

evidence for such claims aside from an oblique appeal to his experience growing up evangelical (18), at the end of his book Balmer does point those interested in further reading to Daniel K. Williams's *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012) (113). Williams's book is a curious suggestion coming from Balmer, as it is a direct refutation of the canard Balmer is advancing—that twentieth century evangelicals were apolitical until the Religious Right came along in the 1970s. Williams is not a lone voice in the historiography on this point. Scholars such as Darren Dochuck have won prestigious awards for meticulously detailing how, contrary to Balmer's memories, evangelicals in fact were politically active and organizing decades before the Religious Right emerged. Meanwhile, scholars such as Carolyn Dupont have demonstrated how southern white evangelicals were engaged politically to fight against civil rights reforms throughout the South as early as the late 1940s.

Balmer's failure to incorporate the work of scholars like Dupont into his analysis is particularly perplexing. For a book arguing that racism rather than reproductive rights motivated evangelical political action, scholarship demonstrating the longer history of a racialized evangelicalism would have bolstered Balmer's argument. But this neglect raises another, and perhaps most consequential, problem with *Bad Faith*: its overly reductionist explanation of the rise of the Religious Right. While race unquestionably played a role in the political resurgence of conservative evangelicals in the 1970s, it by no means was the singular cause Balmer portrays it as being in this book. Evangelical Christians were upset that the federal government began intervening in their private schools, to be sure. But as scholars from Rick Perlstein to Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields to William Martin—the latter's book also appears as suggested reading at the end of Balmer's book—have exhaustively shown, evangelicals by the 1970s were also concerned about feminism, secular humanism, and gay rights. And yes, some were even concerned about abortion. But rather than putting his work in conversation with the burgeoning scholarship on this topic in a way that would more fully explain the rise and continuing influence of the Religious Right, Balmer has written an overly simplistic tale that, while making for a quick and accessible read, is simply unsupported by current scholarship. Bad faith indeed.

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***The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico: Neil Connolly's Priesthood in the South Bronx.* By Angel Garcia. New York: Fordham University Press, 2020. 365 pp. \$38.00 hardcover.**

In *The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico*, longtime community organizer Angel Garcia traces the community-level reception of Vatican II through the eyes of legendary South Bronx priest Neil A. Connolly. Readers meet Connolly at his ordination in 1958, after which he traveled to Ponce, Puerto Rico, with a group from the Archdiocese of New York for an eight-week cultural and linguistic immersion. The immersion was coordinated by the Institute for Intercultural Communication at the Catholic University of


Puerto Rico, a program developed by educator and then-priest Ivan Illich and Jesuit sociologist Joseph Fitzpatrick. On a basic level, its goal was to prepare priests for parish ministry with New York's growing Puerto Rican communities. On a deeper level, it sought, in Illich's words, to "de-Yankeefy" the mostly Irish American priests, schooling them in the history of American domination of Puerto Rico and challenging their assumptions about Euro-American cultural supremacy and clerical power. Garcia illustrates how Connolly's immersion in the Puerto Rican *campo* formed in him the pastoral virtues of flexibility, adaptation, and—most vitally—trust in the laity. This commitment to lay empowerment and collaborative leadership, further catalyzed by the dawn of Vatican II, would define every chapter of Connolly's life as a priest, from his early years at St. Athanasius to his role as a dynamic community organizer and vicar of the South Bronx. In the 1970s, Connolly cofounded the church-based social action organization South Bronx People for Change, of which Garcia later served as executive director. The book concludes with Connolly's 1985 reassignment to a parish beyond the Bronx. Initially resistant, Connolly's eventual embrace of his next assignment offers a poignant final lesson in letting go.

Without question, this remarkable book's greatest contribution to the literature in Catholic studies is its intimate, textured portrait of the reception of Vatican II from the perspective of an urban community. The story of Connolly's ministry in the South Bronx from the late 1950s through the 1980s highlights the complicated synergy between Vatican II and the War on Poverty, two forces of transformation that profoundly shaped the way that the call to solidarity came to be enacted in American cities. Despite the ecclesial energy around urban ministry and the plight of the urban poor, this story of a South Bronx community caught in the crosshairs of urban renewal also demonstrates the ambivalence with which institutions—including the institutional Catholic church—often committed to the inner city. While the effects of Vatican II on the life of the church in Latin America have been widely documented, the United States still lacks a comprehensive "poor people's history" of the Council and its reception. *The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico* is a watershed contribution toward this project.

