EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS POLITICS IN ENLIGHTENMENT FRANCE

By

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B.A., Westmont College, 2007

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of History
2012
This thesis entitled:
Education and Religious Politics in Enlightenment France
written by Ashleigh Corwin
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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Abstract

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Education and Religious Politics in Enlightenment France

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Matthew Gerber

Over the course of the eighteenth-century in France discussions about primary education became infused with concurrent political and religious tensions. Philosophical debates surrounding children’s natural abilities to learn and a new emphasis on the practical utility of education supplanted the traditional focus on creating good Catholics, especially after the nation’s main teaching body, the Jesuits, were expelled from France in 1762. Thereafter, educational theorists proposed plans for a state-run, national program that would train useful citizens, thoroughly infused with religion to instill morality. Dozens of politicians, scientists, philosophers and even priests wrote plans that advocated a secular-run education system that retained Christian instruction. Rather than rejecting religion entirely, these plans embraced Christian devotion and piety as the best tools to raise virtuous, hardworking, and patriotic French men and women. They reflect the rise of anti-clericalism within France leading up to the Revolution, and an increase in popular piety.

This paper demonstrates that the collapse of French kings’ sacred authority paralleled a similar decline in Catholic hegemony within France due to the political and religious conflicts that alienated many French subjects from the two main authorities within France, the Church and State. These conflicts culminated in the expulsion of the Jesuits in the early 1760s, which was the
major turning point for educational treatises from focusing on students as Christians and moral members of polite society to advocating a national, public education that could influence the most children. The educational debate over the course of the eighteenth-century illuminates the fragmentation of religious and political authority in France leading up to the French Revolution, and demonstrates that the desacralization of governmental and religious bodies did not lead to a broader dechristianization of French society.
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Introduction

At the death of Louis XIV in 1715, French primary education was predominantly controlled and conducted by the Catholic Church through its various teaching orders. Up to that point, most children had received a religiously inspired education, along with some instruction in the classics after learning Latin. The goal of education was to develop morality and produce virtuous Christians prepared to serve their society with their eyes fixed on heavenly rewards. By the eve of the Revolution in 1788, numerous political and educational theorists advocated a state-run, national public education system divorced from the religious institutions which had dominated in the classroom for decades. A new emphasis on the practical utility of education encouraged children to be literate in French before they learned Latin, and to develop their natural abilities to strengthen and serve the French state. The fixation on creating good Christians prepared for eternity shifted to a focus on preparing people for earthly vocations, though still with a religious upbringing to instill morality. Elements of the educational projects from the late-eighteenth century such as a desire for education to be useful, uniform, and standardized, dated back to John Locke’s philosophy of the mind and to teaching manuals from the end of the last century. But over the course of religiously infused political debates among governing bodies positioning for power, French educationalists increasingly envisaged a role for a secularized State in education.

This is not a study on educational theory in and of itself, but of educational plans as they relate to the complicated religious and political environment in pre-Revolutionary France. However, philosophical discussions about man’s capacity for learning, the role of nature in learning, and how to teach morality had a direct impact on recommendations for public instruction. An excellent book on “educational philosophy,” written by Natasha Gill, already
exists, which examines many of the same sources used in this study through a philosophic lens.\textsuperscript{1} Gill traces several ideological themes through French educational treatises in the early eighteenth-century, starting with Locke’s idea of the malleability of the human mind and ending with Rousseau’s \textit{Emile}. She is more concerned with the progression of child psychology than in the political and religious environment surrounding the reformers’ plans, though she does include a discussion of both. Most of her study focuses on the writings of philosophers, especially Helvétius and Rousseau. Gill’s book is an excellent reference for educational ideology in early French Enlightenment, but it largely overlooks the main theme of this study because it only touches on writings after 1762.

Because this paper will focus on public rather than private education, it will examine documents that consider how to implement theory into practice rather than those that are more philosophical. The growing public sphere among “enlightened” society within Parisian \textit{salons}, regional \textit{Académies}, newspapers, and hundreds of popular books and pamphlets expanded the scope of ideas and created a national conversation about multiple topics. An excellent discussion of this “new political culture” is found in Roger Chartier’s \textit{The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution}.\textsuperscript{2} Chartier identifies a “growth of political consciousness” in the eighteenth-century.\textsuperscript{3} This occurred among lower-class farmers and artisans in the form of lawsuits and an increasing desire to be involved in political decisions that directly affected their lives. More importantly for this study on Rousseau and La Chalotais, however, was the growing literary public sphere in Parisian salons and academies. With more people able to read, thanks in part to Jesuit \textit{collèges},

\textsuperscript{3} Chartier, \textit{The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution}, 136
discussions about current events and publications grew in frequency and importance. The salon culture merged personal patronage with innovative philosophical and political ideas, making them exclusive and “a necessity for anyone who wanted to get ahead.” Thus a short examination of some of the primary philosophic theories regarding education is included here, but this study concentrates on the political and religious events that impacted educational treatises rather than philosophical themes from the Enlightenment. It looks at the emergence of plans for a national education system leading up to the French Revolution when the National Assembly and other legislative bodies attempted to enact such a system.

Though the origins of ideas can be traced back almost indefinitely, the account outlined here concerning the transformation of the methods and goals of education in the late eighteenth-century begins at the end of the seventeenth-century. Firstly, John Locke’s philosophy of the soul as a blank slate, though perhaps not completely original as will be discussed below, greatly impacted French writers familiar with his work. It transformed teaching methods by placing an emphasis on children’s malleable nature rather than on any innate, or original, evil within them that education would expunge. It also expanded the possibilities of what education could do for society by forming moral and useful subjects. Concurrently, Louis XIV’s political maneuverings to increase the French monarchy’s sovereignty began an expansion of the State into regional affairs that continued into the eighteenth-century. His use of sacred imagery in a cult of personality at court, and his appeal to divine sanction to rule “absolutely” further associated the monarchy with the bond between Church and State in France. The demise of the Sun King disrupted politics in the royal and parlementary courts in part because his successors were unable to sustain the same personal networks of prestige and rewards at Versailles. Actually, there were many contributing factors to the gradual collapse of “absolutism,” including growing critiques of

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4 Chartier, *The Cultural Origins*, 156
the King’s ability to be a sacred ruler when he was living in sin. Though Louis XIV was also
guilty of adultery, Louis XV received more censure for his continuing affairs. The growth of
newspapers and print materials in the eighteenth-century could account for some of this
difference in treatment, but the development of a public discourse on piety and religion is also
highly relevant. The main instigators of disruptive ideas about the monarchy were adherents of
French Jansenism, a devout sect of Catholicism whose members engaged in a decades-long
struggle to defeat the Jesuits in France, and those who supported them.

The conflict between the Jesuits and the Jansenists influenced the main fissure that
opened up a new discussion of education’s potentialities in the early 1760s. It was at the
confluence of several pivotal national events that created the perfect storm for the development
of public, state-run education. The most immediately significant event for French education was
the closure of all Jesuit run collèges in France in 1762, and the total expulsion of the order from
the country by 1765.\(^5\) Because the Jesuits controlled 151 collèges in the country, the loss of their
instructors dealt a heavy blow to French education.\(^6\) The parlementaires that orchestrated the
Jesuits’ expulsion understood the great impact their actions caused, and produced numerous
plans to fill the gap left behind. French philosophes also recognized the opportunities this event
provided for implementing their own educational proposals.

While the Jesuits’ expulsion alone greatly impacted the situation of French education in
practice, the environment surrounding it was infused with conflicts that directly impacted the

\(^{5}\) Though the expulsion of the Jesuits from all of France was not completed until 1765, this paper will reference 1762
as the date most pertinent to French schools because that was when most of the Orders’ schools were closed or
redistributed to other organizations.

\(^{6}\) At the time of their expulsion, the Jesuits controlled more collèges than any other group in France. The two next
largest groups were the Oratorians with 72 collèges and the Doctrinaires with 60 collèges, see John McManners, The
Clerical Establishment and its Social Ramifications, Vol. 1 of Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 516-17. The Christian Brothers were also a major teaching body that
grew throughout the century with 121 institutions by 1789 see F. de la Fontainerie in Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, The
future of children’s instruction. The complex history of antipathy towards the Jesuit Order in France illuminates related debates about the purpose of education, the appropriate role of religion in that education, how schools should operate and by whom, and the state’s proper role in overseeing schools’ everyday administration that extend back into the seventeenth century. The effort to force out the Jesuits reflected religious and political tensions between the monarchy and the parlements, spearheaded by the Paris magistrates, which in turn correlated with the changing public perception of their king and his sacred character. Louis XV’s kingship was fraught with parlementary conflicts, and while he successfully subdued those who challenged his rule, he ultimately lost some public prestige and suffered multiple accusations of despotism.

Dale Van Kley’s work on Jansenism in eighteenth-century France illuminates these connections. He connects the Jansenists’ objections to the papal bull Unigenitus, composed at the request of Louis XIV shortly before his death, with their longstanding conflict with the Jesuits, culminating in the Jesuits’ expulsion. It was initially a religious dispute that gradually took on political dimensions as Jansenism aligned itself with Gallicanism, making it more popular within parlementary and bourgeois circles. Although Jansenists were a minority in the parlements, they wielded great influence, especially in Paris, to elicit dramatic change in their favor. Meanwhile, Jesuits had long been connected to the French monarchy as confessors, counselors, and tutors. To fervent Gallicans the association between their king and these ultramontane agitators was at least troublesome and potentially disastrous for France’s future; it also enflamed enduring criticisms of absolute monarchy and the legal imperatives of crown and court. Thus, the attack

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7 Van Kley goes back to the destruction of Port-Royal, a Jansenist abbey, in 1711 as the initial act that spurred Jansenists to take revenge against the Jesuits, *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 1757-1765* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), 1-4. Although Louis XIV ordered the abbey’s destruction, the Jansenists blamed his Jesuit confessor, Michel Le Tellier.

8 Several other historians have investigated the links between the Jansenists, Unigenitus, Gallicanism, and critiques on absolutism in France, including Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); James Collins,
on the Jesuits was not solely carried out by anti-religious *philosophes* in the midst of a critical Enlightenment, but by fervent Catholics and conservative French patriots. Jansenists, along with sympathetic Gallican magistrates, orchestrated the Jesuits’ downfall. Van Kley’s interpretation of the eighteenth century as a “century of religious controversy” within Catholicism as much as one of philosophic critiques about religion and tradition illuminates the persistence of conventional disputes in a period typically characterized as innovative.⁹

In addition to the political and religious milieu in eighteenth-century France that Van Kley and others elucidate, David Bell’s account of a growing public sphere actively constructing the concept of French nationalism provides a conceptual framework for this study.¹⁰ Bell attributes the steady and steep rise in French nationalist ideology in the eighteenth-century to several factors, notably the increased use of the words *nation* and *patrie* in written sources. These words also transformed in meaning as various pamphleteers and *philosophes* across Europe discussed and explored political, legal, and cultural concepts. These authors often expressed a common disenchantment with religion, and other traditional institutions, following the many religious conflicts which devastated Europe for the previous two centuries, but they could not completely escape its influence. They needed something to replace the corporate identity which the Catholic Church provided. Thus nationalistic language and identity had a distinct religious heritage; revolutionary republicans took Catholic confessional schooling as a model for patriotic primary education. Bell also notes that documents regarding international

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conflicts such as the Seven Years War portrayed wars "neither as a duel between royal houses nor as a clash of religions, but as a battle between irreconcilable nations."\textsuperscript{11} Even the monarchy began to appeal more to its subjects’ French common culture in opposition to the British, and to actively promulgate Great Frenchmen, music, art, and language academies.

**The Education Question**

After considering all these surrounding events, finally we come to how the perfect storm of the 1760s fueled a drive to transform French education. Traditionally, education was reserved for wealthy sons of noblemen and the bourgeoisie. Less fortunate children could attend Catholic primary schools, but their education was often irregular or truncated because their families needed them at home. After the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century the Catholic Church through the new Jesuit Order invested more in the instruction of future clergymen, and in the moral formation of children. The period of Catholic renewal following the Protestant Reformation galvanized the Jesuits’ efforts to indoctrinate children in orthodox beliefs and to exert control over the sacred in opposition to the Protestant heresy. Beyond the prestigious universities and primary schools (collèges) erected by the Jesuits, the Church established smaller catechism schools to instruct a more rural and poor population in basic religious knowledge. The Jesuit education emphasized Latin and Greek classical literature, theology, and philosophy for those fortunate, or wealthy, enough to complete all the years of their instruction. Private tutors were also popular among wealthy families, and many writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries touted the benefits of individualized at-home instruction, especially for women.\textsuperscript{12} In the mid-eighteenth century almost everyone who attended school outside their homes went to an institution associated with a Christian organization, be they Jesuit, Oratorian, or Christian

\textsuperscript{11} Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, 80
\textsuperscript{12} There was one significant institution for girls’ education at this time, Saint-Cyr run by Madame de Maintenon, but it daughters of upper class parents, not poor children.
Brothers. A Christian education was necessary for any noblemen planning to become bishops or higher church officials, but it was also useful for future businessmen, magistrates, *intendants*, and court administrators living in a society permeated with religion and still using Latin in official documents. France’s political leaders sent their sons to the best schools in Paris, including the Jesuit-run Louis-le-Grand, and therefore they had a stake in the education provided to their children by these institutions, and in their ability to provide it.

However, during the eighteenth-century the expectation for what the goal of education was shifted considerably. Previously, schools’ primary role was to ensure that people were sufficiently Christianized, with souls prepared for the afterlife and with moral behavior to serve God on earth. As such, it makes sense that Latin should be valued over French because the majority of religious texts were written in Latin. Reflecting the Renaissance’s exultation of classical culture and literature, teachers presented ancient Greek and Roman texts as the greatest exemplars of literature, philosophy, and law, largely ignoring the fact that most of the ancient authors were pagan by selectively choosing passages that did not challenge Christianity. But studying classical literature, history, and fables in their original languages was becoming less and less desirable as French men and women began celebrating their own country’s history and heroes. A concentration on rhetoric was still useful for lawyers and magistrates, but an increase in printed materials transformed French society into a more literate population. Wealthy socialites needed to understand written French well enough to participate in the popular *salons*,

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13 Roger Chartier, Dominique Julia and Marie-Madeleine Compère examine this goal and the methods used to achieve it in France from the late-fifteenth to the eighteenth century in *L’Éducation en France du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle*, (Paris: Société d’édition d’enseignement supérieur, 1976.)
and previously illiterate peasants needed to read well enough to understand the government
documents that were increasingly present in even basic business transactions.\textsuperscript{14}

Instead of accepting that an education’s purpose was to spread and intensify the Christian
faith, people who wrote about schooling wanted education to be \textit{useful} for the student and for the
Nation. But there were limits to how useful education could be for different social groups and
occupations within France. Harvey Chisick’s study of French Enlightenment writings on popular
education, \textit{The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment}, elucidates some of the concerns that
legislators and \textit{philosophes} raised over providing instruction to the lower classes.\textsuperscript{15} Chisick notes
that a number of these intellectuals advocated teaching basic literacy and arithmetic to farmers
and artisans to make them more productive. But they also often warned against too much
education lest the workers essential to producing France’s food and basic necessities start to
question their place at the bottom of the social and economic scale. There needed to be a careful
balance between too little and too much instruction. France’s workers should be educated in
“skills suited to their \textit{état}” and taught to revere religion and the \textit{patrie}, but they should not be
“enlightened.”\textsuperscript{16} In order to ensure that all French citizens, even girls (although many educational
treatises do not mention women at all), learned skills pertinent to their position in life, and did
not waste time uselessly studying Latin and rhetoric, the education system in France needed to be
reformed.

Even the Christian elements of education changed; there was less emphasis on doctrinal
uniformity than on the constructive and socially beneficial elements of religion. As Carl Becker

\textsuperscript{14} Chartier, Julia, and Compère provide a detailed study of literacy rates in early modern France, largely determining
literacy based on peoples’ ability to sign their names on documents for business, marriage, or other government
documents.
\textsuperscript{15} Henry Chisick, \textit{The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes toward the Education of the Lower Classes in
\textsuperscript{16} Chisick, \textit{The Limits of Reform}, 274
eloquently explained, the innovators of the Enlightenment cared more about this life than the afterlife and so brought heaven to earth.\textsuperscript{17} Even the most radical \textit{philosophes} recognized the practical benefits of Christianity to keep people in line for fear of punishment in heaven. Civil punishment was not enough to discourage bad behavior, because if everyone truly believed that their actions had no consequences in the future, there would be no \textit{internal} restrictions. A successful and prosperous nation needed a system of morality to keep its citizens submissive, loyal, and lawful. For such a system to work there had to be some force compelling peoples’ good behavior, and the fear of God was a very effective tool. Becker argues that some \textit{philosophes} substituted a hope of future posterity for the promise of an afterlife, but that they still could not escape their religious heritage in their language and approach to deified “nature”.\textsuperscript{18}

Most of these reforming ideas are apparent in writings from the early-eighteenth century, but they did not gain much traction until the expulsion of the Jesuits accelerated and intensified the education “problem” in France. After 1762, education plans advocated four primary elements imperative to French schools. They should be run by the State, not the Church through different religious orders, so that the instruction provided would be uniform and \textbf{national}. For this first aspect to work, education had to be \textbf{public} and not private, funded by a combination of taxes, pensions, and donations so that all French children could attend. For the benefit of both the State and the people, education needed to be above all \textbf{useful}, including basic subjects (writing, reading, arithmetic) in the early years of instruction and more advanced professional training in later years for students whose families can afford to send their children to school instead of keeping them at home to work. Lastly, education needed to be \textbf{religious}, because religion is the

\textsuperscript{18} Becker’s argument is similar to Bell’s regarding the persistence of religious language and worldviews throughout the eighteenth-century, as is discussed below in Chapter 1.
best method for teaching morality and virtue, two values necessary in the population of a prosperous State.

