Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment

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CHAPTER I
BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION

Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, the foremost medievalist in eighteenth-century France, was born at Auxerre in Burgundy in 1697. His family had followed the classical path by which the bourgeoisie of the ancien régime entered the ranks of the aristocracy. Successful artisans and merchants in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Lacurnes or Lacornes of Beaune and Arnay-le-Duc had begun to raise themselves socially in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the acquisition of lands and of royal offices, especially in the judiciary. They became thereby the most prominent persons in their communities, the most likely to receive royal favors and excellently placed to usurp titles without risk of contra-

1 A Lacurne may have been mayor of Beaune in the thirteenth century. (Charles Bigarne, Tombes et inscriptions de la Collégiale de Beaune [Beaune, 1878-79], p. 243, n. 2.) Certainly, by the fifteenth century the Lacurnes were bourgeois and merchants, according to local tombstone inscriptions. (Ibid.; also Charles Bigarne, ‘Annales de Vignolles,’ Mémoires de la Société d’histoire, d’archéologie et de littérature de Beaune [1876], p. 37, n. 1.) A marriage contract of 1609 between an Etienne Lacurne and an Antoinette Forneret was witnessed by a cousin of the groom, described as “noble maître Jean Lacurne, receveur des deniers royaux” (Archives de la Côte d’Or, contrat du 13.10.1609, Lebreth, notaire à Beaune). This Jean Lacurne, who turns up again as “lieutenant criminel au baillage d’Arnay,” left money to found a college in the town. (P. Papillon, Bibliothèque des Auteurs de Bourgogne [Dijon, 1743], 1:364; and ‘Additions et corrections,’ p. 9.) He was a friend of Saumaise, who praised him highly. (Bénigne Saumaise, Trad. et Comm. Denys Alexandrin, de la Situation du Monde [Paris, 1597], p. 111v.) At Arnay, a Simon Lacurne is described as “honorable homme” (i.e., a lesser bourgeois or merchant) in a title deed of 1568 and is an alderman of the town in 1566 and 1570. (Albert Albrier, Les Maîtres d’Arnay-le-Duc, 1539-1867 [Dijon, 1868], p. 27.) An Abraham Lacurne, eleventh mayor of Arnay in 1623, is found in 1625 to be holding the office of “receveur des impositions au baillage d’Arnay.” (Ibid.) His children already have lands and seigneuries. One of them, Jean-Baptiste, écuyer and seigneur of La Tour and of Thielloy in 1665, was a lieutenant colonel in the infantry; his son, Henri-Louis, was a sub-lieutenant in the Listenois regiment, in which Sainte-Palaye’s father also saw service. Another son of Abraham Lacurne—Simon—followed the parliamentary rather than the military road; he had purchased lands, was an avocat au parlement, and was probably Sainte-Palaye’s grandfather. (Ibid.; also ‘Notes généalogiques’ at the Château de Sainte-Palaye, copied from an unsigned article.)
Generally the ascending *officier* next had to pass by way of the local *parlement*. But some, especially in the Eastern or frontier provinces, managed to avoid this stage by serving as officers in the army. Service in the royal household was another road to nobility. Sainte-Palaye's father, Edme, who improved the family name to *de La Curne*, was in effect a dragoons officer and then a gentleman-in-waiting to the Duke of Orleans. He was thus certainly in possession of titles of nobility by the time he retired to Auxerre, where the Duke had pensioned him with the modest but comfortable office of *receveur* at the *grenier à sel*, and married Jeanne Brunet, the daughter of a well-to-do family of Beaune, which had already been allied to the Lacurnes. He had by her three daughters and three sons and then, about the turn of the century, he died, leaving Madame Lacurne to bring up the children. Two of the daughters entered the Convent of the Visitation at Auxerre, in 1709 and in 1711, the third married Jacques de Ganay, Chevalier d'honneur of the Chambre des Comptes de Dijon, Bourgogne et Bresse and seigneur de Marault. Of the boys, one—Philibert—seems to have died young. The other two, the twins Jean-Baptiste and Edme—

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4 So it appears, apparently for the first time, on the certificate of baptism of the twins Edme-Germain and Jean-Baptiste. (Archives de l'Yonne, Registres des Baptêmes, Mariages, Enterrements, etc., de la Paroisse de Notre-Dame La d'Hors d'Auxerre, 6.6.1697.)

5 The Brunets were mayors of Beaune in the early seventeenth century, and began to acquire offices about the same time as the Lacurnes. (*Remarques sur l'origine et l'ancienneté de la ville de Beaune, par M. de Lacurne, Mémoires de la Société d'histoire, d'archéologie et de littérature de Beaune* [1892], pp. 182-84.)

6 At least once before, in 1657. (H. Forestier, *Répertoires et inventaires de fonds déposés par les notaires de l'Yonne, études de Sampic et Jouvin* [Auxerre, 1942], p. 191.)

7 A testament of Jean-Baptiste *La Curne*, chanoine de Notre-Dame de Beaune, drawn up on 17.3.1700, includes legacies to the children of "feu Edme Lacurne, gentilhomme ordinaire de Monsieur." (Archives de l'Yonne, Minutes Guimard, vol. 155, année 1700, pièce 41.)

8 Archives de l'Yonne, Minutes Jouvin, vol. 109, nos. 132, 136. Probably they had received their education there. The daughters of patrician families were usually educated in convent schools and many remained to take the veil. (François Bluche, *Les Magistrats du Parlement de Paris au XVIIIe siècle, 1715-1771* [Paris, 1960], p. 245. Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, 35).

9 Archives de l'Yonne, dossier II B. 348.

10 The testament mentioned above (n. 7) includes a Philibert among the children of Edme Lacurne. He does not, however, figure in the division of the estate of Sainte-Palaye's mother in 1737. (Information on this in papers at Château de Sainte-
baptized in the church of Notre-Dame Là d'Hors at Auxerre on June 6, 1697—remained together for seventy-six years and were separated only by the death of Edme. Their affection was celebrated in an age which regarded fraternal love and friendship as sweeter and more lasting than love between men and women. "Combien de fois," Chamfort recalled in his Éloge, "a-t-on vu les deux frères surtout dans leur vieillesse, paraissant aux assemblées publiques, aux promenades, aux concerts, attirer tous les regards, l'attention du respect, quelquefois même les applaudissements!" De Brosses assured Sainte-Palaye that he and his wife were "de vrais Philadelphes," while Voltaire is said to have exclaimed in admiration: "O fratres Helenae lucida sidera."

The education of young patricians was usually entrusted in their earliest years to a tutor, who was carefully briefed and supervised by the child's parents. When the young man was old enough, he was sent to one of the better schools; he was also instructed in the social accomplishments befitting a gentleman. A period of foreign travel often completed this education. Sainte-Palaye's successors at the Académie des Inscriptions and at the Académie Française, tracing his biography in their Éloges, emphasized the role of Madame Lacurne in the education of her children, but it is unlikely that she herself was in charge of it. More probably she entrusted it, as was customary, to a tutor, while guiding it with care. At any rate, Sainte-Palaye's education from the age of eight on was that of most members of his social class.

