



Kent Academic Repository

Caiani, Ambrogio A. (2022) *Review of: Louis de Bonald, philosophe et homme politique*. Review of: Louis de Bonald, philosophe et homme politique (1754–1840) by Flavient, Bertran de Balanda. *French Studies* . p. 1. ISSN 0016-1128.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/95702/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knac151>

This document version

Publisher pdf

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal* , Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

REVIEW

Louis de Bonald, philosophe et homme politique (1754–1840). Par FLAVIEN BERTRAN DE BALANDA. Préface de GÉRARD GENGEMBRE. Paris: CNRS éditions, 2021. 398 pp.

Flavien Bertran de Balanda tackles the life and thought of Louis-Gabriel-Ambroise de Bonald with gusto and passion. This Rouergat noble was the French Revolution's most cerebral critic. Bonald's writing is notoriously ponderous and prolix. Bertran de Balanda does much to rescue Bonald from obscurity and showcases, elegantly, the sheer vivacity of his thought. It takes a brave person to lock horns with this forbidding intellectual, who sought to hoist the Revolution and Enlightenment with their own petard. Bonald's masterpiece, *Tbéorie du pouvoir politique et religieux* (1796), written while he was in exile, argues that the French Revolution, rather than regenerating humanity, had in fact unleashed its degeneration. The new political culture of 1789, by attacking monarchy, religion, and family, rejected human nature. What was quite fresh in Bonald were his forays into the realms of sociology and linguistics *avant la lettre*: man was a social animal, and his existence was inextricable from society. In a conscious subversion of Rousseau's ideal of natural goodness, Bonald held that human perfectibility could only emerge from the fusion of political with religious society. Only the actualization of religion in politics and society could lead to a healthy civil society. For Bonald, politics were constituted organically, rather than created by a constituent power. The paternal power of God was made manifest in the authority of a legitimate monarchy. Hence the critique of a Revolution that had argued it could fashion politics and society *ex novo*. Bertran de Balanda, unlike so many others, glimpses the freshness of Bonald, who was no mere prophet of the past. He was critical of the mistakes and folly of the *Ancien Régime* in reforming monarchy, while his critiques of individualism, capitalism, and industrialization make it difficult to place him comfortably on the conservative right. This tome is by far the most sophisticated and best-researched biography of Bonald ever published. It is based on the private archives and correspondence held in the Château de Monna in Millau, deep in the Aveyron, by Bonald's descendants. Sadly, Bertran de Balanda died prematurely this year. One hopes that somebody will pick up his mantle and edit the papers contained in this collection — especially a treatise, 'Observations sur le droit de guerre' and 'navigation des neutres' (p. 121), commissioned by Bonaparte's government after his accession to the imperial throne. Like Pope Gregory XVI I had thought that Bonald had died in 1831. Great was my surprise to discover that he lived until 1840! Another asset of this biography is that it covers Bonald's declining years during the July Monarchy. From his self-imposed exile in the Aveyron, he took an active interest in the debates of the day, especially the Carlist Wars in Spain and the apostasy of the Abbé Lamennais in 1834. By the 1830s Bonald had jettisoned his Gallicanism and firmly entered the Ultramontane camp. This is a magnificent biography, which seamlessly weaves narrative with political philosophy. I hope that an anglophone publisher commissions a translation of this gem.

AMBROGIO CAIANI 
UNIVERSITY OF KENT

<https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knac151>