipated. In 1754, however, Maria Theresa appointed Patrice-François de Nény, the treasurer-general of the Austrian Netherlands, the Royal Commissioner of the university, giving him the charge to restore the faculty’s reputation. Nény, who became the President of the Privy-Council in 1758 making him the *de facto* governor of the province, had already dedicated himself to Jansenist principles, and he became a regular correspondent of Dupac de Bellegarde’s in Utrecht. Certainly, Nény had no love for the Jesuits; his “eulogy” for the Jesuit Order on the eve of their suppression was proof enough:

In the name of Public Tranquility  
And the Triumph of Law  
Here lies the Jesuit Body -  
Reprobate of the Church, and Assassin of Kings  
Pelagian from His Birth  
A Pharisee in His Life.  
In Persecuting the Innocent  
His Deplorable Success Astonishes.  
If his Execrable Memory  
Lives for Posterity  
It is Because His Crimes More than His Glory  
Are Carried to Immortality.48

Nény proved a powerful agent of Jansenist educational reform in the southern Netherlands. He embraced the pastoral approach of the Jansenists, and Nény began his reform ordering that all students demonstrate mastery of Greek and Hebrew.\textsuperscript{49}

Conflicts between the government and the Faculty were not at all uncommon. Nény had hoped to remove questions regarding \textit{Unigenitus} from both the requirements of the faculty and students, and indeed from academic debate altogether. In 1761, when the Faculty of Theology approved a thesis maintaining the legitimacy of the bull, Nény pressured Vienna for permission to suppress it, but was prevented from doing so by Maria Theresa and her Chancellor, Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz.\textsuperscript{50} Still, Nény privately censured the faculty, and further ordered that from that point forward, all theses must receive the approbation of the state censor. In 1773, Joseph II did in fact order a suppression of any discussion of \textit{Unigenitus} at the university and seminaries within the Austrian Netherlands, although he bull remained part of the required oath until 1782.

The gradual ascendancy of Joseph II to a more direct rule – not to mention Joseph’s more aggressive reform of the church – emboldened Nény to make even more daring moves within the university. In 1774, he promoted P.J. Marant, a Professor of Ecclesiastical History, to President of the prestigious Vigilus College and in 1776 he gave Josse Le Plat, a professor of civil law, the powerful chair \textit{ad Decretum Gratiani} within the Faculty of Canon Law, making Le Plat the definitive authority on matters of canon

\textsuperscript{48} HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2437, Patrice-François Comte de Nény to Duape de Bellegarde, 21 Octobre 1773.

\textsuperscript{49} Roegiers, “Leuvense Faculteit,” 465.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 473.
law at the university. Marant, not a member of the Jansenist International, nonetheless had earned the enmity of the ultramontanists at the university for his rigorous application of historical criticism to church history, which included his suggestion during a public disputation that there was reason to doubt that all of the Apostles were martyrs, since there was no supporting historical evidence for this claim.\footnote{Ibid., 479.} Le Plat, however, was a dedicated member of the “Republic of Grace,” although, to be sure, he initially seemed drawn more to Jansenism as an ecclesiology than as a theology. Shortly after coming into contact with Dupac de Bellegarde in Utrecht (he wrote his first letter to Utrecht in 1759), Le Plat began to work on a defense of the late Gallican canonist Van Espen. In his lectures, Le Plat added to the legal challenge to *Unigenitus* posed by the French canonists, by stating that the bull was based on the premise that Article Four of the Index of Forbidden Books produced by the Council of Trent. However, Le Plat noted that the Index had been imposed on the Netherlandish provinces by the Spanish emperor, without consulting the provincial estates. The Index, Le Plat claimed, had no legal standing in the Netherlands, therefore neither did *Unigenitus*.\footnote{Le Plat claimed that he was presenting this argument in a public disputation in a letter to Dupac de Bellegarde, see HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2344-1, Josse Le Plat to Dupac de Bellegarde. Le Plat argued this point in full detail when his published his *Monumentorum ad historiam concilii Tridentini* in 1781.}

Le Plat’s opinion on the Index became the *cause célèbre* which in turn helped to accelerate the pace of reform at Louvain. His opinions had already come under attack by some of the ultramontanists on the faculty, and Le Plat felt besieged, “No other professor at any university has to endure what I must,” he wrote to Dupac de Bellegarde in 1779,
“and my adversaries are too stupid to understand me.”\textsuperscript{53} This was a bit of a prideful boast, since one his adversaries was the Professor of Dogmatic Theology, Jan Frans van de Velde, who was well-known for his “scientific approach” to theology and admired for his mastery of Greek and Hebrew, but nonetheless was entirely orthodox in his ecclesiology. In August of 1779, Van de Velde presided over a disputation in which Le Plat defended his legal interpretation of the Index and \textit{Unigenitus}. Most accounts state that Le Plat did not fare well.\textsuperscript{54} The ultramontanists inundated Le Plat with criticism: professor’s denounced him in lectures, Feller in his newspaper, and Frankenberg in his sermons and Pastoral Letters. Le Plat became paranoid that ex-Jesuit priests conspired against him; he panicked, for example when a packet of books sent by Dupac failed to arrive, a relatively common occurrence in the eighteenth century. Le Plat, however, concluded that “the government should launch an investigation.”\textsuperscript{55}

The attacks and counterattacks between Le Plat and the ultramontanists of southern Netherlands only convinced the government to make even more reforms. Joseph II promulgated an Act of Toleration in November 1781, granting Protestants civil and religious liberties in the southern Netherlands. The University faculty, almost unanimously, petitioned to have the University exempted. “The remonstrations the University against the Edict of Toleration are \textit{pitiful},” Le Plat wrote to Utrecht, “I am the only one who has not signed them. Van de Velde and Frankenberg must have played a

\textsuperscript{53} HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2344-1, Le Plat to Dupac de Bellegarde, 18 Juillet, 1779.

\textsuperscript{54} Roegiers, 480.

\textsuperscript{55} HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2344-1, Le Plat to Dupac, 7 Octobre, 1781.
large role in their drafting; they would have brought glory to this faculty by expelling no other than Erasmus as a heretic.”\textsuperscript{56} However, the faculty remonstrations further hardened the resolve of the government; in 1782, the Joseph II issued an edict which made the Profession of Faith of Pius IV (r. 1559-1567) the only standard of orthodoxy at the university, thus removing any questions regarding \textit{Unigenitus}. Another edict, issued on the same day, made public expressions of ultramontanism punishable by the secular courts. Finally, in 1784, the government suspended Van de Velde from his post at the university, an order which ultramontanist pamphleteers widely assailed, calling the dismissal “a personal disgrace for the wise, orthodox, and modest professor …” whose only crime was to oppose “the vain efforts of the ignorant and nattering [bavarder] Le Plat.”\textsuperscript{57}

In 1786, Joseph II decided that more assertive measures were necessary at Louvain and indeed for the Austrian Netherlands in general. In an edict, dated October 16, 1786, and issued to the public on the 26\textsuperscript{th}, Joseph declared that starting with the academic term in 1787, all diocesan seminaries were to be closed, and the University of Louvain converted to a General Seminary.\textsuperscript{58} “There is such a disparity in principles,” the government’s official plan for seminary reform stated, “that good uniform instruction can never be achieved in the dioceses … it is essential to have an educational institution more

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 24 Fevrier, 1782. Emphasis in the original.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Relation fidelle des troubles arrivés au Séminaire de Louvain, en 1786 et 1787} (Louvain: 1787), 4.

\textsuperscript{58} Jan Roegiers writes that the initial plan was to erect the new seminary in October, 1786, but was delayed until suitable faculty, and more importantly, a new director could be appointed. See Roegiers, 485.
public, more general, and which does service to both the emperor and the True Religion.”

The regulations of the new seminary, which were adopted from the government’s general plan for creating the General Seminaries and already in place throughout the Empire, left no room for doubt in the Austrian Netherlands that the new seminary would be devoted to the pastoral duties of the clergy, with a decidedly Jansenist emphasis. The Jansenist newspaper lauded Joseph II’s plan for the seminary, writing that it was “a measure to remedy the corruption of morality which is fatal for the Church and State … [it will] make familiar the Christian virtues, principally charity, which is the true source of good in society in general, and each individual in particular.”

In several respects, the students’ life at the seminary was to be regulated in a similar fashion as all seminaries in Europe; their schedules would be tightly controlled, starting with daily Mass, attending classes, and ending with evening prayers. The plan also dictated that the available reading material would be restricted for students. “Holy Scripture must be their principal book,” the government’s official plan stated. The early Fathers of the Church were, of course, acceptable, especially Saint Augustine. Also, the plan encouraged reading the “pastoral rule of Saint Gregory the Great, the introduction to a devoted life of Saint Francis de Sales, the ecclesiastical histories of Fleury, and the edifying works of Nicole and Bossuet.” Should a student desire to read any other books, the seminary regulation required that he gain permission from the rector. 61 Just as at

60 NNEE, 20 Mars, 1787. Emphasis in the original.
61 Plan de l’institute des Séminaires Généraux, 11.
Rynwyck, or Saint Sulpice, seminarians were only allowed to exit the grounds for a weekly promenade, to be conducted under the supervision of the rectors or school prefects.

