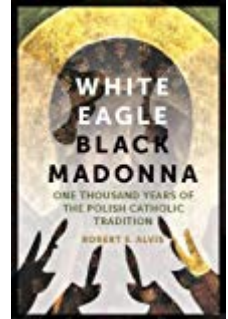
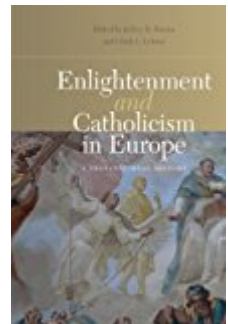


Robert E. Alvis. *White Eagle, Black Madonna: One Thousand Years of the Polish Catholic Tradition.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2016. Illustrations, maps. 368 pp. \$35.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-8232-7171-9.



Jeffrey D. Burson, Ulrich L. Lehner, eds. *Enlightenment and Catholicism in Europe: A Transnational History.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014. x + 482 pp. \$46.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-268-02240-2.



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Ways of Being Catholic in Europe

The two important, if quite different, historical works under review provide new perspectives on being Catholic in various parts of Europe. The first, a collective volume, is transnational in nature, presenting aspects of Enlightened Catholicism in the lives and work of a range of Europeans in the "long eighteenth century" (from circa 1670 to circa 1815). The second book surveys developments in the Catholic tradition in essentially one country, Poland, over the course of its more than thousand-year history. Both works aim for inclusion, and deserve to be included, within broader fields of scholarly inquiry: the Enlightenment overall in the first instance, the history of Catholicism in the second.

The authors of *Enlightenment and Catholicism in Europe: A Transnational History* conceive of the Catholic Enlightenment as "a shifting constellation of discourses emergent from the whole of Europe—the voice of men and women, laymen and clergy, periphery and metropole" (p. 13). The "whole of Europe" represented here is divided into nine parts. Part 1, on the papacy, features a single chapter on the "ambivalent Enlightener" Pope Benedict XIV (p. 41). Best represented geographically are France and Savoy (part 2, represented by five chapters) and the Italian Catholic Enlightenment (part 5, with three chapters). Parts devoted to the Holy Roman Empire (part 3), Habsburg Europe (part 4), the Iberian states (part 6), even Scotland and England (part 8), and Poland (part 9) are composed of two chapters/individuals apiece. Other individuals straddled several polities, as witnessed in part 7, "Transnational Trajectories: The Intersection of Irish, French, Italian, and Habsburg Developments." Perhaps it best exemplifies the transnational element—certainly the migration/movement and cross-pollination—as seen in the life trajectories of two individuals, the Dubrovnik-born Jesuit scientist Ruggiero Boscovich and Irish-born Sorbonne professor Luke Joseph Hooke.

Indeed, one might wonder whether a collection of twenty-one biographical sketches of individual Enlightened Catholics adds up to a transna-

tional history, as promised in the subtitle of the edited volume. The book's editors argue that the Catholic Enlightenment was "a significant manifestation of the wider transnational process of Enlightenment underway within the eighteenth century" (p. 13). Precisely how significant is best judged by a historian of eighteenth-century Europe, which I am not; yet the life stories of individuals represented in this volume—some famous, others less well known—suggest that there is no reason not to integrate them into a larger picture of the Enlightenment (without adjectives).

A minimalist definition allows the editors to include within the Catholic Enlightenment "the work of any author (lay or cleric), statesman, monk, secular clergy, philosopher, or apologist from within Catholic Europe who participated in burgeoning networks of publication and eighteenth-century sociability with a view toward integrating eighteenth-century science, philosophy, philology, or political thought into their understanding of Catholic teaching, and the reform of church and society" (p. 14). Attuned to what was happening outside of a single cloister or country, the Enlightened Catholics within this volume partook of the original "information revolution" both as consumers and producers of Enlightened thought (p. 12). The writings of Vienna-based Johann Pezzl (chapter 10, authored by Ritchie Robinson) might serve as the most entertaining example of how these individuals referenced the works of others: some of his satires riffed off well-known Enlightenment works (for example, his Faustin was patterned after Voltaire's *Candide*, and his *Moroccan Letters* after Montesquieu's Persian ones). What one gleans from a reading of the volume as a whole is how very many ways of being Enlightened there were, and how at least some Catholic thinkers reconciled within their life spans—and at times simultaneously—an Enlightened approach to knowledge and traditional Catholicism. A fascinating example of this comes in the chapter presenting the sole female voice of the volume: that of the talented *filosofessa* Maria Gaetana Ag-

nesi. Among other things, she wrote a textbook on theoretical calculus and a work on mysticism, which, chapter author Massimo Mazzotti convincingly argues, were less incongruous a pairing than they may seem.

