BOOK REVIEWS

John C. Bates, Esq.


In 1923, at the height of Ku Klux Klan influence in Western Pennsylvania, the mayor of Johnstown (Cambria County) ordered the expulsion of all Mexicans and blacks who had not lived in the city for at least seven years. Facing fines and jail, two thousand people were forced out at gunpoint within twenty-four hours. The Catholic Mexicans had been recruited from Texas and Mexico to fill the insatiable employment demands of the steel mills and manufacturing plants in Johnstown; blacks had been recruited from the Old South. This volume records the long-forgotten story of a civil rights violation based on religious, ethnic, and racial prejudice. It also notes the unsuccessful efforts of Protestant clergymen to convert the “devout” Mexican Catholics.


The contribution of the Irish to the development of Catholicism throughout the world is well known. This volume is a comprehensive modern analysis of the persons who effected that result, based on the author’s ten years of research in over one hundred archives on five continents and his examination of various and competing theories of the Irish diaspora and its transnational impact on societies that include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and South Africa. Considerable attention is given to the influence of Michael O’Connor, the Irish-born first bishop of Pittsburgh who almost became coadjutor bishop of New York. The Sisters of Mercy receive their just due in the author’s analysis of the development of parochial schools. The author, a history professor at the University of Aberdeen, presents an erudite yet witty examination of Hiberno-Catholicism and his study makes an outstanding contribution to the history of Catholicism in the English-speaking world.


The authors present what some might view as the “definitive” biography of Catholic radical Dorothy Day, due primarily to their weaving of the contradictory strands in the subject’s complex life (hard-drinking, free-loving bohemian to ascetic Catholic activist) into an intimate portrait of Day, while also presenting a history of twentieth century Catholic radicalism that served the poorest of the poor. This biography notes Day’s strong ties to Pittsburgh and her spiritual development under the guidance of Pittsburgh priest Father John Hugo; her Catholic Worker Movement included Pittsburgh’s House of Hospitality. Pope Francis, in his 2015 address to the U.S. Congress, identified Day as one of four “national figures” (the others being Abraham Lincoln, Trappist Thomas Merton, and Martin Luther King, Jr.). This volume, which has received strong critical acclaim, will prove particularly appealing given current views of the government’s role with respect to the poor. The Archdiocese of New York opened the cause for canonization of Dorothy Day, now a “Servant of God,” in 2000.


This comprehensive survey of American Catholic history spans five centuries. The author, a retired history professor at Catholic University of America, explores a range of topics that include lay religious practice, participation in politics and intellectual life, clerical impact on life and culture, the role of women, and the sexual abuse crisis. A strong emphasis on the post-conciliar period brings to the forefront two former bishops of Pittsburgh: John Cardinal Dearden and John Cardinal Wright. This is an engaging history that provides an up-to-date account of American Catholicism.


This biography of the bishop of the first diocese in Texas has interest for Western Pennsylvanians. The volume traces the establishment of subsequent dioceses carved out of Galveston, of which the new Diocese of Dallas was entrusted to a priest of the Diocese of Erie — Thomas Francis Brennan. Consecrated bishop in Erie in 1891, he was installed in his new Cathedral of St. Patrick in Dallas in 1891. Gallagher’s biographer devotes considerable space to the problems created by Brennan in his new diocese and includes from the *Propaganda Fide* archives a summary of the scathing charges regarding his maladministration of Dallas.
that led to his resignation. This volume presents a sweeping overview of Catholic life in the great state of Texas, with sinners and saints. Definitely worth the read.


This is the new history that traces the development of famed Holy Family parish over its 165 years of existence. Founded in 1854 by Pittsburgh’s first bishop, Michael O’Connor — while Westmoreland County was still part of that diocese — the parish evolved into a full complex, complete with a magnificent church designed by famed Catholic architect John Theodore Comès. Researched over 15 years, with actual production taking almost two years, this well-written and richly illustrated volume sets a new standard for parish histories in Western Pennsylvania.


This is the first English translation of the first biographical portrait of Archabbot Boniface Wimmer (1809-1887), founder of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, that was composed shortly after his death and published in Gothic German print by Benzinger Brothers of New York in 1891, the then-publisher for the Apostolic See. The author was one of Wimmer’s most trusted protégés.


