

# Meet Dr. Gosnell—America's #1 Serial Killer

Deal W. Hudson

Ann McElhinney and Phelim McAleer, *Gosnell: The Untold Story of America's Most Prolific Serial Killer* (Regnery Publishing, 2017)

This is the most difficult book I've ever read, which has nothing to do with how it's written, organized, or argued. The difficulty arises, in part, from the ease of reading the prose of Ann McElhinney and Phelim McAllen and, perhaps, more importantly, the horrific details the authors uncovered through their exhaustive research and documentation.

*Gosnell* tells the story of a monster, but as a reader I often had to remind myself that this monster was real, not a character imagined by a writer of fiction. But in reading the book, I became constantly aware of another distinction: between his monstrous actions, killing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of babies born alive, and the person who wielded his scissors so casually on breathing newborns, without regret or hesitation, because murder had made him a wealthy man.

No one who knew Dr. Kermit Gosnell could believe he was such a monster: the African American physician was admired in his community of East Philadelphia for his exuberant charm, enveloping personality, and his obvious success. Dr. Gosnell and those who worked inside his clinic, however, "joked and laughed amidst the carnage." That carnage included "forty-seven dead babies . . . their remains stuffed into old milk cartons and kitty litter containers," all found on the night when the clinic was raided on suspicions of illegal drug peddling.

Yes, the horrors committed by Kermit Gosnell for over thirty-

five years at his clinic were accidentally uncovered. Philadelphia detective Jim Wood, "Woody," did not begin his investigation of "Women's Medical Society" abortion clinic to corroborate the long list of illegal procedures committed by Gosnell and his staff on a daily basis, but to "bust" Gosnell for supplying drug dealers with massive quantities of addictive drugs by trading fake prescriptions for cash. "On a typical night, Gosnell would sell two hundred scripts" of Percocet, Oxy-Contin, etc.

The tip-of-iceberg appeared when Woody was interrogating an informant, Tosha Lewis, who worked the front desk of Gosnell's clinic, handing out prescriptions and receiving the cash in return. Tosha inadvertently revealed some alarming details about the conditions inside the clinic, including piles of medical waste, flea infestation, and general filth, but then she mentioned the death of an Asian woman, Karna-maya Mongar, after an abortion.

When Woody went looking for a police report of Mongar's death, he couldn't find one. He did find the report of her autopsy that ruled her death accidental. "But Woody didn't buy that for a moment—not after he had heard Tosha describe how patients were being treated by unqualified staff."

When Wood began investigating a possible homicide, he experienced resistance inside the Philadelphia Police Department. At first it seemed to him a matter of one department protecting its turf from another, but as he found out, and McElhinney and McAllen show in meticulous detail: there was institutional unwillingness at every level.

Those whose professional job it was to insure the public safety of citizens from substandard medical care and fraud not only ignored the obvious conditions inside the clinic but also provided cover for Gosnell's serial crimes to continue over decades. What they should have reported, they did not. For example, in 1992, the state health inspector, Janice Staloski,

visited the clinic and reported “no deficiencies.” Even on the night of the raid, which Staloski took part in, she allowed Gosnell to perform abortions after seeing a “filthy flea-infested excrement-covered clinic with expired medicine, broken machinery, and unsanitary instruments—staffed by unlicensed, untrained employees.”

And one thing more was found that night: when Detective Wood opened a cupboard he found five shelves of glass jars *containing babies feet*. As it turned out, Gosnell kept these feet as kind of trophies for his work well done—there was no medical reason to chop off the feet and bottle them, though he claimed there was.

When complaints were sent to state officials, they were ignored. Under Pennsylvania law, any abortion clinic was required to have one person on the staff who had completed a residency in obstetrics and gynecology. Gosnell never completed his, but kept a doctor who did complete his residency on staff until 1989. After that, Gosnell was on his own, a fact noted by two health inspectors shortly afterward, but recommended that Gosnell’s license be approved for another year! The fact is, Gosnell’s clinic should have been closed *decades* before his license was suspended in 2010.

Even more sickening, a Gosnell employee, Marcella Choung, wrote a detailed letter of complaint to the Department of State about the conditions in the Women’s Medical Society clinic, which amounted to a summary of all the information the grand jury would hear much later. Choung listed everything, the untrained staff doing ultrasounds and administering anaesthesia, the filthy conditions, “and the two flea-infested cats [who] roamed around the procedure rooms, where Gosnell would eat sandwiches.”

The entire bureaucracy of the State of Pennsylvania did not want to put an abortionist out of business and create a larger problem for the abortion industry in general. Indeed, when the

pro-abortion Tom Ridge was elected governor in 1995, he changed the law by putting an end to all regular inspections of abortion clinics, thus giving "Gosnell carte blanche for the next seventeen years." No one from the Department of State ever visited the clinic to investigate the claims. Two attorneys from the Pennsylvania State Board of Medicine declared the case file, "Prosecution Not Warranted."

When the Department of Health's chief counsel, Christine Dutton, testified before the grand jury she defended the inaction of her subordinate, Janice Staloski, ending with the comment, "People die." Her callousness incensed the grand jury and stunned attorneys prosecuting the case. Dutton, along with Staloski and many others who ignored Gosnell's crimes, would be fired by Governor Tom Corbett who took office in 2011, just as the grand jury released its report on January 11 of that year.

In addition to Jim Wood, these two attorneys are bona fide heroes of this tale. They were willing to sacrifice their careers to bring Gosnell to justice. Christine Wechsler, who was to give birth to two children during the investigation and trial, dealt with the emotional strain by watching reruns of *I Love Lucy* and reading "99-cent novellas" late at night. Working with her colleague Joanne Pescatore, Wechsler encountered the same institutional resistance met by Woody—she could not find physicians who would talk about the abortion procedure: "Medical professionals did not want to contribute to any official proceeding that might shine a negative light on abortion."

Wechsler, before going to trial, was interrogated by a new supervisor in the District Attorney's office, who asked, "You tell me why I should give a damn about these dead babies." She did give up the case before the trial, but not because of intimidation—she got a job offer from Governor Corbett in Harrisburg. Fortunately, her colleague Ed Cameron took over the case with the same commitment and determination evinced by

Wechsler and Pescatore.

With the exception of Marcella Choung, Steve Massof had the typical attitude of the many staff who assisted Gosnell, except that Massof was educated, a medical school graduate, but unlicensed as a physician. He would operate the ultrasound for Gosnell when he tried to kill the baby by injecting Demerol into the heart. When Gosnell was successful, and the heart immediately stopped beating, Massof would describe it as a "good shot." He felt no compunction at "snipping" the neck of the babies born alive, often seeing patients on his own. He helped Gosnell manipulate ultrasounds to falsify the age of the unborn child. Abortions in Pennsylvania were illegal after twenty-three weeks and six days. His testimony at the trial was vivid, and he evidently enjoyed himself giving it:

"'Literally. . . it would rain fetuses,' he said. 'Some days I would come up, I'd be called—a scream, and I would go running, and fetuses all over the place and blood.'"

But no one was more merciless than Kermit Gosnell himself. Kareema Cross, who worked as a receptionist, testified about the abortion of "Baby A," whose mother was Shayquana Abrams. After drugging her into complete submission during an eight hour wait, she awoke only after the abortion was done. When Abrams had been brought in for the procedure, "the baby just came out." Gosnell did not immediately snip the baby's neck, he "put the baby boy in a Tupperware container. He was still breathing." But the container wasn't big enough for the eighteen-inch child, so Gosnell tried a shoebox which was also too small. Only then did Gosnell use his scissors to cut the baby's neck, who was lying in fetal position. Cross and another employee, Adrienne Moton, took pictures of the child in the shoebox, "pictures that ensured Gosnell's conviction five years later."

When Kermit Gosnell went to trial on March 18, 2013, over three years after Jim Wood lead the raid on his clinic, he

pleaded innocent. The media section of the large Room 304 in Philadelphia Justice Center was empty, symbolizing their complicity in the determination of the state bureaucracy and the medical profession to protect the abortion industry from official scrutiny and negative publicity. Only the efforts on social media to cover the trial, and particularly of journalist Kirsten Powers, shamed the mainstream media into the courtroom. Yet, even so, the Gosnell story did not penetrate very far into public awareness. When I was telling my twenty-year old son about what Gosnell had done, he asked, "Why didn't we hear about it on the news?"

The two-month trial pitted Jim Cameron against Philadelphia's top defense lawyer, Jack McMahon. It was quite a duel, with McMahon not only playing the race card but also picking apart any of the prosecution's evidence that did not completely support the charges against his client. But in the end, it was the power of the images, such as the pictures taken by Cross and Moton, and Cameron's methodical reiteration of the basic inhumanity, illegality, and avarice of Gosnell's actions that led to his conviction on three counts of first degree murder. Gosnell is now spending the rest of his life at the state Correctional Institute in Huntingdon, PA.

*Deal W. Hudson, the former publisher of Crisis Magazine, presently publishes The Christian Review; hosts a weekly one-hour radio show, "Church and Culture," on the Ave Maria Radio Network; and writes a weekly column, "On Religion," for Newsmax.*

---

# INSPIRING LIFE OF AN ABORTION SURVIVOR

*Rick Hinshaw*

Melissa Ohden, *You Carried Me: A Daughter's Memoir* (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2017)

Melissa Ohden's story begins with an attempt to kill her in her mother's womb. That is what brought her to Washington in September 2015 to testify before the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. She spoke along with Gianna Jessen, also an abortion survivor—whose story had, years earlier, been a source of strength to the teenage Melissa as she struggled to deal with the knowledge that she had been the target of an abortion.

Together, they used that Congressional forum to tell America, first-hand, about abortion's victims. "We are your friend, your coworker, your neighbor," Melissa said, "and you would likely never guess just by looking at us that we survived what we did."

When we think about people like Melissa and Gianna, we tend to bookend their stories. They survived an abortion. Now they are living happy, productive lives. The end. It's a powerful pro-life story, in and of itself.

Yet to know of how Melissa's life started—as the intended victim of an abortion—and where she is today—a wife, mother, author, and powerful advocate for women, men and children victimized by abortion—is to know only the barest outline of her inspiring story of tenacity, courage and survival.

In *You Carried Me*, she invites us into her lifelong journey of questioning and self-discovery—from her extreme vulnerability upon learning, as an adolescent, that her live birth resulted

from a failed abortion; through the depths of teenage depression and self-destructive behavior that followed; to a sustained and determined search to find her origins, to determine God's purpose for her life, and ultimately to reconnect with the mother who tried to abort her—and who, she would learn, was as much a victim of that decision as she was.

Along the way, we see how the never-ending love of Melissa's adoptive family, and later her husband and her own children, have sustained her; and how, conversely, friends, college peers and teachers, even some clergy, their hearts apparently poisoned by the abortion culture, reacted with discomfort or outright hostility toward Melissa when she told them her story.

