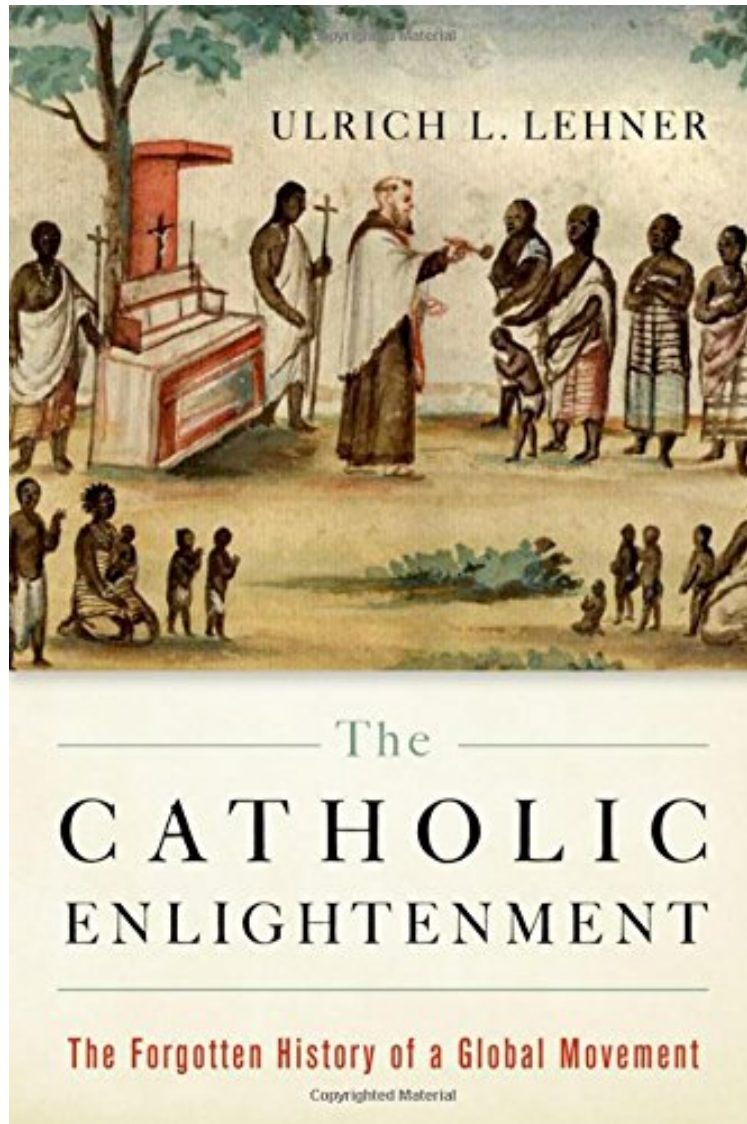


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# The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement

*Ulrich L. Lehner*

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**Ulrich L. Lehner : The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Subtitle, The Forgotten History of a Global Movement Is

