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Dale K. Van Kley, *Reform Catholicism and the International Suppression of the Jesuits in Enlightenment Europe*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2018, xii + 370 pp. Notes and index. \$38.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-30022846-5.

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Historiography dealing with the history, theories, and leading exponents of the Society of Jesus is almost always seriously erudite. Van Kley’s latest book is no exception to this rule. Like his previous works, *Reform Catholicism and the International Suppression of the Jesuits in Enlightenment Europe* rests upon a remarkable documentary base of both archival sources and printed books. Van Kley covers three centuries of early modern European history from the Reformation to the French Revolution. The book’s subject is the criticism and opposition that the Society of Jesus faced from its foundation and that grew on various fronts until it culminated in their expulsion from the principal European states in the 1760s and in the suppression of the order by the pope in 1773.

In describing this struggle, Van Kley uses the category of Reform Catholicism, which is accurately distinct from the more traditional Catholic Enlightenment. The first part of the book addresses the development of this category and studies the “Genesis and Trajectory of Anti-Jesuitism” in the period between 1540 and 1761. The second part explores the expulsions and final suppression of the Jesuits, in France (1758-1764), Portugal and Spain (1754-1767), in Naples and Parma, and the events of the Bourbon Family Pact (1767-1773). The third and last part of the book addresses Reform Catholicism and the Ultramontanist International, and more specifically the polarisation of Catholic Europe following the end of the Society of Jesus right up to the French Revolution (1773-1791). Van Kley’s analysis leaves the reader with the question of why a revolution did not break out in France in the early 1770s. The financial crisis was already under way, and the French monarchy could have interacted with society without triggering the revolutionary dynamic of 1789, which then led to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1791. Obviously, that is not the way it happened, but Van Kley considers the counterfactual hypothesis of a revolution caused by the clash between factions within Catholicism and between the alliance of one of these with the political power of the European states. Effectively, here religion is seen as the only level on which the eighteenth-century ideological debate was conducted. The book pursues the religious (ideological) debates and reconstructs the emergence of conflicts and political dynamics in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, the religious debate took place within its own sources, namely the Christian tradition, while on the other it dialogued with political power, since in the ancien régime religion was indeed the mainstay of the monarchies.

The category of Reform Catholicism—already partially explored by Van Kley in *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France*—is crucial. [1] This category evolved over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and acquired its full significance in the 1760s. A movement emerged that “tended toward the nationalization of Catholic Churches under the aegis of a weakened papacy redefined as a primus inter episcopales pares on what was thought to be the putative model of the early church” (p. 253). It was the renunciation of the dynamic set in motion by the Council of Trent, with its centralisation of Catholic ecclesiastical power in the Roman hands of the pope and the congregations gravitating faithfully around him. This schismatic project had its roots in the structures of the Gallican church and in those of the Jansenist tradition. It can be found in a memorandum written in January 1769 by the Jansenist Louis-Adrien Le Paige for the minister Étienne-François de Choiseul. He argued that the time was ripe for the national Catholic churches to throw off the usurpation of the Church of Rome, the dominance of which was sustained by centuries of ignorance. The articles of 1682 in which Louis XIV established the Gallican church were the necessary remedy, since they expressed the doctrine of the early church. This religious project created “a universal public law,” the principles of which were the independence of sovereigns in political life and limitation on the powers of the pope, who had to acknowledge his fallibility and his subordination to the ecumenical councils (p. 246).

Reform Catholicism can be defined in terms of the designs for independence of the national churches, based on the absolutist aspirations of the Catholic monarchies, and, therefore, for its opposition to the Society of Jesus (p. 58). According to Van Kley, it was this desire for political and Catholic reform that decreed the end of the Society of Jesus, albeit in different ways in the various states involved. In France, the alliance between parliamentarians and Jansenists forced the sovereign to condemn the Society of Jesus, although the king was reluctant to expel it from the country. It was therefore a grassroots movement, unlike in other Catholic states, where it was the monarchs who wanted the expulsion of the Society of Jesus.

