

McGreevy, John T. *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. Pp. vi, 362. Illustrations. \$27.50 (US)

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tions. The editors of *Riots* should be congratulated for a useful retrospective that manages both to introduce students to a literature and to invite old hands to critically reflect on it.

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McGreevy, John T. *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. Pp.vi, 362. Illustrations. \$27.50 (US).

British historian Paul Johnson has observed that more than any other country in history the United States affords a unique opportunity to examine the interaction of religious belief, culture, and politics. However, historians who are now rightly addressing gender, class, race, and ethnicity as factors shaping American society have been slow to include religion, and specifically Roman Catholicism, as equally significant. This omission is all the more glaring for urban history because by the twentieth century Roman Catholics comprised up to 70 per cent of the population of many northern American cities. John McGreevy's *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* is a refreshing and stimulating antidote to this neglect. Utilizing archdiocesan records and Catholic university archives, McGreevy reveals the centrality of the parish to the social and spiritual structure of Catholicism. He contends that the solid and effective parish structures firmly in place by the 1930s fueled racism directed against Afro-Americans and hindered the creation of an integrated community even as the Roman Catholic church spoke against discrimination.

In the interwar years the parish assumed both a geographic and a cultural meaning for its people, many of who were recent immigrants. Within parish parameters, European ethnic and racial identities were sustained by Catholic institutions that were the counterparts of secular organizations and by priests who encouraged home ownership in the parish to keep their flocks under scrutiny and to fortress the Church against state control specially of education. What emerged, in effect, were many urban villages, like Gesu Parish in Philadelphia, with distinct ethnic characteristics and institutions and the Roman Catholic Church as the focus of the community's activities. Residents identified with the parish rather than the city. This fusion of educational, social and religious communities created a barrier to Afro-Americans who began to migrate north in large numbers in the 30s.

Except for the liberal lay people and theologians who were always a minority, there was remarkably little concern within the Catholic church for the new arrivals. Pius XIII urged Catholics generally to show consideration for black Americans but, McGreevy notes, rhetoric and reality rarely coincided. With

increased employment opportunities created by World War Two, migration increased and so did racial tension, partly McGreevy suggests, from a heightened awareness by Euro-American Roman Catholics of their white racial identity. To avoid Afro-American neighbours, many white people left for the suburbs. The exodus created an opportunity for the Roman Catholic priests and nuns to serve Afro-Americans in the now deserted recreational and educational facilities; but in Chicago, Detroit and other northern cities, these new black parishes ironically resembled other ethnically distinct communities. The war itself may arguably have fostered a sense of ecumenicalism rooted in a common cause, but, McGreevy contends, most clergy still directed little energy at interracial harmony largely because they feared alienating one group at the expense of another. Afro-American interests had the lowest priority.

In the 1960s, the nature and influence of the parish began to undergo irrevocable changes that the Church could no longer control. Educated Catholics moved up the social ladder into the middle class; with more marriages among ethnic groups, the parish was less insular and insulated. Furthermore, the earlier generation of European-born pastors who zealously guarded their domains was retiring. The results of this transformation were far from uniform in northern cities; in Chicago the Church supported urban improvement and renewal but many housing projects elsewhere were viewed as detrimental to parish interests. Striving to thwart neighbourhood abandonment without directly condoning segregation, priests often reinforced intolerance. The convergence in the mid 60s of the American civil rights movement and the Second Vatican Council that envisaged a more inclusive global church at last alerted American Catholics to the racial discrimination in their own jurisdictions. Some priests, but perhaps more nuns, who compared their situation as disadvantaged persons to Afro-Americans, marched with other Catholic lay men and women on Washington and at Selma. By the late 60s, two groups had become visible within the Church: theological and social liberals who questioned the roles of the clergy and of women and the traditional function of the parish; and those who resisted and reacted against change. This rift extended to Catholic institutions — schools, seminaries, religious orders — to liturgy, rituals, and to neighbourhoods. In some cities, Philadelphia, for example, Catholic liberals were able to integrate schools but the cost was high with overt hostility directed at the nuns and priests who individually and collectively participated in marches and protests. McGreevy's depiction of a Catholic crowd cheering loudly when a nun was hit by a rock during a 1966 Chicago protest is telling evidence of the degree of racial hatred that abounded. Bussing replaced housing as a focal issue and again many white Catholics opposed efforts at integration. McGreevy argues that the support of Catholic politicians such as Edward Kennedy was probably more detrimental than beneficial to the cause.

