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Mita Choudhury and Daniel J Watkins, eds. *Belief and Politics in Enlightenment France: Essays in Honor of Dale K. Van Kley*. Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2019. 382 pp. 5 illustrations. \$99.99 (pb). ISBN 9781786941428.

Review by Bryan Banks, Columbus State University.

In a 2011 article, Dale K. Van Kley paid tribute to his doctoral advisor R. R. Palmer by returning to Palmer's book on Jesuits and their political importance in an era of supposed-secular Enlightenment. Van Kley took a decidedly somber tone, noting Palmer's work on the religious history of the eighteenth century had fallen on deaf ears, much like had happened to Palmer's mentor, Carl Becker.^[1] From his time in graduate school, through the rigor of the Marxist, Revisionist, and Post-Revisionist debates surrounding the Old Regime and French Revolution's historiography, Van Kley never lost sight of the vital role that religion has played in history. Despite the deafness the field often had towards issues of religion, Van Kley kept pushing through several books and dozens of critical articles. In doing so, he shaped the field of eighteenth-century French history in key ways. The editors of *Belief and Politics in Enlightenment France: Essays in Honor of Dale K. Van Kley*, Mita Choudhury and Daniel J. Watkins have brought a deep appreciation both for Van Kley's important scholarship and mentorship to this volume, noting in their Acknowledgements, "[t]he final outcome is not simply a volume of scholarship but also a friendship" (p. xii). This certainly makes this festschrift all the more appropriate of a reflection of Van Kley as a mentor-scholar. This volume was born out of a conference dedicated to Van Kley held in Chicago, Illinois in 2015.

At its heart, the volume addresses two questions: how did religious belief continue to shape identity in the long eighteenth century in ways that deride the classic secular interpretation of the Enlightenment? And how does refocusing our attention on "enduring religious belief" help us to understand the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 (p. 5)? The answers proffered by the editors and chapter authors complicate the oft-teleological historical construction that connect the anti-clerical side of the French Enlightenment to Dechristianization by advancing a very Van Kleyian narrative of religious controversy, conflict, and intersection, which constructed "multiple roads to modernity" (p. 5). It is also worth noting that the editors and contributors have done a valiant job considering the entirety of Van Kley's extensive body of work, rather than allowing *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution*, arguably his most notable book, to dominate discussion.^[2]

The volume is split into two parts, Old Regime and Revolutionary-era France. Each part starts with a chapter that positions Van Kley's work within the respective historiography. In the first

section, “Belief, Enlightenment, and the political culture of the Old Regime,” the chapters focus on the myriad ways in which Jansenism influenced the political identities of those within the Catholic fold prior to the French Revolution. The opening chapter in this section belongs to Jeffrey D. Burson, who offers an answer to the bedeviling question: “What is the Enlightenment?” by leaning into what he calls “mutually constructive intellectual genealogies” in the eighteenth century (p. 26). There was not just a single Enlightenment, but a set of Enlightenments that crisscrossed each other’s paths regularly. Burson notes J. G. A. Pocock’s concept of a family of enlightenments but offers a critique that even Pocock’s particularization of enlightenment creates monoliths, which themselves are “far from straightforward” (p. 31). Such an argument owes much to Van Kley, who has often avoided adjective-ifying Enlightenments (i.e. Catholic Enlightenment, Jewish Enlightenment, or Radical Enlightenment) in favor of language of parties actively engaged in controversy and debate.

The six chapters that follow unpack the kaleidoscopic world of this enlightening culture before the French Revolution. David A. Bell’s chapter examines the French lawyer and Jansenist, Claude-Joseph Prévost’s fight against Unigenitus—Pope Clement XI’s detrimental blow against Jansenist theology—as well as the havoc it wreaked in the years to follow. Choudhury’s contribution to the volume also takes up a microhistorical perspective by detailing the ways that French *libellistes* compared Jean-Bapiste Girard and François de Pâris, two clerics at the center of two separate religious and public scandals in the early 1730s. Choudhury traces how these scandals called questioned the veracity of religion and the government’s ability to exercise a uniform vision of faith to assert its power. In his contribution, Thomas E. Kaiser traces the evolution of the Jesuits’ political arm, especially during the reign of Louis XVI. For Kaiser, court politics shifted subtly over the course of the years leading up to the French Revolution, recalibrating royalist ideology into a type of royal patriotism. As the editors note, Bell’s, Choudhury’s, and Kaiser’s chapters all explore how Catholic controversy challenged the sacral absolutist state, advancing what many have referred to as the “desacralization of the monarchy.”[3] But uncovering forms of enlightened Catholicism did not necessarily require butting heads with the law, as David Garroich’s chapter shows. There many devotional Catholic confraternities in Paris. Garroich carefully details the wills of the leaders of those confraternities to reveal a complex theological microcosm, wherein Jansenists and others could participate in an enlightening culture.

