

Dinesh D'Souza: What's So Great About Christianity

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Dinesh D'Souza, a member of the Catholic League's board of advisors, is the author of the recently published book, What's So Great About Christianity. Bill Donohue spoke to him by phone about his new book. Here is an excerpt of their conversation:

Bill: You talk about the resurgence of atheism at the same time that you note the global triumph of Christianity. How do you account for this kind of bipolar response?

Dinesh: We have two trends that on the surface seem to be contradictory. One is the rise of atheism, and there's certainly a rising militancy of atheism, and on the other hand, the sort of triumph of religion, and specifically Christianity, worldwide. Many people think that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, but in reality it's Christianity. Islam is growing mainly through reproduction or through Muslims having large families. Christianity is growing both through reproduction and through conversion.

I see the militancy of the new atheism as a sort of a backlash against the realization that religion isn't going away and there's a sort of almost explicit atheist campaign now to say, "Okay, we can't do much about the current generation, let's go after the minds of the younger generation through the schools and through the universities. So we lost this round but maybe we can do better in the future."

Bill: To one extent, 9-11 triggers in one's mind what is going on with the radicalization of Islam, yet so much of militant atheism comes down to thrashing the Catholic Church on matters having nothing to do with Islam and terrorism, but sexuality.

Could you comment on that?

Dinesh: Yes, I think that on first glance, it seems strange that people in the West who are liberal or secular in their values would see Christianity as a bigger threat than Islam. The reason this is odd is because Christianity has a lot to do with forming the central institutions and values of the West, including values secular people cherish. In fact, one of the themes of my book is to show how institutions like democracy, even science, certainly human rights, the concept of just war, the idea of compassion, which has become such a powerful value in our culture—these ideas are rooted in Christianity.

Bill: Ahmadinejad was at Columbia University recently and he was cheered by a certain segment of the student population. The only time they booed him was when he said that they didn't have any homosexuals in Iran. So the sexuality aspect of this really seems to be more troublesome to some people than the threat of terror.

Dinesh: Well, here you're putting your finger on something very critical and that is that Islam is viewed as a threat, you may say over there, but Christianity is viewed as a threat right here. In other words, Islam may want to impose the burqa and the rest of it on people in Afghanistan and in Iran, but Christianity is seen as interfering with the moral freedom of people here in the West, in other words, in Paris, in Boston, in San Francisco and so on. But this is why Christianity is the enemy—it's not even so much a theological enemy—it's a moral enemy. People don't object to the Trinity or transubstantiation, as so much as what they object to is the Ten Commandments, the sort of moral code. This is very important because very rarely is the objection to Christianity explicitly stated in that way.

What's the motive for atheism? Why are people attracted to it? Think about it his way: I don't believe in unicorns but I don't go around writing books about them. Why are guys like

Hitchens on a secular crusade against Christianity and against religion? I think that their objection ultimately isn't so much rational as it is a kind of objection that says that the idea of God puts moral judgment on the world. What the atheists want to do is get rid of moral judgment by getting rid of the judge.

Bill: In your book you made a very insightful comment about the effect of Darwin on today's militant atheists. How do these people account for the very existence of morality?

Dinesh: Morality is a massive problem for Metaphysical Darwinism, and by Metaphysical Darwinism I mean the people who believe that evolution is not simply a theory of how life from A gave rise to life from B, but rather it is a comprehensive key that is the clue to unlocking how the entire universe, and certainly all of life, functions. The problem for the Darwinians is simply this: evolution is based fundamentally on survival, reproduction, and self-interest. As Kant noted a long time ago, it's the very definition of morality to check self-interest. "I would like to do this but the little voice says no," or "I'm inclined to do that but the commandment says no," so the essence of morality is ultimately to militate against self-interest. Now, why would such a quality evolve? The Darwinians have been now for several decades beating their heads to the ground to try to find an adequate evolutionary account for morality. They essentially have to show that what seems to be unselfish, what seems to operate against self-interest is actually a disguised form of self-interest that is simply not obvious to us. So for example, a mother who jumps into the car to save her son is actually just trying to perpetuate her own genes. She may not be aware of that but that's the reason she's doing it. That's the evolutionary fraud that's pushing her in that direction.

The evolutionists have had modest success in trying to explain why people who share the same genes might act for the welfare for each other. But, of course, as I get up to give my seat to

somebody on a bus, I don't know that person. There's no reason to believe that they would ever help me. Or if I donate blood, or if I am a soldier giving my life for my country. Here these are sacrifices of strangers, or Mother Teresa, or Maximillian Kolbe, and so on. You can go on and on down the list as a whole domain of human morality that cannot be reduced to simply, "I'm just doing it because this person is, in some sense, related to me."

Bill: It's funny you mention that, because the fixation on Mother Teresa that Christopher Hitchens has lies to some extent with the fact that he thinks that the state ought to salvage the poor. He doesn't accept the idea of altruism and so he looks at this little Albanian nun as almost a threat to everything that he stands for.

