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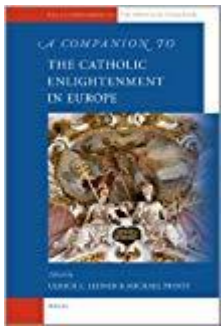

Ulrich L. Lehner, Michael Printy, eds. *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe.* Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition Series. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 468 pp. $233.00, cloth, ISBN 978-90-04-18351-3.

Reviewed by Carolina Armenteros (Independent Scholar)

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Commissioned by Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth (Red Deer Polytechnic)

What Is Catholic Enlightenment? Reflections on a First Overview

If the concept of Enlightenment is much contested, the Catholic Enlightenment that Sebastian Merkle first introduced to historiography in 1908 is still being defined. The same interpretive issues that render the concept of Enlightenment a subject of debate also affect its Catholic variety: whether to grasp the movement from a philosophical (especially epistemological), sociocultural, or political point of view; whether to understand these various aspects of it as mutually influential, or as convergent and context-dependent; and whether to break up the movement in separate national varieties or to understand it as an all-embracing European whole. The debate is unlikely to settle down in the foreseeable future, but for those seeking to refine Enlightenment's definition as an analytical tool, Catholic Enlightenment can offer a good laboratory. As a more confined movement, it is more readily coherent. And as a varied—even fragmented—one, it can mirror many of the ambiguities of its larger counterpart. This review both summarizes and engages with the Catholic Enlightenment's very first overview: Ulrich L. Lehner and Michael Printy's ***Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment***. Its chief aim is to assess what, if any, concept of Catholic Enlightenment can encompass the wide diversity that the movement exhibited throughout Catholic Europe from Poland-Lithuania to Spain, and including Malta and Portugal.

In his introduction to the volume, Lehner locates the movement's dual roots in the reforms of the Council of Trent and in the spiritual and theological currents—influenced by Jansenism and the rise of bourgeois self-esteem—that sought to recapture the spirit of the early church, rejecting modern and medieval forms of devotion along with monastic and mendicant asceticism. For Lehner, the anti-Jesuitism that was integral to Jansenism was also a defining, if unessential, characteristic of Catholic Enlightenment, though as we will see—and this will become theoretically cru-

cial—some of the volume's authors consider the Jesuits as participants in the Catholic Enlightenment, to the point of putting them forward, in various contexts, as paradigms of it. In this respect, Lehner's Catholic Enlightenment—conditioned perhaps by his past work on the Benedictines, who produced, at Saint Maur, modernity's first path-breaking critical works on the monuments of tradition—seems implicitly defined as the (frequently anti-Jesuit) drive to eliminate all cultural, intellectual, and ecclesiastical innovations that postdated antiquity.

Jeffrey Burson writes, by contrast, on the largely pro-*Unigenitus* and pro-Jesuit Catholic Enlightenment that developed in France from the mid-seventeenth century to the Revolution of 1789. Molinism, he points out, allowed for speculation about a pure state of nature succeeding the fall and preceding corrupt civilization that drew the Jesuits close to those epitomes of Enlightenment, the philosophes. For Burson, in fact, the Society of Jesus was Catholicism's enlightened vanguard in epistemology and scientific innovation. Attempting a ***via media*** between René Descartes and Baruch Spinoza, the Jesuits combined John Locke with Nicolas Malebranche, extolled Newtonian physics, and validated church doctrine empirically in order to lend it historical certitude, going so far as to argue that Catholicism had been the natural religion of humankind. The Jansenists, of course, also approached Enlightenment through science: their idea of the hidden nature of divine causality was readily consonant with Enlightenment empiricism. One may surmise, as well, that their exclusion from the universities made it difficult for them to develop intellectually on a par with their enemies. Comparatively, in fact, Burson's French Jansenists seem little relevant to Catholic Enlightenment. Even their triumph over the Jesuits in 1762, when the Society of Jesus was expelled from France, stripped them of their significance, since on entering the mainstream they lost their political clout.

The pendulum swings back to Jansenism in the essay on the Catholic Enlightenment in the Austrian Habsburg lands. Harm Klueting recounts the anti-baroque and Tridentine concern with the improvement of pastoral care that characterized the reign of Maria Theresa, as well as its famously radical continuation under Joseph II. For this exceedingly statist emperor, worship was synonymous with usefulness to the state, and Klueting understandably focuses on government policy: Jewish emancipation; the "reduction of monks"; the legalization of "secret Protestantism"; and the forbidding of pilgrimages, of lights inside churches, and of the sale of rosaries. Such policies had predictable intellectual roots in French Jansenism and Protestant theology, and Klueting closes with the escalation of the revolt of the Catholic clergy against Protestantism and Josephinism that became the Brabant Revolution of 1787.