The first chapter of this paper examines the complex religious atmosphere in France throughout the eighteenth-century. It demonstrates that the collapse of French kings’ sacred authority paralleled a similar decline in Catholic hegemony within France due to the political and religious conflicts that alienated many French subjects from the two main authorities within France, the Church and State. These conflicts culminated in the expulsion of the Jesuits in the early 1760s, which was the major turning point for educational treatises from focusing on students as Christians and moral members of polite society to advocating a national, public education that could influence the most children. The second chapter examines important theoretical antecedents to late-eighteenth century projects. All the authors inspected directly contributed to French education during the Enlightenment through instructional plans, teaching manuals, or ideological frameworks. Many address similar concerns about the utility of school subjects and the need for a structured and uniform system, but they have unique approaches due to their different professional and social backgrounds. Comparatively, the third and final chapter looks at the plans that emerged after 1762 which articulate almost identical concerns, methods, and improvements for education. With the exception of Rousseau’s *Emile*, which is so different from its contemporary projects that it belongs in a category of its own, the education reformers from the expulsion of the Jesuits to the beginning of the French Revolution repeat the same ideas so often that they could be one and the same.19

Beyond the intriguing uniformity of these projects, it is striking that so many of them emerged in the years immediately following 1762. Around one hundred and eighty plans,

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19 Natasha Gill also notes the direct parallels among these writings, and even treats them all as one group instead of examining them separately.
projects, and articles on education were written in the eighteenth-century prior to the French Revolution. Of those, about one third was written in the 1760s, another third from the beginning of the century to 1760, and the remaining third appeared in the decades before 1789.\textsuperscript{20} It is the contention of this study that the intensification and uniformity of educational treatises after 1762 reflects the politicization of education and religion in the eighteenth-century more than it does the logistical necessity of replacing the Jesuits as the leaders of French schools. The expulsion of the Jesuits set an important precedent for religious minorities that it was possible to defeat their enemies and oppressors even in a Catholic nation where it was illegal to stray from orthodoxy. There were cracks in the unity of the “universal” faith thanks to Jansenism’s strict religious piety and criticism of Jesuit practices. The verdict against the Jesuit Order was also a political victory for \textit{parlementaires} who continually butted heads with the monarchy over economic, religious, and legal affairs in the eighteenth-century, whose members suffered multiple exiles. Through the legal struggles between the King and the \textit{parlements} a different conception of who should hold the power in France emerged, with the courts stepping up and exerting their authority based on historical arguments about their inherited prerogatives. The monarchy became embroiled in religious controversies that increasingly tainted the sacredness of the absolute theory of kingship. Jeffrey Merrick describes the loss of sacred authority in the monarchy in the eighteenth-century as the “desacralization” of the monarchy. The educational debate over the course of the eighteenth-century illuminates the fragmentation of religious and political authority in France leading up to the French Revolution, and demonstrates that the desacralization of governmental and religious bodies did not lead to a broader dechristianization\textsuperscript{21} of French society.

\textsuperscript{21} Dechristianization as used in this paper refers to the process of a loss of Christian faith and practice within European society.
Chapter 1: The Politics of Power and Religion

Religion and politics were intimately connected in eighteenth-century France. The vast majority of French men and women lived and died within the Church, where they were baptized, married, and buried. Church holidays gave Christians an annual structure of feasts, fasts, and celebrations. Patron saints instilled pride in towns and villages and were a cohesive social force along with local religious traditions. Most French peoples’ only contact with the Church was their connection to local priests, who preached obedience to local officials and to the King as God’s representatives in a divinely ordained social order. But the Church was intricately involved in French men and women’s everyday lives. It collected the tithe, owned and managed land throughout the country, and oversaw adherence to canon law. The Church in France was so closely aligned with French governing bodies and administration that it is often difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins. Secular and sacred leaders symbiotically relied on each other to order French society. As members of the First Estate, Church officials theoretically held higher authority than their worldly counterparts. Divine sanction continued to carry relevance into the “enlightened” century, especially among devout peasants who were largely removed from the radical philosophic debates occurring among Parisian elites.

In addition to the social reach of religion in civic activities in the eighteenth-century, it retained a psychological hold on French men and women, even those who tried to “escape” its influence. Carl Becker illuminates this connection in his eloquent description of the philosophes’

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22 Throughout this study, the word Church with a capitalized “C” is used to represent the institutionalized religious system in France under the Bishop of Paris. I differentiate it from the “Gallican Church” to avoid confusing it with the particular political aspects of Gallicanism, and from the Catholic Church to distance it from associations with the Papacy. However, when I speak of the Church in France it is of adherents to the Catholic faith, not Protestants.

23 Edward Muir’s Ritual in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005) examines the emotive power of rites and rituals in Early Modern Europe, and how the Church exerted influence over its adherents by ordering and controlling these practices, including marriage, baptism, death, and other celebrations, with varying success. See also John Bossy, Christianity in the West, 1400-1700, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

24 See McManners, The Clerical Establishment and its Social Ramifications, 1-2
reliance on Christian elements to implement a new secular metanarrative. The *philosophes* rejected traditional Christianity but retained a belief in a Supreme Being. Nature took the place of God and man could gain justification and perfection here on earth through the use of reason in accordance with the laws of nature; “having denatured God, they deified nature”.

Rejecting the corrupt and false doctrines of the Church, these men (along with a few women) realized that they needed to provide a new “heaven” to replace the one they were tearing down. Becker’s thesis is stridently contended by Peter Gay who criticizes Becker’s proposition that the *philosophes* transferred their religious faith from Christ to nature. Gay asserts that Becker superficially examined complex *philosophical* concepts such as natural law and discounted atheism’s prevalence in the second half of the eighteenth-century to prove that “there is more of Christian philosophy in the writings of the *Philosophes* than has yet been dreamt of in our histories.”

However, Bell’s study of patriotic texts in *The Cult of the Nation* supports Becker’s assertion that participants in the Enlightenment in France continued to view their world through a Christian lens. They explained their world with religious rhetoric. Beyond being a unifying force by supplying people across France with similar values and history, Catholicism also maintained order and pragmatically benefited society. Faith in an afterlife where peoples’ actions in this world are judged by an omniscient God compelled believers to be upright and honest. Becker claims that the *philosophes* recognized the need to create a comparable system to curb debauchery and facilitate a functioning society, which they found in replacing the hope of

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25 Becker, *The Heavenly City*. Though Becker’s work has been widely criticized since its original publication in 1932, most notably by Ernst Cassirer and Peter Gay, the forward by Johnson Kent Wright in this second edition illuminates the historiography behind the book and argues for the continued relevance of Becker’s argument that the Enlightenment was less about an emerging modernism as it was a continuation of the medieval outlook. See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009) and Peter Gay, “Carl Becker’s Heavenly City,” *Political Science Quarterly* 72, No. 2 (June 1957): 182-199.

26 Ibid., 129-130


heaven with the promise of posterity. They thought that people should be motivated to lead moral, virtuous lives to leave a legacy for future generations to admire rather than in fear of divine and eternal judgment at death. Yet the *philosophes* relied on traditional religious rhetoric to express this message to a Christianized audience. Christianity through Catholicism provided hope and gave peoples’ lives significance in the promise of eternal rewards after death for moral and devout believers. It ordered society and promoted good behavior. The educational treatises from the late eighteenth-century strongly emphasize the social utility of religious instruction. They continually command teachers to use the Bible and the catechism to guide children to live moral, virtuous lives.

However, the majority of French men and women did not participate in these philosophic debates over religion and remained faithful to the Church and to Christianity. Regardless of how truly “devout” individual Catholics were, something that is incredibly difficult to measure or determine, religious authority held sway over society. In France, whoever held sacred authority, whether real or supposed, could better command secular power. There was often little distinction between the two, a tradition going back for centuries which bound French Kings and their representatives with the Catholic Church in particular. In many ways, both socially and legally, to be French was to be Catholic. The King’s relationship with the Church was particularly contentious because any perceived allegiance to the Pope in Rome undermined the monarch’s authority in France and could perhaps weaken the State. French absolutism’s contentious history under the Sun King negatively affected French assessments of Louis XV, whose personal failings did nothing to improve his image. Because French citizenship was so closely tied with the Catholic faith, the King was expected to be the ruler and protector of his subjects’ civil and religious lives. By siding with the Jesuits and opposing Jansenists in France, the monarchy
opened itself up to accusations that it was not protecting its subjects. The King’s involvement in the conflicts discussed below helped to disrupt the connection between religion and politics that eventually led to a secularization of citizenship in France.\textsuperscript{30} Educational theorists picked up on this process in their writings. They recommended that religious instruction should remain the foundation for the education of good citizens, but focused more on the practical benefits of religion than on maintaining doctrinal uniformity. The “secularization” of education meant favoring State control over schools rather than the Church hierarchy. It was not a rejection of religious instruction but a relaxation of religious orthodoxy.

Not everyone agreed on what it meant to be a Catholic in France, or what the Church’s role should be in the French State and within society. Popular religious movements gained more followers than in previous centuries thanks to an increase in written materials and basic literacy in the enlightened age, making Jansenism a dangerous foe for the Church. Because France was so politically and culturally decentralized in the early modern period, the French Church’s highest officials in Paris could never truthfully claim that they spoke for all the Christians in the realm. European peasants fused their own customs with religious components to create localized religious cults and practices.\textsuperscript{31} Dissenters from the Catholic fold posed an additional problem for any claims that France was a unified and Catholic nation, even if they had limited legal standing. The Protestant minority in France lost their legal right to worship as they pleased when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685, and their presence remained controversial throughout

\textsuperscript{30} Again, the fruition of this development did not occur until the radical environment during the French Revolution facilitated drastic change. Jeffrey Merrick discusses this process in \textit{The Desacralization of the French Monarchy}, 167.

the next century, even after Louis XVI granted them toleration in 1787. Throughout the century of light French Protestants became a cause célèbre for *philosophes* opposed to the government’s interference in religious affairs. The Calas Affair in the 1760s inflamed the southern provinces in renewed discord between Protestants and Catholics, and stirred up religious discussions in the new “public sphere” in Paris thanks to Voltaire’s passionate petitions against religious intolerance. Despite the great impact that small Christian sects such as Jesuits and Protestants had on political disputes in this time, the majority of French subjects remained Catholic, even through the religiously antagonistic French Revolution, in practice if not also in faith. Even those who disapproved of some Church policies, such as Gallicans and Jansenists, did not usually recommend a religious break from Rome. They did not go so far as the Protestants, at least not until the revolutionary Civil Constitution of the Clergy made French clergymen submit to the State’s authority above all else in 1790. In the mid-eighteenth century politicians were not quite ready to make such a drastic step, though many did fight to keep the Church in France under French control.

**Sacred Absolutism into the Eighteenth-Century**

Though it is often proposed as one of the defining features of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century monarchy, French absolutism was frequently scrutinized by contemporary court officials, *parlementaires* and *philosophes*, and it remains a source of historical debate today. The extent to which theoretical absolutism differed from the actual practice of absolute rule, especially under Louis XIV, was, and remains contentious. The earliest explications of

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32 There were periodic disturbances with France’s Jewish minority, but they had a longer history of incorporation into the body politic than did the Huguenots. Protestants also brought up memories of the not so distant brutal religious wars within France.

33 As mentioned above, it is beyond the scope of this study to determine if people in the eighteenth-century were “truly” devout Christians or were only going through the motions of religion, so it does not distinguish between the two when characterizing French men and women as Christians.
absolutism, though that specific term was not coined until after the French Revolution, came from legal scholars in the late sixteenth-century interested in the history of French constitutions and French law. J. Russell Major and Dale Van Kley argue that absolutist theory arose out of the religious conflicts plaguing France with the rise of Protestantism; Van Kley even claims that “Bourbon absolutism was a defensive response to the French religious civil wars.”

During the reign of Henri IV the French legal theorist Jean Bodin advocated that sole sovereignty should reside in the monarchy but allowed that the Estates General still served a legitimate legal role in France to approve taxation. His “absolute monarchy” was not despotic because it had legal and divine restrictions; the king remained beholden to God and consenting traditional governing institutions for his power. Bodin’s work introduced the theory of absolutism into academic discourse at the University of Paris, whose graduates debated and sustained the concept through the eighteenth-century. A century later Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, bishop of Meaux and tutor to the Dauphin, characterized royal authority as sacred, paternal, absolute, and subject to reason. But he too emphasized that absolute government was not arbitrary, and was subject to the law and to divine authority.

Before delving into the divine restrictions on an absolute monarchy which are central to the religiously infused politics discussed in this paper, this chapter first examines the historical analysis of Louis XIV’s temporal achievements and limitations to gain a better understanding of the monarchy under Louis XV. Alexis de Tocqueville, while not the first historian to explore facets of ancien régime power, was a major contributor to the idea that royal power was

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36 See Major, *From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy*, 170-171.

sometimes constrained at a local level but that a centralized, bureaucratized State undermined and modernized the traditional feudal system in France leading up to the Revolution.\textsuperscript{38} Tocqueville traced the emergence of this absolute State to the abdication of French nobles’ property, traditional feudal rights, and power to the monarchy in return for increased prestige and position at court. The French State in his account is ubiquitous and controlling, expanding into local affairs through its \textit{intendants}; it drew all power to its base in Paris, which by the Revolution “\textit{was France.”}\textsuperscript{39} William Beik’s work challenges Tocqueville’s thesis from a provincial perspective, but retains the term, if not the exact conception of, “absolutism” with certain qualifications.\textsuperscript{40} He observes that in theory absolute power permitted “no other institution…the constitutional capacity to contradict” the king, but in practice French kings had to negotiate and compromise with various provincial power centers including estates and local notables.\textsuperscript{41}

J. Russell Major’s informative study \textit{From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy} also underscores the absolute monarchy’s practical limitations. He outlines the “centralizing” process that Tocqueville described from the end of the Hundred Years’ War to the “fruition” of absolute monarchy under Louis XIV.\textsuperscript{42} Unlike Tocqueville, though, Major argues that French nobles retained significant power apart from the royal court because they retained vertical ties to each other and to various clients.\textsuperscript{43} According to Major, the state was not a monolithic impersonal entity, but the extension of the court centered around the ruler. State bureaucratic


\textsuperscript{39} Tocqueville, \textit{The Old Regime and the French Revolution}, 46-47, 72.

\textsuperscript{40} See William Beik, \textit{Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and \textit{Louis XIV and Absolutism: A Brief Study with Documents} (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000).

\textsuperscript{41} Beik, \textit{Louis XIV and Absolutism}, 219.

\textsuperscript{42} Major, \textit{From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy}, 366 and xxi.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
powers increased and interfered in local affairs, most notably with the élus and later intendents, however when administrative positions increased substantially, the state lost control over its own representatives. It was too large for its bureaucracy to control. Corrupt tax collectors continued to be a problem, whether employed by the state as royal appointees, in the case of élus, or by the local estates. For all the efforts of Maximilian du Sully under Henry IV and Michel de Marillac under Louis XIII to standardize tax collection throughout France, it was Armand du Richelieu’s personal clientage ties that connected provincial nobles to the crown.

