

The Civil War Diary of Father James Sheeran: Confederate Chaplain and Redemptorist. Edited by Patrick J. Hayes. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016. xi + 596 pages. \$29.95.

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Patrick J. Hayes' *The Civil War Diary of Father James Sheeran: Confederate Chaplain and Redemptorist* is a useful primary resource for those scholars looking for added color and detail in their understandings of the operations and daily lives of the Army of Northern Virginia from fall 1862 until January 1865. Hayes' careful treatment of the source is both a blessing and a limitation on the usefulness of the volume.

The Sheeran document is lengthy and detailed but never dull. His descriptions, particularly of battles, are full of action and color. He wanted to paint an engaging picture of life in the army, to explain what he saw, and to give his sense of the men around him. In the telling he provided more than a narration of a war. The reader gets some sense of the purposes of a chaplain as he recorded his interactions with the men of the armies, a listing of sacraments administered and some of the conditions under which he served, contacts he made and places he went. As with most people who write their observations of great events, Sheeran did all of this with an eye to publication and, as Hayes remarked in his editor's introduction, was "cocksure and convincing, even while frequently mistaken and often lapsing into incredulity" (1). The good father, or someone working with him, wrote with his own pro-Confederate and pro-Catholic biases in clear view. Scattered throughout the work are lectures to or about Yankees and to or about Protestants, whom he once referred to as "Poor deluding and deluded creatures," as might be expected of the time (163).

Hayes began his work with information about Sheeran's life and path to the armies, first as a camp chaplain and then appointed to the 14th Louisiana. He treated the original manuscript with great respect, even indicating where the original pages began and ended. For scholars who wish to locate something in the original, the presence of the page numbers is a great boon, but for those who simply wish to enjoy the original, the constant interruptions can be annoying. Beyond that, Hayes did little to the manuscript, so the reader sees the nineteenth-century style of a well-educated priest.

The care that Hayes takes to let the original stand on its own does not always work well. He has limited the number of footnotes used, to keep the work from being "bogged down by the usual scholarly apparatus of endless footnotes" (7). His decision was significant, since the volume is almost 600 pages in length, but it does limit the usefulness of the work, and the reader is left wondering why he chose the footnotes he did. Some that he included

repeat well-known episodes from the war. Some personalities mentioned in the text are identified in the notes, and others are not. While choices had to be made, the reasons are not always clear.

Sheeran's role in the army is confusing. As a Redemptorist priest his presiding at the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church is completely understandable and adds interesting detail for anyone seeking to understand camp life and something about the work of chaplains during the war. What is not clear is his relationship to the military around him. Sheeran added to the confusion early in the work when he reported on a conversation he had with General Robert E. Lee. Sheeran reports to have told Lee, "I protest against being placed on a level with military officers. I am a Catholic Priest and as such I am even *your* superior" (155). The comment illustrates the very unclear relationship between the two groups, as do Sheeran's actions throughout the work. A bit of clarification about the roles of chaplains during the war in either footnotes or the introduction would have been helpful.

Despite the small annoyances presented, Hayes has provided a careful, respectful treatment of a very useful primary source.

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The Practice of Catholic Theology: A Modest Proposal. By Paul J. Griffiths. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016. xiii + 142 pages. \$29.95.

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Griffiths describes this slender volume as a how-to work, and he does not disappoint. It contains solid practical advice for those aspiring to do Catholic theology, even while arguing for several controverted positions. The book is divided into forty-one short sections, which fall roughly into three broad units. The first fifteen sections treat the nature of Catholic theology, asserting that it is a reasoned discourse about the Lord that seeks "cognitive intimacy" in response to a "particular archive and a particular tradition" (24). In these sections, Griffiths helpfully distinguishes confessional from theological discourse, sharply differentiates cognitive intimacy from other forms of intimacy, and explores the value of both ecclesial and nonecclesial theology. Likely the most controversial part of the book, this first set of sections crests with the claim that only knowledge and fluency are required for doing Catholic theology: baptism, faith, holiness, and moral virtue serve as no more than "contingent aids" (48). Even if one remains unconvinced by Griffiths' position, his