In 1705 he entered the Collège de Juilly, where Richard Simon had taught and Boulainviller had been a student. Montesquieu had just preceded him. The Oratorian Fathers of Juilly were modern-minded men, faithful to the early association of their founder with Descartes and to the rationalism of their own great son and teacher.
Malebranche. Here Sainte-Palaye received a sound historical training, and here he was initiated into the latest methods of critical scholarship. The professors at Juilly—Rollin, Des Molets, Collard, Thomassin—had one ear cocked to catch the latest news and views coming in from Holland, and it is no surprise that all their students were deeply marked by the critical movement of which Bayle and Le Clerc were the leaders. Many of Sainte-Palaye’s future friends and associates at the Académie des Inscriptions were products of Juilly. Montesquieu was the most eminent, but Fréret, the pupil of Rollin and intimate friend of Des Molets, and Secousse, whom Rollin counted among his prize students, are not insignificant names. Foncemagne was an Oratorian for a time, as was the Abbé Bignon. At the Académie Française, Hénault reported that he was happy, on being elected, to discover “sept ou huit confrères qui avaient été de l’Oratoire” like himself. They included the Abbé Terrasson, the ally of Fontenelle and La Motte in the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, the Abbé Houteville, the author of *La Religion chrétienne prouvée par les faits*, in which there is evidence of a wide reading of Spinoza’s historical works, and J. B. Mira-baud, to whom several free-thinking tracts have been attributed. In ecclesiastical matters the Oratory was staunchly Gallican with strong Jansenist sympathies. Many Oratorians were Appellants from the bull *Unigenitus*. As late as 1739, when the University of Paris finally submitted to the bull, it did so over the head of Rollin who was then Rector. The historical scholarship of the Oratorian Fathers and their pupils was often placed at the service of ecclesiastical reform movements. Gaspard Terrasson, for instance, an Oratorian who was in the inner councils of Monsieur de Caylus, Bishop of Auxerre, demonstrated in his *Lettres d’un ecclésiastique sur la justice chrétienne* (1733) that the confession and absolution of venial sins was a practice unknown in the first two centuries of Christianity, and argued that it could not therefore be a necessary

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condition for taking Holy Communion—an argument favorable to the Jansenists of the time. Terrasson's work was continued in a radical direction by Nicolas Travers, another Oratorian and pupil of Oratorians, and a good friend of Des Molets. Looking backward beyond the Council of Trent to the early and medieval Church, Travers sought to establish that in the true historical tradition of the Church the power of the priest to confess and to give absolution is not dependent on the authority of his bishop but is equal to it, and that "le nom d'évêque n'avait rien d'honorable dans l'antiquité et ne doit pas, aujourd'hui qu'il est plus respectable, nous empêcher de reconnaître que Saint Pierre l'a donné aux prêtres." There is doubtless exaggeration in the remark of Travers' biographer that "dans le théologien de la confession, on sent que fermentent les droits de l'homme." Nevertheless, Travers' use of historical research to probe and question established practices contributed to the ferment of ideas and to the atmosphere of speculation and criticism that was an essential part of the Enlightenment. History, as the Oratorian Fathers presented it to their students, was obviously a potent weapon and not a curiosity, and it is understandable that the Oratory was highly suspect to orthodox clergymen and champions of absolutism. The Jesuit Tellier, Louis XIV's confessor in his last years and a bitter enemy of the Jansenists, considered it "comme l'âme, le centre et la forteresse du Jansénisme et comme une république fondée au milieu d'un État monarchique."

In November, 1714, Sainte-Palaye left Juilly and entered the law faculty of the University of Paris, and in July, 1717, he graduated—probably without having learned very much. The syllabus was narrow and the instruction uninspired. Nevertheless, a few of the...
Regents continued to be interested in the relation of laws and institutions to political and social history, and Sainte-Palaye might have learned something from them.²⁶ He was immediately received as an *avocat* at the parlement of Paris.²⁷ But the precise nature of his career had not yet been decided. It was considered good experience for future *Conseillers* and *Présidents* of the sovereign courts to spend a short time as *avocats*, and Madame de La Curne may have had in mind some such office for her sons. A year later she purchased an office of *Conseiller* at the Cour des Aides in Paris for Edme.²⁸ Sainte-Palaye, however, seems not to have wanted to follow this course. For several years he lived “noblement,” traveling, studying, pursuing pleasure, and waiting for events to determine his future.

Some time before 1713, Jeanne de La Curne had settled in Paris where she lived with her two sons until her death in 1737.²⁹ The links with Burgundy were not severed by this change, however, for between 1713 and 1725 Sainte-Palaye paid frequent visits to Auxerre and to Dijon where he took part in the social life of the province and helped to look after his mother’s affairs.³⁰ In both places he encountered men whose critical and oppositional cast of mind was similar to that of his teachers at Juilly.

The rather stagnant society of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Burgundy has been well described by several historians, in particular by Gaston Roupnel in his influential study of 1922, *La Ville et la campagne au XVIIᵉ siècle, étude sur les populations du pays dijonnais*.³¹ Against those who have held that the opposition of the provincial parlement to the absolute power of the monarchy

²⁶ Delbecke, p. 49. ²⁷ See n. 23 above.
²⁸ The *Almanach Royal* for 1732 lists a La Curne as counsellor in the third Chamber of the Cour des Aides since 26.11.1718. This was Edme, not Jean-Baptiste, for the former is referred to as “conseiller à la Cour des Aydes” in a legal document in the Archives de l’Yonne, 9 B 802, Baillage de Saint-Bris, 1738–58.
²⁹ The division of the estate occurred in 1737. She may have died earlier, however. The last mention of her in Sainte-Palaye’s correspondence is in 1732.
³⁰ As late as 1731 Madame La Curne was still acquiring property in her native province, for in that year she came into possession of the lands of Sainte-Palaye, Prégilbert, and Fontenoy, according to a copy of the deed of sale by which the Château of Sainte-Palaye passed to a Monsieur de Boissy on 9.3.1760. This copy is at the Château of Sainte-Palaye.
³¹ In addition to Roupnel, the following works are also worth consulting: Marcel Bouchard, *De l’Humanisme à l’Encyclopédie, essai sur l’évolution des esprits dans la bourgeoisie bourguignonne sous les règnes de Louis XIV et Louis XV* (Paris, 1930); A. Colombet, *Les Parlementaires bourguignons à la fin du XVIIIᵉ siècle* (Lyon, 1936); A. Thomas, *Une Province sous Louis XIV, situation politique et administrative de la Bourgogne de 1661 à 1715* (Paris and Dijon, 1844).
was a feeble continuation of the *Fronde*, Roupnel argues that the Burgundian magistracy stood, on the whole, firmly behind the King. Only after 1690, he claims, when the endless military adventures of Louis XIV were eating away the resources of the province, did the parlement grow more obdurate, though by that time it was too late for any effective opposition.32 More recently the Russian historian Boris Porchnev has argued that the end of the “bourgeois” *Fronde* in 1648 marked in effect the capitulation of the bourgeoisie and the magistracy, terrified by the specter of the popular revolution they had almost unleashed, to the King. Henceforth—Porchnev claims—the bourgeoisie was tied to the monarchy, however unwelcome many of the policies of the monarchy may have been to it.33 In return, the royal authority enabled it to concentrate in its hands all the dignities and much of the landed wealth of the province,34 and this was a further bond between the patriciate and the monarchy. A combination of laborious submission with private, inward resistance which can on no account be allowed to assume serious proportions is thus typical of the patriciate class, reflecting its political and economic position in the feudal-absolutist state and informing its intellectual and literary labors in the latter part of the century as well as its social and political attitudes. “Les Dijonnais lettrés de la fin du XVIIe siècle,” Roupnel writes, “sont d’élegants humanistes ou des disciples plus laborieux que doués. Et s’ils se reçoivent de l’érudition, c’est pour écrire en patois et penser en ‘barozais.’ Ils ne quittent le Forum ou Catulle que pour entrer dans les ‘escraignes.’ Ils hésitent entre l’Athènes antique et la rue Saint-Philibert. Jamais ils ne sont ni eux, ni leur temps... L’esprit publique s’est réfugié dans le fatras pédantesque ou affaisé vers le terre-à-terre.”35

