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Jansenists on Civil Toleration in Mid-eighteenth Century France

Philosophes and Jansenists in eighteenth-century France had more in common than they realized. It would seem that, despite their reputation for doctrinal inflexibility, many Jansenists came to believe in civil tolerance of religious dissenters. This hypothesis raises three questions: first, was Jansenist civil tolerance merely an individual and occasional expression of humane sentiment toward oppressed Huguenots or did Jansenist leaders work out an authentic, coherent doctrine of civil tolerance? Second, if they conceived such a doctrine, what prompted them to do it? Third, were they substantially influenced by the writings of the Philosophes or did they remain faithful to basic Jansenist theological principles? Answers to these questions can be found in Jansenist polemic at mid-eighteenth century, ambivalently related to the works of Montesquieu. Prodded by persecution and inspired by compatible currents of enlightened thought, leading Jansenists drew out of their spiritual tradition a conception of civil toleration that was distinct from the Philosophes' and virtually unique among serious French Catholics.¹

The viewpoint of Jansenists on religious dissent is a complex problem. The persecution of non-Catholic Christians seemed remote to Jansenists, who were principally concerned with the reform of moral and dogmatic theology within the Roman Catholic Church. The central, most practical issue agitating Jansenists was their rejection of *Unigenitus*, the early eighteenth-century papal bull condemning Pasquier Quesnel's *Réflexions morales*. Even Jansenists who might have otherwise favored civil tolerance refrained from advocating it rather than appear indifferent to Catholic truth or friendly to Protestantism. Jansenist attitudes nonetheless seem to have undergone a development in mid to late eighteenth century, from the narrowly limited tolerance of the seventeenth century, inherited from Antoine Arnauld and his disciples, to the religious liberty of the constitution of 1791 which most

¹ There is no authoritative general work on 18th-century Jansenism, nor any comprehensive study of Jansenist civil tolerance. E. Préclin, *Les jansénistes du XVIIIème siècle et la constitution civile du clergé*, Paris 1929, is devoted mainly to the development of Richerism.

Jansenists supported.² Moreover, it is sometimes difficult to identify representative eighteenth-century Jansenists among the supporters of civil tolerance. Editors and associates of the weekly journal *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, however, were acknowledged by contemporary friends and enemies to represent in a quasi authoritative manner the viewpoint of the movement.

If Jansenists are compared with other Roman Catholics on religious tolerance, an apparent paradox emerges, to which Jansenists themselves called attention. In theological controversies of the eighteenth century in France, especially with *Philosophes*, the Jansenist journal, *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, presented an intransigent defense of traditional Christian dogmas. The Jesuits were much more supple. Their principal voice, the *Journal de Trévoux*, usually adopted a conciliatory tone and often observed silence rather than appear unduly contentious. Where dogma was not involved, however, Jansenists argued also for practical tolerance. In contrast, the Jesuits as well as most "orthodox" spokesmen asserted the church's traditional canonical principles in favor of coercing religious dissenters.

The roots of Jansenist tolerance lie partly in certain distinctive characteristics of their religious outlook. Jansenist spirituality offered a place where the seeds of tolerance could grow.³ It placed greater emphasis on individual integrity than its Jesuit opposite did. This is expressed, for example, in the Jansenist insistence on contrition as opposed to attrition in the sinner's repentance, as a condition for receiving sacramental absolution. This concern for honesty between a sinner and God could be extended to include a religious dissenter's analogous relationship. A coerced conversion seemed hardly likely to lead to that perfect, loving union with God that Jansenist moral teaching insisted upon. Another significant expression of concern for personal integrity was Jansenist stress on Scripture and liturgy in the vernacular, that is, intelligent assent to God's Word and participation in His mysteries.

Finally, there was a source of tolerance in the Jansenist conception of the church. A purely religious community under a collegial hierar-

² For an important, late phase of this development see Ch. H. O'Brien, *Jansenists and Enlightenment: the Attitude of *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* toward Josephinist Religious Toleration*, *ThZ* 33 (1977), 393-407.

³ For particularly relevant specimens of Jansenist spirituality, see *Edition janséniste de la Bulle Unigenitus (1741)*, in: A. Gazier, *Histoire générale du mouvement janséniste depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris 1924, II, 303-329.

chy lacking even indirect authority over the state's coercive force, the church possesses only spiritual punishments, the most severe being exclusion from its membership. This ecclesiastical model was drawn from the early church of the New Testament and the Fathers, which in principle and in practice seemed less given to summoning the state's power than the contemporary church was.

In the eighteenth century these elements of genuine Christian Humanism were slowly fused in the consciousness of Jansenists by the persecution that followed upon their rejection of *Unigenitus*. By mid-century the French hierarchy had been largely purged of philo-Jansenists. Despite differences springing from Gallicanism, the bishops were generally at one with the Jesuits and the Papacy in upholding *Unigenitus*. Although not yet obvious to all, the only recourse open to Jansenists was to persuade the educated laity and the civil authorities to tolerate peaceful religious dissent and to oblige the hierarchy to desist from forcing compliance with ultramontane ecclesiastical regulations. "Humanistic" implications of the Jansenists' spiritual outlook, however, were hard to reconcile with the concern that they shared with orthodox Catholics for God's honor and for the salvation of souls threatened by heresy or incredulity. Due to their peculiar perspective, moreover, Jansenists were likely to experience strong inner repugnance to a policy such as civil tolerance which smacked of compromise at the expense of truth. It was sometime, therefore, before they realized that their predicament in France resembled significantly that of the Huguenots, a small, virtually powerless, and legally prohibited minority.

What served most effectively to bring this reality home to Jansenists was the notorious attempt by Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, to pursue Jansenists on their deathbed by means of the *billet de confession*. From June 1749, when the Holy Viaticum was denied to Charles Coffin, a well-known Jansenist and former rector of the University of Paris, until 1756, when an uneasy peace was established by king and pope, the country was either outraged or amused by "macabre" incidents, popular tumult and legal actions against the clergy carrying out Beaumont's policy.⁴ The religious issue was exacerbated as it became entangled with simultaneous controversies between the privileged orders and the Crown over Machault's financial reforms and

⁴ J. McManners, *Jansenism and Politics in the Eighteenth Century*, in: *Church, Society and Politics: Studies in Church History*, vol. 12, ed. by D. Baker, Oxford 1975, p. 271.

between the Crown and the *Parlement* of Paris over the latter's claim to jurisdiction in the external affairs of the church.