Inevitably Afro-Americans questioned the Church's sincerity about universalism. Some accepted traditional forms and ritu-

als, but others, discontented over the dearth of black priests and nuns, left the Church. At the same time, Catholics of all ethnic backgrounds sought parishes whose practices suited their personalities and requirements; few young people were attracted to religious orders. By the 1990s many urban parishes were simply shut down.

On a positive note, McGreevy points out that by the mid 1980s there were ten African-American bishops, and in 1990, almost 10 per cent of Afro-Americans were Catholic (although this 10 per cent might equally be interpreted as an indication of the Church's failure to reach out to Afro-Americans.) McGreevy applauds present-day Catholicism for fostering a sense of community and for its receptivity to newcomers from around the world, but he cannot deny that, in the final analysis, caring for the white majority in the parish made Catholics, like members of other religious denominations, unable and unwillingly to extend their concern to Afro-Americans whose immigrant experience so closely mirrored their own encounters with the dominant culture a generation earlier.

McGreevy should be commended for his energy in tackling this complicated and sensitive aspect of urban history. Far more than an examination of the interaction of Catholicism and racism, the book charts the rocky course of a two thousand year old institution, its personnel and its members trying to come to terms with the modern world. In his quest to validate Catholicism's part in shaping historical consciousness, McGreevy may have glossed over the nuances of gender (women religious seem badly neglected) and the relationship between class and religion in forming racial attitudes, but overall this is a very significant contribution to urban history that Canadian historians would do well to consider.

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Van Slyck, Abigail. *Free To All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1880-1920*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. xxvii, 276. 121 black and white illustrations, graphs, bibliography, index \$29.95 (U.S.).

Between 1886 and 1917, by donating funds to build public libraries in large cities and small towns across the United States, Andrew Carnegie followed existing trends towards free public library establishment and philanthropic support of cultural institutions. However, according to Abigail Van Slyck, Carnegie's emphasis on efficiency and corporate practices helped transform both the design and use of public libraries and the exercise of philanthropy in general.

Van Slyck's approach to studying Carnegie libraries places architectural processes firmly in their social context, stressing that Carnegie buildings as material culture should be under-

stood as components of a "larger cultural landscape" that includes both physical surroundings and interior furnishings. Time frames, she argues, must be expanded to include the impact of buildings on their users long after completion of construction. Participants should include not only architects and their wealthy patron, but bureaucrats of the Carnegie Corporation, city councillors in recipient communities, librarians who worked at the charging desks, and the men, women and children who crossed library thresholds to borrow books.

To incorporate these various perspectives, Van Slyck divides her study into six chapters, each focusing on a different set of participants. In the first two chapters, she discusses the role of Carnegie himself, his influence on the practice of philanthropy, and the interplay between design, construction, professional and market factors. In chapters three and four, she examines the local responses to Carnegie's proposals, showing how in large cities, class and nativism influenced the style and use of library buildings, while in small towns, gender perspectives and boosterism often clashed over the definition of the library's place in the community. In her final two chapters, Van Slyck turns to those principally affected by Carnegie's benevolence: the librarians and citizens—mainly children—who used the facilities. Van Slyck analyzes thirteen libraries as case studies, drawing on original designs, records of the Carnegie organization and recipient communities, correspondence among the various participants, and contemporary newspaper and periodical articles.

Such a multi-perspective study requires the researcher to draw on a variety of disciplines. Van Slyck's social and cultural analysis of the libraries' construction and design is thoroughly convincing. In the negotiations between the Carnegie organization and local elected officials, architects and leaders of the emerging library profession, she elucidates the often conflicting social agendas of the major players, and shows how the process of accepting a Carnegie donation stimulated an ongoing debate about the role of "culture" in early twentieth century America. In her discussion of the experiences of the librarians who worked in Carnegie libraries, she makes perceptive use of library literature of the day, in addition to diaries and correspondence of the (mainly female) librarians themselves.

However, her analysis of users' experience is restricted by an apparent lack of primary sources and secondary literature. It is no fault of Van Slyck's that, despite the existence in public library archives of primary materials, including accessions and circulation records, historians of the book and reading have so singularly neglected the public library as a source of data about historical reading experiences. Lacking appropriate material, Van Slyck is forced to rely mainly on three sets of published reminiscences, all by educated and relatively affluent adult women. Despite this shortcoming, Van Slyck makes a notable achievement in highlighting the turn-of-the-century contest over the production of cultural meaning that brought into play factors of race, class, gender and ethnicity, and in showing how the Carnegie library phenomenon was such a wide-reaching cul-