Somewhere at the beginning of the eighteenth century, an educational cardgame was published in the Dutch Republic. French Huguenot exiles had introduced the genre into the Amsterdam printing business. Besides the colours and values that made them playable games, their individual cards presented finely engraved pictures, useful in professional or moral instruction, often accompanied by an explanatory rhymed stanza. The subjects ranged from geography and fortification techniques to famous personages and moralistic satire. The idea behind this concept was, of course, that the element of play would make the instruction enjoyable, the ideal combination of *utile et dulce*.¹

This particular card game, however, had chosen a curious subject matter for its ‘pleasurable lesson.’ Its jokers promised a satire on the bull *Unigenitus*, promulgated by Pope Clement XI in 1713 to end the Jansenist controversies in France. The history leading up to *Unigenitus* and its protracted sequel, as we know it, is hardly a laughing matter: *Unigenitus* marked a decisive stage in a theological battle over key matters of Catholic doctrine and ecclesiology. It inaugurated the persecution of dissenting clergy as well as political upheaval in the French state, and led to a schism in the Dutch Catholic community. Much of the literature on the conflicts surrounding *Unigenitus*, and especially on Dutch Jansenism, is quite technical—anything but playful.

A closer look at the pictures on the cards shows that *Unigenitus* itself is only an auxiliary issue in this *Constitution game*. More than half of the cards are devoted to episodes from the history of the medieval papacy. The game as a whole presents a, necessarily selective, and moreover high-

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ly partisan and satirical, history of priestcraft from Pope Gregory I until somewhere in the 1720s: the eight, seven and six of spades refer to the deaths of Louis XIV (†1715), Pasquier Quesnel (†1719) and Clemens XI (†1721) respectively. Who would make a game like this, and for whom? How do the game and its content fit our understanding of Dutch Jansenism? And what exactly was the lesson it set out to impart?

Some background

The first two decades of the eighteenth century were an important period for Dutch Jansenism. In 1724, after a long drawn-out stalemate between the States of Holland and the Roman Curia over who was fit to govern the Dutch Catholic community, Cornelis Steenoven was consecrated bishop of the Jansenist Church of Utrecht, an autocephalous church independent of Rome. This effectively caused a local schism in the Catholic church, a schism which had its roots in the specific situation of Catholics living as a tolerated community in the officially Reformed Dutch Republic.

From the late sixteenth century, a closely-knit group of Catholic priests had worked to rebuild ecclesiastical institutions and a ritual and devotional life in accordance with the reforms formulated at the Council of Trent. They had been highly successful in this endeavour. Formally, however, the institutions they rebuilt lacked full canonical status. Formally