Prodded by the archbishop, Jansenists were at the same time enticed toward civil tolerance by a *Philosophe*: Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*, published in November 1748, reached Jansenist readers just as the crisis mounted. Their expressed, initial reaction to the book was quite hostile. Stressing the naturalistic implications of the author's view on religion, their official journal, *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, accused him of thinly veiled contempt for Christianity: he was "a partisan of the religion of nature."⁵ The editor, Abbé Fontaine de la Roche, supported this invective with theological argument, convicting the author of heresy. The Jansenist attack was sometimes captious but close enough to the mark to force Montesquieu to defend himself publically.

Virtually obscured by the dust of this controversy over natural religion was a curious reticence by the journal with regard to Montesquieu's chapters on religious tolerance. Among the best known passages in the book, they caught the gimlet-eyed attention of all of the book's other ecclesiastical critics. Opposing Montesquieu's principle, "the Deity must be honored and never avenged", orthodox Catholics asserted that the state should continue to punish sacrilege and blasphemy.⁶ They objected also to Montesquieu's absolute, unrestricted condemnation of all penal legislation in religious matters.⁷ In contrast, *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* let these points pass without remark.⁸ We must inquire, therefore, whether the journal avoided these issues deliberately and, if so, for what reasons.

It would appear that *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* chose deliberately not to criticize the arguments of *Esprit des lois* against tolerance. The Jansenist journal did not ignore all of Montesquieu's passages on toler-

⁵ *Nouv. eccl.*, Oct. 9 and 16, 1749; Apr. 24 and May 1, 1750, repr. in: *Œuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. by Laboulaye, Paris 1879, VI, 115–137; 209–237.

⁶ *Journal de Trévoux*, Apr. 1749, ed. Laboulaye, 103–104, dealing with *Esprit*, 12, Ch. 4. For G. G. Bottari's report to the Congregation of the Index, March 1750, as well as the Sorbonne's proposal (1752), concerning the same point, see Ch.-J. Beyer, *Montesquieu et la censure religieuse de l'Esprit*, *RSHum* 69 (1953), 108.

⁷ *Journal de Trévoux*, 111–112, dealing with *Esprit* 25, Ch. 12.

⁸ P. Kra, *Religion in Montesquieu's Lettres persanes*, Geneva 1970, p. 36, asserts erroneously that *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, like *Journal de Trévoux*, attacked *Esprit*, 12, Ch. 4.

ation. It quoted virtually the whole of chapters 9 and 10, in Book 25, where the author established the fundamental principle of legislation concerning religion: if a ruler is free to decide whether or not to allow a new religion into his country, he should not permit it to be introduced. Once established, he should tolerate it.⁹ *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* ignored the text's *politique* reasoning in favor of tolerance, singling out for explicit criticism only its intolerant implications for the introduction of Christianity into a pagan country. Needless to say, it was not for want of space that the journal made this distinction. It devoted four issues to *Esprit des lois*, four times as much space as *Journal de Trévoux* did. Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* had good reasons for not attacking Montesquieu's views in favor of toleration.

In the absence of documentary evidence we might profitably conjecture from the Jansenist set of mind in the circumstances of 1749. The crisis over the *billets de confession* had broken out in earnest. While the editor of *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, Fontaine de la Roche, was presumably wrestling with *Esprit des lois*, his colleague Charles Coffin was being denied the Holy Viaticum. It surely seemed inappropriate to Jansenists for their journal to argue against civil toleration.

If the above suppositions are correct, why did not the editor of *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* register approval of Montesquieu's tolerance rather than remain silent about it? The answer lies perhaps in the nature of the polemic practiced by the journal with modern enemies of the faith; it employed denunciation rather than dialogue. It considered *Esprit des lois* a lightly disguised, anti-Christian tract in support of natural religion, all the more dangerous because of the author's great prestige. His malicious intentions were easily detected in the light of what he had expressed in the *Lettres persanes*.¹⁰ The editor must have felt that the force of his attack would be weakened by attempting to isolate nicely the acceptable propositions of *Esprit des lois* from their malignant context.

On subsequent occasions, other Jansenist authors could and would draw from the book whatever they believed might support their point of view. Detached from Montesquieu's naturalistic presuppositions, many passages in *Esprit des lois* were susceptible of a Christian inter-

⁹ Oct. 16, 1749, ed. Laboulaye, 135–136.

¹⁰ Examen critique, ed. Laboulaye, 117.

pretation. Even Montesquieu's theological enemies, therefore, would be tempted to try to exploit the book's great popularity. The Jansenist appropriation of his ideas, moreover, was made somewhat easier by Montesquieu himself. Provoked by *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques'* attack, he published in 1750, *Défense de l'esprit des loix*. Even though it failed to satisfy the Jansenist journal or to ward off condemnation by the papal Congregation of the Index, it could be taken as a step in the right direction. His widely reported reconciliation with the church on his deathbed in 1755 was another such step, even though he refused to retract his expressed opinions. Finally, the posthumous edition of his works (Paris 1757; Amsterdam 1758) contained numerous, if insubstantial corrections of "tainted" passages, as well as explicit recognition of Christianity's superiority over other religions. Referring to Book 25, Ch. 10, for example, he remarked that he did not advocate excluding the Christian religion from pagan countries.

Montesquieu's name could be better received by Jansenists in the 1750s because it was associated with the institution of *Parlement*, the several high courts of France. Although he had sold his seat in the *Parlement* of Bordeaux, he continued to be recognized as "le Président de Montesquieu."¹¹ *Parlement* included but a small number of Jansenists, but its view of church-state relations was similar to theirs. For that reason, after initial hesitation, it came to regard *Unigenitus* as an ultramontane usurpation of civil jurisdiction. By 1750, *Parlement* was inclined to support Jansenist resistance to the bull. In the conflict over the *billets de confession* the *Parlement* of Paris contended that the archbishop had intruded into its jurisdiction. It indicted clergy who attempted to demand *billets de confession* from dying Jansenists. This policy merged with other issues to bring *Parlement* into conflict with the king. Under influence of the *dévot* party he exiled *Parlement* on February 22, 1753. But he soon changed his mind. On October 8, 1753, he issued the *loi de silence*, a compromise consistent with guidelines in a *mémoire* that he received from Montesquieu.¹²

¹¹ J. Tailhié and G.-N. Maulrot, *Questions sur la tolérance chrétienne* (1758), II, 18, repr. under the title, *Essai sur la tolérance chrétienne* (1760). Further references to this tract will be incorporated in the text.