AccurateBy Mary Ann FischerI'm still reading this one and mainly because there's SO much here that I did not know!!The author writes beautifully such that scholars will not be bored nor will students find it inaccessible.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Middle WayBy GDPUlrich Lehner's 'The Catholic Enlightenment' is a perfectly good book that presents a survey of reform-minded Catholicism spanning the sixteenth century through the end of the eighteenth century, along with a nod to the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65 when the Roman Catholic Church formally addressed the relationship of the Church and modernity. In keeping with the book's subtitle, "The Forgotten History of a Global Movement" there is evidence of Catholic Enlightenment thinking from around the world e.g., France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Central Europe, the Americas, China, Italy, et cetera.The scope of the book is both its strength and its Achilles heel, as it covers a tremendous amount of territory, but can't do so to any great depth in its 218 pages of text. 'The Catholic Enlightenment' is strongest when addressing the period of the French Revolution, offers a pretty good introductory treatment of Jansenism, and outlines the pan-European tensions with the Jesuits. There is a very satisfying sketch of the Carmelite nuns guillotined in France's Reign of Terror, as well as a brief look at the Knights of Malta that proved fascinating (and timely).The Enlightenment, of course, is a highly contentious topic with historians frequently constructing narratives that serve their own ideological purposes.Jonathan Israel's Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre is an example of one end of the spectrum. Israel writes of Radical Enlightenment thinkers as the prophets of modernity, while the French Revolution they inspired "denied the validity of ideas, customs, institutions, or laws inherited from the past absolutely and totally" (p. 11), thus founding modernity itself. Israel recognizes that this repudiation of the past was "opposed or incomprehensibly regarded by most of the population and even most of the National Assembly" (p. 11).Israel's conceited brand of valorizing the Radical Enlightenment is captured perfectly in Pierre Manent's Beyond Radical Secularism: How France and the Christian West Should Respond to the Islamic Challenge. Manent characterizes a current prevalent viewpoint among the worshipers of modernity: "Humanity is irresistibly carried along by the movement of modernization, and modern humanity, humanity understood as having finally reached adulthood, is a humanity that has left religion behind" (p. 10). He writes of such "modern humanity" as incredulous that any religion could be the source of personal animation in the enlightened 21st Century. This secular posture leaves "modern humanity" smugly "waiting only for the slower ones to kindly join him" (p. 61). Manent concludes with these words: To declare or even to guarantee the rights of human beings is not sufficient to bring men together. They need a form of common life (p. 116) that can, perhaps, be found in religion and spirituality.Another book that offers an interesting perspective on the Enlightenment is Darrin M. McMahon's Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity. McMahon focuses upon those who articulated reservations, objections, or, in many cases, outright hostility to the Enlightenment's animating 'philosophie' of progress and radical change reliant solely on reason. The book's title, "Enemies of " captures its orientation: counter-Enlightenment and, in particular, counter-Revolutionary reactionary thinking. McMahon postures reactionaries as not only impossibly seeking the past, but an idealized, imaginary past.Lehner's book addresses a space between those two postures, specifically, Catholics who sought reconciliation between their faith and the Enlightenment.An example was Abbe Claude Fauchet (1744-93) who strove, Israel writes, " to bridge the gap between Catholicism and radical thought, assuring listeners at every turn that Jesus was a lover of liberty, equality, and human rights " (p. 136). Fauchet took part in the July 14th attack on the Bastille, joined the Constitutional Church, and was a member of the Legislative Assembly. Lehner writes, "[He] struggled sincerely to balance [his] commitment to the French Revolution with [his] faith, often not very successfully and often not very boldly " (p. 209). His efforts only proved that sometimes life is indeed a vale of tears: the Roman Catholic Church considered him a heretic and a schismatic, while his moderate politics, however well intentioned, led to the guillotine (Oct. 31, 1793).On a cheerier note, Lehner also writes of Caspar Royko (1744-1814), who was a professor of church history in Prague and who boldly professed that Catholics should not regard Protestants as enemies but as brethren. None of this sounds remarkable to twenty-first-century readers, but it was revolutionary at the time (p. 61). One senses that Royko, through faith and ecumenism, was seeking the common life that Manent recognizes as necessary for a true society.The challenge Catholic Enlightenment thinkers confronted in the eighteenth century is, in many ways, the same challenge for people of religious faith today (usually without the threat of a guillotine, thank Goodness). We all enjoy a world filled with the political, scientific, and technological benefits of the Enlightenment. In Daniel Brewster's The Enlightenment Past: Reconstructing Eighteenth-Century French Thought, he writes, it may seem that resisting the Enlightenment is logically impossible, tantamount to venturing into the illogical, the irrational, the premodern (p. 23). Indeed, the fruits of the Enlightenment overwhelmingly represent our reality, but, Enlightenment and religion need not be an either/or choice. Many still look to their faith for community (or a common life), strength, and, hopefully, salvation. Brewer identifies an approach like this to the Enlightenment as postmodern. As such, Lehner's book offers insight into the past and the "postmodern" present, a search for a middle way of faith and Enlightenment, without surrendering to a soulless modernity. It is worth a read.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating readBy James WatrousA fascinating read. One hears that the Enlightenment was in conflict with religion, and there is some truth to that. With this thinking the Catholic Church could not go together. Yet, it's not true. There was a movement within Catholic that embraced ideas

of the Enlightenment and also had influence on Enlightenment thinking. One example was the Catholic criticism of the mistreatment of Native Americans, which many so-called Enlightenment advocates believed Native Americans were inferior to them and they could exploit them in the name of progress. There are many more examples in Professor Leher's book. Read it and be enlightened (yes, the pun is intended but you will learn much you did not know).

"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.

"Ulrich Lehner has uncovered a fresh picture of the Catholic past that calls seriously into question any view of Catholics as straightforwardly anti-Enlightenment. He has also shown the common view of the Enlightenment as an anti-religious movement to be largely false. Lehner's excellent work brings into view paths not taken, insights obscured or forgotten by history, and possibilities still latent for religion in contemporary life."--*American Catholic Studies*"Lehner undoubtedly makes an outstanding, original, and persuasive contribution to Enlightenment studies and to Catholic history. He has contributed significantly to the historiography of the 'many Enlightenments' and makes a strong case for repudiation of the false but enduring myth that Enlightenment ideas and Catholicism were and are necessarily at odds."--*Journal of Church and State*"What distinguishes his book is its global reach and its illumination of so many parts of the Church's life, witness, and worship...[Lehner] writes well and has combed a vast amount of material in several languages."--*The Catholic Historical*"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*"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, Enlightenment 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"His 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 clichs 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 HistoryAbout the AuthorUlrich 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.