

“*Patriot Priests* draws upon a rich collection of correspondence and memoirs to explore how priests, conscripted to serve in the French Army during the First World War, responded to this ‘unpriestly’ responsibility. Anita May sensitively documents the many material and moral comforts that front-line priests provided the men with whom they served, earning their respect and gratitude. *Patriot Priests* further illuminates how the Great War undermined, without fully erasing, the anticlerical character of the early Third Republic.”

MARTHA HANNA

author of *The Mobilization of Intellect: French Scholars and Writers during the Great War*

After serving two and a half years as a stretcher-bearer on the Western Front, Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote that he would “a thousand times rather be throwing grenades or handling a machine gun than be supernumerary as I am now.” Mobilized by military laws dating to 1889 and 1905 that opened the clergy’s ranks to conscription and removed their exemption from combat, Teilhard and his fellow men of the cloth served France in the tens of thousands—and nearly half of them served in combat positions. *Patriot Priests* tells us how these men came to be at war and how their experiences transformed them and French society at large.

The letters and diaries of these priests reveal how they adapted to the battlefields of World War I. Influenced by patriotic ideals of bravery, they went into the war hoping to make converts for the Catholic Church, which had long been marginalized by the Third Republic’s secularizing policies. But through direct fraternal contact with their fellow soldiers, they came out with a sense of common identity and comradeship. These clergymen’s story, recounted here by historian Anita Rasi May, elucidates a unique milestone of church-state relations in France. Their experiences—their hopes and fears, their struggles to reconcile their mission of peace with the demands of war, and their sense of belonging to France as well as to the Church—reveal a new perspective on the Great War.

Anita Rasi May is an independent scholar and historian. Her articles have appeared in *French Historical Studies* and the *Catholic Historical Review*, among other publications.

On the cover: (front) French soldiers bearing a coffin, preceded by a priest, ca. 1914–1916. Photograph by Clovis Guittet. Mémoires de la Somme, Archives en ligne (22960), <http://archives.somme.fr/ark:/58483/a011260969022QaYMAi>. *(banner)* French flag in Angers, 2012. Photograph by Mith. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Im Frühjahr 1493 bestätigte Papst Alexander VI. das Anrecht der spanischen Könige auf die neuentdeckten Gebiete jenseits des Atlantiks, wenn sie deren Missionierung betrieben. Damit war ein Grundmuster vorgegeben. Bernhard Maier zeigt, wie Missionare die Unterwerfung der Welt moralisch flankierten, doch dabei bald an Grenzen stießen. Erzwungene Bekehrungen waren selten nachhaltig. Man musste die Sprachen der Heiden erlernen, die Frohe Botschaft übersetzen, Mythen und Rituale christlich deuten, Schulen gründen, medizinische Versorgung bieten, ja, wenn nötig die anvertrauten Völker paternalistisch auch gegen die eigene Kolonialmacht in Schutz nehmen. So änderten sich mit der Mission auch die Religionen in den Missionsgebieten, die christliche Muster übernahmen und teils selbst missionarisch wurden, während viele Missionare einen neuen Sinn für Spiritualität und Ganzheitlichkeit mit nach Hause brachten. Mit diesem anschaulich geschriebenen Buch liegt erstmals eine Gesamtdarstellung der neuzeitlichen Mission auf dem aktuellen Forschungsstand vor.