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in the United States. C. skillfully uses CST, demonstrating its potential as a resource, holding together both the inherent value of the individual and the universal destination of all goods including health care. Written with care and with a consistent concern lest the book claim too much, this text will provide an excellent resource to those interested in health care, social policy, and the possible role for religious language in public discourse. It will trouble readers by clearly confronting them with the challenges we face, especially as it focuses on such a vulnerable group, but it provides honesty and wisdom about the social and religious debate we need now more than ever.

St. Louis University RONALD A. MERCIER, S.J.

NO CLOSURE: CATHOLIC PRACTICE AND BOSTON'S PARISH SHUTDOWNS. By John C. Seitz. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2011. Pp. 314. $39.95.

Since closing a fifth of its parishes in one stroke in 2004, the Archdiocese of Boston has become an infamous negative example of church "reconfiguration." Seven years later, five "closed" churches remain occupied by an indefatigable core of loyalists in defiance of archdiocesan plans. Over these years, the "vigilers" have pursued every possible civil and canonical avenue to reverse the closures. Meanwhile, their creative "braiding" of Catholic heritage, pre- and postconciliar theological and liturgical perspectives, local and family history, and their own experience as unauthorized custodians has continued unabated—an ongoing attempt to construct coherent personal and group stories of their struggle. *No Closure* is Seitz's apt title for his ethnography of these resisters.

The book is the fruit of over six years of S.'s close contact with vigil participants, including more than two years of personal involvement in occupations at several churches. Such extensive fieldwork enables S. to analyze not only momentary observations of particular words and actions but also ongoing developments in vigilers' motives and self-understanding. To this impressive database, S. adds extensive research into the social and religious history of Boston, developments in ecclesiology, liturgy, and church politics over much of the 20th century, as well as recent work in sociology and anthropology. If at times the reader is overwhelmed with the level of detail and particularly the number of different analytical tools and hypotheses referenced, this is primarily due to the complexity of the phenomenon that S. has chosen to study and its broader setting. It is this complexity itself that he so admirably uncovers for his readers, while detailing its most salient characteristics.

After briefly recounting the events and immediate context of the shutdowns and resistance, S. uses his experience of the vigils (three in particular) and the people who have conducted them to open discussion of two main

questions: why did some parishioners resist the closures, and what can this resistance tell us about the current state of US Catholicism? In good ethnographic fashion, S. uses his voluminous collection of stories and quotations not so much as "proof texts" for a grand theoretical explanation as points of departure for an open-ended inquiry, employing concepts and theories of other researchers where they can assist in making sense of what he has observed. In this way, he touches on the history of parishes and neighborhoods, their foundations, and their later experiences with urban renewal and suburbanization. S. also juxtaposes features of the rise and decline of the archdiocese in the course of the 20th century. Among more theological concerns, he explores elements of pre-Vatican II ritual, devotion, and parish culture, discussing concrete ways in which the reception of the council changed and/or did not change parochial practice and self-understanding. He returns frequently to divergent ways of relating to sacred space and Catholic material culture after the council, and devotes considerable discussion to the impact of rival notions of authority and freedom in the postconciliar church.

In general, S. does not attempt detailed ecclesiological analysis of church closings or the beliefs and practices observed among the resisters, nor does he articulate a theological stance of his own. Fidelity to the participant-observer orientation and method of his work keeps him focused on the contradictions, confusion, and struggle for coherence faced by parishioners themselves. For example, his engaging analysis of pre- and postconciliar rites of consecration/dedication of a church building is intent on marking one particular shift in emphasis (from locating divine presence in material objects, to finding it instead in the gathered community), which subsequently played an important role in the argument for closing churches (which are, it would be said, "only buildings"). His lack of detailed interest in the theology that encourages this shift, however, pushes him close to caricaturing it, rather than examining it on its own terms or questioning whether it had been properly employed by those defending archdiocesan policy. Yet it seems fitting that nuances of ideas such as "symbol," "mystery," "efficacy," and "presence," important as they might be from a theological perspective, find no more place in this book than they have usually found during all the years of interchange between the archdiocese and the resisters. S.'s work reminds us forcefully that negotiating Catholic identity in the contemporary world is "something more than an abstract theological puzzle" (247).

Nonetheless, *No Closure* remains a useful and absorbing study of a topic of immediate importance for pastoral and practical theologians and ecclesiologists interested in what the lives of local communities teach about the broader church. General readers will be engaged by the sweeping compass of the story, and specialists will find an invaluable trove of

information, contextual detail, sociological insights, and tantalizing suggestions for further work, in a broad human setting often missed even in works of pastoral theology.

College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA WILLIAM A. CLARK, S.J.

WRITING GOD AND THE SELF: SAMUEL BECKETT AND C. S. LEWIS. By Sharon Jebb. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011. Pp. x + 281. $32.

Jebb uses psychology, theology, and mysticism to examine the importance of the self and its relationship to God in the letters and novels of Samuel Beckett and the essays and fiction of C. S. Lewis, two mid-20th-century thinkers who are rarely associated with each other. She makes a clear case that Beckett, in his *Three Novels* (1951–1953), dramatized the diminishment of the self in isolation from a personal God. In contrast, C. S. Lewis affirms in his essays and in his final novel, *Till We Have Faces* (1956), the importance of the God-self relationship, especially the Christian God with a special relationship to the individual conscious and loving self.

Although some critics have tried to bring Beckett into the camp of novelists with an implicit apophatic theology and mysticism, J. shows by her analysis of his letters and novels that his characters never develop a sense of the embodied self, of meaningful language, or of a relationship to God. Correlatively, because they are trapped by a self-enclosed view of language, they never reach any source of consciousness or of transcendent meaning. As a result, J. concludes that "Beckett's apophatic mood leads toward disunity, diminishment and nihilism" (119), producing an esthetic and personal solipsism and negative theism that lacks a self, meaningful language, or treatment of God in human experience. This failure is for her a sign that these three must be found in a different modern author, C. S. Lewis.

Lewis in his youth struggled with some of the problems embodied in Beckett's characters and novels. He found himself in a suffocating self-absorption, an obsession with his fantasy life and later with the occult, and eventually a rejection of religion and God. All this negativity as described in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, led him to focus on positive moments of what he called "joy," a dissatisfaction making him happier than any satisfaction. This led to his conversion in his 20s to theism and later to Christianity, but it also left him with little interest in self-consciousness but rather in the "objective" world of friendships, interpretation of literature, and religious life as an Anglican don at Oxford. J. finds that his conversion to the importance of the self and its relationship with God emerged from his readings that accompanied and followed his conversion. These influences included his trinitarian understanding of God as subsistent relations, his discussion of biblical bases for the Trinity, his reading of Plato and