Moreover, the greatest victory the monarchy achieved in its centralization goals came when they operated under traditional power relations. When individual nobles or estates challenged Louis XIII’s much valued authority, he did not hesitate to flex his military power, personally leading campaigns. Mazarin utilized and advocated the patronage system over the paulette because he recognized the value of a bureaucracy filled with members who owed their positions directly to the king. Eventually Louis XIV attained “absolute power” by controlling the patronage system; he held “ultimate control of the vertical ties of clientage.” Yet by creating a system of privilege and positioning at Versailles for the wealthiest nobles, and elevating his image through mythological imagery and elaborate performances, the Sun King “laid the groundwork for the separation of the king from his people.”44 By relying on more traditional forms of power, including personal relationships and clientage networks to consolidate his authority, Louis XIV left his successor “trapped by the precedent of his…personal rule, caught up in the image of gloire he had fabricated.”45 True, Louis XIV brought the centralizing efforts of his precursors together in a unique ministerial and court system in which the State really

44 Major, From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy, 375
46 Campbell, Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 181
became its own enduring institution.\textsuperscript{47} But at his death in 1715, many of his unpopular projects were weakened, such as \textit{Unigenitus}, or completely rejected.\textsuperscript{48}

As Louis XV was only five years old when he inherited the throne, he looked mainly to his tutor and later minister of state André-Hercule de Fleury to run the court. Peter Campbell’s \textit{Power and Politics in Old Regime France} concentrates on Fleury as the major arbiter of royal authority in the early eighteenth-century, and underlines that he worked for years to achieve the political ties and networks of influence necessary to be effective at that position. Even at the height of his power, though, Fleury was not able to control all of the many factions and patronage associations when “factional intrigue was an essential feature of court politics,” thanks in part to Louis XIV’s legacy.\textsuperscript{49} Despite these difficulties Fleury provided some stability to royal policies and the crown’s relationship to the \textit{parlements}. He skillfully walked a “tightrope,” avoiding major conflicts by balancing factional interests that kept Louis XIV’s system essentially intact and acted as a “surrogate monarch” for his young charge.\textsuperscript{50} When he died in 1742 Louis XV was left with a complicated court system defined by personal relationships, but he lacked the determination to adequately manage it as Fleury or Louis XIV had. Louis’ reserved personality and desire for a more private life than Versailles’ afforded spurred gossip that his unpopular mistress Madame de Pompadour was the real power behind the throne.\textsuperscript{51} Collins notes that Louis XV “preserved the forms of Louis XIV’s Court but not its spirit;” the center of cultural

\textsuperscript{47} See James B. Collins, \textit{The State in Early Modern France}, 226.
\textsuperscript{48} The most noteworthy rejection came after his death when the \textit{Parlement} in Paris invalidated his will naming his illegitimate sons as inheritors to the throne, see Collins \textit{The State}, 177-178.
\textsuperscript{49} Campbell, \textit{Power and Politics}, 156. Campbell also relies on Norbert Elias’ work examining the “kingship mechanism” that retained balance at court by playing rival groups against each other, a practice that Fleury utilized, see Norbert Elias, \textit{The Court Society}, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).
\textsuperscript{51} Colin Jones calls Madame de Pompadour “Fleury’s successor as gatekeeper and private advisor to Louis XV” in \textit{The Great Nation}, 130.
and political society shifted from the court to Paris immediately after the Sun King’s death where former courtiers fuelled criticism of the king in an emerging public sphere.\textsuperscript{52}

Louis XV’s personality flaws and reliance on his mistress contributed to the main criticism his subjects had of him that he was not upholding his sacral duties which absolutist theory required of a good king. Bossuet had emphasized these sacred responsibilities of French kings at the end of the seventeenth-century, but allowed for no resistance to God’s chosen agent even if the king lacked personal virtue. Ultimately kings were only accountable to God and to the established laws of the land.\textsuperscript{53} In reality, however, the public perception of their king’s actions grew increasingly derogatory and negative at the end of Louis XIV’s reign and throughout that of Louis XV. Louis XV was certainly not the first monarch to keep a mistress at Court; his predecessor had even delineated a specific place at Court for his bastard sons. But a series of expensive wars that necessitated unpopular tax increases coupled with the “slow decline” of a king devoted to his mistress and their illegitimate sons discredited the notion of absolute monarchy even before Louis XIV died, leaving behind a Court and a public disinclined to ignore the divine and political implications of the king’s mistress.\textsuperscript{54} Rumors of the new King’s health problems stemming from his sexual proclivity reached new peaks in the 1750s when he was linked to the disappearance of Parisian children, whose blood he supposedly bathed in.\textsuperscript{55} Jeffrey Merrick describes the loss of sacred authority in the monarchy in the eighteenth-century as the “desacralization” of the monarchy.

\textsuperscript{52} Collins, \textit{The State}, 278. See also Linton, \textit{Politics of Virtue}, 130-131.
\textsuperscript{53} See Bossuet, \textit{Politics Drawn From the Very Words of Scripture}. Marisa Linton also closely examines the expectations for a virtuous king in theory and practice in \textit{The Politics of Virtue in Enlightenment France}, (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave, 2001).
\textsuperscript{54} Linton, \textit{The Politics of Virtue in Enlightenment France}, 29.
Personal morality aside, French kings also had the responsibility as God’s representative on earth to “protect the Church, promote the spiritual welfare of the realm, and defend the faith that ensured the salvation…of their people.”

Again, Louis XIV’s actions in religious conflicts left a messy situation for his successors, both Louis XV and the ministers under his regency. Collins claims that Louis XIV “did more than any other king to undermine the sacral nature of French kingship” because he compromised with Pope Clement XI to elicit a papal bull against Jansenists, which contradicted Gallican principles and was very unpopular among parlementaires with Jansenist leanings. The bull, *Unigenitus*, was a major issue in early eighteenth-century political and religious clashes between Jesuits and Jansenists, Gallicans and ultramontanes, and the parlements and the crown. Louis XV’s minister Fleury continued the Sun King’s quest to force adherence to *Unigenitus* throughout the country, as did Louis XV when he took power, so that the bull became tied to the monarchy. Defending *Unigenitus* was tantamount to defending absolute monarchy just as opposition to it became synonymous with criticism of absolutism.

Perhaps the most interesting part of these events is that royal policy defended and implemented *Unigenitus* so stridently, when the bull contradicted Gallican principles which bolstered the King’s authority over the Pope’s commands, a seemingly attractive principle for an absolute monarch seeking sole supreme authority over France. In other words, why did Louis XIV, Fleury, and Louis XV choose the Jesuits over the Jansenists when the monarchy’s interests seemed so aligned with those of the latter over the former? As the Jesuits became more and more associated with despotism, corruption, political intrigue, and lax morals among philosophes, parlementaires, and the popular press into the eighteenth-century, anyone

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57 Collins, *The State in Early Modern France*, 188.
connected to them was tainted by association. This included the monarchy, which had close ties
with individual Jesuits at court, and which regarded the Order as an ally in its struggles with their
common enemies in Parisian salons, Académies, Parlements, and newspapers. However, by
aligning themselves with an Order that elicited such passionate and determined political
criticism, French Kings and their ministers opened the monarchy up to related attacks on its
rights and prerogatives. Perhaps the King should not be allowed to rule absolutely if he granted
position and power to foreign elements associated with despotism. Obviously such proximity to
supposedly “religious” men did not inspire the King to live a virtuous Christian life free from
sexual sin, so what benefit were the Jesuits actually providing at Court other than furthering the
interests of the Pope? This topic directly correlates to the education debates in eighteenth-century
France which criticized Jesuits in the classroom and envisioned a new national system, especially
as they emerged from the anti-Jesuit, pro-Gallican parlements. If the king could not be trusted to
ensure an effective Christian education for France’s children because he rejected his rightful
place as head of the French Church in favor of his Jesuit cohorts, it was up to someone else,
namely the parlements to plan and implement new policies. Magistrates, philosophers, scientists,
and politicians criticized Jesuits in the classroom and envisioned a new national system,
especially as they emerged from the anti-Jesuit, pro-Gallican parlements.

In order to understand why Unigenitus became such a defining element of the monarchy,
an appreciation of Gallicanism’s relationship with the sacral elements of French kingship is
needed. Theories about Gallicanism and absolutism developed concurrently and were closely
intertwined from the late Middle Ages through the eighteenth-century. Following a conciliarist
approach, supporters of the Gallican Church argued that it had the right to determine doctrine in
addition to, or apart from, the Papacy, and to follow its own distinct French practices.\footnote{Conciliarism stems from the Council of Constance in 1415 which declared that Church councils were “superior” to popes concerning matters of faith, see Van Kley, \textit{The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits}, 22.} In addition to its spiritual independence from Rome, the Gallican Church asserted French monarchs’ temporal sovereignty over their realm, insofar as the Pope could not depose the King by excommunicating him. To bolster the spiritual authority of the King over the Gallican Church, Gallicanism also endorsed the sacral qualities of French monarchs, in line with absolutist theories.\footnote{Van Kley elucidates this idea in \textit{The Religious Origins of the French Monarchy}, 34-37} The King was accountable only to God, not to the Pope, but that did not mean that he was above reproach – he could still sin and be punished by God. In 1682 an assembly of French bishops composed the Declaration of the Rights of the Gallican Church that reiterated longstanding Gallican principles in response to a papal threat to excommunicate Louis XIV.\footnote{The threat to excommunicate the king emerged from a dispute between Louis XIV and Pope Innocent XI over the \textit{régale}, the right claimed by French kings to secure the revenue from vacant bishoprics in France. The four rights elucidated in the Declaration were: “(1) the Pope has not the power to depose sovereigns nor to dispense their subjects from the oath of allegiance; (2) the Church represented by a General Council is superior to the Pope; (3) the exercise of the Pope’s authority should be regulated by cannons; (4) the Pope’s decisions are only binding when sanctioned by cannons,” Martin Harney, \textit{The Jesuits in History: The Society of Jesus through Four Centuries}, (New York: The America Press, 1941), 287.} The Gallican Articles articulated in the Declaration were taught in all non-Jesuit French seminaries, creating an “attitude of religious patriotism” among French clergy.\footnote{James M. Byrne, \textit{Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant}, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 35. Other religious orders that were loyal to the Pope could also opt out of teaching the Gallican Articles.}

Despite conflicts between French kings and the papacy, like that which led to the Gallican Declaration, Jesuits continued to have a close relationship to the monarch and with elites in France. Many nobles had attended a Jesuit \textit{collège}, and there was a long history of Jesuit confessors and tutors to the royal family including Michel Le Tellier who encouraged Louis XIV in his campaign against the Jansenists. Dale Van Kley posits that the Jesuits ingratiated themselves into the French Court in part by compromising their own rules and adopting a type of
political Gallicanism, and by “wooing” elites.\textsuperscript{63} The Jesuit Order’s association with Molinism also made it popular among those with a humanist education, and was much more palatable than Jansenism’s stern position on sin and moral rigidity. Espoused by the Spanish Jesuit Luis Molina in 1588, Molinism minimized the consequences of original sin and proposed that God gave everybody a “sufficient” grace to overcome each temptation, that they could freely choose to use or not.\textsuperscript{64} Though Jesuits were closely associated with the Pope, to proponents of monarchical power they represented an appealing alternative to more strictly conservative movements like Jansenism, especially as it became linked to Gallicanism in the parlements.

Even though it benefited French kings to link themselves to Gallicanism – it reinforced their divine right to rule and supported their total sovereignty over France, Gallicanism could pose problems for the monarchy especially once it aligned with Jansenism within the parlements. On the surface Jansenism seemed like it would be a natural ally to the French monarchy; it was French, Gallican, and did not break away from Catholicism as the Calvinists did. However, Jansenism’s religious convictions had political implications. Their criticism of France’s chosen allies in the Thirty Years’ War gained Richelieu’s ire. Worse yet, some mazarinades written during the Fronde were composed by Jansenists. Their suspected complicity in the revolt fully turned Louis XIV against the movement from the 1660s to the destruction of the Jansenist abbey at Port-Royal in 1711 and finally to the implementation of Unigenitus in France in 1713. After Louis XIV’s death André-Hercule de Fleury and Louis XV continued to battle Jansenism, but

\textsuperscript{63} Van Kley, The Religious Origins of the French Revolution, 50-51. Van Kley notes that the Jesuits were primarily a missionary order, and that some of its members had lightened the requirements for conversion and the Christian life to “make Christianity as palatable to as many people as possible,” Dale Van Kley, The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 16.

\textsuperscript{64} Luis Molina’s treatise was titled De Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis. For more on Molinism see Van Kley, The Religious Origins of the French Revolution, 52, 60 and The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 7-17
now the movement had very powerful allies in parlements, especially the one in Paris, whose Gallican tendencies fit well with Jansenist beliefs.

The Jansenist movement arose out of Cornelius Jansen’s *Augustinus*, published in 1641, as a reform movement within Catholicism that advocated predestination and a belief that God grants an “efficacious” grace to a chosen few. It has often been associated with Calvinism by modern historians because of its efforts to reform Catholicism, its belief in predestination, and its emphasis on man’s depravity; Robert Palmer calls Jansenists “the Puritans of the Catholic Church.” Van Kley, though, emphasizes the Catholicity of Jansenism in its belief in salvation via good works, only possible because of God’s efficacious grace, rather than salvation by faith alone as in Calvinism. Jansenism aligned itself with conciliarism early in its development, adopting Richerism, a belief that elevated the status of priests so they were no longer subordinate in Church hierarchy according to the Biblical account of Jesus sending out 72 disciples to prepare the harvest for him. Richerism was associated with conciliarism because it “located ultimate spiritual authority in the whole church, including the laity, who in turn delegated it to their ministers,” and consequently facilitated Jansenism’s adoption of Gallicanism. Yet this was not an obvious connection to all early Jansenists; only in the late seventeenth-century when faced with repression by Louis XIV and the Papacy did Jansenism fully embrace “lay Gallicanism.” In turn, Jansenists found refuge in the parlements, bastions of Gallicanism and

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65 Jansen was the Bishop of Ypres though his ideas spread across France and the Netherlands.
70 Ibid., 71
monarchical antagonism by the eighteenth-century, whose members embraced the religious and political ammunition the sect provided in their legal battles with the King and his ministers.

The *parlements* quarreled with the monarch over the limits of his rule throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Taxation was a major issue dividing the two powers, with the King continually asking for more money to support foreign wars and the *parlements* resisting his demands. Collins argues that the creation of the capitation by Louis XIV in 1695 “marked a radical departure” in political and legal theories regarding the monarchy’s rights and prerogatives, and in the creation of a modern state.\(^{71}\) Along with the capitation, the *dixième* and *vingtième* affected the nobility and the clergy, two groups traditionally exempted from most taxes. Though in practice nobles and the Church could avoid paying all of the money these taxes demanded, they were nonetheless disturbed at the taxes’ expansiveness; the capitation was a direct tax on everybody in France besides the King, and the *dixième* and *vingtième* were income taxes. Louis XIV and Louis XV presented these taxes as extraordinary necessities in wartime, but they set precedents that proved difficult to reverse. The kings used the wars as excuses to enact taxation to avoid legal criticism that only the Estates-General could approve new taxes. Louis XIV was most successful at expanding the monarchy’s power through fiscal policies at the expense of regional political players in the mid to late seventeenth-century. But, as examined above, he relied on his elevated image, personal connections and clientage networks to consolidate power, which largely collapsed at his death. Though some aspects of his centralized state remained, notably the *intendants*, the loss of such a powerful, charismatic ruler left a power vacuum and opened the door for criticism of French monarchical power from many fronts.

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\(^{71}\) Collins, *The State in Early Modern France*, 10 and 215-217. Because the capitation was in theory a direct universal tax, levied on everyone in France except for the King, it was hotly contested by nobles and the Church, both of whom had traditionally enjoyed exemptions from taxation. In practice, there were still exemptions granted for these groups.
Legal Debates and Historical Justification

In the eighteenth-century royal, parlémentary, and philosophe historians discussed the history of the legal foundations of the French polity. Keith Michael Baker calls these writings “ideological arsenals” in the debate over the foundations of sovereignty. Lawyers and members of the parlements exiled in the 1730s, 1750s, and 1770s, often Jansenists or Jansenist sympathizers, were galvanized to defend their right to hold office apart from royal intervention. Louis Adrien Le Paige, for instance, argued for the continuity of an ancient constitution granting rights to these judicial bodies. The explosion of political treatises in the French Enlightenment provided a unique perspective on the country’s legal history separate from the vested interests of the crown or the parlements. From Montesquieu’s Esprit des Lois to the encyclopédistes’ prodigious work to Rousseau’s Social Contract, the diverse philosophes and concerned intellectuals challenged entrenched political power by contemplating what form of government was best for France. Royal officials and sympathizers composed essays defending the King’s sovereignty to counter both these groups, parlementaires and philosophes; Baker highlights Jacob-Nicolas Moreau’s efforts as particularly adept at collecting historical texts to support the King’s traditional authority. But the crown’s defenders were fighting a losing battle, especially as Louis XV lost prestige and popularity in his personal and professional decisions. Asserting themselves as the true defenders of French legal traditions, the parlementaires challenged the very foundations of the monarchy.

