

rappresentazione" (540), that featured a set by da' Vinci. Lorenzo de' Medici's "Rappresentazione di san Giovanni e Paulo," published in print in the fifteenth century, is the only such *rappresentazione* mentioned by Machiavelli.

Once illustrated texts enter the picture, Newbiggin's task as a bibliographer of early printed books grows complex. In Ch. 8, "Bartolomeo de' Libri, Antonio Miscomini, and the Illustrated Editions" (fifty pages of plates), reveals a "timeless zone," with "little guidance [for scholars, regarding] date of composition, . . . authorship, and . . . social and devotional context." Woodcuts, she notes, "designate[d] these books as . . . for the popolo rather than the literary elite" (567), but also ensured their great value for collectors. Painters, moreover, "were intimately involved" with producers and actors, sharing "aesthetic values, iconography, and expertise" (609).

In Chapter 9, "Savonarola and Beyond: Castellano Castellani," Newbiggin records how Florence lost its leading role in dramatic spectacle in the late Quattrocento. She denies that Savonarola was responsible for that decline: he issued no explicit ban on the *rappresentazioni*. Moreover, his passing seems to have been registered in four anonymous plays from 1499/1500 to the 1520s, as their subject matter reflects the changing political situation. Nineteen plays are attributed to the well-known Castellani, seven bearing his name (689). They often featured violence and anti-Judaism: "martyrdoms predominate" while Old Testament subjects are "notably absent" (690).

The short Chapter 10 traces the "Afterlife of the Plays," from the Medici duchy's rapidly declining interest as dramaturgical fashions changed, to the complexities of library collections in early modernity. Tracking complex and multiply re-edited plays through the changing networks of collectors and libraries is work for big data enthusiasts; Newbiggin expects recovery of many lost plays. She concludes by saluting her Italian counterpart, Paola Ventrone, author of *Teatro civile e sacra rappresentazione a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (2016). The two scholars' investigations, now mutually re-enforcing, now mutually contesting, promise that study of the *sacra rappresentazione* has a vibrant future.

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***Afro-Atlantic Catholics: America's First Black Christians.* By Jeroen Dewulf. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2022. 334 pp. \$65.00 hardcover; \$51.99 ebook.**

In this brief yet ambitious study, Jeroen Dewulf focuses on "the importance of brotherhoods to the development of Catholicism in Africa and the way that these . . . societies shaped Black Christian identity formation in the Americas" (vii). In doing so, Dewulf draws on original research as well as the insights of research on the African diaspora, the colonial Atlantic, and American religious history. Scholars of these fields will find much to consider here.

Dewulf argues that Portuguese Catholicism had a "profound influence" in the Atlantic world (4), and that "syncretic processes and cross-cultural contacts" drew

Africans to confraternities—religious brotherhoods—in both Portugal and Africa (7). Within the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Black brotherhoods in the Americas had considerable influence in enslaved life. The final piece of his argument is that in what would become the United States, Black Catholic brotherhoods “had a profound impact on the way African American communities would later organize the earliest Baptist and Methodist congregations” (10). In expanding on and supporting these arguments, Dewulf makes use of insights from material culture, anthropological, and linguistic studies, taking a comparative approach that uses a vast array of primary and secondary sources in charting religious developments in Africa, and in free and enslaved Black communities in Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America.

Dewulf’s first chapter provides historical context, examining the role of confraternities in Portugal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Brotherhoods provided a sense of religious community through funeral rites, the celebration of patron saints, and the public observance of religious holidays. By the early 1500s, enslaved Africans in Portugal were practicing Catholics and members of confraternities. In at least one such Lisbon-based brotherhood, Black members formed their own confraternity, due to “racially motivated disputes and accusations of improper behavior during feasts” (28). Black brotherhoods met with several restrictions on leadership and activities yet continued in Portugal throughout the period under study.

In Chapter Two, Dewulf notes that while African religious conversion can only be understood within the context of Portuguese expansion and the enslavement of Africans, many Africans who did convert were heartfelt in their acceptance of Catholicism. For Dewulf, evidence provided by contemporary reports and letters, colonial policies and practices, and recent scholarship indicates that religious beliefs and practices introduced by Portuguese mariners, soldiers, and missionaries beginning in the late 1400s were taken up, modified, and continued by both enslaved and free Africans.