¹² This *Mémoire sur la constitution unigenitus* belonged to the collection of mss. at La Brède; it was first published in: *Mélanges inédits*, 1892. I use the version printed in *Œuvres Complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. by A. Masson (Paris 1950–1955), III, 471–476. Masson dates the *Mémoire* to 1753, prior to the king's recall of *Parlement*.

Although this *mémoire* remained perhaps unknown to Jansenists, it expressed their eclectic affinity with its author. As far as the natural order was concerned, they largely shared the *mémoire's* basic political assumption, "the welfare of the state is the highest law." They could agree with Montesquieu that it had resolved the struggle in the sixteenth-century between Catholics and Huguenots. His *mémoire* applies the principle to the contemporary controversy in France over the hierarchy's use of *billets de confession*, which Montesquieu considers a serious distraction to the orderly conduct of public affairs. Since the contending factions are too well-established to be rooted out, he urges a policy of royal toleration. Montesquieu adopts the common distinction between theological or "internal" tolerance, which a Catholic must oppose, and external tolerance, which circumstances may justify. In the present conflict between enemies and partisans of *Unigenitus* the king should practice external tolerance, while remaining internally intolerant. To restore peace to the kingdom Montesquieu recommends that the king order "complete silence in these matters." Montesquieu argues that the king can never be obliged in conscience to penal legislation against either of the two contending parties. Since the issues are so confused, it is impossible to say that either one faction or the other is separated from the Catholic Church. Montesquieu concludes that it seems best not to take sides.

Montesquieu proposes as a compromise that the king declare *Unigenitus* to have been "received" in France, February 14, 1714. Hence, all disputes should cease. Any violation of this official silence will be regarded as disturbing the peace, strictly a matter for the police. Applying the law to hypothetical cases, Montesquieu explains that, if a sick man declares he will not "receive" the bull, he disturbs the peace. The same crime is committed by a curé who asks a sick man if he "receives" the bull.

The silence recommended by Montesquieu and adopted by the king worked chiefly to the advantage of the persecuted Jansenists.¹³ How far Montesquieu himself was from sympathizing with them, however, can be detected in an extra, concluding bit of advice that he offered the king. The higher positions in the church, Montesquieu contended, are better given to enlightened noblemen than to ignorant ecclesiastics from the lower classes, who find it easier to distinguish themselves by fiery

¹³ Préclin (n.1), pp.247 ss.

enthusiasm than by enlightened understanding and prudence. Even if Jansenists did not read this *mémoire*, they could detect its principles in Book 25, Ch.9, of *Esprit des lois* (1748): “The laws must require of diverse religions, not only that they do not trouble the state but also that they do not trouble one another.” Jansenists who accommodated inwardly to the *loi de silence* and, consciously or not, accepted Montesquieu’s reasoning, were preparing themselves to take an important step toward a modern idea of tolerance.

This step took place in the tract, *Questions sur la tolérance chrétienne*.¹⁴ It was the first significant attempt by eighteenth-century Jansenist authors to establish a Christian rationale for civil tolerance, drawing upon writings of the Philosophes but without compromising the Faith.¹⁵ The tract was occasioned, not only by Beaumont’s persecution of Jansenists but also by a simultaneous controversy over the civil status of Protestants in France. Military and fiscal pressures of the War of the Austrian Succession persuaded the royal government to abate the harsh repression of Huguenots undertaken during Cardinal Fleury’s administration. Saint-Florentin, Secretary of State of the *Maison du Roi*, advised intendants to permit common Protestants to meet in the “desert” and in private homes.

Public opinion generally supported the milder policy. An anonymous tract by Turgot, Master of Requests, even advocated granting civil recognition to Protestant marriages. The French bishops, however, demanded continued rigor. Their counter-attack was launched by the widely publicized *Lettre de M. L’Evêque d’Agen à M. le Contrôleur General contre la tolérance des Huguenots dans le royaume*, May 1, 1751, and furthered by Abbé Jean Novi de Caveirac with several tracts.¹⁶

¹⁴ S. n.11 above.

¹⁵ It was preceded by “Catholic” tracts arguing for tolerance, such as Abbé Yvon’s, *Liberté de conscience, resserrée dans des bornes légitimes*, 3 vols., London 1754, which reflect the perspective of a Philosophe rather than a Christian. Cf. philo-Jansenist tracts in favor of creating a legal status for Protestant marriages: J. Besoigne, *Réponse à une Dissertation contre les mariages clandestins des Protestants de France* (1756); R. de Monclar and Abbé Quesnel, *Mémoire théologique et politique au sujet des mariages clandestins des Protestants de France* (1755–1756).

¹⁶ Published anonymously, they include *Dissertation sur la tolérance des Protestants*... (n.p. 1755); *Mémoire politico-critique, où l’on examine s’il est de l’intérêt de l’Eglise et de l’Etat d’établir pour les Calvinistes du Royaume une nouvelle forme de se marier*... (n.p. 1756); and *Apologie de Louis XIV et de son conseil sur la Révocation de l’Edit de Nantes*... (n.p. 1758).

The Jansenist tract, *Questions sur la tolérance chrétienne*, represents an enlightened Catholic rejoinder; its author recognized that many of the philosophical as well as legal issues raised by the reforms pertained also to his cause.

Generally attributed jointly to Abbé Jacques Tailhié and to Gabriel-Nicolas Maulrot, the tract is consistent with the former's other writings but it reflects primarily the layman's culture of the latter.¹⁷ Since 1733 an *avocat* in the *Parlement* of Paris, Maulrot was an expert in canon law. His Jansenist credentials were impeccable. His necrologue in *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* (1803), virtually an affidavit of fidelity, lists several tracts in the 1750s opposed to *Unigenitus* and to Beaumont's refusal of the sacraments to Jansenists, as well as works in favor of the rights of the lower clergy and the Gallican Church.¹⁸ Closely associated with the journal, he served on its editorial advisory council under Abbé de Saint Marc, Fontaine de la Roche's successor. The collaborative effort by Tailhié and Maulrot in favor of Christian tolerance created a considerable stir. Both editions were condemned by the Congregation of the Index, the first, March 5, 1759, and the second, May 8, 1761.