These four chapters depict a national history of Jansenism, and certainly Van Kley’s earlier work found itself within the confines of the French hexagon. The last two chapters in the first section place the debates between Jansenists and Jesuits in a global perspective. Daniella Kostroun places the French explorer Robert Cavalier de La Salle and the French Atlantic World within this debate. Kostroun’s work first decenters Paris in favor of Normandy and then moves well beyond France’s borders to North America. In retraining the debate around La Salle, Kostroun also contextualizes the eighteenth-century suppression of the Jesuits against the political culture of the seventeenth century, wherein it became increasingly common to blame Jesuits for the kingdom’s problems at home and abroad. Similarly, Carolina Armenteros explores Jesuit identity abroad on the Malabar Coast of West India. Armenteros focuses specifically on how the labor of mission work and Molinism influenced broader cultures of Enlightenment and the establishment of Indology. It is refreshing to see how the Jansenist-Jesuit controversy was productive beyond France’s borders and this research seems like a natural extension of Van Kley’s earlier work. Kostroun’s and Armenteros’s chapters mirror his current interest in the international element of the debates between the Jansenists and the

Jesuits.[4]

The second section, “Belief in a Revolutionary Age,” traces the impact of Jansenists past 1789, and in a few chapters dealing with the nineteenth century it also makes note of the ways that the French Revolution shaped Jansenist political identities. In his opening chapter in this section, Johnson Kent Wright focuses on Van Kley’s later work, those articles that appeared after *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution*. Wright draws the “Van Kley thesis” as he calls it, out of France to other revolutionary movements, thus connecting the first section of the book to the second in transnational terms (although the second section lacks any considerable transnational focus) (p. 199). While acknowledging that the Jansenists were engaged in Old Regime politics, Wright encourages readers to trace Jansenist and Jesuit debates past the French Revolution, which the remaining chapters of this volume do well.

What follows Wright’s contribution in this section are four chapters on Jansenists and Jesuits engaged in French revolutionary and post-revolutionary politics. Jeffrey Ryan Harris’s chapter complicates the intellectual biography of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s theory of the general will, arguing that a rival conception also emerged out of the works of such Jansenists, like Louis-Adrien Le Paige, Gabriel-Nicolas Maulrot, and Martin de Marivaux. Harris’s competing general wills underscore the plurality of religious experience and Enlightenment at the dawn of the French Revolution. Monique Cottret’s chapter on the Jansenist *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* traces the editors’ responses to Dechristianization, showing that despite the turn against the clergy, Jansenists continued to espouse their contributions to the Revolution’s origins and early accomplishments. The final two chapters in this section, authored by Valérie Guittienne-Mürger and Daniel J. Watkins, explore the continued antagonisms between Jesuits and Jansenists in the nineteenth century. Guittienne-Mürger shows how Jansenism remained a nodal point around which anti-Jesuitism could find an intellectual ally. Jansenism remained a source of liberal critique against absolutism as well. Watkins also finds Jansenists to have provided a fundamental check to that same liberal critique, although he emphasizes how Jansenists often accused members of the Society of Jesus of spreading immorality that made the Revolution actionable in the first place.

In the book’s afterword, Van Kley narrates his own historiographical trajectory from graduate school to the present, emphasizing his own turn towards the international. Van Kley’s latest book, *Reform Catholicism and the International Suppression of the Jesuits in Enlightenment Europe*, not only explores Reform Catholicism’s role in the suppression of the Jesuits on an international scale but also returns to the idea of the Enlightenment, a topic Van Kley’s work has circumnavigated for much of his career. Van Kley falls back on Becker, noting that above all, “the Enlightenment reflected a religious tradition in which the divine had taken human form in time, validating with it the material, the particular, and time itself” (p. 325). Van Kley’s work and this volume succeed in inviting “us to think beyond the traditional parameters of the Enlightenment and consider how religious faith functioned in dynamic ways within the broader historical context of Old Regime, Revolution, and post-Revolutionary France” (p. 4).