It is easy to see why Van Kley considers the category of Catholic Enlightenment inadequate and proposes that of Reform Catholicism. This second category brings to light the tensions and desire for reform within the Roman church, which inevitably collided with other components that were opposed to all change, most notably the Society of Jesus. This polarisation is not possible with the Catholic Enlightenment category, which fails to exclude from the area of reformist Catholic culture those who, in some respects, had drawn close to the Society of Jesus. In short, the difference between the two categories is that Reform Catholicism builds a political dynamic based on friend/enemy identification within Catholicism. Catholic Enlightenment introduces a third dimension between politics and religion which we could call culture.

This aspect came from the Enlightenment. Its principles of secularised modernity cannot be traced simply to ecclesiastic ideology, whatever conflicts there may have been within it. They actually arose in the realm of public opinion and culture, what Voltaire defined as *esprit* or *raison*. But their related theories were not merely political but also ethical norms. The nature of the Enlightenment was this very connection between culture, morality, and politics, analysed as human forces. It was this idea of the human world that thinkers of the Catholic Enlightenment, including Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, the most acute Catholic apologist of the mid-eighteenth century, had to address.

In my view, the category of Catholic Enlightenment leads Van Kley to arrive at a very singular twofold result. First, in the reconstruction of the political and ideological dynamics of the eighteenth century and its outcome in the French Revolution, only Catholicism played a decisive role and the Enlightenment none at all (p. 105). Van Kley's analysis leads one to believe that the Enlightenment philosophers discovered the dangerousness of the Society of Jesus only after 1761. Helvétius and Denis Diderot followed the Jansenists in their opposition to René Nicolas Charles Augustin de Maupeou and lined up, "more or less," in the ranks of the French parliamentarians (p. 278). Secondly, we do not have a distinct idea of what the Society of Jesus has been during those three centuries.

But the *philosophes* had already devoted keen attention to both these questions. Yet with his irony Montesquieu chose to consider the Jesuits not as evil and guilty but "like other religious, like other ecclesiastics, like other men."^[2] The Jesuits belonged to an age which was coming to an end: "One thing I cannot reconcile with the enlightenment of this age is the Jesuit's authority."^[3] The process of cultural secularization had gone too far to consider the Jesuits still meaningful. Looking at them at a distance, Montesquieu recognized that "the Jesuits defend a good cause, Molinism, through quite bad means."^[4] The cause was good, since it had enabled the rehabilitation of human nature. The strength of Enlightenment criticism—which was developed by Diderot, Voltaire, and Jean le Rond d'Alembert—lay precisely in this cultural approach that discerned in the actions of the Jesuits a complexity that did not fit with any of the functions set forth by the Council of Trent in establishing the Counter-Reformation Church. The Society of Jesus was one of the faces of the modern world because of its peculiar idea of religion.

If the Society of Jesus was defined as the enemy of the political and religious groups that made up the Reform Catholicism front—Jansenists, French parliamentarians, the elites of the administrative and legal worlds in Spain and in Naples—this still does not tell us what the Society actually was. We know how it was described in the deliberately partisan representations of Étienne Pasquier, Antoine Arnauld, Louis-Adrien Le Paige, and Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes. But is this all the Society of Jesus really was?

