

The Rise and Fall of

THEOLOGICAL
ENLIGHTENMENT

Jean-Martin de Prades and Ideological Polarization
in Eighteenth-Century France

JEFFREY D. BURSON

Foreword by Dale Van Kley

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Perspectives on Enlightenment, Religion, and the Abbé de Prades

Toward a New Historiography of Theological Enlightenment

The Enlightenment, as it unfolded in France during the last half of the eighteenth century was, in part, the accidental creation of frightened theologians, and the fate of Theological Enlightenment unfolded like a murder-suicide in which the Gallican church, in an attempt to obliterate the most dangerous tendencies of a radicalizing Enlightenment, mortally wounded its own more moderate but no less valuable variants of Theological Enlightenment. A climax of this process was the scandal occasioned by the doctoral thesis of one French theologian from the town of Castelsarrasin in the diocese of Montauban, the abbé Jean-Martin de Prades.

Prades was the scion of a distinguished noble family that resided in the vicinity of Castelsarrasin. Prades's uncle was a decorated lieutenant-colonel in the War of the Austrian Succession who was known to Marechal de Richelieu, the marquis d'Argenson, and the duc de Noailles (a close confidant of the Dauphin). In 1741, at the age of seventeen, the young Jean-Martin arrived in Paris and attended various *collèges* as a resident of several seminaries. He attended the seminary of Saint Nicolas-du-Chardonnet (1741–43) and, for unknown stints between 1743 and 1747, the seminaries of Saint-Sulpice, Bons-Enfants, and Saint-Firmin.¹ After finishing his arts curriculum with a *maîtrise ès arts* (master of arts degree) and defending his first thesis in theology (the *tentative*) on 28 February 1748, Prades returned to Montauban for his ordination. A year later, and until 1751, Prades again resided in Paris while pursuing his *bachelier en licence* in theology and then his doctorate in theology at the prestigious University of Paris Faculty of

Theology.² What made Prades controversial after his infamous doctoral thesis was his involvement with Denis Diderot, who had hired him and two other contemporary Sorbonne theologians, the abbé Claude Yvon and the abbé Pêstres, to write the articles on theology in the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire critique des sciences, des métiers, et des beaux-arts*. Prades's closeness to the arguments and assumptions of Enlightenment science, on the one hand, and his active involvement with a generation of Enlightenment theologians at the Sorbonne, on the other, inspired him to write his doctoral thesis, or *majeure ordinaire*, which was initially passed without incident. But the thesis was quickly attacked by the increasingly popular Jansenists for being a covert attempt to insinuate deism and skepticism into the doctrine of Europe's most venerable faculties of theology. In response, the marquis d'Argenson, Diderot, Jean-le-Rond d'Alembert, and Voltaire mobilized in Prades's defense. Always anxious for a legal or political scuffle that would demonstrate the obscurantism of the old regime church, and largely for reasons having to do with court politics in Prussia, his country of exile at the time, Voltaire came to the assistance of Prades by helping secure him a post at the court of Frederick the Great. Diderot and d'Alembert, for their part, defended Prades as a kind of publicity stunt designed to market the *Encyclopédie* as the quintessential meeting of Enlightenment writers persecuted by a superstitious, politically corrupt church and state. The Jesuits, in contrast, who were motivated by those close to the court such as the bishop of Mirepoix and those close to Guillaume-François Berthier, editor of the leading Jesuit periodical in France, the *Journal de Trévoux*, were anxious to see Diderot's *Encyclopédie* condemned; they therefore pushed the Sorbonne to condemn ten propositions extracted from Prades's thesis. The Sorbonne condemnation was carried only after an unprecedented, bitterly divided eleven extraordinary faculty assemblies. With little or no comment after any of the propositions, the faculty censure condemned them as

respectively false, audacious, injurious to Catholic theologians, offensive to pious ears, erroneous, blasphemous, heretical, favorable to materialism, pernicious to society, and to public tranquility in so far as it falsely, and in an improper sense, presents the notion of good and evil and the origin of natural law in a way tending to the overthrow of supernatural religion, while tainting the glory of the ancient law and bounteous

kindness of God, in ways contrary to the integrity and final authority of the books of Moses, and his alliance with the Jewish people. The thesis overthrows the foundations of the Christian Religion, impiously insults the truth and divinity of the miracles of Jesus Christ as mere equivocal events when separated from the witness of the prophets, because in themselves, they are equivocal and appear to resemble and to conform to the miraculous healings the Greek God Aesculapius was thought to have worked.³

Having suddenly found himself at the center of a scandal that momentarily brought the Sorbonne, the Jesuits, the Jansenists, the archbishop of Paris, the old bishop of Mirepoix (confessor to the Dauphin), and the Parlement of Paris strangely into accord respecting his fate, Prades managed to evade arrest and escape to Prussia at the behest of the marquis d'Argenson and Voltaire. In Prussia, Prades remained as a reader (*lecteur*) to Frederick the Great until 1757/8, when he was accused of espionage during the Seven Years' War. With the Treaty of Paris (1763), Prades was finally released but remained unable to return either to France or to the court of Frederick the Great; he lived out the last twenty years of his life as a canon in Glogäu, only to die a forgotten, obscure cleric in 1782.

That the Sorbonne denied him the opportunity to defend himself during the eleven extraordinary convocations of the faculty induced Prades to write the *Apologie* for his condemned thesis, built on letters written to various faculty members during December 1751 and January 1752. Both the thesis and the *Apologie* have been attributed completely or in part by contemporaries and historians alike to Diderot, d'Alembert, Voltaire, or the abbé Yvon.⁴ As discussed in chapter 6 and in the appendix of this book, the whole of the thesis as well as the *Apologie* itself (with the exception of fewer than a dozen pages and a supposititious third part known for more than a century to have been the work of Diderot) are authentically attributable to Prades.⁵ In fact, contrary to the expectations of most historians, Prades's *Apologie* was not welcomed by d'Alembert; it was called "theological claptrap" by Voltaire,⁶ and it was so unsatisfactory to Diderot that he decided to preempt its first publication in France with a third part supposedly by Prades but in fact written by Diderot himself for his own purposes. Erroneously, the *Apologie* was (and is occasionally by historians still today) thought to have been written in large part by the abbé Yvon or by

Diderot. Diderot, for his part, rebuked Prades on several key points (the possibility of historical validation of past miracles and the resolution of the conflicting Hebrew and Greek versions of the genealogies contained in Genesis). Moreover, Diderot would not have appended his own addendum to the *Apologie* if he had thought it satisfactory. The *Apologie* does present as a sincere elaboration of Prades's own positions in his thesis, and when taken together with his one verifiable article, "Certitude," in the 1751 *Encyclopédie*, it is a fascinating, albeit still evolving synthesis of a form of Theological Enlightenment discourse first developed by Jesuits close to the *Journal de Trévoux* in the first three decades of the 1700s and gradually integrated into the writings of vernacular apologists and university theologians at the Sorbonne from 1729 to 1752.⁷

Previous works have referred to the thesis of the abbé de Prades as a "signal of open war," and its author has been studied largely as a closet philosophe who "marched under the banner of Diderot."⁸ Robert Shackleton called Prades's theology a series of doctrines "to which the Sorbonne was not accustomed" and a rallying point for the fledgling writers of the *Encyclopédie* whose condemnation was really set in motion by the condemnation of Prades.⁹ Such assertions continue to be made in recent work on the origin of Counter-Enlightenment movements in France that date the first substantive "*antiphilosophie*" literature to the aftermath of the Prades Affair. Some historians have so far treated Prades essentially as a local curiosity; others have far too willingly treated his theology as the bastardized creed of Diderot and d'Alembert.¹⁰ But thanks to renewed interest in the adaptability of old regime French education by scholars such as Laurence Brockliss, André Tuilier, and Dominique Julia,¹¹ as well as a growing number of historians of modern medicine, the mind-body problem in eighteenth-century philosophy, and the radicalization of the Enlightenment in the period 1730s–1750s such as Roy Porter, Sergio Moravia, G. S. Rousseau, John W. Yolton, Margaret Jacob, and Jonathan Israel, it is now possible to write the history of the *Affaire de Prades* with a more nuanced understanding of the variants of Enlightenment that theologians had alternatively appropriated and increasingly disavowed after Prades's thesis was defended.¹²

