



The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement

By Ulrich L. Lehner

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"Whoever needs an act of faith to elucidate an event that can be explained by reason is a fool, and unworthy of reasonable thought." This line, spoken by the notorious 18th-century libertine Giacomo Casanova, illustrates a deeply entrenched perception of religion, as prevalent today as it was hundreds of years ago. It is the sentiment behind the narrative that Catholic beliefs were incompatible with the Enlightenment ideals. Catholics, many claim, are superstitious and traditional, opposed to democracy and gender equality, and hostile to science. It may come as a surprise, then, to learn that Casanova himself was a Catholic. In *The Catholic Enlightenment*, Ulrich L. Lehner points to such figures as representatives of a long-overlooked thread of a reform-minded Catholicism, which engaged Enlightenment ideals with as much fervor and intellectual gravity as anyone. Their story opens new pathways for understanding how faith and modernity can interact in our own time.

Lehner begins two hundred years before the Enlightenment, when the Protestant Reformation destroyed the hegemony Catholicism had enjoyed for centuries. During this time the Catholic Church instituted several reforms, such as better education for pastors, more liberal ideas about the roles of women, and an emphasis on human freedom as a critical feature of theology. These actions formed the foundation of the Enlightenment's belief in individual freedom. While giants like Spinoza, Locke, and Voltaire became some of the most influential voices of the time, Catholic Enlighteners were right alongside them. They denounced fanaticism, superstition, and prejudice as irreconcilable with the Enlightenment agenda.

In 1789, the French Revolution dealt a devastating blow to their cause, disillusioning many Catholics against the idea of modernization. Popes accumulated ever more power and the Catholic Enlightenment was snuffed out. It was not until the Second Vatican Council in 1962 that questions of Catholicism's compatibility with modernity would be broached again.

Ulrich L. Lehner tells, for the first time, the forgotten story of these reform-minded Catholics. As Pope Francis pushes the boundaries of Catholicism even

further, and Catholics once again grapple with these questions, this book will prove to be required reading.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This well-researched and intelligently written book, which may be enjoyed by experienced scholars in the field, as well as non-experts thanks to its accessible style, sheds new light on the development of Catholic scholarship, philosophy, and theology in the Age of Enlightenment Moreover, this is an honest book, given that Lehner points out not only the merits of the Catholic Enlightenment, but also its shortcomings and failures."--*Intellectual History Review*

"How far, then, the term 'Catholic Enlightenment' can be used as a way of conceptualising the vast terrain of Catholic responses to the modernising impulses of the eighteenth century may, then, continue to be a point of scholarly debate. Such debates will, however owe much to the industry, intellectual clarity, and pioneering approaches of this book."--*Journal of Religious History*

"Lehner has produced an impressive work that anyone with an interest in church history will want to read."--*Church of England Newspaper*

"This impressively learned study rewards-and demands-careful reading. It opens up the possibility for further research into neglected aspects of Catholic history, and provides lessons (positive and negative) for those considering how the church today might respond more productively to the intellectual and moral challenges of the present era."--*Commonwealth Magazine*

"[T]his book is informative on the various individual reformers "--*CHOICE*

"Lehner, with an impressive display of scholarship, tells a different story, one in which 'only a small fraction of Enlighteners [were] anti-religious,' working instead for 'a balanced relationship between reason and faith.'"--*The Public Discourse*

"[Lehner] offers a masterful reinterpretation of the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the Enlightenment The book's global scope is perhaps its most impressive feature. Building on his scholarship on the Austrian and German Benedictines, Lehner weaves a complex narrative that brings together areas and figures that had been largely overlooked by eighteenth-century scholars This book raises important questions about the ways in which historians should think about eighteenth-century learned culture, and it also forces us to consider whether "the Enlightenment" continues to be a useful category of analysis *The Catholic*

Enlightenment is thus both a provocative challenge to established narratives about the Enlightenment and an extremely useful resource for scholars and students of all levels."--*H-Net*

"Excellent With a sure-handed mastery of both primary and secondary literature, Lehner provides a generous survey of Roman Catholic contributions to the development of genuinely 'modern' values."--*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

"A masterful reinterpretation of the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the Enlightenment."--*H-Net*

"In this comprehensive concise account, Ulrich L. Lehner, professor of religious history at Marquette University, offers a masterful reinterpretation of the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the Enlightenment The book's global scope is perhaps its most impressive feature Lehner weaves a complex narrative that brings together areas and figures that had been largely overlooked by eighteenth-century scholars This book raises important questions about the ways in which historians should think about eighteenth-century learned culture, and it also forces us to consider whether 'the Enlightenment' continues to be a useful category of analysis *The Catholic Enlightenment* is thus both a provocative challenge to established narratives about the Enlightenment and an extremely useful resource for scholars and students of all levels."--*H-Net*

"*The Catholic Enlightenment* is not only one of the best books I have had the privilege of reading this year, it is certainly one of the best books of history I have ever read."--*The Imaginative Conservative*