The immediate and extraordinary success of the Society lay in the fact that it met the paradoxical nature religion had in the sixteenth century. In the Society of Jesus, just as mysticism had been transformed into ascetic life, so freedom became the anxiety of obedience. This unity of the sacred, which combined its most separate and opposed aspects—the individual and the group, solitude and community, freedom and obedience—was one of the reasons for the "mysterious fascination" the Society of Jesus exercised on contemporary religious consciousness.^[5] Therefore, this religious element cannot be ignored if we wish to grasp the root of the Jesuits' power. The practices of prayer and preaching introduced by the Society of Jesus were radically new. They too idealised the original apostolic age and found the model of Christian life in the early church. However, unlike the Jansenists, they believed that European society had drastically changed and hence called for new forms of preaching. The Jesuits were simultaneously engaged in spreading Christianity among the so-called savage peoples who were said to be atheists, and in combating heresies in Christian Europe. They responded to this dual commitment by creating a new religious representation of the modern world. It was no longer possible to follow St. Paul in equating pagans, heretics, and atheists. The Jansenists, who continued to do so, portrayed the world as split into two parts with the true Christian religion, on the one side, and idolatry, atheism, and false beliefs, on the other. The Jesuits, on the contrary, believed that a completely new condition unknown to the early apostolic culture had been created.^[6] In America it was

not possible to preach the “*evangelium evangelice*.” Therefore, according to José de Acosta, “the ancient way of preaching was not to be kept with savage peoples.” Acosta turned that kind of fideistic relativism into a new practice: “He who is in search of the glory of God, will easily accept that with a new type of mankind a new type of evangelization has to be used.”[7]

The Jesuits believed that this new type of preaching could also be applied in Europe, especially in societies that they believed to be dominated by heresies. On the strength of their missionary experience, the Jesuits countered the notion of true and false religions with the idea of a single realm of religious experience that had the idolatries of primitive peoples at its base and Christianity at its apex. The missionaries had to conclude that the *barbares* recognised a divine creator and “many gods of second order,” so that the consent of all men in the idea of a God was assured.[8] Sometimes the missionaries had let themselves be deceived by the absence of cult, and they had wrongly concluded that savage peoples had no sentiment of God. In 1717, the Jesuit René-Joseph de Tournemine observed that missionaries did not need to search for a theological knowledge of God among the so-called savages; instead, by uncovering the people’s natural sentiments, they would discover that the savages were not atheists.[9] A true atheist plainly and confidently denies the existence of God. Therefore, Tournemine concluded, atheism does not exist and it never really existed.[10] For the Jesuits, the human world was perforce religious; the intertwining of sacred and profane history that stemmed from this worldview placed the Society of Jesus at centre stage, since it was capable of directing both.

Blaise Pascal, in his *Pensées*, grasped that underlying the Jesuit religion was the acknowledgement that in Modern Europe “the world naturally wants a religion, but wants it soft” and the deriving Jesuit desire to follow the world rather than the truth.[11] He wrote: “It is a strange thing that there is no way of giving them [the Jesuits] the notion of a [true] religion.”[12] According to Pascal, the Jesuits maintained that one cannot live for long in open impiety or harsh asceticism; men need “an accommodating religion that can endure.”[13] This religion, to which truth was extraneous, was what the Jesuits offered both to the savages and the seventeenth century libertines. Through this notion of religion, the Jesuits had succeeded in amassing, without arms, an extraordinary power based on spiritual strength apparently capable of spreading through all societies and all levels of society. The Jesuits claimed the right to control political power, since they alone knew how to unify sacred and profane history.

Furthermore, according to the philosophes of French Enlightenment, the centre of Jesuit culture was the relationship between religion and politics. The Society of Jesus posed two risks to European societies. The first was that political power could be absorbed into an unprecedented totalitarian form of religious power. The second was a threat to political authority, which could be undermined by the links that the Society had forged with the rural and urban people. This was what Pombal and Campomanes were afraid of, and what was expressed by Condorcet at the time of the *guerre des farines*. The masses had been impelled “not by hunger but by a fury that had been roused in them.”[14] The opinion that it is legitimate to take grain where there is some and to pay what you like for it was on the point of becoming the “common opinion” among the populace whom Condorcet describes as a “very patient sort of animal ... undoubtedly stupid,” but also dangerously prone to enthusiasm for irrational causes.[15] “Bread and religion! There you have exactly what the Jesuits did in Paraguay: they distributed to each inhabitant a little maize and plenty of relics and used the whip on anyone who dared to take a step or say a word without the permission of the father superior.”[16]

