

Benedictine scholars around 1700, most prominently the proponents of historical criticism among them, have long been regarded as the spearhead of ecclesiastical learning on the brink of Enlightenment: first in France, then in Germany and other parts of Europe. Based on unpublished sources, this book is the first to contextualize this narrative in its highly complex pre-modern setting—and thus at some distance from modernist ascriptions *ex posteriori*. Challenged by Protestant and Catholic anti-monasticism, Benedictine scholars strove to maintain control of their intellectual tradition. They failed thoroughly, however: in the Holy Roman Empire, their success depended on an anti-Roman and nationalized reading of their research. For them, becoming part of an Enlightenment narrative meant becoming part of a cultural project of “Germany”.

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