It is tempting to think of the seminary, especially one inspired by Jansenist theology and ecclesiology, as a dour place, where students were tightly controlled. However, the plan for the General Seminaries in the Austrian Empire also reflected the spirit of the eighteenth century, at least the spirit of the Catholic Enlightenment of which Jansenism was a significant part. In other words, the Austrian plan recognized that the happiness of the students was a vital element in their moral education. Certainly, this did not mean that the seminaries were full of entertainments; an ex-Jesuit seminarian had caused a minor scandal in Vienna when he composed and performed in an opera, showing, as one Austrian member of the Jansenist International claimed, “that the Jesuits have totally perverted morality.” But, the government’s plan acknowledged, quite likely referring to the types of criticisms and attacks launched by ultramontanist opponents of Jansenist reform, that “At times, a good sense of humor is necessary in order to survive the altercations, cabals, and divisions which always afflict … students must live with each other in true concord and affection, as brothers with tranquil gaiety.” In order to do this, the seminary regulations enforced a sense of equality between the students:

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62 HUA Ms. 215, Inv. 2303, Hans Koeune to Dupac de Bellegarde, Aout, 1782.
All, without distinction of age, of regular or secular vocation, noble or common, rich or poor, must conform to a uniform regime; furthermore, there are to be no distinctions made in housing, or at the dining tables; no distinctions of social rank, or family are permissible, all students must be treated with perfect equality.63

The notion that social distinctions hindered true human concord and happiness not only reflected the Jansenist ecclesiology emphasized the role of the lower clergy, but also a Rousseauan sociability in which true happiness originated with the fraternal spirit of equal citizens.

The greatest innovation of the Austrian seminary stemmed from the emphasis on pastoral education; the students at the General Seminaries were to spent their last year, usually the sixth year, serving a practicum at an actual parish. During this year, students were to practice exercising their pastoral duties, especially “the methods of catechizing” under the supervision of a parish priest and the rectors of the seminary. Moreover, in order to help the pastor fulfill his sacerdotal functions and pastoral obligations, he was to spend at least six months of his final year “in the countryside … to learn the functions of a rural economy and natural history … this is essential for the Pastor who will be cultivating the vines of the Lord.”64 In other words, the enlightened reforms of the General Seminaries were to train clergy not just to help their parishioners to achieve salvation in the next world, but also to be better aware of the very real tribulations by the faithful in this world.

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64 Ibid., 23-24.
Not surprisingly, the ultramontanist party in the Austrian Netherlands reacted negatively to the reforms of the University of Louvain. Indeed, the government blundered by appointing Ferdinand Stöger the Director of the General Seminary. Stöger, a former professor of Church History at the University of Vienna had already become infamous for his book *Introductio in historiam ecclesasticam Novi Testamentii*, published in 1776, in which Stöger praised certain aspects of the Protestant Revolution and recommended reading the works of two well-known German Pietists.\textsuperscript{65} Cardinal Frankenberg vehemently protested Stöger’s appointment, largely based on his book, which was “full of citations which are dangerous and pernicious for young Catholics.”\textsuperscript{66} Another pamphlet called Stöger an agent of “Jansenism, Indifference, and Deism,” conflating terms to be sure.\textsuperscript{67}

Before the General Seminary even opened in 1787, Stöger and the government faced significant unrest at Louvain. On December 7, 1786 students at the university rioted, ostensibly over concerns about housing conditions and the poor quality of the food and beer. However, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* reported than when Stöger met with students to hear their grievances, the students responded with cries of “Death to heretics!

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\textsuperscript{66} Qtd. in *Apologie du Government-Général des Pays-Bas, Relativement au renvoi du Sr. Ferdinand Stoeger, ci-divant Directeur du Séminaire a Louvain*, (Louvain: 1787), 6.

\textsuperscript{67} *Observations sur les Différens qui Subsistent entre le Gouvernement Général des Pays-Bas et l’Université de Louvain* (n.d: n.p), 19.
Death to Le Plat! Death to Stöger! Long Live the Bishops! Long live Van de Velde!”  

In response, the government issued an edict asserting:

> While you depend on your bishops for the spiritual, you are entirely under the Sovereign for all temporal things. *This is why you must obey and respect your superiors regarding the discipline and regimen at the Royal Seminary.* As for doctrine, it is up to us to ensure that nothing they offer you is contrary to orthodox religion.

And, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* asserted, “History is full of accounts of temporal leaders regulating discipline: Theodosius, Charlemagne, St. Louis, St. Alfred of England. Opposition to this principle reflects the blind zeal of ultramontanism, and these revolts are the natural consequence.”

While the student’s revolt abated for a short period of time, long enough that the General Seminary opened with a scant sixteen students, the now ex-students of the university renewed their protests in earnest in the summer of 1787 – this time with more verve than in the winter. And this time, the students were joined by regents and burgers of the town and had received the full support of the Estates of Brabant, who allegedly proclaimed that the General Seminary was “a violation of the Liberties of our beautiful and fertile Province not seen since the times of the Romans.” But Le Plat, whom

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68 NNEE, 20 Mars 1787.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 27 Mars 1787.

71 Qtd. in *Observations sur les Différens qui Subsistent entre le Gouvernement Général des Pays-Bas et l’Université de Louvain* (n.d: n.p), 8.
rioting mobs caused to flee in fear to Maastricht in 1787, was convinced that the Estates were themselves, “motivated by those attached to ultramontanist principles.\textsuperscript{72}

By June, the Hapsburg government acquiesced to the demands of the Estates of Brabant, and restored the seminary to its old forms, and it reinstated Van de Velde on the faculty; the government permitted Le Plat permitted to take a leave of absence.\textsuperscript{73} The incident itself became known as the ““Little Brabant Revolution,”” and it foreshadowed events to come. Indeed, the Emperor was not prepared to abandon reform in the Austrian Netherlands, nor was the Jansenist “Republic of Grace.” By 1789, the crown attempted once again to create a General Seminary in the Austrian Netherlands, and to do so by force if necessary. By 1789, however, the nationalistic sentiments of the Belgians were fully actuated – the Age of Enlightenment ceded to the Age of Revolution, and with this shift, so too did the Jansenist public sphere become directly engaged with patriotic sentiments of the end of the eighteenth century.

\textsuperscript{72} HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2344-2, Le Plat to Dupac de Bellgarde, 9 Juin 1787.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 27 Juin 1787.
CHAPTER 6
THE JANSENIST PUBLIC SPHERE IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS

If the Jansenist “Republic of Grace” viewed the opening of the Estates-General in France in the spring of 1789 as an opportunity to enact revolutionary ecclesiastical reforms, they showed little indication of this. This is not to say, of course, that the International Jansenists were unaware of the opportunity for change that the French Estates-General offered. “The letter of the Archbishop of Paris to the King …,” Guénin de Saint-Marc wrote to Dupac de Bellgarde in Utrecht, “has offered some thoughts on the signing of the Formulary and if this should be a matter of concern for the Estates-General. The representatives of the Nobility of Paris, in their cahiers, have unanimously supported requesting that signing be abolished. This proposition has been poorly received.”¹ Thus, French and European Jansenists hoped that the Estates-General might serve, at long last, as the ecumenical council to finally rule on the validity of the anti-Jansenist Formulary and Unigenitus.²

¹ HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2508-2, Saint-Marc to Dupac de Bellgarde, 16 Mai, 1789.

With the creation of committee to examine ecclesiastical affairs by the newly constituted National Assembly, events in France began to hold the attention of Jansenists throughout Europe. Yet, although the prefatory pages of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* for the year 1790 claimed that “the events in Paris and all France are the theatre that has held Europe’s attention for eight months ...” the outbreak of Revolution in France prior to the creation of a French Constitutional Church was by no means the solitary concern of the Jansenist International. Indeed, the journal’s editors looked for a “parallel revolution that is as necessary for the Church as that which has been necessary for the State.”

Thus, the reform efforts across Europe competed with revolutionary developments for Jansenist, and even ultramontanist attention. In fact, for the Jansenist International, the measure of success of the French Constitutional Church was the yardstick of the Church of Utrecht, so that the French Civil Constitution of the Clergy was viewed not as a uniquely Gallican manifestation, but a part of Jansenist reform of the universal church.

In French Revolutionary historiography that has little to show by way of agreement, one rare area of consensus is that the Civil Constitution of the Clergy which nationalized the French Catholic Church was the National Assembly’s great blunder in the otherwise moderate phase of the Revolution. By restructuring the church based on

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3 NNEE, 1790, 1.

4 Ibid., 4

Gallican principles, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy quickly rent the revolutionary fabric into two hostile camps. With the notorious Oath of the Civil Constitution, the French clergy who could reconcile their support for the Revolution and their faith found themselves in a spiritual dilemma. Following the Oath, the clergy split into groups of constitutional and refractory clergy, often pulling their parishioners along with them. Where the clergy and laity disagreed, anti-clerical violence was more often the result; for many in France, it became impossible to be simultaneously a good Catholic and a good Revolutionary.

This view is, of course, overly simplistic. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy would not have been possible without clerical support, support that often came in a vigorous defense of the Constitution in overtly Catholic terms. Rather than accepting the view that this was a secular intervention of the state in the affairs of the universal church, defenders cast the Civil Constitution of the Clergy as part of a broader movement – an international movement of Catholic reform. Even for its critics, the Civil Constitution was another act in the schism which began in Utrecht. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy was constructed, criticized, and defended on the model of the Church in Utrecht, just as the debate waged within Catholicism about the causes and the nature of the break between Rome and Utrecht carried into the debate over the Civil Constitution of the

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6 Albert Mathiez’s classic, and still useful, study of the French clergy during the French Revolution and the Papacy argued that the rupture between Paris and Rome – between the French Revolution and Catholicism – was not the result of a dialectic between secular liberalism and traditional religion, but part of a complex intersection of a number of interests and ideologies, including (in addition to secular liberalism and traditional religion), the French monarchy, Jansenism, and papal politics. See Mathiez, *Rome et le Clergé Français sous la Constituante* (Paris: 1911), 7-11. This chapter adds another “character” to the story of the French Revolution and the Civil Constitution, the “international reform” and the Catholic public sphere.
Clergy. And, the discursive patterns of defense and attacks of Utrecht and the Constitutional Church after 1790 echoed and perhaps even amplified the debate over national sovereignty in the terms of the relationship between the ruler, be it papal or monarchical, and the will of the people, whether they were constituted as an église or nation.