The understanding of Catholic Enlightenment as fundamentally political returns in Printy's chapter on the Holy Roman Empire, which borrows a phrase from J. G. A. Pocock to characterize Catholic Enlightenment as a "series of programmes for reducing the power of either churches or congregations to disturb the peace of civil society by challenging its authority" (p. 171). Despite this definition, though, Printy takes an intellectual historical approach, helpfully reviewing the work of the theologians who propagated Catholic Enlightenment: Eusebius Amort, who attacked superstition while professing anti-Jesuitism and an interest in science, and Anselm Desing, who studied Protestant natural law. Printy also examines the juridical theories of the Febronian canonists who expanded the concept of the church law's sources in order to diminish Rome's power. As for the monastic orders, they were, for Printy, heirs of a German Catholic tradition that preceded the Reformation and that made possible the anti-Jesuitism that was the unifying feature of the German Catholic Enlightenment.

Of all European Catholic Enlightenments, perhaps the most fertile was the Italian one, which Mario Rosa recounts in this volume, using the German concept of ***Aufklärung*** rather than the French ***Lumières*** to emphasize the less ideological and polemical connotations that Enlightenment had in its Italian setting—and to avoid the definitions that Italian research rejects: "Catholic Enlightenment," "enlightened Catholicism," "reformist Catholics." Ludovico Muratori famously inaugurated the Italian Catholic ***Aufklärung***, recommending that religion's regulation of daily rhythms be reduced in favor of the disciplinary reform of social life by stressing interior over exterior discipline. One might argue that such emphasis on interiority was not entirely compatible with Benedict XIV's diffidence toward mysticism in preference of medical and scientific literature, but the Italian Catholic Enlightenment that Rosa describes followed a fluctuating and trying course, opening the century by engaging with science, going through an eudaemonist phase in the middle decades, and intertwining with political and religious reforms in the 1780s, especially as Habsburg reforms resumed in Tuscany and Lombardy, and Bourbon ones in Naples and Sicily. It was in these regions, Rosa remarks, that Jansenism emerged as a defining feature of the Catholic Enlightenment.

The case of Malta, recounted by Frans Ciappara, is perhaps most interesting given the Knights of Malta's theocratic government of the island. Considering their order's Crusading origins, one might expect them to have preserved the medieval devotional practices that many Catholic enlighteners sought to extirpate, and this is indeed the case, as the cult of the Sacred Heart and the ***via crucis*** not only continued but even intensified in eighteenth-century Malta. In their relations with the papacy, however, the Grand Masters, who styled themselves as philosopher-kings, followed the lead of other European monarchs in attempting to limit ecclesiastical jurisdiction, going so far as to discredit the pope's representatives in their administration of justice. Nor were the papist Jesuits the Knights' friends: the Society of Jesus had already been expelled from Malta in 1639, and was again driven out in imitation of the Bourbons in 1768. In all, the Maltese Catholic Enlightenment, as Ciappara tells it, seems to have been little governed by intellectual developments: what mainstream Enlightenment ideas arrived from the continent played out simply as the millennial struggle between spiritual and temporal powers.

No such struggle occurred in Poland-Lithuania, where more religious than secular ideas came in from western Europe, and where the nobility stood unchallenged as the major wielder of political power. Richard Butterwick tells the story of the Catholic Enlightenment in this part of the world as one of parish reforms by bishops who sought to improve the quality of seminary education, make worship more accessible to the common people, and encourage charity over external devotion. Far from being the enemies that defined these efforts, the Jesuits led them in the 1750s through an intellectual renewal that reduced philosophy to logic and natural science while avoiding the literal interpretation of scripture. In literature, however, the Polish Catholic Enlightenment seems to have produced little besides the ***Monachomachia*** (1778)—the mock-epic of Ignacy Krasicki, prince-bishop of Warmia, whose title (War of the monks) suggests all—and novels by bishops depicting plain-speaking hero-priests.