David Conyngham (1825-1883), an Irish Catholic journalist and Union officer in the American Civil War, authored a manuscript history of the stories of fourteen Catholic chaplains and six orders of female religious who served during the war, both North and South. Hidden away in an archive for more than a century, the work has been annotated and edited for modern readers. This is the fullest nineteenth century record of the Church’s involvement in the war. A chapter is devoted to Pittsburgh diocesan priest-chaplain (to the 78th Pennsylvania Volunteers) Father Richard Callixtus Christy — who was baptized by Father Demetrius Gallitzin in Loretto, studied at St. Michael’s Seminary in Pittsburgh’s Glenwood section, and was ordained a priest by Bishop Michael O’Connor. The Sisters of Mercy figure prominently in Conyngham’s account.


The current and former archivists of the Sisters of Charity in Greensburg have assembled an attractive pictorial and narrative history of the order based at Seton Hill. This is one of the latest in Arcadia Publishing’s series of Images of America books. The Charities’ history is traced from the order’s arrival in Altoona in 1870 (then a part of the Diocese of Pittsburgh) to the present time and includes its expansion to other parts of the United States and to Korea.


The author of this work is a former Dominican priest who obtained his doctorate in liberation theology at the University of Pittsburgh. He came to the Steel City to work as a community organizer at the Thomas Merton Center. His first encounter with the Association of Pittsburgh Priests (APP) took place at an anti-nuclear rally at the Federal Building in downtown Pittsburgh, where Fr. Jack O’Malley addressed participants with a bullhorn. This volume traces the APP’s lobbying for optional celibacy and women’s ordination, and its conflicts with a series of bishops. Readers will recognize the many priests and laity mentioned. This is a significant contribution to understanding the complex history of Catholicism in southwestern Pennsylvania.


This is the first edition of a new biography of the Servant of God Prince and Father Demetrius Gallitzin (1770-1840), prepared with documentation gathered during the process towards his beatification. The author is the Roman postulator for the Cause for the Canonization, who was selected by the bishop of Altoona-Johnstown in 2013 to present the Cause to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. This work provides an informative historical context for Father Gallitzin’s life story. This is the sixth volume in an ongoing series of books on Gallitzin that will be produced by the postulator. The preceding volumes include: *Demetrius A.*

This definitive history of the legal profession in Pittsburgh examines the role of the Steel City’s lawyers in the shaping of American democratic and commercial institutions over a 231-year period (1788-2019). This lively history includes the role of prominent Catholics such as Father James Cox, cathedral rector Monsignor Andrew Pauley, Judge Michael Musmanno, and Judge Ruggiero Aldisert. Institutions such as Duquesne University and St. Paul Cathedral also figure in this lengthy work. The volume’s presentation of local political, economic, and development history explains the rise of Pittsburgh to become the wealthiest and most important industrial city in America in the nineteenth century. This is not a boring “legal” history but rather an easily readable account of how local lawyers and others made history!


This is the biography of Sister Theresa Kane, RSM, a native of the Bronx who headed the Sisters of Mercy of the Union from 1977 to 1984 and was president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) from 1979 to 1980. She is well remembered for asking Pope John Paul II during his 1979 visit to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., to open “all the ministries of our Church” to women. This work notes the influential role played by Pittsburgh Sister of Mercy Elizabeth Carroll in Kane’s work for women’s equality and sketches the historical background of the Sisters of Mercy whose first foundation in the New World was in Pittsburgh. The book documents a critical period in American Catholic history when Kane and other women religious exercised significant leadership roles.


During his almost forty years as auxiliary bishop of Detroit, Thomas Gumbleton became known as one of the strongest episcopal voices for peace and justice. A founding president of Pax Christi USA, he was a key member of the committee that drafted the American bishops’ pastoral letter on nuclear war. His positions on the Vietnam War, the poor and homeless, victims of clergy sexual abuse, welcoming of LGBTQ people, and the role of women in the church attracted supporters and detractors. Of interest to Western Pennsylvanians is the book’s treatment of Gumbleton’s relationship with John Cardinal Dearden, who served as bishop of Pittsburgh before his elevation to the archbishopric of Detroit. Dearden advanced Gumbleton to the episcopacy and served as his principal consecrator in 1968; the relationship was not without its difficulties. The author is News Editor for the *National Catholic Reporter*.