Jean Bouhier can be taken as an example of the flower of the

32 Roupnel, p. 7.
34 Roupnel, pp. 155–57, 182–83; Colombet, pp. 106–8. On the expansion of the rural patrimony of the robe, see also H. Carré, *La Fin des parlements* (Paris, 1912), pp. 1–6. The magistrates were interested above all in land. They resisted Colbert’s efforts to encourage industry (Roupnel, p. 215 et passim) and they were not attracted by trade, the most rewarding field of enterprise at the time. They were also suspicious of speculation. De Brosses, according to Colombet (p. 75) was the only member of the Burgundian magistracy to take out shares in the Compagnie des Indes. On the similar outlook of the patriciate at Toulouse, see Robert Forster, *The Nobility of Toulouse in the Eighteenth Century: a Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1960).
35 Roupnel, pp. 8–13.
Burgundian patriciate in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the early years of the eighteenth. Possessor of one of the finest estates in the province,36 president of the parlement, heir to a notable collection of printed books and manuscripts, Bouhier was well versed in both classical letters and the history and customs of his native province, as a glance at his printed works will show. From his stronghold at Dijon, he conducted an extensive and international correspondence with the most eminent figures in the world of learning. Claude Saumaise, Nicolas Heinsius, Isaac Vossius, Montfaucon, and Le Clerc were among the many scholars with whom he exchanged letters.37 His prestige was enormous. The Académie Française, having elected him a member in 1727, overlooked the fact that he failed to take up residence in the Capital as he had promised to do and as the statutes required.38 Although he was not a member of the Inscriptions, any notes or essays he submitted to it were discussed at length and reported in full in the Registers.39

The young Burgundians of talent to whom Bouhier played host at his home in Dijon—La Monnoye, Lantin le Jeune, Oudin—all concentrated like Bouhier on textual criticism or compilation, turning occasionally perhaps for light relief to poetry in patois. Bouhier himself wrote poetry in odd moments. Sending a copy of a collection of his poems to Sainte-Palaye, he remarked that he hoped "qu'elles puissent vous amuser quelques moments et vous distraire du travail fatigant de vos Poètes Provençaux."40

Just as he liked to contemplate his extensive domain, Bouhier liked to contemplate his library which reminded him of his eminently respectable place in society. "Je trouve quelque plaisir," he confessed with naive pride, "à penser que depuis plus de deux siècles, il n'y a eu aucun de mes Ancêtres qui n'ait aimé les sciences et les livres."41 A patrician in his hôtel, on his lands, and in his parlement, Bouhier was also a patrician in his library. Conscious of his dignity, he did not like it to be attacked. When Bimard de La Bastie questioned some observations he had made on the powers of

36 Ibid., p. 247.
37 Bouhier's correspondence is preserved at the B.N.
39 Institut de France, Registres de l'Académie des Inscriptions, passim.
40 Bréquigy 66, fol. 15, Bouhier to Sainte-Palaye, 27.7.1742.
the Roman *pontifices maximi*, the doyen of Burgundian letters wrote sneeringly to Sainte-Palaye of "votre confrère M. de la Bâtie" and of his "critique impertinente" and tried to have La Bastie censured by the Académie des Inscriptions.\(^42\) He immediately composed a reply to the young scholar and dispatched it to eminent antiquarians in the Capital. Probably Mazaugues tried to restrain Bouhier, for La Bastie was gravely ill at the time.\(^43\) But nothing could hold back the patrician who felt himself attacked in his honor and his prestige. A month later La Bastie was dead. Sainte-Palaye appears to have grasped the necessity of humoring this powerful patron whose library and literary connections were invaluable to him, and though he felt the loss of the young man who had been his friend and colleague, he prudently flattered the vanity of the *Premier Président*. Bouhier was pleased. "Vous avez très bien jugé du Baron ci-devant votre confrère," he wrote. "Quoi qu'il eût quelques connaissances elles étoient fort au-dessous de celles qu'il croyoit avoir et que son ton définitif faisoit croire à bien des gens qu'il avoit en effet."\(^44\) This mean opinion was not shared by Fréret, by Muratori, or by Mazaugues. Such was the atmosphere of the literary circles of Burgundy: masters of the soil and of the dignities of the province, the patricians intended to be masters of its literature too.

The Burgundian patriciate, however, was vaguely disturbed by the thought that all was not quite well with literature and learning at Dijon. Bouhier himself complained to Sainte-Palaye of "la stérilité de notre littérature,"\(^45\) while the President's indefatigable correspondent, the *avocat* Michault, commented: "Ce n'est pas qu'aujourd'hui les sciences soient fort cultivées (at Dijon), il faut l'avouer ingénument; on y voit principalement régner le goût d'une littérature aisée et superficielle; on s'y amuse bien plus à voltiger sur les fleurs du bel esprit qu'on ne s'y occupe à recueillir les fruits d'une étude sérieuse; on y chérit les lectures où le divertissement a plus de part que l'instruction, et nos curieux rassemblent beaucoup plus de

\(^{42}\) Bréquigny 66, fol. 16, Bouhier to Sainte-Palaye, 6.10.1742. For a full account of the quarrel, see Nicolas Fréret's *Éloge* of Bimard de La Bastie, *MAI* 16:335-47.

\(^{43}\) Bréquigny 65, fol. 135, Mazaugues to Sainte-Palaye, 19.10.1742. Mazaugues shared Sainte-Palaye's regard for La Bastie and expresses regret that Bouhier was in such haste to publish his reply.

\(^{44}\) Bréquigny 66, fol. 17, Bouhier to Sainte-Palaye, 2.11.1742.

\(^{45}\) Bréquigny 66, fol. 15, Bouhier to Sainte-Palaye, 27.7.1742.
livres que nos vrais savants qui se bornent ordinairement à une petite quantité de volumes bien choisis, et dont ils font un utile et excellent usage." The Burgundian magistracy was inclined to look back nostalgically upon the great period of the learned commentators, many of whom, like the incomparable and unforgettable Saumaise, came from its own ranks. Literature was part of a general movement—social, economic, and political as well as intellectual—that was leading away from the old magistracy and leaving it behind. The magistrates—the more conservative provincial ones particularly—sensed this, and they expressed their concern by lamenting the decadence of taste and of manners, and pointing backward—as they did also in political and religious matters—to the pure sources which, they proclaimed, should never have been abandoned and in which the true genius of France was enshrined. Father Oudin, one of the luminaries of the Dijon circle, gave a simple definition of this conservatism as it affected literature. "En fait de poètes," he said, "comme en tout autre genre littéraire, il en est comme du vin: vetus melius est... Qui a Térence, Virgile, Horace, Racine, Boileau... a tout ce qui est nécessaire, et au-delà." 47

The older members of the magistracy kept a watchful eye on their protégés so that they might be preserved from the temptations and corruptions of the age. When Leblanc sent Bouhier some verses in which he undertook "d'entremeler quelques vers mesurés à l'Angloise," the Premier Président expressed pedantic disapproval: "Dans le temps de l'enfance de notre langue et dans nos vieux romans en vers, on trouve des variations à-peu-près pareilles. On les a bannies peu à peu à mesure que notre langue s'est polie et que notre poésie a pris une forme régulière. Voudrions-nous donc retomber dans la barbarie des temps passés, parce que cette irrégularité bizarre plaît à nos voisins, dont vous convenez que le goût n'est encore nullement formé?" One may take liberties with strict verse forms, Bouhier warned, only "pour de petites pièces." 48