Evergton Sales Souza's account of the Catholic Enlightenment in Portugal, by contrast, opens with a remark on the formative importance of a book (and one, too, with an eminently intellectual preoccupation): Verney's ***The True Method of Study*** (1746), which argued that theological and canonical studies should be grounded in history and erudite critique. That such methods had long been employed by the Augustinians already announced Verney's theological preferences, and his book's critique of scholasticism and proposals for the reform of religious studies only confirmed them. Portugal in Verney's day was a perfect re-

ceptacle of his ideas, as scholasticism became increasingly marginalized by the Marquis of Pombal's anti-Jesuit government, to the extent that the Royal Censors Office prohibited the reading of books by Jesuits. The extraordinary degree to which the government achieved control of religious discourse within the country is perhaps best exemplified by the austere monastic mystical movement of the Jacobeians, who had drawn government persecution at the beginning of the century by attempting to reform church practice at both the intellectual and pastoral levels, yet who by the 1760s felt sufficiently compelled by government religious policy as to defend regalist and episcopalist stances that had never been a domain of their thought. Such doctrinal dominance by an anti-Jesuit government readily explains why the Jesuits seem to have played no role in the Portuguese Catholic Enlightenment, as does, of course, the fact that Portugal was the first country to expel the Society of Jesus in 1759. It would have been helpful, though, to know more about the reasons for the government's anti-Jesuitism, especially considering that Portugal is an exception to Dale Van Kley's model of the Society of Jesus as an ever-staunch supporter of temporal authority.[1]

The theme of the state's dominance over religious developments recurs in Angela Smidt's narration of the Catholic Enlightenment in neighboring Spain. Her main point is that the movement succeeded only to the extent that it was willing to accommodate enlightened absolutism. As in Portugal, the government sided with Jansenism, which in Spain developed out of an Erasmian humanism that criticized baroque devotion, emphasized individual spirituality and scriptural reading, and envisioned a poor and egalitarian church modeled on that of the first centuries—a vision that in scholarship dovetailed with the historical criticism of Benito Feijoo and Gregorio Mayans. As the century progressed, the initially unitary Spanish Catholic Enlightenment splintered for political reasons into Jesuit and Jansenist factions, and the Jansenists allied with the government. Cogently, Smidt observes that the absolutist state's emphasis on luxury and economic progress would have been better suited to Jesuit theology, and that after the Jesuit expulsion, cooperation between the state and the Jesuits' former enemies became senseless as the state's political priorities became irrelevant to those interested solely in the church's spiritual needs. What seems perhaps a bit puzzling is her characterization of Catholic Enlightenment as a mostly grassroots movement—unless by "grassroots" she means the intellectual (as opposed to political) elite that in Spain imported foreign books and ideas, and that elsewhere in Europe imparted education and developed theology.

The *Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment* constitutes a major reference on the Catholic Enlightenment. It brings together an unprecedented wealth and breadth of erudition on a field until now explored in fairly dispersed ways, and provides the major analytical themes needed to craft a theoretical approach to its subject. Yet if this volume may be faulted, it is for the absence of a conclusion reflecting on the chapters' themes to craft a concept of Catholic Enlightenment sufficiently broad to include them all, flexible enough to be adapted to different national contexts, and above all, mindful of the movement's status as an intellectual, and not just as a political or ecclesiastical, phenomenon. This last point is especially important, as many of the essays presented in this volume, and in the literature on the religious Enlightenment in general, suggest that the Catholic Enlightenment may be understood primarily as a series of reform efforts—and hence as a Jansenising phenomenon—rather than in primarily intellectual terms like the Enlightenment itself—and therefore as a movement that included the Jesuits, as Burson especially seems to believe. Certainly, it is fallacious to attempt to separate cleanly intellect from action, theology from reform. In the context of Catholic Enlightenment, though, it seems that the Jesuit-Ultramontanist side was more intellectually inclined, while the Jansenist-patriotic side ex-

pressed itself more indirectly through action (in a manner probably determined by the Jansenists' exclusion from the universities, as well as ironically quite contrary to that of each side's ideational descendants, the early conservatives and early liberals, respectively). To understand the Catholic Enlightenment strictly in terms of political and ecclesiastical reforms is hence not only to subordinate the intellectual aspect that should take at least equal, if not more, precedence in its identity, but also to ignore the movement's inalienable religious quality. The problem is not confined to the Catholic Enlightenment, but reflects a general tendency in the literature on enlightened religion.

