Rebecca Messbarger, Christopher M.S. Johns, and Philip Gavitt, eds.

Benedict XIV and the Enlightenment: Art, Science and Spirituality. Toronto:

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Much of twentieth-century historiography has viewed the institution of the papacy as retrograde and anti-progressive. Pius IX's *Syllabus errorum* (1864) and the anti-modernist encyclical *Pascendi Dominici gregis* (1907) have led historians to believe that the institution has uncompromisingly resisted change, especially the types of change that the eighteenth-century Enlightenment initiated. This interdisciplinary collection of eighteen original essays from specialists around the globe seeks to remedy this historiographical misconception by presenting the case of the "moderately modern" (4) Pope Benedict XIV (r.1740–58). Derived from an academic conference held in St. Louis in 2012, the volume positions Benedict as an important contributor to the Enlightenment.

The arrival of this volume is timely considering the recent attention that historians have paid to the Catholic Enlightenment. Although the term was coined in the early twentieth century, in the work of Sebastian Merkle among others, the Catholic Enlightenment has become one of the most fertile sub-fields of Enlightenment studies. Most work on the Catholic Enlightenment focuses on theologians and Catholic writers scattered throughout the European continent; there has been a distinct need to investigate the seat of the Catholic Church itself, the Vatican and the institution of the papacy. By focusing on a pope, therefore, this volume puts to the test just how far enlightened Catholicism extended and how much of an impact it made on not only the Catholic Church but also the broader culture of eighteenth-century Europe.

The case for Benedict XIV's connections with the Catholic Enlightenment comprises many parts, and it is easiest to trace these themes as they appear across the various essays. The clearest piece of this puzzle is Benedict's sponsorship and promotion of empirical science, including his patronage of the Institute of Sciences and Arts in Bologna, in which he invested considerable time and resources. Benedict himself clearly consumed and utilized scientific research. Nowhere is this more evident than in his *De servorum Dei beatificatione*, Benedict's transformational treatise on the process of beatification and canonization. Benedict's work as patron and promoter of science demonstrates his connections with a fundamental aspect of the Enlightenment—namely, the central role it placed on empiricism and scientific knowledge. It also illustrated how the Enlightenment could interact with and contribute to the Catholic Church in powerful ways.

Many of the volume's essays also make the case that Benedict was committed to the pedagogical project of the Enlightenment. The studies in the

volume's first section, "Benedict XIV, Women, and Progressive Catholicism," for example, show how committed Benedict was to fostering the scholarly careers of talented women, including Laura Bassi, Maria Gaetana Agnesi, and Anna Morandi. His willingness to acknowledge their erudition and help them acquire academic positions provides a striking example of his egalitarian approach to education. Benedict also fostered the growth of institutions whose missions were, at least in part, to educate and enlighten the public. According to Paola Giuli, he participated in and promoted Arcadian academies, or egalitarian conversation groups, throughout Italy. Christopher M.S. Johns revealed how he attempted to create a sort of "coffeehouse" within the papal palace in the Vatican and use it to demonstrate his embrace of enlightened ideals. Perhaps the best examples of his commitment to public education, however, involve his sponsorship of the arts. Carole Paul uncovered the pivotal role that Benedict played in the establishment of the Capitoline Museum and its mission to present art to the public. It seems clear that Benedict saw art as not only a point of civic and even "national" pride—a crucial piece in his broader celebration and revitalization of Italian culture—but also a useful tool for teaching both specialists and the wider masses. Jeffrey Collins's depiction of the battle that was the founding of the *gipsoteca* in the Bologna Institute colorfully demonstrates this point. Benedict dedicated himself to the mission of enlightening the world through the sponsorship of new learning and institutions that broadcast that learning to a broader public.

Finally, Benedict was firmly committed to practical, rational reform within the church. He clearly desired to purify the church of excesses and point Catholics in the direction of a "reasonable" faith. His longest lasting reforms were in the aforementioned procedures for canonization and beatification. His emphasis on the careful diagnoses of miracles directed attention away from the ostentatious manifestations of baroque Catholicism toward a more rationally based religious culture.

To its great credit, the volume avoids painting an overly simplistic picture of a pope unquestionably committed to the ideals of the Enlightenment. Many essays point out the complicated nature of Benedict's connection with the Enlightenment. Censorship provides the best context for this discussion. Although Benedict was committed to softening the censorial apparatus in the church in numerous ways—for example, he loosened regulations on the censorship and control of vernacular Bibles—he still maintained the *Index of Prohibited Books* and supported the work of the Holy Office in regulating Catholic language and thought. The best example of how conflicted Benedict could be with the ideals of the Enlightenment was in his dealings with the case of Galileo. Although Benedict recognized the victory of the heliocentric model

of the universe and pushed the *Index* to remove the universal ban on all works promoting heliocentrism, he nevertheless failed to remove the controversial Galileo's works from the *Index* itself. This less-than-enlightened decision drew criticism from figures inside and outside the church, exposing the complexity within the Catholic Enlightenment. As Benedict aptly demonstrates, the Catholic Enlightenment had dual goals: the promotion of Enlightenment and the promotion of Catholicism; often these two goals aligned, but sometimes they conflicted. That the contributors were willing to recognize these tensions indicates the nuanced approach that this study brings to Benedict and the Catholic Enlightenment in general.

On the whole, this is a well-researched and tightly focused volume that makes a significant contribution to the historiography. It will surely be of interest to specialists and, perhaps, to committed readers curious to see another side to the narrative of a "retrograde" and "anti-modern" papacy. The reader should be aware that there is a fair amount of overlap in the essays. Themes run across the contributions and sometimes lead to authors recapping details established in earlier essays. Perhaps the one thing that readers of the *Journal of Jesuit Studies* might find wanting in the volume is a thorough analysis of how Benedict XIV interacted with the Society of Jesus. Kristina Kleutghen's essay on Jesuit artists in China briefly touches on the Chinese rites controversy—an episode of immense importance to the eighteenth-century Catholic Church—but there was more to be said about Benedict's perspective on the Jesuits and on their activities in Europe. This is a question of some significance, moreover, for the study of the Catholic Enlightenment. Many historians have viewed resistance to the Jesuits (and even participation in the campaign to expel and suppress the Jesuits) as a hallmark of enlightened Catholicism. While a number of the essays touch on this subject obliquely, the volume might have benefitted from a more thorough and direct engagement of the topic. These are, however, very minor critiques of what is otherwise an excellent, useful, and indeed pioneering work.

Daniel J. Watkins

University of North Florida

d.watkins@unf.edu

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