

Catholic rednecks, and the pettinesses and insensitivities of priests—what centuries ago had been condemned as *invidia clericalis*: envy among the clergy.

But John Jay Hughes had been fortunate enough to travel from Canterbury to Rome via Europe—where he spent at least ten years of the most intellectually and spiritually satisfactory chapter of his life. “Humanly speaking I could have never entered the Catholic Church if all I had known of it was the still strongly Irish-American immigrant Church of my native Northeast. Experience of the Church in Europe had shown me that Catholicism had another face.” Or perhaps more than a face.

“My church I would change; my religion, never.” A cryptic sentence, food for much thought.

Perhaps *No Ordinary Fool* should have ended with it. Instead, Hughes’s autobiography ends with long citations and quotations of letters and prayers that he had written. There is a certain disproportion here—unlike in the rest of this book where the proportions of the admixture of confession and of pilgrimage are just about right. Agony and contentment—in the same mind and heart. John Jay Hughes’ recognitions and expressions of that agony and contentment rise above the nearly inevitable self-indulgence that lies on the bottom of so many autobiographies.

—John Lukacs

CRY WOLF

by PAUL LAKE

Benbella, 224 pages, \$12.95

Paul Lake’s political fable, *Cry Wolf*, is on one level a simple tale about the unraveling of the idyllic Green Pastures Farm and on another, a bold statement against many of the values that have come to define America. The truths that are spoken through the mouths of the farm animals on issues such as immigration, tolerance, and free speech sound

eerily familiar to the problems that are snagging American democracy. Written with courage and poignancy, this allegory from *FIRST THINGS’* poetry editor ambitiously tries to take a step back from our society in order to show how America has drifted into becoming a nation that now seems to be waffling, especially in the face of the upcoming presidential election.

—Kristen Scharold

BEING CONSUMED: ECONOMICS AND CHRISTIAN DESIRE

by WILLIAM T. CAVANAUGH
Eerdmans, 103 pages, \$12

Our globalized world of free-market consumerism teases the eye with a “surface appearance of diversity,” masking “a stifling homogeneity” that bears resemblance to Andy Warhol’s “Orange Disaster #5,” a painting whose serial imaging of the electric chair removes the sting of death.

William Cavanaugh claims that consumer culture is “one of the most powerful systems of formation in the contemporary world, arguably more powerful than Christianity.” The Church cannot be “a different kind of economic space” when most Christians are suffering from visual agnosia, an inability to recognize familiar objects. In remedy, we need to understand “theological micro-economics,” training our eyes to see the paradoxes of economic life.

Cavanaugh, a professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, examines four economic realities: the free market, consumerism, globalization, and scarcity. Assuming a “reactive posture,” Christians typically ask: “Are we for or against the free market? Should we not think of ourselves as consumers? Are we for or against globalization? How do we live in a world of scarce resources?”

Perceptively applying the “logic of the gospel” to the logic of the market, Cavanaugh goads Christians to

assume an active posture, asking: When is a market free? How does a consumer overcome “detachment from production, producers, and products”? How can the Church develop a “true catholicity” that is both global and local? How do we refuse scarcity as a given?

To answer these questions, Cavanaugh uses Christian luminaries—Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and John Paul II—to critique capitalist lodestars, Adam Smith and Milton Friedman. The analysis is textured with examples from our “everyday economic life”: *Dilbert* cartoons and Catholic Relief Services, Wal-Mart and Free Trade.

At the center of his discussion, Cavanaugh places the eucharistic celebration—as a subversive “act of anticonsumption.” He writes, “God is the food that consumes us. The Eucharist effects a radical decentering of the individual by incorporating the person into a larger body. In the process, the act of consumption is turned inside out, so that the consumer is consumed.”

—Christopher Benson

RECOVERING SELF-EVIDENT TRUTHS: CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN LAW

edited by MICHAEL A.

SCAPERLANDA and

TERESA STANTON COLLETT

Catholic University Press,

403 pages, \$35.95 paper

An extremely useful collection of informed examinations of how natural law theory can constructively engage American legal and political traditions. Included are essays by some of the heavy hitters in Catholic theology, philosophy, and law: Avery Cardinal Dulles, Robert P. George, Richard Garnett, Mary Ann Glendon, and others. This is a necessary text for students of Catholic social doctrine and its interaction with the American experience.