To grasp the Catholic Enlightenment as a dually religious and intellectual movement that introduced a shift in perception, clarity first requires considering the specifically religious quality that set the Catholic enlightened perception apart from that of nonreligious intellectual movements, and that distinguished the religious Enlightenments more generally from the materialistic strands of the enlightened movement. All religions fundamentally presuppose the existence of a dimension beyond physical perception—what is ordinarily termed the spiritual realm—the experience of which cannot be seized by reason or articulated through ordinary language. In this respect, the religious Enlightenments differ essentially from the radical and materialistic strands of Enlightenment that considered human understanding of reality to be limited not by human reason—since through reason, as Spinoza wrote in the ***Ethics*** (1677), we can see things as they truly are, ***sub specie aeternitatis***—but by science's empirical limitations. In the case of Catholicism, the presupposition of a spiritual realm traditionally resulted in a double approach to reason most influentially expressed by Thomas Aquinas: reason as the site of God's self-revelation to humanity, yet reason as an instrument ultimately inadequate for grasping the truth of faith. In practical terms, this meant that, as Aquinas succinctly put it, "it is useful for the human mind to exercise its powers of reasoning, however weak,... provided that there is no presumption that it comprehend or demonstrate [the substance of the divine]."[2] In parallel with the instrumentality of reason was the instrumentality of devotion: in Catholicism, love and devotion are major means of spiritual enhancement. Again Aquinas: "The love of God ... infuses and creates goodness in things."[3]

In the Catholic Enlightenment, the Catholic idea that reason can and should be used to approach God through his Creation dovetailed with the Enlightenment's encouragement of scientific inquiry, and in this respect Catholics of all stripes, from Jesuits to Jansenists, could readily become enlighteners. However, the Catholic Enlightenment also had to import two types of reason. The first was the Lockean empirical reason, which the Jesuits, as Burson recounts, took up in order to respond to Enlightenment empiricism. The second was a critical variety of reason—original in skepticism and best represented by Cartesian reason—that attacked superstition, baroque religiosity, and external forms of devotion. This was a reason aligned mostly with Augustinian and Jansenist Catholicism—although the Jesuits also combined it with their Lockean perspective—and whose employment as the ultimate criterion of spiritual correctness necessarily implied setting aside the traditional warning against reason's insufficiency to apprehend the divine.

Critical, skeptical reason probably represented Catholicism's greatest adaptation to the Enlightenment, since it had all but disappeared during the first millennium of the religion's development.[4] Catholic enlighteners themselves thought of this adaptation as a change from a corrupt or superstitious religiosity to a "pure" one—from a religiosity that claimed to access the other-worldly in a multitude of imaginative and hence dubious and potentially immoral ways, to one that approached it in a rational and hence strictly moral manner. But from the viewpoint of traditional Catholicism, the change represented a closing of

the number of doors that opened onto the spiritual realm. Not only that, but the closing was prompted by a foreign version of the very reason to which orthodoxy had long granted mere auxiliary status on divine matters. It was aided in this task by Lockean empirical reason, which as the new "proof" of divine truth, tended to pull the divine down to the physically perceptible and logically apprehensible, so that it seemed that no doors onto it were even needed at all. Plainly worded, from a traditional perspective, the Catholic Enlightenment was inherently secularizing.

Socially, it was also egalitarian in its drive to make religious practice reasonable and hence accessible to all, and in restructuring the church to look less like a monarchy and more like a republic. Yet, paradoxically and simultaneously, the attempt to make religion reasonable also had hierarchizing results. The internalization of devotion, or the elimination of sensible supports of devotion (like saints), accompanied by the rise of an intellectual devotion centered on scriptural reading, was necessarily tailored to an educated class. The illiterate majority of Europe's Catholics would have been faced with the dual alternative of continuing their old devotional practices, or, in cases where government and ecclesiastical reforms effectively prohibited them, simply reducing their participation in religious rituals. There remained, of course, the Muratorian option of exercising devotion through charitable social relationships, but this could be done as much in a religious as in a secular spirit. In all, what Sales Souza observes in Portugal probably applies to the rest of Europe: that the extent to which Catholic enlightened policies affected the religious practice of the common people is difficult to gauge.[5]