More recently, historians such as Marie-Hélène Cotoni and Thomas O'Connor have referred to the abbé de Prades as a sort of liberal theologian who was closer in many ways to a constellation of so-called modernizers at the Sorbonne led by Luke Joseph Hooke, whose theology was not

as far from the philosophes as contemporary polemics would suggest.¹³ Most recently, Jonathan Israel has seen the Prades Affair as a turning point in the inevitable breakdown of the Lockean-Newtonian Moderate Enlightenment in France and the mainstreaming of the Radical Enlightenment thanks to the *Encyclopédie*. The deep and eclectic roots of Theological Enlightenment informing Prades at the Sorbonne and the complexity of the relationship of these roots to the Moderate and Radical Enlightenments need further examination, however.¹⁴ For as Israel concludes concerning the relevance of the Prades Affair, “The circumstances of the struggle locked together two opposed philosophical traditions [the “Moderate mainstream” of Lockean-Newtonian Enlightenment versus Radical, fundamentally Spinozan Enlightenment] which had long acknowledged, and continued to acknowledge, their own mutual antagonism and incompatibility but saw themselves as obliged to work together against a vastly more popular and more powerful force, namely that of *antiphilosophie* and Jansenism.”¹⁵ Certainly Prades’s connections to the *Encyclopédie* forced the Jesuits to more closely ally themselves philosophically with the Jansenists, which in turn forced Voltaire and other more moderate writers to support more radical contributors to the *Encyclopédie* under threat of persecution. But Israel’s treatment of Prades’s thesis and theology (scarcely three paragraphs in 871 pages) lends the victory of Radical Enlightenment an aura of philosophical inevitability. He does not focus on the long-term continuities and philosophical endurance of earlier forms of Theological Enlightenment from whence Prades’s apologetical theology grew. Earlier, often quite sophisticated engagement by theologians and Jesuits with Radical Enlightenment discourses and the syntheses of Locke and Malebranche so central to the earlier Theological Enlightenment are not studied. Israel also sees the “broad moderate mainstream” that had united philosophes like Voltaire and Montesquieu with the Jesuits, and that was “based on Locke and Newton,” as having “come into being in France” only “in the 1730s.” Yet these aspects of Theological Enlightenment were much more deeply rooted in philosophical and religious controversies of the late seventeenth century.¹⁶ Most significantly, though Israel’s account of the *Affaire de Prades* focuses on the convergence of moderate and radical writers, the diversity of institutions and loyalties among his more reified antiphilosophie opposition is scarcely addressed. The vitality, curricular changes, and historical initiative of the Sorbonne and French seminaries, the restive machinations

of the Parlement of Paris and the bishops, and the growing divisions among the Jesuits themselves in these years—all recede in a narrative that focuses on the Jansenists and *antiphilosophie* as a menacing *deus ex machina* that stood in the way of “modernity” and the “emancipation of man.”¹⁷

Retelling the story of the abbé de Prades necessarily involves reassessing one kind of Enlightenment movement that was as common to France as it was to other areas of Europe. This form of Enlightenment has been dubbed “Enlightenment Theology” by Thomas O’Connor, in his intellectual biography of Prades’s thesis president, the Irish theologian Luke Joseph Hooke. O’Connor writes that Enlightenment Theology has until recently been treated as mere apologetics, that is, “primarily [as] a defense of the Christian religion against Deism and atheism.”¹⁸ Historians of France have too often assumed that throughout the eighteenth century the clergy focused only on “exterior moral behaviour” in their belated and inadequate defenses of Christianity and, in addition, that their apologetic enterprise poorly or idiosyncratically engaged new developments in biblical criticism, natural history, and the mind-body question stimulated by the writings of Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza. Nothing could be further from the truth, however, as recent works on Enlightenment apologetics and the prehistory of Counter-Enlightenment thought have argued.¹⁹ But most of this scholarship focuses more precisely on later Enlightenment apologetics, especially on developments after 1760, and it often fails to see the connection between the formal censures of Prades, the *Encyclopédie*, and Helvétius and the inability of the Gallican church to maintain philosophically satisfactory and adaptable apologetics against a more mainstream Radical Enlightenment in the 1760s and beyond. Darrin McMahon’s pathbreaking study of the development of a Counter-Enlightenment ideology is devoted mostly to the period between the 1780s and the Restoration era, while William Everdell’s otherwise excellent taxonomy of eighteenth-century Catholic apologetics from the 1730s to the 1790s tends to isolate apologetics from wider sociocultural changes in the Enlightenment such as the spread of Gallicanism within Catholic Enlightenment or the mainstreaming of Radical Enlightenment discourses in France. Everdell’s treatment paints the picture of an essentially reactive movement that, chiefly after 1755, valiantly but quixotically attempted to equate “the most gothic of all Catholic dogmas” (such as even church mysteries and sacraments) with natural religion in a way that remained largely unconvincing to public opinion.²⁰ The focus of Everdell’s book is later, and as its title suggests, it is ultimately concerned

with finding the roots of “romantic religion” in early-nineteenth-century France. Only Marie-Hélène Cotoni addresses the early and dynamic interaction of theologians and philosophes in creating forms of theological argument that creatively addressed the challenge of Spinozan biblical criticism. Cotoni astutely argues that “the criteria of judgment among apologists, on the one hand, and the philosophes, on the other, were comparable” but that effective dialogue between Theological Enlightenment and the philosophes began to break down by the 1750s. Nevertheless, Cotoni remains content to describe the cooling of relations among different purveyors of different variants of Enlightenment without historicizing its beginning.²¹

If the wider history of the French Enlightenment is to be understood in a comparative context, the nature and historical development of O’Connor’s Enlightenment Theology must be broadened, periodized, and rescued from marginality. The notion of an Enlightenment Theology suggests that the time has come to reconceptualize the religious history of Enlightenment Europe as diverse trajectories of Theological Enlightenment. To speak of a “Theological Enlightenment” (as I refer to it in what follows) provides a more suitable conceptual framework for encompassing the dynamic interaction of multiple modalities of regional, confessional, and philosophical Enlightenment movements. Studying the European Theological Enlightenment opens the way, in short, toward the globalization of historical scholarship on religion and Enlightenment overall while maintaining the necessary pluralization of the Enlightenment called for by Pocock but in a way that does not fracture the necessarily cosmopolitan narrative of the Enlightenment.²² Consequently, discourses of Theological Enlightenment can be treated as a dynamic, creative, and constantly evolving series of movements the intersection of which permits us to view connections among European Catholic and Protestant Enlightenments, alongside connections to the broader evolution of Radical, Moderate, and Counter-Enlightenment movements in Europe studied by Israel, Jacob, Van Kley, McMahan, and others.

