

who do not share with O'Connor a common understanding of Christianity as a mysterious battle between good and evil, and "True Believers," or those who cannot help but associate their adherence to Christianity with O'Connor's religious sensibilities. Caron then proceeds to criticize in no uncertain terms the failure of "True Believers" to consider the implications of race and racism in the works of O'Connor.

Part 3, "The Word: Denominational Doctrine in O'Connor's Fiction," includes three essays on O'Connor's deployment of Catholic theology in her fiction. Joanne Halleran McMullen, Ralph Wood, and John May all go to great lengths to disabuse readers of the tendency to read O'Connor with an eye for Catholic orthodoxy. Specifically, McMullen uses the short story "The River" to illustrate "how Catholicism seems to take a back seat to Protestant fundamentalism" (169) because of O'Connor's belief that the scholarly writer ought to separate private religion from public creativity. Ralph Wood makes a similar point in his analysis of Harry Ashfield's "scandalous baptism" and "happy death" in "The River." In the final essay, John May argues that "the question of the Catholic dimension of American fiction" is best understood if scholars avoid biographical readings of the author's intentions and instead favor simple readings of "the fiction itself," or the "ways in which religious faith insinuates itself subtly into story" (205).

Inside the Church of Flannery O'Connor is an excellent introduction to the rich scholarship on the real life and fictional writings of a Catholic woman in a Protestant region. Together, the essays also serve as an accessible medley of revisionist arguments against the simplistic reading of O'Connor as an orthodox Catholic writer and the American South as a uniquely solid Protestant land. Historians interested in the relationship between religion, culture, and literature will find this book to be especially useful, as will those interested in the role of race and gender in the composition of American literature.

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The Church Confronts Modernity: Catholicism since 1950 in the United States, Ireland, & Quebec. Edited by **Leslie Woodcock Tentler**. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007. vii + 302 pp. \$29.95 paper.

In her collective volume, *The Church Confronts Modernity*, Professor Leslie Woodcock Tentler has produced an insightful, well-organized, and balanced

comparative-religions study looking at Catholicism in the post-World War era in three different environments: the province of Québec, Ireland, and the United States. This volume originated as a conference in March 2003 at Catholic University that asked: "What could two apparently diverse societies, Québec and Ireland, say about Catholicism in the United States, from World War II to the present?" Conference organizers admitted that their knowledge of Catholicism in Ireland and Québec during this period was minimal and thus were intrigued with the possibilities of connections with the American church. Tentler has produced a valuable text that not only demonstrates a general diminution of Catholic practice in these three locales, but more importantly offers reasons for this trend, which has been manifest to varied degrees in the three countries. Tentler and her co-writers have fulfilled their objectives in an exceptional way.

This book represents the work of eight scholars, all of whom have written extensively in their areas of expertise. The volume is divided into four parts of two chapters each. The parts cover Québec, Ireland, the United States, and a comparative analysis of the three societies. Part 1 describes the situation in the province of Québec. Both essays seek to answer one basic question: How did a region that was socially, culturally, and religiously steeped in Catholicism become one where church practice, by all statistical analysis, has experienced a precipitous decline? Both authors admit that the Catholic identity in the region was eviscerated after World War II, but most especially in the decade of the 1960s as a result of Canada's "Quiet Revolution." Both writers as well speak of how Catholic Action, beginning in the 1930s, became a base for the scuttling of Catholicism. The explanation provided by Michael Gauvreau on the connection of Catholic Action to the loss of Catholic identity is more helpful, in this reviewer's opinion, than that offered by Kevin Christiano. Both scholars admit that this devastating reversal of Catholic fortunes in the region can in some measure be attributable to decisions made by Catholics themselves.

Part 2 reviews Catholicism in Ireland since 1950. The authors suggest that, in the mid-twentieth century, to be Irish was to be Catholic. Over the last half-century, Ireland, like Québec, experienced a significant downturn in church practice due to, as suggested by the two writers, an openness to modernity, recent national economic prowess, and the revelations in the 1990s of sexual abuse by priests and religious on many fronts. While the church in Ireland has experienced a downturn, at least as seen statistically in Mass attendance, vocations, and similar measurable criteria, the country continues to be Catholic and stands in the opposite light of the devastation seen in Québec.

Part 3 of the study sees the United States' Catholicism situated between the opposed poles of Québec and Ireland. Professor James Davidson uses Vatican II as a dividing line to analyze three separate groups of people: pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and post-Vatican II Catholics. Borrowing from Eugene Kennedy, he shows that Culture I, held strongly by pre-Vatican II Catholics, where orthodoxy and conformity are normative, collides with Culture II, generally held by post-Vatican II Catholics, where personal autonomy reigns. Not afraid to disagree with his colleague, Scott Appleby sees Vatican II as important but not a watershed event in the transformation of American Catholicism. Rather, he offers three specific rationales for the diminution of Catholicism in the United States after 1950: a period of skepticism, a loss of biblical and classical learning, and a fractious pluralism that threatens to undermine the possibility of a genuinely diverse but unified moral and religious community. All of these factors led to what Appleby calls a "make your own" approach to spirituality.

Part 4 of Tentler's collection of essays contains two closing chapters that compare the three specific Catholic societies under examination. Michelle Dillon clearly acknowledges the statistical downturn of Catholicism in these three regions but suggests that social, economic, political, and cultural shifts must be considered. Her analysis of the situation is very positive, suggesting that any retreat of the church to an earlier period would severely limit its now positive public role. This reviewer wonders whether her positive assessment, especially when contrasted with Appleby's analysis, is a bit too optimistic. Canadian scholar Gregory Baum concludes this volume by presenting a rather positive analysis of the American church situation. He asks whether that which led to the devastation in Canada through Catholic Action, namely the "see, judge, act" motto, might be applied to generate a brighter road for Catholicism in the future.

The Church Confronts Modernity is a very important study that, while acknowledging problems and significant downturns in church practice, demonstrates as well that the causes for this diminution are not narrow, but rather must be seen in the broader context of political, cultural, and social upheaval that the world experienced in the post-World War II era. Thus, the book presents both a challenge and a sense of hope for Catholics at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Clearly, Tentler and her eight contributing colleagues have pushed forward the study of Catholic life in a way that can be used by students and scholars alike.

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