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which nationalized church lands, suppressed all of the contemplative monasteries, mandated the election of prelates and parish priests, provided a state salary for ecclesiastics, and what became most controversial, required priest and bishops to take an oath of loyalty to the revolutionary constitution, contained undeniably Gallican elements. Indeed, it served to reinforce the close connection between Catholicism and the idea of “France” as a nation, rather than accept the perhaps more prudent model of a full divesture of church and state. This does not mean, however, that the Civil Constitution merely represented the triumph of French nation over the universal church represented by Rome. This would ignore the concerted efforts by the Jansenist “Republic of Grace” to cast the Civil Constitution of the Clergy as a member in full communion of the universal church represented by Utrecht and the Jansenist program of international reform.

Of these other reforms, the outbreak of the so-called Brabant or First Belgian Revolution in 1789 captured the more immediate attention of the Jansenist International. As noted in Chapter Four, the dissolution of the Jesuits offered Jansenists the opportunity

to create educational reform in Europe’s seminaries. Their goal was to enshrine a system of clerical training that was based in pastoral rather than scholastic theology. This program of educational reform received an added boost in Austrian territory as Joseph II’s broad program of ecclesiastical reform known as Josephism embraced Jansenist educational methods. Thus in the Austrian territories, of Lombardy, Bohemia, and the Austrian Netherlands, the emperor abolished diocesan seminaries and ordered all theology and canon law students to enroll at the General Seminaries, in which the faculty were appointed directly by the Aulique Council in Vienna. The first attempt by Joseph II to enact these reforms in the Austrian Netherlands in 1787 was aborted as the Estates of Brabant protested that these reforms violated their constitutional liberties.

By March of 1789, however, the Emperor once again forced his ecclesiastical reforms in Austrian Netherlands, as Josse Le Plat, the Jansenist professor of canon law at Louvain reported to Dupac du Bellegarde,

You will have already seen the publications and the letters from the government to the bishops, abbots, and other monastic superiors ordering them to send their students to the Seminary General in Louvain, under the threat of the suppression of the abbeys, their pensions, and their temporal rights .... You have also seen the letter to the Archbishop of Malines which orders him under the same threat to provide a public testimony on the orthodoxy of the teaching [at Louvain].

Not surprisingly, the Archbishop-cardinal of Malines, Johann Heinrich van Frankenberg, a long time enemy of the Jansenist International refused his approbation and instead

8 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 2344-2, Le Plat to Dupac, 9 March, 1789.
publicly challenged the legitimacy of the Seminary General, both in terms of its orthodoxy as well as a violation of the traditional liberties of the Belgians.  

The constitutional debate between the Emperor and the Estates of Brabant broke into open hostility and armed conflict in the summer and fall of 1789. In June, 1789, Joseph II declared the Joyous Entry – the *de facto* constitution of the Austrian Netherlands estates vis-à-vis the emperor – invalid. Local artisans, especially in Brussels and Louvain, organized into local militias and under the leadership of Henri Van der Noot the “traditionalists” coalesced into an identifiable “patriot” party. In October, 1789, the “patriots”, also known as the Vandernootists, declared war on the Austrian emperor and, under the banner of the “Army of the Moon,” drove Austrian troops from the Austrian Netherlands by the close of that year. Nor were ecclesiastics absent from the ranks of the “patriots.” The ideological and theological justifications which equated rebellion with a defense of ultramontane orthodoxy provided by Frankenberg and the ex-Jesuit journalist, François-Xavier Feller were coupled with more direct action – the Abbot of the Tongerloo monastery led a regiment of monks in the Army of the Moon.

The Belgian Revolution was actually a three part affair, between the Vandernootists, the “democrats” also known as the Vonckists, and finally the royalists, or

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9 Ibid., 26 March 1789.


11 The abbot was eventually appointed by the papacy the vicar *in spiritualibus* for the Belgian armies, where according to Le Plat, the jesuitical errors of frequent communion were repeated as army chaplains held communion masses “three. four, even five times per day.” HUA 215/3496, Le Plat to Mouton, 15 Decembre, 1790.
loyalists, the latter maintaining the support of Jansenists and sympathizers. Largely, the Vonckists and royalists were allied against the traditionalists who were viewed by both contemporaries and historians as part of an aristocratic and conservative reaction – in spite of their use of the term “patriot.”

Thus, it appears that the Belgian patriots who fought in the name of ultramontanism and traditional liberties were the opposite of the French parti patriote who defended Gallican liberties from the papacy and Parliamentary liberties from the monarchy in the two decades preceding the French Revolution. It is not within the scope of this chapter to examine the origins and uses of the term patriot in revolutionary Europe, except to suggest that the view of international “democratic revolutions” established by Palmer, who linked Belgian and French patriots (along with the Dutch and Americans) stands in need of further revision when religious causality is mixed into the batter of “patriotic” political ideology.

While the Belgian Revolution made use of the relatively new language of patriotic revolution, both sides also continued to use the terms of the older conflicts between Jansenists and ultramontanists. Therefore, individuals such as Le Plat on the Jansenist side, and Frankenburg and Feller on the other, attempted to center themselves and the programs of their parties discursively as one which maintained adherence to orthodox Catholic doctrine. Furthermore, they all sought to establish communion and unity within

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14 Indeed, this revision of Palmer is well underway. David Bell’s recent study of French nationalism argues that religion in general, and Jansenism in particular had a positive role in the construction of French national identity, see David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France; Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: 2001).
a broader religious identity – the Roman Catholic Church of either Rome proper, or the
spirit of the ancient church represented by Utrecht. The ultramontanist party labeled the
Josephist reforms as “heretical” and “schismatic” as often as they called them “despotic,”
while the Jansenists themselves repeated the oft-heard accusation that their enemies were
religious “fanatics” and “superstitious.”

By 1790, many of the cities in the province of Brabant were either in the hands of
the Vandernootists, or, as was the case in Brussels, in a state of chaos as “patriots”
simultaneously clashed with republican Vonckists, Imperial troops, and other loyalists in
the streets. Louvain was as much a center for popular rioting as ultramontanist
pamphleteers claimed “The Revolt in the university was preceded by a schism created by
the diverse writings of Doctor Le Plat in 1782, … since 1788 they [the patriots] have
condemned the school at Louvain as a schismatic school.”15 Vandernootist supporters
targeted Le Plat himself as the object of popular violence and in February of 1790 Le
Plat reported that “those who called themselves the Brussels Patriotic Committee have
confiscated my library and papers … I have protested to the Sovereign Council of
Brabant that this act violates all laws of this country’s constitution.”16 As in 1787, Le
Plat fled the Austrian Netherlands. This time, he made his way to the Archbishopric of
Mainz where the Archbishop-Elector, Karl von Erthal, remained one of the steadfast

15 Quoted in HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3496, Le Plat to Mouton, 15 Mai, 1790.

16 Ibid., 11 Fevrier 1790. Le Plat’s papers and library were destroyed in a “patriotic” auto de fe
shortly after his flight and there is no correspondence of Le Plat in either the Royal Library of Belgium or
in the Special Collections and Archives of the Katholeike Universiteit te Leuven (the present name of the
Univeristé de Louvain), see HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3496, 20 Fevrier 1790. Thus, the Le Plat correspondence
to Utrecht at the Utrechts Archeif the only extant papers of this interesting and important figure of the
International Jansenist movement.
supporters of Gallican liberties in Germany, having signed the Gallican-inspired “Punctation” of the Congress of Ems in 1786.  

Indeed, Mainz was one of the Jansenist International’s successes as Archbishop von Erthal had accepted the international version of Gallican ecclesiology, promoted by the early eighteenth-century Louvain canonist, Zeger Van Espen, as well as his later disciples, including the German Justinus-Johann Nikolas von Honthein, better know by his pseudonym Febronius, and of course Le Plat himself. Le Plat remained in Mainz until sometime in August of 1790 where he was able to reaffirm the support of Archbishop von Erthal for the Church of Utrecht, writing to Mouton, “I enjoyed a long conversation with His Eminence,… he had the good will to speak of the Bull *Unigenitus* and the infinite ills it has created. I rather brusquely turned to the Church of Utrecht, and this prelate is convinced of the justness of her cause against the Court of Rome; he knows about the last synod, the *Receuil des Temoignages*, etc., and is assured that [Utrecht] will once again enjoy immediate communion with the Pope.

Le Plat continuously blamed the revolt in Belgium on the handful of prelates and ex-Jesuits, such as Feller and Archbishop Frankenberg, because of their manipulation of the Belgian faithful through the basest appeals of fanaticism and superstition. Even the

17 Von Erthal, along with the Archbishops of Cologne, Trier, and Salzburg met, and signed the “Punctation” of the Council of Ems to protest the installation of a papal nuncio in Munich, viewing the act as a violation of the traditional jurisdictional rights of the German Archbishop-Electors over Bavaria.