To read Melissa's story will be, for those who are actively pro-life, a powerful affirmation of all they have believed and given witness to: the living humanity of the pre-born child; the meaning and purpose that God gives to every human life; the destructive nature of abortion, not only to the child in the womb, but to everyone who is touched by its evil; and the love, care, healing and hope—for mothers and children before and after birth, and also for all those whose lives have been devastated by the tragedy of abortion—that are and must be central to every pro-life ministry.

For abortion supporters, on the other hand, Melissa's story will be—or should be—terribly, terribly disturbing. For her life is testament to the reality of abortion. No one can look at her, or hear her story, and deny that abortion kills; that every abortion—or every *successful* abortion—destroys a living, growing human being. Melissa is here only because in her case, the abortion *failed*. She was living in the womb and she *continued* to live after the abortion. She—as well as Gianna and other abortion survivors—is a living, breathing refutation of the abortion culture's wholly discredited claim that there is no meaningful life before birth.



Moreover, her life disproves the pernicious lie upon which our abortion culture is based: that a child conceived under difficult circumstances is necessarily “unwanted,” and would be better off dead. Melissa, we see, was very much wanted and loved: by the family that adopted her shortly after her birth; by her husband and children later in life; and also, as she would learn, by her birth mother, who never wanted, and deeply regretted, the abortion that was forced upon her.

Melissa’s story, however, is not just about the extraordinary love she has received; it is also about the love she has given.

In Frank Capra’s classic movie, “It’s a Wonderful Life,” the angel Clarence observes that “Each man’s life touches so many other lives. When he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?” We see in Melissa’s story how her own life, of course, was so dependent on the love of others. But we also see how she deeply touched so many lives—and what holes there would be in those lives if, as first intended, she had not lived.

The outpouring of love for Melissa began with the nurse who first heard her weak cry after she had been aborted, and the nurses who got her to ICU—despite, as she would learn years later, the demand of her own maternal grandmother that she just be left to die. Then there were all the nurses and staff who continued to care for her over the ensuing weeks as she fought for her life.

What would have happened to her if they weren’t there? Or if they had taken the attitude adopted by Barack Obama? As Melissa points out, as an Illinois State Senator the future president voted against legislation to protect children born alive after an abortion. One wonders what he would say to Melissa Ohden if he met her today. Would he have the courage of his convictions, and tell her that if it were up to him she wouldn’t be here?

Then there were, of course, Melissa's adoptive parents, Ron and Linda Cross. They risked so much to take her into their family, not knowing what traumatic long-term consequences might have resulted from the saline poison that had wracked her little body for four agonizing days before the abortion was completed. (Miraculously, there were no such lasting complications in Melissa's case, beyond the serious medical problems associated with premature birth that the Crosses had to navigate with Melissa.) But—inspired, she writes, by the strength and tenacity of a friend who had been rendered quadriplegic by an accident, they hoped to find the same qualities in Melissa; and did, even as their love helped to draw those qualities out.

It is easy to understand what the Crosses meant to Melissa—giving her a loving home, working and sacrificing over the years to raise her and give her opportunities, being there for her as she dealt with the awful truth—that they had to tell her—about the attempt to abort her, and then being fully supportive of her efforts to trace her origins and find her birth families.

Equally compelling, however, is what Melissa has meant to them—how this “unwanted” baby, intended to be discarded, became such an integral, loving part of their lives and their family. What a hole there would have been in *their* lives had Melissa been killed before they could have found and adopted her.

There are so many others whose lives Melissa has touched, and who have touched hers: from friends, siblings and extended family members; to all the people she ministered to during her career in social work, in the fields of mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and child welfare; and all those to whom she now helps bring hope and healing through her various pro-life ministries. And of course, where would the lives of her own husband and children be without her—or hers without them?

Most compelling is the incredible story of Melissa's connection to members of her birth families. From the searing pain of learning that her birth father had died without ever responding to the letter she had written him, came the wonderful, loving relationship that her paternal birth grandfather formed with Melissa.

Then, contacted by her birth-mother's cousin, she read the words she had longed for: "The abortion was against your mother's wishes."

"I felt a private joy for myself," she writes: "I had been wanted, and loved, after all." This was confirmed when finally they met, and her birth mother shared with Melissa the joy she felt when she first learned, years later, that her baby had lived.

At the same time, having, through her pro-life work, "met so many women who had endured what had happened to her," Melissa wept for her mother. "My heart ached for this young girl, afraid and alone, forced against her will—by the people who should have protected her—to end the life of her child." Forgiveness, already in her heart, now flowed forth.

And so Melissa and her birth mother filled each other's lives as no one else could. Melissa gave her mother the forgiveness and love that made her whole again; she in turn enabled that forgiveness in Melissa, and filled the great void in her child's life with the knowledge that her birth mother does, and always has, loved and wanted her.

Moreover, Melissa learned that telling her story publicly, far from being painful for her birth mother, was vital for her healing. "I need you to keep speaking," her mother wrote. "You are the first person to ever fight for me." Melissa, the intended victim, was now the healer.

As is so often the case with those victimized in one way or another by the abortion industry, Melissa's story also

involves a journey of faith—one that would ultimately lead her into the loving embrace of the Catholic Church.

A Christian who attended various churches over the years, she traces the beginnings of her journey to the Catholic faith back to an encounter with a pro-life group outside a Planned Parenthood clinic in 2005.

Blissfully unaware at the time that Planned Parenthood did abortions, she had gone there to obtain birth control pills. Approached by a pro-life man who informed her that they did abortions, she told him that she knew all about abortion, she was an abortion survivor.

“You should be here, not there!” he replied—words that challenged her, and ultimately helped draw her into publicly sharing her story. He also gave her a rosary, and “ever since,” she writes, “I had been led, slowly but inexorably, to the Catholic Church.”

Years later, “encouraged by the faith and witness of so many Catholics I had met through my years of speaking out,” she started attending Mass. “I knew right away it was where I belonged; it felt like coming home.” She began taking formal instruction, and was received into the Church at Easter time in 2014.

Thinking again of Frank Capra’s words, it is easy to see the holes that would exist in so many lives today had Melissa Ohden not lived. But what about those millions of babies who did not live? How many “awful holes,” in how many lives, exist today because the Melissa Ohdens who would have filled them were killed by abortion?

To the unspeakable atrocity of more than 40 million innocent children killed, add those countless millions of empty, wounded lives. That gives some idea of the true depth of America’s abortion carnage. And that is what Melissa Ohden’s life story should inspire us to confront.

*Rick Hinshaw is the director of communications for the Catholic League.*

---

# DEBUNKING ANTI-CATHOLIC HISTORY

*William Doyno Jr.*

Rodney Stark, *Bearing False Witness: Debunking Centuries of Anti-Catholic History* (Templeton Press, 2016)

In the world of religious scholarship, few men are as respected as Rodney Stark. He is a sociologist by training, and now co-director of Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion.

Among his best-known works are *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (1996), *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity led to Freedom, Capitalism and Western Success* (2005), *America's Blessings: How Religion Benefits Everyone, Including Atheists* (2012), and last year's *The Triumph of Faith: Why the World is More Religious Than Ever*.

As one might infer from these titles, Stark has invested a great deal of time and energy exploring the benefits of mainstream religion—especially Christianity—which he sees as influencing civilization in a unique and unrivalled way.

As far ranging as his work is, however, Stark has never published a book exclusively about the Roman Catholic Church, until now. *Bearing False Witness: Debunking Centuries of Anti-Catholic History*, is Stark's latest work, and it is as important as anything he has ever written.

Bearing False Witness examines ten alleged sins of the Church: creating anti-Semitism; suppressing secret Gospels; persecuting pagans; fostering the “Dark Ages”; launching immoral Crusades; sponsoring the Inquisition; obstructing science, sanctioning slavery, embracing authoritarianism, and opposing modernity.

Employing the best modern research, and heavily documenting all his points, Stark shows that every one of these charges is either false or seriously exaggerated—often maliciously so.

Stark’s mastery of the topic is displayed in his opening chapter, where he thoroughly dismantles the claim that the Catholic Church gave birth to anti-Semitism, fostered it, and then turned a blind eye to its millions of victims during the Holocaust.

In fact, anti-Semitism emerged in the pagan world, well before the beginnings of the Catholic Church, which was a minority sect during its early existence, without the ability to dominate anyone.

After the Catholic population grew, and its leaders did obtain power, they treated those with opposing viewpoints with far greater charity than pagans ever had. Christ’s command to love one another had a profound impact upon Catholic behavior, especially toward the long-suffering Jewish community. Not surprisingly, when Jews became targets of fascist and Nazi militants, in the early twentieth century, the Catholic Church, far from remaining “silent,” was among the first to come to their defense, as records from the fascist-Nazi era amply demonstrate.

More importantly, the Church’s defense of persecuted Jews wasn’t restricted to words; Catholics everywhere, led by the heroic Pope Pius XII—who was involved in three separate plots to overthrow Hitler, and denounced as a “mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals” by the Nazis—backed those words up with

concrete actions, saving hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives.

At one point, the Nazis decided to kidnap and possibly even kill Pius XII, but he never left Rome, despite being urged to do so, and continued his life-saving activities from Vatican City. As just one of many interventions, Stark notes that the pontiff “used his summer home, Castel Gandolfo, to shelter thousands of Jews during the War, providing them with kosher food and turning his private apartment into an obstetrical ward.”

Jewish communities graciously thanked Pius XII for his leadership and rescue efforts during the War; and no amount of anti-papal revisionism will ever be able to erase the truth and sincerity of those tributes, without doing violence to history itself.

Stark’s takedown of anti-Catholic polemicists who have tried to depict the Church of Pius XII as complicit with Nazism marks a real turning point, for what it proves is that the best and most respected scholars of our time have now repudiated the claim that the Church posed an existential threat to the Jewish community, and that Pius XII remained aloof and indifferent toward their persecution during the Holocaust. “The Roman Catholic Church,” concludes Stark, “has a long and honorable record of stout opposition to attacks upon Jews. And Pope Pius XII fully lived up to that tradition.”

Batting away the charge that the Catholic Church was anti-Semitic sets the stage for Stark’s ensuing chapters, which expose equally disreputable myths.

Confronting the claim that the Church suppressed alternative and equally valid “Gnostic Gospels,” a favorite theory of certain academics, Stark demonstrates just the opposite: there were no “alternative” forms of legitimate Christianity at that

time—and the “Gnostic Gospels” were no more validly Christian than science fiction or the *Da Vinci Code*. The Gnostic sects and their writings eventually collapsed because of their own lack of credibility and incoherence, not because of any Church conspiracy to cover-up supposed secrets about Christ and His apostles.

