

work is that O'Leary occasionally lets his own opinions on the Church show through a bit too much – as when he calls the editors of *La Civiltà Cattolica* 'narrow-minded, intolerant and aggressive' (p. 45). Remarks of this type tend to undermine the generally balanced and thoroughly researched view which O'Leary presents.

O'Leary's most significant addition to scholarship on science and religion may be his two chapters dealing largely with Vatican II and the papacy of John Paul II. These are a very useful source for historians of the twentieth century, presenting a concise overview of the implications of the Second Vatican Council and the hierarchy's growing unease regarding birth control and genetic technologies. John Paul's reign saw the reopening of the Galileo case with a special commission. Unfortunately, O'Leary's focus on biological science means that this commission and its findings receive relatively scant attention. Still, his book would be a good starting place for any historian interested in Catholicism and science in the twentieth century.

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TONY VOLPE, *Science et théologie dans les débats savants de la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle: La Genèse dans les Philosophical Transactions et le Journal des savants (1665–1710)*. Preface by Louis Châtellier. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Etudes Sciences Religieuses, 133. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2008. Pp. 467. ISBN 978-2-503-52584-6. €65.00 (paperback). doi:10.1017/S0007087410000579

The rise of literary journals in the second half of the seventeenth century is, alongside the *commerce des lettres* and the proliferation of salons and academies, one of the hallmarks of the Republic of Letters. Tony Volpe identifies 1665 as the year of a 'veritable revolution' (p. 12) in communication and knowledge dissemination, thanks to the dual inauguration of the first scientific journals, the *Journal des savants* (*JdS*) and the *Philosophical Transactions* (*PT*), associated with the establishment of, respectively, the Parisian Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of London. By way of a comparative exploration of these two journals, Volpe explores the relations between science and religion in, as he puts it, 'a Catholic country, Descartes' France, and a Protestant country, Newton's England' (p. 14), through examination especially of the differences in the reception of scientific and theological–scientific works in the journals. A series of debates concerning the relation between science and the Book of Genesis emerges as a prominent focus.

Volpe's study is divided into three parts, each of eight chapters. The first part presents a history of the two journals from their foundation to 1710. The existence of the *JdS* during this period was precarious; it was published only intermittently and under the direction of several editors: Galloy, La Roque (1674–1686), Cousin (1687–1701) and Bignon. The detailed and informative account that Volpe provides revolves largely around his numerical and statistical analyses, arranged in tables and comparing, for each editorship, the types of article published (book reviews, letters, memoirs); the provenance of the books reviewed; and their subjects, languages and so on. This data-heavy approach is dominant throughout the book. As for the *PT*, during its first dozen years it was directed by its founder, Henry Oldenburg (d. 1677), after which successive presidents of the Royal Society took the helm: Grew, Plot, Musgrave, Halley (one year or less each), Waller (three years) and Sloane from 1695 to 1713. Towards the end of this first part, Volpe – in a somewhat forced departure – turns to the subject of 'Genesis in the two journals', in which context he identifies two main themes: the defence of the biblical narrative (especially the story of the Great Deluge), and 'the question of origins', or speculations concerning the age of the Earth and the origins of humanity.

The book's second and the third parts explore these issues *in extenso*. The second part takes up the question of origins. With respect to controversy over the age of the Earth, Volpe pays special

attention to disputes over chronology within the *JdS* during the late 1680s and early 1690s, with a particular focus on the polemics between a certain Paul Perzon and Jean Martianay, and a very thorough examination of the reception and reviews of key works concerning interpretations of the Deluge (a central topic in early modern debates over scriptural authority). The most illustrative instance discussed is Olaus Rudbeck's mammoth *Atlantica*, which was reviewed in both journals around the turn of the century, and which aimed to demonstrate that Sweden was the ancient *Atlantica*, first mentioned by Plato, and that Swedish was Adam's original language.

In the third part Volpe discusses Genesis as both an inspiration for scientific research and a subject of scientific explanation. The ideas of Kircher, Steno, Scilla, Lister, Hooke and others on fossils and the fossil record are mentioned, and their respective reviews and references in the two journals traced. In the penultimate chapter Volpe takes a look at influential books about theories of the origin and formation of the Earth and their reception in the journals. His final chapter examines the reconcilability of the biblical story of Genesis with science, especially as related to Cartesianism. Volpe detects in the *JdS* a much greater 'willingness to separate science and religion' than in the *PT*, in which the 'combining of the two domains was commonplace'. As to the source of this difference, he suggests that the separation of science from religion was easier in a Catholic and absolutist state. 'L'esprit des Lumières', he concludes, is absent from the *PT* at a time when it is evidently present in the *JdS* (p. 422).

Unfortunately, Volpe's interesting thematic-methodological approach is not consistently applied; and where it is applied, it sometimes does not do justice to the complexity of the issues at hand. There are also problems arising from the book's structure, which ends up scattering the narrative and so impeding argumentative flow. The problem is compounded by the cumbersome presentation of the many tables, excerpts and other various data. Nevertheless, this study conveys a great deal of new and useful information, and should find an appreciative audience among scholars of the history of early modern science, religion, scientific societies and print culture.

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KURT BALLSTADT, *Diderot: Natural Philosopher*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2008. Pp. viii + 246. ISBN 978-0-72948-3. £55.00 (paperback).  
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'To date', writes Kurt Ballstadt, 'the only truly comprehensive attempt to appraise [Denis] Diderot's natural philosophy has been Jean Mayer's *Diderot, homme de science*, written in 1959' (p. 1). This half-century of neglect alone justifies a return to Mayer's project. But given the sea change – indeed revolution – that has occurred in the historiography of early modern science during the same period, a new interpretation of Diderot's science is also warranted. Ballstadt is certainly right when he writes that 'since the publication of Mayer's work many new vistas have been opened up' within history and philosophy of science, especially 'new models ... for examining ... a given scientific oeuvre' and 'fresh perspectives on the natural philosophical landscape of the eighteenth century' (p. 1). He is also right that a new synthetic study of Diderot's science framed according to the best recent scholarship would be welcome. Unfortunately, *Diderot: Natural Philosopher* is not that book. It is a very traditionally conceived monograph that describes what Diderot was up to when he was not writing plays, erotic novels and art criticism, or editing monumental, epoch-changing encyclopedia volumes. But it does not succeed in integrating Diderot's natural philosophy with the understanding of eighteenth-century science present in the latest scholarship.

The problems with the book stem from its overall organization and conceptualization. Citing as his source a late text (1775) written for the Russian tsarina Catherine the Great and sketching out Diderot's ideal plan for a university, Ballstadt claims to be able to 'follow in the footsteps of