Dewulf shifts his focus to the Americas in Chapter Three. He argues that while sixteenth-century Afro-Atlantic Catholics played a leading role in converting enslaved Africans to Catholicism, they did so “autonomously or even . . . [as] a force of opposition against the colonial authorities” (92), as seen in their presence in Maroon communities. Kongolese brotherhoods played a leading role in both Brazil and Spanish America. Returning to the theme of Chapter Two, Dewulf stresses that Afro-Atlantic Catholic practices centered on “a Christian god and saints, whom they worshipped with Afro-Catholic rites” (101). He then examines continuity between ritual practices in Africa and in Latin America, observing that many of these practices have continued into the present day. Returning to the past, while referencing Brazil and Spanish America more generally, Dewulf focuses on experiences of his subjects in specific areas within the greater Caribbean and in North America, arguing for the presence and influence of Afro-Catholic believers and societies in these regions, whether in the multilayered syncretism of Haitian Vodou or the presence of persons with “Iberian Catholic baptismal names” (137) in New Netherland and elsewhere in North America.

In the fourth chapter Dewulf sets out the case for “the Catholic roots of African American Christianity” (161) and engages elements of Ira Berlin’s arguments relating to the influence of the “charter generations” of Africans in the Americas (*Many Thousands Gone*, Harvard, MA: Belknap Press, 1998). Dewulf admits the difficulty of making his case due to a range of confounding factors, yet reads between the lines of contemporary observers who saw what can be interpreted as “an African expression of Catholic faith” (165), and relies on descriptions of Black brotherhoods in New

Netherland, “Election Day” and Pinkster celebrations in New England and New York, and “King” celebrations in nineteenth-century New Orleans and elsewhere to argue that connections between such celebrations and similar activities in Latin America and the Caribbean illustrate not “pan-African communalities” (172) but “Afro-Iberian roots” (174).

Extending this line of thought, Dewulf sees the affinity of some “charter generation” blacks for Dutch Reformed or Anglican churches as being rooted in perceived similarities between Catholicism and these Protestant faiths, the material benefits of joining, and the possibilities that joining could lead to freedom. From there, Dewulf’s narrative ties into conventional understandings of early Black Christianity in colonial America to raise the issue of “whether the presence of Afro-Atlantic Catholics . . . may, in any form, have influenced the development of Black Protestantism” (183). He argues that it did, making connections between Pinkster ceremonies as Pentecost celebrations and Pentecost celebrations elsewhere in the black Atlantic, the possible Kongolesse origins of the “ring shouts” used in rituals of black mutual aid societies as late as the nineteenth century, and other parallels between Afro-Catholic brotherhoods, black American mutual-aid societies, and black evangelical churches, with special attention given to the South Carolina low country.

Engaging with and expanding upon recent scholarship in Atlantic history and American religious history, Dewulf has provided a thoughtful examination of the history of black Catholicism and its shaping of life for African peoples and for the charter generation of enslaved Africans in the Americas. His bold and intriguing arguments for connections between Afro-Atlantic Catholics and black Christianity in the United States should be a starting point for further research and historiographical debate.

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***Images on a Mission in Early Modern Kongo and Angola.* By Cécile Fromont. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022. xvii + 245 pp.**

On pages 66–67 of Cécile Fromont’s beautifully illustrated book, we find a seventeenth-century image depicting a Capuchin missionary in peaceful dialogue with an African man. The latter, pointing his arrow to the spectacular Pedras Negras rock formations in present-day Angola, is not reduced to a decorative motif or an anonymized character. Both men appear as equal interlocutors amidst the tantalizing beauty of African tropical nature and thereby challenge the assumption that in early-modern European imagery, Africa and the African were typically dehumanized, exoticized, and stereotyped. The scene pictures, Fromont argues, “an even relationship” (150) and “a dialogue between peers” (170).

This powerful image captures the core reason behind Fromont’s decision to publish a corpus of little-known illustrations produced in the context of the Capuchin mission to Central Africa, starting in 1645 and ending in 1834, that consists of a panel from the