Continuing self-consciously in the tradition of Peter Gay, Israel’s most recent tome, *Enlightenment Contested*, analyzes the Enlightenment from a broader European and Atlantic world perspective, seeing within it a fundamental duality between “moderate mainstream” and “Radical Enlightenment.” Israel’s work (which is actually more nuanced than his self-proclaimed dichotomies suggest) depicts the former as fundamentally conservative and willing to countenance an epistemological role for both reason

and tradition, empiricism and rationalism, natural religion and revealed religion. Under the rubric “moderate mainstream,” Israel casts a sweeping net across the Continent and the Atlantic world, insisting that “Cartesian dualism, Lockean empiricism, Leibnizian monads, Malebranche’s occasionalism, Bishop Huet’s fideism, the London Boyle Lectures, Newtonian physico-theology, Thomasian eclecticism, German and Swedish Wolffianism” were “all methodologies of compromise” fundamentally at odds with the Radical Enlightenment, which he sees as the inevitable harbinger of modernity.²³ The Radical Enlightenment, Israel contends, had no truck with revelation or philosophical dualism because of its essentially revolutionary, inherently anticlerical faith that philosophy was socially transformative because of Spinoza’s idea that natural law, God’s law, and natural reason were substantially one. This Radical Enlightenment, Israel then asserts, became dominant in France during the 1740s because the moderate mainstream “simply proved unable clearly and cogently to win the intellectual battle” in successive controversies spanning the decades from the 1730s to the 1760s in France.²⁴

Though Israel’s work is an invaluable contribution destined to be a standard work of eighteenth-century intellectual history, his methodology does not account for the breadth of nuance now evident in the historiography of the Enlightenment. His narrative is imbued with an excessively teleological approach that underscores the inevitable modernity and inevitable victory of Radical Enlightenment. But Radical Enlightenment in Europe was not inevitable; it had much to do with the philosophical and institutional peculiarities of the manner in which Enlightenment thought was adopted by Catholic and Protestant apologists, lay writers, and theologians in particular early modern regimes. Though often hostile to Spinoza, philosophically inclined apologists, university theologians, and Jesuits whom Israel has branded as moderate or even Counter-Enlightenment figures were not exclusively Lockean and Newtonian in their natural philosophy. Instead, they were often Lockean and Malebranchian in their psychological and theological approaches as well. Many writers who would later be retrospectively branded as “Moderate” or “Counter-Enlightenment” by their critics were in their own day passionately convinced that the body of revelation was, in toto, empirically verifiable. Whether their arguments seem convincing to present-day historians or later critics is not precisely the point, if we are to avoid a Whiggish interpretation of the Enlightenment. In

short, the philosophical, theological, and sociocultural permeability of the first half of the eighteenth century makes it difficult to distinguish the Radical Enlightenment, Moderate Enlightenment, and Counter-Enlightenment until the 1750s. Israel does recognize that Counter-Enlightenment often unintentionally played directly into the hands of the most radical writers, but he insists that this has much to do with their “faith-based hostility to philosophy.”²⁵

This tendency to elide Counter-Enlightenment with Catholic Enlightenment, on the other hand, is a tempting and forgivable oversight, for as both McMahon and Didier Masseur have argued, Catholic apologists were often leading figures in the rise of *antiphilosophie* in Europe. But as Ulrich Lehner has astutely noted, “It is also inconceivable to label Catholics who paid respect to tradition but were simply interested in new ways of doing theology as members of the Counter-Enlightenment simply because they did not follow certain strains of Enlightenment thought.”²⁶ Indeed, though well forged, and rapidly becoming a standard work on Counter-Enlightenment and counterrevolutionary ideology in France, McMahon’s *Enemies of Enlightenment* leaves some room for revision on precisely these grounds noted by Lehner. For though McMahon’s work (which is concerned chiefly with the period 1776–89) is masterful, an earlier focus on the decade of the 1750s, which began with the censure of the abbé de Prades and climaxed with the condemnation of Helvétius’s *De l’Esprit* and Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, problematizes the elision of Catholic and Counter-Enlightenment. Such a focus demonstrates that the Counter-Enlightenment was not, *sui generis*, somehow on the conservative, Catholic, or cultural “right” while the rest of the Enlightenment was somehow “left.” Rather, the Counter-Enlightenment derives from manifold origins that defy such later sociopolitical categories that, in fact, have more to do with French revolutionary paradigms.²⁷

The seemingly paradoxical notion, therefore, of Counter-Enlightenment arising from Enlightenment discourses themselves is the subject of what follows. It is here argued that the Counter-Enlightenment was often a child of the early Enlightenment as much as was the Radical Enlightenment, but Counter-Enlightenment movements were offspring beset by identity crises inherent in their very conception. Passionately fearful of unbelief after the the 1750s especially and endlessly divided against themselves, Counter-Enlightenment partisans and apologists often argued for

the social utility and rationality of church history and mystery while retrospectively condemning the epistemological bases for such arguments vested in the theological enlightenment of the early eighteenth century that had actually rhetorically synthesized certain Lockean and Cartesian principles. This identity crisis is in fact rooted in the censure of the abbé de Prades and its meaning for the unfolding of religious and secular enlightenment debates in prerevolutionary France.

In a long overdue corrective to the dual tendency of equating the Counter- and Catholic Enlightenments, on the one hand, or marginalizing religious enlightenments as fundamentally at odds with the march of modernity, on the other, Lehner, Douglas Palmer, Samuel Miller, and Van Kley have engaged in a thought-provoking multinational renaissance of Catholic Enlightenment historiography.²⁸ Seeking to modify earlier endeavors, for example, Lehner has recently attempted to describe fundamental characteristics of the Catholic Enlightenment without losing sight of the diversity inherent in the movement across European societies and across the metropole and peripheries of Catholic empires like Spain or Portugal.²⁹ Lehner identifies nine characteristics that refocus attention on the internationalization of the Catholic Enlightenment: (1) poignant confidence in social progress and the malleability (if not in fact perfectability) of human nature; (2) reverence for human reason and free will; (3) concern for utility and historical-critical scholarship; (4) a desire to move beyond Aristotelianism and Cartesianism; (5) struggle against superstition; (6) ecumenism; (7) criticisms of despotism whether papal or episcopal; (8) an intense, almost preromantic engagement with affective piety by the late eighteenth century alongside a more sedate and introspective spirituality associated with Jansenists; and (9) ongoing debates over conciliarism, consent, authority, and original sin inherited from the Council of Trent. Indeed, and somewhat in contrast to the recent work by David Sorkin, the Catholic Enlightenment is a “religious Enlightenment” with “its own dynamics.”³⁰ But, though this effort is long overdue and provides invaluable nuances to the already quintessential contributions of McMahon and Israel, there are risks. Emphasizing the character of the Catholic Enlightenment as distinct from the “monopoly that the Protestants had on Enlightenment literature”³¹ may bring about further balkanization of Enlightenments at the expense of comparative, multiconfessional, and multinational narratives. Moreover, while both Sorkin and Lehner emphasize the vital impor-

tance of studying “religious Enlightenment” (singular) as a movement with “its own dynamics,” surely no less essential is the imperative of studying just how these dynamics evolved in dialogue with other Enlightenments, Radical, Protestant, or otherwise. In short, while the pluralization of Enlightenments called for by Pocock, Roy Porter, Alan Kors, Israel, Hunter, Lehner, and Sorokin continues to revolutionize our understanding of the eighteenth century, pluralization can verge on scholarly balkanization that does not reflect the cosmopolitan networks of exchange that starkly re-made the Western world from the 1600s onward.³²