One challenge that arises in reading *The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico* is discerning what sort of book it is. It reads, in certain respects, as a text from another age. Its narrative style is at times reminiscent of the midcentury films in which dashing Irish American hero-priests carried communities on their backs. One imagines Bing Crosby starring as the city priest Connolly in a silver screen adaptation. In writing the book, Garcia conducted two dozen interviews with Connolly, and the text and its dialogue are grounded in these reminiscences. The book's reliance on Connolly's accounts makes it something like a third-person memoir; its narrative style combines hagiography and history. Indeed, Connolly is the narrative's protagonist in every sense, which slightly complicates our ability to gain a more robust sense of the historical actors by whom Connolly was surrounded. In the book's reconstructed dialogue, Connolly's interlocutors, whether a Puerto Rican woman or a fellow priest, speak in essentially the same voice as Connolly himself. The reader longs to hear from some of these individuals in their own words, perhaps through the incorporation of interviews with them or their descendants, letters, editorials, or other sources. Similarly, the challenges that Connolly faces in his encounters across lines of culture, ethnicity, language, and race are narrated with wide-eyed innocence. On one hand, this allows the reader to identify with the always-learning Connolly, to learn along with him about American imperialism and urban poverty and civil war in Central America. On the other, it could play into suspicions that more critical readers may

bring to the book about the supposed saviorism of white priests in urban communities of color. Readers in both categories would be well served by an approach that not only celebrates Connolly for his determination but also invites empathy for his missteps.

Ultimately, *The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico* is a tremendously valuable work of historical memory. In the book's introduction, a subheading introducing the book's context asks, "Why the South Bronx?" Garcia begins the paragraph that follows, "Why not?" (4). Why not, indeed. The stories of community organizing, social action, and profound local commitment that Garcia chronicles revel in the sort of intimate detail often written out of grand narratives of Vatican II-era Catholicism. Its particularity is its greatest gift, and Garcia deftly interweaves Connolly's story with the larger ecclesial, national, and hemispheric stories of which it is part. Publishers would do well to emulate Fordham University Press's Empire State Editions imprint in bringing more accessibly written, deeply researched, grassroots microhistories like this one to print. The book will be of interest to an array of audiences, from scholars and students to ordinary readers interested in urban religion, Vatican II, social justice, and the Catholic church in the Bronx and beyond. I can imagine it serving as a central text in an undergraduate seminar at one of New York City's Catholic colleges and universities, inviting a new generation into the story beneath the story of church and city.

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***God on the Big Screen: A History of Hollywood Prayer from the Silent Era to Today.* By Terry Lindvall. New York: New York University Press, 2019. 384 pp. 25 b&w illus. \$35.00 paperback, \$99.00 hardcover.**

Prayer figures in the earliest stories of which we have record, including *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. While sermons, songs, revivals, rituals, readings, apologetics, and polemics are all powerful genres of religious communication, prayer in many ways stands apart from these other genres. As an intuitive mode of communication, prayer can be a private or public act. Prayer harnesses unique motivations and gestures and can be spontaneous, free form, standardized, and/or ritualized while achieving personal, psychological, public, rhetorical, and/or political aims. Unsurprisingly, because of the wide variety of possibility presented by prayer, prayer continues to maintain a profound presence in stories of stage and screen today, which is the wager of Terry Lindvall's *God on the Big Screen: A History of Hollywood Prayer from the Silent Era to Today*.

Lindvall's book catalogs the appearance of prayer in hundreds of stories told in major Hollywood films over the last 120 years. In a dizzying array of movies, movies it would take the better part of a lifetime to watch, Lindvall illustrates the many ways the portrayal of prayer has moved along with the social and political events of the day. Movies not only reflect an image of ourselves back at us, but also have the capacity to teach us how to be, how to pray, how to worship, how to feel grace, how to experience