Dinesh: I think that is part of it but there's another part of it that is much deeper than that, and it's the following: Mother Teresa, at one point, was hugging a leper, at which point someone said to her, "I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world." And she replied, "I wouldn't either, I'm doing it for the love of Christ." Now what this suggests is that Mother Teresa's motivation goes way beyond secular explanation. Ultimately a certain level of human goodness requires transcendent motivation. This is what gets Hitchens. They can say, "Obviously one does not have to be a believer to do good." And that's true. But the question is, "Does the kind of life that Mother Teresa represented, can that occur with a purely secular outlook? What would be its rationale? Why would you act that way if you didn't have her motive?" I think this is what makes Mother Teresa a supreme example of human goodness. That's why it's so important for the atheists to pull her down.

Bill: You mention also in your book about Darwin, how he lost his faith at least in part because he rejected Christianity's concept of eternal damnation. I can't help but think there is almost an infantile rejection of authority that we are working

with here, or a kind of narcissism. The concept of do's and don'ts, and eternal damnations, and the Ten Command-ments—this is positively threatening to these people, and particularly when it gets into the realm of sexuality.

Dinesh: Yes, I think we're seeing a new phenomenon that's occurred in the West really since World War II. This is the idea that the only guide for how I should act is my inner self, an inner self in pursuit of unceasing self-fulfillment and self-expression. My point is that what happened in the 1960s was that this morality went mainstream. And so we began to see, if you will, not only an attack on traditional morality as sort of constraining this quest for self-fulfillment, but a sort of new morality that adopts self-fulfillment itself as a moral ideal and sort of turned against traditional morality as being nothing more than a disguised form of hypo-crisy. This is why whenever people espouse moral values and fall short of them, there's almost a gleeful howl that goes through the culture: "Look, you espouse A but you do B." And so hypocrisy has now become our cardinal virtue. And why? Because in this code of self-fulfillment, the only value is be true to yourself, and to be true to yourself means, "Don't say one thing and do another." In a sense, you may say that the standard is lowered to bring it into line with human desire.

Bill: Atheists talk about how religion poisons everything, yet when atheism is embraced by the nation-state—we've seen this in the twentieth century with Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Mao—it always winds up with blood. How can they logically even begin to say that the secular crusade embraced by these totalitarians in the twentieth century is somehow triggered by some religious impulse?

Dinesh: Well, this is where the atheists are on very weak ground. They try to show that religion is the source of most of the mass murders and conflict in history, but the reality, of course, is that the atheist regimes are. And so people like

Dawkins and Hitchens do backwards somersaults to try to show that totalitarianism, even if it is explicitly secular, arises out of a mindset that is very similar to that of religion. And so, for example, their extremely convoluted efforts to show that communism was just another name for a certain kind of religion. So the idea here is to blame religion not only for the crimes of religious people but also for the crimes of atheists.

Bill: It's been great talking to you. Congratulations on your splendid book.

Dinesh: Thanks, Bill.

Dinesh D'Souza's What's So Great About Christianity is published by Regnery.

Donald Dietrich: Human Rights and the Catholic Tradition

Donald Dietrich

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Donald J. Dietrich, Human Rights and the Catholic Tradition. Transaction Publishers: To order, call (888) 999-6778.

Reviewed by Kenneth D. Whitehead

Hardly anyone disagrees today about how bad Hitler and the Nazi regime were for the world. Besides unleashing World War II, Hitler had plans to exterminate entire peoples—plans which

he proceeded to carry out before the eyes of a too-long unbelieving world in his Holocaust against the Jews and others considered subhuman, and which surely did mark some kind of evil low point even amidst all of the other violence and horrors that characterized the unhappy 20th century.

Nazism was especially bad for the Germans themselves. They lived under it longer than anyone else and suffered greatly from it, even though as a people they also furnished the principal means by which Hitler was able to inflict it upon the rest of the world for a time. German Catholics, in particular, were placed in the unenviable position of living under a government run by elements who only later finally came to be seen as criminals and madmen. While these criminals and madmen were in power, however, they constituted for German Catholics "the governing authorities" to whom St. Paul teaches Christians must be "subject," since "there is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Rom 13:1). The Church has generally interpreted this teaching to mean that good Christians must normally obey the duly constituted "powers that be" where they live—but obviously not to the point of falling into sin themselves.

Thus, living under the Nazi regime did constitute a genuine moral dilemma for Catholics and for the Church. This was especially true at first, when it was not always as easy for people living at the time to see the evil of the regime as it is for us today looking back. As the regime's evils unfolded, many of them could be interpreted, at least for a while, as mere aberrations or excesses. If the Western powers themselves went on for years trying to "do business with Hitler," it is at least understandable that Christians living under the regime should perhaps have tried to do the same more extensively and for a longer period of time than we would consider to be wise or even moral today.