In lieu of further balkanization of Enlightenments by taxonomic categories, all the vital traditions of analysis discussed above can be approached holistically. A more interactive, dialectical approach that studies Catholic Enlightenments, Protestant Enlightenments, and the process of Enlightenment radicalization or secularization in different national contexts as contingent processes of historical change is now both timely and possible. The Radical Enlightenment itself was highly pluralistic, comprising very diverse lay and ecclesiastical “personnel” and with different outcomes in France than in the British, Atlantic, Iberian, German, or even Orthodox and Jewish worlds.³³ The same can be said of various religious Enlightenments where indeed Radical, Moderate, and Counter-Enlightenment currents can all be shown to have arisen at particular moments from the accumulation of particular causes célèbres. “Theological Enlightenment” cannot be identified with any one confession, one decade, or one national context.³⁴ If construed globally, the term can capture the dynamic intersection of Enlightenment movements without succumbing to taxonomic reductionism, on the one hand, or the equally alluring tendency to slur national, confessional, radical, or moderate discourses uncritically, on the other.³⁵ Indeed, Theological Enlightenment as a historiographical category allows one to view Enlightenment pluralization in motion. In France, this motion was driven by the fact that Catholic Enlightenment was held hostage to controversy between pro-Jansenist and pro-Jesuit wings of the Gallican church. This Catholic Enlightenment became increasingly and bitterly divided against itself after the 1730s. Such a state of affairs ultimately afforded the precocious normalization of Radical Enlightenment in France after the 1750s. In response, Jesuit contributions to Enlightenment rhetorically ceded the field both to more radically secular writers and to a more self-conscious Counter-Enlightenment. All this at a time when, as Van Kley

has argued, the quasi-republican strands of Jansenist Gallican ecclesiology remained vital and went on to inspire “patriotic revolutions” in church and state throughout the Netherlands and in areas of Italy, Spain, and, of course, France itself after 1789.³⁶

Finally, and although outside the scope of the present book, the historical paradigm of Theological Enlightenment allows historians to integrate fascinating research on enlightenments of religious ritual, practice, and devotional styles into scholarly treatments of political thought, apologetics, natural philosophy, or the academic theology of universities and seminaries. The historian of the Anglo-American Puritan movement, Dewey D. Wallace, instructively cautions, “Theological formulations function in relation to religious experience, but that latter phenomenon is the soil out of which they grow and in which they thrive.”³⁷ But often this necessary intersection of spirituality and high theology remains a problem with respect to studies of Catholic Enlightenment, because much of the fascinating scholarship on the transformation of eighteenth-century devotion cuts across formal distinctions, Jansenist or Jesuit, Gallican or ultramontane, Radical or Counter-Enlightenment Catholicism.³⁸ As Derek Beales has noted, the more sober and individualistic forms of piety characteristic of neo-Augustinian Jansenists often coexisted with the aesthetically bombastic, richly variegated style of Baroque Catholicism still beloved by Jesuits, and much more *à la mode* in Spain than in France overall, for example.³⁹ If Theological Enlightenment is construed along the lines suggested by Wallace, additional dimensions of Catholic Enlightenment and their intersection with Protestant and secular Enlightenment ethics and aesthetics are opened for investigation.

Specifically with respect to France, however, the way to comprehend Theological Enlightenment discourses is not, as O’Connor has argued, to “focus . . . on systematic theology as though apologetics were still a uniformly separate and vulgarized discipline.”⁴⁰ Rather, Theological Enlightenment, as I argue here, was viewed by many theologians of the early eighteenth century as *synonymous* with apology. For this reason, after the 1730s and 1740s especially, I begin referring on occasion to the discourses Prades and other French theologians employ as “Enlightenment Theology/apologetics.” For as O’Connor points out, eighteenth-century attacks on orthodoxy came not just from within clerical and university circles (as was often the case during the sixteenth century) but also from laymen in a much

broader reading public.⁴¹ In this environment, theologians such as the abbé de Prades thought of themselves as rationalizing theology by reviving the original, primitive context in which doctrine was created by the apostles and the apostolic fathers themselves. Prades and many others like him were seeking, by the most effective, consensual arguments of Christian authorities through the centuries, to defend the faith through *sociabilité* and dialogue with the wider society. Prades was neither deliberately heterodox nor a philosophe; he was an ambitious young theologian who, like his teachers at the Sorbonne, like other lay and clerical apologists, and like many high clergy in mid-eighteenth-century France, had been deeply inspired by the spirit of the Enlightenment. He was trying to provide a blueprint for a modernized theological argument that presented orthodoxy in a way more convincing to even the most skeptical Enlightenment writers. He was attempting, as were the early church fathers, to put old wine into new wineskins, to communicate the immutable through the all-too-mutable voice of human language through time. In so doing, Prades did little more than continue the tradition of Theological Enlightenment that had been synthesizing the old with the new since the late seventeenth century, when Bayle, Spinoza, and Descartes first revolutionized the intellectual milieu of Europe. The theology and the scandal of abbé de Prades have yet to be analyzed in the context of the wider movement of Theological Enlightenment that inspired him.

In what follows, I use my own terminology (i.e., Theological Enlightenment) to functionally denote a distinctively French and partially still-born movement of theological enlightenment just emerging into self-consciousness by 1751 when Prades defended his thesis, and having its origins in Jesuit engagement with the early Enlightenment.⁴² This book does not attempt a conclusive or monolithic definition of Theological Enlightenment for the whole of Europe. Theological Enlightenment in Europe is a book that remains a work in progress, and in any event, a monolithic, reified definition of it would be alien to the nuanced evidence available from the eighteenth century.⁴³ Indeed, this book argues that an early Theological Enlightenment grew up alongside and in dialogue with related early Enlightenment discourses in France (including both Radical Enlightenment and the Gallican and Jansenist discourses of the early Enlightenment). The particular discourses of Theological Enlightenment that informed Prades, the Sorbonne, the seminaries, and many vernacular apologists between the

1730s and the 1750s were associated very much with pro-Jesuit, more ultramontane and absolutist forms of Gallican Catholicism. Prades's thesis, in particular, encapsulates and develops many prominent arguments and tropes with a long history, dating back at least a half century to Jesuit attempts to adapt to the challenges posed by Spinoza, Bayle, Descartes, and others during what Paul Hazard termed the "crisis of European understanding" or what Theodore K. Rabb called the "struggle for stability" in post-Reformation Europe.⁴⁴ But I would not wish to lend the impression (nor do I personally believe) that there were not other variations of Theological Enlightenment extant in the period both before and after 1750. For example, Van Kley views the internationalization of Jansenist Theological Enlightenment discourses as among several religious origins for the rise of early patriotic movements throughout the confessional states of Europe.⁴⁵ Networks of exchange, the clandestine book trade, and cross-confessional citation made the internationalization of Jansenist-Gallican Theological Enlightenment functionally similar to Protestant Theological Enlightenment in the British Isles, the British Atlantic, the Netherlands, and the Holy Roman Empire (e.g., pietism)—and all, Van Kley has argued, were an important component of what Palmer once referred to as "Democratic revolutions."⁴⁶ As Van Kley's work on Gallicanism in Europe has already begun to demonstrate, the Enlightenment—hitherto studied at the intersection of a triad of reified "Catholic," "Protestant," and secular (Moderate mainstream or Radical) discourses, or as a pluralized intersection of national Enlightenment—needs to be revisited. Accordingly, the concept of Theological Enlightenment proposed here allows historians to do just that—to provide a sharper lens through which to study the interconnectedness of both Protestant and Catholic Enlightenment trends throughout Europe and its colonies, with pluralized national "Enlightenments" arising at the intersection of these Theological Enlightenment with the contingencies of institutions, law, and sociability within diverse states.