This brings us back to the “century of Unigenitus” and the unique interconnection of religion and politics in eighteenth-century France. By continuing to enforce Unigenitus and support the Jesuits in France, André-Hercule de Fleury and Louis XV further “desacralized” the

74 This is how Van Kley describes the eighteenth-century in The Religious Origins of the French Revolution.
monarchy. *Unigenitus* united Jansenists and Gallicans and gave ambitious magistrates political and religious ammunition in their legal disputes with the King. By persecuting his own countrymen at the behest of a document enacted by a foreign religious leader, Louis XV undermined the absolutist theory that his predecessors had done so much to advance. He and his ministers were following Louis XIV’s quest against Jansenists because they too saw subversive elements in these Catholic puritans’ message. Jansenism advocated inward piety expressed through outward good works while the “Most Christian King” engaged in notorious affairs. Once Jansenists became ingrained in the *parlements* they stirred up legal opposition to royal directives.

Though they were a minority within the courts, Jansenists encouraged their colleagues to dispute *Unigenitus* and the Jesuits, although non-Jansenist, Gallican *parlementaires* often needed little convincing. Jansenist jurists, clergy, and businessmen became adept at utilizing the prevailing religious atmosphere, namely support for Gallicanism, to achieve victory over their religious rivals. Van Kley discerns that, according to the Jansenist newspaper the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, “the political portion of [Jansenism’s] quarrel with the Jesuits was just as, if not more, important than the theological.”75 This journal helped to spread Jansenist ideas to a wider audience, at least among intellectual elites who were the primary members of a more public political discourse.

In their publications Jansenists accused the Jesuits, and the King who supported them, of despotism and religious persecution, indictments with serious implications in an environment already questioning the roots of political sovereignty. Their assertions appealed to a larger audience than just *parlementaires* in the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* and garnered popular support in the conflict over the Saint-Médard miracles in the 1730s and the *billets de confession* in the 1750s. In both these instances the monarchy intervened in its citizens’ religious expression and

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75 Van Kley, *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France*, 34
asserted its authority over French Christians. The convulsionary movement at the Saint-Médard cemetery was a major recruiting tool for Jansenists, both for the miracles experienced there and their repression by the King. Because it was a popular religious movement, its repression by royal officials bolstered accusations that the King was acting despotically. When French priests demanded proof of people’s confession to a non-Jansenist clergyman in order to administer the sacraments, most importantly the last rites, they sparked a national controversy. Even people who were not Jansenists decried the priests’ actions because of the appalling implications of people dying without receiving last rites. The King supported the offending priests which again garnered accusations that he was neglecting his sacred duty to protect his subjects. Alternatively, the Parlement in Paris emerged as the champion of religious rights in France. The Jansenists were not the first or only Christian group in France with a strong political dimension, but their presence and actions within the heightened political and religious tensions of the mid to late eighteenth-century certainly provided a catalyst for significant changes.

The expulsion of the Jesuits in the 1760s was consequently a victory for Jansenists, Gallicans, and philosophes over Jesuits, as well as for parlementaires (Jansenist or not) over the monarchy. The event which precipitated the Jesuits’ downfall was an embezzling scandal by the Jesuit leader La Valette in the French island colony, Martinique. La Valette was caught not by French officials looking into Jesuit dealings, but by English ships at the beginning of the Seven Years’ War. Damaging as this revelation was, it did not have to lead to the Orders’ expulsion. Rather, their insistence on engaging in a trial rather than paying restitution put the Jesuits’ future in the hands of their enemies in the Parlement of Paris who took the opportunity to critically

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76 Campbell posits that the Saint-Médard episode was a major element in eliciting popular support for Jansenism, though he notes that almost half of the convulsionaries came from people who were well-off – “shopkeepers and above, including a quarter from the bourgeoisie, the robe and above,” Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 204.
examine Jesuit constitutions.\textsuperscript{77} That body issued an \textit{appel comme d’abus} in 1761 against the Jesuits which was “suspensive and provisional,” pending consideration by provincial \textit{parlements} and allowed the Jesuits one year to appeal before magistrates in Paris.\textsuperscript{78} This was partly to avoid drawing a definitive line in the sand with Louis XV who still supported the Jesuits. Over the next year Jansenists furiously elicited public support against the “despotic” and corrupt partisans of the Pope. The Jesuits aligned themselves with a monarch who was growing increasingly apprehensive about the damage to his position such an alliance brought. He tried to defend the Order without being accused of despotism by overtly overruling the \textit{Parlement}, but he eventually “resigned himself to what seemed to be the inevitable.”\textsuperscript{79} By 1762 most Jesuit \textit{collèges} and institutions across France were closed and the Order officially expelled at the end of 1764.

\textbf{Beyond the Expulsion of the Jesuits}

Though the \textit{parlements} triumphed over the Jesuit Order, their difficulties with the King were far from over. In the early 1760s the \textit{Parlement} of Rennes clashed with the monarchy over the registration of a financial declaration which culminated in the arrest of six magistrates accused of conspiring against the King, and the resignation of the court in 1765. While sparked by yet another dispute over taxation, the so-called Brittany Affair centered on the personal rivalry between the \textit{procureur-général} of the \textit{Parlement}, Louis René Caradeuc de La Chalotais and the secretary of state for foreign affairs, the duc d’Aiguillon. D’Aiguillon and members of his faction at court believed that there were subversive elements in the \textit{parlements} across France. When his uncle, secretary of state Saint-Florentin received anonymous letters maligning the King, both men suspected (or perhaps wished) La Chalotais was the author and hired

\textsuperscript{77} Van Kley describes the Jesuits’ “blunder” more in-depth in \textit{The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France}.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 137
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 201
handwriting experts to prove it.\(^{80}\) La Chalotais’ colleagues came to his defense when he and a few others were arrested for conspiring against the king, providing a united and “vociferous” front against threats to parlementary privileges and jurisdiction.\(^{81}\) As events heated up, the King realized that he needed to affirm his authority to maintain control over the courts. In a *lit de justice* in front of the *Parlement* of Paris on March 3, 1766 known as the *Séance de la flagellation*, Louis XV forcefully asserted his position as protector of the French polity, directly negating the magistrates’ constitutional and legal claims that they represented the country’s citizens in the face of an intolerant King. Louis declared that public order emanated from him; the Nation was inseparably linked to his person, and he would not tolerate subversive elements within the *parlements*.\(^{82}\) Soon thereafter the King ceased the trial of the six arrested magistrates, but exiled them all from Brittany. In the end the King and his ministers appeared ruthless and arbitrary because they pursued the accused *parlementaires* so “remorselessly,” which fuelled allegations that the government was despotic.\(^{83}\)

The Brittany Affair directly contributed to the crisis in 1771 when chancellor Maupeou, with the King’s blessing, refused to back down on his reforms to curb the rebellious *Parlement* of Paris and exiled most of its members. The magistrates were frustrated by the Breton magistrates’ treatment by Louis XV, and by his continued insistence that they pass his financial plans. Maupeou’s heavy handed approach further raised the indignation of the King’s political rivals, and animated the discussion of the constitutional obligations of the *parlements*. They believed they now had unmistakable evidence that the King was overstepping his bounds, and

\(^{80}\) In *Politics and the Parlement of Paris*, Julian Swann discusses the personal rivalry between La Chalotais and the duc d’Aiguillon, suggesting that the indictment of La Chalotais for writing potentially treasonous letters was without true evidence, and was mostly a convenient excuse for the *parlementaire’s* enemies to attack him.

\(^{81}\) Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris Under Louis XV* 274

\(^{82}\) Robert R. Palmer, “The National Idea in France Before the Revolution,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1, no. 1 (January 1940): 104. Palmer takes the king’s side, arguing that he was “correct in thinking that he represented the country better than a Parlement which had obstructed attempts of the Crown to lessen inequalities of taxation,” 105.

many observers agreed with them.\textsuperscript{84} Numerous pamphlets and books castigated the government’s actions in the early 1770s, including Guillaume-Joseph Saige’s \textit{Catechisme du Citoyen}. Keith Michael Baker uses Saige’s work to demonstrate the extent to which political debates had come to challenge traditional authority and politics in the eighteenth-century. Saige made an argument for a “radical” interpretation of national sovereignty that went beyond abstract Rousseauan theories to offer a “direct response to a precisely defined act of royal despotism.”\textsuperscript{85} Almost two decades before the Revolution in 1789, Saige presented a choice between “revolution” against the government or “the destruction of the political order” if there were not significant reforms.\textsuperscript{86} The revolution was temporarily delayed when Louis XV died and Louis XVI reinstated the exiled magistrates. But the young king’s attempt to resolve political tension in France only made the returning \textit{parlementaires} triumphant and more tenacious.\textsuperscript{87} The Maupeou “revolution” highlighted the need to firmly establish the rightful wielders of political authority and representation in France. Merrick claims that the critiques that emerged during the crisis in the 1770s finally “discarded the absolutist myth of divine ordination” and the “absolutist fiction of the unaccountability of the crown.”\textsuperscript{88} There was no going back, no “resacralization” of the French monarchy after this point. Not even Louis XVI’s personal piety could repair the damage from decades of religious conflicts; it actually contributed to the “seditious discourse” about his impotence.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{85} Baker, \textit{Inventing the French Revolution}, 128-129
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 129-129
\textsuperscript{87} See Merrick, \textit{The Desacralization of the French Monarchy}, 125
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 129. See also Baker, \textit{Inventing the French Revolution}, 170.
\textsuperscript{89} Van Kley, \textit{The Religious Origins of the French Revolution}, 293
Conclusion

Because the expulsion of the Jesuits in the early 1760s had such a dramatic impact on French education, it is important to understand the story behind it. As discussed above, the political and religious environment and conflicts in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries culminated in this momentous event. But even beyond the Jesuits’ physical expulsion, sixty years of conflict between Jansenists and Jesuits, *parlementaires* and royal ministers, and between Gallicans and ultramontanes transformed the way people thought about religion’s place in education. It also impacted the deterioration of the relationship between the monarchy and the courts in the late-eighteenth century and the disintegration of sacred absolutism. Attacks on the Church and even on Christianity by iconoclastic *philosophes* did not convince everyone to abandon their faith, but they certainly added fuel to the fire encroaching on the institutional Church. Discontent over the Jesuits’ tolerant attitude towards royal sin and their allegiance to a foreign ruler contributed to complaints about Church hierarchy in France and the extent to which it should be involved in education. Once the Jesuits were gone those wishing to modify the system of public instruction had an ideal opportunity to propose and even implement change. A royal edict in 1763 attempted to reorganize abandoned Jesuit *collèges* under local Church and *parlementary* control, but the system was imperfect at best and many schools collapsed.  

Lay governors butted heads with teachers, most of whom were secular clergymen, and many schools reverted to the authority of other Christian teaching Orders. There was no real attempt to institute a uniform, national education system until the Revolution, though many politicians, *philosophes*, teachers, clergymen, and parents presented plans to form one.

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90 The direction of schools was composed of “boards of governors, the diocesan bishop to preside, and the members to be the premier président and procureur-général of the local *parlement*, the two chief municipal officers, two co-opted notables, and the headmaster of the school,” John McManners, *The Clerical Establishment and its Social Ramifications*, 517.

91 Ibid., 517-518.
A significant change that occurred as a result of the conflicts discussed above was a transformation in the expectation of who should control primary schooling and what role religion should have in it. Priests were no longer the primary people interested in the power of education to create good, loyal, and moral Christians. Scientists, *philosophes* and *parlementaires* increasingly saw a legitimate role for themselves in primary education. Louis XV’s persistent alignment with the unpopular Jesuits, and his lack of public piety stimulated criticism about the sacred aspects of an “absolute” monarchy. Throughout the political and religious strife in the eighteenth-century the King’s role as protector of French Christians and subjects was questioned, and other players, especially *parlementaires*, asserted themselves as the true defenders of French legal traditions. As the monarchy was “desacralized,” the conception of a separation between Church and State became easier to envision. Likewise, reformers’ discontent with clerical control over education led to plans for a secular system run by governmental officials that still imparted Christian values and traditions, though not as concerned with personal piety. Even as sacred absolutism and clerical control over schools were crumbling, Christianity retained a central role in public education in the eyes of educational reformers.
Chapter 2: The Conditions of Education before 1762

Seventeenth-Century Antecedents

Although the authors of educational treatises in the eighteenth-century were heavily influenced by the controversy surrounding *Unigenitus*, they frequently referred to works published in the seventeenth-century. Foremost among these was John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which was first translated into French in 1695 and went through multiple editions throughout the next century. Many of Locke’s ideas were shared by contemporary French authors Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, Claude Fleury and François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon. An examination of these authors is essential for understanding future debates over French education because their educational treatises and instructional manuals were used in schools throughout the eighteenth-century, and were often recommended in the projects from 1762 to 1789. Locke is undoubtedly the most referenced by the authors considered later in this work, though many of his prescribed teaching methods were common in the late-seventeenth century, and were present to some extent in the works of the three French authors described below. What set this English philosopher apart from his counterparts across the Channel was his unique contribution to an ongoing debate about original sin and man’s true nature that transformed the implications of education’s impact on society. The three other men examined here may not have had the same impact on French *philosophes* as Locke did, but they greatly contributed to French education during their lives and over the next century; de la Salle through the schools he established, Fleury through his instructional manuals, and Fénelon through his

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93 As will be described below, these include the belief that humans learn best through personal experience and their senses, also known as sensationism, through aversion to pain and attraction to pleasure, and that children require an education specific to their unique capacities and sensibilities.
collection of fables and famous book *Telemaque*. All three were priests and teachers with unique teaching approaches to educating children, and their work touched and inspired generations of students.

**John Locke**

“I imagine the minds of children as easily turned this or that way as water itself.”

Peter Gay calls John Locke the “father of the Enlightenment in educational thought.”

Writing at the end of the seventeenth-century, Locke formulated educational theories that proved fundamental to generations of French philosophers. Especially relevant was Locke’s idea of the mind at birth as a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate. He proposed that the human mind had a vast capacity for development, with education as the vehicle for its expansion. He attributed the differences in men’s abilities and conduct to their education rather than their class, though social status could have a direct impact on a person’s ability to access schooling. The implications of this idea alone were momentous for anyone interested in directing the future; whoever controlled children’s education could decide what values they followed, and what kind of adults they would become. Locke did not take his conclusions as far as some of his admirers in France who envisioned endless possibilities in open minds ready to be led by their environments. It would take another century before French politicians fully envisioned a far-reaching program to inculcate new citizens according to their principles. Several of Locke’s ideas influenced French educational theorists, but his concept of the human mind’s malleability widened the possibilities for education that dramatically impacted the conversation on who should control schools.

In order to conceive of a flexible and directed mind, Locke first had to contemplate man’s original state at birth. *Some Thoughts on Education* is the only text Locke wrote devoted entirely

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94 John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* ([London], 1693), 2
to education. However, several of his other works address mental, physical, and spiritual
formation he further develops in Some Thoughts. Ideas that are especially relevant to the political
and philosophical aspects of Some Thoughts come from Locke’s Two Treatises of Government,
Of the Conduct of the Understanding, and An Essay Concerning Understanding.\textsuperscript{96} In these
works, particularly in his Essay, Locke struggled with the concept of innatism. The idea that
people are born with natural, often corrupt principles and knowledge propelled religious
arguments that moral education was necessary to keep humanity from sliding into naturally
inclined depravity. Both Protestants and Catholics adhered to this concept of original sin, though
with different emphases on the necessity of God’s grace to combat it.\textsuperscript{97}

Though Locke was a Protestant, he deviated from the traditional religious understanding
of original sin when he proposed that people are in fact born without innate knowledge and that
the mind at birth is like a blank slate. Locke believed in a kind of “original neutrality” rather than
original sin or original innocence.\textsuperscript{98} Neutral and blank, the child’s mind is open to impressions
like hot wax. Their capacity for instruction was potentially limitless. Even if Locke rejected
original sin, he still advocated instilling Christian values into children along with Biblical
knowledge and elementary theology. Also, his Christian faith informed his belief in human
potential and progress. “We are born with faculties and powers capable almost of anything, such
at least as would carry us farther than can easily be imagined,” he says. “But it is only the
exercise of those powers which gives us ability and skill in anything, and leads us towards

\textsuperscript{96} Both of these works were published in 1689, four years before Some Thoughts on Education.
\textsuperscript{97} See Peter A. Schouls, Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1992),
193-196 for a short rundown of the differences between the Protestant and Catholic theology of original sin by the
late seventeenth-century
\textsuperscript{98} Schouls, Reasoned Freedom, 197.
He believed that humans had great potential, but needed direction to perfect their minds and to lead them to virtue, thus the water analogy.