Clearly, all progress had not been bad, since there had been a time—no doubt preceding the magistracy's own social ascension—when the ideal had not yet been achieved. But any attempt to move for-

47 Ibid., pp. 82–83.  
ward from the position of classicism was judged dangerous; the magistrates had no sympathy with experimental and individualist trends in literature. This does not mean that in private they did not nourish independent and sometimes highly speculative ideas. The magistracy’s Ludovician aesthetics, politics, and religion were never as orthodox as they sometimes appeared. It has been said that the magistrates paid their respects to Racine and Boileau as they did to the King and the Church, dutifully but without enthusiasm, while privately they continued to read and enjoy the humanist writers of the sixteenth century. Their own literary labors were devoted to editing and translating the poets of the Renaissance and the ancient singers of the life of withdrawal and pleasure. Horace and Ovid, Catullus and Anacreon were their favorites. In addition many of them liked to collect or compose light satirical verse in French, Latin, or patois.

Their private unorthodoxy was not confined to literary matters. Bouhier was interested in Locke some time before his philosophy was popularized by Voltaire and others, and he is known to have possessed one of the manuscripts of the notorious Testament de Jean Meslier as well as other examples of clandestine literature. La Monnoye made collections of the poems of Charles d’Orléans, of François Ier, of Marguerite de Navarre, and he prepared an edition of the works of Melin de Saint-Gelas; but his library shows that his unorthodoxy went further than a slight divergence from classical literary taste. “Ce vieil athée”—as Mathieu Marais called him—had in his possession works by Spinoza, Vanini, Herbert of Cherbury, and Campanella, and he was active in procuring “dangerous” literature for his friends. Bayle was acclaimed enthusiastically at Dijon, La Monnoye in particular finding no praise too high for him. At the gatherings in Jean Bouhier’s hôtel in the rue Saint-Fiacre, Sainte-Palaye thus imbibed more than a love for classical learning and a curiosity about native French antiquities. The traditions of humanist criticism and free thought, to which the magis-

49 Bouchard, p. 125. The magistrates enjoyed Rabelais, Montaigne, des Périers more than they enjoyed Bossuet, according to Bouchard, pp. 423-24.
50 Ibid., pp. 222-27, 353-54 et passim. 51 Ibid., pp. 162, 430.
54 Vernière, p. 388, and Wade, pp. 24-25.
55 Deberre, pp. 119-20.
trates had contributed so much earlier in the century, were by no means extinct at Dijon. Sainte-Palaye was well aware of them, and in later years he himself showed special interest in one of his forebears, that Jean Lacurne, founder of the College of Arnay, who had been a friend of the great Saumaise.56

In Sainte-Palaye’s own home town of Auxerre there was ferment of a different sort. The Bishop of Auxerre, unlike the magistrates, refused to bow to the absolutism of Rome and Versailles. Monsieur de Caylus, brother-in-law of the celebrated wit and beauty, Madame de Caylus, and uncle of the antiquarian, came of an ancient and distinguished noble family. He rose to high office through the patronage of Madame de Maintenon, but he turned out to be less docile than those who got on in such ways were expected to be. Consecrated Bishop of Auxerre in 1705, he at first accepted the bull Unigenitus, but in 1718 he joined Cardinal de Noailles in the appeal to Rome. Two years later he was one of seven bishops who refused the compromise which Noailles himself accepted, and he became thereafter an ardent and distinguished opponent of the bull. Against the Jesuits, against Rome, against Royal authority, he extolled the rights of the bishops as leaders of their flocks, and in defense of his position he looked back to and drew inspiration from the early Church, much as magistrates and nobles looked back for inspiration—each in his own way—to the ancient usages of the nation. He was among the few bishops who joined their voices with some 2,000 ecclesiastics of all kinds—138 of them from his own diocese of Auxerre—in protesting against the deposition of Jean Soanen, Bishop of Senez.57 In 1729 Caylus again voiced his opposition to

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56 He proposed additions and corrections to the information on his family in Papillon’s Bibliothèque des Auteurs de Bourgogne; cf. letters to Bouhier of 24.4.1741 and 26.6.1742 in B.N. Français 24418, fols. 362, 378.
57 Préclin, p. 123. Soanen, together with the Bishop of Bayeux, de Lorraine, and the Bishop of Montpellier, Colbert, had appealed from the bull again in 1720, despite a royal decree prohibiting further appeals. The government had hesitated to mobilize the bishops, a majority of whom were opposed to the appellants, against Soanen’s colleagues, on account of their family connections, but it gave the green light to the enemies of Soanen himself, a man of lowly birth. The pretext was a pastoral letter issued by Soanen in August, 1726, in which the elderly prelate criticized the King, the Popes, and “bad shepherds” in general, defended Quesnel, and praised the appellant bishops, “seuls défenseurs de la vérité” (Préclin and Jarry, p. 246). In September, 1726, Soanen was suspended by the provincial council of Embrun and relegated to the monastery of La Chaise-Dieu. According to Préclin, the suspension of Soanen marked the capitulation of the bishops and the end of episcopal Jansenism. Only the Bishops of Montpellier and Troyes continued with Caylus to oppose the Unigenitus bull.
Papal policies and to the absolutist pretensions of Rome. In a new edition of the Breviary, Benedict XIII praised Gregory VII for having excommunicated the Emperor Henry IV and released his subjects from their oaths of fealty. Prayers were to be offered so that future Popes might be granted the same courage. On July 20, 1729, and again on February 23, 1730, the Parlement of Paris condemned the Papal Brief, while from Auxerre, Caylus issued a pastoral letter "qui défend de suivre l'office imprimé dans une feuille volante qui commence par ces mots: Die XXV maii, in festo S. Gregorii VII." The parlement was defending the State—which the Church, in its view, was meant to uphold—against the claims of a rival power, the Holy See. The intention of Caylus and of the five bishops—a small proportion of the total number of bishops—who joined him in rejecting the Brief was ostensibly to preserve the Church from the corruption of temporal ambitions and power politics; but it is difficult not to discern in their action the same tendencies as were manifest in the political sphere at the end of the reign of Louis XIV, when the aristocracy tried to reduce the power of the centralized monarchy. In both cases the great, while acting and speaking for themselves, seemed to represent a new democratic force and did, in some measure, succeed in winning the support of the lower orders.

Caylus's interest in the spiritual reform of the Church is manifested most concretely in the liturgy he composed for his diocesans. Of eighteenth-century missals, those of Auxerre and of Troyes are—in Professor Préclin's opinion—the two that show deepest marks of Jansenist and Richerist inspiration; on account of them both Caylus and Bossuet, Bishop of Troyes, incurred the wrath of their metropolitan, Archbishop Languet of Sens. The Troyes liturgy, the Archbishop charged, reduced "les ceremonies de la sainte administration de l'Eucharistie à la maniere seche et grossiere dont la cene se distribue dans les preches des Huguenots"; it was scandalous, full of errors, denuded the altar of ornaments—even to the crucifix—and did not pay proper respect to the Holy Virgin or to Saint Peter. About the same time (1733) Cardinal Fleury reproached Caylus with having insinuated in the Rituel d'Auxerre "des mots qui semblent dénoter que le peuple sacrifie avec le pretre, ainsi qu'on

50 On Edmond Richer and his ideas, see Préclin, pp. 1-12.
51 Ibid., pp. 187-88.
l'avance dans quelques libelles.” Caylus replied that “le peuple n’offre pas le sacrifice comme le prêtre, mais il l’offre avec le prêtre; c’est l’esprit et la doctrine de l’Église.” So too Bossuet, answering Languet, formulated one of the essential principles of the dissident bishops: “Le sacrifice de la messe est une action commune du prêtre et du peuple, bien qu’ils y coopèrent d’une manière bien différente.” The political implications of this theology were not lost on those whose task it was to preserve and promote absolutism.

