

Reading the New Testament in the Church: A Primer for Pastors, Religious Educators, and Believers. By Francis J. Moloney, SDB. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015. xiv + 226 pages. \$23.00 (paper).
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This outstanding and much-needed book rectifies many popular ideas in Catholic piety that find their way into preaching and religious education, as well as the minds and hearts of most Christians. In his preface, Francis J. Moloney, an Australian Catholic priest and biblical scholar, recognizes that popular suppositions diminish the New Testament's legacy. In this "primer," Moloney intends to provide a "faith-directed critical introduction to the New Testament" (xi) for Catholic clergy, religious educators, and laypeople as well as Christians of all denominations.

In chapter 1, "Catholic and Critical," Moloney traces how the Catholic Church reversed its late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century suspicion of modern critical scholarship with Pius XII's encyclical *Divino Afflate Spiritu* in 1943. He notes that Vatican II not only endorsed historical criticism in *Dei Verbum* in 1965 but also inaugurated a liturgical renewal in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that granted a new prominence to Scripture into Catholic worship.

Chapter 2 reviews the historical context of the New Testament world. Moloney summarizes the political situation of the Jewish people from the Exile through the first century AD. He describes the major forms of Judaism at the time of Jesus (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, and Followers of Jesus) and concludes with a description of the Greco-Roman world.

Moloney's discussion of New Testament origins in chapter 3 considers how the story of Jesus and his significance began with oral recollections of his death, resurrection, and exaltation. He traces how references to Jesus' death and resurrection expanded forward from Paul with accounts of his ministry in Mark, and birth and resurrection narratives in Matthew and Luke, culminating with the prologue of Christ's preexistence in John's Gospel. He also recognizes that "the New Testament is not a history book or moral instructions but texts that seek to draw readers or listeners into faith in Jesus of Nazareth" (56).

In chapter 4, Moloney considers what can be learned about Jesus from the gospels, which are not historical records, by answering two questions: What did Jesus think he was doing? Who did Jesus think he was? Moloney challenges popular piety by recognizing that "during his lifetime Jesus did not regard himself as the only begotten Son of John's Gospel, the Second Person of the Trinity of the Fourth Century Council of Nicaea, or the divine-human Son of God of the Council of Chalcedon" (78).

Chapter 5 concerns Paul; chapter 6, the four gospels; chapter 7, the Acts of the Apostles; and chapter 8, later writings of the New Testament, including the disputed Pauline letter. Moloney's comments follow the views of contemporary scholars. His documentation for these chapters identifies contemporary commentaries, noting those most compatible with his positions.

Moloney's remarks on the book of Revelation in chapter 9 differ from the standard conviction that this text assures Christians suffering from Roman oppression of the Lamb's future triumph. Founded on an Italian study by Eugenio Corsini, which Moloney translated, this interpretation claims Revelation concerns "the presence of the crucified and resurrected victorious Lamb *now*" (183; emphasis in the original).

The epilogue concerns the importance of the Word and Catholic understandings of Tradition that gave birth to the New Testament. Moloney distinguishes this Tradition from other traditions and claims that critical biblical scholarship offers a deeper appreciation of inspiration in the formative process of writing, reading, and discerning the presence of God within the community.

The text is flawlessly written with precise documentation supplied in the form of footnotes rather than endnotes. This book would be an excellent text for seminary, graduate, and college courses as well as faith-formation programs. It is essential for deacon candidates who in a very short amount of time must grow beyond the misnomers of their popular piety. Academic libraries that support biblical studies courses must include this title in their collections. Public libraries should consider this book a valuable acquisition.

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Introduction to the Mystery of the Church. By Benoît-Dominique de la Soujeole, OP. Translated by Michael J. Miller. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014. xxviii + 640 pages. \$75.00.

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At 640 pages, this book is a magnum opus. A translation of a French text published in 2006, it is an exhaustive study of various aspects of ecclesiology. The work has its origins in the author's teaching of Dominican students in Toulouse and at the University of Fribourg. The author situates his work explicitly as a project in *ressourcement*, so the chapters approach their respective themes by way of analysis of texts from Scripture, the Fathers and later sources, and official teaching at Vatican II and beyond. Especially in its first half, however, the dominant source for the work is the theology of Thomas Aquinas.