Locke incorporates the whole human experience in his educational treatise, not just the mind. *Some Thoughts* continually advocates training the body and mind alike to perfect their temperaments and capacity; “a sound mind in a sound body.” Speaking primarily to an aristocratic audience, Locke advises parents to expose their children to small discomforts to inculcate “a strong constitution, able to endure hardships” and warns against spoiling them by “cockering and tenderness.” He references certain practices of the rural poor as beneficial for everyone, anticipating a romanticization of country life common among some *philosophes* including Rousseau. Essentially, children should have “plenty of open air, exercise and sleep; plain diet, no wine or strong drink…straight clothing, especially the head and feet kept cold, and the feet often used to cold water, and exposed to wet.” The aim of all this was to discipline the body so that it may tolerate discomfort and so that people may push themselves to greater endeavors. Strong bodies, like strong minds develop “chiefly in being able to endure hardships.”

But Locke recognized that humans naturally withdraw from discomfort. The one innate capacity that Locke identifies in *Some Thoughts* was that children, and adults, gravitate towards what gives them pleasure and away from what brings them pain, both physically and mentally. Hence, using rewards and punishments, the “only motives to a rational creature,” is the ultimate

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100 Ibid., 1.  
101 Ibid., 3-4.  
102 Ibid., 32.  
103 Ibid., 33
method for parents, tutors, and teachers to instruct children. They should make learning pleasant, even recreational, so that children want to study. Given the choice, a child would rather play than sit in a classroom, so it is the teachers’ responsibility to instill in them a strong work ethic. Discipline of the mind and body under the right guidance will produce virtuous, moral, wise adults. The goal of a good education according to Locke was not found in merely bearing adversity; the student must recognize and choose the more difficult path. “The great principle and foundation of all vertue (sic) and worth, is placed in this, that a man is able to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, tho’ (sic) the appetite lean the other way.” But Locke understood that children were different creatures with different motivations and drives than the men they may become. His child-centered model emphasized that children’s education should be fashioned according to their unique capacities. They were not simply smaller versions of adults, but singular creatures deserving distinct treatment. Education should focus on the abilities, aptitude, and needs of the child rather than the desires or customs of the teachers.

With this in mind, Locke did not envision social engineering or political indoctrination as an acceptable application of his paradigm. His emphasis is on giving students the freedom to exercise the reason they are taught. It is the instructor’s imperative to continually guide children to right behavior, gently but with recourse to physical correction if necessary, so that eventually the student chooses the right path on their own. In order to create a functioning, virtuous adult,

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104 Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education, 53. Locke devotes a lot of this treatise discussing the benefits of different forms of punishment, and when to use which type. However, he admonishes against reprimanding or whipping them too severely because it is counteractive.
105 Ibid., 33
106 Philippe Ariès asserts that there was no real conception of childhood in Europe until the sixteenth or seventeenth century, at which time a transformation occurred which saw children treated as innocent and “fragile creatures of God who needed to be safeguarded and reformed.” Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Knopf, 1962), 133. Locke participated in the larger movement that Aries identifies, one which realized children’s separate needs, and emphasized discipline and rationality.
the child must be taught what is right until they are able to correctly govern themselves. Thus learning is achieved through constant *practice* and application. He was not the first to advocate giving individual attention to children in the classroom; the Jesuits among other teaching groups also offered each student at least a little private instruction.\(^{107}\) Yet Locke’s method goes beyond simple rote memorization of more and more facts as was the typical method of his time. A student of his method would gain knowledge as a step towards a well-rounded education, not as an end in itself. He advocated a Christian upbringing as the best to instill morality and good behavior on otherwise unfilled minds. Locke wanted to create rational adults who would willingly chose to “follow what reason directs as best,” his model of virtue.\(^{108}\)

But by emphasizing the impact of environmental influences on the human mind Locke’s theories opened up the possibilities for any force, religious or otherwise, to direct society by controlling education. As Natasha Gill points out, because Locke did not differentiate between “‘internal’ and ‘external’ motivation” he paved the way for “the validation of a purely secular and utilitarian interpretation of virtuous behavior.”\(^{109}\) Locke’s claim that “all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education” inspired educators, philosophers, and political theorists across Europe for at least the next century.\(^{110}\)

**The Three French Priests**

Apart from Locke’s *tabula rasa* idea, most of the practices proposed in *Some Thoughts on Education* are not unique to him. Several French philosophers expressed similar arguments for education, including an emphasis on children’s unique nature, teaching through the senses or

\(^{107}\) Natasha Gill mentions Pierre Nicole, Michel de Montaigne, and Johann Amos Comenius, among others, as precursors to Locke in promoting individual learning, *Educational Philosophy in the French Enlightenment*

\(^{108}\) Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 33


environment, and consciousness of the pleasure/pain drives. In the case of Claude Fleury, his *Traité du choix et de la méthode des études* was published before Locke’s *Some Thoughts* and may even have informed some of Locke’s thoughts. Isaac Newton, Nicolas Malebranche, and especially René Descartes inspired Locke’s educational philosophy, and that of his French counterparts. Thus while the majority of eighteenth-century French writers discussed here gained insight from Locke’s canon of works, including *Some Thoughts*, his was only one of the many contributing voices to educational theory. There are several important French voices that contributed to the education discussion before 1715 when Louis XIV died, but only three are considered here. Claude Fleury and his fellow royal educator François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, along with Jean-Baptiste de la Salle were three of the most influential educationalists in France at the turn of the century. Their work, whether through their teaching manuals or institutional legacies, continued on into the rest of the eighteenth-century.

Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle was a devout cleric who dedicated most of his life to forming a system of charitable primary education for poor children. He founded the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, or the “Christian Brothers” in the 1680s in Paris, and worked until his death to elucidate its purpose, goals, and conduct. Petty politics within the Catholic Church periodically afflicted La Salle, but did not interfere with “the general progress

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111 Gill emphasizes these three “progressive notions” were elaborated by several writers who wrote “three of the most influential pedagogical treatises of the early French Enlightenment.” The men she focuses on are Charles Rollin, Jean-Pierre de Crousaz, and Claude Fleury, the last of which is considered in this paper, *Educational Philosophy in the French Enlightenment*, 73-98.
112 Fleury’s *Traité du choix* was published in 1686. Gill claims that Locke owned a copy of this book, *Educational Philosophy in the French Enlightenment*, 75.
113 Locke’s adoption of Descartes’ philosophy regarding politics, religion, and the nature of men as they relate to education is complicated at best, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into them. For a more detailed description of Locke’s Cartesian influences see James M. Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); Gill, *Educational Philosophy*; Ross Hutchison, *Locke in France*; and Schouls, *Reasoned Freedom*. These are only a few of the numerous works that investigate Descartes’ impact on Locke and other eighteenth-century writers.
of the institute” across France. In 1725 the Institute was officially recognized by Pope Benedict XIII, one year after receiving letters patent for the jurisdiction of the Parlement of Rouen by Louis XV. Christian Brothers’ schools continued to flourish up to the Revolution, when many of their teachers, all priests, refused to submit to the civil constitution of the clergy and left their positions. However, the Institute survived the Revolution and its schools still operate across the world today. Besides the direct impact that La Salle’s educational writings had on Frenchmen throughout the next century, the methods used in Christian Brothers’ schools were notorious, for good or bad. Some lauded their efforts and charity, but most of the educational theorists considered in this work criticized the monotony and severity present in their classrooms.

Repetition and structure are highly evident in La Salle’s writings, but are advocated as tools to instill Christian values and literacy. His *Conduite des écoles* is a teacher’s manual on how to properly provide a Christian education and run a school. It is orderly, strict, and very precise; every hour of the school day is accounted for, as is the correct response to every potential problem. Religion permeated all aspects of the schools, from prayers recited together throughout the day to the conditions necessary to impose physical punishment. The main texts the children studied were the Bible, the catechism, and La Salle’s *Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne*. Altogether, the “Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher” according to the La Salle method are “seriousness, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, restraint, gentleness, zeal, watchfulness, piety, and generosity.” La Salle wanted his teachers to induce

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115 At the start of the Revolution there were 127 Christian Brothers communities within France and internationally, teaching 36,000 students, see La Salle, *The Conduct*, 30. For more information on La Salle and the Christian Brothers see W.J. Battersby, *Saint John Baptist de la Salle*, (London: Burns Oates, 1957).
learning and “win [their pupils] to our Lord Jesus Christ” by practicing firm authority and constant vigilance. They were to use varying degrees of “correction” to guide students away from bad behavior, from reprimands to using the rod, and rewards to incentivize proper conduct. Silence plays a vital role, being the “principal means of establishing and maintaining order in schools.”

There were two goals to education for La Salle; to provide a sound Catholic education to raise good Christians who fear God and to teach children how to read and write. His schools taught primarily poor students, and provided basic instruction, where these two objectives were all anyone expected them to learn. La Salle’s passion for providing an education to France’s underprivileged children was rather unique for his time, though numerous subsequent writers in the eighteenth-century advocated schooling for the lower classes. He argued that the advantages of literacy for a child far outweighed the benefit they could bring their families by staying at home to work, that “however little intelligent he may be, if he knows how to read and write he is capable of anything.” Thus we see La Salle advocating children’s potential through education and using punishments and rewards to teach practical skills, the most important of which were Catholicism and literacy. These principles infused Christian Brothers’ schools and influenced thousands of Frenchmen whether they were their students or not. If nothing else, the Christian Brothers’ methods instigated many educational theorists to devise new instructional systems that were not quite so methodical and strict.

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117 The teacher’s constant surveillance provided order and discipline both while the teacher was in the classroom, and when they were absent because then God was watching the students. This is reminiscent of the panopticon in Michel Foucault’s *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). Foucault was not the first critic of this practice; Louis-René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais also harshly criticized the surveillance aspect of Christian Brothers’ schools in his *Essai d’éducation nationale ou Plan d’études pour la jeunesse*, discussed below.
118 La Salle, *The Conduct of the Schools of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle*, 147.
119 La Salle spends a lot of time discussing how to teach children to read and write, and proper pronunciation of French. He advocates making sure that children know French before being taught Latin because it is more useful.
120 This topic is particularly explored by Harvey Chisick in *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment*.
121 La Salle *The Conduct of the Schools of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle*, 199.
Claude Fleury and François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon were devout priests and teachers who wrote several educational manuals each. Both gained prominence and enjoyed prestigious religious and political positions. Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, the Bishop of Meaux and famed defender of absolutism, was a longtime friend of Fleury and Fénelon and he introduced the two to each other in the early 1680s. Over the next few years both had successful teaching careers and growing reputations within aristocratic and courtly circles, so that in 1689 they were chosen to be the preceptor (Fénelon) and sub-preceptor (Fleury) to Louis XIV’s grandson, the young Duc de Bourgogne. After Fénelon’s fall from power in 1697, and Louis XIV’s death in 1715, Fleury was appointed to be the new young king’s confessor. Although they did not personally influence as many students as Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, their reputation spread their writings. Their approaches to education differ, but Fleury and Fénelon at times expressed similar goals and methods, elements of which are present in Locke and future French theorists.

“Education must be the apprenticeship of your life,” according to Fleury in his *Traité du choix et de la méthode des études*. No matter what profession a person pursued, they should devote themselves to learning the most useful and practical knowledge pertinent to their position.

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123 Fleury was primarily a historian whose great opus was the *Catéchisme Historique* which was mentioned by some of the educational treatises in the late-eighteenth century, including J.B.L. Crevier, and Jean-Baptiste Daragon who are both discussed in chapter 4 of this study.

124 Fénelon’s dismissal from court ultimately came after he wrote *Télémaque*, as is discussed below, but he had already become estranged from Bossuet due to a religious dispute regarding Fénelon’s association with Madame Guyon and Quietism. There are numerous works that explore Fénelon’s religious and political disputes with Bossuet and at court, of which a few are Davis, *Fénelon*; Gérard Ferreyrolles, Béatrice Guion, and Jean-Louis Quantin, *Bossuet* (Paris: PUPS, 2008); Patrick Riley in François de Fénelon, *Telemachus, son of Ulysses*, ed. and trans. Patrick Riley, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Ernest Seillière, *Mme Guyon et Fénelon: Précurseurs de Rousseau* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1918); Wanner, *Claude Fleury*.

125 Claude Fleury, *Traité du choix et de la méthode des études*, trans. anonymous (London: S. Keble, 1695), 56. As noted above, the *Traité du choix* was first published in 1686. Fleury also wrote *Histoire du droit Français* (1674) and *Les moeurs des chrestiens* (1682), though the *Traité* is the only work considered here because of its direct treatment of education.
And the most important training for anyone was to care for their souls, the foundation of education, which is achieved through studying virtue.\footnote{Fleury, \textit{Traité du choix.}, 73} For Fleury, priests and bishops were the “true professors” of morality, the “principle design of all education,” but any public instruction they provided must be supplemented in the home to be most effective.\footnote{Ibid., 73, 89} His education was not merely concerned with learning facts, but rather with understanding how to apply reason to those facts and to the world. But reason went hand in hand with experience and practice. In this line, and very much reminiscent of Locke, Fleury advocated training the body to endure discomfort as a spiritual practice of discipline. However, every effort should be made so that education is an enjoyable experience for children so that they associate learning with pleasure. While he did not propose excluding poorer children from schools, Fleury warned against their number being too great because too much education may adversely affect their futures as farmers, artisans, or tradesmen.\footnote{He observes that those children who “rashly” pursue their studies can be left without any practical knowledge useful for a person of their class, and “yet think any other way of living unworthy of them.” Fleury, \textit{Traité de choix}, 110.} Learning Latin should be postponed because only those who could continue their education for many years, in other words the wealthy, would need to know the language of law, religion, and business. In sum, an education should raise virtuous, moral Christians who know how to think and act reasonably, armed with the practical knowledge pertinent to their position in society.

Fénelon composed an educational treatise similar to those of the above authors, but his approach to teaching was more creative than that of Fleury, La Salle, or Locke. As noted above, Claude Fleury greatly influenced Fénelon professionally and intellectually. Fénelon’s \textit{Éducation des filles} adopted many of Fleury’s ideas, such as that children should learn by experience through curiosity, which a superior instructor can guide to their own interests while making their
instruction pleasant. The best education was one in which the child does not realize they are being taught. More importantly, Fénelon agreed with Locke that children are by nature “simple and open,” with highly impressionable new brains, a crucial stage for imprinting good morals and behavior. Fénelon’s unique contribution to educational theory, “indirect instruction,” emanated from these ideas and is best exemplified in his didactic epic *Les Aventures de Télémaque*. Relying on children’s love for fairy-tales and fables, Fénelon adopted a classic tale to introduce moral lessons. It was positively received by most of France, except for some members of the royal court and the Church, and spurred several editions and imitations. The controversy surrounding *Télémaque* when it was first published in 1699 made it an overnight sensation, and it remained popular throughout the eighteenth-century as did Fénelon’s scheme for indirect instruction.

Pleasurable learning through experience and imprinting morality and virtue early on malleable young minds are more or less the principle themes gleaned from Locke, La Salle, Fleury, and Fénelon. Locke’s international fame in philosophic circles helped to disseminate his ideas into France, though many of his thoughts on education were already present. La Salle founded a Christian institution that went on to instruct thousands of French students, and which stimulated debate by *philosophes* and politicians alike. Fleury expressed similar ideas as Locke,

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129 He says “La curiosité des enfants est un penchant de la nature qui va comme au devant de l’instruction, ne manquez pas d’en profiter.” Fénelon, François de Salignac de la Mothe-., *Éducation des filles*, (Paris, 1687), 32. Fénelon also suggests teaching children to read by making it a game, 61.


131 In chapter 6 of *Éducation des filles* he advocates this method for teaching Biblical stories and elementary theology to children. Fénelon also wrote *Fables* and *Dialogues des morts* in the same vein.

132 See Davis, Fénelon, 107-111. Rousseau considered *Télémaque* to be the only book worthy for his *Emile* besides *Robinson Crusoe*.

133 As James Davis aptly put it, “The great public clamor, the almost incredible brouhaha of interest and outrage that greeted the publication of *Télémaque* quickly turned it into nothing more or less than a *success de scandale*.” The controversy centered around the association many men and women at court found between themselves and various characters in the book. Especially significant was the critique of King Idomeneus in *Télémaque*, who many readers associated with Louis XIV.
and influenced not only his colleague Fénelon, but generations of educationalists.\textsuperscript{134} Fénelon wrote one of the most read children’s books in the eighteenth-century, and popularized the notion of teaching indirectly through stories. These men and their philosophies on education continually appear in French educational treatises up to the Revolution.

\textbf{The Collèges and the Jesuits}

In order to appreciate criticisms of French education in the eighteenth-century, one has to first consider what the reigning methods and institutions were. \textit{Collèges} originally began as boarding schools in the late sixteenth-century and developed into day schools where the “monastic spirit” of medieval schools was replaced by “authoritarian discipline” and supervision.\textsuperscript{135} Emerging from the Renaissance, these schools focused on teaching Greek and Roman classics in their original languages, with an emphasis on Latin to read religious sources. By the eighteenth-century most French \textit{collèges} were run by religious teaching orders founded during the Counter Reformation. The Jesuits, Oratorians, Pères de la Doctrine Chrétienne, and the Lazarists were the major players, with the Christian Brothers being a late addition at the turn of the eighteenth-century. Especially after the Council of Trent these religious orders wanted to Christianize the population and combat Protestantism; educating children allowed them to reach a wider receptive audience.

