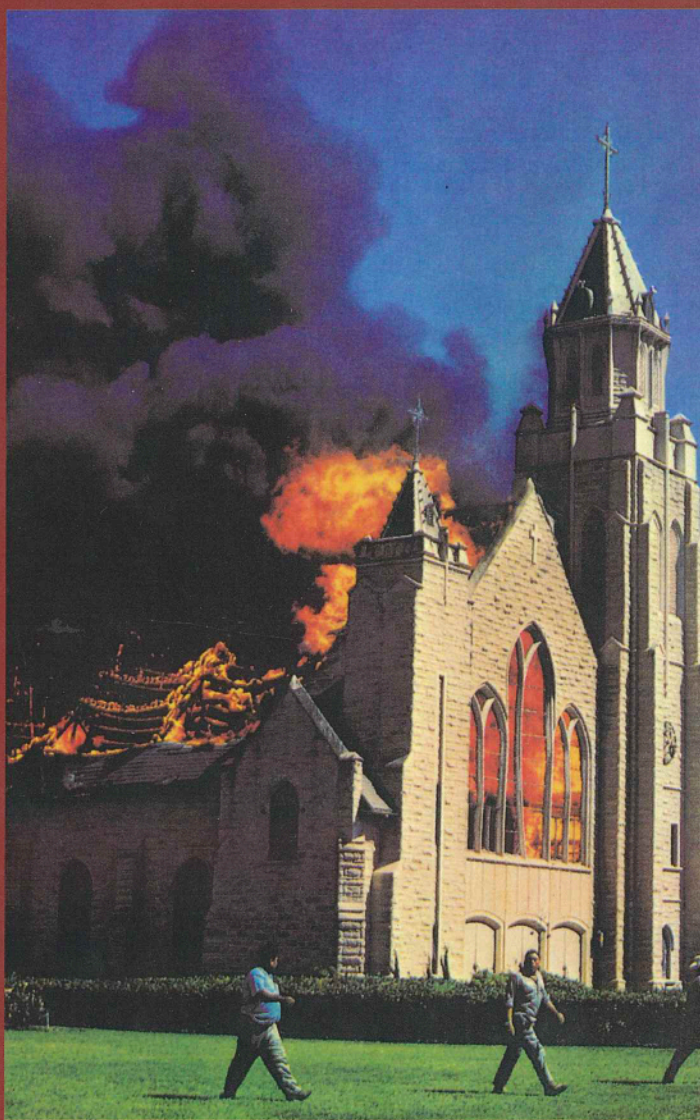
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Patrick Foley. *Missionary Bishop: Jean-Marie Odin in Galveston and New Orleans*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi, 206. \$40.00.

This is a most welcome addition not only to Texas Catholic history but also to American Catholic historiography. Bishop Jean-Marie Odin, Texas' first Catholic bishop, "was always a missionary," in the final words of this detailed and sympathetic study. And this is a well-earned, and gracious encomium. While his personal journal is incomplete, particularly after the early years of his episcopate, what Odin does reveal there and in his correspondence is that his life, from France to Missouri to Texas, and finally as archbishop of New Orleans, was one filled with generosity of spirit. And particularly a missionary's generosity challenged by constant travel and meager resources. But, withal, "always a missionary."

In this volume, Odin's life and contribution become a worthy example of the circumstances of a member of the Catholic Church in the first half of the nineteenth century: foreign-born and called upon not only to learn new languages (English and then Spanish), but also to acclimate himself to a regime and national ethos marked by separation of church and state, religious toleration, and yet, the burden of a traditional anti-Catholicism. The author does indicate that Odin was not necessarily adept at learning new tongues, but this stranger in the land did embrace the opportunities afforded to him in his new homeland to live his faith courageously. The Catholic Church would be free to prosper, if it might, but its development would depend primarily on its capacity to sustain itself from within while outside scrutiny would be often rather critical. Odin's situation in Texas (1840-1861) was itself a microcosm of the Church's situation at the time with the beginnings of large-scale immigration into the new Lone Star Republic which would soon (1845) become a state in the American republic, but with a Texas "twist":

The Catholic Texas demography... was unique. It was a population that had developed originally in a frontier region evangelized through the influence of the Spanish and Mexican Catholic culture that had been carried north from the Valley of Mexico and offered to some of the indigenous peoples of Texas. By the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, that original Catholic identity had begun to knead with a non-Hispanic Catholic religiosity entering Texas from the United States and Europe.

This study amply demonstrates that the necessary kneader, or shaper, was indeed Odin, a person who did "understand the nature of the challenge to evangelization that such an ethnically and religiously diverse demographic region offered." (60)

The author is also persuasive in his description of Odin as, from his first encounter with it at the Vincentian outpost in Missouri, an opponent of slavery. While he did support the South in the Civil War, his fear regarding the conflict concerned more the human costs of the war and the attendant dissolution of national, and potentially, Church unity. In his reluctance to offer a public voice to his difficulties with America's "peculiar institution," Odin was not in any way unusual from most of his episcopal confreres, North and South, in the ante-bellum period. His understandable prudence in what most American Catholics considered to be a political matter did not prevent him from pushing a reluctant Catholic population in his

archdiocese to provide education for the freedmen following the war, a cause that sadly did not attain much success.

All in all, Bishop Jean-Marie Odin has found his biographer... and our historiography, Texas and Catholic, is the grateful beneficiary.

Thomas W. Jodziewicz
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James Hitchcock. *History of the Catholic Church: From the Apostolic Age to the Third Millennium*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012. Pp. 580. \$29.95.

To offer a history of the two-thousand year-old Catholic Church in fewer than 600 pages might be considered a rather tall task if the purpose is to provide an informed yet accessible and balanced, and even detailed, narrative of “the longest-enduring institution in the world.” (11) The author succeeds admirably in fourteen chapters that cover the story from the “Beginning at Jerusalem” to the post-Vatican II world of “Joy and Hope, Grief and Anguish.” The writing is clear, the text always kept under control with “sidebars” that function as effective sign-posts that continually locate the narrative, and specific Catholic terms or realities, for the reader, whether a seasoned traveler or a first-time observer of the Church. Not all will be satisfied, however.

The “Introduction” (11-17), although brief, is a very useful preface to a *historical* appreciation of a Church that claims to be founded, literally, by the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Contemporary scholarship, strongly positivistic and warmed by pragmatic skepticism and moral relativism, shies from any *transcendent* meaning(s) in human life that might be other than simply idiosyncratic and personal. Historicism, or the belief that the complete meaning of something might be retrieved only in terms of its everyday reality, an apparent modesty that we enjoy at most historical-only horizons, appears as the utilitarian norm of modernity. One’s values are of course one’s own. Or, more simply: whatever is... is... and to venture beyond that *is* puts oneself quite at odds with the best we might achieve: civil and interesting conversation. Hitchcock argues instead for the necessary inclusion of *faith* in any history of the faith even as one works scrupulously with available historical sources:

... an awareness of the historical character of the Church carries with it the danger that she will be seen as only a product of history [historicism], without a transcendent divine character. While Christians can never be indifferent to the reliability of historical claims, since to discredit the historical basis of the Gospel would be to discredit the entire faith, they must be aware of their limits. (11)

Hitchcock identifies several forms of modern skepticism such as (a reappearance of) Gnosticism and other contemporary efforts to free us from dogma and doctrine in the name of an elusive objectivity. The historical record does not necessarily assist in an effort to disengage from Christianity’s persisting challenge:

Beginning with the Judaism of Jesus’ day, the Gospel has always had a disruptive effect on cultures. If it did not, it would not be the Gospel, which requires