

quite like that. Many have lived lives like some of it. Wills provides careful, insightful analysis of all of it.

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***In the Shadow of Ebenezer: A Black Catholic Parish in the Age of Civil Rights and Vatican II.* By Leah Mickens. New York: New York University Press, 2022. 205 pp. \$89.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.**

In the Shadow of Ebenezer: A Black Catholic Parish in the Age of Civil Rights and Vatican II by Leah Mickens is a significant contribution to the fields of African American religious studies and to U.S. Catholic studies. Here Mickens documents, contextualizes, and interprets the interplay of faith, worship, and work for social justice in the lives of Black Catholics at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in the Atlanta Auburn Avenue neighborhood from its founding in 1912 through today. Using a mix of historical and sociological tools, Mickens brings to life the parishioners; the students who attended its parochial school; the priests, originally Society of African Mission priests and later diocesan and other religious order priests who ministered there; the religious sisters who taught at the school, first the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and later the Immaculate Heart Sisters; the Protestant family members, friends, and neighbors of Our Lady of Lourdes parishioners; and whites who gave financial support to the parish.

Central to Mickens's thesis is that among the things that made Our Lady of Lourdes such a distinctive community of black Catholics is the place where they lived out their faith—Atlanta and Auburn Avenue. When the parish was established, Atlanta had a quite small Catholic population that made black Catholic Atlantans a minority within a minority. Atlanta Catholics faced a certain degree of anti-Catholicism and exclusion. For most white Catholics, who desired to be accepted by their fellow white Atlantans, making their black coreligionists at home in the church was not a priority, and engaging in Jim Crow practices in Catholic spaces was a moral and social compromise they made. Therefore, white and black Catholics up through the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s essentially lived in their own Catholic worlds in Atlanta. While not all black Catholic Atlantans lived in the Auburn Avenue neighborhood, those that did attended Our Lady of Lourdes, which shared the neighborhood with a host of other houses of faith, several of which had cultural and political heft, such as Ebenezer Baptist Church, Wheat Street Baptist Church, and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Mickens explains that the power of that place gave black Catholics at Our Lady of Lourdes access to social, political, cultural, and spiritual gifts that they made the most of in the pre-Vatican II period. In the post-Vatican II period, these gifts helped them to survive an almost thirty-year decline in active membership and to harness the power of liturgical inculturation to create a black and Catholic worshipping community in the Auburn Avenue neighborhood that began to reattract blacks to the parish, as well as people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds, to make it the vital Catholic parish it is today in the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

Mickens asserts that Our Lady of Lourdes is historically important because it serves to “expand the received history” of Catholic life in the twentieth century. It deepens and expands Southern Catholic history, the understanding of the reception of Vatican II by American Catholics, particularly the renewal of the sacred liturgy, Black Catholic involvement in the civil rights movement, and the ways in which Catholics before Vatican II engaged with Protestants. Generally, it is thought that because, prior to Vatican II, Catholics were admonished not to engage in Protestant worship and to avoid going to Protestant churches, that Catholics strictly adhered to these practices. Through her interviews with members of Our Lady of Lourdes as well as members of the neighboring Protestant churches, Mickens shows that members of Our Lady of Lourdes did in fact attend services at Protestant churches often before Vatican II. Mickens finds that they did so because the people who made up those churches were their family, friends, and neighbors. These black Catholics did not regard Protestants as “heretics.” Instead, they recognized the people who belonged to these churches as Christian communities, and they enjoyed benefiting from what they had to offer, especially in terms of work for civil rights.

