

Introduction

The Other Voice

Whenever I return to Paris, I visit the Hôpital Cochin on the Rue Saint-Jacques. I walk to the hospital's interior garden, where I engage in meditation on one of the green benches. Centuries ago, the garden was part of the cloister for the convent of Port-Royal de Paris, the urban branch of the religious community noted for its Jansenism. Built in 1626, the stone colonnade and the mansard roofs of the old convent still stand. Next to the cloister garden is the baroque convent chapel, still used for religious services for the hospital's patients, staff, and visitors.

The chapel was the scene of one of the most violent episodes in the history of the tormented convent. On August 21, 1664, Archbishop Hardouin de Beaumont de Péréfixe of Paris arrived at the convent chapel in person and berated the nuns for their refusal to sign a document condemning the alleged theological opinions of Cornelius Jansen. He decreed that the nuns were placed under interdict and thus incapable of receiving the sacraments. Under armed guard, carriages in the courtyard took a dozen of the most recalcitrant nuns to house arrest in foreign convents. The expulsion of 1664 inaugurated a decades-long campaign of excommunication, house arrest, isolation, and military occupation, all of which failed to break the will of the nuns, who were convinced that church and state had erred in their condemnation of Jansen.

No figure is more prominent in this history of resistance than Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly (1624–1684). In each successive crisis of the signature, she emerges as the principal strategist of the convent's campaign of refusal. More importantly, she has left behind a large corpus of writings in which she expounds her theology of resistance to perceived abuses of authority. Her scholarly defense of the rights of conscience against demands of servile obedience is a gendered one. The right of women, specifically of nuns, to maintain a theological judgment against efforts at political and ecclesiastical coercion is her central preoccupation. I have chosen to introduce the Anglophone reader to her copious writings by translating several of her works where the narrative and theory of resistance to oppression are prominent.

The Life of Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly

The oldest daughter of Robert Arnauld d'Andilly and Catherine Le Fèvre de la Broderie Arnauld d'Andilly, Angélique Arnauld d'Andilly was born on November 28, 1624, at the family chateau of Pomponne. Her *noblesse de robe* family figured prominently in French politics. Her father was the overseer of the household of

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Gaston d'Orléans, the brother of Louis XIII, and her mother's family provided several members of the French ambassador corps.

Influential at court, the family was also deeply involved in the fortunes of the convent of Port-Royal. Her aunt Angélique de Sainte-Magdalene Arnauld began the reform of the Cistercian convent as its abbess in 1609. Five other aunts also became nuns at Port-Royal: Agnès de Saint-Paul Arnauld, Madeleine de Sainte-Christine Arnauld, Marie de Sainte-Claire Arnauld, Anne-Eugénie de l'Incarnation Arnauld, and Catherine de Saint-Jean Arnauld Le Maître. Four of her sisters ultimately became nuns at the convent: Anne-Marie, Catherine de Sainte-Agnès, Marie-Charlotte de Sainte-Claire, and Marie-Angélique de Sainte-Thérèse. Even her widowed grandmother Catherine de Sainte-Félicité Marion Arnauld entered Port-Royal. Many of the male members of Angélique's family also allied themselves with the beleaguered convent. Her uncle Antoine Arnauld was a prominent theologian who defended the nuns when the convent underwent persecution; a militant apologist for the convent among the French bishops was her uncle Henry Arnauld, bishop of Angers. A priest, her brother Charles-Henry Arnauld de Luzancy provided pastoral ministry to the Port-Royal nuns. A minister in the cabinet of Louis XIV, her brother Simon Arnauld, marquis de Pomponne, oscillated between defending the persecuted nuns at court and admonishing his sister Angélique for political and ecclesiastical critiques he found temerarious. Her cousins Louis-Isaac Le Maître de Saci, Antoine Le Maître, and Simon Le Maître de Séricourt distinguished themselves by their scholarship and their teaching when they joined the *solitaires*, a group of pious laymen who pursued a life of penance, prayer, and study in the environs of the convent. Intermittently, the *solitaires* conducted a series of schools, their most famous alumnus being the playwright Jean Racine.

By the 1620s Port-Royal had become a model of austere conventual reform, imitated by other Catholic reform movements. In the 1630s the convent became a bastion of Jansenism under the influence of Port-Royal's chaplain, Abbé Saint-Cyran. A personal friend and disciple of the Belgian theologian Cornelius Jansen, Saint-Cyran promoted the controversial tenets of Jansen's Augustinian theology: radical human depravity, predestination, the small number of the elect, and moral rigorism. The convent's endorsement of these Jansenist positions would lead to its censure by the church and the French court. By the 1640s the burgeoning convent had established two locations: its original Parisian countryside location in the valley of the Chevreuse, Port-Royal des Champs, and its new urban location in Paris's Faubourg Saint-Jacques, Port-Royal de Paris.

From the moment she entered the Port-Royal convent school in 1630, Angélique impressed observers by her intelligence. She excelled in classical languages, quickly mastering both Latin and Greek. A sympathizer of Port-Royal, Madame de Sévigné summed up the astonishment many visitors experienced when they

heard her speak: “All the languages and all the sciences have been infused into her. In short, she is a prodigy.”¹ Her erudition in discussions of the Bible and of the church fathers caused widespread admiration. Even the Jesuit Father Rapin, usually hostile to the Jansenists, expressed amazement at the young pupil’s mastery of the complexity of Saint Augustine’s theories.² If her erudition garnered universal praise, Angélique’s moral character was a matter of dispute. Her aunts Mère Angélique and Mère Agnès criticized her tendency toward intellectual arrogance. Her uncle Antoine reprimanded her for her tendency toward sarcastic intransigence.³

Long attracted to a vocation as a Port-Royal nun, Angélique easily shifted from the status of boarding pupil to that of a postulant for the convent. She became a novice on June 27, 1641, and a professed nun on February 25, 1644. Her name in religion was Angélique de Saint-Jean. The intelligent and industrious nun quickly assumed major positions of trust within the convent: headmistress of the convent school, novice mistress devoted to the formation of young nuns, and subprioress. Observers noted her courage during the civil wars of the Fronde (1648–1653), when she helped to shelter terrified refugees within the convent and organized charitable assistance for convent neighbors ravaged by the famine and epidemic caused by the civil unrest.