In his own diocese Caylus was respected and beloved. Sainte-Palaye must have been constantly informed of his independence of spirit in political and religious matters. The fact that he himself was sent to school with the Oratorian fathers at Juilly instead of to the Molinist Collège Louis-le-Grand (olim de Clermont) favored by the majority of robe families suggests that his own family was in sympathy with the views of Monsieur de Caylus. In later years Sainte-Palaye was to encounter among his scholarly colleagues in France and in Italy many men by whom the Bishop of Auxerre was held in high regard.

Monsieur de Caylus was a great nobleman and he had the sympathy of the men of his class, who had themselves mounted a vigorous campaign for the reform of the absolutist state. Saint-Simon spoke highly of him and contrasted him favorably with his opponent, Languet of Sens, “sujet ... infame” and, incidentally, a man of far lower birth. Like many other independent noblemen of the time—Boulainviller, for instance, or the dashing Comte de Plélo—Monsieur de Caylus had a speculative bent; adventurous thinking was for him one of the ways in which a nobleman might prove his valor, his initiative and his honor. It was not at all inconsistent with his religious convictions that Caylus was a client of those whose business it was to procure forbidden deistic and other speculative tracts, which were copied and circulated in manuscript form.

There is no evidence that Sainte-Palaye was personally known to the Bishop of Auxerre. He was closely associated, however, with the man Caylus called to Auxerre to be succentor of the cathedral. Jean Le Beuf was a scholarly churchman whose theological views were similar to those of his bishop. He already had some published

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60 Ibid., p. 187.  
61 Ibid., p. 190.  
62 Bluche, p. 245.  
64 Wade, pp. 3-4.
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SCHOLAR AND HIS WORLD

essays to his credit when he began discussing questions of erudition with Sainte-Palaye around 1722. The friendship of the two men lasted many years, and their correspondence covers a wide range of subjects in French history and antiquities. Le Beuf was Sainte-Palaye’s guest at his country house not far from Auxerre, and when he was elected to the Académie des Inscriptions in 1740, Sainte-Palaye had prepared the ground for him. On his side, Le Beuf introduced Sainte-Palaye in 1724 to Father Des Molets’ little Academy, where every Tuesday outstanding men of letters such as Montesquieu and Fréret mingled with scholarly ecclesiastics. We have already mentioned some of the Oratorian Fathers who were connected with Des Molets and whose erudition was at the service of their reforming aspirations. Le Beuf himself was such a man. His earliest large-scale work, La Prise d’Auxerre par les Huguenots (1723), which dealt with the period of the Wars of Religion, had included at one point a sixteenth-century prayer invoking God’s help for the Pope as an “homme qui peut errer et faillir comme les autres.” The allusion to contemporary political and theological disputes, and the Gallican tone of the whole passage were so patent that Le Beuf’s printer was afraid to print it. Le Beuf was also closely associated with Jacques Jubé, the celebrated Curé of Asnières, whose liturgical reforms excited the wrathful indignation of conservatives. An appellant and reappellant from the bull, Jubé dreamed of restoring the ancient disciplines and rites, as he understood them, of the primitive Christian communities. In his new church at Asnières the walls were decorated, not with the customary paintings representing the lives of the saints but with engravings of Biblical scenes. In flagrant defiance of the Unigenitus, a copy of Baillet’s Vie des Saints and of the French Bible of Le Maistre de Sacy was prominently displayed for consultation. The altar in Jubé’s church was stark; there was neither cross nor candelabra.

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66 The correspondence is in part in Lettres de l’abbé Le Beuf (see note above), in part also in Correspondance de l’abbé Le Beuf avec La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, ed. E. Petit, Annuaire historique du département de l’Yonne (1884), 48:244-69, and there is additional material in Bréquigny 62, where the references to Des Molets are found (fols. 178-79, 182).

67 See the article by H. Leclercq on Le Beuf in Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie.
Likewise, the celebration of the Mass included a number of innovations designed to reduce the gap between the celebrant and the faithful. In this part of his reform Jube’s guide was Jean Le Beuf himself. Although Jube had to flee to Holland in 1724, Le Beuf carried on his work of liturgical reform, and turned out pupils—the most eminent being Jean Mignot—who continued the work after Le Beuf’s own death. The intentions of Le Beuf and Jube were sufficiently close to those of Caylus and the bishops to make collaboration among them possible, even though the defection of most of the bishops from the appellant movement indicates that there were significant differences between their aims and ideals and those of Le Beuf and Jube. At all events it is impossible to separate the scholarship of Le Beuf and Jube from the deep intellectual, spiritual, and social currents on which it was borne. “L’historien,” Préclin declares, “trouve dans le Ceremonial (i.e., of Asnières) autre chose qu’une oeuvre d’archéologue ou de liturgiste. Les innovations de la seconde partie de la messe, qui ne ressemblent que d’assez loin aux usages de la primitive Église, présentent avec les doctrines richéristes des coincidences qui ne sont vraisemblablement pas fortuites.”

Le Beuf’s interest in the early Church and in Gothic architecture is part of a deep nostalgia for what he took to be the pre-Tridentine spirit of the Church, and it is misleading to say—as a recent writer did—that “it was an eccentric love of things medieval that made him dislike the modern style.”

Though unusually learned, Jean Le Beuf was probably quite typical of the kind of churchman with whom Sainte-Palaye associated in his native Auxerre, for the history of the city in the eighteenth century indicates that the ideas of Richer and his eighteenth century interpreters—Vivien de la Borde, Nicholas Le Gros, Nicolas Travers, P. F. Le Courayer—had taken firm root among the local clergy.

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68 Préclin, p. 183.
69 Ibid., p. 185.
71 Caylus himself should probably be judged a moderate, compared to the most ardent disciples of Richer. But the appeal which the latter’s ideas must have had for noblemen like Caylus is suggested by Roland Mousnier’s summary of them: “Richer ... soutenait (1611) que le Christ a donné sa puissance, non au seul saint-Pierre, mais à tous les évêques qui succèdent aux douze apôtres, ils sont donc comme le Pape de droit divin et doivent être indépendants de lui. De même les prêtres succèdent aux soixante-douze disciples. L’église n’est donc pas une monarchie universelle mais une aristocratie nationale. Richelieu fut hostile au riché-
At Auxerre, therefore, Sainte-Palaye was in the midst of one of the most restless and learned ecclesiastical bodies in the country. He could have heard many issues discussed there which he was to hear discussed again in Paris among the friends to whom he was introduced by his Auxerre associates, among his colleagues at the Académie des Inscriptions, and even in the salons which he frequented. His friendship with Le Beuf is in no way surprising. Like the clergy, and for similar reasons, the aristocracy was deeply interested in history, and historical erudition stood at the center of the occupations of churchmen, nobles, and parlementaires alike. At Auxerre, at Dijon, at Juilly, and in the academies of Paris and the provinces it was in the forefront of contemporary conflicts, political, intellectual, and spiritual.

