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Christian Albertan, *Les Mémoires de Trévoux, 1751-1762: Un moment dans l'histoire religieuse et intellectuelle de la France du XVIIIe siècle*. 3 vols. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2020. 1842 pp. €190.00 (pb). ISBN 978-2-7453-5254-5.

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Writing at the moment of the Jesuits' suppression in France, Jean le Rond d'Alembert mused that the Society of Jesus had long deserved the fate that eventually became theirs. "[Les jésuites] se rendaient eux-mêmes odieux à tous les Sages de la nation," wrote Jean le Rond d'Alembert in his *Sur la destruction des Jésuites en France*. "Ceux qu'on nomme philosophes, & qu'ils cherchaient à persécuter, n'oubliaient de leur côté aucune occasion de se venger dans leurs ouvrages, & se vengeaient de la manière la plus mortifiante pour les Jésuites...."[1] D'Alembert's characterization of the Jesuits illustrates a well-worn narrative about the relationship between the *philosophes* and the members of the Society of Jesus, a relationship fueled by mutual disdain and the Jesuits' rejection of all things "Enlightenment." It is this simple narrative, however, that Christian Albertan complicates in this three-volume work. Albertan is above all concerned with providing nuance to our understanding of the Jesuits' impact on the intellectual culture of the eighteenth century. Focusing on the *Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux-Arts* (a.k.a. the *Journal de Trévoux*), a Jesuit-run scholarly journal published over the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century, Albertan makes the case that some Jesuits were in fact deeply imbedded in the scholarship of the *siècle des lumières*. Albertan is careful not to replace the narrative of Jesuits *qua* enemies of the *philosophes* with a similarly one-dimensional narrative of Jesuits as unabashed promoters of Enlightenment. Throughout his detailed study, he highlights the complex tensions that French Jesuits around the periodical had with the new ideas and institutions of the eighteenth century and carries on what has been a present but often overlooked strand of Enlightenment historiography that goes back to the work of Robert Palmer.[2]

Albertan organizes his investigation of the *Journal de Trévoux* into three parts that, somewhat confusingly, cut across the book's three volumes. Part one (chapters one through five and the entirety of volume one) covers the production and development of the journal. Part two (chapters six through nine, included in volume two) focuses on its reception. Finally, part three (chapters ten through fifteen, included in volumes two and three) deals with Albertan's interpretations of what was written in the journal itself. Interspersed throughout are chapters that focus on particular events in which the *Journal de Trévoux* played a role. Chapters four and five detail the impact that the journal had on the *De l'Esprit* affair and the suppression of the Jesuits in France respectively. Chapters thirteen and fourteen tell the story of the events that led to the censorship of the *Encyclopédie* in the 1750s. In essence, Albertan describes not only the operations and

contents of the journal but also the impact it had on some of the most important intellectual and political events of the mid-eighteenth century. He focuses his study on the period from 1751 to 1762, the final decade of the journal's Jesuit editorship and arguably the most volatile years of the French Enlightenment.

Chapters one through three describe the principal contributors to and producers of the *Journal de Trévoux*. The first chapter is dedicated to the journal's chief editor during the period in question, Guillaume-François Berthier. Despite the caricature assigned to him by the *philosophes* of his day, Berthier was not, in Albertan's assessment, "une figure emblématique des Anti-Lumières et un piètre personnage, voué à l'exécration des siècles" (p. 42). Rather, Albertan characterizes the famous editor as a man both erudite and religious, deeply involved in the European Republic of Letters, but also committed to the spiritual mission of the Society to which he belonged. It is this tension, one between "le P. Berthier directeur des *Mémoires de Trévoux*, homme public, homme des apparences, et le P. Berthier secret qui...est un religieux à la foi inébranlable donnant toute son attention à la vie spirituelle," that not only defines Berthier but also, in many ways, serves as a symbol for the entire enterprise of the *Journal de Trévoux* (p. 119). Chapter two takes up the difficult task of identifying the main contributors to the journal. As would be expected, most were fellow Jesuits: Jean-François-Joseph Fleuriau, Louis Joseph de Prévile, and Christophe Gabriel Mat, among others. These "Trévousiens" were not only highly regarded members of the Society but also well-respected scholars in their fields of interest. Unexpectedly, Albertan discovers that the journal also published articles written by non-Jesuit authors, including members of regional academies and even scholars from outside France. In chapter three, Albertan turns his attention to the production of the *Journal de Trévoux* and particularly the role of its Parisian publisher, Hugues-Daniel Chaubert. Through Chaubert, Albertan uncovers the economic history of the journal. Not an immensely lucrative project, the *Journal de Trévoux* nevertheless provided a steady income for a printer whose finances were at times very tenuous. Moreover, Chaubert did much to facilitate the development of the journal, far more than previously realized. In sum, Albertan concludes that the *Journal de Trévoux* cannot be considered simply a "religious" periodical or an official organ of the Society of Jesus. It was a scholarly enterprise on par with similar ventures of the time including, most especially, the more widely known *Journal des Sçavans*.