Angélique de Saint-Jean’s early years as a nun paralleled the emergence of the controversy over Jansenism. In 1640 Jansen’s *Augustinus* was posthumously published. The massive theological tome defended what it considered to be the authentic interpretation of Saint Augustine’s teaching on grace. It emphasized the incapacity of fallen humanity to save itself and the utter necessity of God’s grace, freely given to whomever he elected, for salvation. Themes of divine sovereignty and the depravity of the world were emphasized. Led by the Jesuits, critics argued that the theories of the book were dangerously Calvinistic and destructive of human freedom. Champions of the book, led by Saint-Cyran and his disciples, insisted that the book had restored the church’s authentic doctrine of grace and constituted a useful antidote to the exaggerated claims of human freedom and moral virtue made by the Jesuits.

The Vatican published increasingly severe censures of the book. Urban VIII’s *In eminenti* (1642) removed the book from circulation and forbade its reading, but the bull seemed to object primarily to the book’s reigniting the old quarrel over grace and thus dividing the church. For good measure, the pope also

1. Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan, November 29, 1679, in Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, marquise de Sévigné, *Lettres*, vol. 2, ed. Émile Gérard-Gailly (Paris: Gallimard, 1953–1963), 517.

2. See René Rapin, *Mémoires du P. René Rapin de la Compagnie de Jésus sur l’église et la société, la cour, la ville, et le jansénisme*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gaume et Duprey, 1865), 443.

3. For a discussion of the criticism of her personality by members and allies of the convent, see Brigitte Sibertin-Blanc, “Biographie et personnalité de la seconde Angélique,” *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 35 (1985): 74–82.

condemned works that were attempting to refute the book of Jansen. Innocent X's *Cum occasione* (1653) condemned five theological propositions concerning grace and freedom as heretical; it also cited the *Augustinus*. But the link between the censured propositions and the book was less than clear. Alexander VI's *Ad sanctam Beati Petri sedem* (1656) clarified the issue by insisting the church was condemning the five propositions precisely in the sense in which Jansen had held them. Faced with increasing demands that clergy, teachers, and members of religious orders swear that they accepted the church's condemnation, Antoine Arnauld devised the *droit/fait* distinction. According to Arnauld, the church could bind the conscience of its members on matters of faith and morals (*droit*), since the church had the right and duty to guide its members to salvation. On issues of fact (*fait*), however, the church could only demand respectful consideration of its judgments. Error was always possible. The application to the current controversy was clear. Jansenists would gladly assent to the condemnation of the five propositions; they agreed that they were heretical or at least could be interpreted in a heretical way. But they could not assent to what they believed to be an erroneous judgment of fact concerning the text and beliefs of Jansen. The legitimacy of the *fait/droit* distinction as well as the substantive dispute over Jansen's theology would become central to the burgeoning Jansenist controversy.

As the opposition to Jansenism and Port-Royal intensified, Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean became the convent's leading apologist. Starting in 1651 she and her cousin Antoine Le Maître began to collect documentation concerning Mère Angélique's reform of the convent. A reluctant Mère Angélique was persuaded to write her autobiography in 1654.⁴ This project of historical documentation was quickly amplified. Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean urged other nuns to write memoirs of the reform and to elaborate their own spiritual autobiographies. Ever the lawyer's daughter, she collected biographical sketches, eyewitness accounts, legal documents, transcripts of interrogations by canonical visitors, abbatial conferences, and abbatial letters to refute what she considered a libelous portrait of Port-Royal concocted by the enemies of Jansenism in the pamphlet wars of the period. A tool of polemic, this vast documentation often assumes a hagiographic tone. The documents present the nuns as the heroic victims of a process of misunderstanding, censure, persecution, and final abandonment to God's inscrutable providence. As Thomas Carr argues,⁵ the immense documentation amassed by the nuns of Port-Royal is unique among the literary remains of the century's convents. In large part its existence is due to the authorial and editorial work of Soeur

4. For a critical edition of this autobiographical sketch of Mère Angélique Arnauld, see Jean Lesaulnier, "Relation écrite par la Mère Angélique Arnauld sur ce qui est arrivé de plus considérable dans Port-Royal," *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 41 (1992): 7–93.

5. See Thomas M. Carr, *Voix des abbesses du Grand Siècle: La prédication au féminin à Port-Royal* (Tübingen: Narr, 2006), 1–25.

Angélique de Saint-Jean as she constructed a lawyerly defense of the orthodoxy and sanctity of Port-Royal against its critics.

Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean emerged as the leader of the intransigent faction of Port-Royal nuns as the conflict over Jansenism reached its climax. In the spring of 1661, Louis XIV's agents expelled the postulants, novices, lay students, and confessors from the convent. External superiors were imposed on the community. In the summer of 1661, the community faced its first crisis of the signature. On June 8 the archdiocesan vicars of Paris presented the convent with a formulary that each nun was ordered to sign. The formulary condemned five propositions dealing with freedom and grace as heretical; it further affirmed that Jansen had defended these propositions in the *Augustinus*. In their accompanying instruction concerning the formulary, however, the irenic vicars explicitly endorsed the *droit/fait* distinction as a legitimate tool for interpreting the meaning of one's signature. Given this concession, Antoine Arnauld urged the nuns to sign without reservation. Allied with Soeur Jacqueline de Sainte-Euphémie Pascal, the sister of Blaise Pascal, Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean demurred, insisting that the signature still indicated assent to a proposition concerning Jansen that she did not believe. Under pressure from their clerical counselors, Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean and the other nuns signed the formulary but against the counsel of Antoine Arnauld, they added a postscript to their signatures, indicating that they were assenting only to matters of faith (*droit*) and not to matters of fact (*fait*) in the document.