Moreover, the new international history of Catholic Enlightenment needs to encompass the internationalization of Gallican and Jansenist Theological Enlightenment by linking it to the rise and fall of different, equally significant Theological Enlightenment among the Jesuits and the many philosophes, academic theologians, apologists, and seminaries influenced by them prior to their expulsion from France. It remains true that the relationship of Jansenism or Gallicanism to Enlightenment and Revolution is all but impossible to deny. Yet this connection is only one side of

the story. Historians have unintentionally delimited the scope of the Enlightenment and religion in France to the contributions of Jansenism and Gallicanism to political thought and their relatively democratic view of the clergy that idealized the social and religious importance of the *bon curé*.⁴⁷ But the Jansenists and those with Jansenist proclivities did not speak for everybody in the French church. Indeed, theirs was in many ways a minority view for much of the eighteenth century. As Palmer noted, the Jansenists were in every other respect hostile to much of the scientific, epistemological, and ethical thought of the Enlightenment.⁴⁸ This hostility is not characteristic of the French clergy as a whole, and the scandal of Jean-Martin de Prades is in fact one major cause célèbre that stands at the *conjoncture* of these diverse trajectories of Theological Enlightenment. Increasingly by the 1750s, the more politically innovative, pro-Jansenist Catholic Enlightenment was squaring off against the ultramontane and absolutist Jesuits who somewhat ironically had within their ranks the vanguard of Catholic Enlightenment science and epistemology. This polarization that tended toward Counter-Enlightenment trends among French Catholics and a more radical mainstream in France on the eve of the Revolution accelerated as a result of the censure of the abbé de Prades. France was becoming, and with distinctive precocity vis-à-vis the rest of Europe, a house divided against itself. Radical Enlightenment writers such as La Mettrie and Diderot, therefore, were more convincingly able to chart a middle way based solely on reason and social utility for the improvement of society.

This book, then, focuses largely on Theological Enlightenment discourses used by non-Jansenist apologists, Jesuits, some Gallican bishops, and academic theologians in France. Accordingly, “Theological Enlightenment” is hereinafter taken to denote previously acceptable Enlightenment discourses most prominent and self-consciously adopted in the 1740s by apologists, many seminaries, and the University of Paris Faculty. This Theological Enlightenment, later used by Prades, had many of its origins in Jesuit responses to Cartesianism and Spinozism and in the joint participation of many French clergy and Jesuits in the salons, clubs, and academies of the first third of the eighteenth century. These strands of Theological Enlightenment were then further disseminated and self-consciously adapted by the vernacular apologists of the 1720s–1740s, just as the movement made inroads into the Sorbonne. Very often, the purveyors of these discourses of Theological Enlightenment were pro-*Unigenitus*,⁴⁹ and after

the 1720s they were not only ensconced in the Enlightenment *sociabilité* of the capital but also had carved out a self-conscious role for themselves as revivers of the original methods by which Christianity was ideally defended and doctrine ideally pronounced. Apologetics and academic theology were, as such, inextricably linked: weaknesses in the philosophical integrity and truth claims of the one all but inevitably and recursively affected the other.

Theological Enlightenment was challenged after the 1730s, however, by the publication and popularization of earlier clandestine manuscripts of the “Radical Enlightenment,”⁵⁰ on the one hand, and by a more millenarian and increasingly politically active Jansenism, on the other. Since the early 1970s Van Kley, Robert Kreiser, William Doyle, Peter Campbell, and Monique Cottret (to name only a few of the most prominent) have revolutionized our understanding of the political and intellectual role of Jansenism in the religious and intellectual history of eighteenth-century France.⁵¹ And the meticulous and insightful studies of Jacob and Israel have made it possible to historicize both the sources and the time frame for the radicalization of the French Enlightenment with much greater precision.⁵² In effect, only in this historiographical context can the rise and fall of Theological Enlightenment in France and the work of Jean-Martin de Prades be more clearly elucidated.

— So what can be said about Prades and his relationship to Theological Enlightenment? Little direct evidence supports the theory that Prades’s thesis was a conspiracy of philosophes, and as John McManners has noted, “the outcry against the notorious thesis of Prades was not justified by its actual content.” Still, existing work focusing on Prades remains minimal, and all but exclusively in French; historians are consistently too willing to ascribe the historical agency for Prades’s theology to either the editors of the *Encyclopédie* or the so-called modernizers at the Sorbonne.⁵³ Though certainly inspired by multiple progenitors, and far from original in its particulars, the thesis of the abbé de Prades reveals its author to be the originator of his own theological synthesis. Prades articulated his design for the synthesis in his article “Certitude” in the *Encyclopédie* and in his Sorbonne *majeure ordinaire*, and his thesis was a mere prelude to what he considered a new *summa theologica* in the making. Although clumsy and

inchoate in places, it was developed further in his own *Apologie* for his theological perspective. Prades's authentic self-defense—Parts I and II of his *Apologie*, published in both Paris and Amsterdam in 1752 and again in 1753—was intended to prove the orthodoxy of Catholicism by starting from the assumptions of the *Encyclopédie* and the sensationist epistemology he shared with Diderot, d'Alembert, and Voltaire.

Ultimately, however, Prades derived his arguments from those discourses of Theological Enlightenment that heralded from a Jesuit-contrived synthesis of Locke and Malebranche so far left unnoticed in existing historiography. The Jesuit synthesis of Malebranche and Locke found its way both into vernacular apologetics in the 1730s–1740s and into the Sorbonne faculty itself once Cardinal de Fleury had expelled the Jansenists and allowed Jesuit patronage, science, and theology to flow freely into the Sorbonne. I argue that Prades's stillborn life's work was ultimately designed to combat “unbelievers” and “skeptics” by turning the apologetical orientation of Theological Enlightenment to good effect, communicating Catholic orthodoxy in a way freethinkers and Enlightenment writers could understand rather than ridicule. Such intention is evinced by Prades's ultimate repentance and reinstatement on the faculty rosters of the Sorbonne and by the way in which he finished his life: as a beneficed priest.

This focus on a relatively minor figure in the history of eighteenth-century France may seem like a strange choice. Yet to vaunt the originality of one minor figure of the French Catholic Enlightenment and imply that every component of Prades's argument was novel in its day is not my intention. As evinced throughout this book, the strands of Prades's theological and philosophical influence are as pluralistic as they are often densely and haltingly articulated. Prades was, after all, a young, spirited, but often clumsy and arrogant writer. If his work had one fault it was perhaps its immaturity and rough-hewn quality as of 1751–53 when he presented it before the European republic of letters. I am not, therefore, attempting to rehabilitate Prades, or engage in theological polemics concerning his doctrine in light of eighteenth-century or current understandings of Catholic orthodoxy. I am a historian by profession and a very moderate American Protestant by personal conviction; as such, I have absolutely no personal stake in the imbroglio surrounding his life, supposed heterodoxy, orthodoxy, modernity, or otherwise. As a work of cultural history, this book necessarily treats the question of whether Prades was a second-rate philosopher

or apologist as essentially ahistorical; it does not argue that the young abbé led to conclusion the halting Theological Enlightenment synthesis his work was attempting.

Rather, Prades's work is the artifact of a particular moment in the history of the Sorbonne. His career was forged in a blast furnace of undeclared religious war within the French Catholic Church, at the climax of Theological Enlightenment in France among the Jesuits and the Sorbonne—at a turning point in its engagement with those who would eventually be revered as philosophes. The intersection of sociopolitical and religious struggles in France made his theology possible, and these struggles, in turn, transformed an otherwise unremarkable artifact of apologetical engagement with the Enlightenment into a cause célèbre for a distinctive trajectory of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment ideologies in prerevolutionary France. Engaging with the nature of this historical process and the nature of Prades as cause célèbre is thus impossible without a deeper engagement with the content and unfolding of Prades's thesis and *Apologie*—with the nature of Prades as historical agent. No studies of the life of the abbé de Prades and his place in the Enlightenment have thoroughly contended with the long-term sources of his thought, nor have they contextualized his writings in light of what, I argue, are the highly pluralistic discourses of the early Theological Enlightenment in which he participates.⁵⁴ Historians have tended, instead, to read the inconsistencies of the Prades thesis as evidence of his covert deism, his theological liberalism, or his status as a second-rate intellectual hack who lacked depth and originality as a philosopher, apologist, or theologian. Accordingly, they continue to neglect a close reading of his writings. Prades only seems derivative if one assumes that his thesis and *Apologie* (published together in 1752) were just deviously inconsistent replications of deism, or, at best, some kind of second-hand “modernizer” theology deriving from his teachers at the Sorbonne. Roughly hewn or not, derivative in its components or not, Prades's work, and the history of the Enlightenment overall, demands a nuanced historical perspective that takes note of the endlessly adaptable strands of argument creatively reassembled and disseminated by historical agents engaged in complex networks of authorship, publication, institutions, and public discussion. We cannot fully comprehend the unfolding of French Theological Enlightenment, we cannot understand the ways in which Prades's scandal was a crucible of more radical Enlightenment, more assertive Counter-