The oft-heard claim that the Church ruthlessly crushed paganism is equally off the mark. While the coming of Christ, and the establishment of His Church, clearly marked a break from pagan living, the early Christians tried to incorporate whatever was good and honorable in pagan civilization, while rejecting its destructive parts—and even then, most often and successfully did so through persuasion and Christian witness. Brute force and coercion were not the hallmarks of the early Church.

That being so, is it not at least true that the Church routinely resorted to force and wicked cruelty during the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and slavery?

Stark answers each question honestly and comprehensively, and the short answer is “Yes, and No”—with an emphasis placed on the “No.” While the very concept of an inquisition resorting to physical punishment is objectionable, the Spanish one led by Catholics was usually much less severe than other forms of justice then being meted out. Indeed, when those suspected of wrongdoing learned they would face investigation—and might have to pay mightily for their actions—they invariably preferred placing their fate with the Church, rather than secular regimes, realizing they would receive a much fairer hearing among committed Catholics.

This is not to rationalize a procedure which never should have existed in the first place, only to point out what its actual record was, in comparative terms, and in a world filled with miscarriages of justice. And it should be noted that the Spanish Inquisition often exonerated people, particularly



those accused of witchcraft, who were burned at the stake by many non-Catholic governments.

Yet, it is the Spanish Inquisition which is constantly singled out for unspeakable and unique acts of cruelty. Stark contends that this is a consequence of rival religions and cultures: "The standard account of the Spanish Inquisition is mostly a pack of lies, invented and spread by English and Dutch propagandists in the sixteenth century during their wars with Spain, and repeated ever after by the malicious or misled historians."

The practice of slavery is also indefensible, but, like anti-Semitism, it wasn't begun by Christians, and Stark proves that slaves were treated considerably better by Catholic masters than Protestant ones. This may be because Popes strongly and repeatedly condemned the practice, ameliorating its evils, even as they did not always have the power to enforce their teachings. Had temporal rulers and ordinary believers fully obeyed the Holy See, the slave trade would have ended much sooner than it did.

Having already written a book on the Crusades, boldly entitled, *God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades* (2009), Stark challenges a whole body of polemical literature which condemns the Crusades unequivocally. He shows that, contrary to popular belief, they were not launched to ruthlessly conquer non-Christians, but to defend Christian people already under ferocious attack by Islamic warriors.

Stark's history of Catholic-Muslim conflict is jolting and politically incorrect, but it is based on a careful, dispassionate reading of history, and Stark's conclusion is striking: "The Crusades were not unprovoked. They were not the first round of European colonialism. They were not conducted for land, loot or converts. The Crusaders were not barbarians who victimized the cultivated Muslims. The Crusades are not a blot on the history of the Catholic Church. No apologies are

required.”

Stark’s exposé of anti-Catholic mythology reaches a crescendo when answering those who invented the idea of the Catholic “Dark Ages.” No reputable historian who writes about the years in question, roughly 500-1500 AD, believes they were backward or superstitious, at least in comparison to what came before them. If anything, these were Catholic ages of progress and enlightenment—in education, the arts, and scientific advancement; and the Middle (not “Dark”) Ages also marked the beginnings of a rudimentary free-market system.

According to Stark, the whole narrative of the “Dark Ages” was an act of intellectual pride perpetrated by seventeenth-century atheists and rationalists who were determined to prove that their age was the first of “Enlightenment,” and that the Catholic Church was uninvolved in the advance of modernity. They could not be more mistaken. Not only was the Church involved in the best aspects of modernity, it laid its very foundations.

The same is true today, when it is the Roman Catholic Church, more than any other institution on earth, which defends human life and dignity against violence, abortion, euthanasia, human trafficking and pornography, to mention only a few of the many evils which now surround us.

In marshaling peer-reviewed research and unassailable evidence on the Church’s behalf, Stark does not commit the opposite mistake of whitewashing Catholics who have truly done wrong. Stark knows—and we all know—that there have been individual Catholics, both religious and lay, past and present, who have violated the Gospel, and he makes no excuses for them.

“But no matter how much importance one places on these negative aspects of Church history,” he writes in his introduction, “it does not justify the extreme exaggerations, false accusations and patent frauds in the chapters that

follow. Faced with this enormous literature of lies, I have heeded the words of Columbia University's Garret Mattingly (1900-62), 'Nor does it matter at all to the dead whether they receive justice at the hands of succeeding generations. But to the living, to do justice, however belatedly, should matter.'"

Actually, I believe that the unjustly maligned, now in Heaven, do appreciate historical justice, however late its arrival; and those now living, still dealing with the slings and arrows of anti-Catholic bigotry, should be even more appreciative to Rodney Stark—a non-Catholic, independent and conscientious Christian scholar—for writing this courageous and exceptional work.

*William Doino Jr. is a contributing editor to Inside the Vatican magazine, and an online contributor for First Things. Known for his research and writings on Church history, his 80,000-word annotated bibliography on Pope Pius XII and the Second World War appears in the anthology, The Pius War: Responses to the Critics of Pius XII.*

---

## CATHOLICS IN AMERICA

*Russell Shaw*

Russell Shaw, *Catholics in America* (Ignatius Press, 2016)

Who says Catholics don't have a presence in today's American politics to match the presence they once had? It all depends on which Catholics—and what version of Catholicism—you have in mind.

As their vice-presidential candidate for 2016 the Democrats offered us Tim Kaine, a Catholic senator from Virginia who

says his faith is his guide. But Kaine votes pro-choice on abortion, and he told the Human Rights Campaign that the Church would come around on gay marriage. As their VP pick the Republicans tapped social conservative Indiana Governor Mike Pence. A cradle Catholic, Pence now worships in an evangelical megachurch where services feature colored lights and bands.

The Catholic roots of both featured prominently in media coverage of the campaign.

As if that weren't enough, in August sitting vice president Joe Biden, a pro-choice Catholic Democrat who spearheaded the Obama administration's shift to all-out support for gay marriage, officiated at a same-sex wedding in his official residence. This was apparently more than the hierarchy could take. Three bishops, including Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, president of the bishops' conference, released a statement calling Biden's action a scandal.

In their several ways, politicians like Kaine, Pence, and Biden illustrate the impact of cultural assimilation on Catholic religious identity that I analyze in my book *Catholics in America* (Ignatius Press). The thesis, which I first discussed in an earlier volume called *American Church*, is simple: assimilation—Americanization, it's commonly called—contributes to undermining the Catholic identity of a large number of American Catholics, to the point that the very future of the Church in the United States is threatened.

Of the trio mentioned, Pence is the wild card. Kaine's and Biden's differences with the Church involve repudiating some of its teachings. But Pence appears to have repudiated the Church by simply walking away from it. Switching religions, as Pence has done, is itself a common American practice. The Catholic Church is particularly vulnerable, losing many more members yearly in this way than it gains by conversions.

*Catholics in America* contains profiles of fifteen prominent

individuals—from Archbishop John Carroll to author Flannery O'Connor—whose lives in various ways shed light on the central question in the assimilation debate: is it possible to be a good American and a good Catholic? Answers range from the testy no of cantankerous Orestes Brownson, the leading American Catholic public intellectual of the nineteenth century, to the heartfelt yes of Brownson's old friend, Father Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers.

Others profiled include such figures as Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, de facto primate of the American hierarchy who for four decades steered the course of Catholic assimilation with a firm but diplomatic hand, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, premier Catholic televangelist during the religious boom of the 1950s, Dorothy Day, countercultural, controversial co-founder of the Catholic Worker, who is now being considered for canonization, and Father John Courtney Murray, S.J., the leading Catholic theological apologist for the American church-state arrangement.

The book looks at two Catholic politicians: Al Smith and John F. Kennedy. The stark contrast between their approaches to the relationship between faith and politics speaks volumes about assimilation.

Born in 1873 on Manhattan's Lower East Side, Smith was a proud New Yorker and practicing Catholic who rose from humble beginnings to become a four-term governor of New York and a candidate for the White House. When he sought the Democratic party's vice-presidential nomination in 1924, Franklin Roosevelt called him "the Happy Warrior." Four years later the Democrats chose him to head the ticket.

With the nation in 1928 at the peak of an economic boom (soon to end with a stock market crash and the onset of the Great Depression), it's doubtful any Democrat could have been elected president that year. But Smith didn't just lose, he lost badly, with 40.77% of the popular votes and 87 electoral

votes to GOP candidate Herbert Hoover's 58.2% and 444 electoral votes. Traditionally Democratic states like Texas, Oklahoma, and Florida all went Republican. Many votes were cast against Smith, the *New York Times* concluded, "because he was a Catholic."

That was hardly a surprise. The Ku Klux Klan, re-founded in 1915, was a significant force in those days, aiming its vitriol at Blacks, Jews, and Catholics. A senator from Alabama, Thomas Heflin by name, earned a measure of fame denouncing "the Roman hierarchy and the political machine." And the venerable *Atlantic Monthly* weighed in with an open letter by a New York lawyer named Charles Marshall questioning Smith's commitment as a Catholic to religious liberty and his views on education issues. Smith responded vigorously, but it was clear early on that his religion would be an issue if he ran in 1928.

And so it was. An avalanche of anti-Catholic animus greeted his candidacy. Declaring that with Smith in the race "Rome has reached one of its long-sought goals," a Protestant magazine spoke for many when it pronounced "the mere mention of a Roman Catholic as President" to be cause for alarm. "Rome has not changed...Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," the editorial proclaimed.

Incensed by the attacks, Smith responded in a speech on September 20 in Oklahoma City. His passionate, blunt rebuttal elicited genuine concern for his safety.

After citing his scandal-free record in public life, Smith turned to his religion and the opposition he was encountering on account of it.

"I can think of no greater disaster to the country than to have the voters...divide upon religious lines," he said. "Our forefathers, in their wisdom, wrote into the Constitution of the United States that no religious test shall ever be applied

for public office.” And that was “not a mere form of words,” the candidate added, but “the most vital principle that ever was given to any people.”

“I attack those who seek to undermine it,” Smith concluded fervently, “not only because I am a good Christian, but because I am a good American and a product of America and of American institutions. Everything I am, and everything I hope to be, I owe to those institutions.” A few weeks later he suffered overwhelming defeat in an election in which bigotry had played a major role.

Practically speaking, that was the end of Smith’s political career. He died in 1944. But he had accomplished a great deal. Not the least of his achievements was to help pave the way for another Catholic politician: John F. Kennedy.

Born in 1917, Kennedy was Smith’s antithesis in many ways. Smith’s family was poor, Kennedy’s family very wealthy. Smith was a self-educated man of the people, Kennedy a Harvard-educated elitist (but with no significant education in Catholicism). Smith was a faithful husband, Kennedy a womanizer. Smith was a devout Catholic, while Kennedy’s Catholicism was at best superficial.

After seeking but failing to gain the Democratic nomination for vice president in 1956, Kennedy and his advisers began weighing a run for the presidency in 1960. They knew from the start that his religion would be a problem.