19 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3496, Le Plat to Mouton, 20 Fevrier 1790.
death of Joseph II and the succession to the Austrian throne of his brother Leopold, the
Grand-Duke of Tuscany in March 1790, was the opportunity for more calumnious rabble-
rousing. Rather than quelling the rebellion on Joseph’s death, Le Plat reported that
“priests and monks stir the people against the new prince [Leopold], they call him a
jansenist, and that not only must one not show obedience to him, he must be treated as an
enemy.”20 As for Belgian liberties, Le Plat had no doubts: “Those two bishops
[Frankenberg and his ally, the Bishop of Antwerp] … dare to say that the people have
developed a taste for their Liberty – Horrible Liberty, such a sour fruit!”21

Le Plat’s condemnation of the political liberty associated with national or popular
sovereignty is not surprising; it was in the name of this liberty by which patriot mobs
drove Le Plat from his home. His dim views of liberty only increased after the French
occupation in 1792 and the ascension of pro-Jacobin Vonckists who created a Belgian
Republic bearing the motto “Liberty, Equality, or Death” and demonstrating as much a
propensity for radicalism as their French counterparts.22 And, Le Plat’s views of popular
sovereignty drew him into disagreement with some members of the Republic of Grace at
large, especially with those in France who embraced the role of popular will in the
formation of religious and political reform and revolution. In political terms, therefore,
the Jansenist International was by no means immune from the discursive battles fought in

20 Ibid., 14 Mars, 1790. The emphasis is Le Plat’s.
21 Ibid., 3 Avril, 1790.
22 Pierre Delsaerdt, “De politieke aspecten van de Franse overheersing in onze gewesten,” in Hugo
van de Voorde, et al., Bastille, Boerenkrijg en Tricolore; De Franse Revolutie in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden
France between concepts of political liberty defined by, in Keith Baker’s terms, “the intimate relationship between royal power and national liberty” and the popular will of the people of sovereign.23

In spite of a difference of opinion concerning political sovereignty, however, the “Republic of Grace” maintained their cohesion throughout the European revolutions by continuing to assert that by “liberty,” they only referred to a conciliar form of liberty within the church, and true expressions of political stemmed from grace and charity. For Le Plat and the rest of the European Jansenists, therefore, Utrecht remained the model of religious reform which was universal, and therefore was accorded universal rights and liberties. Speaking at the seminary in Mainz in 1788, at the invitation of Archbishop von Erfurt in order to publicly defend the “Punctation of Ems,” Le Plat neither attempted to examine “the particular discipline of the Church of Germany, nor the Concordats of this Nation with the Court of Rome, but instead concerned himself with an exposition of the principles of all Churches on the authority of the Papacy and on the rights originally attached to the episcopacy, ‘that no usurpation, no lapse in time can cause to be lost, for these are divine rights.”24 In other words, although the papacy claimed that once the Dutch Republic became officially Protestant, the papacy could not usurp the authority of the Archbishop of Utrecht since the Episcopal rights of the Church of Utrecht were divinely granted – thus these were inalienable rights. Le Plat’s comments, therefore, reveal a concept of a Jansenist social contract, that certain rights pertaining to the


24 NNEE, 24 Juillet, 1789
“liberties” of individual bishops came directly from God, were confirmed by “Scripture and Tradition,” and could not be forfeited to even the Bishop of Rome, who, although the spiritual head of the Church, was part of the same body of the Church, and subject to the same divine constitution. If there was a paradox that in France defense of ecclesiastical liberties combined with a defense of popular sovereignty, while the opposite was true in Belgium, it was because, according to the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, in France ex-Jesuits hoped to split the sovereignty of the nation from a monarch to which the nation had only shown “great love and respect” while in Belgium the same Jesuits split the populace from their “legitimate sovereign” – all because the Jesuits favored “Roman pretensions” over the rights and liberties of the universal church.26

That the Jansenist reforms in Belgium elicited such a violent popular response was, according to many within the Jansenist International, similarly the fault of the Jesuit and ultramontanist intriguers. “The Public,” reported the Jansenist newspaper, “is continually instructed in their resistance towards His Majesty … by the Bishops of the Austrian Netherlands, especially the Cardinal-Archbishop of Malines; without ceasing, he proclaims with such calumnious murmuring, gossiping, and with such injustice and ferocity against [Louvain’s] orthodoxy.”27 And, although the loyalists and Jansenists in Belgium formed an alliance in the early revolution with democratic factions to combat the aristocratic and religiously conservative estates, the Jansenist inspired Josephist

25 Ibid.

26 NNEE, 6 Novembre 1790.

27 NNEE, 16 Janvier, 1790.
reforms never developed a popular following in the Austrian Netherlands. Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century, the ultramontanist side of the ecclesiastical debate had developed its own public sphere. Still, an adequate explanation of why Jansenist reform, with its explicit calls for lay participation in ecclesiastical affairs, failed to gain wide-spread popular support remains to be written. One possibility is that the various Josephist and Jansenist inspired reforms, such as suppression of the monasteries, in fact attacked the only uniquely “Belgian” institutions so that Belgians, without a national political entity around which to rally, such as an English Parliament or French Estates-General, rose in nationalistic defense of traditional, albeit papal, religion.

Ultramontanism was still the enemy of religious liberty for Le Plat and the rest of the “Republic of Grace.” That is, they continued to define the liberty of the conscience as something personal, for which the only public response was a public defense of religious toleration. This was no less a concern in the Austrian Netherlands as it was for the French Revolutionaries who proclaimed a freedom of religious opinion in Article X of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. For the Jansenist International, one of the more scurrilous pro-ultramontane/aristocratic pamphlets was a reprint of a pamphlet published in French and Dutch on the occasion of Joseph II’s Edict of Toleration in 1781, which granted civil toleration to Protestants. The pamphlet, entitled *Lettres d’un*


\[\text{\footnotesize 29 According to art historian Barbara Haeger, monasteries in the southern Netherlands were sources of civic pride in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, hence local elites patronized art works for use in the monastic chapels. It is quite likely that by the eighteenth century, these institutions of civic pride became part of Belgian national identity. See Barbara Haeger, “Reuben’s *Adoration of the Magi* and the Program for the High Alter of St. Michael’s Abbey in Antwerp,” in *Simiolus* 25 (1997): 45-71.}\]
Chanoine Penitencier, called for a reinstating of the Inquisition in the Austrian Netherlands; it was, according to the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques “imbued … with the dangerous principles of blind obedience and the fanaticism of the author.” 30 Le Plat’s Réponse aux Lettres d’un Chanoine Penitencier, first published in 1786, and reprinted in 1790, argued that religious toleration and the liberty of conscience were “fundamental laws of nature … recognized by the Church Fathers and writers with a little more reason … nothing is more false and temerarious than the contrary assertions of the author [of the Lettres d’un Chanoine Penitencier].” 31 Nevertheless, in light of a popular uprising inspired by what was the European Jansenists commonly accepted as Jesuit inspired fanaticism directed at an ignorant public, Le Plat remained skeptical about political liberty. Referring, for example to the French Revolution, he asserted, “the rights of the people: it has some good, but in principle, in my judgment, it is very dangerous and seditious. Would one really want to make the monarch a simple mandataire of the people, and to grant them the same ability to revoke their mandate?” 32

The popular reaction directed against Jansenist reforms was not limited to the Austrian Netherlands. In Tuscany as well, the ecclesiastical and liturgical reforms instituted by the Bishop of Pistoia and Prato, Scipione de’ Ricci, and sponsored by the Grand-Duke of Tuscany Peter Leopold (the brother of Joseph II who became Emperor in 1790), inspired similar violence. Well prior to 1789, Ricci had established Jansenist

30 NEE 27 Fevrier 1790.
31 Josse Le Plat, Réponse aux Lettres d’un Chanoine Penitencier, (Lille: 1786), 31-32.
32 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3496, Le Plat to Mouton, 19 Avril, 1790.
reforms within his diocese, including training of the secular clergy in pastoral theology
and a concomitant emphasis of the lower clergy’s role in ecclesiastical affairs,
 suppression the Cult of the Sacred Heart and veneration of local but unofficial saints,
suppression of lay confraternities, and the convocation of a diocesan synod in 1786,
which was to become the model for a Tuscan national ecclesiastical council – one which
never came to fruition.33 Instead, both Ricci and Peter Leopold, like Joseph II,
 underestimated the potential of Jansenist reforms to evoke popular, and even nationalistic
reactions. The Grand-Duke’s departure from Florence in 1790 to accept the Austrian
crown after the death of his brother left room for the local Tuscan aristocracy, who like
their Belgian counterparts, were ill disposed to accept the reforms of a German prince.
And, similar to the situation in the Austrian Netherlands, they helped to foment a local
rebellion that equated ultramontanism with Tuscan national identity. As Ricci’s close
friend, Count Girolamo Astorri, the Imperial Director of the Post in Milan (making
Astorri a vital part of the Jansenist book-trade in Italy) reported to Mouton in Utrecht,
“… all has been turned around. All spirits are completely embittered against the Bishop
[Ricci] and the curés who obey him.34 In one particular assertion of the popular will,
Astorri reported “The Populace wants to celebrate the feast of St. Julie [of Florence,

33 On Ricci and reform in Tuscany, and especially the Synod of Pistoia, see Charles A. Bolton,
Church Reform in Eighteenth-Century Italy (The Synod of Pistoia, 1786), (The Hague: 1969) and Van
Kley, “Catholic Conciliar Reform.” A detailed summary of the Acts of the Synod of Pistoia, on the
occasion of its publication of Dupac de Bellegarde’s French translation was provided in the NNEE, 17
Juillet, 1789, 11 Septembre, 1789, and 18 Septembre, 1789. One example of popular devotion suppressed
by Ricci was the veneration of “Saint” Atto, Bishop of Pistoia from 1153-1155. Credited with bringing
relics of Saint James of Campostella to Pistoia, he was nonetheless, never officially canonized as a saint.
On April 24, 1790, a mob forced their way into the cathedral and placed a statue of Atto in its “old niche,”
HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3394-1, Astorri to Mouton, 1 Mai, 1790.