This latest biography of the controversial now-deceased Seattle archbishop Raymond Hunthausen (1921-2018) presents a partial life story of the prelate. Among the central dramas of Hunthausen’s life was the appointment of Donald Wuerl of Pittsburgh as his auxiliary bishop, with special authority in five areas. A retrospective appraisal of that highly publicized traumatic event, along with other prominent issues, is lacking. Instead readers are treated to an unstinting adulation of the archbishop, avoiding treatment of the prelate’s own culpability and personal flaws that contributed to leadership struggles and ultimately to a premature resignation as archbishop. Hunthausen controlled the book’s narrative by getting the author to withhold publication while the archbishop was alive. The author is a retired college professor and Catholic social justice activist.


This massive volume presents the bicentennial history of the Diocese of Richmond, as told through the stories of each of its parishes and bishops. The diocese originally embraced the original Commonwealth of Virginia, before the separation of its western counties to form the new State of West Virginia. This history recognizes the enormous contribution of the Benedictines of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe (Pennsylvania) who have served the scattered pockets of Catholics throughout rural Virginia through the staffing of parishes and educational institutions from the...


These two works constitute the final publications of the recently deceased author (2020), who established her architectural bona fides in her textual writing in the history of St. Paul Cathedral in Pittsburgh (2007). The *American Gothic Catholic* volume presents the biographies of a number of American architects with selected examples of their principal Catholic churches. The *Ecclesiastical Architects* volume is the sixth in her series (the first five were published 2011-2016) that examined American ecclesiastical architecture — focusing on selected architects, artists, and artisans during the 60-year period beginning in 1860. Many photographs enhance the text of both volumes, which include churches in Western Pennsylvania. All of the author's volumes are available at the website www.blurb.com.


This volume is a synthesis of modern Catholic church architecture in the United States, placing evolutionary developments within the broad and deep context of Catholic history and demonstrating how church design was linked to the understanding of the Church itself well before Vatican Council II. By the mid-twentieth century, modernity was affecting the tradition-bound Catholic Church, effecting a changing look in church design and furnishing. Father Thomas Coakley, builder of Sacred Heart Church in Pittsburgh's Shadyside district, figures as a prominent traditionalist who challenged modernist architectural trends. This work is must reading for architects, architectural historians, and students of Catholic culture. The author, a professor at Loyola Marymount University, holds degrees in art history and theology.


An assistant professor at Westmoreland Community College presciently researched the history of the first pandemic to hit Western Pennsylvania in 1918 and published his work in 2018, just two years before a second pandemic struck in the form of the Coronavirus in 2020. This large volume (473 pages) captures the original pandemic’s impact on the lives of ordinary people — many of them identifiable Catholic immigrant families. This work is a “must” read for those desirous of understanding the long-term impact of medical epidemics in our area.


This book was authored by a native of Johnstown, who attended Visitation parish elementary school and Bishop McCort High School in his hometown. An involved Catholic, he tackles the broad and local problem of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests, taking on former Altoona-Johnstown Bishop Joseph Adamec. The book addresses corruption, clericalism, deviation from Catholic doctrine, and other issues tied to the clergy sexual abuse scandal. This will not be an easy read for many readers, but it will be thought-provoking. It may prove to be a harbinger of additional books authored either by abuse victims or their supporters addressing the crisis in Western Pennsylvania.

This is the light-hearted reminiscence of a boy growing up on Giffin Avenue in Mt. Oliver, the South Hills municipality completely surrounded by the city of Pittsburgh. Central to this autobiography is the outsized role of St. Joseph School and the many Millvale Franciscan sisters the author encountered along the way. A chapter titled “St. Joe’s School: Survival in a Parochial Biosphere” captures the essence of this heartwarming account. The author is a nationally recognized communications consultant — a tribute to the quality of his Catholic education!


The closing of Pittsburgh’s St. Michael’s Seminary in the 1870s witnessed the migration of many seminarians to the Grand Séminaire in Montreal, Canada. The oldest seminary in North America was opened in 1657 by the Society of Saint-Sulpice (Sulpicians) — not a religious order but a society of diocesan priests committed to training men for the seminary. This massive volume reflects the work of more than two dozen contributors, who examine the seminary and its history from every facet. Of interest is the fact that for decades, many Western Pennsylvania seminarians studied in Montreal; indeed, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Americans constituted fifty percent of the student body. They were attracted by geographical proximity, the institution’s outstanding reputation, and the influence of Irish Sulpician instructor Father Patrick Dowd.