Well before the issue came up in an actual campaign, Kennedy sought to deal with it in a *Look* magazine interview with prominent journalist Fletcher Knebel. Summing up, Knebel said of the senator from Massachusetts, “His theme is that religion is personal, politics are public, and the twain need never meet and conflict.” Reactions in the Catholic press were not enthusiastic. “To relegate your conscience to your ‘private life’ is not only unrealistic, but dangerous as well,”

remarked Catholic weekly magazine *Ave Maria*.

But the religious issue wouldn't go away. Soon after Kennedy was nominated for president, 150 prominent Protestant leaders headed by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, author of the bestselling self-help book *The Power of Positive Thinking*, issued a statement calling the Catholic Church a "political organization" and questioning Kennedy's ability to "withstand the determined efforts of the hierarchy to work its will in American political life."

Kennedy reacted quickly in an address delivered on September 12, 1960 in Houston to an audience of Protestant ministers. The speech remains a turning-point—not just for the Kennedy candidacy but, as later events have shown, for Catholic participation in American political life.

In a key passage, he said: "Whatever issue may come before me as president—on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject—I will make my decision...in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be in the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates." Here was the sort of separation of faith from public life that the Second Vatican Council five years later would call "one of the gravest errors of our time."

Instead of that, Vatican II (in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) declared that people of faith should be "proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values."

Kennedy squeaked by the GOP's Richard Nixon in November, losing 6.5% of the votes of Protestant Democrats and independents together with a hefty 17.2% of the Southern vote because of his religion, but compensated by getting 80% of the votes of Catholics. His short, dramatic presidency came to a



tragic close by assassination on November 22, 1963.

The Kennedy profile in *Catholics in America* concludes this way:

“Many Catholic politicians have followed the path marked out by JFK in Houston. Catholic officeholders and candidates who lend support to causes like legalized abortion and same-sex marriage are in effect following his lead.

“Now as then, however, the issue isn’t taking orders from the pope and the bishops—something those supposedly power-hungry ecclesiastics neither expect nor want—but how to apply moral principles grounded in faith to real-world politics. John Kennedy’s innovative and influential approach lay in giving assurances that he wouldn’t even try. We are still living with the consequences.”

The politics of 2016 and the fresh evidence it has supplied of cultural assimilation operative in the world of politics vividly illustrate the truth of that.

*Russell Shaw is former Secretary for Public Affairs of the U.S. Catholic bishops conference and former information director of the Knights of Columbus. The most recent of his twenty-one books is Catholics in America (Ignatius Press). He is also a member of the board of advisors for the Catholic League.*

---

# MOTHER ANGELICA’S EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS

*Rick Hinshaw*

Raymond Arroyo, *Mother Angelica: Her Grand Silence: The Last Years and Living Legacy* (New York: Image, 2016)

In his previous biography on Mother Angelica, Raymond Arroyo brought us into personal contact with her extraordinary life. He took us through not only her remarkable accomplishments, but the seemingly insurmountable challenges she had to overcome in achieving them, and how God's intervention in her life put her on this lifelong journey of faith to achieve eternal union with Him—not just for herself, but for countless millions of souls whom she never even knew, but who came to know her.

One expects this final work, then, to recount how she died. And it does that. But anyone who thinks this is simply the telling of a moving story about a remarkable earthly life passing quietly into eternity is in for a surprise. It is, rather, the story of how Mother Angelica in her last years, seemingly hidden away in her sickbed in a corner of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Hanceville, Alabama, only intensified her service to God and to others. Arroyo makes a compelling case that, with her voice virtually silenced and her physical mobility gone, she may have brought more souls to Christ in those last years than in all her extraordinary years of physically active, world-wide ministry.

Surely, some of this was due to the continued growth and expanded programming of EWTN, the worldwide Catholic media network she had founded. As it reached ever more people around the world, EWTN allowed them to experience and be drawn to the faith. Indeed, it allowed whole new generations to come to know Mother Angelica—to feel her love, receive her wisdom and guidance, and experience the depth of her personal relationship with Jesus—through the regular re-broadcasts of her own powerful preaching on “Mother Angelica Live” and other EWTN programs.

But EWTN was only part of the story of Mother Angelica's

extraordinary witness to and evangelization of the Gospel during those final, bedridden years. There was, first of all, her determination, for as long as possible, to still be active in whatever ways she could in advancing the mission of her community. For example, she urged and inspired the sisters to establish new foundations, and she even traveled, as far away as Japan, to help gain acceptance and support for these undertakings.

But most of all there was her prayer and spiritual life: her willingness, indeed her joy, in joining her sufferings to those of her beloved spouse, Jesus, and offering them for others. In this way she gave totally of herself in service to all manner of human concerns: physical, emotional and spiritual healing for those close to her; all those around the world who asked for her help and prayers; and for millions of people with whom she had no contact, but knew to be suffering. She also offered her suffering for the successes of the work of her community, and of the Church's worldwide evangelization efforts; for the leaders of our Church; for a world in terrible spiritual crisis; and for all whom she knew to be in need of prayer—in short, for all humanity, past, present and future, whom she longed to help into heaven through her own sacrificial suffering.

“In her protracted silence—for more than a decade,” Arroyo writes, “Mother Angelica would struggle for her soul, fight for her religious community, see the fulfillment of her last mission, and radically transform the lives of people she had never known.”

It was indeed “a grand silence.” Arroyo brings us into it, transforming us from outside observers to insiders who in a sense actually share the experience of Mother Angelica's life, or at least the experiences of those who, like Raymond Arroyo, did share intimately in her life. He is able to do this in part, of course, because of his closeness to her, and his descriptions of their interactions as he visited and

interviewed her over this last period of her life are powerful and inspiring. So too are the testimonies of some of the sisters who saw to Mother's care in her last years, and who, through Arroyo, also generously share with us their moving personal observations and reflections.

Arroyo draws us into these extraordinary final years of Mother Angelica's life by employing his manifest skills as an author—and one who himself lives and evangelizes the Catholic faith. So he fully understands and affirms the concept of redemptive suffering, and the deep personal holiness and fidelity to Christ and His Church that were the essence of Mother Angelica.

Her "grand silence" really began, Arroyo recounts, on Christmas Eve 2001 when a stroke caused by a brain hemorrhage nearly killed her. Having retired from EWTN the previous March, she had already planned to spend her time in the cloister, in meditative prayer, "mothering her community," and preparing her sisters to eventually establish new monasteries elsewhere. Now her severely limited speech and movement would seemingly further enforce such a quiet, uneventful retirement.

But that was not to be. As she had her entire life, Mother Angelica struggled mightily against the challenges life had dealt her, working as always to carry forward the will of God. This led her to insist, three years later, on accompanying several members of her community on a trip to Japan to look into establishing a monastery there. It was a grueling trip, from which she returned in great pain from a fractured tailbone, resulting in her "most onerous" cross: the "abrupt loss of mobility and independence."

To "release the last shred of control she still possessed—her self-rule—was an extreme sacrifice," Arroyo notes. But it was a trip the previous year—to Lourdes—that perhaps provided Mother Angelica with the spiritual strength to accept even this cross. "She traveled to the famed grotto and miraculous

springs in search of healing," Arroyo recounts. What she found instead, "in the sea of pain all around her was the spiritual strength to embrace her suffering, and to appreciate its rich value beyond the awful frustrations of the moment." This affirmed what she had once told Arroyo: "those who continue to suffer may not be healed, because they are healers themselves."

And so she surrendered to her own suffering, in order to heal others—physically, if that was God's will, but more importantly, spiritually. For as Arroyo notes, while ministering throughout her life to the downtrodden, having suffered material deprivation herself, she focused her charitable work and prayers especially on the spiritually impoverished. And as this book recounts through numerous testimonies of those whose lives she touched, that special care for the spiritual health of others worked many wonders in the lives of those who, through her, found or rediscovered Jesus.

Indeed, for many readers these testimonials, carefully selected by Arroyo to give a sense of the reach and impact of Mother Angelica's ministry—in lives touched, in healings assisted, in conversions inspired—will be the highlight of this book. Certainly many readers who also found their way through their spiritual connection to Mother Angelica will see themselves in similar stories recounted here.

Other challenges beset Mother Angelica during what Arroyo poignantly calls her "white martyrdom" of sacrificial suffering for Christ. Among those that "pained her greatly" was disharmony among the sisters, due in part to conflicts of personality, but also deeper concerns about the future direction of the community. While she struggled in her weakened state to guide the sisters away from such division—"Support! Support!" she told one nun she heard complaining about another—this strife led to her again having to surrender to God's will, when Rome addressed the problem by

appointing a new superior from outside the community.

Some of the sisters who cared for Mother Angelica are certain that they also witnessed her dealing with the most terrifying of challenges: personal confrontations with the devil. Arroyo recounts these in his chapter on her mysticism, which he traces back to a miraculous event from her childhood, when she felt herself being picked up and moved out of the path of an onrushing motor vehicle. (Witnesses marveled that they had never seen anyone “jump” so high.) The author then relates various mystical occurrences during her years of ministry—appearances to her by the Child Jesus and St. Michael the Archangel, among others, and accounts of people who insist that Mother Angelica appeared to them, in a dream or a vision, while she was still living.

Admirers of Raymond Arroyo and all he has himself done to evangelize the Gospel, at EWTN and beyond, will appreciate his willingness to share with us details of his own special relationship with Mother Angelica. That relationship, he makes clear, presented difficult challenges, particularly when Mother Angelica took it upon herself—loving him, she told him, “like a mother”—to teach him some humility. She was not above harsh words, even public humiliation, and he found himself on the receiving end of that in one particularly painful episode.

Like Mother Angelica, he responded by persevering for the greater good, and that’s exactly what was achieved. He gained a “spiritual mother” who he says taught him so much. EWTN and its worldwide audience continued to benefit from his dedication and his many abilities—some of which, like his interviewing skills, he credits Mother Angelica with enhancing. And of course, we all received the spiritual gift of his wonderful writings on Mother Angelica, made possible by the deep and warm personal relationship that developed between them.

In 2010, one of the sisters caring for Mother asked

her—"impetuously," Arroyo writes—if she thought Jesus was going to take her soon or heal her.

"I don't want to live," Mother Angelica replied, but "I owe Him much." Later, as she caressed an image of the Divine Child, she uttered the words, "For the people. For the people."

"The sisters," Arroyo writes, "interpreted Mother's statements to mean that she had a personal desire to die—to be with Him—but she felt she owed the Lord a great deal and therefore would continue to suffer 'for the people.'"

When she was 20-years-old, Rita Rizzo, the future Mother Angelica, was finally relieved of years of excruciating stomach pain after a mystic advised her to pray a novena to St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

"All I wanted to do after my healing was to give myself to Jesus," she told Arroyo years later. Ultimately, she did so much more than that. For in giving herself totally to Him—surrendering always to His will—she brought countless others along with her to Jesus.