34 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3394-1, Astorri to Mouton, 29 Mai 1790.
whose feast was suppressed by Ricci] … they were reminded of the maxims by which they must only honor God in their celebrations. The Populace responded that they would celebrate as they wished.”

If the popular uprising directed against Ricci, which eventually drove him from Pistoia and to resign his see in 1790, were only partly a religious reaction to reform, and more an expression of proto-Italian nationalism, or a social and economic reaction to Tuscan economic depression due to Leopold’s liberalization of the grain trade – the nuances of the unrest were lost on the members of the International Jansenist community. Although the regency government of Tuscany attempted to maintain order first by re-regulating the grain trade, they also reinstated the lay confraternities and suspended Ricci’s reforms. And, from the perspective of the “Republic of Grace,” they also thought that they recognized a Jesuitical plot when they saw one. Astorri reported “most atrocious calamities” were committed by the peasantry and that the Jesuits “liked this.” Moreover, “…they [Jesuits] have inflamed passions against all those labeled as Jansenists, insulting their persons, destroying their houses, and menacing them with pillage. The enemies hope this charge will expand the fight, claiming that Jansenists themselves were the authors of all disorder.” The Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques claimed

35 Ibid., 5 Juin, 1790.

36 On Tuscany’s economic conditions, see Stuart Wolfe, A History of Italy, 1700-1860; The Social Constraints of Political Change, (London: 1979), 105-107, 130-136. As for the nationalistic elements, at one point, the insurgents donned a national cockade which was presented to the regency government, HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3394-1, Astorri to Mouton, s.d.

37 Ibid., 16 Juin, 1790.

38 Ibid., 30 Juin, 1790.
that in Pistoia, Jesuit plots and papal intriguers “were constantly active, straining to prevent that which appears contrary to their system and to their interests…” even though Ricci’s reforms were “perfectly orthodox.”

And, as Ricci proclaimed, “The insubordination, [and] the libertinage … are the sour fruits of a revelation that Rome has surely fomented.”

Thus, the Jansenist International reduced the Tuscan rebellion to its most familiar tropes – this was a conflict between reform in the name of Christian charity for the edification of united Catholicism versus the concupiscent self-interest of Rome and the Jesuits. This conflict afflicted the Austrian Netherlands, Tuscany, and would be part of the discourse of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the French Revolution.

While revolutionary events tested the “Republic of Grace,” even to the extent of placing some members in real physical danger, and though members disagreed over the political significance of these events, it is important to note that internally, the bonds of charity and Christian sociability remained intact. Indeed, Jansenist expressions of friendship and Christian fraternity had survived these sorts of trials before – the Jansenist communal identity was closely linked to a sense of perseverance in the face of persecution. And still, Utrecht remained the central axis of this community both symbolically and practically. Communications passed through Mouton in Utrecht, and while Le Plat, Astorri, and Ricci, (amongst many others) reported on their own particular circumstances, they seldom failed to inquire about their fellow members. “I would be well-pleased to receive some good news regarding M. Le Plat,” Astorri wrote to Mouton

39 NNEE, 25 Mars, 1791.

40 HUA Inv. 215 Mss. 3553 Ricci to Mouton, 10 Mai 1790.
for example, “Following the outrages he has suffered, I hope that he may find some peace and tranquility. I should write to him directly myself to offer him an expression of my esteem and attachment.”

For his part, Le Plat still found time in 1795, after the University of Louvain had been closed by the French and Belgian Jacobins, to publish a defense of the canonicity of Ricci’s Synod of Pistoia. Le Plat wrote his two-volume, point-by-point refutation of the papal bull condemning the publication of the synod’s acts, *Auctorum Fidei*, in order to defend the “Synod which dignified one of the most beautiful centuries of the Church.”

Le Plat’s publication affirmed both the internationalism of Jansenist reform and the persistent view, late into the eighteenth century, that these reforms were based on the restoration of the church to its pristine state.

The National Assembly’s official approval of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy on July 12, 1790, and legislation of the notorious Oath of the Civil Constitution on November 27, 1790 to be enforced with the new year, only added another set of what the Jansenist International accepted as universal ecclesiastical reform. The same discursive blanket of sound and orthodox reform of the universal church against the fanatical and particularistic interests of the Jesuits and Papacy was meant to cover events in France as well as those in Belgium and Italy. However, the seeming rapidity by which the French Revolution radicalized, moving from an expression of national sovereignty to the execution of the monarch, and from the Civil Constitution to outright de-Christianization, tested the cohesion of the Jansenist “Republic of Grace.”

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41 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3394-2, Astorri to Mouton, 22 Mars 1791.

42 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3496, Le Plat to Mouton, 25 Septembre, 1795.
The reactions of the Papacy, ultramontanists, and the populace to Jansenist reforms in Italy and the Austrian Netherlands perhaps should have encouraged members of the Ecclesiastical Committee of the National Assembly and their Jansenist supporters to proceed more cautiously with the Civil Constitution. Yet, some considered the legislation as the fulfillment of certain prophecies. Even after nearly a half-century that Jansenist and Enlightened discourse shared certain discursive patterns of criticism, the figurist aspirations of early eighteenth-century Jansenism still lingered, and the French Revolution and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy became interpreted by some as the final stage in the complete regeneration of the Church. The editor of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, Guénin de Saint-Marc, inquired of Mouton

Have you heard of the Demoiselle de la Brousse …? It seems certain that since 1779, she had actually predicted the National Assembly for 1789, and even some of its more important actions, such as the abolition of the distinctions of the Three Orders, Clergy, Nobility, and the Third Estate, and the abolition of the monasteries. She made these predictions to Dom Gerle, then Prior at the Chartreuse de Vaucleres, who forwarded them to his General. … She also predicted that Dom Gerle would become a deputy to this Assembly, and that those who suffered from great calamities would enjoy a regeneration, which would make Religion as flourishing as ever, and provide the State with all possible happiness.\(^43\)

The French Revolution brought in several religious circles a certain millenarian inevitability, including the conversion of the Jews to Christianity; hence some justified Jewish emancipation during the Revolution as a necessary step towards assimilation and finally full conversion.\(^44\) Within Jansenism, figurist expectations viewed the Revolution

\(^43\) HUA, Inv. 215, Mss. 3461, Guénin to Mouton, 20 Mars, 1790.

and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy as the opportunity to restore the Church to its ancient and pristine condition, and to happily marry the Church with the State.

If there was an inevitability about the Civil Constitution, it was perhaps that the Rousseauan discourse of will should triumph in the constitutional debates within the National Assembly so that rather than separating a religious private sphere from the political public one, the Church became an indivisible component of an equally indivisible nation. What Jansenists hoped for with the Civil Constitution was a reformist institution which would “sanctify the Nation, the Law and the King…” rendering both religion and the state “incorruptible.” Thus the constitutional church might serve the state, and vice versa, while still enjoying communal ties with the universal church – a combination of Rousseauan “general will” with Jansenist “universality and unanimity.”

What they received, however, was a constitutional church containing distinctly non-Jansenist elements, including the lack of provisions made for national councils, since legislators such as Robespierre, argued in purely Rousseauan terms that the National Assembly was an expression of a general will from which a national church could not dissent – creating a church that was as Gallican in character as it had even been. However, this also exposed the Jansenist International to an ideological two-front war, since they now had to go to great lengths to defend the constitutional church as both orthodox from papal condemnation, and sufficiently universal from critics within their own party.


Still, the Republic of Grace considered the Church of Utrecht as the model by which the Constitutional Church might become both a national entity while maintaining its Catholicity. Although the Nation, via the National Assembly created the Constitutional Church, while Utrecht remained a tolerated (to say nothing of preferred over its orthodox counterpart by the Dutch government), but nonetheless unofficial institution within the Dutch Republic, both Utrecht and the French Church acknowledged Papal supremacy in spiritual matters, that as the Vicar of Christ, the Pope remained the head of the Exterior Church. Indeed, Utrecht had established a pattern of acknowledging Papal supremacy over the visible Church, while simultaneously preserving ecclesiastical independence through Letters of Communion. Written by each new Archbishop of Utrecht on the event of his investiture to the Papacy, these letters each fastidiously protested Utrecht’s orthodoxy and their desire for reconciliation and communion with Rome, without, however, conceding the Papacy’s claim that the Utrecht sacres were invalid without Rome’s approbation. That each letter sent in a spirit of Christian charity by each newly elected Archbishop since Steenhoven’s election in 1723 was met with the response of excommunication only served to convince Utrecht that fault for the lingering schism lay with Rome, and not Utrecht. As Dupac de Bellegarde observed,

47 See for example, NNEE 13 Decembre 1791.
There is a paradox that the Court of Rome … has continued to allow the separation of such respectable clergy, … upon receiving these marks of communion, which have always promised inviolable loyalty to the dogmas of the Catholic faith … [and] humbly and faithfully acknowledge unity and communion with the universal Church and the Holy Apostolic See as the center of Catholic unity.\textsuperscript{48}

Newly elected Bishops in France, then, were required by the Civil Constitution to write similar letter of communion to the Papacy in the spirit of Catholic unity.\textsuperscript{49}

Of course, the France of 1789 was not the same as the Utrecht of the 1720s, on the event of that city’s initial break with Rome, or even the Utrecht of 1758 when the Archdiocese held its council that would become the model for subsequent Jansenist ecclesiastical councils in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{50} The debate over the Civil Constitution of the Clergy cannot be separated from the context of the French Revolution; there is no question that some within the National Assembly, such as the Jansenist canonist, Armand-Gaston Camus, took the more radical view that “the ambitions of the Court of Rome … are to make each bishop a vassal of the Pope…,” therefore, letters of communion to the Pope were a polite formality at best, but that the National Assembly was the only institution which could “assure the tranquility of the Church of France.”\textsuperscript{51}

Or, as Guénin de Saint-Marc declared, those who opposed the Constitutional Church

\textsuperscript{48} HUA Inv. 102, Mss. 61, Dupac de Bellegarde, “Preface Sur le Schisme contenus dans ce Recueil” in Recueil de Divers temoignages … En faveur de la catholicite et de la legitmite des droits de l’Église de Utrecht.

