
Response Page

The following responses were posted on the H-France discussion list in response to Suzanne Kaufmann's review of Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times*.

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The original review may be found on the H-France web page at:

<http://www.h-france.net/vol2reviews/vol2nos8kaufman.pdf>

Friday, 25 Jan 2002

Norman Ravitch

bossuet@earthlink.net

I have read but briefly in Jonas' book but what like to make the following comment: strongly opposed to the cult of the Sacre Coeur in 18th and 19th Century France were those identified as "Jansenists," including the Abbe Henri Gregoire. Does anyone agree with me that while the Jesuits who propagated this cult also favored feminine and erotic symbolism, the so-called Jansenists represented a more masculine type of piety? Augustinianism seems more masculine to me than Ignatian piety.

Friday, 25 Jan 2002

Charles G.N. Bashara

bashara@bc.edu

While these labels can be deceptively convenient, there is little doubt of these antithetical emphases over time in Christianity, especially in France during much of the early modern period and later. I suggest, however, that these are best seen as affective (or laxist, to their detractors) and rationalist (or rigorist)trends, despite strong presences at times of opposing forms of spirituality in each camp, as seen at Saint-Medard, for example. Indeed, one can see clearly Rome's continual efforts at preventing one tendency from overcoming the other, recognizing both as integral to Catholicism, as both arise over fundamental views of human nature and indeed of the created world after the Fall.

It is significant that the most affective devotional practices championed by Jesuits, i.e. veneration of the Virgin Mary, especially in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the cult of the Blessed Sacrament and the emphasis on its frequent reception by the properly shriven faithful, and increasingly, the cult of the Sacred Heart were the flashpoints of Jesuit conflicts with more augustinian elements in the Church such as Dominicans, and later the Jansenists. In my own work on the Jesuit formation of clergy belonging to the Assemblée (or Aa), there is a discernible shift of affective emphasis by these secular

clergy away from explicit devotion to the Virgin and towards that of the Sacred Heart, perhaps reflecting a masculinization of French spirituality in as a jansenist/rationalist axis considered to be more "modern" became more predominant in France. In fact, a pilgrimage by members of the Assembly and their sodality at Toulouse to Brugieres was cancelled by the mid-eighteenth century. Among other reasons cited explicitly, was a change in devotional or pious mores and sensibility.

Another affective practice carried over by Jesuit spirituality from medieval forebears was that of communal mortification. The vehemence with which jansenist/rationalist/gallican critics attacked it as foreign and backward comprises a section in my dissertation. In this practice as with other affective and expressive forms of piety, critics seem to have been formed by a historical memory of the divisive religious wars in France and its complement of 'fanatiques' led by Henri III whose perceived excesses in all areas compared unfavorable for them with the more "manly" and pragmatic spirituality of Henri IV. Perhaps the vaunted quality of French "discretion" dates to this very period.

Having read related articles in the Encyclopedie, I wonder if anyone could clarify rationalist perspectives on male friendship, and even further their perspective on same-sex relationships however these were perceived. Some of the more vicious attacks by their critics at the time of their expulsion lampooned Jesuits for immorality.

Saturday, 26 Jan 2002

Yves Krumenacker

yves.krumenacker@fnac.net

Yes, but the women were numerous with the "jansenisme convulsionnaire". Perhaps there are many Jansenisms...

Saturday, 26 Jan 2002

Suzanne Kaufman

skaufma@wpo.it.luc.edu

In responding to Norman Ravitch and Charles Bashara, I would like to clarify two points that I made in my review of Jonas's book. First, I should make clear that his book does not explicitly argue that the cult of the Sacred Heart was a masculine form of religious worship. Rather, I have suggested that the counter-revolutionary political imagery of the Sacred Heart (especially the rhetoric of male heroism embodied in images of Vendean generals and the martyrs of Loigny) that Jonas analyzes so well may

also be seen as an attempt to appeal to devout male Catholics. If this is so, perhaps the Jesuits were wielding a kind of "affective" (to use Charles Bashara's term)imagery around the cult of the Sacred Heart that appealed emotionally to devout men. So my second point is that we might wish to question our usual pairing of "affective" religious practices with women and "rationalist" or austere religious practices (like those of the Jansenists that Ravitch mentions) with men. What I found so interesting in Jonas's discussion of the Sacred Heart was that his analysis forced one to complicate our typical characterization of the cult as a "sentimental" devotion that appealed primarily to devout women in the nineteenth century.

Suzanne Kaufman
skaufma@luc.edu