Where the volume might have been pushed farther would be to take the logic of varieties--varieties of Enlightenment and varieties of Jansenism--to its natural conclusion by testing the parameters of religious community during the same time period. There were Jansenisms and Jansenists that inspired other Catholics, but they also influenced Protestants and Jews, who were equally confronted, if not more so, with Catholic and Bourbon state mechanisms of

repression. Protestants only appear on a handful of pages, despite the fact that David Garroich published a book on the Protestant community in Paris in the eighteenth century the year before the conference that led to this volume was held.^[5] “Calvinist-like predestinarian theology,” as Van Kley notes in this volume, inspired the early Jansenists, and Jesuits often lobbed the Calvinist epithet at the Jansenists (p. 296).

Despite this minor critique and understandable, if lamentable, lacunae, Choudhury and Watkins should be commended for their work on this volume. Several edited collections challenging the narrative of ascendant secular modernity by excavating long-eighteenth century French and European religious debates have been released in the last couple of years.^[6] While there is overlap with these other collections, this volume will certainly be required reading for graduate students and specialists wanting to take a deep dive into the Jansenist and Jesuit controversies of the period. It is also a great act of commemoration for the influence that Dale Van Kley has had on the field. This reviewer imagines that Becker and Palmer would be proud.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Mita Choudhury and Daniel J. Watkins, “Introduction”

I. *Belief, Enlightenment, and the political culture of the Old Regime*

Jeffrey D. Burson, “Entangling the ‘century of lights’ to disentangle the Enlightenment”

Daniella Kostroun, “Reflections of Jansenism in North America: La Salle and his letters”

David A. Bell, “A lawyer and a citizen revisited: the case of Claude-Joseph Prévost (1674–1753)”

Mita Choudhury, “Masculinity and faith in the eighteenth century: comparing François de Pâris and Jean-Baptiste Girard”

Carolina Armenteros, “Jesuits of India: adapting Van Kley’s ‘Religion and the age of ‘patriot’ reform’ to South Asia”

Thomas E. Kaiser, “From the *parti dévot* to the *parti du roi*: royalist ideology, foreign policy, and the recrystallization of court faction at the accession of Louis XVI”

David Garroich, “Varieties of religious behaviour in eighteenth-century Paris: the material culture of leaders of confraternities”

II. *Belief in a Revolutionary age*

Johnson Kent Wright, “Religion, Enlightenment, and revolution: the Van Kley thesis”

Jeffrey Ryan Harris, “Jansenism, popular sovereignty, and the general will in the pre-Revolutionary crisis”

Monique Cottret, “Jansenism during the Revolution: the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* in the face of

dechristianization”

Valérie Guittienne-Mürger, “The ‘Ides of August 1814’: the Jansenists and the image of Port-Royal in the anti-Jesuitism of the Restoration”

Daniel J. Watkins, “A suppression revisited: Jansenism, conservatism, and the anti-Jesuit ordinances of 1828”

Dale K. Van Kley, “Writing religion into the French century of lights: the confessions of a Protestant historian of the Catholic Jansenist controversy”

NOTES

[1] Dale K. Van Kley. “Robert R. Palmer's Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 37, no. 3 (2011): 18-37; R. R. Palmer *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth Century France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947); Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1932).

[2] Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975).

[3] Jeffrey Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1990).

[4] Dale K. Van Kley, *Reform Catholicism and the International Suppression of the Jesuits in Enlightenment Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

[5] David Garroich, *The Huguenots of Paris and the Coming of Religious Freedom, 1685-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[6] See for example, Jeffrey Burson and Jonathan Wright, eds., *The Jesuit Suppression in Global Context: Causes, Events, and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Bryan A. Banks and Erica Johnson, eds., *The French Revolution and Religion in Global Perspective: Freedom and Faith* (New York: Palgrave, 2017); and Anton M. Matytsin and Dan Edelstein, eds., *Let there be Enlightenment: The Religious and Mystical Sources of Rationality* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2018).

Bryan A. Banks
Columbus State University
Banks_bryan@ColumbusState.edu

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