Arroyo's powerful recounting of how she evangelized the Gospel through the pain and suffering of these last years will leave readers hungry for more. Which, happily, they can find in his four previous works on Mother Angelica, detailing her extraordinary life story, her lessons on life, spirituality and the Scriptures, and her prayers and personal devotions.

"Many have written and spoken of the New Evangelization," Arroyo observes. "Mother Angelica was the New Evangelization."

---

# MOTHER TERESA'S CRITICS UNDONE

Thomas C. Reeves

In 2003, Pope John Paul II beatified world-famous Mother Teresa. On September 4, she will be canonized. Bill Donohue, long-time president of the Catholic League, examined the extensive literature on the topic and discovered nothing that directly supported Mother Teresa's critics. Donohue, as always, is careful with his research (the footnoting is extensive), and he is articulate and persuasive.

The author of *Unmasking Mother Teresa's Critics* is a champion of the woman born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in 1910, in a town that is now part of Macedonia. Donohue describes her heroic work in the slums of Calcutta among the poor and dying to the subsequent founding of the Missionaries of Charity, and her discovery and leap to fame in 1968 by British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge.

Donohue is unimpressed by her critics (who seem remarkably few in number). "It is one thing to point out her shortcomings, quite another to misrepresent her work and disparage her efforts," he writes. "After reading their failed accounts, I am convinced more than ever that Mother Teresa is a role model for the entire human race."

Her most voracious critic was British writer Christopher Hitchens, whose campaign against the nun began with a television documentary in late 1994. Hitchens was a leftist, an atheist, and a practicing bisexual who hated Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church. He was also brilliant and articulate.

Hitchens claimed that Mother Teresa was dishonest, that she associated with crooks and dictators. He also accused her of



denying the sick proper care. He attacked her personally, calling her the "ghoul of Calcutta." He also mocked her lack of physical beauty, and heaped scorn on her by saying that she was "a presumable virgin."

Donohue and Hitchens crossed swords in public debates on numerous occasions (some of the televised debates are available on YouTube). Donohue charged that his opponent was guilty of using half-truths and slander based on little or no research. His brief and devastating analysis of Hitchens' book, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*, is definitive.

The Left in general has opposed the sort of selfless charity practiced by Mother Teresa and her nuns, favoring government action that prohibits any religious emphasis. The Catholic idea of redemptive suffering is, of course, entirely out of bounds for Leftists. Moreover, the Church's opposition to contraception and artificial birth control (not to mention sodomy) makes the Missionaries of Charity seem even more the enemies of "progress."

In 2002, atheist Aroup Chatterjee joined the assault on Mother Teresa with his book, *The Final Verdict*. His cynicism was such that his book received little attention. Fellow atheist and screwball Hemley Gonzalez later joined Chatterjee in charging that the Vatican "manufactured" the nun to raise funds and advance its power.

In 2013, three left-wing Canadian professors published "The Dark Side of Mother Teresa" in a scholarly journal; they repeated earlier allegations against the sisters and the Vatican. They were especially critical of voluntary service to the poor. "Such a model of charity overshadow[s] the urgency of taking our collective responsibilities and getting organized with regards to social justice."

The academics also criticized the lack of financial

transparency by the sisters (they have in fact accepted donations that later proved to be of criminal origin), suggesting, without evidence, that donations often failed to reach the poor. Mother Teresa told a biographer, "I need money to use for my people," not for investing. "The quite remarkable sums that are donated are spent as quickly on medicines (particularly for leprosy and tuberculosis), food and on milk powder."

The Canadians also wrote of "the deplorable lack of hygiene on the premises" in Calcutta. As it turns out, a physician, quoted by the professors to substantiate their charge, actually undercut their bogus claims. Donohue reports what the doctor said. "So the most important features of the regimen are cleanliness, the tending of wounds and sores, and loving kindness."

Donohue also discusses how a former volunteer and ex-Catholic wrote of Mother Teresa in the leftist Huffington Post: "Her fundamental belief is that everyone, absolutely everyone in this world deserves love and care. She cherished every single life on this planet more than anyone ever did, and that's why she created the Missionaries of Charity: to help and welcome the poorest of the poor, those whose life had not been judged worthy to live and who had been rejected by everything and everyone."

Donohue quotes an assortment of witnesses who evaluated the work of Mother Teresa and her sisters. They all declared their praise for the work that they did in India and elsewhere. One, atheist Prabir Ghosh, exclaimed, "If she is bestowed with sainthood for her service to mankind, that will be a great thing."

Navin Chawla, one of Mother Teresa's biographers, wrote admiringly of the many professionals—physicians, dentists, nurses, and others—who generously volunteered their time and talents. He estimated that in Calcutta, Hindu workers

outnumbered Christians ten to one. Chawla thought that the work with children (which often included help with their education as well as physical needs), the dying, and lepers were the crowning achievements of the Missionaries of Charity.

Mother's labors even extended to the United States, where in the 1980s she founded New York's first AIDS hospice in Greenwich Village. New York Mayor Ed Koch was astonished by the nun's compassion. "She said that when AIDS patients were near death, she would sit at their bedside. Often they would take her hands and place her fingers on their faces wanting her to feel their lesions and to close their eyelids for the last time."

Why pay any attention to people who are about to die? Mother Teresa's response to this question was indignant, "For me, even if a child died within minutes, that child must not be allowed to die alone and uncared for." One of her most famous quotes was, "If there is an unwanted baby, don't let it die. Send it to me." Of AIDS victims, she said: "They were asking for a ticket to heaven, and I gave them that ticket."

Mother and her sisters were themselves extraordinarily austere. An American reporter wrote, "They own only three saris, sleep on thin mattresses, wash their clothes by hand and sit on chapel floors....In the kitchen, the food continues to be cooked on a charcoal fire, the fuel of the very poor." The food comes from volunteers who collect it for that purpose.

The nuns were not social workers and considered themselves outside the pale of the state. When British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher boasted to Mother Teresa of her country's welfare system, the nun replied, "But do you have love?"

In 1979, Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize and used the occasion to defend the lives of the unborn. She declared, "The poor people are very great people," adding that "they can

teach us so many beautiful things.” Abortion, she said, was the greatest enemy of peace. Mother spent the prize money on the poor in India.

In 2007, after her death, private letters exchanged between Mother Teresa and her confessors became public. They revealed that for 50 years the nun did not feel God’s presence in her heart or in the Eucharist.

Critics had a field day, going so far as to claim that she was insane. But wiser heads knew that many saintly Christians over the centuries have experienced the “dark nights” of the soul, and that overcoming them was a sign of sanctity. Donohue handles this issue wisely and thoughtfully, noting Mother’s continued faith and devotion despite the spiritual handicap given to her by God.

And so, after the Church carefully authenticated two miracles (causing a flutter among her atheist critics), Mother Teresa will soon be canonized. Her legacy is one of love and service to countless numbers of people, by her deeds and her spoken and printed words.

Today there are 4,500 Sisters in the Missionaries of Charity, continuing the work of their founder. One way to get better acquainted with this remarkable saint is to read this book by America’s most courageous and active champion of the Catholic Church.

*Thomas C. Reeves is a professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. An historian, he is the author of several books, including ones on Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, John F. Kennedy, and Joe McCarthy. He serves on the advisory board of the Catholic League.*

“Mother Teresa’s detractors have met their match. In this devastating response to persistent critiques, Bill Donohue corrects the record and turns the tables on Mother’s attackers. The truth within is a powerful antidote to the lies

that have dogged Mother for too long.”

**Raymond Arroyo**

***New York Times* bestselling author and host, *The World Over Live***

“What Donohue has done is expose and analyze the fever swamps of ideological bias from which scattered attacks on this holy woman now and then arise. Unmasking Mother Teresa’s Critics is a valuable and enlightening book.”

**Russell Shaw**

**author of *Catholics in America***

---

# HOW ABORTION BECAME FEMINISM’S HOLY GRAIL

**Rick Hinshaw**

Sue Ellen Browder, *Subverted: How I Helped the Sexual Revolution Hijack the Women’s Movement* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015)

Over the years, others have noted the hypocrisies of the so-called women’s movement, as its self-appointed leaders abandoned broad principles of equality for a radical feminist ideology. Now Sue Ellen Browder offers a compelling first-hand account of how that movement allowed itself to be hijacked by the sexual revolution and the abortion lobby, in the process turning its back on legions of mainstream American women who still valued motherhood and family.

This is really two parallel stories, or perhaps one story told on two levels. At the same time Browder witnesses for us the struggle within the feminist movement broadly, she also

chronicles her own personal struggles, as her values and family life clashed with her professional role as a propagandist for radical feminism and the sexual revolution.

We see how, even when she was most deeply immersed in that world, some deeper part of Browder was always in conflict with it, even when she did not realize it. And that, in the end, would be her saving grace, and that of her husband, as well.

Determined to leave behind what she regarded as the sheltered provincialism of her small town Midwestern upbringing, Browder aspired to a career in journalism—and got her big break when she landed a position at Helen Gurley Brown's *Cosmopolitan* magazine.

She soon got her first taste of the cynicism her career pursuits would require. At the University of Missouri, she had been scandalized to realize that among the articles she was called upon to analyze as a journalism student, were instances of professional reporters clearly inventing sources and quotes out of thin air. Now, she was told at *Cosmo* to do the same thing—indeed, Helen Gurley Brown had written guidelines for when, how and why to insert such fictionalized accounts into an article. Browder complied. It was the first of many compromises of principle she would make in order to advance her career, leaving her to conclude later in life that “I had betrayed everything a real journalist should be.”

She found herself working not as a serious journalist, but as a propagandist for the sexual revolution. Under Helen Gurley Brown, *Cosmopolitan's* contribution to feminism was the idea that women could and should be just as self-centered, hedonistic and materialistic as the worst examples of men. This was the sexual revolution's definition of equality between the sexes.

It was not Betty Friedan's concept of feminism. “The mother of the feminist movement” wanted to use the women's movement “to

broaden and deepen women's lives," Browder writes. As such, Friedan labeled *Cosmo* "quite obscene and quite horrible," promoting "the idea that woman is nothing but a sex object, that (she) is nothing without a man."

Yet unable to stem the tide of the sexual revolution, Friedan and other leaders of the women's movement seemed to accommodate themselves to the exploitation of feminism by those who—like Brown and Playboy's Hugh Hefner—valued it not as a movement for women's equality, but as a tool for making their promotion of sexual hedonism seem somehow high-minded.

Certainly, this was the case with abortion.

"At *Cosmo*, the one assumption I never thought to question was whether or not abortion and contraception were good for women," Browder writes. "In Helen Gurley Brown territory, it was an automatic given that separating women from children (through abortion and contraception) was required for women to be free." Yet Browder shows that Friedan at first dismissed the significance of abortion in women's fight for equality.