Ultimately the most valuable contribution—the glue that holds this collection of biographies together—is the introduction by Jeffrey D. Burson. It should be required reading for anyone interested in the Enlightenment as a whole or its many aspects. Burson details the historical emergence and evolution of scholarship on the subject of the Catholic Enlightenment, begun by Sebastian Merkle in the first years of the twentieth century. The usage of the term "Catholic Enlightenment" (as opposed to "Enlightenment Christianity," "Reform Catholicism," or "Religious Enlightenment") is defended, its scope defined as cited above. Last but by no means least, Burson pens a useful and comprehensive categorization and periodization of the Catholic Enlightenment in the long eighteenth century that supports his contention that it was no less monolithic or temporally of a piece than the Enlightenment as a whole.

The final two chapters of *Enlightenment and Catholicism in Europe* are devoted to Polish Enlightenment thinkers: the Piarist educational reformer Stanisław Konarski and "revolutionary priest" Hugo Kołłątaj (p. 455). Seemingly on the outskirts of the Catholic Enlightenment, Polish clergymen—such as the two aforementioned—were nonetheless prominent among eighteenth-century Polish reformers. While the faces of Polish Catholicism have been many, Poland was from its beginnings very much connected with the Roman church. That said, it would be wrong simply to equate "Polishness" (however defined) with Roman Catholicism; this was hardly true for a country that for many centuries had a highly stratified, heterogeneous, and multid denominational population (including Orthodox, Uniate, and Protestant Christians as well as Jews).

White Eagle, Black Madonna: One Thousand Years of the Polish Catholic Tradition provides a nuanced, balanced, and comprehensive look at the Polish Catholic past. Robert E. Alvis has written the best and most up-to-date English-language introduction to this vast subject, from its tenth-century beginnings up to and into the first decade or so of the twenty-first century.[1] Alvis focuses on what he calls the "Polish Catholic tradition," by which he means Polish (in the civic, not ethnic, sense) Roman Catholic "patterns of belief and practice" (p. xii). This lived Catholicism comprises the crowning part of each of the ten (chronological) chapters, which unfold in a clear and accessible fashion. A well-chosen anecdote sets the tone for each chapter. What then ensues is a brief outline of pertinent political developments, followed by an examination of church (institutional) developments; the final section (always capped by concluding remarks) deals with the ways Poles experienced their faith. The author's mastery of the subject (from sacral architecture to sermons), his fruitful mining and close critical reading of (sometimes sparse) sources, and his vivid and accessible prose bring the subject to life. Alvis does not treat Polish developments in a vacuum but rather situates them within a broader context, noting points of intersection and contact. For example, long before Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II, Polish hierarchs took part in various important church councils and served as conduits of new ideas. There is even a brief excursus into the Polish Catholic experience in the United States before World War I.

What is particularly valuable in *White Eagle, Black Madonna* is the inclusion of pieces of the past that have been forgotten or even sometimes consciously obfuscated, as they do not always square with the idealized picture of the church and its role in Polish history that is still current in certain circles today. Alvis provides a scholarly and objective treatment of such subjects as the church's anti-Semitism, strains of which—as seen in the Catholic press, sermons, and other church pronouncements—were particularly virulent in

the interwar period of the early twentieth century. The *longue durée* coverage of the book also allows the author to discern disconnects and patterns that might otherwise be not so evident in a work of shorter scope. For example, the church's later intolerance is seen as a far cry from the religious toleration that set the tone in the country in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries—a period when much of the rest of Europe was fighting wars of religion. Likewise, the interwar and postcommunist periods (each of which followed a period of oppression) both witnessed a continued defensive posture on the part of the church that Alvis finds both "self-defeating" and hard to fathom, given that these were moments when the church had regained its (earlier) dominant status within the state and was otherwise thriving (p. 276).

There is much rich detail and much to be learned from the book, both by those familiar with Polish history and by the uninitiated reader. The author argues convincingly that there is no one all-encompassing narrative that fits for the entirety of the Polish past, which is marked by "deep disjunctions and ironic turns" (p. 276). The one constant is that Catholicism figured, (again) in ways positive and negative, throughout the thousand-plus years of Polish history. As Alvis concludes, "one simply cannot make sense of Poland's history without coming to terms with the impact of its dominant religion" (p. 277).

In sum, the two books under review make important contributions to their respective historiographies and should be read by the appropriate target audiences. *Enlightenment and Catholicism in Europe* deserves a broad scholarly readership, including historians and literary scholars of the (adjective-less) Enlightenment as well as historical theologians; the useful index of names at the end of the book can help them trace intellectual cross-pollination. *White Eagle, Black Madonna* boasts not only an extensive index but also maps, illustrations, and a one-page timeline of Poland's political and ecclesiastical history, making it accessible

to the general reader, not to mention Catholic as well as Polish historians.

Note

[1]. An older English-language survey is Jerzy Kłoczowski, *A History of Polish Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Also worthy of note here but covering only the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

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