The Jesuits in particular were founded as a teaching society by Saint Ignatius of Loyola and were interested in both university instruction in philosophy and religion and primary education of children in grammar and the catechism. They adopted Christian humanism to educate the whole person that emphasized grammar, rhetoric, and elementary religious instruction for the lower five classes and philosophy, logic, and theology for the higher

\textsuperscript{134} See Wanner, \textit{Claude Fleury}, 218-253 for more on Fleury’s spread and impact in France.
\textsuperscript{135} Philippe Aries, \textit{Centuries of Childhood}, 167
classes.\textsuperscript{136} The Jesuits emphasized reading classic rather than modern authors, though they conveniently disregarded any pagan elements found therein by carefully selecting the materials to study. Natasha Gill posits that the Jesuits used the classics to create a space for children to learn about vice without experiencing it; they were a “sterile bridge to morality.”\textsuperscript{137} Children were separated from the immoral world and constantly watched for any signs of vice which they were naturally inclined to. They were taught Christian and classical morals including dedication to the patrie and to the Catholic Church.

The education gained from these collèges was useful primarily for future jurists, clerics, bureaucrats, and military officials, though sons of wealthy peasants could also attend if they could afford it. Besides those schools run by the Christian Brothers, most collèges charged some tuition. Poorer children might attend a local grammar or Sunday school at church to learn the catechism and perhaps a bit of reading and writing. But for the most part, the collèges primarily taught the more privileged members of society. The classical education collèges provided was intended to make their students adept rhetoricians, philosophers, theologians, and jurists, should they complete their studies. The major critiques levied against this system in the eighteenth-century surrounded its lack of utility in a more modern world. Critics decried the emphasis on dead over living languages, and the lack of practical subjects such as history, geography and the sciences. Even if they did not directly mention the Jesuits, by far the most disparaged order, educational theorists and reformers almost universally mentioned these improvements to the contemporary system. Certainly by 1762 the majority of educated French men and women believed that French public education needed significant reforms, and the expulsion of the order

\textsuperscript{136} In this case, “classes” refers to the students’ year in school, not to social class.
\textsuperscript{137} Gill, \textit{Educational Philosophy in the French Enlightenment}, 69
most associated with the backward methods in practice provided an excellent opportunity to implement those ideas.

**From Unigenitus to 1762**

From the initial implementation of *Unigenitus* in 1713 to the expulsion of the Jansenists in 1762 numerous educational treatises were published in France. The majority of these were practical teaching manuals for instructors and parents, but several were essays that examined educational theory and presented new schemes for organizing national education. Their authors came from diverse backgrounds including scientists, priests, teachers and philosophers. Before moving on to the national plans proposed after 1762, this chapter ends by examining three distinct educational sources. All three assert that education needs to be useful to the students. They also spend a lot of time discussing how children’s minds are formed because in order for teachers to be effective they need to understand how the mind works. They largely lack the same fervor for state-run national education systems that became so popular in the 1760s, though Saint-Pierre touches on it in his *Projet*, but they strongly advocate replacing the existing system with a structured and uniform system.

Charles-Irenée Castel, abbé de Saint-Pierre was a Jesuit educated priest, scientist, politician, and later *philosophe*. His position as chaplain to the Duchess d’Orléans at the court of Louis XIV at the turn of the eighteenth-century afforded him access to political intrigues and intelligence that informed his writings. Indeed, he is best known for his political works especially *Le projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*, completed in 1717. However, he also wrote a *Projet pour perfectionner l’éducation* in 1728 that combined contemporary educational theories with an emphasis on the moral and religious imperatives for instructing children. He wanted children to learn good practices and morals to prepare them for this life and for the next,
and to profit their country as good citizens. Saint-Pierre lays out five fundamental methods or habits for obtaining a good education, all of which are infused with Christian disciplines; they include Christian prudence, justice, “bienfaisance,” discernment of truth, and exercising a good memory. He claimed that “all good or bad habits start in childhood, are strengthened during youth [la jeunesse] and then govern men for the rest of their lives.”

With his background in natural science, Saint-Pierre compared children to plants and trees with their instructors as the gardeners of their lives, rather than using Locke’s tabula rasa image. Children “resemble young plants” that are easier to manipulate because they are just beginning to “bend” and are not yet inflexible to outside manipulation. Unlike Locke and Fleury, but in line with Jesuit beliefs, Saint-Pierre maintained that children were not entirely blank slates when their education began, in part because he envisioned more public than private instruction. Teachers had to work to “recover” students from such bad habits as they have practiced until entering school in the same way as a gardener prunes a tree in a nursery. What this entailed was constant repetition and practice, not only in terms of factual knowledge, but also of moral behavior. The best way to learn is to do, or at least to observe; this is one of the reasons Saint Pierre advocated public over private education, because only in a group setting can students really learn from each others’ errors and practice proper social behaviors. But again, young students needed constant supervision to ensure good behavior and that they did not become bored with Saint-Pierre’s repetitious method. Yet children must not comprehend the surveillance of their teachers; they must remain largely ignorant of the process for it to be

138 Saint Pierre, Projet pour perfectionner l’éducation, avec un discourse sur la grandeur et la saineté des homes (1728), 28
139 Ibid., 26
140 Ibid., 26-27
141 Ibid., 71-74
effective. Three decades later Rousseau would advocate the same system of undetected surveillance for Emile’s education.

Beyond these instructions for educators, Saint-Pierre also made preliminary suggestions for a more uniform education system in France to implement his method, and encouraged instruction for practical reasons. He called for “un Bureau perpetual pour diriger perpetuellement l’Education de la jeunesse” governed by an authoritative minister and informed by men with years of experience in their professions. However, beyond expressing a need for such an institution, Saint-Pierre did not lay out a constructive plan for developing it. But he recognized that uniformity of instruction and method among all the collèges in France would better produce loyal, virtuous citizens who had similar values and diligence after all their repetitious learning. Because the collèges were where “la tête de la nation” learned virtuous and religious habits to “increase the happiness of the whole nation,” it was in the government’s best interest to invest in a uniform education system. Saint-Pierre argued that education should not only form moral and virtuous Christians prepared for heaven, but it should also prepare people to be servants of the State in their future professions. They should be instructed in subjects that they will use for the rest of their lives including history, geography, music, anatomy, medicine, chemistry, politics, law, geometry and arithmetic, among others. Students bound for particular professions should receive specialized instruction in their last years at collège, always keeping in mind that their talents are “useless, and even harmful to society, if they are not always accompanied by virtuous habits.”

The renowned French nationalist and scientist Charles-Marie de la Condamine dabbled with educational theories with his Lettre Critique sur l’éducation, published in 1751. Having

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142 Saint-Pierre, Projet pour perfectionner l’éducation, 88-89
143 Ibid., 137-138
144 Ibid., 69
received a Jesuit education at Louis-le-Grand, La Condamine decried the eighteenth-century system as inefficient and outdated. Like so many of his contemporaries, La Condamine advocated utility in education, where successful students would have the tools to live productive, useful lives that would benefit society. He wanted to eliminate instruction in topics and information that were no longer practical, including Latin and Greek grammar and “Baroque syllogistic rules”, and insert functional subjects such as history, geography, mathematics, politics, and living languages. The “secret” of his method is to “exercise children’s memories without exhausting their attention” and to take advantage of the time the child struggles to understand ideas by providing them with words to express themselves. Because children have large memories but lack judgment they should be taught much information by heart early on, and then taught the meaning behind that knowledge as they grow older. Thus La Condamine does not throw out teaching the Catechism, so long as it is in French and made intelligible to children by their instructors. He does, however, refute Fénelon’s method of using fables and fairy tales to teach moral lessons in favor of lessons in history because it is more practical.

Because this paper is primarily concerned with educational projects that could be practically implemented and not with philosophical expositions, not much space will be devoted to the latter. However, the abstract ideas articulated by some *encyclopédistes* and *philosophes* were part of the eighteenth-century intellectual milieu that influenced, directly or indirectly, more practical plans for French primary education. This has already been demonstrated in the consideration of Locke’s philosophy. Therefore no discussion about educational treatises in this time is complete without at least tacitly considering the work of a few influential *philosophes*.

145 Charle-Marie de La Condamine, *Lettre critique sur l’éducation*, 21
146 La Condamine, *Lettre critique sur l’éducation*, 34
The *Encyclopédie*, that great philosophic project spearheaded by Jean le Rond d’Alembert and Denis Diderot in the mid-eighteenth century has various references to education in its many articles, including one each on *collèges* and *éducation*. César Chesneau Dumarsais wrote the article on *éducation* while Edme-François Mallet and d’Alembert contributed to the article on *collèges*. The piece on *éducation* repeats much of the same advice as the other authors already examined in this study. Like Saint-Pierre, it made an analogy between the cultivation of plants and children’s education, saying that in both cases nature “doit fournir le fonds.” In the eighteenth-century, education encompassed the whole person - body, mind, and spirit, so no discussion on the topic was complete without considering children’s health and hygiene.\(^{147}\) It noted the argument, advocated by Locke and later Rousseau, that children should be exposed to more physical hardships because peasants in the countryside were deemed healthier by being more “natural.” However this argument was rejected as flawed because it does not account for the very real dangers such practices can cause, especially for children who grow up in a privileged household. Dumarsais allowed that child-rearing should not be “soft” or “effeminate,” but should not go to extremes in the quest to return to an idyllic “natural” state.\(^{148}\) This naturalist recognized that even if nature could do all, man must use his reason to properly interact with it. Nature is a tool that is only effective under the right direction. Thus the second most important part of a good education is a skilled instructor who can manipulate pupils according to his wishes. It is imperative that children begin their education early because their first impressions last the longest and are the hardest to reform.

\(^{147}\) This division of people into body and mind reflects the persistent influence of Descartes’ dualism in eighteenth-century thought.

The article entitled *collège* starts by reviewing the history of *collèges* from antiquity to the eighteenth-century, noting their difference from *lycées, académies* and universities. It identified three aspects of public education including rhetoric, the humanities, philosophy, morals and religion. The text is highly disapproving of the existing education system and those running the schools. It criticized the fact that students spent so much time studying religion and the catechism when they could be learning more useful information. And besides, it adds, is not the “most pleasing prayer to God” a person’s work to “fulfill the duties of his state?” A child spent the ten most valuable years of their life at a *collège* and only emerges with an imperfect understanding of a dead language, a superficial knowledge of religion, deteriorated health, and poor manners. The teachers were not to blame for the inefficiency of public education in France, and many “deplore” it; inept or possibly even corrupt masters following an outdated model are to blame.


150 Ibid., 3:635

151 Ibid., 3: 636
Chapter 3: Educational Treatises Following the Expulsion of the Jesuits

More educational treatises were written in the 1760s than in any other decade during the eighteenth-century. The trial and expulsion of the Jesuits from France in the early 1760s mostly explains why there was such an explosion of educational writings around the same time. The logistical problems that the loss of Jesuit instructors, collèges and universities introduced stimulated many plans and projects to fill the gap they left behind. But the concurrent appearance of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile ou de l’éducation* inspired numerous responses on its own, both favorable and inimical. Rousseau’s treatise is so distinctive because it combines his unique political, religious, and philosophical ideas with existing theories on child-rearing. While *Emile* does not align with the other works studied here because it is more philosophic than practically applicable, it significantly impacted the discussion of French education for the rest of the century especially because of its connections to Rousseau’s *Social Contract*. For this reason, this study includes a short description of *Emile*, even though Rousseau’s work does not discuss a national education system as so many of his contemporaries did in the mid-eighteenth century.

In the 1760s, many of Rousseau’s critics used *Emile* as an example of a flawed model to refute in their own plans. One of the first to respond to *Emile* was Louis-René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais’ *Essai d’éducation nationale, ou Plan d’études pour la jeunesse*, published in 1763. La Chalotais was the procureur-général of the Breton Parlement of Rennes in the middle of the eighteenth-century, and was fiercely anti-Jesuit. In 1762 he published a *Compte rendu des constitution des Jésuites* as an indictment against the Society’s fanaticism and backwardness, but it was his *Essai* that inspired other educational theorists into the French Revolution. It specifically calls for a national public education system under secular governmental control and out of the hands of corrupt and inept monks and priests. La Chalotais’ work exemplified the
concept of national education for his contemporaries. The central part of this chapter focuses on La Chalotais before continuing on to examine a few of the authors who commented on education in the 1760s.

**Rousseau’s *Emile***

The son of a Genevan clockmaker, Rousseau traveled to Paris in the 1740s to pursue music and only turned to writing philosophical tracts in response to a call for papers by the Academy of Dijon. Though the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* was his initial foray into Enlightenment discourse, its composition was not the first time he had pondered such ideas. Thereafter, he participated in the increasingly significant culture of salons and academies, writing articles for the *Encyclopédie* and publishing influential works. He fell out of favor with various *philosophes*, most memorably with Voltaire, because of some of his controversial ideas that seemingly countered “typical” Enlightenment thought. This has led to debates over whether Rousseau’s philosophy, particularly his treatment of the limits of reason, can truly be considered part of the Enlightenment. Yet Rousseau deservedly remains a part of the *philosophe* canon, however distinctive his particular interpretations of society, politics, and reason were from his contemporaries.

Though *Emile* was published in 1762, just a few months after his political treatise *The Social Contract*, Rousseau was not primarily reacting to the trial of the Jesuits; he actually wanted to publish both works earlier. The two works fit together in Rousseau’s political ideology; *The Social Contract* expressed his argument for a legitimate state based upon the general will of citizens and *Emile* was his attempt to correctly educate a citizen of a flawed State

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not run by a social contract, but ready to participate in one nonetheless. Rather than responding primarily to events surrounding the *parlements*, the monarchy and the Jesuits like La Chalotais and other authors, Rousseau’s texts expressed his unique theories.  

When considering Rousseau’s other writings, his rejection of the possibility to create both a man and a citizen seems contradictory, but really reflects his rejection of French society. Arthur Melzer argues persuasively that despite all his “supposed idiosyncrasies, contradictions, and changes of mind,” Rousseau maintained a unity in his “system and his intentions” throughout his writings. Rousseau elaborates further on his ideas for a civil education, and the dichotomy between nature and society in his *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, the *Discourse on the Origins and Foundation of Inequality*, *The Social Contract*, and *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, among others. Most immediately relevant when discussing *Emile* is *The Social Contract*, published in the same year. In *Emile*, Rousseau is so critical of his state, France, and its society that he rejects its validity to educate citizens. Because France is not governed by the general will of its people under a social contract, it is useless for it to try to educate true citizens.

It follows that in *Emile* Rousseau remains skeptical at best regarding the government’s relationship to teaching morals in a non-ideal state, according to his definition. He refers his readers to Montesquieu’s *De l’esprit des lois* to study “les rapports nécessaires des moeurs au gouvernement,” then goes on to extrapolate his own succinct ideas. A government’s goodness should be judged by examining the population of the state, its size and the morality of its people.

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154 Indeed, Cranston argues that the expulsion of the Jesuits “seems to have stunned Rousseau.” *The Noble Savage*, 316.
156 See Perkinson, “Rousseau’s Emile.”
posits that “le pays qui peuple le plus, fût-il le plus pauvre, est infailliblement le mieux gouverné,” though he reserves judgment on whether France’s population is increasing or decreasing “à sa ruine.” \(^{158}\) Though he, of course, puts his own Rousseauean spin on judging true demographic growth by advising that truly moral governments will by their inherent goodness incline their citizens to good deeds without using force. Thus people will be compelled to marry and produce more children without the need for constraining laws. A government’s natural rectitude should influence morals, rather than needing to legislate them. The true form of government is “fardée par l’appareil de l’administration et par le jargon des administrateurs” and is only discovered by studying its effect on the “people.” \(^{159}\) He diverges drastically from contemporary authors’ reliance on state apparatuses to instigate good conduct. Further, following his own proscriptions against urban society, Rousseau claims that evidence of population growth and the morality of a nation is found in the country, not in cities. By examining people dispersed in the provinces, away from corruption and closer to nature, the true character of a nation is found; “plus [les nations] se rapprochent de la nature, plus la bonté domaine dans leur caractère.” \(^{160}\)

Rousseau borrowed, or copied, large parts of Emile’s early education from John Locke, especially his romanticization of rural life and belief that “il n’y a point de perversité originelle dans le coeur humain.” \(^{161}\) Most of his advice on preserving the health and fitness of young children is unoriginal, including his lengthy discussion on the dangers of wetnurses. \(^{162}\) Rousseau rejects Locke’s prescription to reason with children from an early age, believing that they are by

\(^{158}\) Rousseau, *Emile*, 613. Rousseau notes that China is the only exception to this rule that he knows of.