Ironically, given Friedan's insistence that women should free themselves from any dependency on men, Browder shows that it was Lawrence Lader, a self-appointed male crusader for abortion, who led Friedan to embrace it as central to the feminist cause.

Employing the investigative journalism skills she never got to use at *Cosmo*, Browder takes us inside the event that placed abortion advocacy permanently front-and-center in the feminist movement: a small gathering in the Chinese Room of the Mayflower Hotel in Washington D.C., during the National Organization for Women's second annual convention in 1967. A fierce debate ensued, as a number of women with impeccable feminist credentials argued fervently against including a pro-abortion plank in NOW's platform—some, to be sure, for strategic reasons, fearing such a radical proposal back in

1967 could derail mainstream support for the women's movement; but others opposing the plank on philosophical or moral grounds, believing that advocating for the right to kill unborn children was hardly consistent with the women's movement's demand of equality for all.

But those voices were stifled, as Friedan combined her personal belligerence with parliamentary abuses to strong arm the pro-abortion plank through. Browder notes that the final vote of 57-14 left more than 30 registered members of the convention unaccounted for. Thus did "the 57" as she calls them, dictate that the women's movement would henceforth be not just associated with, but defined by, its unrelenting support for the mass destruction of innocent human life. Moreover, she reviews what has been documented before, by such as the late Dr. Bernard Nathanson, the pro-abortion leader and abortionist turned pro-life crusader and Catholic convert whom she cites. Abortion was sold, to this gathering, to the American media, and to the U.S. Supreme Court, through Lader's strategy of disseminating deliberately falsified information regarding such things as the prevalence of illegal abortion, the history of abortion, and the level of public support for legalized abortion. She notes that Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, author of the infamous 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling mandating virtually unrestricted abortion, "relied 'heavily and uncritically'" on such false information, citing "Lader's *Abortion* book no less than seven times"—though Lader had absolutely no credentials as either a historian or a medical expert.

With its embrace of abortion and the sexual revolution, feminism also turned its back on the family values important to many mainstream American women. Friedan, Browder contends, had early on "insisted the new women's movement must be pro-family." But again, she caved—and years later was left to lament that "The women's movement...has come to a dead end. ... Our failure was our blind spot about the family."



Browder's personal story gives powerful witness to how the radical feminist movement, despite its propaganda successes, failed to really connect with many American women at the level of their individual, everyday lives. Professionally, Browder bought into radical feminism's philosophy and buried any qualms about the contradiction between its embrace of the sexual revolution and its stated opposition to reducing women to sex objects. But in their personal lives, she and her husband Walter were a living contradiction to the anti-family attitudes that the sexual revolution devotees had foisted upon the women's movement. When Browder left *Cosmo's* staff to become a freelance writer, it was in large part so she could spend full time at home with her children—the direct opposite of what Helen Gurley Brown was preaching about putting career ahead of children. Walter also worked from home writing, but whenever hard financial times hit, he would take the kind of office or factory jobs he hated, not to advance his career but to support his family! And always, their marriage came first, and they were pillars of love and support for each other—contradicting the sexual revolution's denigration of married love, and the feminist article of faith that a woman did not need, and should not seek, to have a man permanently in her life.

Predictably, it was radical feminism's promotion of abortion that had the greatest impact on Sue Ellen Browder's personal life, and that would ultimately convince her of its terribly damaging effects on women and families. Having become pregnant with a third child at a time when they were struggling financially, "Abortion, which was after all my right as a liberated woman, seemed to me to be an easy escape hatch out of an impossible situation," Browder recalls. So with her husband's apparent support, she availed herself of that "rational option."

"After my abortion, somehow the story inside me changed," she writes. "I had done the unspeakable, and I had done it rashly

and boldly, almost without a moment's hesitation or doubt." Her marriage, too, was affected, because "At a pivotal moment in our lives, when we most needed to embrace the freedom born only of hope and trust in God, Walter and I had succumbed to mind-shrinking fear"—embracing instead a "freedom of choice" which did not liberate them.

For years, Sue Ellen did not realize that Walter too was troubled by the abortion, because it was something they never talked about. She got a clue when, after she was one day moved to buy a new crib and donate it to a pro-life crisis pregnancy center (an attempt at "atonement," she calls it), Walter said he wished he had known, because he would have liked to have gone with her. Then years later, when their spiritual journey had led them to explore the Catholic faith, it was Walter who blurted out to a priest, "We've had an abortion."

"Until that time," Sue Ellen writes, "it had never occurred to me that all these years he had been silently grieving right along with me."

Spiritually, Browder found her embrace of feminism creating in her a deep hostility toward the Catholic faith. Seeking a new church after they had relocated far from their Episcopal Church, Walter suggested they try the local Catholic Church. "I'm not going to join that patriarchal old Church," Sue Ellen responded in full feminist voice.

But when she subsequently opened herself to the idea, she found within the Catholic Church "the wholeness and unity I had sought all my life.

"I suddenly saw that to live in the fullness and joy of the Catholic faith, to follow Christ's way, is to be united in love with all of mankind: friends and enemies, rich and poor, saints and sinners—from the most powerful billionaire to the weakest boy or girl in the womb." And so, "when Walter and I receive God on our lips for the first time, I only know in the

depths of my heart that, after all my searching, I have at last found the Truth who promises to make me free.”

And so a story that at first seems one of despair becomes a story of hope, thanks to Sue Ellen Browder’s sharing with us her personal experience. We are inspired by her and her husband’s enduring love for each other; by their devotion to their marriage and children in the face of many personal and societal pressures; and by their never-ending search for truth—even, as in the case of their abortion, when that truth is profoundly uncomfortable for them.

Their long search, amid many struggles, that finally led them to the Truth in Christ and His Church, calls to mind the words in the Gospel of John that should be the hope of every pro-life person: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men; the light (of life) shines through the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” It never will.

*Rick Hinshaw is director of communications at the Catholic League.*

---

# When the Pope Tried to Kill Hitler

**Ronald J. Rychlak**

Pope Pius XII and the Nazis: far too many writers have wandered into this fascinating subject without bringing anything new to the table. Many of the late pope’s critics have simply repeated information that appeared in already discredited books and articles, but even some supporters have done little more than parrot earlier accounts. Thus, as one

who has read almost all of the books on the topic, I approached Mark Riebling's *Church of Spies* cautiously.

The first chapter seemed promising as it covered the outbreak of World War II and the new pope's first encyclical, *Summi Pontifictus* and its striking condemnation of racism. Unlike many other writers, Riebling acknowledged Pius XII's profound and express statement that there was no room for distinction between Gentiles and Jews in the Catholic Church. That was good, but Riebling also wrote about the perception that Pius was insufficiently outspoken and the problems that created between Catholics and Jews. It looked like the book might go either way, but then Riebling came out with a line that smacks the reader upside the head: "The last day during the war when Pius publicly said the word 'Jew' is also, in fact, the first day history can document his choice to help kill Adolf Hitler." Fasten your seatbelt; you're in for one heck of a ride.

It has long been known that the pope tipped off the Allies about at least one planned coup attempt and certain German troop movements, and other writers have noted that Pius was involved on the periphery with efforts to topple Hitler. Riebling, however, uses documents from German, Italian, Vatican, and other archives to prove that rather than being on the periphery, Pius was deeply involved in the various plots to assassinate Hitler.

The assassination plot began inside the German high command in August 1939. Hitler had already ordered the extermination of those who were mentally or physically defective, he had begun his war against the Jews, and he was just days away from invading Poland. He called together his top generals and admirals to brace them for the invasion, which would be carried out with "merciless severity." The Führer, who saw Catholicism as incompatible with Nazism and particularly hated Pope Pius XII, capped off his talk by saying that he would "snuff out the least flicker of Polish strength by liquidating

thousands of Catholic priests.”

The head of German military intelligence, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, had once admired Hitler. A year earlier, however, he became disillusioned when Hitler began turning ferociously on Germany's own citizens, including some German officers. Although he was a Protestant, extermination of Catholic priests was the final straw. Canaris already had a small circle of like-minded friends. Now they made the fateful decision to depose Hitler, even if they had to kill him.

The logistics of any coup would be complicated enough, but the Canaris group was also concerned about how the Allies would respond. They did not want to see a repeat of the Treaty of Versailles, the harshness of which had assisted Hitler's ascendance to power. They needed to communicate and coordinate with the Allies.

The question was how to make contact with Allied leadership. Canaris determined that the only person with sufficient prestige and freedom to act was the pope. Canaris had known the future pope as a Vatican diplomat in Germany back in the 1920s. He knew about Pius XII's many talents and his utter disdain for Hitler. He just needed someone to help him make contact.

Munich attorney Josef Müller was a war hero and devout Catholic who had represented the Church against the Reich in legal matters. Riebling described him as “part Oskar Schindler, part Vito Corleone.” In 1934, Müller survived a beating and interrogation at the hands of SS Commander Heinrich Himmler, who asked the lawyer about a controversy that had taken place in Bavaria. Without apology, Müller admitted that he had advised the Bavarian prime minister to have Himmler killed. Impressed by his courage, Himmler invited Müller to join the SS. Müller replied: “I am philosophically opposed to you. I am a practicing Catholic, and my brother is a Catholic priest. Where could I find the possibility of

compromise there?" Himmler appreciated this "manly defense," and let the lawyer go. This made Müller somewhat of a legend even among Hitler loyalists.

Riebling introduces Müller in the prologue to *Church of Spies*. He is in leg irons at Flossenbürg concentration camp in 1945, hands tied behind his back, and forced to "eat his food like a dog from a plate on the floor." On the next page, he is being led to the gallows. The chapters that follow explain how and why he got there.

In addition to being an attorney, Müller was a pilot, and he often traveled to Rome on business. So, in 1939, when the conspirators tapped him as their messenger, his trips did not draw undue attention. For his first mission, German intelligence gave him a dossier of Nazi atrocities in Poland. He flew to Rome and asked the pontiff's top assistants whether Pius would be willing to contact the British government and ask for support.

Not only did Pius XII agree to assist the conspirators, saying "the German opposition must be heard," he also mobilized Catholic religious orders, especially the Jesuits and Dominicans. These orders did not report to local bishops, who might be susceptible to Nazi pressure, but to leaders of their orders, who reported directly to the pope. The head of the Jesuits in Northern Germany, Augustin Rösch, had been battling the Gestapo since well before World War II, and he became the driving force behind the pope's team in Germany. Rösch linked his group with the military intelligence unit headed by Canaris and worked on planning the coup.

Müller also built a spy network among "army, college, and law-school friends with access to Nazi officials—a community of the well-informed, who worked in newspapers, banks, and even ... the SS itself." His office soon became a clearinghouse of information for the Vatican.