\textsuperscript{49} Timothy Tackett, Religion, Revolution and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France (Princeton: 1986), 16.

\textsuperscript{50} Van Kley, “Catholic Conciliar Reform”.

\textsuperscript{51} Armand-Gaston Camus, Observations sur Deux Brefs du Pape, s.l., s.d., 25-27.
were those who “hold onto ignorance, temerity, and irreligion with an irreverence more than Jesuitical.”

More serious, however, was that the Civil Constitution of the Clergy undermined the ability of the International Jansenist community to appeal to public consensus, since the consensus of the community itself, which was defined as adherence and loyalty to the Church of Utrecht, began to fray over the Constitutional Church. Gabriel-Nicolas Maultrot, for example, rejected Camus’s more radical idea that the National Assembly alone, by assuming the rights of the sovereign, could alter the exterior structure of the church. Instead, Maultrot held firm to the view that had served the Jansenist cause so well in its struggle against absolutism: namely, that in private spiritual matters, the church must be free from the public state. After casting off a monarch who was prepared to act as the sole voice of the Nation, including in affairs of faith and dogma, Maultrot was certainly no more inclined to allow the National Assembly the same prerogative by making it the sole authority if a Constitutional Church. “It is indubitable,” he wrote, “that the Assembly is not, and can not be in these circumstances the organ of the Nation… Should the Nation disavow the Assembly, the decommissioning of the [Constitutional] bishops and priests would have to be presumed.” In other words, Maultrot, one of eighteenth-century French Jansenism’s and the Gallican Church’s most ardent defenders was not prepared to take national sovereignty to the point of allowing the will of the people to hold the power to both sanctify and invalidate the Church.

52 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3461, Guénin de Saint-Marc to Mouton, 1790.

Maultrot’s views, however, which he made public in the form of an eighty-five page treatise which drew heavily on scripture, patristic theology, and ecclesiastical history to support the thesis that the church faithful could not validly remove their legitimate pastors, was refuted equally publicly by his fellow Jansenists within the pages of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*. According to the Jansenist weekly, Saint Cyprian, one of the church fathers on whom Maultrot relied, supported the notion of an ecclesiastical social contract – an idea that perhaps resonated within the Revolutionary leadership. The paper claimed that

Saint Cyprien not only approved when the Clergy and the People of Spain…rejected Basilide and Martial as their bishops, he allowed that they could put others in their place. … He has established in principle that the people not only have a right to remove Pastors soiled by crimes, they are equally obligated to do so, lest they become culpable in those same crimes.

Furthermore, the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* assured its readers, “Pastors are for the people, not the people for the Pastors.”

Nonetheless, Maultrot still defended the Church of Utrecht while he argued that “the Constitutional prelates will always be an intrusion and schismatic.” It was schismatic, not because the Constitutional bishops and priests were anathematized by Rome, but because neither the people, nor their secular representatives possessed the right to remove “legitimate” pastors, whether they swore the Oath of the Civil Constitution or not. The key difference between the Constitutional Church and Utrecht was that the clergy of Utrecht had not deposed legitimate ecclesiastical leadership; it had

54 NNEE 13 Decembre 1791.
55 Maultrot, *Véritable idée du schisme*, 60.
merely elected a bishop in a see that stood vacant. This view was echoed by the anonymous author of the *Défense de la veritable idée du schisme, contre l’auteur des anciennes Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*. The difference between Utrecht and France, according to the author, was that “The bishops of Holland were placed in their sees by the canonical election of their chapters … not by the election of lay active citizens, of Protestants, of Jews, of Muslims, of Pagans themselves.” Thus, the author concluded, while the rejection of Utrecht by Rome was “a palpable injustice, … an effect of the ambitions of the Court of Rome,” the schism created from the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was justified. Nor was schism measured by communion with Rome.

“Immediate communion with the Holy See is neither possible, nor necessary for all members of the Church,” wrote Maultrot. “One is fixed in unity by mediate communion; that is to say, in communication with those who are in communion with the Holy See.” Thus, the letters of communion sent to the Archbishop of Utrecht by other prelates who enjoyed full-communion with the Papacy, and published in the *Receuil des Temoignages* for the reading public, sufficed to maintain Utrecht within the fold of the universal church.

In response to the critique of Maultrot and others, Jansenist supporters of the Constitutional Church went to great lengths to draw direct connections between the creation of the Gallican church in France and the Church of Utrecht. In 1791, for


57 Ibid.

example, the Parisian publisher of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* reprinted the
*Consultation de douze Avocats au Parlement de Paris*, which was essentially a legal
treatise penned by twelve canon French lawyers *parlementaires*, including incidentally
Maultrot, in 1770 that upheld the rights of the Utrecht clergy to elect their own prelates
independent of Rome. It was first made public in 1786 in support of Joseph II’s attempts
to reform the church in the Austrian Netherlands, and the editors of the *Nouvelles
Ecclésiastiques* believed, “applies equally to the reforms in Ecclesiastical Discipline
made by the National Assembly.” Moreover, it was hoped that the Archbishop of
Utrecht himself would preside over the consecration masses for the newly elected
constitutional bishops. Although, Guénin wrote to Mouton, “[o]f 152 bishops, only 4
have sworn the Oath, so nothing is yet certain. … There is no reason to hope that there
will be any new *sacres* … [But] it could provide a link of unity between your Church and
her cause with the Church of France, which would seemingly be to your advantage.”
However, the Archbishop of Utrecht, Walter Michael van Nieuwenhuizen, never did
perform the *sacre* of a single Constitutional bishop, nor did he ordain a single priest, nor
did Nieuwenhuizen even speak publicly in defense of the Constitutional Church. The
only bishop outside of France, in fact, who published a defense of the Constitutional
Church before France’s turn towards radicalism and dechristianization, was Ricci, Bishop
of Pistoia and Prato.

59 NNEE, 27 Septembre, 1791.

60 HUA Inv. 215, Mss, 3461 Guénin de Saint-Marc to Mouton, 22 Janvier, 1791.
Ricci’s opinion on the Civil Constitution arrived in Paris before his resignation from his see; the fact that he had already been *de facto* deposed by 1790 by angry mobs, however, served in the opinion of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* as an asset. Ricci was, therefore, “an impartial judge and a clear guide, who placed far from the turbulent passions which obscure our horizon, can show the way.” In Ricci’s opinion, the “people” had “an inalienable right” to have pastors who ministered to them, and thus, the State regulated this right by ensuring proper ecclesiastical discipline. 61 The National Assembly was, therefore, fundamentally no different in providing needed reform in France than was Joseph II in Hapsburg territory, where in spite of the ecclesiastical and popular reactions against these reforms, benefited from at least the tacit approval of Rome. As for France, Ricci considered that the only ones who were responsible for a schism were those priests who refused to acknowledge to legitimate authority of the state to regulate matters of ecclesiastical discipline. 62

Ricci’s solitary external defense of the Civil Constitution, however, ensured that ultimately, the French Church would not achieve the same level of international support, and thus the essential marks of “unanimity and uniformity” that Utrecht enjoyed. Moreover, Ricci’s resignation only further exacerbated the problem since Ricci could not confidently claim to be an ecclesiastical authority in communion with the Constitutional clergy. Nor did the fact that Ricci spoke as an Italian during a revolution which had unmistakable nationalistic sentiments help matters. “The false, imposter of a bishop….”

61 NNEE, 23 Aout, 1790.
62 Ibid.
wrote Bernard Lambert, “how he can say … our position? This position is that of France, not of Tuscany.”63 In France, as in the Austrian Netherlands, nationalism could equally be used in the defense of traditional religion.

If Jansenists made efforts to explain the French Constitutional Church within an internationalist discourse, then political events in France, beginning with the King’s attempted flight from Paris in June 1791, served only to increase tensions, both between the Jansenists and ultramontanists, but also within the Jansenist International itself. Indeed, for much of the eighteenth century, Jansenist religious reform found a common, albeit unwitting, ally with the enlightenment in a struggle against fanaticism and superstition. After the so-called “Flight to Varennes” and the monarch’s subsequent deposition, trial, and execution, the discursive positions of Jansenists, ultramontanists, and secularism were realigned so that, as the Revolution moved closer to the Reign of Terror, the Jansenist International and ultramontanists held a common belief that a “philosophical” conspiracy was hell-bent on the destruction of Europe’s political foundations.64 Jacobinism and republican national sovereignty became increasingly problematic for International Jansenists as it moved closer to anti-clericalism, irreligion, and Terror within France.