\(^{159}\) Ibid., 614-15

\(^{160}\) Ibid., 615

\(^{161}\) Ibid., 111.

\(^{162}\) Eighteenth century foundling hospitals were well aware of the high mortality rate for children sent to wetnurses, see Matthew Gerber, *Bastards: Politics, Family, and Law in Early Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
nature immature and must be treated as different creatures than grown men. Until children reach the age of reason, which is much later in life, they must be taught what is good and what is bad, through experience mostly, according to Rousseau. To become good, one must do good, and Rousseau sets Emile up to participate in character building activities. Likewise, young children, here talking about infants and toddlers, cannot act badly because they do not know what is bad until they are taught. Rousseau thus precludes punishing them because they are not yet moral beings. Yet there is still room for conscience, which compels people to love good and hate evil. These internal leanings, however, are not enough; man still needs to learn what the inclination to do good or its opposite mean.

Here Rousseau adopts Locke’s representation of the soul as a *tabula rasa*, but he focuses on preventing bad behavior and morals rather than on promoting virtue. This is the focus of Rousseau’s “negative education,” but the reason for such a concentration on vice is because of Rousseau’s fixation on society’s corrupting influence, opposed to man’s right state in nature. An orphan restricted to his childhood home, with only his tutor as a guide and companion, Emile is the ideal student, the ultimate *tabula rasa*. Without previously learned bad habits to correct or outside influence the tutor directs his pupil’s every lesson, controlling him while giving him the illusion of freedom. But still the focus of Emile’s early education is on further preventing him from learning poor behavior. Here is evidence of Rousseau’s pessimistic tone; though he attributes no original iniquity in humans, his inclination is that they will tend towards depravity.

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163 In this sense, Rousseau overlooks the novelty of Locke’s child-centered model in its late seventeenth-century environment, reflecting the extent to which the idea of children as separate from adults had taken hold by the mid-eighteenth-century.
164 Rousseau, *Emile*, 111
165 Ibid., 77
They must be discouraged from bad behavior, and taught to value and follow the good. Yet Emile remains an unattainable ideal student, educated in the clean, fresh country air, removed from any societal or corrupting influences and completely under the control of his tutor.

Rousseau touches briefly on the need for multiple educations for the different classes, and largely agrees that in an ideal State everyone should be instructed in their designated occupation, and no more. In the “natural” world, Rousseau proclaims all men equal and called to improve man’s state in that world, but in a world corrupted by society, each person has their place. He is not troubled by peasants having less access to schooling; on the contrary, he praises their rustic and “natural” knowledge. “Dans l’ordre social, où toutes les places sont marqués, chacun doit être élevé pour la sienne.” Furthermore, he proclaims that students learn more practical lessons from examining the world around them, and from interaction with each other than anything they may be taught in a dull and dreary classroom. The tutor encourages Emile to discover answers to proposed difficulties on his own, prompted in the right direction by previous conversations and investigations. Thus the tutor leads the boy through the woods and pretends to be lost, inspiring Emile to deduce the direction home based on the previous week’s lesson in geography. The important point is that the learned topics are useful, not that everyone would have access to the same education. With everyone employed in their established jobs, the order of the State works. But, “si un particulier formé pour sa place en sort, il n’est plus propre à rien.” Emile does eventually learn a trade, so as to give him a constructive employment and prevent him from becoming a useless pedant.

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166 Rousseau goes on at length in Books I and II about discouraging bad behavior in young children by retaining control and not giving in to their demands. For more on Rousseau’s pessimism, see Melzer, “Rousseau’s ‘Mission’”, 294-320.
167 Rousseau, *Emile*, 41. See also *Emile*, 156: “Il n’y a point de petit paysan à douze qui ne sache se servir d’un levier mieux que le premier mécanicien de l’Académie. Les leçons que les écoliers prennent entre eux dans la cour du college leur sont cent fois plus utiles que tout ce qu’on leur dira jamais dans la class.”
168 Ibid.
Following a negative education, Rousseau focuses much more on prohibitions than on suggestions for what to include in education. Firstly, he expresses an intense distaste for books, and almost exclusively restricts them from Emile. The only two books that he mentions giving Emile are *Robinson Crusoe* and Fénelon’s *Telemachus*. Rousseau’s aversion to books springs from his whole philosophy on learning. Books can contain useless knowledge, of which children cannot tell the difference from truly pertinent information, and on their own books do not instruct. “*Ils n’apprennent qu’à parler de ce qu’on ne sait pas.*”169 For all his praise of the solitary man separated from corrupt society, Rousseau presents in the *Emile* an education founded on a relationship – that between student and tutor. Emile’s entire education is directed by his tutor, though the child does not, according to Rousseau, realize that he is being led. The tutor remains always nearby, ever watchful even while appearing aloof. This is so that Emile may be kept from learning harmful practices while at the same time encouraging his childlike curiosity so he can learn by experience.

Regarding religion, Rousseau recommends not teaching it to children until they are at least in their teenage years because they cannot yet comprehend what they are expected to believe. The Professions expounded by the Savoyard Priest in Book IV are perhaps the main impetus behind the Parlement of Paris’ banning of *Emile*, but the conclusion of the priest’s speech is that Emile should listen to his advice but then choose his own religion.170 Rousseau does not throw out Christianity as a true religion, in fact he advocates it for Emile, nor does he consider dispelling religion entirely. However, his “natural religion” realigned factors to

169 Rousseau, *Emile*, 238
170 Ibid., 409-410. See also Cranston, *The Noble Savage*, 334-362 for details about the parlement’s denunciation of Emile and Rousseau’s banishment from France.
“demonstrate by reason what the Gospel teaches on authority.” The fact the tutor allows *Emile* to choose Christianity rather than commanding him to accept it as truth definitely places Rousseau among the more radical *philosophes* of his time, but it does not necessarily make him anti-Christian so much as anti-Church.

The problem with considering *Emile* alongside other educational projects from the mid to late eighteenth-century is that it promotes *private* instruction with no role for a governing body. Rousseau posits a dichotomy between nature and society that forces a choice between “making a man or a citizen because one cannot at the same time make both one and the other.” *Emile* is both Rousseau’s explication of the ideal, though unrealistic, education for a man separate from society and a philosophical treatise on man’s corruption by that society along with advisements to avoid such a fate. To protect Emile the tutor keeps him in the country until he is sufficiently protected from harmful city life by his “natural” perspective. Emile lacks the vapid insincerity of the Parisian aristocrats and *salonnières* with whom Rousseau had a vacillating relationship. Emile’s education is entirely private and practically impossible to copy, but it was not Rousseau’s goal to outline a replicable model. Rather, he wanted to sketch certain methods of instruction and expound on some of his previous writings while offering his own utopian ideal. Emile’s particular education was not meant to be meticulously copied, but many of Rousseau’s admirers selected parts of his child-rearing ideas to follow. Anyone familiar with Locke’s work, however, would recognize most of Rousseau’s suggestions regarding health and hygiene. *Emile* lent itself nicely to those wishing to pick and choose elements of Rousseauean education because

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172 Rousseau, *Emile*, 38
it contained some easily applicable suggestions. But it does not fit in with other national
education plans because it is an ideal and not a practical system.

La Chalotais

Louis-René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais was the procureur-général of the Breton Parlement of Rennes in the middle of the eighteenth-century. He was a fiery politician, and fiercely anti-Jesuit. Besides his Essai d’éducation nationale, La Chalotais was, and is, best known for his role in the so-called “Brittany Affair” from 1764-1766. But he gained notoriety before that event through his remarks on the Jesuit controversy and the future of French education. His Compte rendu des constitution des Jésuites in 1762 was an indictment of the Society’s fanaticism and backwardness. His approach and the form of his arguments earned him the admonition of Jesuits who accused him of being an Encyclopédist and a disciple of the philosophes. Though other philosophes such as Voltaire and d’Alembert praised La Chalotais’ work, he was not so tightly aligned with their values or beliefs and “guilt by association is hardly a legitimate method by which to categorize a thinker.” His criticisms of the Jesuits, though perhaps reflecting the philosophical and literary milieu of his time that resonated with other “enlightened” authors, reflected his opinions as a statesman, not as a philosopher. La Chalotais’ Essai d’éducation nationale also elicited numerous responses by other educational theorists in the next few decades, whose authors embraced the idea of a national public educational system expounded therein.

173 See Chapter 1 of this study.
174 See Van Kley, The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits, 139-162
175 Ibid., 140
La Chalotais’ main criticism of the Jesuits was that they were beholden to the Pope, a foreign power, and not to the King or to France. His *Essai d’éducation nationale* further elucidated this and one other aspect of his disapproval of Jesuits: the disgraceful state of France’s educational system under their leadership. La Chalotais certainly supported the Jesuits’ expulsion, but he also recognized that with them went the largest group of teachers in the country. A new system was needed, and this was the ideal time to discuss remodeling French education. La Chalotais wrote the *Essai* as a politician specifically for the Parlement of Brittany to help develop a method to administer previously Jesuit-run schools. Despite the local character of its commissioning, the *Essai* addressed a potential national system to instruct France’s children and raise citizens, and it elucidated La Chalotais’ political theories. La Chalotais offers plenty of criticism of the Jesuits as teachers, but his *Essai* concentrates more on instituting a new plan for the future of French instruction. His patriotic tone and reference to citizens and national pride display the rising nationalistic fervor that David Bell identified in *The Cult of the Nation in France*.

La Chalotais offers yet another image of a Lockean *tabula rasa* to explain the soul. La Chalotais claimed that people are born with a nascent “*capacité vuide*” and that ideas are introduced into the mind by sensation and reflection. However, this *capacité vuide* is aided by a natural and divine law “written on all hearts” which “the conscience testifies to.” Thus humans are born open vessels, rather than blank slates, guided by their consciences and led by a

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178 See Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*
180 Ibid., 119
moral, “natural” law that transcends time and place.\textsuperscript{181} But that empty space quickly needs to be filled to reinforce the conscience and encourage children to follow the moral law and do good, otherwise immoral influences may creep in. This is done by the child examining the world through the senses, a sensationist education, or by teaching them right ideas to produce good morals. People are led by the principles taught them early in life, he asserts, and by the ideas which those principles influence. Teaching sound morals guides children’s principles and ideas to good rather than evil. Without instruction, culture or knowledge of “ses devoirs” man will preoccupy himself with evil.\textsuperscript{182} La Chalotais cites ignorant centuries as being the most vicious and corrupt, but recognizes that even great nations do not necessarily have good moeurs publiques.\textsuperscript{183} Eighteenth-century France, while grand, still suffered under the actions of ignorant and unenlightened men, and needed a sound educational system to put it on the right track. This is not so different from Rousseau’s assertion that men are corrupted by society. Men become good by learning what right conduct and ideas are, thus education is the means to overcome evil.\textsuperscript{184}

Where La Chalotais diverges from Rousseau is in his solution. This parlementaire places far more confidence in the power and ability of France’s legislators and King to overcome social corruption through education than does the renegade philosophe Rousseau. La Chalotais’ primary inspiration for writing his essay, other than the immediate need to replace the Jesuit’s educational system, is to outline a plan for a civil education that benefits the State. If social perversity, lax morals, and an overabundance of luxury are the problems, then education is the

\textsuperscript{181} La Chalotais, Essai d’éducation., 119
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 7
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 7 and 9. La Chalotais further elaborates some problems in the public morals of a “great nation” including too much luxury, people not having enough devotion to country or the public good, and people forgetting to perform the duties of their profession.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 9-10.
solution. Throughout his essay La Chalotais appeals to the King as the arbiter for the future of the French educational system. All that the King need do to ensure such a scheme is to order that more instruction books be written, an easy task according to La Chalotais. Let the King command this, education will proceed smoothly, and all that is left is to find teachers. He does not criticize the King for supporting the Jesuits or for his personal sins, most likely because La Chalotais recognized the consequences of such a move, which he would later suffer because of a political rivalry with a court faction.

La Chalotais promotes allowing secular clergy and laics to become teachers; in fact, they would be far better than the Jesuits with their banal rituals and suspect allegiance to the Pope. He places the prerogative to educate French citizens solely on the State: “Je prétends révendiquer pour la Nation une éducation qui ne dépende que de l’État, parce qu’elle lui appartient essentiellement; parce que toute Nation a un droit inaliénable et imprescriptible d’instruire ses membres; parce qu’enfin les enfants de l’État doivent être élevés par des membres de l’État.” Such an education could completely change France for the better, adding to its esteem and strengthening its power by increasing the utility of its members. Since the prestige of the State was so closely tied with the education, or lack thereof, of its members, it was up to the government to initiate and oversee that instruction. The government was inextricably linked with teaching morality to ensure that French men, and women, remained loyal, reliable, and devoted.

Regarding what exactly to teach the people of France, La Chalotais argues that “le bien de la Société demande que les connoissances du Peuple ne s’étendent pas plus loin que ses

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185 Perhaps his deference in this document lends credence to La Chalotais’ denial of writing the letters sent to Saint-Florentin that expressed criticism of Louis XV and set off the “Brittany Affair.”
186 See Chapter 1 about the Brittany Affair
187 La Chalotais, Essai d’éducation, 20
Teaching farmers and artisans to read and write, if it takes away from their primary work, is counterproductive and potentially harmful. They should be educated to be religious and good citizens, but only so far as it encourages them to be useful contributors to the nation. This tenet applies to the higher professions as well. Lawyers, doctors, and scientists need applicable instruction by capable, informed teachers, and it is in the best interests of the State to provide such education. A state with a few competent and educated members and a majority of less-well learned workers will succeed so long as “chacun s’attache à sa profession.” It need not necessarily be public education; he calls domestic education “la plus naturelle et la plus favorable aux moeurs et à la société,” so long as the teachers are religious, have good morals, and can read well. Likewise, it does not have to be universal. It is better to have a few good collèges with fewer students and better teachers and instruction than many mediocre institutions. Following many of his contemporaries, La Chalotais expresses some fear that people may neglect their occupations in favor of more learned trades.

For La Chalotais, books make up one of the two essential components to a good education, excellent teachers being the second. Both parts need to be present; books alone without teachers do not fully educate a student, and teachers without books often are not informed enough on all subjects to teach them adequately. The instructors make sure that students are learning, and the books give those instructors the tools and information they need. Books are especially necessary to teach history, a subject that La Chalotais expounds on as particularly important for children to learn early. History is useful to further the patriotic spirit.

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188 La Chalotais, Essai d’éducation, 28. See also Harvey Chisick’s study of French Enlightenment writings on popular education, The Limits of Reform, which elucidates some of these concerns that legislators and philosophes raised over providing instruction to the lower classes.
189 La Chalotais, Essai d’éducation, 31.
190 Ibid., 141.
191 Ibid., 28
192 See Ibid., 47-55
and elicit pride for the nation, as well as for teaching sound moral principles. For young children, La Chalotais advocates using fables, and directly criticizes Rousseau for prohibiting them from Emile. But Rousseau’s reasons for keeping fanciful moral stories from Emile are similar to La Chalotais’ distaste for novels; they both argue that these compositions can have a corrupting influence if the student is not properly instructed by an erudite mentor.

Though La Chalotais focuses more on what to teach than what to prohibit, contrary to Rousseau’s “negative” education, he raises similar suggestions on how to instruct children. Both he and Rousseau lay out a progression of study for children, breaking up their education into stages to reflect the capacity of their minds. La Chalotais complains that the current system of keeping children in classrooms for most of the day endlessly repeating Latin phrases was not successful at teaching much of anything. Men learn through their senses, by seeing, listening, touching, experimenting, and reflecting, and because children lack prior experience or erroneous ideas they are the best pupils. Children first learn through concrete examples, not from abstract reasoning which should be gradually taught as they grow older and develop the faculties to understand logic. Rousseau presents a similar argument for delaying teaching reason to children until they can fully understand its purpose. If they are reasoned with too young, they can become “disputeurs et mutins.”

1762-1789

From 1762 to 1789 numerous politicians, philosophes, scientists, priests, and educators wrote educational treatises that (1) support public education, (2) under governmental or State

193 See Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, 107-139 for information about “National memory and the Canon of Great Frenchmen.”
194 Though, La Chalotais does advocate some memorization practice, so long as it is useful information, because “c’est que l’on retient bien que ce qui a été souvent répété, et qu’il n’y a que la répétition des mêmes idées, qui puisse former des traces allez fortes pour les conserver long-temps.” La Chalotais, *Essai d’éducation*, 44.
195 Ibid., 40-41
196 Ibid., 98-99
197 Rousseau, *Emile*, 107
control, (3) teaching useful information along with (4) religious morality. These four elements appear over and over so often that the multiple plans and projects begin to seem almost identical.

