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Faith and the Historian: Catholic Perspectives. Edited by **Nick Salvatore.** Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. x + 198 pp. \$60.00 cloth; \$25.00 paper.

This collection of articles explores the influence of Catholicism on the conceptualization and practice of American history by eight American historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its title is thus somewhat misleadingly broad. Based on papers delivered at a conference at Cornell University in 2001, the contributors' autobiographical essays reflect a wide range of different relationships to Catholicism, from decades-long estrangement to theologically sophisticated embrace, as well as different views about the salience of Catholicism (and more broadly, of religion) for professional historical research. All but one of the contributors was raised in a Catholic family throughout childhood; no historians are represented who were adult converts to Catholicism. Part recounting of religious journey, part portrayal of intellectual vocation, and part commentary on the transformations in American society since the mid-twentieth century, the essays convey a personal immediacy that is by and large illuminating, braiding recollections of worship, familial formation in the faith, ethnic parish communities, and parochial school educations with the awakening of wider intellectual and social awareness against the backdrop of the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, in most of the essays this autobiographical focus yields a tendency to evaluate Catholicism through the authors' respective individual experiences and almost exclusively through a modern American prism, rather than as part of a global tradition extending over two millennia.

Answers to the volume's central question about the influence of Catholicism on the authors' practice of history seem to fall into three main categories. First, regardless of their respective relationships to Catholicism at present, the contributors are sensitive to the constitutive importance of religion in Americans' lives past and present, partly as a result of their own experience as Catholics, and they are critical of historical analyses that either ignore religion or reduce it to ostensibly more fundamental categories such as class or ethnicity. In Nick Salvatore's words, "I had done enough reading by 1982 to realize that no serious history of American people could be written that did not take into account the religious sensibilities of the individual or group under discussion" (111). The *marxisant* materialism and anti-religious political commitments of many social and labor historians means, in James Barrett's view, that they "simply miss much of the personal, the emotional and spiritual side of life" (141). Of course, neither Catholic nor other

religious influences in one's own experience are a necessary precondition for acknowledging the widespread influence of religion in shaping human identity. Second, many of the contributors acknowledge Catholicism's influence on the formation of their left-leaning politics and concerns about the lives of working-class and marginalized people in American society. It is no accident that labor and immigration historians are disproportionately represented among the contributors, all of whom have written either about American Catholics, or social and labor activists, or both. At the same time, many historians espouse similar political and moral sensibilities apart from (and frequently in opposition to) any influence of Catholicism or other religious traditions. Finally, the essays by Philip Gleason and especially David Emmons offer substantive reflections about the relationship of distinctively Catholic theological views to the doing of history. In contrast to the implications of some of the other essays, Gleason suggests that for *Catholic* Americans, the transformations of the 1960s, however dramatic, neither severed post- from preconciliar Catholicism nor subsumed it within wider societal and cultural changes. Gleason's knowledge of preconciliar Catholic history and theology provides him with a basis for judgment. Emmons's remarkable essay stands out: it interweaves a narrative of his own estrangement from and return to the Church, a theological awareness that transcends American particularism, his historical investigation of the Irish immigrant miners of Butte, Montana, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and his articulation of a "Catholic hermeneutic" in which faith is an asset rather than a hindrance to historical scholarship. Those interested in what Catholicism might contribute in distinctive yet non-confessional ways to the practice of history will find the most food for thought in Emmons's essay.

American historians of modern American history comprise a small subset of Catholic or Catholic-influenced professional historians. The somewhat parochial character of *Faith and the Historian* might have been diminished had it included essays by Catholic historians from different countries, American historians who work on other periods and continents, and professional historians who converted to Catholicism as adults. Catholic historians who study late antiquity, the Middle Ages, early modern or modern Europe, or missionary activity in Latin America, Africa, or Asia are less likely to understand their faith in relationship to the peculiarities of American history or American Catholics, even if they are themselves from the United States. So too, scholars who convert to Catholicism as adults often have a more appreciative and less antagonistic perspective on the "doctrinal orthodoxy" of "Church leaders" than do some Catholics reared in the faith (such antagonism is central to the essays by Maureen Fitzgerald and Joseph McCartin). It is precisely the Church's arguments for orthodoxy and

truth under leaders such as John Paul II and Benedict XVI that has attracted converts, over against the absolutizing of individual experience so characteristic of current American culture and manifest in several of the essays in *Faith and the Historian*. A wider range of theologically better informed perspectives might have tempered tendencies in several essays to regard the Catholic Church in the United States as though it existed apart from the Roman Catholic Church, to view the Church and attitudes toward it in terms directly analogous to those drawn from secular politics, and to blur distinctions between the directives of the Second Vatican Council and changes in American society.

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