



# The Visual Culture of Catholic Enlightenment

*Christopher M. S. Johns*

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Until relatively recently, most scholars considered the notion of a Catholic enlightenment either oxymoronic or even illusory, since the received wisdom was that the Catholic Church was a tireless and indefatigable enemy of modernist progress. According to Christopher Johns, however, the eighteenth-century papacy recognized the advantages of engaging with certain aspects of enlightenment thinking, and many in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, both in Italy and abroad, were sincerely interested in making the Church more relevant in the modern world and, above all, in reforming the various institutions that governed society. Johns presents the visual culture of papal Rome as a major change agent in the cause of Catholic enlightenment while assessing its continuing links to tradition. *The Visual Culture of Catholic Enlightenment* sheds substantial light on the relationship between eighteenth-century Roman society and visual culture and the role of religion in both.

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