Mickens does a wonderful job of setting the context of life in black Atlanta and Catholic Atlanta in the period covered by her study. She drew from diocesan, secular, academic, and religious order archives to show how members of Our Lady of Lourdes and graduates of Our Lady of Lourdes School were active members of the local civil rights struggle and how Our Lady of Lourdes received Vatican II, especially its call for inculturated liturgies. Among the strongest of the chapters is the chapter that focuses on the involvement of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in the foundation of the parish and school from 1912 to 1974. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament annals reveal how they worked in the both the “world of white Catholics and that of Black Catholics without attracting undue attention” (4). The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament brought financial and practical support from white Catholics to Our Lady of Lourdes, support that allowed the church and school to grow over the years. The annals also reveal that the Sisters of the Blessed Sacraments quietly but consistently advocated for racial justice in the Catholic church and in American society, from calling for the ordination of black men to priesthood to participating in local civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s to taking students to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s funeral in 1968.

There are a few historical inaccuracies in the book that should be corrected. Mickens speaks of the “rapid evolution of the Catholic Church’s philosophy on racial issues in 1963,” when in fact there had been some significant Catholic lay, religious, and clerical activism and progress on racial injustice in the U.S. Catholic Church well before 1963, including the integration of Catholic schools, colleges, and universities in some Southern dioceses; the work of Catholic interracial organizations; and the work of some Catholic theologians and other scholars who identified racism as a sin (64). The claim that Catholic clergy, religious, and laity had to seek permission from their bishops and religious superiors to participate in “demonstrations and other political actions” is overly broad (63). While clergy and religious were expected to receive such permission from bishops and religious superiors, the laity did not have to do so. Finally, Mickens identifies Fr. William Headley, C.S.Sp., a crucial figure in the saving of Our Lady of Lourdes School in the 1970s, as black when he is white (87).

Mickens’s work is essential reading for scholars, students, and interested lay persons who want a deeper and more expansive reading of U.S. Catholic and African American religious histories. And, in the age of Catholic parish downsizing around the country, Mickens offers a cautionary lesson about how important it is for church leaders to listen to the people in the pews when making decisions about what is “best” for them. People

have good reason for loving their own parishes and will do the work to keep them alive. The history of Our Lady of Lourdes is evidence of this.

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***Science and Catholicism in Argentina (1750–1960): A Study on Scientific Culture, Religion, and Secularisation in Latin America.* By Miguel De Asúa. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022. 365 pages. \$118 hardcover.**

This is a historical study of the relationship between religion and science in Argentina. A relation that, when I tend to think has always been tense, De Asúa proved to be more nuanced and complicated than expected. From the very beginning, the first paragraph of the introduction, the aim is clear. The author will immediately go back to the title: by religion he means Catholicism. He will then take time to explain what he meant by “science,” empirical positivism, and the scientists that engaged in that research in different disciplines, mostly natural sciences and medicine. His point is that the idea of secularization, as a political and cultural program, shaped the interplay between Catholicism and positivist scientists.

The book is structured in chronological chapters, the first two about colonial times (the work of the Jesuits in the Rio de la Plata region) and the early Independence years (the time of the Bourbon reforms and the aftermath of the independence war, 1800–1820), the following three covering the nineteenth century (with the transition from the teaching of theology to natural sciences, and the impact of Charles Darwin theories in Argentina), and the last three from the beginning of the twentieth century into the early 1960s.

The material is well structured, with a presentation of the matter of the chapter, contextualization of the discussion, the main topic of the chapter (usually with clear cases that show nuances and complexity), and a clear conclusion. The data are compelling, and the narrative is engaging and clear. If you do not know anything about Argentina’s cultural history, you will learn a lot while journeying to the tension between scientists and religious figures. At some points, and perhaps this is an editorial decision, I missed some illustrations (like maps, depictions of plants and tools, and the like). Another editorial mistake is the lack of information about the author and the editors of the series. De Asúa teaches history at Universidad Nacional de San Martín, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and holds degrees in medicine and history. He is a member of CONICET, Argentina’s government research agency, and of the National Academy of History, and has had different visiting positions in American universities.

My criticisms of this otherwise excellent book are two. Both have to do with the promise in the title. We know clearly, and early enough, what the author means by religion and science. However, I found the use of secularization problematic. De Asúa does not engage with local scholarship in his discussion about secularization in Argentina or Latin America. His assessment of this pivotal idea for his work is based on Jose