Infuriated both by the vicars' compromising pastoral instruction and the nuns' qualification of their signature, the Vatican annulled the first formulary and insisted that the nuns sign a new formulary, unencumbered by any softening postscripts. On November 28, 1661, the nuns signed the new formulary. Instead of postscripts next to their names, the nuns added a paragraph-length preface to the document, explaining how the signatures were to be interpreted. Further inflaming the controversy, Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean added her own postscript to the preface, in which she explained that her signature in no way represents any departure from Saint Augustine's theory of grace, which the church had endorsed on so many occasions in the past.

The predictable rejection of this new signed formulary by church and throne led to a graver impasse. In 1664 the new archbishop of Paris, Paul Philippe Hardouin de Beaumont de Péréfixe, attempted to find a resolution to the conflict. He informed the Port-Royal nuns that they must sign without reservation a new version of the formulary. They were forbidden to use the *droit/fait* distinction in relationship to their signature. However, they could distinguish between divine faith (assent to a truth divinely revealed by God) and human faith (assent to a claim because the person making the claim is trustworthy) in distinguishing their degrees of assent to the formulary's provisions. The Jansenists rejected this

distinction as inapplicable to their situation since they could not in conscience assent in any way to what they considered an erroneous judgment of fact. Prodded by Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean, the majority of nuns once again added the *droit/fait* distinction to their signatures as they signed the new formulary on July 14, 1664.

Enraged by this act of disobedience, the archbishop personally appeared at Port-Royal de Paris to condemn the nuns for their intransigence and to announce new disciplinary measures of punishment. The resisting nuns were placed under interdict, a canonical ban on receiving the sacraments. Twelve of the leaders of the *nonsigneuse* majority were exiled to house arrest in foreign convents. Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean was exiled to the Annonciade convent in the Marais neighborhood of Paris. Soeur Catherine de Sainte-Flavie Passart, the leader of the *signeuse* minority (those Port-Royal nuns who had given an unreserved signature to the formulary), was named as the assistant superior to a Visitation nun imposed by the archbishop to govern Port-Royal. In her *Report on Captivity* Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean recounts the ordeal of solitude and deprivation she suffered during her ten-month sojourn in the Annonciade convent.

When the campaign of exile failed to make the recalcitrant nuns submit to the signature, the archbishop changed tactics. In June 1655 the archbishop regrouped Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean and the other *nonsigneuses* at Port-Royal des Champs under a virtual regime of martial law. Soldiers surrounded the convent. All visits from externs and all communication with externs were forbidden. The penalty of interdict turned into outright excommunication. Ever intrepid, Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean quickly outmaneuvered the penal regime. Clandestine letters were exchanged. She even managed to seek spiritual direction from her cousin Isaac Le Maître de Saci, now a distinguished biblical scholar.

The rigors of exile and excommunication only hardened her intransigence. The vitriolic rhetoric of her *Report on Captivity* alarmed Antoine Arnauld. It denounced the Annonciade nuns as jailers and condemned the Annonciade convent as a jail. She mocked the good faith of the *signeuses*: “They never truly entered into the spirit of the convent, although the second one of these [Soeur Flavie de Passart] certainly talked about it enough. But that was the very thing she did not understand: the kingdom of God does not consist of words. Still, that was all the poor girl had.”⁶ When sympathetic laity attempted to find a compromise between the Vatican and the nuns, she denounced them. Her letter to Madame de Sablé, a pro-Jansenist aristocrat who hosted a committee charged by the church to find a solution to the crisis, indicates her adamant position: “As far as I am concerned, I still find consolation in my [alleged coldness], because I am persuaded by my

6. Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly to Antoine Arnauld, December 28, 1668, *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, Ms. Bibliothèque de la Société de Port-Royal: P.R. Let 358, 176. Hereafter cited as *LMASJ*.

recent experience that firmness is worth more than tenderness. I would go even further and dare to say that I prefer my roughness and my dryness to the caresses and softness exhibited by certain people you saw after you saw us.”⁷

In 1669 the persecution of Port-Royal abruptly ended with the Peace of the Church, engineered by Pope Clement IX. With the acquiescence of the throne, Pope Clement modified the formulary that the nuns were summoned to sign. Instead of affirming that she condemned the censured theological positions found in the *Augustinus* of Jansen, the signatory nun simply had to affirm that she condemned these propositions “wherever they might be found, even in the works of Jansenius.” Louis XIV’s willingness to reduce this act of submission to a cosmetic gesture stemmed from his own political difficulties. Preoccupied by an impending war with Holland, the king considered the festering Port-Royal controversy an unwelcome distraction. His efforts to suppress Jansenism had backfired. Prominent pro-Jansenist aristocrats, starting with his cousin Madame de Longueville, condemned the harsh treatment of the nuns as scandalous. The French episcopate was divided. A theologically distinguished quartet of bishops (Arnauld of Angers, Pavillon of Alet, Buzeval of Beauvais, Caulet of Pamiers) defended the *droit/fait* distinction as a legitimate tool in the crisis of the signature. An irenic diplomat, Pope Clement wanted to resolve an embarrassing conflict that had wounded the unity of the church as it faced the Protestant challenge. Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean joined the other nuns in signing the tempered formulary, although she privately expressed concern over any compromise that might weaken the convent’s determination to maintain the neo-Augustinian position on grace.

During the Peace of the Church, the convent once again flourished. The community received new postulants and novices. The reopened convent school taught the daughters of prominent aristocratic and bourgeois families. The *so-litaires* produced a flood of influential translations, spiritual treatises, and pedagogical works. Serving first as prioress of Port-Royal des Champs and then as the convent’s abbess (1678–1684), Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean guided the community in a path of militant resistance toward compromises with its opponents. In her extensive correspondence and abbatial conferences, she exhibited her moral rigorism. When Gilberte Pascal Périer, the married sister of Blaise Pascal, congratulated her on the nomination of her brother Arnauld de Pomponne to Louis XIV’s cabinet, the nun reprimanded her: “I am not happy about your claim that you experienced perfect joy over a piece of news that really should have given you a very great fear about the spiritual peril to which one of your true friends will be exposed.”⁸ The Christian life could be no more easily combined with the world of

7. Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d’Andilly to Madame la marquise de la Sablé, September 2, 1669, *LMASJ*, P.R. Let 358, 180.

8. Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d’Andilly to Gilberte Pascal Périer, October 18, 1671, *LMASJ*, P.R. Let 359, 250.

politics and finance than it could with the world of the theater or the gambling house. Her description of the opposition between the world and the gospel often assumes an apocalyptic tone: “The world is a house that is going to perish. All the lusts that reign in it are a fire that consumes it and all who are attached to it. This fire never goes out because this is the same fire that will burn in hell for souls who have been consumed by it in this life.”⁹

Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean’s governance of the convent defended the spiritual rights of women. Following the principles of Mère Angélique Arnauld’s earlier reform, the abbess was to be elected by her sisters, not appointed by the throne or the episcopate. Chapter meetings were to discuss disputed points of government. The abbess was to serve as the convent’s principal spiritual director. Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean exemplified this pedagogical office through the elaborate cycle of conferences she delivered on biblical texts, the Rule of Saint Benedict, and earlier texts by Port-Royal abbesses. She quarreled with the archbishop of Paris when she insisted that it was the privilege of the abbess to choose the convent’s chaplains and confessors. In her vast correspondence with nuns and laywomen, she functioned as a spiritual director who encouraged other nuns to exercise rights of self-government and who cautioned against blind obedience to political and ecclesiastical authorities in the theological controversies of the day.

The Peace of the Church abruptly ended on May 17, 1679, when François de Harlay de Champvallon, archbishop of Paris, unexpectedly arrived at Port-Royal des Champs. He promulgated a decree expelling the postulants, pupils, and confessors from the convent. When questioned as to the motive for this sudden recourse to sanctions, the archbishop gave only vague responses. In fact, the principal reason was the changed political fortunes of Louis XIV. At the apex of his power with the treaties of Nijmegen (1678–1679) sealing his recent military victories, the king now turned to the destruction of his internal opponents. The Jansenists and their citadel of Port-Royal would no longer be tolerated. There was no reversion to the sanction of excommunication. The nuns could continue their life of prayer and manual labor. But the new sanctions still constituted a death sentence for the community. Without younger members, the convent would slowly die from attrition. Without the school, the isolation from external society would become more pronounced.

In her campaign to protest the arbitrary sanctions, Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean did not hesitate to address personally the pope and the king. In her remonstrances the abbess’s rhetoric is abrasive. She informs Pope Innocent XI that his negative judgment of the community was based on his being deceived by the enemies of Port-Royal as to the actual beliefs of the nuns and their clerical counselors: “If Your Holiness could for once be properly informed about all we

9. Soeur Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d’Andilly to Mademoiselle de Bagnols, July 11, 1674, *LMAS*, P.R. Let 359, 265.

have suffered, which was caused by nothing other than the jealousy and malice of certain people against some very wise and pious theologians, including some who participated in the direction of this convent, we have no doubt, Holy Father, that the account of our sufferings, which have few parallels in centuries past, would soften the heart of Your Holiness.”¹⁰ Other letters to Innocent XI make clear that the Jesuits are the principal culprits in this systematic campaign of denigration and deception. Her protest to Louis XIV is no less bold. Rather than asking for mercy in the execution of the new sanctions, the abbess demands an explanation for this arbitrary treatment: “We have always considered it an obligation to obey His Majesty and to conform to his desires, since he is the one who holds the first rank in our duties after what we owe to God. Sire, it is the cause of the greatest sorrow for people raised in such sentiments to see that, on the one hand, we are seen as evil in your mind and that, on the other hand, we cannot see any way to leave this painful state since we are not permitted to know what has placed us here and what keeps us here.”¹¹

Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean’s campaign of protest found few allies. The persecution following the end of the Peace of the Church had forced the prominent clerical allies of the convent into exile. Smuggling the precious manuscripts and archives of the abbess over the border, Antoine Arnauld sought asylum with other Jansenists in the Low Countries. Many of the aristocratic defenders of Port-Royal, notably Madame de Longueville, had died. Pope Innocent XI privately admitted that the nuns had done nothing to violate the terms of the Peace of the Church, but already embroiled with Louis XIV over the question of the *régale*,¹² he was not about to start another quarrel with the French throne. The apparent indifference of external society to the nuns’ plight only stiffened the abbess’s militancy. Her letters and abbatial conferences stressed the radical Augustinian anthropology inherited from Jansen and Saint-Cyran. Human depravity, the depth of concupiscence, predestination, and the small number of the elect were emphasized. She warned the oppressed nuns that any concession to their oppressors was an act of cowardice and a betrayal of the truth regarding the grace of Christ. Steely courage, not prudence, was the virtue required in the crisis. “There are circumstances so

10. Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d’Andilly to Pope Innocent XI, May 29, 1679, *LMASJ*, P.R. Let 359, 474.

11. Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean to King Louis XIV, king of France, February 5, 1680, *LMASJ*, P.R. Let 360, 551.

12. The *régale* was an ancient privilege of the French throne in regard to church revenues. When a diocese fell vacant in the throne’s ancient fief of the Île-de-France, the king could collect the revenues of the diocese until a new bishop was inaugurated. In 1673 Louis XIV declared that he had the right to exercise the *régale* in all the dioceses covered by current French territory. Pope Innocent XI declared that the king’s action constituted a violation of earlier concordats between France and the Vatican. In the bitter dispute, prominent Jansenists sided with the papacy, thus further inflaming Louis XIV’s hostility to the Jansenist party.

unusual that charity should take no account of prudence. . . . Political good sense is so contrary to the gospel that we should not even pretend to possess it. . . . This is the idol of our time. I wholeheartedly detest it.”¹³

In her final years the abbess’s apocalyptic vision of a fallen world standing under imminent divine judgment became even more dramatic. “When will we be in the holy city in which God himself is the light and where consequently there are no longer any shadows? The life here below is just the opposite. Everything casts a shadow. When day fades, the shadows become longer. That is where we are now. It is certainly truer of our time than it was of the time of which Saint John said, ‘It is the last hour.’”¹⁴ The militant resistance had ended in abandonment to an obscure divine providence.

Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d’Andilly died on January 29, 1684.

The Works of Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d’Andilly

Angélique de Saint-Jean’s extant writings constitute a veritable literary monument from the reformed Port-Royal at its moment of maturity. More impressive than the sheer bulk of the writings is the variety of genres that the abbess mastered. An indefatigable writer, she composed letters, biographies, autobiographies, biblical commentaries, legal commentaries, eulogies, devotional treatises, exhortations, and chronicles. Her editorial work prompted dozens of nuns to compose autobiographies and biographies attesting to the doctrinal integrity and good order of the convent.

The abbatial conferences delivered during her rule of Port-Royal constitute her most sustained literary effort. *Discourses on the Rule of Saint Benedict* represents a Jansenist reworking of Saint Benedict’s theory of monastic virtues. It repeatedly stresses the necessity of grace for the performance of any virtuous action. *Conferences on the Constitutions of the Monastery of Port-Royal* maintains a gendered emphasis on the rights of nuns to theological formation and the rights of abbesses to exercise substantial authority in the governance, spiritual direction, and religious education of their subjects. The accompanying biblical commentaries on 1 Kings and the Book of Esther celebrate the role of militant women in defending the faithful from oppression by both religious and political authorities. *Reflections to Prepare the Nuns for Persecution* presents itself as a simple commentary on Mère Agnès’s earlier *Counsels in the Event of Change in the Government of the Convent*, but Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean reverses Mère Agnès’s earlier irenic argument. Whereas the earlier abbess had justified a limited cooperation

13. Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean to Mademoiselle de Bagnols, May 29, 1683, *LMASJ*, P.R. Let 359, 814.

14. Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean to Madame de Fonspertuis, November 17, 1681, *LMASJ*, P.R. Let 360, 614. See 1 Jn 2:17–19.

with ecclesiastical authorities during times of persecution, her niece exhorts her subjects to militant resistance in a world sharply divided between the saintly elect and the satanic.

Several works emphasize the necessity for resistance to the demands for blind obedience made by the throne and the altar during the crisis of the signature. I have chosen in this volume to focus on three of them. *Report of Captivity* is an autobiographical work in which Angélique de Saint-Jean recounts her spiritual resistance to the demands for her signature to the formulary condemning the *Augustinus* during her time of exile at the Annonciade convent between 1664 and 1665. A companion piece written during the same period of duress, *On the Conformity between the State to Which Port-Royal Has Been Reduced and the State of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist* turns her personal experience of persecution and spiritual deprivation into an object of theological meditation. The suffering of the Port-Royal nuns now receives its meaning from the parallel humiliations of Jesus during his crucifixion. Written later at Port-Royal des Champs, *On the Danger of Hesitation and Doubt Once We Know Our Duty* censures any effort to compromise with the opponents of the convent. Given the power imbalance between the nuns and their opponents and the patent desire of the opponents to force the nuns to abandon their Jansenist convictions, any indication of the willingness to doubt the truth of the Augustinian position on grace can only lead to the spiritual destruction of the community. Vigilance, not dialogue, must be the stance of the upright nun.

Each of these narratives and justifications of resistance is gendered. *Report of Captivity* rejects the argument that nuns, given their lack of theological culture, must bend to the judgment of ecclesiastical and political authorities in religious disputes. The archbishop and priests who demand such submission are skewered. *On the Conformity* celebrates the unexpected spiritual intimacy the nuns experience when they are deprived of the sacraments of the Eucharist and confession. Freed from the sacerdotal meditation of the sacraments, the nuns can now experience more directly the immediate presence of Jesus the eternal priest. *On the Danger of Hesitation and Doubt* argues that the biblical, patristic, and monastic precedents for disobeying an erroneous religious authority apply to women as well as to men. Other opuscles, notably *Three Conferences on the Necessity to Defend the Church*, distinguish between enlightened and servile obedience during a nun's crisis of conscience.

As the persecution against Port-Royal intensified in the 1660s, the male clerics allied to the convent could easily go into hiding or exile. Spanish-ruled Belgium would become the ultimate destination of Antoine Arnauld. But the cloistered nuns faced no such possibility. They would either endure persecution or surrender to the demands of throne and church. A marked gendered distance opened up in the Jansenist circle over the limits of resistance. Her uncle Antoine

Arnauld and her brother Simon Arnauld, marquis de Pomponne, begged Angélique de Saint-Jean to moderate her opposition and soften her rhetoric. The male defenders of the Port-Royal nuns repeatedly appealed to their naïveté and lack of instruction in theological matters. But the position of Angélique de Saint-Jean was different. Just as the abbesses of the reformed convent had the right and duty to offer public commentaries on the Scriptures, the Rule of Saint Benedict, and the constitutions of the convent, the nuns have the right and duty to enter the theological disputes of the day when issues of justice were involved. The convent's refusal to bow to the demands of the state on the question of the signature is part of a larger commitment to offer public and ultimately published opinions on the broader theological issues in the church and on the moral issues specific to the convent. Angélique de Saint-Jean's bold and prolific voice as a *théologienne* refuted the stereotype of the ignorant, passive nun diffused by Port-Royal's clerical allies just as it challenged the anti-Jansenist stereotype of the arrogant shrew.