Enlightenment, and the victory of a more pervasive Gallican Catholic Enlightenment in France on the bones of the Jesuit Theological Enlightenment, unless we deeply engage the language of his theology itself and its role in the crucial decade of the 1750s. Therefore, this book adopts a new approach: it takes Jean-Martin de Prades at his word; his own contemporary statements concerning his endeavor demonstrate that his thesis was the précis to an overly ambitious attempt to write a new *summa theologia* that would update defenses of Christianity by integrating assumptions of the Enlightenment, thus carving out a newly self-conscious role for the Enlightenment theologian. The historical genesis, contours, and ultimate failure of the Prades *summa* of Theological Enlightenment—a nearly half-century-old constellation of movements that inform his attempt—is the subject of this book.

Prades's attempted summation as of 1752 backfired drastically because of the severe political and doctrinal divisions of eighteenth-century France. The result of this so-called *Affaire de Prades* sorely compromised the efficacy of later apologists against writers who were, in their turn, emboldened by the affair to rally around the *Encyclopédie* as the persecuted symbol of the church's supposed intransigence, superstition, and opposition to free thought. In this sense, the *parti philosophe* was both directly and indirectly created from the persecution by the old regime church in France.⁵⁵ The philosophes rallied together because of intensified persecution after the *Affaire de Prades*. But the philosophes were also directly created by the church's reactive narrowing of the boundaries that delimited acceptable orthodoxy after 1752 when anything openly heralded as associated with the sensationism of John Locke (including the half century of Theological Enlightenment built on by Prades) was viewed with suspicion as tending inevitably toward materialism or atheism. This narrowing of acceptable Catholic orthodoxy cramped the freedom of writers committed to defending the faith while embittering the pens of more radical philosophes even long after Prades's flight into Prussia. Prades's life and work therefore demonstrate that the anticlericalism of late-eighteenth-century philosophes was not inevitable, nor was the Catholic Church in France inherently the enemy of Enlightenment, any more than religion was the enemy of the English, Scottish, or American Enlightenments. In France, movements of Theological Enlightenment existed with sources and characteristics common to the wider Enlightenment; it took an active role in addressing many

of the same questions addressed in the *Encyclopédie* about the nature of human perception, the relationship of mind and body, the origin and moral progress of human individuals in society, natural versus revealed religion, and biblical criticism. Jean-Martin de Prades was a significant participant in this Theological Enlightenment, despite being a contributor to Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. This book, in effect, argues that by the 1740s philosophes and Enlightenment theologians continued to mingle freely, and still had in common education and participation in clubs, salons, and academies and remained in constant dialogue with more radical writers. Prades and a sizable handful of his teachers at the Sorbonne were not exceptional in that sense. What brought about the censure of his thesis was a change in the sociopolitical balance of power within the old regime church between 1749 and 1752 and the last fruits of a change within the Sorbonne itself dating to 1729–30.

Prades is, therefore, at the heart of an important question that continues to plague historians of the French Enlightenment: where did the anti-clerical tendencies of Enlightenment and Revolution come from? Despite much evidence to the contrary, too many historians of all stripes remain content to speak of the French Enlightenment as though it were inherently Spinozan, inherently materialistic, and inherently bent on a mission to obliterate the superstition supposedly inherent in all revealed religions, including Catholicism, throughout the eighteenth century. Yet few historians have systematically addressed the two questions this view of the French Enlightenment immediately begs. First, how and when did so many bishops, Jansenists, university theologians, and Jesuits become enemies of Enlightenment? Did they? Or did other, more conservative trends arise from within more moderate Catholic Enlightenment movements and emerge victorious in response to institutional contingencies and perceived threats from Radical Enlightenment? In what precise ways were French clergy against the Enlightenment, and why? Second, if the philosophes in France came to see themselves as prophets and martyrs of civilization against barbarism, superstition, and tyranny, how did so many Enlightenment writers come to associate those concepts with the leadership of the Catholic Church in France?⁵⁶ More than fifty years ago, Ronald Messières noted that the project of the *Encyclopédie* created a sort of self-conscious “sect,” an “esprit de corps,” a set of self-proclaimed shock troops for the *siècle des lumières*. No such unifier was available to the opposition. The scholarly consen-

sus among historians of the Counter-Enlightenment remains that the partisans of “*anti-philosophie*” were far from uniformly “anti-Enlightenment,” for they were divided among Jesuits, Jansenists, the Parlement of Paris, the court, and disgruntled, unemployed writers.⁵⁷ Consequently, more fundamental questions are at the heart of this study of the abbé de Prades: what drove French Christians to become Enlightenment theologians and/or Counter-Enlightenment figures? When and how was that choice made by different people? Why, indeed, was an esprit de corps among Enlightenment figures necessary in the first place? The decade between 1752 and 1764 in general—the Affaire de Prades in particular—is a crucial key to these questions that cut straight to the heart of what, in effect, created the French Enlightenment and its Counter-Enlightenment after midcentury. The doctoral thesis, the *Apologie*, and the scandal of the abbé de Prades must be reexamined in light of nearly thirty years of historical literature that has revolutionized our understanding of the role of the Jansenists and religious conflict in the 1750s, the role of Radical Enlightenment in France, and the intricate role of old regime higher education. Such historical understanding will make the contours of Theological Enlightenment visible to the eye of modern history. For revealing the original context of Prades’s work will provide long overdue insight into the unfolding of an affair that, for France, was the crucible of the Theological Enlightenment and an event around which the *parti philosophe* rallied, in essence, creating its own identity.⁵⁸

Part I of this book retraces the history of the controversies that drove French Theological Enlightenment movements throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Prades was inspired by discourses originally wrought by the Jesuits close to the *Journal de Trévoux* and the most forward-thinking of the Regency-era republic of letters. In response to the rationalism of Descartes, the skepticism of Bayle, and the materialist monism of Spinoza, Jesuits such as René-Joseph Tournemine and Claude G. Buffier had worked out a synthesis of Locke and Malebranche throughout the first third of the eighteenth century, which I have referred to as the Jesuit synthesis for the sake of clarity and brevity (I do not wish to imply that the Jesuits were the only ones to creatively adopt it). This Jesuit synthesis vested metaphysical causality and absolute free agency in God alone, and acknowledged that speculative reason about him was limited. Like Locke, many theologians of the first half of the eighteenth century, including Prades and

his Jesuit predecessors, Buffier and Tournemine, believed that essential knowledge of substance was impossible. Yet experience provided humans with a kind of “common sense” built on an individual’s interior sense (or in some writers, internal sentiment) of his or her own existence. This self-perception of one’s existence as a being that thinks led to a kind of “common sense” that God exists, that there is a substantial difference between body and soul, and, finally, that an apparent liaison exists between the mind and the body despite the substantial difference between them. Establishing methods of ascertaining the historical certitude of the church’s miracle claims, its body of revelation, and its apostolic authority were also the preoccupation of many Enlightenment theologians.

