

and the Low countries. The movement was all but exterminated in France as a result of intrigue, broken promises, and lack of vigilance.

The motivation for Louis' act is doubtful but part of it was in his request for an indulgence to cover the vice and corruption of his rich and elaborate court. He was atoning for his sins with this great service for God. France, deprived of a middle class, would not remain a great nation for long. The societies of the nation polarized and practical atheism took over the religious life of the people. The stage was set for the French revolution...perhaps the bloodiest of all the modern insurrections.

III.6 Jansenists

The Jansenists

Cornelius Jansen, (d. 1638) was the bishop of Ypres and a throwback to Augustinian theology. Although marked with some mediaeval trappings, Jansen seems to have had a quite clear understanding of the nature of grace and redemption...particularly justification by faith...and the reality of the presence of God in the life of the believer. He stressed morals and ethics and found himself in constant dispute with the ideals of the Jesuit order and the methodology of much of the French church of his time. To Jansen, casuistry and mental reservation were simply methods of telling lies and he was hard on those who supported such methods. A group of followers developed at the monastery at Port Royal near Paris and began to propagate Jansen's work and teaching. They referred to the Jesuits as being Pelagian and the Thomists as pagans ...terminology not calculated to win friends or influence people.

By 1642 the group was denounced and condemned by the Pope but total suppression did not occur at that time. In 1653 came a total condemnation of Jansen's teachings. Louis XIV destroyed the Port Royal monastery in 1710 and some Jansenists fled to Holland and Luxemburg. There is a Jansenist church in the latter place to this day. Pope Clement XI in 1713 gave the final denunciation and condemned a good bit of Augustine as well--unwittingly.

One of the best known Jansenists was the mathematician-physicist, Blaise Pascal (d. 1662). His PROVINCIAL LETTERS constitute a great expose of the Jesuit philosophy and principles and his PENSEES are worthy of anyone's reading.