The issue of a political assassination, even of Hitler, raised many questions. Riebling, however, explained that: "Over the centuries, Catholic theologians had developed a nuanced doctrine of tyrannicide, covering virtually every conceivable context." After peaceful means had been exhausted, the assassination of a tyrant could be justified if it would improve conditions in a subjugated nation without sparking a civil war. Unfortunately, Lutheran and Calvinist generals were tied to a Protestant theory of state authority, and they had a much harder time justifying such an action.

Although initially suspicious, British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax and Francis D'Arcy Osborne, British ambassador to the Holy See, were won over by the pope's personal intervention. They would negotiate with "The Decent Germany" if Hitler could be removed. Unfortunately, there were many doubts in high British circles, and the Allies failed to take advantage of much reliable information.

The plotters organized several attempts on Hitler's life, but he had "the luck of the devil," surviving repeated assassination attempts. He canceled speeches without knowing that snipers were in position and ready to take him out. He missed parades where bombs were set to explode. Plotters attempted to kill him by blowing up his plane, but the bomb didn't go off. By shifting a meeting from a concrete bunker to a wooden barracks, Hitler evaded another attempt, memorialized in the movie *Valkyrie*.

Resistance to the Führer at home began to melt away after his military victories in Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and France. Outside of Germany, others began to lose patience with the conspirators. Upon becoming prime minister, Winston Churchill put no faith in "decent Germans" taking out Hitler.

German military intelligence eventually learned about Müller's work with the pope and brought him in for questioning. The lawyer was shocked when they asked him to work with them

against Hitler. They gave him a cover story. He was to be a German operative using his contacts with the Vatican to spy on Italians. He would do this by posing as a conspirator seeking out Italians who might rally against Mussolini. "Müller would advance the war effort by pretending to talk peace," explained Riebling. "But he would only be pretending to be pretending." He actually was the anti-Axis plotter that he was pretending to be. Müller, of course, informed the Vatican of what was going on. It dramatically escalated the risk and potential reward of the pope's work with Müller.

At this point, Vatican officials introduced the German lawyer to the concept of *Disciplina Arcani*—the "way of secrecy." Those involved in the Vatican spy ring developed code names. Müller was known as "Herr X," and Pius XII was called "the Chief." Some high security meetings were held in the most secure place possible, excavation sites under Vatican City.

Plotters from Germany's intelligence services asked "the Chief" to keep quiet: "Singling out the Nazis," one later explained, "would have made the German Catholics even more suspected than they were and would have restricted their freedom of action in their work of resistance." Explaining this to a French diplomat, Pius once said: "You know which side my sympathies lie. But I cannot say so."

In 1943, as the SS narrowed its focus, a member of German intelligence finally revealed the names of the conspirators. Müller's dramatic flights across the Alps came to an end, and the Gestapo found his secret files, including the conditions that the plotters had established to kill Hitler, which were printed on Vatican letterhead. This sent Müller into Dachau for the remainder of the war.

When Mussolini was ousted in July 1943, Hitler ordered a division of paratroopers to the borders of St. Peter's Square. "On one side stood German soldiers in black boots and steel helmets, with carbines on their shoulders and Lugers on their



hips. On the other side were the Pope's Swiss Guards, in ruffled tunics and plumed hats, holding medieval pikes in white gloves." Fortunately, Hitler's advisors talked him out of an immediate invasion, though Hitler vowed to finish the job after the war.

Hitler ultimately avoided assassination and died by his own hand, but not before the SS tracked down the resistance. The SS interrogated conspirators, tortured them, and executed or sent them to concentration camps. Some were subjected to show trials before being publicly executed.

*Church of Spies* reads so well that one is inclined not to reveal what happened to Müller and Rösch (spoiler alert: it's not as bad as the prologue might suggest). In fact, that aspect of *Church of Spies*, involving multiple death sentences, paperwork problems, and well-timed favors, could be a book unto itself.

*Church of Spies* reads like an adventure novel, but it is documented history. It explains the virtually universal perception of Pius XII during and after the war as a staunch opponent of the Nazis and defender of the Jews. It also reveals Moscow's perception that Pius was anti-Soviet, which certainly could account for the post-war assault on his reputation. It's a great read and an enormously important book.

*Ronald J. Rychlak teaches at the University of Mississippi School of Law and is a member of the Catholic League's board of advisors.*

---

# **“The Unthinkable in the Twenty-First Century”**

*Rick Hinshaw*

George J. Marlin, *Christian Persecutions in the Middle East: A 21st Century Tragedy* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2015)

Bombarded as we are by daily news reports, we probably feel we know all we need to know about the unspeakable crimes being perpetrated virtually every day against innocent people – primarily Christians – in the Middle East. But how much do we really know, about the history, the causes, and, perhaps most importantly, possible responses to this persecution?

As chairman of Aid to the Church in Need-USA, which works to support the suffering and persecuted Church around the world, George Marlin is uniquely situated to give us a much clearer picture of this tragic situation. And he does so in this book, which helps us better understand the long and often painful history of Christian-Islamic relations in the Middle East; the current day situation of Christians in the different nations of that region; the proximate causes of their suffering and persecution; and, through the eyes of various Church leaders who bear the burden of ministering to the suffering faithful throughout the Middle East, some of the challenges that must be addressed, needs that must be met, and solutions that must be explored if the world – and the universal Church – are to help bring about a just and lasting end to the persecution.

And that, as Marlin makes clear, is his intent.

“Far more than supplying readers with information and perspective, or even alerting Christians and others in the West to the threat posed by today's ultra-violent expression of Islam,” he writes in the Introduction, “the purpose of

*Christian Persecutions in the Middle East* is to enable us to walk the Via Crucis, the 'Way of the Cross,' with these fellow Christians in the Middle East, to truly stand with them, and to inspire us to provide them with the means to help them continue to bear witness to Christ in the land that gave Him birth."

In "The Unthinkable in the Twenty-First Century," the book's second main section, Marlin gives us a heart-wrenching overview of what that "Way of the Cross" looks like for Christians in today's Middle East. He starts by recounting the carnage that the Ottoman Turks committed against Armenian Christians before, during and after the first World War, beginning in the 1890s when the Ottoman Sultan, "[t]o dissuade Christians from seeking more rights and freedoms ... turned to loyal Muslim tribesmen, particularly the Kurds, to attack and massacre" Christian Armenians.

"As many as 200,000 Christians perished" in what became, Marlin quotes historian Philip Jenkins, "a dress rehearsal for the later genocide" that would occur in Armenia during and after World War I – when, as Marlin quotes British statesman and historian Lord James Bryce, "the Turks hatched 'a plan for exterminating Christianity root and branch.'

"It is estimated that between 1914 and 1923, when a new state in Turkey was established, 1.5 million Armenian Christians, out of a total population of 2.5 million, were murdered by Turkish Muslims."

From here, Marlin, citing scholars and Church leaders of the region, details – nation by nation – the persecution of Christians today throughout the Middle East, in:

- Turkey, "Now a prosperous democracy under the rule of an Islamist party," where Christian communities "find themselves at risk of being extinguished altogether."
- Egypt, where "discrimination" against Christians is

“continuous,” and “violent persecution,” which “tends to surface sporadically” has “increased significantly over the last five years, in parallel with the Islamization of the police.”

- Lebanon, where a 15-year-long civil war between 1975-1990 left 125,000 dead, 80 percent of them Catholic; another 213,000 Christians fled the country; and “approximately 440 Christian churches and facilities were destroyed.”
- Syria, the “cradle of Christianity,” where Christians today are caught in the middle of the civil war between the brutal Assad regime and rebels, and now the ISIS terrorists. Open Doors International reports that “Syria headed ‘the list of the countries in which the most Christians were killed for their faith’”; and, according to a study released in January 2014, “as many as 600,000 Syrian Christians, a third of the nation’s total, have fled their homes and are displaced within Syrian borders or have been living as refugees in neighboring countries.”
- Iraq, where a mass exodus of Christians began during the Gulf War in the early 1990s, and has accelerated in the years since, as a series of events – culminating now in the onslaught of ISIS – has so terrorized Christians and put them to flight that the Archbishop of Mosul declared, “My diocese no longer exists. ISIS has taken it away from me.”
- Iran, where there is systematic discrimination and repression against Christians and other religious minorities, who are prohibited – under penalties including even death – from propagating their faith.
- Sudan, where “In the final decades of the twentieth century,” it is estimated that 2 million people may have been killed by fighting and famine, and 5 million displaced, as “Sudan’s single party authoritarian sharia-based government waged war on the country’s 6.6 million Christians and 18 million racial minorities.”

- Saudi Arabia, where “public practice of non-Muslim religions” has for most of its history “been strictly forbidden”; and where, in recent decades – even as the government actively sought to attract foreign workers for its rapidly expanding oil industry – it has repressively enforced these anti-religion restrictions against some six million foreign workers, including about 600,000 Christians. They face floggings, jailings and deportation for daring to practice their Christian faith.

Before exploring possible solutions to this ongoing scourge of anti-Christian persecution, it is necessary to examine its causes; and this Marlin does, again through his own insights, those of academic experts, and – in the book’s Part Three section entitled, “Christian Perspectives on the Middle East” – through the observations of bishops, priests and religious who have been “on the ground” ministering to the Church and her people throughout the Middle East.

Some lay some blame at the feet of outside influences; and indeed, Marlin describes the machinations of western nations, particularly after the two World Wars, creating artificial divisions and boundaries throughout the region. Whether done to enhance their own economies or spheres of influence, or even for altruistic reasons, trying to construct a more durable peace, such manipulations have surely fueled resentments and power struggles in the region, leading to the scapegoating and persecution of Christians and other minorities seen as tied to the West.

Some place blame more specifically on the support of the West – particularly the United States – for Israel, at the expense, they contend, of the Palestinian people. Sister Marie Melham, after recounting her years growing up peacefully with Muslims and Christians together in Lebanon, points to “exterior forces that use poverty to their ends and that want to sell arms.” Others, too, cite conditions of poverty as a breeding ground

for violence and terrorism, as well as for scapegoating of minority populations.

Yet it becomes clear, reading this book, that the root causes of anti-Christian persecution in the Middle East cannot be separated from the tenets of Islamic teaching and the history of Islamic rule.

“Unlike Christ’s apostles, who preached to all nations but did not coerce or threaten non-believers,” Marlin writes, “Muhammad told his followers that they had a duty to wage holy wars and to destroy pagan non-believers, referred to as infidels. ‘Kill all pagans,’ he declared.”

Muhammad taught that Christianity and Judaism were “earlier, incomplete divine revelations given by God,” Marlin explains; and thus Muslims, during their “centuries of conquest,” held that Christians and Jews were “corrupted by error and obstinacy and no longer worthy of carrying out the commands or teaching of the almighty.”

Also unlike Christianity, Marlin explains – again, citing scholarly experts – religious control of the state is held to be integral to the religious mission of Islam. And thus, Christians and Jews living under Muslim rule in conquered lands were treated as “dhimmis,” second class citizens – with certain freedoms but also many restrictions, and at times – certainly today – harsh repression.