The historical works of Angélique de Saint-Jean constitute another important pole of her canon. Her *Report or Documented History of Mère Marie-Angélique* constitutes the most important of the many biographical sketches she composed concerning the Arnauld family and other prominent members of Port-Royal. Serving an apologetic purpose, these memorials glorify the virtues of the Port-Royal nuns and vilify their critics. Miracles and suspicious coincidences abound as divine providence testifies as to who is its elect. Her *Miséricordes* are an exercise in a distinctive Port-Royal genre. They are eulogies of deceased benefactors of Port-Royal. Faithful to the convent's operative Augustinian theology, the eulogies stress the sovereign role of grace rather than the natural endowments or personal freedom of the deceased in the performance of virtuous works during his or her lifetime.

Many of the abbess's works were spirited away in manuscript form to Jansenist archives in the Low Countries during the persecution of the convent following the collapse of the Peace of the Church. With the relaxation of French censorship and a new curiosity in the vanished Port-Royal in the eighteenth century, many of the manuscripts became published books. The exiled Jansenist community in Utrecht was especially active in producing print versions of her works. In 1711, Pasquier Quesnel published his edition of the autobiographical *Report of Captivity*. First print editions of other works by Angélique de Saint-Jean appeared in 1733, 1735, 1736, 1742, 1740, 1760, and 1787. Indicating the growing French sympathy for Jansenism, the 1736 Parisian edition of her commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict appeared with the imprimatur of the king and the official approval of the faculty of the Sorbonne. The editors of this volume indicate the praise that the abbess's works had already garnered: "The works of Reverend Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean are very well known and do not need further praise. Several opuscles of this pious abbess have already been published at various times.

They have sufficiently won the approval and favor of the public to let us hope that the work we are now presenting to the public will find the same approval.”¹⁵

Despite this extensive print canon, many of the writings of the abbess remain in manuscript form. The most important is the collection of the nine hundred letters edited by Rachel Gillet and archived in the Bibliothèque de la Société de Port-Royal. Manuscript opuscles of special interest are *On Direction*, which defends the role of the abbess as the principal spiritual director of her nuns, and *Faithful Narrative of the Miracles and Visions of Soeur Flavie*, a scathing character sketch of the leader of the *signeuse* minority, whom the abbess denounces as an ambitious traitor.

Influences on Her and Her Influence

Spending virtually her entire life within the confines of Port-Royal, Angélique de Saint-Jean acquired a narrow but profound theological culture. It is a monastic culture tinged by the radical Augustinianism of the Jansenist circle. An erudite woman who can read Latin and Greek, she cites the scriptural, patristic, and monastic sources long venerated in Benedictine and Cistercian convents. She also quotes the works of Saint Augustine and the controversial interpreters of Augustine (Jansen, Saint-Cyran, Antoine Arnauld) who constructed Jansenist theology. But the nun's intellectual culture is broader than her reading. The deepest influence on her thought arises from persons she actually knew. Saint-Cyran was her spiritual director, her uncle Antoine Arnauld her correspondent and counselor. The words and deeds of her aunts Angélique Arnauld and Agnès Arnauld constitute living sources for her theological reflection. Many of the texts she cites are translations made by relatives among the *solitaires*. Her theological culture is very much an argument with living persons who encourage and oppose her. The thrust and parry of her thought spring from the controversy of the moment.

The Bible is the centerpiece of Angélique de Saint-Jean's theological culture. She exhibits a predilection for the Gospel of Saint John and the epistles of Saint Paul. Ever the Latinist, she peppers her writings with citations from the Vulgate version of the Bible. Her biblical commentaries show concern for issues of gender. The lengthy commentary on the Book of Esther celebrates the mission of a woman to confront political authorities in the midst of religious persecution. It is not far from a flattering self-portrait.

Among church fathers Saint Augustine holds a privileged place. The nun frequently cites his *City of God* and uses its sharp demarcation between the City of God and the City of Man to warn her correspondents and subjects against the temptation of worldly compromise. She also cites the later writings of Augustine,

15. Cited by Germaine Grébil, "L'image de Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean au XVIIIe siècle," *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 35 (1985): 113.

where he denounces the Pelagian tendency to exaggerate the role of human freedom and to minimize the role of grace in the act of salvation.

Among monastic sources, the Rule of Saint Benedict holds pride of place. Like many abbesses before her, she delivers a cycle of commentaries on Benedict's rule in order to remind the nuns of their monastic duties. In expounding on the meaning of the virtues prized by Benedict, she transposes them into a Jansenist key. Little discussed in the actual text of Benedict, it is the divine grace permitting us to perform virtuous actions that is at the center of the abbess's attention. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the cofounder of the Cistercians, is also frequently cited. Angélique de Saint-Jean mentions the celebrated Bernardine passages on the virtue of humility, but she shows particular interest in the texts where Saint Bernard legitimates the criticism of ecclesiastical superiors when they are in error or involved in injustice.

The major works of the Jansenist circle are prominent in her theological culture. She cites Jansen's *The Reformation of the Interior Man*, a work read at table in the convent and used in the convent school. She often refers to Saint-Cyran's *Simple Catechism*, the central catechetical text used in the convent school. Despite its title, the text is actually a substantial theological presentation of the major themes of Jansenist theology: the depth of human concupiscence, the priority of grace over freedom, the reality of divine election and of the *massa damnata*, the danger of sacrilege in too frequent a reception of the sacraments. Saint-Cyran's *Letters*, another devotional staple of the convent, also figures prominently. Antoine Arnauld's *Of Frequent Communion* provides the arguments for the nun's counsels against frequent communion and against a practice of confession where the motive is imperfect contrition (fear of temporal and spiritual punishment) rather than perfect contrition (sorrow for having offended God). She clearly has some knowledge of Blaise Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, with their scathing critique of Jesuit casuistry and alleged moral laxism.

One of the controversies surrounding the adventures of Port-Royal concerns the degree to which the nuns actually understood the conflict over freedom and grace at the root of the church's condemnation of the *Augustinus*. On several occasions, Angélique de Saint-Jean herself argues that like the other nuns, she had never read the book in question and did not understand the technical terms employed in this theological quarrel. But this position is at best a half-truth. There is no evidence that the nun had read the *Augustinus*, but she had certainly read other works by Jansen and through her extensive reading of other Jansenist authors had arrived at a well-informed position on the underlying questions of grace and freedom.

