



Ethics of Resistance in Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly (1624–1684)

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During the persecution of the Jansenist convent of Port-Royal, Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly counseled militant resistance to anti-Jansenist authorities who took over the governance of the convent and who exiled some of the nuns to foreign convents. Unlike more moderate convent leaders, who tolerated a limited amount of material cooperation with hostile superiors, Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean urged the nuns to adopt a regime of strict non-compliance. The nuns had no duty to obey illegitimate superiors; any sign of compliance would be used to pressure the nuns to violate their religious convictions concerning the Jansenist doctrine of grace. In her philosophy of resistance to oppression, she developed a psychology and spirituality of resistance. The solitude undergone by the persecuted nun would open her to manipulation by her opponents; she must use the tools of monastic life (prayer, biblical meditation, examination of conscience) to maintain her spiritual resistance. In this isolated resistance the nun should discover a deeper union with God, who is now more immediately present to her in her soul since the customary sacramental and sacerdotal meditations of God have been forcibly removed. Efforts at dialogue are particularly dangerous for the persecuted person. No matter how benign the invitation to dialogue may appear, dialogue with the oppressed is a tool used by the oppressor to scrutinize the oppressed person's vulnerabilities and to pressure his or her will into compliance.

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