

THE CULTURE OF ENLIGHTENING

Abbé Claude Yvon and the Entangled Emergence of the Enlightenment

JEFFREY D. BURSON

The Culture of Enlightening argues that regnant notions of the Enlightenment, the Radical Enlightenment, and the multitude of regional and religious enlightenments proposed by scholars all share an entangled intellectual genealogy rooted in a broader revolutionary “culture of enlightening” that took shape over the long-arc of intellectual history from the waning of the sixteenth-century Reformations to the dawn of the Atlantic Revolutionary era. Generated in competition for a changing readership and forged in dialog and conflict, dynamic and diverse notions of what it meant to be enlightened constituted a broader culture of enlightening from which the more familiar strains of the Enlightenment emerged.

By adapting methodological insights from the scholarship of historical entanglement (*l’histoire croisée*) to the study of the Enlightenment, this book provides a new interpretation of the European republic of letters from the late 1600s through the 1700s by focusing on the lived experience of the long-neglected Catholic theologian, historian, and contributor to Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, Abbé Claude Yvon. The ambivalent historical memory of Yvon, as well as the eclectic and global array of his sources and endeavors, Burson argues, can serve as a gauge for evaluating historical transformations in the surprisingly diverse ways in which eighteenth-century individuals spoke about enlightening human reason, religion, and society. Ultimately, Burson provocatively claims that even the most radical fruits of the Enlightenment can be understood as the unintended offspring of a revolution in theology and the cultural history of religious experience.

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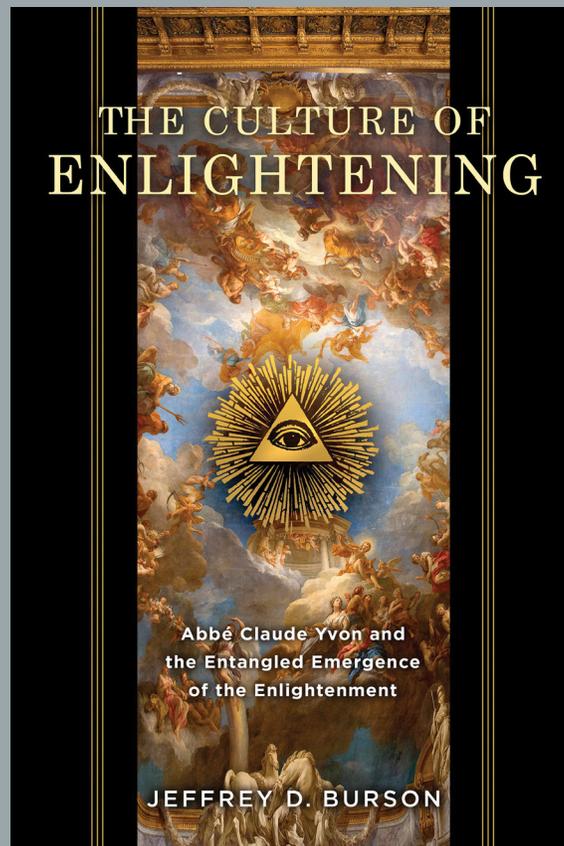
—Alan Charles Kors, University of Pennsylvania



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