At the heart of the Jesuit question there was, therefore, a much more general clash concerning the notion of civilisation. A structured lay culture had emerged, in which the definition of secular values was not merely the transformation of religious values, but the endorsement of principles generated by autonomous reason. Offering the Society of Jesus as a Catholic scapegoat was designed by the pope to reassure the ruling classes that a strict separation would be maintained between religion and politics, the rules of which were those defined and imposed by the states. Rome was forced to give in to the requests of the European states and their intellectual and political elites, and not to those of the Jansenists.

The strength of this enlightened culture can be felt even in the most important *compte rendus* of the French parliamentarians, especially in those of Louis-René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais and Ripert de Montclar. La Chalotais proudly asserted that he considered the Jesuits without prejudice. A rational judgement was the responsibility of all those citizens who had led honest lives, and of the magistrates who knew the laws of the nation—in other words, of “this public which does not and cannot make a mistake, before whose judgement nobody can escape.” [17] Public opinion judged the Society of Jesus to be *irréformable*.

De Monclar agreed that “the source of all these monstrous errors of conscience” lies in the *code jésuitique*, which was freed from all dependence on natural laws; it had been thought out not in terms of reason but of fanatical passions. Such a “code of politics” proved useful to “pious fanatics” and to “ambitious politicians”; with its exceptional systematic coherence, it possessed “an invincible force for subjugating men and transforming them.” [18] De Monclar showed that this was the immense power of the General, conditioning the Society of Jesus itself. The despotism practised by the General of the Jesuits is regarded by de Monclar as of “a new kind,” because it had been generated by religion. [19] To think politics without religion was the *enjeu* of the battle against the Society of Jesus

D’Alembert was therefore right in attributing victory in the dispute about the elimination of the Society of Jesus to philosophy. It was not an insignificant work. D’Alembert regarded the Jesuits almost with benevolence, with no suggestion of commiseration. He sincerely believed that the Jesuits were less dangerous than the Jansenists. The Jesuits had acknowledged men’s freedom and were very undemanding when it came to respect for fanatical beliefs, whereas the Jansenists had entirely lost sight of the natural dimension. The Jesuits “render happy, it is assured, the people, who obey them, and whom they have at last effectually subjected to them without employing violence.” [20] It could not be denied that the Jesuits have a profound knowledge of people’s nature, he argued: “The people know but one thing only, the wants of nature, and the necessity of satisfying them.” [21] They are “children” who must be “well-fed, kept employed without crushing them, and led without suffering them to see too plainly their chains.” [22] Once protected from suffering, people are happy: “Liberty is a good which is not made for them.” [23] It was by exploiting their skill in controlling the masses that the Jesuits had sought to compete with the established power of the European states. They had been defeated because a new public opinion had been formed in the meantime. This is the political problem explored by *Sur la destruction*. D’Alembert went straight to the most obscure aspect of the Jesuits, the problem which most aroused the *philosophes’* interest and concern.

In his *Seconde lettre à M.* conseiller au Parlement* (1767), d’Alembert imputed responsibility for all the uprisings in Latin America, Madrid, and Naples to the Jesuits. Happiness had to be given to the people, but how? Were they to be educated and made an integral part of the state? Should

they be told the truth concerning the foundations of sovereignty, religion and all forms of domination in general, or was it always necessary to deceive them? A further question was to be answered, whether in religious affairs it was useful to mislead people.[24] D'Alembert did not have a high regard for human nature: "Certainly people are an imbecile animal to be guided in their darkness." Religion was useful because with it one could both arouse and control the passions at the same time. Deism was the most appropriate religion for them because it will make it easier to free them from superstitious beliefs and reveal the rational structures of natural law. D'Alembert concluded however, that unfortunately in France this "wishful revolution of the mind" was still very far.[25]