Theologians of the early eighteenth century who developed and elaborated the Jesuit synthesis were reinforced by the debates in the wider republic of letters over the corruption of natural religion after the fall of humankind into original sin (in theological terminology, the postlapsarian human condition). Moreover, many Jesuits found in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* a plausible means for updating Thomism in light of Spinoza, Descartes, and Bayle. In addition, Locke’s *Essay* helped Theological Enlightenment writers inspired by the Jesuit synthesis to explain humankind’s natural corruption after the fall, and its consequent need for revealed truths as a necessary republication (in the form of Catholic Christianity) of what eighteenth-century theologians supposed had been God’s primordial, original, and natural religion. This original religion, newly revealed through the church to a humanity whose religious understanding was inexorably thought to have been corrupted by its dependence on sense perception, Prades would later call “supernatural religion” as opposed to simply “revealed religion.” After 1729, with the acceptance of the papal bull *Unigenitus* by the Paris Faculty of Theology and the chasing of Jansenists from among its ranks, the Jesuit synthesis would come to exercise a prominent influence at the University of Paris through a variety of direct and indirect influences—developments addressed in depth in Part II.

As the whole of Part I argues, the early Theological Enlightenment was challenged throughout the 1730s–1750s period by a surge in medical knowledge about the human central nervous system and by an equally significant surge in the publication of hitherto clandestine manuscripts that often blended English deists, Locke, and Spinoza together, putting them in the service of a pantheistic and materialist cosmology. In response to

these two developments after 1743, the early building blocks of theological argument proffered by the Jesuits were widely publicized and interwoven by vernacular apologists of the 1740s. Such apologists as the abbé d'Houtteville, who was used by both Prades and Hooke, fashioned earlier discourses into a self-conscious identity and mission for Enlightenment theologians that valued the constant, open, and collaborative explication of Catholic doctrine by educated priests in commerce with society and its contemporary challenges. For these apologists who were well known in the seminaries and theological faculties of Paris, including the Sorbonne, the science of theology became the science of apology, and this is the tradition in which the abbé de Prades wrote his thesis.

Part II, comprising chapters 3, 4, and 5, examines the early university and seminary milieu of the 1730s–1750s—the staging ground for Prades's theological endeavors and a high-water mark of Jesuit Theological Enlightenment within the republic of letters, the court, French seminaries, and the University of Paris.⁵⁹ The harshness of the reaction to Prades's thesis and *Apologie* is impossible to understand without a better grasp of the intellectual and curricular intersection of the Sorbonne and the Theological Enlightenment trends discussed in Part I—a process that has never been fully addressed. Chapter 3 addresses the ways in which the *collèges*, universities, and seminaries in Paris responded to the wider intellectual and religious aspects of the Theological Enlightenment, and chapter 4 considers the channels by which Paris philosophy and theology instruction was influenced by the Enlightenment theology evolved by Jesuits and vernacular apologists. I argue, in particular, that Jesuit influence (its theology and pedagogical methods) cast a long and fruitful shadow over the life of Parisian students, court politics, and even the Sorbonne itself during the nadir of Jansenist influence at the Sorbonne after 1729.

This analysis of the curricular developments at the University of Paris is relevant to Prades's thought because it demonstrates the characteristics of eighteenth-century university discourse. To interpret the discourses of old regime schoolmen as stagnant, quasi-medieval, or stifling is to misunderstand the parameters of this form of discourse as it existed in its eighteenth-century context. To encourage the creative adaptation of authoritative texts of both ancients and moderns, thereby gradually modernizing and usefully articulating the authoritative corpus as a whole, may well have been the purpose of higher learning in the period. Variations among individual

schools and faculties notwithstanding, university discourses shared a set of fundamental assumptions about reason, perception, and revelation that evolved in response to scholarly disputes over Descartes, Bayle, and Spinoza. Nevertheless, such discourses increasingly began to differ from more radical strains of Enlightenment materialism and vitalism after 1750. Synthesis among competing methods and opinions wherever possible was the ideal for the Enlightenment theologian. When synthesis was impossible, the gradual rejection of conventional viewpoints by broad consensus of the careful and qualified, undertaken on the basis of empirical reasons and justified by conformity to past precedent, was the ideal of university scholarship.⁶⁰ Despite the lingering addiction to the *esprit de système* that many philosophes eschewed, these foundational assumptions of university discourse both informed Theological Enlightenment and intersected with the concerns of the wider Enlightenment public. This university discourse should be treated as a kind of Enlightenment discourse that was seldom touted by its practitioners as self-consciously new, for the essential purpose of Catholic theology faculties was inherently conservative: the preservation and dissemination of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Yet university discourses of Theological Enlightenment were considerably adaptable, and conservation was only part of the picture. Useful articulation and dissemination of revealed truth was equally significant, and the process by which this should occur was and remains a source of dynamism, adaptability, and tension within the Christian tradition.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the intersection of court politics with the culture of the Sorbonne and the wider University of Paris in the period from 1729 to 1752 after Cardinal Fleury orchestrated the expulsion of the professed Jansenists and those who had appealed *Unigenitus* to a general council during the 1720s. In particular, chapter 5 analyzes the immediate causes of the censure by looking at the contentious relationship among the Sorbonne, the Jansenists, and the Parlement of Paris after 1746 and the radicalization of the *Encyclopédie* project under Diderot that occasioned the Jesuit campaign against it. I argue that three factors were directly responsible for the censure of the abbé de Prades: first, the growing popularity of political Jansenism and the growing assertiveness of the Parlement of Paris after 1748–49; second, the Sorbonne's tenuous hold on its own corporate privileges; and third, the unprecedented influence of the Jesuits and the pro-Jesuit archbishop of Paris over the Sorbonne. As Jansenists

found themselves marginalized in faculties of theology, lucrative benefices, and the Bourbon court, their piety became more affective, its theological Augustinianism more intense, and its popularity among jurists and in the streets of Paris increasingly troubling to the court, the Jesuits, and the Paris Faculty by the dawn of the 1750s. Controversies over Jansenist miracle claims and high-handed attempts by a new court confessor and archbishop of Paris to refuse the sacraments to suspected Jansenists proved the twin catalysts of a radicalization of writers residing in Paris such as Diderot. Escalating publication of hitherto controversial and clandestine writings deeply alarmed more Augustinian Jansenists and conservative clerics whether Jansenist or Jesuit. Yet the Jesuits who succeeded Buffier and Tournemine as editors of the *Journal de Trévoux* continued to be favorable to Enlightenment natural philosophy, and the Jesuit synthesis continued to find a home among many mainstream philosophes and faculty at the Sorbonne with close ties of patronage to pro-Jesuit Catholic bishops in France. The theological articles—indeed, the whole of the inaugural volume of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*—received approval by Sorbonne censures as early as 1751, at least in part because of the participation of many junior members of the faculty, including Jean-Martin de Prades. But Diderot's provocation of the Jesuits close to the *Journal de Trévoux* was beginning to create problems for Jesuits close to the archbishop of Paris and the Sorbonne when Jansenist attacks on the latter suddenly appeared vindicated after Prades's thesis raised such a stir in Paris—a stir largely created by Jansenists with covert connections to a handful of marginalized doctors at the Sorbonne. The sociocultural controversies of the late 1740s to early 1750s—the milieu in which Prades studied and wrote his thesis—are vital to Theological Enlightenment in France especially, as is the contribution of Prades's theology.⁶¹

By the time of the Prades thesis, then, certain forms of Theological Enlightenment were under threat because of a growing quickness by some writers, first, to reject all things arational as inherently irrational, and second, to welcome a Spinozan interpretation of advances in medical science and human understanding. In essence, the radicalization of the French Enlightenment after 1743, when many clandestine texts began to find a wider public, effectively set the stage for retrenchment among high churchmen, Jesuits, and Sorbonne doctors alike. The crucible of that process was the censorship of the abbé de Prades. Part III thus examines the life (chap. 6),

theology (chaps. 7, 8), and scandal (chap. 9) of the young abbé, as well as the far-ranging aftermath of the censure of his thesis (chap. 10). As the scandal over the thesis heated up between December 1751 and February 1752, the Jesuits felt impelled to use Prades's affiliation with Diderot to darken the *Encyclopédie* and protect the Sorbonne theologians closest to Prades whose writings, in fact, shared so much in common with many Jesuits and whose efforts during the theological assault on Jansenism throughout the 1730s and 1740s had proven instrumental to the court.