The first of the tract's two parts argues for tolerance on the basis of natural law; the second, on politically pragmatic grounds. The author expresses a conception of natural law akin to Locke's in the *Second Treatise of Government*.¹⁹ The legitimate self-interest of human beings,

¹⁷ Catalogue général des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale: Auteurs (Paris 1953), CLXXXI, 917–919, has the most complete bibliography of Tailhié's work. His tract, *Remarques succinctes et pacifiques sur les écrits pour et contre la loi de silence*, Paris 1760, offers the clearest indication of his Jansenist convictions. Little is known of his life (1702–1778). A native of Villeneuve-sur-Lot, he was a fervent disciple of Charles Rollin, a distinguished historian, who supported the cause of the early Appellants.

¹⁸ Maulrot (1714–1803) lacks an adequate biography. "Il fut tout dévoué au parti janséniste," according to J. Carreyre, *Maulrot*, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris 1928) X, 399–402, a study informed by ultramontane bias. The most extensive treatment of Maulrot is in Préclin (n. 1), 333–362 et passim, which is wholly inadequate concerning Maulrot's intellectual background and formative influences, his relationship to the Enlightenment and his role in the controversy over religious toleration in France. Sympathetic biographies include the necrologues in *Nouv. eccl.*, May 10 and 24, 1803, and *Annales de la Religion*, Nov. 1802, XVI, 542–549.

¹⁹ Locke is not among the several authors, including Montesquieu, Hobbes, Pufendorf, Bayle, et al., whom Maulrot cites or quotes. Nor is there any other evidence in the tract of direct literary or philosophical dependence on Locke. In virtue of similar views of the state of nature, however, the French Jansenist and the English Latitudinarian define the jurisdictions of church and state so as to forbid any violation of the integrity of the

asserts the Jansenist, obliges each of them to agree to respect the possessions of others. The peace of society and the security of each person's life and property rest on this tacit convention. Its violation throws individuals back into a state of war, each one defending his own possessions. Talents and property are distributed unequally among men, but the right to them is equal and inviolable. In accordance with this right the author distinguishes parenthetically the "polite" or civilized man from the "barbarian." The former refrains from injuring or disturbing another person; the latter compels another person to do what revolts him. Civilized behavior springs from an enlightened sense of one's own self-interest (I, 7).²⁰

Every act of intolerance, persecution or religious constraint breaks this mutual agreement among men, putting society back into a state of war (I, 8). Individuals recover the right to reassert their pretensions. Mutual respect does not mean, the author carefully points out, that belief is an indifferent matter. A civilized person may be convinced that his opinion is the most reasonable or even the only true one, but he refrains from dispute about religion. Recurring frequently in the tract, this critique of religious disputation perhaps alludes to the *loi de silence* (I, 9).²¹ It might be directed against Jansenists arguing in favor of continued attack on the bull in defiance of the royal prohibition.

Mutual tolerance is founded on the natural law's maxim of the Golden Rule, a self-evident truth, a basic principle of "natural religion." According to the author, natural religion offers a feeble but divine light guiding even the most savage nations. It also includes a noble instinct that sometimes precedes reasoning, whose outward expression is "humanity," an attitude consisting of loyalty and generosity toward other human beings. The author infers that mutual tolerance is produced by the working of the light of natural religion upon this humane instinct. Furthermore, since revealed religion subsumes rather

individual conscience. Locke's affinity to Jansenism can be observed in his translation (ca. 1677), *On the Way of Preserving Peace*, in: *Discourses: Translated from Pierre Nicole's Essais de Morale*, London, 1828. Maultrot is hostile to Hobbes; cf. the tract's oblique attack (I, 90) on Leviathan's principle of unlimited sovereign power, "a system for courtiers."

²⁰ Cf. the same distinction between "policés" and "barbares" in the last sentence of *Esprit*, 25, Ch. 13.

²¹ See also I, 28/29 and II, 42. Cf. Tailhié's *Remarques succinctes*, published shortly after *Questions sur la tolérance chrétienne*.

than negates natural religion, it also must accept the principle of mutual tolerance. The author works out a free adaptation of the right to possess property, extending it to include religious opinions.²² “I dare to put religion among the most precious possessions,” he declares, “I base this right not on the truth of my religion but on the fact that it is mine, on the principle of equality, the common basis of all rights” (I, 16). Hence, he concludes, sovereigns do not have the right to force their religion upon their subjects.

The tract draws out a further implication, directly relevant to an enlightened Catholic conception of toleration. The true religion, asserts the author, has no more right to persecute the false ones than vice versa, or even less, since grace renders the use of constraint less useful. To earn the right to persecute, he contends, a religion must prove, not that it is the true one but that true religion may persecute (I, 19).²³ On grounds of natural law and, implicitly, Jansenist ecclesiology, he strips the church of the indirect coercive power claimed for it by orthodox canonists, reason enough to put the tract on the *Index of Forbidden Books*. Purely religious acts, such as assembling for prayer, are not criminal, he argues, if they do not injure anyone or offend against common standards of decency. That a false religion claims to be true is no reason for persecution.

The author applies natural law to the chief internal problem afflicting the eighteenth-century French Church, the “schism” provoked by *Unigenitus*. Schism is a sin rather than a crime, he contends. A revolt against ecclesiastical authority, it should be punished only by ecclesiastical penalties. Civil authority is not competent to judge whether ecclesiastical authority is legitimate or not. Nor can it determine which side is responsible for schism. Once religious conflict has broken out, the only way to establish peace is to apply the natural law’s principle of equality of right. While prohibiting verbal as well as physical violence, the state should allow all parties in the dispute to maintain their

²² In: *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett (ed.), 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1967, Locke uses “property” in a similarly wide sense, to include not only physical possessions but also life and liberty; cf. the *locus classicus*, II, sec. 123. Locke implies agreement with contemporaries like Richard Baxter that the Protestant religion was their “property.”