The remainder of this chapter will briefly examine the correlations among four other education plans that were published from 1762 to 1789, noting their inclusion of the four essential components of French national education. The authors to be studied were chosen based on the pertinence of their arguments to the discussion on national state-run education. They also represent a range of backgrounds both secular and religious, with some experience in education, and a range of publication dates for their works. Many elements of La Chalotais’ national education plan are recycled and augmented, and there are a few attempts made to elucidate a feasible national system that is self-sustaining and funded, mostly under State control and direction. Most agree that the education of citizens is crucial for France to remain (or become, depending on the perspective) a great nation, and therefore the King and the Magistrates should invest financially, ideologically, and structurally in a uniform scheme. Public instruction should be above all devoted to utility and religious morality.

The Plan Général d’Institution, particulièrement destiné pour la jeunesse

The anonymous Plan Général provides a detailed, concrete plan for a uniform and national education that will produce useful citizens. Unlike many other “plans” it incorporates a philosophy of education and a design for scholastic institutions that are run by efficient administrators under a functioning bureaucracy rather than just stating that such a design should exist. It is also one of the few projects from this period that discusses the education of girls. In fact, the author attributes a lot of influence over the “morals of a Nation” to women. They have a certain female power which combines a “severity of morals” in a “mild character, and lights of a cultivated mind” that could change the face of an entire Nation and have a certain power over
Beyond including both sexes, the *Plan Général* emphasizes that all members of society need an education to be valuable to the State, and to keep all citizens under the discipline, and control, of a common morality. Every school should have the same laws and practices no matter who runs them so that every citizen has the same upbringing and values. The project equates improving the “institution of youth” with a reformation of the “morals of an entire nation,” which includes *all* parts of society – urban and rural, male and female, farmer, artisan, and bureaucrat. However, this is not a call for social equality per se; everyone should receive an education, but not all educations are created equal. The plan calls for four divisions in the schools in every part of France, with one class each for different parts of society. Girls’ schooling is also divided into four where they receive instruction appropriate to their sex. To guarantee consistency and uniformity in all schools across the country the *Plan Général* proposes a system of surveillance by secular and sacred authorities. The curés of each district would visit all the families in their vicinity to ensure their children were receiving an education, whether in school or at home. The Municipal Bureau of the cities will inspect and survey every *collège* in their region. No child could “escape the watchful eyes of the *Magistrat*” until they are strong enough to “walk alone without fear of going astray.”

The most pressing logistical problem for French schools was a lack of teachers for the *collèges* and of the money to pay them. The *Plan Général* explains exactly how many positions need to be filled, the qualities to look for when hiring teachers, and potential methods to pay

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198 Anonymous (Impr. Causse), Plan général d’institution, particulièrement destiné pour la jeunesse du resort du Parlement de Bourgogne, 1763, 11-12
199 Ibid.
200 There is one school in the country for sons of laborers and agricultural workers, one in the “bourgs” and villages for sons of artisans, one in the cities for the early education of sons of gentlemen, and another for higher education, Anonymous, 12.
201 Girls learn “rustic economy” in the country, how to be a domestic servant in the city, how to be a good mother and housekeeper if they are of higher social standing, and how to be “women of quality,” Anonymous, 13.
202 Ibid., 36-37
them. In smaller villages there should be at least one school teacher, preferably married so that
his wife could teach the girls. Several teachers were needed in larger cities, and in the capital the
Brothers of the Christian Doctrine and the Sisters of Charity could teach the many poor children.
Instructors should be passionate so they can instill a love of learning in their pupils. The project
specifies what qualities to look for in both male and female teachers, and suggestions of
indispensable books to teach from including the Bible, the Catechism, the Lives of the Saints by
Abbé Gouget, and a collection of moral maxims.\textsuperscript{203} But the most essential position in schools is
held by the Principal who monitors all the teachers and students, dispenses prizes for academic
contests, and ensures there are enough supplies and funding.

As organized as this plan is, however, its author demonstrates some naivety in his or her
proposed method to raise the necessary funds to support a national education system. The plan
calls for a combination of taxes and pensions to provide the money to pay teachers and
administrators; taxes to maintain schools in poor areas and pensions from wealthier parents to
support the whole system. Parents could also pay extra for dance, music, or other supplementary
lessons if they could afford it. What the plan largely overlooks is the complexities of local
customs in tax collection and cultural traditions that made any “uniform” project in France
incredibly difficult to implement. It is also problematic to suggest new taxes to fund public
education at a time of such financial turmoil in a country wracked with war debt and political
discord between the King and the \textit{parlements}. As such, the \textit{Plan Général} is typical of other
national education projects that are filled with grand schemes but lacking in practicality, as
educational reformers in the French Revolution learned when they attempted to actually
implement a countrywide system.

\textsuperscript{203} Anonymous, 54. The plan also lays out a structure for the school day and year, taking into account holidays and
agricultural seasons that will affect schoolchildren.
Jean-Baptiste Daragon

Jean-Baptiste Daragon was a professor of philosophy at the University of Paris. His *Lettre...sur la nécessité et la manière de faire entrer un cours de morale dans l’éducation publique*, published in 1762, argued that education should be useful and incorporate Christian morals. He criticized a system that left its students unprepared for the transition from *collège* to adult society. To alleviate this problem he argued that students should enter school when they are a little older than is customary to give them more time to prepare for a time of serious study. Additionally, the period of study should be extended two years where pupils will learn ethics to ensure that “young men will only receive accurate principles that conform to the constitution of the State.” 204 There should be a “fixed goal” for students throughout their years at school to give their education direction. 205 Similar to most reformers, Daragon derided the teaching of Latin and Greek because they had no utility. Why, he asked, did children continue to study a dead language since Latin was no longer imperative to understanding public documents or traveling around Europe? Do French engineers still use Gothic architecture to construct new buildings? 206 The answer, of course, is no.

Beyond complaining about the existing system, Daragon offered some constructive ideas. He said there needed to be a coherent policy towards public instruction founded on a “complete body of morality” for it to be effective. 207 Appealing to the King, he argued that a more uniform system benefited the State by producing constructive citizens who were loyal to France and had similar values, and would ensure the happiness of both the State and mankind. 208 Though he did not mention the Jesuits specifically, Daragon claimed that morality was neglected entirely in the

204 Daragon, 52
205 Ibid., 9
206 Ibid., 54
207 Ibid., 30
208 Ibid., 13
schools. If French schools were reformed, he asserts, the time could be found to train and form the citizen and the Christian at the same time, which should be the “main goal” of every institution. He concluded that the physics and geometry of the universe were evidence of God’s creation, all of which was for man as man was for God. Religious morality was still valuable in eighteenth-century France, but the way of teaching it needed to be updated, taking into account new scientific knowledge about the world and jettisoning the traditional and largely useless language of religion, Latin. Science and Christianity were not necessarily antagonistic because science was the study of God’s creation that strengthened the faith of believers.

Devienne

The 1775 *Plan d’éducation, et les moyens de l’exécuter*, written by Devienne, a Benedictine from the Congregation of Saint-Maur, emphasized that the nation that could construct a useful system of education for its citizens was setting up a foundation for its happiness and glory. He listed five components for the education of children until they reached adolescence. These included maintaining their health, instructing them in religion, correcting their vices, giving them age appropriate lessons, and cultivating their natural talents. His health advice was mostly unoriginal as he rehashed Rousseau’s recommendations to “strengthen [children’s] character.” This does, however, show the persistence of Rousseau’s ideas, and how many people selectively adopted parts of *Emile*. It seems that for Devienne, studying religion was important more for its usefulness than because of a divine mandate. A religious education entailed having respect for “les objets de son culte,” being certain that man cannot be happy unless he is fulfilling his duties, and that religion is the main recourse for the hardships of

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209 Daragon, 41
210 Ibid., 62
211 Devienne, 13
212 These include living in a house with “fresh air,” eating “simple and frugal” food, lots of exercise, and active games, Devienne, 14
life.\textsuperscript{213} Devienne described education as an “art” that entailed doling out punishments to persuade students that it is “more advantageous” to abandon their bad practices.\textsuperscript{214} While Devienne did not explicitly discuss different educations for different social classes, he did say that all children should learn about religion, math, reading, writing, and how to speak well. As for any further instruction, the children, or rather, their parents should have complete freedom to choose what that should be. Because educated citizens represent the “hope of the nation,” teachers needed to be worthy of their “honorable title,” use their time wisely and be informed about multiple subjects to provide the most comprehensive instruction and to please the parents of all students.\textsuperscript{215}

Devienne’s plan also provided pragmatic suggestions to run and fund a system that are similar to those advocated by the anonymous \emph{Plan Général}. The Principal or director should have full authority in the schools. Students stayed in school for ten years, the first five learning the basics (reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion), and the last five in a specialization of their choice to cultivate their natural talents. Although, typical of many of these projects, Devienne’s plan spent a lot of time discussing how much money is needed to keep a school functioning, but hardly remarks on how those funds are to be raised.\textsuperscript{216}

**Corbin**

The last author considered here addressed his arguments to the National Assembly in 1789. Corbin, a priest, strongly advocated for a State run public education infused with religious principles in his \emph{Mémoire sur les principaux objets de l’éducation publique}. He claimed that the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{213} Devienne., 14
\item \textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 15
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 18; The subjects he lists for teachers to know include: reading, writing, arithmetic, dancing, drawing, vocal music, instrumental music, painting, geography, chronology, history, French grammar, spelling, ethics, Latin, Greek, Italien, English, Spanish, German, mathematics, natural history, philosophy, physics, horsemanship, and weaponry, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{216} See…
\end{itemize}
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public education system in France was irreparable because it had inexperienced teachers and no religious or moral foundation, two essential elements of a successful education. Even though a multitude of educational projects addressing the deficiencies in French schools had flooded the public, Corbin said most of them were filled with useless exaggerations, “childish” declamations, or are “bizarre, false, [and] dangerous.”

There were no real plans for education, just verbose speculations, when what France needed was a firm structure and strategy. Corbin provided a framework for a true system, and proposed a commission to oversee and standardize French education composed of “enlightened” men from various professions including bishops, judges, bourgeois, and soldiers.

Corbin’s plan was first of all national, in that it was sanctioned by the State to contribute to the training of men and citizens, and also to provide consistency and avoid confusion in all schools across France. Similar to other plans it had two distinct parts, one broad and one specific; the first was to provide a basic education that was suitable for all orders of citizens, and the second was to give specialized instruction to the different particular parts of society. This way all students learned common knowledge of vital subjects, including a love for the laws of the State and religion to create fraternal citizens, but each student only completed a course of study constructive to their profession. The State needed to oversee education to ensure that all citizens were “imbued with the same principles, fed nourris the same maxims [and] familiar

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217 Corbin, 11-12
218 Corbin, 33-34. He proposes that the Keeper of the Seals preside over the commission, and that its members be “firmly religious.” Corbin’s plan also lays out the number of schools to have in each province, the amount of money needed to run them, how many teachers and administrators to staff, and how to discipline children.
219 Corbin recycles many of the same recommendations for an updated curriculum as his predecessors such as focusing on French over Latin, modern over ancient history, and specialized professional development in the later years of study.
with the same truths” so that when they were adults these students always acted in favor of public interests.\textsuperscript{220}

Teachers had the most important role because they had the most contact with the children of the State, so the administrators of a national education system needed to establish governmentally funded schools to train instructors. Teachers must be virtuous, moral, and strong examples of all the values the State wants to imbue in citizens and must also be pious Christians. No matter the subject being taught or the social background of the student, religion should be “the goal of all work and the end of every instruction by a good teacher, basic at first and developed and deepened” throughout the years.\textsuperscript{221} Because there was a pressing need for more and better teachers, Corbin suggested that public education should be entrusted to all who were capable of fulfilling the teaching duties outlined above, including secular and regular clergymen and laymen as long as they were qualified and effective. Indeed, non-clergy teachers could provide useful information based upon their professional experience which was desirable since utility was a primary objective in education. But, as a priest, Corbin believed that ecclesiastics made better teachers in general because they were not burdened by the corruption and distraction of worldly pursuits and were more disciplined and obedient to authority.

Parts of Corbin’s project incorporated eighteenth-century ideals that flourished during the Revolution, but he did not reject traditional values. His ideology bridged conservative and progressive approaches to education, politics, and religion. Corbin appealed to French history and reiterated the theory of absolutism, though not in those words, to demonstrate the legality of the National Assembly. He claimed that French kings had always been “limited by laws” and could never legitimately impose their arbitrary will in opposition to the “constitutional

\textsuperscript{220} Corbin, 9
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 25-26
principles” that the people had the right to invoke.\textsuperscript{222} In their wisdom, courage, and “patriotic zeal,” the members of the National Assembly would “regenerate all.”\textsuperscript{223} Corbin believed that an education system should be a fundamental part of the Assembly’s deliberations. He advised its members to adopt his suggestions, especially stressing the necessity of religion in State-run education. At a time of great promise for France’s future, Corbin argued that the Church should continue to have a distinguished position in the French State because it had so much influence over public morality. He contended that it was “impossible” to separate the sacred from the secular within French government because it had been so closely linked to religion and the Church.\textsuperscript{224}

\textsuperscript{222} Corbin., 39-40
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 59
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 41
Conclusion

Eighteenth-century France was a period of major transition at the confluence of traditional and innovative ideas. The above statement is true of just about every period in history, but not all such phases end in revolution. Not to say that events in the eighteenth-century unavoidably propelled France into a violent political and social upheaval; but it is foolish to ignore such a monumental event when studying the decades leading up to 1789. The French Revolution produced some of the greatest transformations in politics, social class structure, economics, and religion in France and Europe in the history of Western civilization. Most significantly, it transformed French citizens’ expectations of what their government should provide for them, and increased their role in the political process. Ardent revolutionaries, and Napoleon, spread their ideals to neighboring Europeans forcefully through war, while philosophers influenced their intellectual counterparts abroad and educators raised French children into virtuous French citizens. Indeed, a major discussion throughout all the political upheavals of the late eighteenth-century revolved around reshaping France’s educational system to inculcate the principles of 1789 into subsequent generations who could carry on the banner of revolution.

Multiple legislators proposed a new national, uniform, and more widely accessible organization of primary schools to instruct future citizens. The scope of their proposed plans was truly innovative in its attempt at universal, free education for all French children. Though almost every Revolutionary attempt at reforming French education ultimately failed, the legacy of efforts by Condorcet, Bouquier, Lakanal, Daunou, and even Napoleon to create national public instruction was to normalize instruction publique for French children.225 Republicans and

225 The idea that public education became “normative” thanks to the efforts of the National Convention comes from Isser Woloch, who provides a concise summary of the development and transformation of national education plans,
Catholic leaders picked up these reformers’ efforts and themes in the nineteenth century, battling for control of the hearts and minds of future citizens and Christians. Guizot, Ferry, and their contemporaries recognized that in the new political environment of public participation and interest, whoever controlled what children learned could potentially direct France’s future. But all these politicians, and the dozens of others interested in reforming public education during and after the Revolution stood at the end of a long history of educational theorists who transformed the meaning and implications of public instruction from religious catechism and training for elite positions to preparing useful citizens of the nation. Rather than functioning as the major rupture from the past that carried France into the modern age, the Revolution acted to further develop, albeit at an accelerated pace, existing theories on education’s role and structure, and its relationship to State and Church.

The Revolution in 1789 also ushered in new heights in the secularization of government in France. The famed inauguration of the Temple of Reason demonstrates the fruition of the Enlightenment’s deification of nature and the belief in man’s capacity to order his life through reason. But one cannot gauge the faith of a nation based upon the actions of a radical minority in the capital. Even those critical of the Church in France, supporters of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, did not necessarily abandon their Christian beliefs. The desire for the State to have power over the Church in France was present long before that revolutionary measure in the form of Gallicanism. Yet it is wrong to assume that wanting civil power over sacred affairs was synonymous with a dechristianization of French society.


226 Robert Tombs holds that two major themes in France up to World War I were the legacy of the Revolution and the debate between Republicanism and Catholicism, *France, 1814-1914* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc.), 1996.
This is apparent in the case of educational treatises throughout the eighteenth-century. Rather than rejecting Christian principles as an instructional model, the politicians, scientists, *philosophes*, educators, and clergymen who wrote new plans for French education embraced religion as a necessary and useful tool to teach children how to live virtuous lives. These authors criticized a corrupt Church hierarchy that persisted in using an outdated and ineffective instructional system, not the religion they preached. Their complaints centered on the inefficiency of instruction and perceived deficiencies in moral fervor among Church officials, especially Jesuits. There was certainly a minority of *philosophes* who pushed the bounds of Christianity to the breaking point into deism, naturalism, and even atheism. But the majority of French men and women remained Christian, whether they supported the Church hierarchy or not. The authors of most of the eighteenth-century educational projects fall into this category of believers, or at the very least they recognized that religion was still important to French society and to most parents. Christian principles and morals were considered necessary to create a system of education that would improve French society.
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