The influence of Auxerre and of his patrician background was felt socially as well as intellectually by Sainte-Palaye. His family was not, as we have seen, of ancient nobility but it had begun its ascent of the social ladder fairly early, and Sainte-Palaye’s father had been a courtier. One can imagine that all the doors of the local gentry were open to him, the more so as the social barrier between robe and sword was falling rapidly. Indeed, as the eighteenth century progressed, robe and sword came more and more to be regarded and to regard themselves as distinguished by état or profession rather than by social class. In the upper ranks of the robe, moreover, there had already been a great deal of intermarriage with the sword and, just as many robe families had withdrawn completely from the exercise of the law to live as landed gentlemen, some families of the sword had entered the robe. Doubtless there was still distrust and hostility especially between the lesser robins
and the aristocracy, and this hostility was to be a significant factor in the Querelle of the Anciens and the Modernes, but the history of the first half of the century is largely the history of the rapprochement of the two segments of the aristocracy, and it is this rapprochement that was the condition of certain parts of Sainte-Palaye’s work, notably the Mémoires sur l’ancienne chevalerie. At any rate, by the early years of the century all the upper strata of society mixed freely in provincial centers and parliamentary seats. At Dijon, Rennes, Strasbourg, Montpellier, Aix, Poitiers, Toulouse landed nobility, intendants, bishops, regimental officers, and magistrates frequented each other regularly. Even the smaller cities came to life. Louis Ducros quotes the superintendent of the tobacco warehouse at Autun, not far from Auxerre: “Our one occupation was to divert ourselves, our one care to vary our amusements. Thus, every day saw a succession of dinner parties, suppers, concerts, balls, card parties, excursions, and entertainments of all kinds.”

Sainte-Palaye was one of the lions of the provincial society of Auxerre. “Vous ne me parlez que de plaisirs, de tendresses,” his boyhood friend de Croisoeil wrote in 1715. “Quinze ou vingt plats morbleu, passer les nuits à danser, faire l’amour tout le reste du temps ce n’est pas trop mal débuter.” Affable and urbane, Sainte-Palaye never lost his taste for polite society. At the age of eighteen he was writing little rococo verses to the young ladies of Auxerre, and at eighty he was still eager to turn a pretty compliment in verse, as La Harpe records in his Correspondance littéraire. Hunting must have been one of the favorite occupations of the gentlefolk of Auxerre and the surrounding country, and Sainte-Palaye never lost his taste for it. Later, when he was in the service of Stanislas of Poland, he often went hunting with his royal master in the great park at Chambord, and between 1752 and 1758 he presented a

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76 Carre, Noblesse, p. 99.
77 Brequigny 66, fol. 67. The letter is undated, but Brequigny has written in the year 1715.
78 La Harpe, Correspondence littéraire (Paris, 1801), 1220.
79 Brequigny 66, fol. 5, Stanislas to Sainte-Palaye, 25.5.1726.
series of learned Mémoires historiques sur la chasse to the Académie des Inscriptions. The best example of the gaiety and sociability of the new generation of the robe is also the most famous. In 1739 Sainte-Palaye went on a tour of Italy with his brother Edme, de Brosses, and some other Burgundian friends. The historian of the Académie des Inscriptions, L. F. Maury, was to describe this journey as "un véritable événement scientifique," on account of Sainte-Palaye’s assiduous tracking down of manuscripts relative to French history and literature in the Italian libraries. In his Lettres familières, however, de Brosses took care to preserve another, lighter side of the trip. A series of delightful cameos bring the adventures of the little band alive before our eyes—Sainte-Palaye and Migieu making themselves sick on nougat, Edme unsuccessfully pursuing the dark-eyed Madame de Bentivoglio, Sainte-Palaye’s evening rendezvous with Mlle Grognet, the dancer, who went about vestita da uomo—an encounter which provoked some sly comments from de Brosses—and the merry escapade in the gardens of the Borghese villa at Frascati, when all six companions played practical jokes on each other round the fountains and returned to their inn soaked to the skin.

Sainte-Palaye did not forget the friends of these early years. De Croisoeil emigrated to Santo Domingo, settling at Fort Dauphin, about forty miles from Le Cap Français, but the War of the Austrian Succession disrupted the economic life of the colony, and in 1747 he returned to France, ill and destitute. With those of his early friends who shared his own interests, Sainte-Palaye’s relations were naturally


82 Bréquigny 66, fols. 83–89, letters from de Croisoeuil to Sainte-Palaye from Fort Dauphin and Toulouse.
closer still. He corresponded regularly with Bouhier and with de Brosses, and seems to have acted as a sort of literary agent in Paris for them both. During the recesses of the Académie des Inscriptions he often returned to the estate at Sainte-Palaye, not far from Auxerre, from which he took his name. Here he worked on his literary projects, went hunting, and visited the local gentry—Bouhier at Dijon, Buffon at Montbard, or his old friend de Brosses in his magnificent château of Neuville-les-Comtesse, the scene of many a lavish reception. He had considerable improvements made to his own château and to the grounds in order to bring them into line with the taste of the age. Gradually he did detach himself somewhat from his Burgundian roots. Unmarried, childless, caught up in the intellectual and social life of the Capital, he was less concerned than families of his kind usually were with the maintenance of his landed interests and, after vainly trying to rent his château at Sainte-Palaye to Voltaire and Madame Denis in 1753, he ended by selling the whole estate in 1760. Nevertheless, despite his relative alienation from his origins, Sainte-Palaye continued throughout his life to move in magisterial and aristocratic circles. His will shows how closely tied to the robe he remained. It included bequests to the families of two presidents of the Parlement of Paris, Bourrée de Corberon and Le Couturier de Mauregard, while the principal legatees were two members of the distinguished Thiroux family, Thiroux d'Arçonville, another president of the Parlement of Paris, and Thiroux d'Ouarville, a conseiller at the Parlement and later maître des requêtes.

84 Of Sainte-Palaye’s letters to Bouhier, fourteen have been preserved covering the years 1739-45 (B.N. Français 24418, fols. 358-84). Of Bouhier’s letters to Sainte-Palaye there are eight written in 1741 and 1742, in Bréquignon 66, fols. 11-20. All of these letters contain mention of other Burgundians, in particular de Brosses whom the two correspondents obviously saw often. Only one letter from de Brosses to Sainte-Palaye survives in Moreau 1567, fol. 9. It is undated, but was written after de Brosses’ quarrel with Voltaire. I have found no letters from Sainte-Palaye to de Brosses.

85 Bouhier speaks of a visit made to him by Sainte-Palaye and Buffon together in a letter to Le Blanc of 4.7.1737 (‘Lettres de Bouhier à l’abbé Le Blanc,’ ed. Marquis de Chateaugiron, Mélanges de la Société des Bibliophiles français [Paris, 1827], letter 8.)

86 Carré, Noblesse, pp. 99-100.

87 Bluche (Les Magistrats, pp. 198-201) relates that Robin families took great care of their properties and spent large sums on embellishing them.

88 Voltaire’s Correspondence, ed. T. Besterman, 4903, 4907, 4912, 4928, 4980, 4982, 4984, 4993, 5012, 5052, 5071.
In May, 1719, Sainte-Palaye set off with his brother Edme on a tour of the Low Countries. Their itinerary took them by way of Rheims to Aix-la-Chapelle, Rotterdam, Delft, The Hague, Leiden, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Antwerp, Brussels, and Louvain. Altogether, they were away three months.