²³ The Jansenist author’s position is very close to Locke’s. Cf. J. Locke, *A Letter on Toleration*, ed. by Klibansky and Gough, Oxford 1968, p. 83: “Even if it could be made clear which of those who disagree held the right religious opinions, that would not confer upon the orthodox church any right of destroying the others.”

respective opinions. They may continue to reject what they consider to be erroneous views, but they must honor the rights of the persons holding them (I, 29). This line of argument is virtually repeated in Tailhié's proposal for complying with the *loi de silence*, elaborated shortly afterwards in 1760 in the tract, *Remarques succinctes et pacifiques sur les écrits pour et contre la loi du silence*. It is also consistent with Montesquieu's principle in *Esprit des lois*, cited above, that religious groups should not disturb either the state or one another.

The author immediately acknowledges that the principle which he has just invoked for the benefit of persecuted dissenters within the Roman Catholic Church applies as well to any religious group which the state chooses to tolerate. Among "persecutors" the author includes those controversialists of the dominant religion who attack a tolerated religion immoderately or with bitterness, as well as those prominent persons who practice intimidation on dissenters of inferior rank. To inoculate respect for the natural rights of men, the tract suggests establishing public schools in France and encouraging literary works from which "all the sects might draw the common principles of humanity and of sociability" (I, 39). In the optimistic spirit of the Enlightenment the author believes that tolerance can and should be taught.

The Jansenist tract's close affinity to contemporary enlightened thought becomes even more evident in the second part of Part I. In a chapter exposing the excesses of the Inquisition the author alludes frequently to Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*, Book 25, Ch. 13, "Remonstrance to the Inquisitors of Spain and Portugal" (I, 48–61). It purports to be written by a Jew, inspired by the burning of an eighteen-year old Jewess at recent auto-da-fé in Lisbon. The Jansenist contends that inquisitors can indeed discover that a person is in error, but God alone can judge whether the error deserves punishment. In support of this enlightened chain of reasoning, however, the author draws upon the testimony of the Early Christian Church, for sentiments which Montesquieu justifies with an appeal to our common humanity. Citing the early fourth-century Christian apologist, Lactantius, the author states that indiscreet zeal pollutes and violates religion (I, 54).²⁴ Echoing Tertullian, the early third-century Latin Church Father, the Jansenist declares that "he lacks religion who forces another person to profess a religion in which he does not believe" (I, 54).²⁵

²⁴ Cf. *Esprit*, 25, Ch. 13, last two paragraphs.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.* "vous voulez que nous soyons chrétiens et vous ne voulez pas l'être."

Paraphrasing *Esprit des lois*, the tract asserts that the orthodox persecutor should extend to heretics the same tolerance that he demands for Christians from the Emperor of China or Japan (I, 53).²⁶ The author cites the Jesuits, Mariana and Maimbourg, against forced conversions, as well as Pierre Bayle's *Commentaire philosophique* on the Scriptural text, Luke 14:23, "Compel them to enter." For the first time the Jansenist explicitly refers to Montesquieu: "Does not humanity alone tell the Inquisitors the most pathetic and touching truths which M. de Montesquieu put into the mouth of a Jew?" (I, 59). The Jansenist then quotes a paragraph which lends itself to an enlightened Catholic theological argument for tolerance, the example of Christ: "We implore you to act toward us as He would act, if He were still upon earth" (I, 60). The ironical overtone of Montesquieu's paragraph does not disappear, but it is weakened in its new context.

The tract attempts to sketch the origins and progress of persecution, "that barbaric prejudice" among Christians. It complains that only Christians persecute others systematically and are likewise persecuted by others. The author lets pass the opportunity to attribute this Christian fault, as a *Philosophe* would have done, to the essential spirit of Christianity. The sources of Christian intolerance, the author insinuates, are first the early Christian emperors' legislation against paganism, which set the example for laws against heretics. Second, Christians adopted the erroneous view of coercion held by some churchmen. Ignoring the strictly spiritual nature of the Church, Augustine and other "pious" bishops asked rulers to coerce those who refused to submit to ecclesiastical authority. Hence, the temporal and the spiritual powers became confused, the *lex gentium* was neglected and the evangelical maxims of gentleness were relaxed.

The author condemns several classic examples of Christian intolerance, imputing them chiefly to political ambition. In ch.19, from the vantage point of a native of southern France, Tailhié (presumably) touches critically upon the Albigensian crusade. He condemns the self-serving efforts of the Montfort faction to vilify the tolerance practiced by the enlightened Catholic prince, Count Raymond of Toulouse. The following chapter is devoted to an historical indictment of the Spanish Inquisition. That barbaric court functioned in glaring contrast to the honorable rules of the early Christian Council of Toledo for the con-

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, third paragraph.

version of infidels. The author stresses that the Inquisition punished good faith and rewarded hypocrisy among the Moors and forced many useful subjects of the Spanish Monarchs to leave the country. On similar grounds the author next condemns the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV in 1685. Sparing the person of the king, the author vents his wrath on the Royal Court. Reflecting once more a close, sympathetic reading of Book 25 of *Esprit des lois*, the Jansenist ascribes the persecution of Huguenots to Hobbes' system of unchecked exercise of authority, to hypocritical profession of the prince's religion, to indiscreet zeal of courtiers and to "a kind of pedantry in the administration" (I, 90–92). Probably written by Maultrot, this critique of the French Crown's intolerance reflects his adherence to certain secular ideals of the Enlightenment as well as to the *parlementaire* conception of limited, constitutional government.

In contrast to the Court's harsh suppression of the Huguenots, the author proposes a humane alternative inspired by Montesquieu's opinion that the best way to attack a religion is to seduce its adherents with favors rather than to persecute them. The Jansenist quotes from Book 25, Ch. 12, the paragraph where Montesquieu argues against penal laws in religious matters (I, 92–93).²⁷ A comparison of Montesquieu's text with its adaptation in the tract reveals that they agree on the basic issue. The Jansenist accepts also Montesquieu's reasoning from history that such legislation has always been destructive, which the Jansenist illustrates with the Revocation's negative effects.

There are, however, important differences in the texts. Their psychological arguments against penal legislation are dissimilar. From a purely political vantage point Montesquieu concerns himself with irrational forces in religion which might threaten sound civic order. He argues that religion inspires a special kind of fear through its "great threats" and its "great promises." If the prince enacts penal legislation against a sect, he instills in effect a competing fear. "Torn between these two different fears," Montesquieu observes, "souls undergo unbearable suffering." In such cases penal legislation inspires either hypocritical submission or fanatical resistance to the laws of the prince, neither of which benefits the state.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, the paragraph from "il est plus sûr d'attaquer une religion par la faveur" to "les invitations sont plus fortes que les peines."