Van Kley underscores the polarisation of the Catholic front after 1773. It had to answer to the reform strategy, which was particularly energetic in Austria, where the state sought to expand its jurisdiction in the teeth of papal claims, to downsize the demands of the monastic clergy, to control superstitious forms of popular piety, and—to boot—to create the conditions for the establishment of religious toleration. But this was the turnaround of a new politics, not the confirmation of the power of Catholic despotism. In 1776, Gibbon's work on the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* appeared along with Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, while the American revolution broke out. The popular revolts became more threatening: in Paris, Pugachev in Russia, and the Corsicans in the Mediterranean. The bolstering of central power in the European states triggered new reasons for friction with the privileged groups, sparking new political and ideological dynamics. More than the tensions between the Jansenists and the pope after the disappearance of the Jesuits, it was the tensions of liberty and democracy that came to the fore in the end of the eighteenth century.

NOTES

[1] Dale K. Van Kley, *The Jansensists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 1757-1765* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975).

[2] Montesquieu, *My Thoughts*, ed. Henry C. Clark (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 2012), 35.

[3] *Ibid.*, 217.

[4] *Ibid.*, 220.

[5] Leopold von Ranke, *The Popes of Rome: their Ecclesiastical and political History during the XVI and XVII centuries*, trans. Sarah Austin (London: Murray, 1866), v. 2, 23-24: the history of the Jesuits "is a case perhaps without a parallel in the history of the world." The Jesuits were "industrious and visionary, worldly wise and full of enthusiasm ... No wonder that they were successful. Such a union of ... widespread influence and a unity of a directing principle and aim never existed in the world, before and since."

[6] Girolamo Imbruglia, *The Jesuit Missions of Paraguay and a Cultural History of Utopia (1568-1789)*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017).

[7] José de Acosta, *De promulgando evangelio apud barbaros: sive De procuranda Indorum salute*, II, 16, (1670), ed. Francisco Mateos ed., (Madrid: Atlas, 1952), 454. Even the enemies of the Society of Jesus admitted that this missionary action had been successful. See Antoine Arnauld, *Réflexions*

sur un livre donné au public par le Révérends Pères Récollets en 1691, intitulé *Premier établissements de la foi dans la nouvelle France* [by C. Le Clerc] in *Œuvres de messire Antoine Arnauld*, 49 vols. (Paris: Sigismond d'Arnay & co., 1775-1783), v.7, 702.

[8] René J. Tournemine, *Réflexions sur l'athéisme attribué à quelques peuples par les premiers Missionnaires qui leur ont annoncé l'Évangile*, in "Mémoires de Trevoux", janv. 1717, 37.

[9] Tournemine, *Réflexions*, 38: "Ne cherchez point dans ces sauvages une connoissance de Dieu conforme à celle des Théologiens, étudiez-vous à déterrer celle que la nature leur a donné, et vous ne les prendrez pas pour des Athées."

[10] Ibid.

[11] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Léon Brunschvicg, in *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963), 633, no. 956.

[12] Ibid., 626, no. 940.

[13] Ibid., 633, no. 956.

[14] Jean Antoine Nicolas de Condorcet, *Lettre d'un laboureur de Picardie à M. N****, in *Œuvres Complètes*, 21 vols. (Paris: Heinrichs, 1804), v.19, 12.

[15] Ibid., 10-11.

[16] Ibid., 39.

[17] Ibid., 190.

[18] Ibid., 39.

[19] Ibid., 200.

[20] Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *An Account of the Destruction of the Jesuits in France* (London: Becket and de Hondt, 1766), 16.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 17.

[24] Jean le Rond d'Alembert, "Letter of 9 March 1770," in *Œuvres philosophiques, historiques et littéraires*, 18 vols. (Paris: Bastien, 1805), v.16, 154.

[25] D'Alembert, "Letter of 30 November 1770," in *Œuvres philosophiques, historiques et littéraires*, v.16, 215-16.

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