

## Book Reviews

*Pierre Gibault, Missionary, 1737-1802.* By Joseph P. Donnelly, S.J.  
(Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1971. Pp. viii, 199. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$8.00.)

With the observance of the bicentenary of the American Revolution there undoubtedly will be a revival of interest in George Rogers Clark's conquest of the Old Northwest, and in connection with this will come consideration of the role played by Father Gibault in that operation. Father Joseph P. Donnelly, drawing on Catholic archives in Canada and the United States and other sources, has written the first extended biography of the priest about whom historians have differed so widely. Jacob Piatt Dunn, for instance, declared him to have been the outstanding patriot of the Old Northwest, and Clarence W. Alvord found him a far from attractive figure.

Father Gibault was ordained to the priesthood in Quebec at the rather late age of thirty on March 19, 1768, and left the following June for the Illinois Country. His superior, Jean-Olivier Briand, Bishop of Quebec, apparently sent him forth with some misgivings; and this lack of confidence, justified or not, would continue through his years of service at Kaskaskia, Vincennes, Ste. Genevieve, Cahokia, and finally New Madrid, where he died in 1802. Petty politics, the remoteness of the area, and the confusion that prevailed in civil and clerical authority in this turbulent period would have made the lot of a missionary, no matter how strong he might have been, very difficult. The challenge presented by the arrival of Clark and his army at Kaskaskia in July, 1778, was probably too complex for Gibault to meet decisively. He must have been aware of his bishop's opposition to the American cause, and his role in persuading the citizens of Vincennes to take an oath of allegiance to Virginia was in direct violation of this. The priest indicated his awareness that he had acted contrary to his superior's expressed position when later he denied having aided the Americans, even writing to his bishop on May 22, 1788: "not only did I not meddle in anything, but on the contrary I have always regretted and still do regret every day the loss of the mildness of British rule" (p. 82). Donnelly tries to explain, but not very convincingly, Gibault's apparent collaboration with Clark and the subsequent denial of it as due to his "volatile character which inclined him to extremes of enthusiasm and discouragement. . . . Given his temperament, it is not impossible that Gibault rationalized his . . . position. . . . he may well have become convinced that he really did not aid Colonel Clark or that he had any official hand in causing the British to lose Vincennes" (p. 84).

After 1780 Father Gibault's difficulties continued. He was out of favor with his Canadian superior, and, when the Illinois Country came under the authority of the newly created diocese of the Bishop of Baltimore, he found himself rebuffed by that prelate. He then settled in New Madrid under the ecclesiastical superior of Spanish Louisiana where his last years were "one long series of petty annoyances" (p. 5).

Gibault's participation in Clark's conquest, puzzling though it is, is certainly the most interesting aspect of his missionary career. As Donnelly concludes, despite his own denial Pierre Gibault was a factor in Clark's success. The significance of the conquest in the treaty negotiations at Paris in 1783 is disputed by historians to this day, but this reviewer is inclined to agree with Donnelly that Gibault, still "an historical enigma" is "an important, if minor, character in the history of the War of Independence" (p. 5).

It might be pointed out that Barthelemi Tardiveau was not an Illinois congressman (p. 119). The book would have benefited from the inclusion of a map of the Illinois Country and a more complete index.

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*Debs.* Edited by Ronald Radosh. *Great Lives Observed.* Edited by Gerald Emanuel Stearn. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971. Pp. viii, 181. Notes, bibliographical note, index. Clothbound, \$5.95; paperbound, \$2.45.)

*Debs* is one of the volumes in Prentice-Hall's *Great Lives Observed* series and, like the other volumes in the series, attempts to present "a three-fold perspective" of Debs drawn from his speeches and writings, his contemporaries' attitudes toward him, and analyses of him by "leading historians."

The largest part of the book is taken up by Debs' speeches and writings. Professor Ronald Radosh has done a careful job in selecting material which throws light on the evolution of Debs from "Conservative unionist" to Socialist "revolutionary" and on the two pillars of Debs' ideology: his conviction that industrial unionism would lead to the economic salvation of society, just as socialism would lead to its political salvation. Along the way the speeches and writings included in this collection also reveal Debs' curious blending of nineteenth century rhetoric ("Old Josh" Leach's grey hair was "the frost that never melts") with very advanced attitudes and opinions respecting such twentieth century issues as war and peace, militarism, poverty,