Some French Jansenists, such as Guénin de Saint-Marc, blamed the radicalization of the Revolution on Rome, continuing to hope that ecclesiastical reform would provide a

63 Bernard Lambert, La constitution de l’Église vengée, contre la réponse de M. l’évêque de Pistoie (Paris: 1791), 5. Emphasis is in the original.

remedy. Referring to the refractory clergy who refused the Oath of the Civil Constitution, Mouton wrote:

If there is such unbelief, I am persuaded that it is the fault of that Clergy, not only because of their negligence in fulfilling their obligations, for their Pope, for their habits, for their tyrannical government, but also because of the indecent fights they have supported, against the Parlements, the refusal of sacraments … Religion can only become more and more odious by the abuses they create for crossing the Revolution.65

And, even though France grew increasingly anticlerical, prompting Guénin to ask Mouton to refrain from using the term “abbé” in his correspondence,66 he continued to hope for a return to moderation, even on the eve of the Louis XVI’s execution on January 21, 1793. “The Church, you say, is captive in France, that it even has become a Babylon?” Guénin wrote to Mouton, demonstrating a difference of opinion between the two Jansenists, “I believe that this is truer in other Catholic countries. Where else is it more Babylonian than in Rome? In France, it is the carnal Ecclesiastics [again, the refractory clergy] who are captive. In no other Catholic country is there more liberty than in France.”67 Yet, in April, 1793, the Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques would admit to its readers, “The ills of the Church are compounded in the Age of Revolution, no human power can remedy them,” and that it was the hope that the “sainted” habitants of Port-Royal, would intercede on behalf of not only France, but the Netherlands and Italy as well.68

65 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3461, Guénin de Saint-Marc to Mouton, 10 Septembre 1791.
66 Ibid., 9 Septembre, 1792.
67 Ibid., 20 Janvier, 1793.
If France’s turn towards “unbelief” and the execution of Louis XVI created tensions between Guénin and Mouton, for Astorri in Italy it marked France’s descent into nothing less than barbarism. Clearly sympathetic towards the rights of the nation to take ecclesiastical control of the Church, especially since Rome’s opposition to the Civil Constitution was driven by “fanatics who would proscribe all the Church Fathers,”69 Astorri also deplored French violence done in the name of national sovereignty. The news of Louis XVI’s death drove Astorri to proclaim,

> The French have tricked us for two centuries by their hypocritical sociability and humanity… Here’s another proof of French liberty, they have intercepted and opened my letters at their pleasure. If they ever have the pleasure of reading this, they should read that they are as detestable and abhorrent as tigers, as monsters! We have no other consolation than to dream to see such crimes avenged by the total destruction of these barbarians.70

Finally, Astorri claimed, “all of Italy there is a general cry against France and the audacity of the Jacobins.”71 Le Plat confirmed Astorri’s suspicion of France’s radical turn, writing that France’s constitution contained “the germ of a general uprising clearing the way for incalculable horrors, at the base of which is the dangerous book of Rousseau, The Social Contract.”72

Dramatic as the Terror was for the French and for the Jansenist Republic of Grace, it was at least short-lived. And, following the Thermidorian reaction, and the

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68 NNEE 10 Avril, 1793.
69 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3394-1, Astorri to Mouton, 25 Aôut, 1790.
70 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3394-3, Astorri to Mouton, 28 Fevrier, 1792.
71 Ibid., 8 Septembre, 1792.
72 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3496, Le Plat to Mouton, 23 Avril 1792.
subsequent rise of a Directory government which hoped to moderate between French Jacobinism and monarchism, the French Constitutional Church reconstituted itself anew. Under the leadership of Henry Grégoire, the French Jansenists hoped to enjoy the Directory’s “liberty of cults,” as close as a separation of church and state as the Revolution was to get, and Grégoire promptly proceeded to plan for a French National Council. Indeed, there were two national councils, one in 1797 and the other in 1801. Yet, in a letter to Mouton dated 1795, Guénin de Saint-Marc expressed a typical Jansenist pessimism regarding the resurgence of religious sentiment in post-Terror France. While he applauded the reconstruction of two constitutional churches in Paris, he also proclaimed, “These spectacles should make us happy, considering the devastation caused by men. But, when one considers the justice of God, who will surely punish our profanities and sacrilege, we have good reason to be subjected to further humilities and punishment.”

Still, the French National Councils sought approbation, even communion from Utrecht. Augustin-Charles-Jean Clément du Bizon, once the Republic of Grace’s primary agent in Rome, now the Constitutional Bishop of Versailles, extended an invitation to Mouton to represent the Church of Utrecht at the National Council of 1801 as a mark of communion and union between the two churches. Mouton, however, respectfully declined the invitation. Citing the difficulty of traveling to Paris, Mouton

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73 There is much research to be done on these two councils, to say nothing of religion in the Directory period in general. Dale Van Kley has established a starting point for further research, including connections between the French National Councils and international Jansenism, in his article, “Catholic Conciliar Reform,” 95-106.

74 HUA Inv. 215., Mss. 3461, Guénin de Saint-Marc to Mouton, 18 Juin, 1795.
also said that sending an alternate representative to Paris was equally difficult, since at present “there is only a single vicar for the two dioceses of Utrecht and Haarlem, nor is there a priest who is not necessarily engaged at his post.”

More interesting, however, was that Mouton also claimed that while the Archbishop of Utrecht would keep “your church in his prayers,” it was not at all in the interest of Utrecht to form a union with the French church. Any such link would only “supply the adversaries of this church [Utrecht] with the pretext for more calumnies. You must understand, they still hope to show our complicity with your Philosophers against the Pope and religion…” Thus, while the bonds of Christian fraternity within the Republic of Grace certainly survived the Revolution intact, the public face of this community, the bonds of communion between the various churches – in essence the Jansenist public sphere – lost the cohesion it once enjoyed.

At the very end of the eighteenth century, quite literally in fact, Le Plat sent New Years greetings to Mouton from Amersfoort, where Le Plat enjoyed a quiet retirement as a professor of canon law at the Jansenist seminary there. His letter, dated December 31, 1800 expressed a sense of resignation over the failure of the Jansenist public sphere to create any sort of permanent reform. “I wish you a happy beginning to the new century,” he wrote, “hopefully we will see a happier nineteenth century, less turbulent and less philosophical than the end of the eighteenth.” In a sense, Le Plat’s wish was granted

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75 Bibliotheque de Arsenal, Mss. 6065, folio 54-55, Mouton to Clement, 13 Mars, 1801.
76 Ibid.
77 HUA Inv. 215, Mss. 3496, Le Plat to Mouton, 31 Decembre, 1800.
within the year; on July 16, 1801 Napoleon Bonaparte’s Concordat with the papacy was finalized, putting the weight of the Bonapartist state behind the cause of ultramontanist religion. The century of the Jansenist Republic of Grace had indeed come to an end.
On Sunday, June 16, 2002, Bishop Wilton Gregory, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops appeared on the NBC News program, Meet the Press, to discuss the bishops response to crisis created by the sexual abuse of children by Roman Catholic priests, the failure of a number of bishops to remove priests from pastoral duties, and the attempts of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to keep the entire affair an internal church matter. Just the week before, the bishops’ conference adopted new guidelines that, amongst other measures, declared a “zero-tolerance” policy, so that priests accused of abusing children would be immediately suspended from pastoral duties; should the allegations become proven, “zero-tolerance” meant the priest would be defrocked. Tim Russert, moderator of the program, asked the bishop about speculation that the Vatican would reject the new guidelines because, quoting a Vatican official “The church is about reconciliation. Its highest priority cannot be driving out the pedophiles.” Russert added, “That has to be troubling to hear those kinds of comments.” Bishop Gregory’s response provided one of the most surprising, and least discussed statements of the entire crisis: “It’s not surprising that people who do not live in the United State under a British common law set of legal standards that they don’t understand all the realities that we as
Americans live with.”¹ Indeed, Bishop Gregory’s statement suggested first, that a matter of church discipline had to conform to the secular laws of the state. And second, Bishop Gregory argued, in effect, that because the American bishops better understood the local legal traditions than did the Curia in Rome, the response to the crisis was better handled by the local ecclesiastical authorities without Roman interference. While Bishop Gregory acknowledged Rome’s authority, he clearly believed that the child abuse crisis would come to a better resolution if handled externally by the American bishops and the American legal system. At a certain level, this was really no different from what the Church of Utrecht or the French Constitutional Church asserted in the eighteenth century.

It is tempting to speculate that had the Jansenist efforts been more successful at the end of the eighteenth century, then the scandal of the contemporary Church might have been avoided. Indeed, one expert suggested that had more laity been directly involved in diocesan and parish administration, something that would have been more readily embraced by the Jansenists than by their opponents, neither the abuse nor the cover-up would have become as wide-spread as it appears to have been.² Still, to claim that the triumph of ultramontanism caused the clerical sexual abuse crisis would be claiming too much. Nevertheless, the current situation of the Catholic Church in the United States does raise the question: could there have been a more compatible history between Catholicism and modern democracy, including democratizing the church? In fact, it seems that even after the so-called Age of Democratic Revolutions, the last

¹ Transcript, Meet the Press, June 16, 2002.

bastian of European absolutism was within the Catholic Church. During the First Vatican Council in 1870, which declared papal infallibility a dogma of the church, Cardinal Filippo Guidi remonstrated to the effect that infallibility violated the traditions of the church. In response, Pope Pius IX declared, reminiscent of Louis XIV himself, “I am the tradition! I am the Church!”

A solution may very well have been found in the eighteenth-century American Catholic church where American Catholics found themselves in a situation rather similar to that of Dutch Catholics. American Catholics were a small minority in an overwhelmingly Protestant nation, governed as “missionary territory” by a Vicar-Apostolic in London from which their country had just separated, and without a native ecclesiastical leadership, that is no American bishop, the American Church had no provisions for replenishing the clergy without support from Europe. Thus in 1789, without permission of the papacy, the American clergy elected John Carroll, the head of the “American mission” as the Bishop of Baltimore. Ironically, Carroll himself had once been a Jesuit priest.