The Jansenist author ignores Montesquieu's line of reasoning, although there is no reason in principle to object to it. He chooses a psychological argument better suited to the purpose of developing a Christian rationale for religious tolerance. Instead of fear, he proposes the example of love within nature. "One should imitate nature," he argues, "by contenting oneself with imperceptible but continued progress." Religious dissenters like the Huguenots, the author infers, should not be confronted with peremptory commands to convert to the dominant religion. The nature of the human psyche prevents them from complying honestly, for it forms only gradually the basic dispositions prerequisite to conversion. Moreover, such a command ignores a fundamental principle of human motivation: one should not demand from the reason of men what can be obtained more easily from their passions. The author explains this principle by an analogy with nature. "Nature does not tell you haughtily to do this or that duty," he declares, "it engages your interest or your pleasure. Then you obey without difficulty."

In the Jansenist text the words "interest" and "pleasure" and "passion" allude primarily to the natural attractiveness of the true religion. They lack the worldly, rather base connotations in the assertion of *Esprit des lois* that a religion can be attacked more effectively "by favor, by the comforts of life, by the hope of fortune." Montesquieu's proposal would reduce or kill the zeal of Huguenots and other dissenters; it would not bring about their conversion to Catholicism.

This exegesis, I believe, is confirmed by the function of the Jansenist reference to nature as a philosophical analogue to the theological principle which immediately follows. "Does not grace," asks the Jansenist, "act in an analogous manner in order to bring back those in error or sin? Does it not employ that *délectation victorieuse*, which draws the will without constraining it?" Since the seventeenth century, the term *délectation victorieuse* served virtually as a Jansenist password.²⁸ Taken by Bishop Jansenius from St. Augustine, it is synonymous with *délectation céleste* in contrast to *délectation terrestre*. In this tract it means that God wins our love by His countless favors, thereby gaining our free, uncoerced obedience.

After this theological passage the author criticizes again the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. It should have been resisted more vig-

²⁸ J. Carreyre, *Grace*, DTC, Paris 1924, VIII, 400–402.

orously by the *Parlements*, he argues, and approved less ardently by the clergy. The magistrates ought to have concerned themselves with the constitutional issue. It is most likely Maultrot who writes: "what a breach was made in the constitution, of which they are the custodians, and in the rights and liberty of subjects" (I, 96). The clergy should have realized, continues the author, that they would receive the blame for this crime and all the evil that it caused. "Nothing could render a more evil service to religion" (I, 96). It was easy to foresee, he explains, that forced conversions would subsequently impede genuine ones and that persecution would supply grist for the mill of Protestant clergy throughout Europe. Finally, for those readers genuinely concerned about God's honor, the author calls attention to the consciences forced by persecution to commit sacrilege by receiving the sacraments unworthily.

This lengthy indictment of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and Louis XIV's persecution of the Protestants serves as the author's transition from the first to the second part of the tract, that is, from arguments for tolerance based on principles of natural law and Holy Scripture, to those drawn from considerations of political utility. In the second part he contends mainly that it is contrary to the self-interest of sovereigns to recognize the principles of religious intolerance.

Although he draws heavily again upon Montesquieu's works, the Jansenist author nonetheless continues to develop a Christian rationale for civil tolerance. In *Grandeur des Romains*, published by Montesquieu in 1734, the Jansenist discovers that Islam penetrated the Eastern Roman Empire through those provinces most severely ravaged by Justinian's persecution of religious dissidents. The author's explanation of their violent disaffection seems inspired by the psychological theory of conflicting fears that he ignored in his analysis of *Esprit des lois*, Book 25, Ch. 12. There is a significant discrepancy, however, in the respective texts concerning Justinian's motives. Montesquieu attributes the emperor's persecution of heretics in Egypt and Syria to the religious fanaticism springing from his passion for uniformity and orthodoxy in Christian faith.²⁹ The Jansenist author ascribes the same persecution simply to a crude scheme by Justinian for the economic exploitation of the provinces (II, 27).

²⁹ Œuvres (1758), III, 502, in: Montesquieu, ed. Masson, vol. 1. The Jansenist author cites *Grandeur des Romains*, Ch. 20, for Justinian's intolerance, and Ch. 16, for Charlemagne's; he also refers to Ch. 14, for a brief explanation of the psychological origins of intolerance.

This alteration of Montesquieu's version of Justinian's intolerance reflects a Jansenist perplexity in accounting for Christian "fanaticism." The circle of Jansenists directing *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* held fanaticism to be an evil fruit of false zeal, shaped by perverse principles and nourished by self-love. They honored religious enthusiasm when they thought that it sprang from true faith and was moved by divine grace. For example, led by Fontaine de la Roche, they cautiously defended the austere life of the saintly deacon, François de Pâris, as well as the controversial miracles which took place at his grave early in the eighteenth century in the cemetery of Saint-Médard. Out of respect for genuine zeal, they shied away from any simplistic use of "fanaticism" in order to account for intolerance among the defenders of Christian orthodoxy. Maultrot's analysis expresses a discretion born of this concern. He acknowledges "zèle indiscret" or "prejugé barbare" among Christians but he stops far short of the Philosophes' imputation of fanaticism to Christianity as such. Maultrot finds the chief roots of fanaticism in man's political ambition and love of power. This emphasis on a universal human evil is not only consistent with Augustinian views on the corruptive effects of Original Sin, it also safeguards the mark of holiness, which must characterize Christ's church.

To ensure respect for equality of rights among men, as well as to preserve the foundations of society, the Jansenist author adopts Montesquieu's conception of checks and balances among the chief political institutions of a country. If rulers are given unlimited authority by the laws, they will abuse it, provoking a proportionately dangerous reaction among the persons on whom that power is exercised (I, 16). Maultrot illustrates this law of social dynamics with the example of the tribunate in the Roman Republic, drawn from Ch. 14 of *Grandeur des Romains*. The predominance which this office gave to leaders of the plebians provoked the rise of Sulla and the patricians. Moreover, the tribunate's unlimited power to raise the accusation of *lèse-majesté* was usurped by the emperors. They made it the model of the laws of persecution, which punished words and thoughts as well as acts. The author clearly shares Montesquieu's aversion to absolute divine-right monarchy, inclined by its nature to intolerance and other abuses of power. Maultrot's conclusion reflects a perspective that combines the *thèse parlementaire* with natural law philosophy: "Everything which dispenses the legislator from the forms of law and from observing the

principle of equality places society in a state of war where crimes lose their name" (II, 23).

