

that all citizens have the right to act on their most deeply held beliefs. Her technical book is not directed to a broad audience, and it does not directly engage the complex theological questions surrounding same-sex unions, but its claims about the political question of access to marriage deserve a broad hearing.

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JULIE HANLON RUBIO

CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES ON SPORTS: FROM MEDIEVAL TO MODERN TIMES.
By Patrick Kelly, S.J. New York: Paulist, 2012. Pp. x + 212. \$19.95.

Kelly has broken fresh ground in Catholic theology and its positive embrace of every dimension of creation and human activity. Drawing on his expertise in spirituality and sport, K. has delved into the history of sport from the medieval era into the contemporary scene.

Retrieving images of sport in medieval manuscripts, from artwork in stained glass windows, and from notable theologians, K. debunks the earlier critique, often offered by Protestant historians, that Catholics somehow developed a fear and hatred of the human body. He lays out a highly positive theological anthropology of how Catholics reveled in sport and play as a natural dimension of their faith. That practice continued with many of the Renaissance humanists and the Jesuits especially, both of whom incorporated sports into their systems of education as a vital dimension of the education of the whole person (37–39).

In fact, as K. describes in helpful, insightful detail, Catholic theology has strongly criticized sects (68–93), such as the gnostics, Manicheans, and Cathars, who in one way or another denied the body or saw it as a dire impediment to spiritual well-being. These heretical sects were driven by the need to escape the material world in favor of pure spirit. But for authentic Catholic theology, there is nothing bad or evil per se in the material. In fact, the resurrection of Christ—whole and entire, human and divine—necessitates materiality. All this seems rather pedestrian until one encounters the Protestant era and some of the extremes of Puritanism.

For Puritans, play was the devil's workshop, and Catholics were particularly suspect because they reveled in festivals and feast days to the scandal of their Calvinist neighbors. K. contests the historical narrative developed by D. Stanley Eitzen and George Sage about the relationship between sport and religion. These authors, K. observes, claim that early Christianity constructed an asceticism based on the belief that evil exists in the body. They even assert that “the Reformation brought to an end the vicelike grip that Roman Catholicism had on the minds and habits of the people of Europe and England” (63).

K. demonstrates convincingly that these and other authors “tend to seize on some of the more rigorous statements of Early Christians regarding the

body and sexuality and to present them as representative of the whole of Christianity during that period. . . . But this is something that needs to be demonstrated rather than assumed.” By retrieving the full dimensions of a Catholic theology of the body, K masterfully upends these unsubstantiated claims. Thomas Aquinas, in fact, held that “it is also possible to sin by having less play in one’s life than is reasonable” (110).

K. aptly provides the corrective: “If one starts with *what people were doing* . . . , a different picture emerges” (67, emphasis original). One may not denigrate the human body if one complies with the actual lived tradition.

After laying out a solid Catholic anthropology of the body, K. explores some of the successes and challenges of contemporary sport. He relates how Catholic women’s colleges pioneered in the development of women’s intercollegiate athletics. The story of young women at Immaculata College in Philadelphia is heartwarming and telling. Supported by the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters, the college racked up repeated national championships, and their coach was widely credited with revolutionizing women’s sports and breaking early barriers (134).

The devotion and faith of the storied Vince Lombardi, who got his start at Fordham University, and went on to coach several championship professional football teams at Green Bay, is another powerful model of integration of the Catholic faith, spirituality, play, and sport that K. advocates.

K. also suggests that professional sports has become so driven by the Calvinist work ethic that it has lost its playfulness and endangered its soul, and it certainly damages young bodies. He lays out positive avenues for its reform.

K.’s text provides an attractive resource for courses in Catholic tradition and Catholic spirituality. It should have wide readership among all people of faith who are concerned about what drives and motivates young people today—both on and off the field of play.

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THE VARIETIES OF VERNACULAR MYSTICISM 1350–1550. By Bernard McGinn. *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* 5. New York: Crossroad, 2012. Pp. xiv + 721. \$70.

I have now had the honor, pleasure, and difficult task of reviewing four volumes of the most commanding, synoptic, single-authored, history of the Western mystical tradition in any language. McGinn’s masterful fifth volume of a projected seven-volume work focuses on the writings in the Golden Age of Dutch, Italian, and English mysticism. In contrast to earlier times when the major mystics were often also prominent ecclesiastical figures, those of “the long 15th century” were mostly marginal figures: hermits,