Travel in foreign countries had not normally been part of a young man's education, but it was increasingly so, especially in the circles of the well-to-do patriciate. Some voices were even being raised in protest at the custom. The reason for the increased popularity of travel may have been in part a desire to complete the education of young men by bringing them into contact with the great models of culture and the arts at the time, which were to be found principally in Italy, but to a lesser extent, since de Piles' successful campaign in favor of Rubens, also in the Low Countries. The aim of travel was thus, in a sense, to consolidate a culture. But there was another side to travel, which both Montaigne and Descartes had emphasized and which had motivated the free-thinking scholars of the early seventeenth-century magistracy, those "libertins érudits," who still dominated the intellectual world of their successors. To them travel was, among other things, a means of broadening the mind and freeing it of myths and prejudices by revealing to it the variety of human beliefs and activities. Amid the questioning and speculation which marked the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, this aspect of travel must have loomed large. The principal motive for visiting Holland, in particular, must have been less to consolidate an established culture than to discover a different social world. Entirely governed by a patrician oligarchy of "deftige Burger," Holland enjoyed a nice degree of intellectual, religious, and political liberty.

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88 There is a complete account of this journey in B.N. Bréquigny 131, fols. 24-34. Quotations are taken from there.
89 Bluche, Les Magistrats, pp. 246-47.
which the French magistracy could well have looked upon with envy and approval. It had been from Amsterdam and Rotterdam, moreover, that had come those Protestant-inspired revivals of the antimonarchical political theses of the sixteenth century with which the magistrates were certainly familiar—the famous Soupirs de la France esclave or the writings of Jurieu. Then again it was to Utrecht that many a French Jansenist, weary of the persecution to which he was subject in his own land, most naturally betook himself. The journey to Holland thus seems to have been intended as much to relax as to consolidate established opinions and values.

Some of the guidebooks of the time, moreover, were highly unorthodox. Misson, for instance, whom Sainte-Palaye consulted on a later journey to Italy with de Brosses, was not only an avowed partisan of the Modernes against the Anciens, but a free-thinking spirit schooled in the ideas of Bayle and Fontenelle. The tourist of the early eighteenth century freed himself from the bonds of the familiar in more ways than one. Sainte-Palaye seems to have acquired a taste for this freedom, for on his return from Holland he made shorter trips through France and into Switzerland and in 1766, after two trips to Italy, he returned once more to Holland and Flanders.

His travel notes, though less extensive than those of Montesquieu a decade later, reveal interests and attitudes similar to those of his great contemporary. The encyclopaedic curiosity of Montesquieu, which is manifested throughout his travel notebooks, was shared by Sainte-Palaye, as indeed it was by many magistrates or children of magistrates in this period. In this way they were perhaps continuing an old tradition more than they were opening up a new one. Like Montesquieu, he was interested in everything: sugar refineries and
tobacco factories at Dieppe, commercial and maritime establishments in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, natural history collections and cabinets of curios, botanical and zoological gardens, the way of life and religious ceremonial of Quakers and Jews (Sephardi and Ashkenazi), the principles of government in foreign lands, buildings, paintings, people, and the customs and manners that give life to organizations and institutions. A letter of introduction to the Burgomeister of Rotterdam—Vandermal—procured him entry into the house of a leading Dutch burgher. He found the ladies of the household polite and well-educated and noted the fact with characteristic gallantry. The combination of refinement and sobriety seemed to him the most striking feature of Dutch life—and it was one that many of the older generation of the robe in particular would have admired. The burgesses' homes are clean but simple, he noted, and they themselves are industrious, prudent to the point of frugality, and unconcerned to make a lavish display of their wealth. "On me dit"—he observed simply, but with a care for accuracy, of Vandermal—"que le mary qui est dans une place distinguée jouissoit de plus de 200,000 florins de Hollande, ce qui fait près de 3,000,000 d'argent de France, ce qui ne l'empesche pas de continuer le commerce et de vivre avec une grande économie." On the 1766 journey to Holland, he again commented on the sobriety and good husbandry of the Dutch people and on their relative social equality, which contrasted strikingly with France. "Le peuple est tranquille et honnête, les moeurs en général sont simples et pures, on voit l'aisance et la frugalité régner dans tout le pays; chaque paysan a son Cabriolet et est vêtu d'un habit de drap. Il n'y a presque point d'inégalité dans les conditions, quoiqu'il y en ait beaucoup dans les fortunes." France did not come out well from a comparison with Holland or with the Austrian Netherlands, then under a relatively enlightened administration. "Le beau pays de la Flandre avoit disparu," Sainte-Palaye and his companions lamented. "Tout parois-soit s'enlaidir et s'appauvrir en avançant dans le sein de la France."

97 He visited Dieppe, then engaged actively in trade with the West Indies, in 1725. (cf. Régine Pernoud, Histoire de la bourgeoisie en France [Paris, 1962], 2:230) and wrote a detailed account in his journal of the manufacturing processes used in both the sugar and the tobacco factories there. This journal is in Brequigny 131, fols. 47-50.

Nevertheless, Sainte-Palaye did observe in Holland what Montesquieu had predicted—the growing power of the Stadhouder and the decline of the republican spirit.

Sainte-Palaye’s comments reveal a mixture of ironical detachment and open-mindedness that is probably characteristic of his age and his social milieu. He is obviously not unsympathetic to the Dutch, though this does not mean that he wished to see his own countrymen follow their example. But most strikingly he is interested in the coherency of all the aspects of Dutch life and, in particular, in the relation between certain modes of behavior and corresponding economic activities and political institutions. In later years this interest was to lead him to a line of thought and investigation of which Montesquieu was the master.

The esthetic interests revealed in these early travel notes also point to the future. Sainte-Palaye shared with Montesquieu and the rest of his generation a keen interest in town planning, that is to say in the social aspect of architecture. Like Montesquieu, he appre-
ciates light, air, open spaces, public promenades, good water supplies, cleanliness, and the harmonious arrangement of individual dwellings in the interests of the city as a whole; the success of the Dutch in providing these advantages impressed him as it had impressed others before him and as it was to impress Montesquieu a decade later. Doubtless he remembered these impressions of the Dutch cities when, in the forties and fifties of the century, he joined in a campaign to improve the city of Paris.

In painting, his taste is abreast of the times but not adventurous. Again there is a striking resemblance to Montesquieu. Rubens is the king of painters, and the two brothers sought out and listed as many canvasses as they could set eyes on in Brussels and Antwerp. In Italy, Montesquieu likewise added to his reverence for Raphael, the idol of Le Brun, a fondness for the Venetians whom de Piles had rehabilitated along with Rubens. Sainte-Palaye never went back on this eclecticism, which was perfectly compatible with the relaxed neo-academicism characteristic of his circle.

These notebooks also provide the first comments on things medieval by the man who was later to do so much for medieval studies in France. Partly, of course, they can be accounted for by supposing that he was using a guidebook. The guidebooks of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly the series known as the Délices, dealt indiscriminately with all the notable features of each city or country, and carefully executed plans often accompanied the description of cathedrals and churches.101 Sainte-Palaye’s comments do, however, appear to indicate a moderate receptiveness to medieval art. Rheims cathedral, he described as “de la derniere magnificence Gothique.” The town hall of Louvain surpassed, in his eyes, even that of Brussels “par la perfection de l’ouvrage Gothique.”102 The diary he kept of later journeys in France and to Switzerland in the fall of 1720 confirms the impression given by the

102 Although Gothique is used here as a descriptive—not an abusive—term, it is not used very precisely. In the account of a later journey to Holland in 1766, care was taken to distinguish three periods of Gothic, and the discussion was more knowledgeable than that in the 1719 journal, thanks no doubt to Laugier who was the Sainte-Palaye brothers’ companion on this second journey.
Dutch journal. He admired the thirteenth-century portal of Notre Dame at Dijon, which Soufflot later selected to illustrate the brilliance of Gothic construction techniques, and the Chartreux of Champmol, close to Dijon. In the latter's "antiques bastimens . . . beaux et vastes . . . les deux magnifiques tombeaux" of the Dukes of Burgundy impressed him as a "chef d'oeuvre de la sculpture de ce temps."