Chapters four and five provide Albertan's first analyses of the events in which the *Journal de Trévoux* played an important role. The first was the affair over Helvétius's controversial book *De l'Esprit*. Albertan tells the story by focusing on Pierre Joseph Plesse, one of the Jesuit editors of the *Journal de Trévoux*, a friend and confidant of Helvétius, and a decided proponent of the ideas of Descartes and Maupertuis. Thanks in part to Plesse, the journal announced the arrival of *De l'Esprit* when it first appeared in 1758. When authorities began to act against the book, however, this brief announcement became a liability for the periodical and for the whole Society of Jesus. Critics, including the editors of the Jansenist weekly the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, attacked the *Journal de Trévoux* for promoting materialism and defending irreligion. Here Albertan reveals one of the main dynamics that affected the decisions and operations of the journal: the external pressure placed on it by competing groups in the French Catholic Church. This pressure forced Berthier and the journal's other editors to change course and take a hard stance against Helvétius, a stance that ultimately led to Plesse being pushed out of his position as an editor of the journal. For Albertan, the *De l'Esprit* affair revealed both how some Jesuits were closely connected to French *philosophes* and how public pressure and the obligation to defend religious orthodoxy explained the Jesuits' apparent turn against *philosophie*. Albertan's narration of the suppression

of the Jesuits in chapter five follows the main course of events generally attributed to the Society's fall but takes a closer look at the ways that the *Journal de Trévoux* was affected by what was happening. In addition to tying the journal itself to the case levelled against the Jesuits in the 1760s, Albertan illustrates the suppression's role in stripping the Jesuits of their control of the *Journal de Trévoux*, an act that marked the beginning of the end for the periodical. While Albertan makes clear in earlier chapters that the *Journal de Trévoux* was not an official organ of the Society of Jesus, he maintains in this final chapter of part one that it was also nothing without the talented Jesuits who ran it.

In the second section of the book, Albertan uncovers the reception history of the *Journal de Trévoux*. These chapters are, in many respects, the most impressive of the entire three-volume work. Albertan deftly utilizes the approaches and methods of historians of the book to reveal that the *Journal de Trévoux* was not a parochial, Catholic periodical ignored by serious intellectuals. Indeed, he makes the case that it was among the most widely read and most highly respected erudite journals of the era. Chapter six breaks down the structure of the journal and makes the broader case that the *Journal de Trévoux* was considered by eighteenth-century readers to be in the same category as the *Journal de Sçavans*. Albertan rejects the narrative that the *Journal de Trévoux* was simply interested in religious matters. While religion was a topic of importance to the Trévousiens, Albertan clearly shows that it was not their sole focus. In chapter seven, Albertan identifies the readership of the journal. Through a detailed study of private library catalogs, wills, and publishers' records, he dismisses the notion perpetuated by many eighteenth-century *philosophes* that no one read the *Journal de Trévoux* and instead estimates that the regular European readership was anywhere from 8,000 to 10,000 people, a number that would put it below the *Journal de Sçavans* in market share but still among the strongest scholarly periodicals in eighteenth-century France. As to the question of who read the journal, Albertan maintains that its primary audience included participants in the broader Republic of Letters, members of academies, and educated aristocrats. "Acheté, lu, conservé, prêté, discuté, par un nombre conséquent de personnes, dont certaines appartiennent aux sphères les plus élevées du savoir et de la société," Albertan concludes, "le *Journal de Trévoux* est, au milieu du XVIIIe siècle, un acteur incontournable du monde savant" (p. 751). Chapter eight investigates the censorial mechanism through which the journal passed and the ways that the Direction de la librairie affected the production of the periodical. Though the journal enjoyed the benefits of having two censors who were deeply committed to theological Molinism (and thus decidedly pro-Jesuit), it nevertheless did not enjoy the freedom to be unapologetically partisan and ideological. The journal's editors had to navigate the system of censorship carefully. No issue demonstrated this better than that of Jansenism. While the illegally-published *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* could overtly reference theological disputes of the day and denounce the Jesuits in no uncertain terms, Berthier and the Trévousiens were forced to abide by the terms of the Law of Silence imposed by Louis XV in 1756. Thus, the journal could not function as a vehicle for the Society of Jesus to attack its enemies. Because of the Librairie, it had to maintain at least a modicum of distance from the partisan religious disputes of the day. But the journal was not "objective" simply because of the royal bureaucracy. In chapter nine, Albertan makes the case that the journal's editors embraced the spirit of objectivity themselves. Berthier and his colleagues endeavored to read the many pieces of scholarship that they reviewed in the journal with an impersonal eye, much to the chagrin of many of their colleagues in the Society of Jesus. This is not to say that the Trévousiens never criticized works that they reviewed. They most certainly did, but they approached their work, according to Albertan, from their perspective as scholars rather than as priests.

