

ENLIGHTENED MONKS: THE GERMAN BENEDICTINES, 1740–1803. By Ulrich L. Lehner. New York: Oxford University, 2011. Pp. viii + 266. \$99.

This erudite book, the winner of the 2011 John Gilmary Shea Prize of the American Catholic Historical Association, makes a valuable contribution to the burgeoning historiography on religion and the Enlightenment in Europe. More specifically it adds to the growing scholarship on the Catholic Enlightenment, a historiographical topic and historical reality once largely regarded as all but oxymoronic. Lehner offers a synthetic social, cultural, and intellectual overview of Benedictine monks in southern and central Germany, Switzerland, and Austria in the three generations before the end of the *Reichskirche* and confiscation of monastic property in 1803, as they differentially adopted and adapted new ideas and social behaviors during decades marked by both vitality and multiple challenges. Through patient reconstructions and descriptive case studies, L. understatedly demolishes largely unexamined assumptions about alleged antitheses between Benedictine monasticism and Enlightenment ideas, practices, and institutions. Based on a vast range of printed primary sources in German and Latin and on archival research in more than 20 different archives and libraries, the book also synthesizes a great many specialized studies (mostly in German) about 18th-century Benedictines. No scholar interested in early modern monasticism or Catholicism, the Catholic or German enlightenments, or religion and the Enlightenment can afford to overlook this book. A brief review cannot do it justice.

By the 18th century, Benedictine establishments had existed in central Europe for a millennium. In contrast to the mendicant orders and the Jesuits, the Benedictines' decentralized organization and openness to different theological traditions meant that Enlightenment influences could and did affect monastic life depending on the policies of individual abbots in the approximately 150 monasteries of the regions covered in L.'s study. Enlightened ideas also influenced the University of Salzburg, which had been established by a confederation of Benedictine abbeys in 1618, and in the 18th century became "the first German university to include experimental physics in its curriculum" (176). Seven of the book's nine chapters address ways men vowed to a deeply traditional way of religious life, one renewed in significant respects in the wake of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), responded to different yet related "challenges." The self-conscious Benedictine reaction to these challenges varied monastery by monastery and was subject to multiple contingencies. The book makes clear that by the 1780s and 1790s more and more houses were being affected.

L. devotes four chapters to challenges posed by new conceptions of history and historical research, "lifestyle," individual freedom and autonomy, and forms of communication, and three chapters to intellectual challenges

arising from law, philosophy, and theology. Finally he concludes with a chapter on monastic prisons and another on case studies of “runaway monks,” including runaway Abbot Anton Boehm.

This book deeply contextualizes intellectual and religious history. One of its great virtues is the way it combines monastic responses to new historical, legal, philosophical, and theological ideas with concrete attention to monastic material culture, social practices, and institutional innovations. L.’s anecdotes about, e.g., changes in monastic dress, diet, routines of prayer, recreation, travel, social interactions with those outside the monastic community (including women), and living accommodations give the impression of a virtual cultural revolution in multiple Benedictine houses in the second half of the 18th century. L. is alert to the ways the increasing exchange of ideas, books, and monks themselves in central Europe and beyond affected inherited commitments to *stabilitas* and routines of prayer: “Enlightenment communication challenged the traditional way of Benedictine life because the monks’ participation marginalized not only the silence of the cloister (instead it emphasized communication as a virtue) but also introduced a new emphasis on individual achievements and new patterns of self-presentation” (80–81).

German Benedictines established major historical-critical projects (inspired by the French Maurists), participated in learned societies, contributed to (and in some cases founded) academic journals, conducted scientific experiments, expressed disdain for Scholasticism and enthusiasm for the ideas of Locke, Wolff, and Kant, and embarked on theological experiments in ecumenism (Beda Mayr) and religious toleration (Benedict Werkmeister). Throughout, L. commendably provides many individual examples and descriptive stories to illustrate his points.

The book ends rather abruptly with the forced dissolution of German monastic life in 1803 and a three-page conclusion, a third of which summarizes the book’s chapters. It perhaps seems intellectually greedy to have hoped for more at the end of this original and important book, just as one might have hoped for more substantive conclusions at the end of individual chapters, some of which lack even a summary paragraph. But the desire for more is a function of the extraordinary, enlightening materials that L. presents. More analysis throughout and in a longer conclusion would only have enhanced his reconstructive descriptions and wide-ranging synthesis.

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HABITS OF CHANGE: AN ORAL HISTORY OF AMERICAN NUNS. By Carole Garibaldi Rogers. New York: Oxford University, 2011. Pp. xx + 319. \$27.95.

Rogers, a professional writer and editor, provides a rare insight into religious life for women as seen through the eyes of the women themselves.