The tract raises parenthetically a question, which it leaves largely to the reader to answer. Why did not Christianity, which abolished other barbaric customs, put an end to the laws and principles of persecution? To sharpen the issue the author asserts that Christians have gone so far as to make persecution's cruelties the subject of "tranquil deliberation" and to commit them "in cold blood" (II, 25). If he shared Maultrot's Richerist perspective, the reader would most likely reply, that authority in the church has become improperly concentrated in the Roman Curia and its partisans, who have lost sight of its preeminently spiritual character. Hence they have adopted the coercive methods of secular rulers in order to put down dissent.

Persecution not only undermines the foundations of social peace, it also puts princes themselves in danger. According to the Jansenist author, history demonstrates and Pierre Bayle has proven invincibly that, "once the constraint of faith is admitted, the consequences are no less dreadful for sovereigns than for subjects" (II, 29). For, if coercion is acknowledged to be "holy" and "useful" in a good cause, it can lead a fanatic to regicide. The Jansenist adds that religious tolerance also injures princes by interfering with sound government. It inhibits the selection of generals and governors on the sole basis of their competence. With Byzantine examples from *Grandeur des Romains*, the Jansenist points out that tolerance also diverts governments from the political problems, which they should address, to theological disputes, which they should presumably leave to the clergy (II, 33).³⁰ Identifying himself as a layman, Maultrot points out that the sword of persecution is two-edged; it can be turned against the clergy, as well as against heretics. Therefore, it is not in the clergy's interest to provoke the prince to persecute.

From this pragmatic reasoning Maultrot moves back to the level of principle, where he appears to adopt the Jansenist stress on the integrity of the individual conscience. He calls upon the clergy to abandon its traditional inclination, when confronted by dissent, to render merely lip-service to religious liberty while relying upon the coercive power of the ruler. Maultrot insists, the clergy should instead defend "the sacred rights of conscience." As God's minister, and subject only to Him, it

³⁰ Maultrot cites *Grandeur des Romains*, Ch. 22.

should secure the true obedience and the interior worship that human beings owe to Him. “Interpreter of the Most High,” declares the author, “the clergy is placed at the entrance to the sanctuary of conscience in order to prevent at the risk of its life the kings themselves from profaning it” (II, 35). The Jansenist chides the clergy of England in the sixteenth century for failing to oppose Henry VIII, “the most intolerant of men,” who persecuted in matters of conscience and doctrine.³¹

This duty of the clergy to protect the integrity of the human conscience marks a significant exception in Maultrot’s *parlementaire* system of church-state relations. In external affairs, he held that the church should generally be subordinate to the state, particularly to the authority of the high courts of justice. This conviction was surely strengthened by recent events. The judges had used their superior authority in order to prevent Archbishop Christophe de Beaumont from depriving dying Jansenists of the last rites of the church. If defense of the rights of conscience was to be meaningful, however, the clergy must have some freedom of action in public. By citing the despotism of Henry VIII Maultrot clearly implies that the clergy should offer an effective opposition to violations of religious liberty. His critique of Louis XIV’s persecution of Huguenots also indicates that the clergy’s duty was not limited to defending the rights of Catholics but extended to all men. Contrary to the opinion of ultramontane critics, Maultrot was mindful of the true rights of the church, as well as opposed to any form of unchecked sovereign authority.³² Principles which he enunciates in this tract of 1758 served thirty-three years later to justify his opposition to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and to the Revolution’s persecution of the non-juring clergy.³³

Together with the *Parlements* and the other “Orders of the State,” continues Maultrot, the clergy should demand mercy rather than rigor,

³¹ Maultrot returns to the intolerance of Henry VIII in: *Comparaison de la Réformation de France avec celle d’Angleterre*, Paris 1791, p. 30, offering as an example the execution of Thomas More.

³² A careful reading of the tract of 1758 would seem to undermine Carreyre’s implausible argument: “C’est à partir de ce moment (1789–1790) que Maultrot aperçoit les conséquences désastreuses de ses thèses sur la constitution de l’Eglise,” *DTC*, X (1928), 399. Maultrot believed that the disaster was caused by the hierarchy’s opposition to an authentic reform of the church prior to the revolution.

³³ Maultrot’s opposition to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy is expressed in his tract, *Comparaison de la constitution de l’église catholique avec la constitution de la nouvelle église de France*, Paris 1792. See also Préclin (n. 1), pp. 498–500.

“even for the erring.” This ironic reference to the clergy alludes to the French hierarchy’s campaign against civil tolerance of the Protestants. Attacking a traditional source of ecclesiastical intolerance, Maultrot contends that the notorious canon of the Fourth Lateran Council against heretics, as well as against sovereigns who refused to exterminate them, is no longer binding. A departure from “ancient discipline,” it was probably never valid. In any case, the Jansenist thinks, today it is harmful to religion, “since the spiritual outlook of people is entirely different from what it used to be”³⁴ (II, 39). With a slightly modernist accent the author reasons that the church should conform its discipline and legislation to the progress of civilization. Like certain Jewish laws in the Old Testament, he points out, the laws of persecution were permitted among Christians by God because of the hardness of their hearts. Now, the Jansenist concludes, since social customs have become gentle, intolerant laws cannot be allowed to continue.

Anticipating nineteenth-century Liberal Catholicism on another point, the author believes that religious liberty would benefit the church. Its disputes with other religious groups would nurture the growth of great theologians, critics and leaders. The field, however, must be left open for controversy. To insist that all ecclesiastics should think alike is to reduce them all to the same ignorance. Returning to the issues raised by the *loi de silence*, the author contends that it suffices “to reduce all of the clergy to the same moderation” (II, 42). The Jansenist, presumably Maultrot, appears to appropriate here the sentiment expressed by Montesquieu at the conclusion of his *mémoire* of 1753 for the king. With a touch of cynicism, the tract asserts that the task of keeping religious strife within moderate limits should not prove difficult “for those who dispose of favors.” Schisms are caused by the rigor of temporal authority, the author remarks, not by the distribution of its favors.