Chapter 9 examines the surviving accounts of the Prades Affair within the Sorbonne in light of the surviving minutes of the faculty meetings found in the Archives Nationales, the manuscript collections of Joly de Fleury, the collection of defamatory libels found in the Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, and other pieces in the French manuscript collections at the Bibliothèque Nationale, as well as the printed collections of the documents and pamphlets generated by the affair. The actual debates within the faculty assembly meetings, however, do not emerge from the official sources; therefore, I depart from previous accounts of the censure of the Prades thesis by devoting considerable comparative attention to the behind-the-scenes narrative of the faculty assemblies found in part 1 of Prades's *Apologie*, in *Tombeau de la Sorbonne* (written by Voltaire but with considerable assistance from Prades), and in the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*. Because Prades names his sources within the faculty in both the *Apologie* and the *Tombeau*, because the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* similarly names its informant from the Sorbonne, and because so many details of all three accounts corroborate one another, these renderings are likely to be indispensable and reasonably precise accounts of what happened behind the scenes.⁶²

The condemnation of Prades did much to hasten the deterioration of Theological Enlightenment among the Jesuits, the bishops, and the Sorbonne, because it occurred at the nexus of significant changes in the politics of religion in France. Frequently neglected is an analysis of exactly how a conjuncture of three other major contemporary factors drove Prades's condemnation and resulted in a far more sweeping assault on widely disseminated constellations of Theological Enlightenment discourses. The first factor concerns the policy changes associated with the appointment of Christophe de Beaumont as archbishop of Paris in 1746 and the earliest rounds of the refusal of the sacraments controversy (1751–52) fought against the backdrop of the ignominious aftermath to the War of the Aus-

trian Succession that brought spiking bread prices and a consequent heightening of tensions in Paris.⁶³ The second factor, directly related to the first, was the growing popularity of *parlementaire* Jansenism, which benefited from significant shake-ups in the royal court beginning in 1749 and the rising tensions of the capital.⁶⁴ A third factor, however, concerns the high point of Jesuit pedagogical influence over the Sorbonne in the late 1740s, coinciding with the earliest Jesuit assault on the *Encyclopédie*, because of the personal animus between its editor, Diderot, and Berthier, editor of the *Journal de Trévoux*. In the midst of all this turmoil it is highly significant that *all* parties concerned (Jansenists, *parlementaires*, Jesuits, the Sorbonne, and the court of the king) united amid some of the most religiously contentious years of the 1750s to condemn the same man, leaving him no other recourse but to cooperate with Diderot and Marc-Michel Rey in publishing his *Apologie*. This book thus concludes with an examination of the long-term implications of the affair for the signal decade 1752–64, for the future of a more secular Enlightenment, the future of the Sorbonne, the Jansenist Catholic Enlightenment, Christian apologetics, and the rise of Counter-Enlightenment in the years immediately preceding the French Revolution.

Finally, although this book is not intended principally as a biography of the abbé de Prades, enigmas surrounding the remainder of his life in Prussia from 1752 to 1782 lend valuable insight, not only into Prades's actions during the scandal itself, but also into the twin processes of Enlightenment radicalization and Catholic Enlightenment change at the very heart of this study of the eighteenth century. A brief epilogue addresses lingering mysteries concerning the nature of Prades's later relationship to Voltaire, d'Alembert, d'Argens, Diderot, the abbé Claude Yvon, and Frederick the Great of Prussia, as well as Prades's disavowal of his own condemned propositions in 1754 and his reinstatement into the rosters of the Paris Faculty at the behest of Benedict XIV. The epilogue reconsiders the likely motivations for Prades's retraction and the reasons behind his falling out with both Voltaire and Frederick II. Prades ended up isolated from both the Prussian king and Voltaire, not because he was a Janus-faced opportunist, but because he was not a philosophe in the first place.⁶⁵ After 1752 Prades was more concerned with ingratiating himself with the papacy and the Sorbonne than with serving either Frederick or Voltaire. By revising earlier studies of Prades's last years in Prussia with the help of recent scholarship

on Frederick the Great, I conclude that Prades's later activities in central Europe—insofar as these are knowable at all—appear consistent with his earlier identity as a self-proclaimed Christian apologist and Enlightenment theologian.

Overall, I argue five related points. First, the abbé de Prades said little that prominent Sorbonne theologians, Jesuits, and apologists had not said before. Second, the Jansenists were wrong to tout Prades as evidence of a Jesuit-Sorbonne axis that wished to undermine the purity of French Catholicism. Third, the abbé de Prades was not the intellectual stooge of Diderot or the *parti philosophe*, nor was there an organized conspiracy of unbelievers at the heart of Prades's enterprise (as many contemporaries surmised). Instead, Prades was a participant in one prevalent discursive trajectory of Theological Enlightenment, but his overweening ambition and poor sense of timing had lodged him at exactly the wrong place, at precisely the wrong time, and nearly everyone had something to gain from his misfortune. What resulted was one of the first significant moments in the repudiation of the early Theological Enlightenment in France and the rallying of a still-inchoate group of philosophes around a strawman, Prades, refashioned by radical and Catholic writers (Jesuit, Jansenist, and otherwise) as the living embodiment of the *Encyclopédie* project. Everyone, in short, created Jean-Martin de Prades in his own image, and the subsequent religious polarization thereby created set the tone for the final three decades preceding the French Revolution.

Finally, the work of the abbé de Prades was a prescient and ultimately failed attempt to address certain problems in which Enlightenment Theology/apologetics would eventually become ensnared by the radicalization of Enlightenment. In striking a blow against skeptics, by co-opting and mollifying many of their most devastating criticisms, Prades hoped to revitalize Theological Enlightenment and redeem the so-called Radical Enlightenment from what many feared was a growing pantheism or atheism. Yet the condemnation of Prades only magnified the problem, ruling out as heterodox a still problematic yet potentially fruitful core of Theological Enlightenment discourses. In 1752, fearing for the loss of its institutional prerogatives, the Sorbonne acted in step with both Jansenist propaganda and the Jesuit campaign to rid themselves of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*; in so doing, it ironically attacked some of the most timely (albeit still evolving) apologetical arguments for the Christian faith available at that time.

In part because of this condemnation, the Sorbonne hastened its own decline and with it, the premature fragmentation of Theological Enlightenment in France. Motivated by an intense fear of encroaching *incrédulité*, on the one hand, and competition among rival groups within the French Catholic Church to maintain the popular initiative in the new war against materialism, on the other, the once-fruitful Theological Enlightenment—commonly created over the course of half a century by Jesuits, Sorbonne faculty, bishops, laymen, and vernacular apologists alike—gradually cannibalized itself in a headlong rush to condemn that against which the church erroneously felt too threatened to argue. In the process, the scope of allowable apologetic orthodoxy narrowed, with devastating consequences that would not be fully apparent perhaps until the French Revolution.

None of what happened, however, was the inevitable end of an outmoded scholastic methodology, any more than it was the inevitable victory of Radical Enlightenment modernity. The outcomes of the Prades Affair were, instead, artifacts of poor choices made in the face of an incipient religious paranoia that afflicted many institutions of the old regime in the 1750s. The result is a story of ideological polarization that resulted in a fundamentally different Enlightenment century in France by comparison to the rest of Europe. For before the desacralization of the monarchy tending toward Revolution,⁶⁶ there was the desacralization of the church in the eyes of the French Enlightenment public—an event directly resulting from the self-immolation of early Theological Enlightenment in France after a long storm of political, philosophical, and doctrinal turmoil in the 1750s. Jean-Martin de Prades was at the eye of that storm.