For the abbess, the most important sources for the theological instruction of the convent were the works by two earlier abbesses, Angélique Arnauld and Agnès Arnauld. The earlier artisans and interpreters of the convent's rule of life

had become the central authorities in that rule. Two massive cycles of conferences are devoted respectively to Mère Agnès's *Constitutions of Port-Royal* and *Counsels in the Event of Change*. Her biography of Mère Angélique and the many memorials of Mère Angélique she commissioned provide a literary ideal of the properly reformed nun and convent.

The abbess's relationship to her Jansenist sources is never slavish. Mère Agnès's exhortations to prudence and compromise are replaced with a summons to courage and militancy in the face of opposition. Antoine Arnauld's repeated calls to moderation in the successive crises of the signature are summarily rejected. Rarely broached in the literature of male clerics, the question of the right and duty of women to resist illegitimate demands of obedience becomes central in the reflection of Angélique de Saint-Jean. A gendered theology of resistance transforms the monastic and neo-Augustinian sources she routinely cites.

The influence of Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean has been sporadic. Undoubtedly, her teaching and memory stiffened the aging Port-Royal in its final decades. Yet another crisis of the signature arose in the early eighteenth century. In 1705 Pope Clement XI's *Vineam Domini Sabaoth* condemned the Sorbonne's earlier judgment that a priest could give sacramental absolution to a Christian who did not accept the church's judgment of *fait* in the quarrel over the *Augustinus*. A new formulary was drawn up to ensure fidelity to the Vatican's censure. In 1706 the Port-Royal nuns signed the formulary, but once again the signature was not unreserved. The nuns added a codicil stating that they accepted the bull's judgment only on condition that it did not violate any of the privileges conceded by Pope Clement IX during the Peace of the Church. Infuriated by this new expression of insubordination, Louis XIV ordered armed guards in 1709 to remove the Port-Royal nuns from their convent and to assign them to house arrest in separate, distant convents. The next year he ordered the destruction of the remaining buildings at Port-Royal des Champs to prevent the convent from becoming a site of pilgrimage for Jansenist sympathizers.

The eighteenth century introduced the writings of Angélique de Saint-Jean to a cultivated European public. Louis XIV's destruction of the convent had only made the Port-Royal nuns heroic martyrs to conscience. A new curiosity about the persecuted convent and a broad sympathy for Jansenism among many educated Catholics fueled interest in the abbess's works. Based primarily in Utrecht, astute Jansenist publicists promoted successive print editions of her writings. In 1760 an editor for the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, the leading Jansenist newspaper, discussed the abbess's burgeoning literary fame: "We are astonished at the genius of this incomparable woman. We have difficulty in understanding how, given her responsibility for governing a large community in difficult times and passing part of her days and nights in prayer, she was able to give so many conferences, without speaking of the letters she was continually asked to write."

In recent centuries it is the personality rather than the writings of Angélique de Saint-Jean that has tended to dominate discussions of her. Sainte-Beuve's lecture cycle *Port-Royal* and Henry de Montherlant's drama of the same name focus on her, but they both provide predominantly negative portraits of the combative nun.¹⁶ Her intransigence on doctrinal matters appears to be a species of willfulness unbecoming in a woman. Jean Orcibal's scholarly study devotes greater attention to her actual thought, but the monograph still tends to provide a critical portrait of Angélique de Saint-Jean, the overly tenacious rebel, contrasted with Flavie Passart, the overly docile accommodationist.¹⁷ An exception to this is Louis Cognet's scholarly edition of her *Report of Captivity* in 1954.¹⁸ The edition underscores the interest of the document as a masterpiece in the literature of resistance to perceived oppression. It also underlines the complex psychology of the abbess, who experiences moments of doubt and anxiety as surely as she experiences moments of certitude and self-mastery.

Starting in the 1970s the second wave of feminism, with its interest in reviving neglected women authors from the past, has inspired a new attention to the writings of Angélique de Saint-Jean. New commentaries devoted to her have appeared. An entire issue of *Chroniques de Port-Royal*, the flagship journal of scholarship on Jansenism, was devoted to her.¹⁹ Under the direction of Julie Finnerty, a scholarly venture to produce a critical print version of the letters of the abbess is currently underway. Despite this activity, the abbess remains less studied than her aunts Angélique and Agnès, let alone her uncle Antoine. Part of the obstacle lies in the monastic genres in which she presents nearly all of her theological arguments. Few contemporary readers can negotiate the rule and constitutions of a monastic order. Fewer still can comprehend a theological commentary on such austere documents. Even for devout Christians, the labyrinthine quarrel over grace can seem a distant arcane affair. Few contemporaries possess the legal knowledge to grasp the canonical issues behind the successive crises of the signature. It is in her writings of resistance, especially her fiery *Report on Captivity*, that Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly draws closest to contemporary concerns. These texts tell the simple story of the spiritual and psychological price paid by those who resist oppressive authorities. They justify the right and duty of women to refuse the summons to blind obedience.

16. See Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, vol. 2, ed. Maxime Leroy (Paris: Gallimard, 1953–1955), 703–37, and Henry de Montherlant, *Port-Royal* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954).

17. See Jean Orcibal, *Port-Royal entre le miracle et l'obéissance: Flavie Passart et Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1957).

18. See Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly, *Relation de captivité*, ed. Louis Cognet (Paris: Gallimard, 1954).

19. See François Gazier et al., "Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly," *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 35 (1985): 9–85.

