

THE AUGUSTINUS OF CORNELIUS JANSEN AS A WORK OF POSITIVE THEOLOGY

In the Counter-Reformation period, positive theology (historical-theological inquiry into the written sources of tradition) came to stand on its own as a necessary methodical approach or component in the doing of theology, alongside the use of the Bible as a source and the dominant speculative or scholastic method. Paul Misner's paper put Cornelius Jansen's famous posthumous work of 1640, *Augustinus*, into this context of the development of positive theology after Trent, especially given the 1607 outcome of the Roman disputations *de auxiliis*. Since that outcome accorded to Molinism the status of a free or theologically permitted theory, on a par with Banezianism, Jesuit theologians were predisposed to be hostile to Jansen's work and saw to it that it was condemned practically without a hearing.

In all this, including the interpretation of the *Augustinus* as a serious work of positive theology with the aim of getting to the bottom of the historical question of the content of Augustine's own doctrine of grace, Misner followed the views of Lucien Ceysens, OFM. The latter's 1982 essay, "Voies détournées dans l'histoire du jansénisme," (*Jansénius et le jansénisme dans les Pays-Bas. Mélanges Lucien Ceysens* [BETL 56; Louvain University Press] 11-26), provides a good introduction to the conclusions Ceysens has reached in the course of half a century of research in the field. As Ceysens sees it, an "original sin" infected antijansenist efforts from the beginning, namely the refusal to take Jansen's researches as serious history, that is, as positive rather than speculative theology. Instead, the antijansenists under the papacy of Urban VIII and his successors, finessed the question of what Augustine thought and taught "speculatively," by arguing back from Molinist premises accepted as valid. "Jansenist" propositions were condemned. Access to the historical Augustine was effectively blocked. To accomplish this against Jansenist resistance, the antijansenists insisted successfully that formulas of condemnation be imposed that made Jansen himself into a heretic—whereas he was not making any categorical or dogmatic ("speculative") assertions in his book, but only trying to interpret Augustine historically.

According to the main hypothesis formulated by Misner, the results over the next two centuries were as devastating to the relationship of Roman Catholicism with an evolving historical consciousness as the condemnation of Galileo in 1633 by the same Pope Urban VIII was to its relationship with modern science. (At issue is the *second* time Galileo was censured, not the earlier time when Bellarmine had been involved.) Harry McSorley, in his response to Misner, noted that in neither case was the result a total stoppage of historical or scientific work in the bosom of the papal church—the Galileo side of the parallel has to be understood appropriately as well as the Jansen side. Other factors, such as the Thirty Years' War,

must also be taken into account to explain the precipitous slide of the reformed and fervent Christendom of the seventeenth century into the hostility toward Christianity that much of enlightened society in eighteenth-century Europe evinced.

Of course, this was a matter of largely unintended consequences. How could Pope Urban VIII or the villain in the piece, Francesco Albizzi (no Jesuit, but a Roman jurist and later cardinal), have any inkling of the use that King Louis XIV would later make of the Jansenist controversies? This only bolsters the parallel: it would seem that the unwarranted papal condemnations of Jansen himself and his book, at one of the decisive thresholds of modernity, may well be comparable in negative impact to that of the Galileo affair. This would hold good particularly of the reputation of the Holy See in Catholic countries.

Perhaps (so McSorley) Ceyskens has an undue tendency to heap blame on Jesuits as the prime movers of the baleful antijansenism he has uncovered. After all, Petavius (the French Jesuit Denis Petau, 1583–1652) did take up Jansen's challenge in the years immediately following the publication of the *Augustinus* in two separate opuscula as well as in Book 13, Chapters 3–5 (on the incarnation and the universal saving will of God) of his *Dogmata theologica*. That is, Petavius attempted to refute Jansen's interpretation as a matter of positive theology through a responsible alternative interpretation of the data, rather than simply as propositions inconsistent with a pre-formed speculative position. If the universal salvific will of God represents the valid concern of the Molinists, in view of the missionary situation of which Jesuits and Franciscans would be more aware than other scholars, then one must also remember that the sixteenth and seventeenth century missions meant much to the longer-term future of Roman Catholicism, perhaps outbalancing the loss of influence in European society.

Misner and McSorley tended to disagree about the real status of the much cited "freedom of the schools," a prefiguration of pluralism, allowed in the explanation of conciliar and papal teachings. In the wake of the condemnations of Jansenism, was this freedom, as far as Augustinian thought on freedom and grace was concerned, reduced to a shadow without substance? Would not the repeated pleas for respecting other Catholic viewpoints in disputed theological questions ring hollow, after the rush to judgment on Jansen's book?

In the discussion, various pointers toward overcoming the Molinist-Banezian (-Jansenist) deadlock were mentioned, from Prosper of Aquitaine to Pascal and Scheeben. Some ironies of the situation were noted, e.g., French Jesuit missionaries in Canada virtually denying God's will to save all, while Jansenists became linked with Gallicans and would-be enlightened reformers of the church in Europe.

PAUL MISNER
Marquette University