

empirical focus on laboratory practices may also have played a role. Not everyone, after all, is interested in the detailed practices of the Salk or T-laser labs. Whatever the reason, one can only hope that Tom Gieryn's long anticipated book reaches a broad audience. I wish only that the case studies were likely to appeal to a wider readership than I expect they will. Nonetheless, the book needs to be read because it makes important claims about the way we should approach one of the most important cultural themes of our time—the widespread acceptance of the epistemological authority of science. I recommend it highly, not least to the composters in the profession!

Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power, by **Michele Dillon**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 289 pp. \$59.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-521-63044-4. \$19.95 paper. ISBN: 0-521-63959-X.

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At the ASA's annual meeting last summer, an associate noted that I had joined the faculty at Notre Dame and asked if that meant I "had to go to Mass." It didn't occur to me that he was mocking the idea until he confessed that he was freed from the Catholic faith as a teenager when his mother admitted to him that Catholicism was "total bullshit." It obviously did not occur to him that I might be Catholic myself. As a Catholic sociologist, I routinely encounter such anti-religious, and particularly anti-Catholic, views. This is not altogether surprising since sociologists—Marxist or not—are heirs to an intellectual tradition that often holds that "criticism of religion is the beginning of all social criticism." Against this background, Michele Dillon's *Catholic Identity* ought to be required reading for all sociologists.

The book addresses a phenomenon that is surely enigmatic for many sociologists: Why do people remain Catholic today, especially those who deviate from the Church's countercultural positions on questions of sexual ethics (homosexuality, gender equality, and abortion)? Dillon addresses this issue by studying members of three "pro-change" Catholic organizations: Dignity (which works

for the acceptance of homosexuality within Catholicism); the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC); and the abortion rights group, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC). Through participant observation, surveys, interviews, and content analysis of organizational literature, Dillon seeks to understand these "Catholics who choose to stay Catholic even though their understanding of Catholicism is denounced in official church teaching" (pp. 3–4).

Although the empirical material presented is focused and localized, the theoretical concern is grand. In elaborating her argument, Dillon engages a dizzying array of scholars, including critical theorists (Habermas, Foucault), philosophers (Mary Ann Glendon, Iris Marion Young), theologians (David Tracy, Yves Congar), and sociologists (Bellah, Etzioni) and joins her study to some pressing theoretical questions. In documenting the process by which "institutionally marginalized Catholics" produce their identity as Catholics (p. 31), Dillon speaks to issues such as the relationship between faith and reason, individualism and commitment, cultural diversity and unity, and how these dualisms can be dialectically transcended in practice. Of her many contributions, I only touch lightly on the three I found particularly insightful.

First, based on her participant observation of the Boston chapter of Dignity (Chapter 5), Dillon concludes that Dignity is a subculture within the Church, but—*contra* Bellah—it is not a unidimensional and transient "lifestyle enclave" because it is integrally tied to the Church as a historical community of memory. Interpretive authority is individualized but "derived and exercised from within an external communal tradition" (p. 185). Members of Dignity/Boston, therefore, manifest both individualism and commitment. They are, in fact, hyper-committed to the Church, since they could understandably leave and avoid official stigmatization.

Second, the critical theory of Habermas is deployed by Dillon to explain how those involved in these movements to institutionalize an alternative, egalitarian vision of the church balance faith, reason, and power in their engagement with the Catholic tradition. The result is simultaneously a critique and a defense of Habermas. On the one hand, Dillon shows how Habermas fails to recognize that religious argumentation can be reflexive-

ly critical, and that doctrinal faith and reason need not be opposed (Chapter 6). To the contrary, pro-change Catholics often “use doctrine to critique doctrine,” as when one respondent argued for the ordination of women on the grounds that “if Christianity teaches that all are redeemed in Christ then it is a contradiction to exclude women in the full ministry” (p. 170). On the other hand, Dillon notes that “Habermas’s view of reason as the basis for communicative action has an egalitarian charge that is frequently overlooked.” Democracy is advanced by focusing on the “reasonableness” of arguments “rather than on the authority of the church hierarchy and its invocation of the rule of tradition, dogma, or sacred office” (p. 187).

Third, Dillon makes a strong case for the possibility of forging “unity out of diversity” when she documents both the pluralism among the pro-change Catholic groups in beliefs and practices, as well as the common ground that unifies members of pro-change and orthodox Catholic groups (Chapter 7). Most interesting, Dillon compares her data on Dignity, WOC, and CFC to data from a survey of members of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights and finds that “although pro-change and conservative Catholics present polarized views on many doctrinal issues, they share a committed attachment to core symbols, meanings, and memories in the Catholic tradition” (p. 211).

This study of marginalized, pro-change Catholics is not meant to be representative of the current state of the Catholic Church today. The keyword, one that recurs often throughout the work, is “possible.” On each of these three points, we catch a glimpse of what is an institutionally and doctrinally possible future for the Church. This is a profoundly optimistic work, seeing possibilities not simply for the renewal of Catholicism, but for any collectivity that must find ways of balancing individual freedom and social solidarity, or diversity and unity.

Is this optimism well-founded? I am left wondering, for example, whether Catholicism’s capacity to contain diversity is historically unique. Dillon herself notes that Catholicism’s history distinguishes it from Protestantism—which is far more prone to schism in the face of difference—but she doesn’t fully explain if and why the future of modern societies in the twenty-first century is

more likely to follow the Catholic path than the Protestant one.

A second concern follows from Dillon’s observation that the Church hierarchy is an “interpreter” of tradition rather than the “source” of revelation (p. 191). This move relativizes the hierarchy’s role and opens a space for alternative interpreters of tradition, most notably the laity. It also leads to Dillon’s conclusion that there is no doctrinal “truth,” only “multiple and shifting sites of interpretation” of doctrine (p. 188). This statement leads me to wonder whether Dillon sees any limits to lay interpretive authority. Are there elements of the faith that are so central that they cannot legitimately be debated without threatening the Catholic tradition itself: the existence of God, the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the Sacraments? I, for one, cannot conceive of a Catholic Church in which there is no doctrinal truth.

These concerns notwithstanding, this is a very mature work—in the scope, complexity, and humanity of its vision—and it reinforces my belief that Michele Dillon is one of the leading sociologists (of religion, of culture) of her generation. That this is the work of someone who is fully Catholic and fully a sociologist without compromising either identity is, for me personally, reason for great optimism.

Irish Pilgrimage: Holy Wells and Popular Catholic Devotion, by **Michael P. Carroll**. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. 226 pp. \$38.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-8018-6190-X.

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Carroll has a clear and significant thesis: Irish Catholics of the post-Reformation/pre-Famine period were not passive automatons clinging to ancient pagan Celtic traditions as they made pilgrimages to holy wells. Rather, they reacted to their changing cultural and religious situations in creatively bold new ways. Such an interpretation of the historical data is fairly new, and Carroll is puzzled as to why it has not been previously made. Carroll is perplexed because there have been two intellectual revolutions since the 1970s that have