"Outstanding...Especially relevant to current debates over Francis's papacy...[an] important book."--*First Things*

"*The Catholic Enlightenment* is a major contribution to ongoing efforts to show that, from its very beginning, Catholic Christianity has rarely been closed to insights into the truth attained by those of different faiths or none."--*Library of Law and Liberty*

"Ulrich Lehner is the leading scholar of the Catholic Enlightenment: he knows more about it, and has done more to make it accessible, than anyone else. His brief survey, *The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement*, is a pioneering survey that everyone interested in religion in the modern world should study and savor." --David Sorkin, author of *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna*

"This book synthesizes an extraordinary range of material with eye-opening implications for our

understanding of both the European Enlightenment and modern Roman Catholicism. Lehner shows multiple ways in which the robust, global Catholic Enlightenment continued trajectories developed in the sixteenth-century Catholic Reformation. He also makes a strong case for the abiding relevance of the Catholic Enlightenment today. An outstanding achievement and a must-read for both scholars and students." --Brad Gregory, Dorothy G. Griffin Professor of Early Modern European History, University of Notre Dame

"Upending conventional wisdom, Ulrich Lehner persuasively demonstrates that normal oppositions, conservative versus progressive, Enlightener versus Catholic, modern versus traditional are unhelpful in coming to grips with the fascinating history of Catholic engagements with the Enlightenment. His beautiful prose and captivating historical narrations are as enjoyable to read as they are profound. *The Catholic Enlightenment* deserves to be well read and discussed not only by historians and theologians, but also by anyone seeking to come to grips with our moment in history and Catholicism's rich contributions to it. This work will make you rethink what you thought you knew." --D. Stephen Long, Cary M. Maguire University Professor in Ethics, Southern Methodist University

"The value of the book lies in the sheer amount of information recorded; the present reviewer. . . learned many helpful and enriching things." --*Catholic World Report*

"Ulrich Lehner's excellent book unpacks the notion of the Catholic Enlightenment, and provides us, as he says in the subtitle, with a 'forgotten history.'" - *America Magazine*

"This impressively learned study rewards--and demands--careful reading. It opens up the possibility for further research into neglected aspects of Catholic history, and provides lessons (positive and negative) for those considering how the church today might respond more productively to the intellectual and moral challenges of the present era."--*Commonweal*

"Few, if any, scholars are as comfortable with such a wide variety of Roman Catholic thinkers as Lehner. One feels the strength of his work most in the sheer diversity of figures, themes, and cultures he treats. More important, however, is its thorough and steady demolition of so many abiding clichés about Catholicism and modernity." --*The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

"Ulrich L. Lehner, the foremost American scholar of Enlightenment Catholicism, shares his expertise in this clear, engaging survey."--*Fides et Historia*

"Lehner's book is full of new and interesting insights, and proves a provocative and engaging read."--*Journal of Global Intellectual History*

"This is a stimulating book for theologians and historians because, as the author affirms, *The Catholic Enlightenment* illustrates where the dialogue of the church with modern thought was most fruitful, and where it failed, and can thus serve as lesson and potential guide for twenty-first century theology in its continuing dialogue with modernity"--*Theological Studies*

"Lehner's spirited and engaging prose in the pages of his thematic *tour de force* through eighteenth century styles of Enlightenment Catholicism has accomplished something that is long overdue, very important, and admirable in its intent...[His] insights and very readable approach to the topic promises to engender spirited debate and fascinating scholarship about a topic that has been until quite recently, if not precisely 'forgotten,' then certainly under-appreciated and woefully under-examined by students of the eighteenth century."--*Journal of Jesuit Studies*

"This is an important book that should be read not just by historians of Catholicism and the eighteenth century but also by journalists and pundits wanting to understand the Catholic Church...Without doubt, Lehner's ground-breaking book is essential reading for everyone studying the Enlightenment. It should not be sidelined merely as a history of one religious response to the Enlightenment, but rather received as a hugely significant contribution to our understanding of the history of ideas."--*British Catholic History*

About the Author

Ulrich L. Lehner is Professor of Religious History and Historical Theology at Marquette University. A member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, he has received awards and fellowships from the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study, the Notre Dame Institute of Advanced Study, the Earhart Foundation, the German Humboldt Foundation, and the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Foundation. He is the award-winning author of several scholarly works on early modern and modern history of religion.

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Jeffrey Brown:

Here thing why this kind of The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement are different and trustworthy to be yours. First of all reading through a book is good but it really depends in the content of the usb ports which is the content is as scrumptious as food or not. The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement giving you information deeper since different ways, you can find any e-book out there but there is no e-book that similar with The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your eyes about the thing which happened in the world which is might be can be happened around you. You can actually bring everywhere like in playground, café, or even in your approach home by train. For anyone who is having difficulties in bringing the printed book maybe the form of The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement in e-book can be your choice.

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