Note on the Translation

The translation of *Report of Captivity* had to face several textual problems with the French original. The original autograph of the memorial has long since disappeared. Two ancient manuscript copies of the original have survived in the archives of the Bibliothèque de la Société de Port-Royal.²⁰ I have relied primarily on these two sources. The original print edition of the memorial, published by Pasquier Quesnell in 1711, is seriously flawed.²¹ Not only has the prose been embellished to suit the taste of the early eighteenth century but the text has also been bowdlerized. Angélique de Saint-Jean's bitter references to the Annonciade nuns as jailers and to the Annonciade convent as a jail have been removed. The sarcastic references to Archbishop Hardouin de Péréfixe have been softened.

In working on the translation, I have also consulted Louis Cognet's excellent 1954 critical edition of the memorial.²² In modernizing the work, Cognet subdivided the long paragraphs. I have followed his lead in my own translation.

Additionally, I have subdivided many of the periodic sentences into smaller units. One of the characteristics of French seventeenth-century prose is the use of long periodic sentences with multiple subordinate clauses. It is not unusual to find single sentences containing over twenty clauses, many of them subordinate, in the text of *Report on Captivity*. While such elaborate constructions illustrate the logical complexity of Angélique de Saint-Jean's argument, a literal translation of such convoluted sentences would prove intolerable to a contemporary Anglophone reader.

To further facilitate access to the text, Cognet subdivided the long narrative into discreet chapters, each with its own chapter heading supplied by him. I also subdivided the text into numbered chapters but I have not provided chapter headings. These are not present in the original and to a certain extent betray the flow of the nun's narrative. Angélique de Saint-Jean composed the memorial in bursts of spontaneous recall. The chronology is far from smooth. She frequently jumps forward, goes back to a forgotten episode, adds a moral judgment, or stops the narrative to depict her emotional state at a given moment of her exile. The effort to provide a literary structure that would be easily intelligible to contemporary readers should not overwhelm the vivacity and abrupt emotional shifts of a text composed with ardor and speed.

In the translation of the *Report* and the two other texts in this volume, I have generally used inclusive language to translate terms that indicate generic

20. See Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly, *Relation de la captivité de la M. Angélique de Saint-Jean*, Bibliothèque de la Société de Port-Royal, Manuscripts: PR 87 ms and PR 129 ms.

21. See Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly, *Relation de la captivité de la M. Angélique S. Jean, religieuse de Port-Royal des Champs*, ed. Pasquier Quesnell (s.l.: s.n., 1711).

22. See Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly, *Relation de captivité*, ed. Louis Cognet (Paris: Gallimard, 1954).

humanity. *L'homme*, for example, is usually translated as *humanity* or *human being*. But I have generally used gender-specific language to translate terms related to theological entities. The abbess's divinity is very much Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The theological *il* is rendered as *he*. Her religious community is none other than Holy Mother Church. Consequently, *l'église* is referred to as *she*. Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly's theological universe is constructed on such gendered differences.

Suggestions for Further Reading

The current volume represents the first translation of the writings of Angélique de Saint-Jean into English. Further study of her work requires the use of the original French texts.

The nun's biographical and autobiographical sketches are her most accessible works. Louis Cognet's critical edition of *Relation de captivité* (1954) presents her narrative of the house arrest she endured at the Annonciade convent between 1664 and 1665. The copious notes illuminate the historical context and the theological disputes surrounding the exile. Her apologetic skill is evident in the biography of her aunt, the controversial reform abbess Mère Angélique Arnauld: *Relation ou l'histoire suivie de la Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld*.

Her abbatial conferences constitute her most sustained exercises in theological reflection. Most are available only in rare eighteenth-century print editions, of which the Bibliothèque de la Société de Port-Royal contains the most extensive collection. Several of these works can be accessed in the *Gallica* electronic library of ancient French books available on the webpage of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Conférences sur les Constitutions du monastère de Port-Royal du Saint-Sacrament is a commentary on the convent's constitutions, principally authored by Mère Agnès. The commentary defends the rights of the nun to self-government and the rights of the abbess as the leading spiritual director and teacher of the convent. *Discours sur la Règle de Saint Benoît* provides an Augustinian commentary on the monastic virtues outlined in the Rule of Saint Benedict. The cultivation of such virtues by sinful humanity depends far more on the inscrutable grace of God than it does on the exercise of human freedom. The virtue of humility is not to be confused with blind submission to authority. *Réflexions pour préparer ses soeurs à la persecution* counsels militant resistance to political and ecclesiastical demands of submission swirling around the question of the signature. Her *Miséricordes* uses a literary genre unique to Port-Royal. In these eulogies of recently deceased lay associates of the convent, the secondary causes in the deceased's life are passed over in favor of the primary cause, the divine activity, which drew the deceased to the convent and which guided the deceased in the path of salvation and virtue.

Other writings expound the theology and the strategies of resistance women must employ in opposing illegitimate claims to obedience. Compromise is as dangerous as outright surrender. *Sur le danger qu'il y a d'hésiter et de douter* dissects the temptation to negotiate over religious convictions that no one has the right to alter. Unevenly matched against powerful opponents who seek to break their will, the persecuted Port-Royal nuns must accept the demands of unremitting spiritual combat. *Sur la conformité* develops a theological analogy between the persecuted state of the Port-Royal nuns and the state of Jesus in the Eucharist and on the cross. Abandonment by the powerful of the world, even religious authorities, is to be embraced rather than feared.

Several secondary sources study the psychology of the abbess. Sibertin-Blanc (1985) provides a balanced portrait of a personality often denigrated by earlier authors. Orcibal (1957) studies her personality through the lens of her conflict with the *signeuse* leader, Flavie Passart. Various literary dimensions of the writing of this prolific author are examined by Carr (1998), Cousson (2012), Lesaulnier (2002), and Weaver (1985). Icard (2010) probes her link to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and Cistercian spirituality. Conley (2009) analyzes her as a neo-Augustinian philosopher. Several recent studies emphasize how the works of Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly represent an empowerment of women. Carr (2006) studies the gendered authority represented by the abbess in her frequent conferences to her subjects. Bretz (2005) underlines how the defense of the rights of conscience is central to the abbess's extensive controversial literature.