Having made the case for freedom of conscience and belief, the tract next takes up the question of public worship. If the former issue in large part concerned the Jansenists themselves, the latter issue involved chiefly the Protestants in France. The author, probably Maultrot, observes cautiously that all external acts normally fall under the negative authority of the civil ruler. Public worship constitutes an excep-

³⁴ Cf. F. Vernet, *Latran IVème*, DTC, VIII (1927), 2652–2667. The “notorious canon” is n. 3.

tion, however, because it appears to be inseparately connected to the rights of conscience. Hence, he concludes, so long as it is decent and not contrary to common standards of law and morality, it should not be forbidden (II, 43). He supports toleration of public worship with the same argument from natural equity that he used for freedom of conscience. Christians cannot demand the right of public worship for themselves while denying it to others.

After describing again the ill effects of the Revocation, the author elaborates a new economic argument drawn from uncited Physiocratic sources. He advocates permitting Protestant cult, not in the major cities but in the countryside, the seat of virtue as well as the creator of a nation's true wealth. Freedom of worship, he believes, would attract back to France many Huguenots living in exile. They would rejuvenate, morally as well as economically, the villages and small cities of the provinces. Freedom of worship would be a way to increase the nation's population without encouraging the growth of great cities, "those deadly congestions" (II, 59).³⁵ Then there would be at least some cantons and entire provinces, he claims, where the most useful arts and professions, together with morality, would not vanish. Maultrot attributes to Protestant ecclesiastical discipline a kind of censorship which watches effectively over morality. Because it reaches the conscience of Protestants, it is more exact and more respected than that of ancient Rome. But, Maultrot argues, this discipline is dependent upon cult or public worship. Liberty of conscience for individuals does not suffice. For Protestant Christianity to function beneficently in France, it must be able to worship corporately.

Enemies of religious toleration had grown fond of citing Montesquieu's principle in *Esprit des lois*, Book 24, Ch. 5, that the Protestant

³⁵ F. Quesnay's *Tableau économique* appeared in 1758. Maultrot was surely inspired by V. R. de Mirabeau's *L'Ami des hommes ou traité sur la population* (1756), 1758. Cf. the latter's moralizing argument for agriculture, I, 90, 95 and 165, and against cities, I, 73 and 145. Like Maultrot, Mirabeau acknowledges religion as, I, 192, "le premier et le plus utile frein de l'humanité," and, I, 85, "le ressort principal des mœurs." Unlike Maultrot, however, Mirabeau does not criticize the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes or propose tolerance of Protestant public worship as a means of increasing rural population. The two texts are sometimes very close: compare Maultrot's phrase, "ces engorgements funestes," with Mirabeau, *L'Ami des Hommes*, I, 72: "cet engourdissement si fatal à l'Etat," and "le prodigieux gonflement de la capitale;" cf. also, I, 159: "un état d'engorgement dans la tête."

religion suits a republic better than a monarchy. Hence, they concluded, it should not be permitted in France. Our author saves Montesquieu's reputation for tolerance but eviscerates his theory concerning religion's relationship to politics. The Jansenist explains, Montesquieu's principle was only intended to show the influence of climate; he did not anticipate and would not approve an inference in favor of religious intolerance. Without explicitly contradicting Montesquieu, the author of the tract denies that a religion's theological doctrines determine the political views of its adherents or their forms of government. The Jansenist illustrates his point with Venice, a state which is Catholic as well as republican, and several other contemporary European examples. Catholicism and Protestantism do not differ on political principle, he states, both require obedience to authority (II, 77). Alluding to the revolt of the Camisards in southern France early in the eighteenth century, the author asks that past excesses and faults should be forgotten: "let he who is without sin, cast the first stone." In any case, the "crime" of the Protestants occurred while their cult was forbidden, at the least, an extenuating circumstance.

The tract concludes with an anecdote revealing how much the French nation desires toleration. When false news spread that Protestant marriages were going to be declared valid, the author, present at the *bourse* of one of the largest cities of the kingdom, witnessed among the Protestant and Catholic merchants tears of joy and mutual congratulation. "Are these the effects of an implacable animosity and an inflexible zeal," he asks rhetorically, "or are they sentiments that religion inspires" (II, 82). Maultrot thereby implicitly contradicts the argument that France cannot adopt tolerance because the people would refuse to comply with its dictates.

The final passage of *Questions sur la tolérance chrétienne* expresses clearly a humanistic theme running through the tract. Its humanism, however, has Christian roots. The Jansenist authors reject implicitly the naturalistic principles laying behind "enlightened" views on dealing with religious dissent. Montesquieu and other Philosophes agreed that the only true "faith" was the one which reason could discover. Sectarian differences based on alleged supernatural revelations seemed intrinsically unimportant; hence they could be tolerated. In contrast, Jansenists like Tailhié and Maultrot, professing firmly the orthodox Catholic doctrine that the church was exclusively one, holy, catholic and apostolic, held also its corollary of theological intolerance. The

pressures of persecution, however, led them to discover a principle of civil tolerance in the Jansenist emphasis on respect due to the integrity of the individual person's relationship to God. Tailhié and Maultrot applied this principle consistently to Protestants as well as to themselves. Their tract, *Questions sur la tolérance chrétienne*, represents an overlapping of perspectives, Jansenist and Philosophe, more than a convergence. For, the Jansenist case rested ultimately on a revealed doctrine of divine grace; the Philosophe, on a deistic assumption concerning the Creator's intentions when endowing man with rationality. Most of the tract, it is true, offers arguments for civil tolerance drawn from natural law, often adopting passages or ideas from *l'Esprit des lois* and other writings by Philosophes. The Jansenist authors, however, tailor these borrowings to the basic Christian view that coercion of religious dissenters is wrong because it impedes the working of God's grace.

The tract, *Questions sur la tolérance chrétienne*, reflects a perspective quite characteristic of late Jansenists. On the one hand, they continued to demonstrate strong commitment to basic Christian doctrine, morality and ecclesiastical discipline. The polemic waged by Fontaine de la Roche against Montesquieu's naturalism was continued by Abbé Saint Marc and others against the atheism of d'Holbach and Helvetius. On the other hand, late Jansenists continued to prove receptive to enlightened ideas, such as religious liberty, which were compatible with Jansenist spirituality. Arguments similar to those used by Maultrot and Tailhié were expressed twenty years later by *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, Pietro Tamburini and other Jansenist commentators on Joseph II's Patent of Religious Toleration.

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