This is the story of Vincentian Father Thomas Judge and his heroic efforts to develop the laity as “apostles” in the evangelization of Catholics in the United States where there was considerable religious “leakage” among immigrants. His work with the lay apostolate evolved into the formation of two religious congregations of priests (the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity) and sisters (the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity). The latter congregation was organized by Margaret Keasey from Butler, Pennsylvania, who took the name of Mother Boniface. It fell to Pittsburgh Bishop J.F. Regis Canevin to assist Father Judge in developing his “mission band” collection efforts by facilitating the introduction of the sisters into the Pittsburgh diocese, much to the surprise of local Catholics who were taken aback at the non-traditional garb used. Bishop Hugh Boyle of Pittsburgh, Bishop John McCourt of Altoona, and Pittsburgh’s Capuchins and the Sisters of Divine Providence figure prominently in this comprehensive biography. The author is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Dayton.


This work chronicles the challenges facing Catholic colonials and immigrants in the pre-Civil War period. The author covers a number of issues in Western Pennsylvania history: Father Demetrius Gallitzin, natives and whiskey in the Alleghenies, Captain McGuire’s settlement, frontier missions 1749-1799, Father Peter Heilbron, and St. Vincent Abbey. This work is an overview, not an in-depth account, of the missionary challenges of the period.


A Minnesota journalist has authored an incisive and sharp critique of radical feminism and its impact upon the Catholic Church in the United States. The author spares no punches in her attention to the infiltration of “creation-centered spirituality” and “feminist faith” in retreat programs in Western Pennsylvania, citing St. Vincent Archabbey, the Thomas Merton Center, Villa Maria Community Center, St. Paul’s Retreat House, the Sisters of Divine Providence, and the then-diocesan Department of Religious Education.


The recruitment of Irish seminarians to the Diocese of Pittsburgh began with Bishop Michael O’Connor’s enlistment of several to join him in his initial voyage to his new see in 1843. The principal source of Irish seminarians in the United States would prove to be All Hallows Seminary, established in Dublin in 1842 to serve mission needs. The seminary would produce over 4,000 priests. This volume traces the history of the institution and its students includ-
ing John Tuigg, who spent four years at All Hallows, before departing for Pittsburgh and his final year of formation at St. Michael’s Seminary prior to his ordination. Tuigg became the third bishop of Pittsburgh and was instrumental in a continued flow of Irish students to Western Pennsylvania during the last half of the nineteenth century. All Hallows closed in 2016, due to declining vocations, and the enormous seminary complex became a campus of Dublin City University.


While ostensibly an examination of the impact of the National Labor Relations Act on American unions, this work is in fact a penetrating sociological study of the lives of Central and Eastern European immigrants in Johnstown (Cambria County). The critical role of the many ethnic Catholic churches, both Latin and Byzantine, in the lives of these immigrants and their descendants is a not surprising component of this volume. The author is a British professor of sociology, focusing on migration and ethnicity.


The explosive growth of the Catholic population in the United States, primarily by immigration from Europe, coincided with a European missionary spirit. Establishment of the American College of Louvain in Belgium in the mid-nineteenth century was designed to meet the Church’s pastoral needs in America. These two volumes — the first authored by the seminary’s history professor to cover its first fifty years, and the second a revision based upon broad research in archives internationally — chronicle the role of Pittsburgh Bishop Michael O’Connor, who while instrumental in establishment of the North American College in Rome, was the principal episcopal impediment to formation of the Belgian seminary. Yet, after his retirement from the see of Pittsburgh, O’Connor supported and visited Louvain.


The first work is one of the mid-twentieth century biographies of prince-priest Demetrius Gallitzin. The author (1889-1955) was a native of the Summit in Cresson (Cambria County) and became a Sister of Charity of Seton Hill in Greensburg. The 1947 volume was an adult adaptation of the author’s earlier 1938 children’s version entitled *The Priest Who Gave His Gold Away: A Story of the Russian Prince, Demetrius Gallitzin, Told for Boys and Girls*, with pen sketches by the author. Between those two volumes, Sister Fides also authored a 1944 work, *The Seton Ballad: A True Story in Verse and Pictures of Mother Elizabeth Seton*. The 1951 volume is a later work comprised of collected stories of the original pioneer families who knew Father Gallitzin. The stories were passed on to the authors by those settlers’ descendants. This collection of memories would otherwise have been lost to Catholic and local history, absent preservation in this volume. The work contains illustrations by Stephen Grout.