The third and final section of the work looks at what was written in the *Journal de Trévoux* and the ways that its authors approached some of the most important intellectual developments of the day. Albertan analyzes the journal's articles on literature and the arts (chapter ten), religion (chapter eleven), politics (chapter twelve), and science (chapter fifteen). Imbedded in the middle of this analysis is a two-chapter excursion on the *Journal de Trévoux's* role in the *Encyclopédie* affair in the 1750s (chapters thirteen and fourteen) which function as a case-study, albeit a limited one, of how the journal covered works of philosophy. Through these chapters the reader gets a close look at the ways that the editors of the *Journal de Trévoux* attempted to walk a *via media* between new intellectual enterprises and traditional theological tenets. Albertan does not claim that the journalists were in total union with the *philosophes*. In each of these analytical chapters, he shows the limits beyond which the Trévousiens would not go. Regarding religion, for example, while the *Journal de Trévoux* was open to publishing the work of Protestants and even lauding their contributions to the scholarly world, they were not willing to advocate for religious toleration. Similarly, while the journal considered political and social reforms, it did not advocate for large structural changes and always affirmed the central mechanisms of power in France, namely the monarchy and the systems of privilege that it maintained. Albertan's analyses of the contents of the *Journal de Trévoux* are consistent with what many scholars of the Catholic Enlightenment have affirmed about those Catholic intellectuals who sought to make deep and lasting connections with the work of the *philosophes* but whose religious convictions kept them from venturing too far into certain philosophical and cultural terrains.

The strength of Albertan's book lies not in the innovation of its argument but rather in the depths of analysis that Albertan brings to the subject matter. Nothing exemplifies this better than the sources Albertan has marshaled for the project. Far from a simple close reading of the *Journal de Trévoux*, Albertan has mined numerous public and private archives in France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, England, Germany and Switzerland to uncover the history of the journal. Even specialists in the history of eighteenth-century French Jesuits will find fresh archival documents overlooked by previous studies. That Albertan also includes transcriptions of many of these sources in between chapters only further illustrates the value of these three volumes as a receptacle from which one can draw new information about the Jesuits. Albertan's book should be an indispensable point of departure for anyone who wishes to research Jesuit intellectual culture in France and the *Journal de Trévoux* more specifically.

Albertan unquestionably accomplishes his goal of illuminating the ways that the *Journal de Trévoux* operated and the role that it played in the intellectual culture of eighteenth-century France. Perhaps the most important take-away from the work is the complex relationship that the Trévousiens had with the larger world of the Enlightenment. At once promoters of many of the latest ideas in science, medicine, and other realms, the Jesuits of the *Journal de Trévoux* remained ardent supporters of both throne and altar. Albertan's exhaustive study is sure to become the definitive work on the *Journal de Trévoux* and a necessary reference for all scholars interested in the intellectual culture of the French Society of Jesus in the eighteenth century.

NOTES

[1] Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Sur la destruction des Jésuites en France* (n.p., 1765), p. 135.

[2] Robert R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1939); Robert R. Palmer, "The French Jesuits in the Age of Enlightenment," *The American Historical Review* 45, no. 1 (1939): 44-58.

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