What is the extent and the significance of this interest in medieval art? Thanks to Nathan Edelman's study of the attitudes of the seventeenth century to the Middle Ages, it is no longer necessary to suppose that it was a product or an accompaniment of mysticism or romanticism, neither of which is remotely relevant to Sainte-Palaye, his friends, or their seventeenth-century predecessors. In fact, curiosity about medieval art as about medieval literature and a taste for both were by no means uncommon in the circles both of the robe and of the sword. Boileau himself, it will be remembered, had some kind things to say of Villon. This curiosity had been somewhat muted in the reign of the Sun King, especially perhaps during the sixties and seventies, but it had by no means died out.

To some degree it was connected with the Modernes. The circles in which "modernisme" flourished looked back with pride on a past that had been their own peculiar contribution to civilization, owing little or nothing to Greece and Rome. It was among the Modernes likewise that the "merveilleux chrétien" found its earliest champions. The Modernes could also admire the technical originality of the Gothic architects and invoke their successes to justify their own departures from strict classical canon. The architect Pierre de Vigny, for instance, who made a spirited defense of Gothic in an attempt to question classical dogma, was also an admirer of Borromini and a champion of the rococo. Similarly Frémîn's


104 Cf. Herrmann, pp. 64-65, 86-87.
praise of Gothic in his Mémoires critiques d'architecture (1702) was accompanied by a rejection of rules and the choice of a functional criterion of beauty in place of the classical aesthetic canon. Throughout the century praise of Gothic architecture was often directed at its structural brilliance. The characteristically moderne preference for cose rather than parole is plainly visible here. “L’architecture est un art de bâtir selon l’objet, selon le sujet et selon le lieu,” Frémin observed in words that foreshadow Marmouset's defense of his style and vocabulary, against the attacks of the Anciens and the classicists. In literature, too, an interest in things medieval was usually the sign of a tolerant and emancipated moderne taste.

But interest in medieval things was not confined to the circles of the Modernes. Sainte-Palaye’s curiosity, indeed, received powerful encouragement from learned ecclesiastics in his own home town of Auxerre, notably from Jean Le Beuf. It was Le Beuf who directed him to the medieval French manuscripts in the libraries of neighboring religious houses and who obtained his admittance to them.¹⁰⁵ Le Beuf’s interest in the Middle Ages was somewhat different from that of a sophisticated architect such as Pierre de Vigny. It arose out of an ideal of purity and simplicity in spiritual matters which caused him to look backward beyond the Council of Trent to the medieval Church and which itself sprang from the reforming and purifying labors of the great scholars of the classical period. It was his theology rather than admiration for the technical inventiveness of the medieval architects that made Le Beuf into a passionate student and admirer of the Gothic, which, he tells, he found infinitely more delicate and touching than the classical style of the later seventeenth century. The latter was more appropriate to triumphal arches and palaces, the monuments and dwelling places of temporal power, than to churches and holy places. Le Beuf, in his very appreciation of Gothic architecture, is thus in agreement with Boileau and the Anciens on the matter of the separation of the genres and styles. The sacred and the profane each has its domain and its appropriate style in his view, and they should not be confused.

Of course, the attempt to scrape away the accretions of the ages and to rediscover the pristine form of Church or State implied a degree of detachment and criticism that placed the apologists of the

¹⁰⁵ Letters from Le Beuf to Sainte-Palaye in Bréguigny 62, fols. 161–92.
primitive church or the antique "constitution" remarkably close to rationalists and demystifiers such as Fontenelle or La Motte. But to see this is only to recognize that certain positions, certain attitudes were common to ancients and moderns, to reforming churchmen, noblemen, and magistrates alike. The very men who scolded modern fashions (rococo, Italian music, the *merveilleux chrétien*, the abominable style of Marivaux, etc.), were also moved, as we have seen, by their particularism, by their family pride, and by their strong spirit of independence to cultivate the poetic traditions of their provinces, the old "libertine" writers, even local *patois*.

Few of Sainte-Palaye's early mentors, however, despite their interest in pre-Ludovician literature and thought, actually favored the movements that were undermining the precarious compromise of Ludovician classicism. Like Boileau himself in the last two decades of the century, Bouhier and his friends in Dijon became increasingly disillusioned with and even critical of the King and his reign. Boileau's suspicion of the *Modernes*, indeed, his rejection of an art of flattery and pomp, his growing commitment to the cause of the *Anciens*, expresses not conformism but the increasingly critical attitude he and the men of his class were assuming toward the King. Yet just as Boileau, reflecting the political dilemma of the entire magistracy, could not develop a coherent and original aesthetic in opposition to the *Modernes* but could only point backward to the humanist tradition, so too Bouhier and his friends wanted no revolutions. The classical canon was not to be overthrown, it was to be criticized, eased, and improved by a return to the purer sources of Greek and Latin. Similarly, the critical and free-thinking spirit of the Dijon magistracy was tempered by prudent distrust of the "superstitious" populace, which they feared even more than they represented the King. They had their speculative moments, therefore, but they intended them to be private and exclusive. Theirs was to be the spirit of the sage, not that of the reformer or the adventurer. The adventurism of the aristocratic champions of new styles and new ideas, the éclat of aristocratic libertinism, alarmed them. Mathieu Marais, the lawyer and Bouhier's close friend in Paris, knew and loved the Renaissance poets of his own country and of Italy but, like the *Président*, he was against the *Modernes* of his own generation—against Fontenelle, La Motte, and Moncrif. He com--

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plained of the newfangled taste for Italian music that Madame de Prie was encouraging. "Elle protège déjà les La Motte et tous les autres censeurs d'Homère; il ne lui reste plus qu'à nous dégoûter de Molière et de Lulli ... "107 In his letters to the Marquis de Caumont—one of Sainte-Palaye's associates in the South of France—Dubuisson primly lamented the decadence of taste while, characteristically, he sent the Marquis copies of every piece of subversive, satirical, or erotic writing he could lay hands on.108 Austere churchmen like Le Beuf were not likely to be more sympathetic to the Modernes. The Jansenists condemned the Epicureanism and libertinism of the Regency and the literature that went with it, and they had set their faces against the financiers who were increasingly influential patrons on the contemporary literary, artistic, and musical scene.

Sainte-Palaye, we can assume, was not indifferent to the views of patrons, mentors, and friends in the patriciate, in the Church, in the provincial nobility. But he was younger than Bouhier and Marais and, if the sons of high-placed officers of the parlements could not resist the new aristocratic and opportunistic spirit,109 how much less could he whose father had been in the service of a Prince. Above all, he had his career to think of and ambitions to satisfy in a world that seemed to offer more and better opportunities for pleasure, advancement, and wealth than had been available for a long time. It is natural that his tastes and pursuits at this time were more adventurous than those of his mentors, for in the years between 1720 and 1725 Sainte-Palaye was making himself known in influential circles in Paris and at court.

109 The petits-maitres—Montesquieu wrote—"inspirent aux jeunes gens, choqués du sérieux de la robe de leurs pères, de répandre leur sang pour le service de la Patrice et de s'approcher du Prince." (Pensees, no. 1404.)