Surely, as most of the commentators cited in this book concur, this extreme face does not represent the whole, or probably even the majority, of Islam in today’s world. At the same time, as Father Wafik Nasry, an Egyptian born Catholic Copt and expert on Islam and inter-religious dialogue, maintains, it cannot be pretended that “members of al-Qaeda and ISIS and many other Muslim militant political groups have nothing to do with true Islam. ...Both Muslims and Christians,” he writes, “need to calmly face the reality of violence in Islam.”

And speak out against it. As this book also makes clear, far too many moderate Muslims – whether out of intimidation, apathy, or other reasons –are loath to raise their voices against this anti-Christian persecution. And they are not alone. Too many in the West have also fallen virtually silent, including Christians. While some of those cited in this book see a military role in protecting Christians, virtually all see the need for a strong, universal moral voice – Muslim and Christian, secular and religious, political, social and cultural – rallying, as Marlin writes, to “truly stand with” the persecuted Christians of the Middle East as they courageously continue “to bear witness to Christ.”

The question naturally arises: in the face of their terrible, terrible suffering, *why* should Christians in the Middle East be encouraged to stay, rather than being helped to flee to a potentially better life? Besides the logistical enormity of such a mass evacuation – the current number of refugees is already overwhelming nations and aid organizations – it is first a matter of simple justice. These nations are their homelands, and they should not be forced to uproot their families, abandon their livelihoods, and move to strange lands. Beyond that, their presence as Christians is vital, not just to preserve the heritage of our religion’s birthplace. As so many of the commentators to whom Marlin gives voice in this book – particularly those bishops, priests and religious “on the ground” in the Middle East—make clear, their Christian witness is essential *now* if peace and justice are ever to come for *all* the people of this beleaguered region. Their courage and sacrifice, their love of family and neighbor, their willingness to suffer so greatly out of love for Christ, can be the most powerful weapon of all in calling forth the universal cooperation – including in the Muslim world – that can ultimately destroy the forces of cruelty and oppression.

As George Marlin intended, we cannot help, after reading this book, but be inspired to support that courageous witness in

whatever way we can – offering our prayers, our material support, and our voices, calling on forces of influence in our part of the world – media outlets, government leaders, churches – to do all in their power to bring this terrible situation to light, to aid the suffering, and ultimately to stop the anti-Christian persecutions in the Middle East.

*Rick Hinshaw is editor of the Long Island Catholic magazine.*

---

# WOULD YOU BAPTIZE AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL?

**Rick Hinshaw**

Guy Consolmagno, S.J. and Paul Mueller, S.J., *Would You Baptize an Extraterrestrial ... and Other Questions from the Astronomers' In-Box at the Vatican Observatory* (New York: Image, 2014)

“Science is God engaging with us.”

Thus do Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno and Jesuit Father Paul Mueller challenge – most effectively, in “Would You Baptize an Extraterrestrial” – the oft-stated contention that science and religion are mutually exclusive, or, worse, inherently in conflict with each other.

Brother Guy, with two degrees from MIT and a Ph.D. in planetary science from the University of Arizona, and Father Paul, who holds master's degrees in philosophy, theology and physics, as well as a Ph.D in history and philosophy of science from the University of Chicago, are well situated to examine, and to describe for us, the very natural, positive



relationship between religion and science. Both are members of the research staff at the Vatican Observatory, “the official astronomical research institute of the Catholic Church.” Brother Guy, a scientist specializing in “planetary physics and geology, and especially the study of asteroids and meteorites,” has worked there since 1993. Father Paul, whose “expertise is the history and philosophy of science – especially that of physics and astronomy” – has worked at the Vatican Observatory since 2010. Prior to that, he was a member of the philosophy faculty at Loyola University in Chicago.

As they make clear at the outset of this work, “Science and religion have common historical roots,” and “the war between them (if there is one) has not been eternal.” The Catholic Church in particular, as their own work and that of their colleagues at the Vatican Observatory attests, has been historically, and is today, not only supportive of, but actively involved in, scientific research.

Using their own extensive experience as Catholic scientists, they explain the relationships between religion and science, and debunk some of the myths about each – not in a contentious, argumentative way, but rather in a positive, persuasive way – using light-hearted humor throughout, and, perhaps more importantly, writing in a breezy, down-to-earth style that makes their scientific and theological reflections accessible to even the most novice of readers in either field – as I can personally attest, particularly in the field of science, never my academic forte.

Indeed, Father Paul explains, this is a constant challenge faced by scientists: making their research understandable to a general public that is often affected by their findings and discoveries, while at the same time avoiding the tendency to “dumb down” scientific discussion in a way that “inhibit(s) the conversation among scientists.”

But this book is clearly written for the average person – for

all those who struggle with the apparent conflicts between faith and science: those who tend to give greater authority to the Bible over science, those who routinely give science “the last word over biblical faith,” and those who “think that *both* science *and* faith should be taken seriously” but who “struggle” to hold the two together. And so they write in a very light, engaging fashion, using a series of dialogues between themselves that easily holds a reader’s interest, while opening our minds to new information and answering – although perhaps not in the absolutist, definitive way we might desire – some of the frequently asked questions they hear repeatedly about the relationship between faith and science.

Their dialogue, in fact, is built around six such frequently asked questions, involving the “biblical Genesis vs. Big Bang” theories of creation; the “Galileo Affair”; the star of Bethlehem; the end of the world; the “demotion” of Pluto from the status of a planet to a “dwarf planet”; and the question that became the book’s title, “Would you baptize an extraterrestrial?”

Each chapter is compelling, in the details the authors provide, from their own research and experience about each of these topics; in the answers they offer; and in the new questions they raise for us to contemplate – perhaps, after reading this book, with a broader perspective.

Certain of their observations stand out. For example, they contend that the perceived “war between science and religion” dates *not* “from the [17th century] time of Galileo, as so many people seem to think,” but “only from the late Victorian era” some 200 years later – placing it, in the observation of this reader, at the cusp of the impending 20th century secularist revolution, which has advanced the idea of an inherent conflict between science and religion as a way to discredit and ridicule religious belief.

Brother Guy illustrates this by describing “the most memorable time” he was asked this book’s title question.

It was prior to a talk he was to give at the Birmingham Science Festival in England in 2010.

“As it turned out, the day of my talk happened to coincide exactly with the visit of Pope Benedict to Birmingham,” he recounts, “so the cream of British journalism was there” and naturally “all they wanted to ask me about was the Pope.” But “they kept asking me questions like ‘What is your biggest source of conflict about the Pope?’ Or ‘Has the Pope ever tried to suppress your scientific work?’

“They didn’t want to hear me tell them,” he writes, “how much Pope Benedict supported the Vatican Observatory and its scientific work.” They “were looking for a juicy story and for ways to make me look stupid, or at least to make my Church look stupid.” So they moved on to the next “gotcha” question: “Would you baptize an extraterrestrial?”

When Brother Guy answered with what he intended as a joke – “Only if she asks!” – the journalists “all got a good laugh, which was what I intended.” But “the next day, they all ran my joke as if it were a straight story, as if I had made some sort of official Vatican pronouncement about aliens.”

These are the kinds of problems we know the Church faces when it tries to communicate its serious scientific scholarship to the public through a hostile, and often intellectually shallow, mainstream media.

And of course, for those modern secularists anxious to discredit the Church’s commitment to scientific research, the “Galileo Affair” is a handy tool. While this book is informative and entertaining throughout, its chapter titled, “What Really Happened to Galileo?” itself makes it a vital read. Brother Guy offers us an extensive timeline of that period which puts the Galileo controversy into a clear

context. He notes that many of the claims now taken as irrefutable “facts” in that case are “just plain wrong.” He points out that “in spite of what popular opinion would have you believe, the Church” – not only now, but historically – “is actually pretty good at allowing theological and philosophical debate and even tolerating dissenting points of view.” The Galileo case is so often cited by those seeking to portray the Church as “antiscience,” he writes, because “it’s one of the few examples they can come up with where the Catholic Church made that particular mistake.” And he makes a persuasive case that the mistake was made in that instance because Pope Urban allowed political considerations, not science, to guide his actions.

“More often than not,” he laments, whenever the Church “has tripped up over the years,” it has resulted from its being “tied up in politics.”

Science, too, is influenced by politics – as well as other internal, non-scientific factors, including “personalities, egos, multiple agendas and all sorts of human considerations,” Father Paul makes clear. “We all bring our own distinct human tang to everything we touch,” Brother Guy agrees – science as well as religion. “It’s not pure.”

Like these other factors, political influences – in both religion and science – are oftentimes internal, within the particular religious or scientific community. But they can also be external – as in Pope Urban’s need, in Brother Guy’s analysis, to mollify competing factions in Europe’s Thirty Years’ War. Today, I would submit, we see science constantly under pressure from outside factors – some economic, as in the competition for grant money or the need to get new products on the market; some health-related, as in development of new treatments and medications for illness and disease; and virtually all of it political, given government’s extensive involvement in the economy, in health care, and in providing grants for scientific research.

Indeed, as Brother Guy points out, “The conflicts you read about in the popular press” between religion and science “are usually not about science but about the use of science. No one doubts the biology behind stem cells; the issue is not whether the science is accurate, but whether using the technology based on that science is a good idea.”

And that seems to be the major point of departure between science and religion: that where science concerns itself with the “physical world,” as Brother Guy puts it, “religion worries not just what’s happening physically, but who’s doing it, and why, and what are the possible side effects to individuals and society.”

Yet, the authors argue, this does not have to lead to irreparable conflict between science and religion. We do not have to choose, they write, “between science and religion, between reason and faith.” Rather, the two fields can beautifully complement one another in the human quest for truth.

This echoes St. John Paul II, who termed faith and reason the “two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” In this complementary relationship, scientific discovery can tell us what is possible; ethical considerations, guided by faith, can then help us determine what uses of those discoveries will best serve individuals and society in a just way.

Science has to recognize, Brother Guy writes, that “there is more to reality” than simply “a list of mere facts.” People of faith need to remember that while scientific discoveries may change some of our understandings about God’s creation – even as changes in religious practices over the years have reflected growth in our understanding of God – “the truth itself does not change. ... God is the same as He ever was. If there was any change, it was in us.”

“Many proponents of science go too far when they try to explain love, or to explain away God, scientifically,” Father Paul writes. “And many people of faith respond with unnecessary fear and panic to these excesses on the part of science – just as some in the Church responded to Galileo with fear and panic.”

Christians and scientists are together, Brother Guy contends, in seeing the world as “an intelligible *logos*” that “can be understood via reason.” And “when we try to make sense of the world via reason, we are imitating God; we are acting in the image of God.” Thus, he writes, scientists, “no matter whether or not they believe in God, as far as I am concerned, by what they do, they are giving praise and honor and glory to God.”

*Rick Hinshaw is editor of The Long Island Catholic magazine.*