Catholics first came to America in 1634 to settle Maryland as a refuge for English Catholics. The original charter of the colony promised religious toleration, but events in both England and the American colonies meant this toleration would be short-lived. The English Civil War, and later Glorious Revolution, both prompted anti-Catholic sentiments in America, and in Maryland, by the end of the seventeenth century, Puritans

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3 Giacomo Martina, “PIO IX (1867-78)”, Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae 58 (1990), 205-207

4 On the early American Catholic Church, see Chester Gillis, Roman Catholicism in America (New York: 1990).
had taken control of the government and banned “popery” in the colony. Still, Catholic “missionary priests,” who were almost exclusively Jesuits, preached in the colony, largely in the privacy of plantation homes. The Jesuits themselves owned a number of missionary plantations that supported the church by farming tobacco, often with African slaves.\(^5\)

John Carroll was born in Maryland in 1735 to Irish immigrants. In 1757, Carroll entered the Society of Jesus and he traveled to Liège, where he studied theology. In 1769, Carroll was ordained and he accepted a position teaching at the Irish College in Bruges, an English-language Jesuit seminary in the Austrian Netherlands, where Carroll remained until the dissolution of the Jesuits and the closing of the college in 1773. In fact, Carroll spent a short period of time in prison in the Austrian Netherlands for signing a petition protesting the closing of the college.\(^6\) Carroll was released in 1774 and he returned to America. Although he makes no mention of the Jansenist and Jesuit controversy, it is unlikely that after living for sixteen years in the Austrian Netherlands that he would be unaware of the conflict.

Carroll had good reason to support the American War of Independence; four of the new state constitutions drafted in 1776 granted full civil liberties to Catholics, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. American independence seemed to provide a promise of full toleration throughout the new nation. However, Carroll, who

\(^5\) Timothy Bosworth, “Anti-Catholicism as a Political Tool in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Maryland,” Catholic Historical Review 61 (1975), 542.

had become the leader of the American Catholics, also faced an ecclesiastical problem regarding the church’s relationship with the Vicar-Apostolic in London. Carroll worried that “a Foreign jurisdiction will never be tolerated here, and even the spiritual authority of the Pope is the only reason why in some of the United States, the full participation of all civil rights is not granted to the Roman Church.” 7 Should the papacy “send their agents,” that is a foreign Vicar-Apostolic to America, Carroll warned, “they will surely return empty handed.” 8

The solution, Carroll argued in 1784, meant that the American church should have an American bishop elected by the clergy in the United States. However, the idea was not Carroll’s; it seems to have come from Benjamin Franklin, with whom Carroll traveled on a diplomatic mission to Canada in 1776. In 1784, Franklin still lived in Paris after negotiating the Treaty of Paris and may very well have been aware of the Jansenist movement. As it happened, Carroll reported,

> Dr Franklin has sent me a letter which he also presented to the Nuncio in Paris … that the Catholic Clergy and Laity here know that the only connection they ought to have with Rome is to acknowledge the pope as the spiritual head of the Church … that no Bishop Vicar Apostolic shall be admitted [to the United States]; and if we are to have a bishop, he shall not be in partibus but an ordinary national bishop, in whose appointment Rome shall have no share.” 9

Still, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, under whose authority the American church fell, preferred that America accept a Vicar-Apostolic, although Cardinal

7 John Carroll to Charles Plowden, 26 September 1783, in ibid., 78.

8 Ibid.

9 John Carroll to Charles Plowden, 10 April 1784, in ibid.
Leonardo Antonelli, head of the Congregation, promised that the American’s would not be forced to accept one.\footnote{Antonelli also figured prominently in the Papacy’s condemnation of the Synod of Pistoia and the French Civil Constitution of the Clergy.} Finally, in 1789, Carroll assembled a synod of Maryland priests in which he was elected Bishop of Baltimore. Carroll sent a letter of communion to the papacy, swearing loyalty to the pope as the head of the Church, and a case of Maryland tobacco for Cardinal Leonardo Borromeo, a member of the Congregation.\footnote{John Carroll to Vitaliano Borromeo, 14 April, 1789.}

Pope Pius VI approved Carroll’s election, and in the summer of 1790, Carroll traveled to England where he was consecrated by the Bishop of London.

It is likely that the Pius VI approved Carroll’s election in 1789 because the outbreak of the French Revolution that same year was a far more pressing concern of the papacy. And, the fact that Carroll was once a Jesuit certainly must have assured Rome that, although the forms of Carroll’s election might have seemed Jansenist, the American church could be considered orthodox, at least in terms of theology. Liturgically, however, Carroll also held views similar to the Jansenists; the Constitution of the Clergy drafted by American priests in 1783 asserted the validity of saying Mass and reading Scripture in English.\footnote{Constitution of the Clergy, 27 June 1783, most of the constitution deals with the property rights of the Catholic estates, which the American clergy claimed belonged to the American church, and not the Vicar-Apostolic.}

By the same token, it seems more than incidental that the right asserted by the Dutch clergy in 1723 to choose and to elect their own Archbishop would be similar to the rights asserted by the French Civil Constitution of the Clergy during the French

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Revolution, and the American Catholic Church following the American War of Independence. Thus, there should be more than a casual connection between the religious public sphere centered on the Church of Utrecht and the development of participatory democratic politics that Jürgen Habermas claimed resulted from the public sphere. That these democratic forms within the Catholic Church did not survive, however, meant that the rise of papal absolutism in the nineteenth century came relatively unchallenged as the papacy, like the absolute monarchs of the seventeenth century, turned the affairs of the church into secrets of the papal household. In this light, perhaps establishing a connection between the end of the Jansenist public sphere and the Catholic Church’s contemporary crisis is not so difficult after all.

Had Jürgen Habermas recognized the development of a religious public sphere, or even acknowledged a positive role played by religion in general, and Catholicism in particular, he would not have been surprised at the dissipation of the religious public sphere in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Habermas claimed that the bourgeois public sphere, as it spread, would also become diluted to the point that it lost its political edge, only to become appropriated by the mass media institutions of the modern capitalist and corporate powers. The public sphere degenerated from a phenomenon of “culture-discussing” to one of mere “culture-consuming.”

It is likely that the religious public sphere followed a similar pattern as that of the bourgeois public sphere, although this study remains to be written.

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13 Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 159.
Nonetheless, neither did Habermas recognize a religious public sphere in his original study, nor did he acknowledge one in later decades. In a subsequent volume to Habermas’s *Structural Transformation*, published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press in 1992, Habermas offered “Further Reflections” on the public sphere, including a number of revisions. Chief among these revisions included an admission that 1) the public sphere was not as bourgeois as he had first argued and 2) he had completely ignored the role of women in the development of the eighteenth-century public sphere, to the overall detriment of his study.\(^14\) Indeed, the only theoretical modification Habermas seemed prepared to make was to give more attention to mitigating emergence of the twentieth-century social-welfare state within which citizens continued to have a private political interest in what Habermas termed a “political public sphere.”\(^15\)

For Habermas, engagement in the public was a necessarily egocentric act; people only had the legitimate authority to speak reasonably about public affairs in which they were privately interested. Religious faith, however, seeks to diminish private and mundane interest. Mircea Eliade defined the pre-modern religious believer (*homo religiosus*) as one for whom there “was an absolute reality, *the sacred*, which transcends this world but manifests itself in this world, thereby sanctifying it and making it real.”\(^16\) Modernity, according to Eliade, entailed a demystification of the transcendent, so that the

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\(^{15}\) Ibid., 441-452.

profane world had a legitimacy by its own accord, and in which for the modern man, “[t]he sacred is the prime obstacle to freedom.” To be sure, Eliade wrote, modern humans reenact vestiges of religious ritual in secular forms, taking a visceral delight in the heroes and myths of the cinema, for example, so that it would seem that the mass consumer culture which Habermas claimed diluted the eighteenth-century public sphere, had also replaced the sacred in the modern world.

The Jansenist public sphere that is the focus of this dissertation offers, at least, a case of what might have been. In other words, the international “Republic of Grace” provides an example for which religiosity and modernity were not only compatible, but necessarily linked. The Jansenist theology of grace that formed an intimate and private realm of faith, analogous to Habermas’s intimate conjugal sphere, provided eighteenth-century Jansenists with an ideological and discursive means by which the individual faithful could both act out of private interest and maintain a connection to the sacred. Moreover, individual grace had the effect of legitimizing the individual in this world (as well as the next) so that the individual became a theological focal point in Jansenist pastoral theology. Like the theology of grace and individual faith and salvation, Jansenist pastoral theology in general, and ecclesiastical history in particular, provided a means through which the empirical of the profane world meshed with the transcendent of the sacred.

17 Ibid., 203. Marcel Gauchet echoed Eliade’s work, calling modernity a “disenchantment” of the world. Moreover, Gauchet viewed this desacralization as particularly acute in Christianity, because the Incarnation meant that the profane world became legitimized by the very act of God becoming man.
The eighteenth century was not only a century of Enlightenment and Revolution, it was a century of religious reform, and indeed a century of the public sphere (or spheres), both religious and secular. Jansenism was not the only religious movement of the century which appealed to the private realm of religious experience: Methodism within English Protestantism, Pietism within German Protestantism, and the Hasidic movement within European Jewry all made appeals to the intimacies of faith. Perhaps these movements as well developed a theology by which the private became public; if so, this dissertation proposes not only a revision of the secular and bourgeois public sphere, but a model by which the religious public sphere becomes as prominent feature of historical scholarship as it was prominent in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolutions.
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