It should come as no surprise by now to say that the Catholic Enlightenment was divided into two, frequently opposed streams. One encouraged the application of an inherently revelatory reason to the understanding of Creation, and thereby to the development of the arts, crafts, and natural sciences. This kind of Catholic Enlightenment—well, if not best, represented by the Jesuits—accepted more readily the retention of traditional devotional practices and of traditional social relationships, including subordination to the pope. It was well served in this endeavor by Locke's empirical reason, which, in its attentiveness to facts, could become inherently valorizing of existing institutions. The other strand of Catholic Enlightenment, esteeming critical reason and insisting on interior forms of devotion, developed critical historiography, erudition, and grammars in order to eliminate the modern and medieval devotional practices that it associated with superstition, and to render social relations generally less subject to the vagaries of arbitrary power and more akin to the imagined ideal of the early church. Febronianists, Gallicans, Jacobeians, Jansenists, and other types of anti-Jesuitists all represented it in some way. This dual model resonates with the one that Van Kley proposes when describing the national-Molinist and patriotic-Augustinian sensibilities that Jesuits and Jansenists respectively developed in the Age of Enlightenment, with Jesuit "nationalists" preaching an anthropology of human goodness, a theology of individual liberty, and a politics of submission to authority, and Jansenist "patriots" insisting on human evil and developing a theory of constraint by grace that wore ironically revolutionary colors in the field of politics.[6]

We must be wary, though, of treating Jesuit and Jansenist theologies as unitary forces that tended invariably toward political conservatism and liberalism, respectively. In Portugal and Spain, as this companion shows, clerics sympathetic to Jansenism played roles of submission to the absolutist state that might have shocked their French counterparts. Theological styles could also change across continents. In India, for instance, the Jesuits critiqued Hindu superstition, speculated on Satanic iniquity, and idealized the early church in ways that would have had little resonance with the Jesuit message in Europe, but that were still readily consistent with Jesuit identity.[7] Thus if as an in-

tellectual movement the Catholic Enlightenment constituted a shift in perception, this understanding has limited value when it comes to predicting how the new perception actually manifested socially, politically, and even ecclesiastically—that is, how it translated practically into "reform" or lack thereof. On this point logic, no matter how rigorous, cannot compensate for detailed knowledge of national contexts. Perhaps the one consistent consequence that Catholic Enlightenment had in the political arena across Europe is an increase in public consciousness,[8] and indeed if the Thomistic reason that once ideally mused on the divine directly was now reoriented toward profane things, it made sense that it should include the public sphere among its new objects of contemplation.

Whatever form it adopted, though—whether Jesuit or Jansenist—Catholic Enlightenment resulted in a lessened use of human faculties to access the spiritual sphere. Reason was now encouraged to exercise itself on those "objects of the senses" that Aquinas had deemed "completely insufficient to manifest the substance of God,"[9] while devotion's path was narrowed—at least for the majority—as the new critical reason abolished devotional practices. Of course the intellectual and socially conscious devotions that Catholic enlighteners preached could have compensated for the loss of the old devotions, but both intellectual exercise and social construction can be easily emptied of religious referents and become secularized. This was especially the case in a context where history and empirical science were being used by both sides as proofs of Catholic truth and not the other way around—where God, to put it briefly, was becoming more available to logic. Thus while David Sorkin, ***The Religious Enlightenment*** (2008), has been right to underline that religion was pervasive in the Enlightenment, from the perspective of traditional religion, entering the Enlightenment implied losing a portion of the sacred. For the Catholic Enlightenment at least, the secularization model retains its validity.[10]

Notes

[1]. See Dale Van Kley, "Religion and the Age of 'Patriot' Reform," ***The Journal of Modern History*** 80, no. 2 (2008): 252-295.

[2]. See Thomas Aquinas, ***St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics***, trans. and ed. Paul E. Sigmund (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988), 5.

[3]. Ibid., 33.

[4]. See the article Charles Bolyard, "Medieval Skepticism," ***Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*** (Spring 2013), http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skepticism-medieval/#ThoAquSigBra.

[5]. Interestingly, if critical reason was the Enlightenment's contribution to the Catholic Enlightenment, Christianity's input into the Enlightenment was the valorization of love and devotion—as demonstrated by the strictly rational models of progress put forward by Enlightenment strands uninformed by Christianity.

[6]. See Van Kley, "Religion and the Age of 'Patriot' Reform."

[7]. See the ***Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères***, 34 vols. (Paris: 1702-76).

[8]. David Sorkin identifies reasonableness, tolerance, and the public sphere as concerns defining of the religious Enlightenment (***The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna*** [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008]). Reasonableness was important as explained above. But the essays presented in this companion do not suggest that tolerance was paramount, at least within the Catholic Enlightenment: on the contrary, persecution seems to have been frequent. As for the public sphere, although the essays in this volume do not theorize explicitly how the Catholic Enlighten-

ment encouraged engagement with it, they provide sufficient evidence that it did.

[9]. Aquinas, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, 5.

[10]. I am grateful to Van Kley for his comments on a previous draft of this review.