So while resisting pretty much from the outset some obvious evils—such as the Nazi takeover of the media, education, youth

activities, and the like—the Church did also try to accommodate the regime in other ways. For example, the concordat which Pope Pius XI concluded with the Nazi regime in 1933—it was signed by the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who would later become Pope Pius XII—is much criticized today, but nevertheless provided the legal basis for the Church to try to deal with the regime at all.

Donald J. Dietrich is a professor of theology at Boston College and a specialist in German Catholic history. He has written other books, notably on the subject of why some Catholics in Germany supported and others opposed the police state. In *Human Rights and the Catholic Tradition*, he focuses on the experience of German Catholics as they attempted, in the light of their faith, to deal with the barbarism of the Nazi era and the problems and conflicts brought about by Nazism and the Second World War.

One of the author's basic premises is the incompatibility of Catholic moral teaching with Nazism. Hence, as the true nature of the regime became clearer, both the Church and individual Catholics generally became more opposed to it and more inclined to mount various forms of resistance to it (although the penalties for resistance of any kind could sometimes be drastic!). But these developments were neither automatic nor particularly rapid. As Dietrich notes, "until it was too late, most Germans...did not realize that the Nazis wanted something totally revolutionary."

The incompatibility between the Catholic faith and the Nazi regime was real. Dietrich examines and documents how Catholic moral teaching came to be applied to what was actually going on in Germany. His main focus is not on what the Church or the Catholic bishops were doing or reacting to, but rather on what Catholics themselves were doing and reacting to. In particular, he covers in some detail how various Catholic theologians and thinkers gradually came to see, and hence to condemn, the evils being perpetrated by the Nazis.

Not only did these thinkers and theologians finally reject the tenets of the regime. In the course of the Nazi era, they succeeded in developing a new personal and existential theology of the human person—emphasizing the dignity of the human person—which became one of the pillars of the official teaching adopted on this subject by the Second Vatican Council. This new approach proved essential in enabling the Church to participate as a full partner in the debates and discussions concerning democracy and human rights that took place after World War II. Both the vocabulary and the concepts of this new theology were largely developed by German theologians in reaction to the brutality of the Nazis. Some of these same German theologians also proved to be very influential at Vatican II.

The major achievement and importance of this book, in fact, lies in Dietrich's survey and analysis of the thinking of a number of major Catholic thinkers and writers who developed this new theology in reaction to Nazism. They include such still well known figures as Karl Adam and Romano Guardini, or, in the next generation, the Jesuits Gustav Gundlach and Karl Rahner as well as the latter's student, Johannes B. Metz. The degree to which some of these writers at first thought they were obliged to come to some kind of accommodation with Nazism was a surprise to this reviewer—although, of course, that stance did not endure.

The author also includes chapters on Nazi terror, sometime Catholic ambivalence towards the Third Reich (especially at first), the scope of Christian resistance, and resistance in the daily life of German Catholics. Dietrich is not uncritical of the overall Catholic record. He does not think the Church opposed Nazism as vigorously as she should have; this was because she continued to seek "institutional survival" instead. "Nazi ideology was critiqued by the Church when it affected the institution...but accepted when it focused on nationalistic patriotism."

"Since the churches sought institutional survival," he further generalizes, "meaningful resistance did not spring from Christian churches but from their members' attempts to uphold their faith." He includes an interesting chapter on how average German Catholics in practice often did act on their Catholic and Christian principles, contrary to what the Nazi regime was urging.

Dietrich is especially critical of what he sees as the inadequacy of the general Catholic reaction to Nazi anti-Semitism and aggression against the Jews in particular. He thinks Catholics and the Church tended to see and condemn only "pagan racism," and hence did not always take the full measure of the evil of the virulent and indeed lethal brand of anti-Semitism which, in the hands of Hitler's minions, led to Auschwitz and the Holocaust against the Jews.

Though he is critical, however, Dietrich's book is in no way an attack on Catholics or on the Church in the way that has become familiar in the anti-Pius XII books which have continued to appear; the authors of these books accuse the wartime pope as well as German Catholics of being sympathizers and even collaborators with the Hitler regime. On the contrary, Dietrich himself documents many instances of Catholic resistance even as he also judges that the Catholic resistance could have been stronger. Nevertheless, his own focus is so narrow in this book that he scarcely touches upon the Pius XII question at all, even though this would seem to be almost inescapably related to his own chosen subject matter. The period of German Catholic history with which he is concerned is exactly contemporaneous with the period during which the pope and the Church in Germany have been accused by a veritable legion of critics of having been "silent" in the face of Nazi persecution, if not actually enabling of it.

Not only is all this scarcely mentioned or even referred to, but Dietrich actually includes references to such anti-Pius authors as Susan Zuccotti, Michael Phayer, David Kertzer, and

even Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, as if the biased, inaccurate, and agenda-driven “scholarship” of these writers merited serious consideration. Meanwhile he seems totally unaware of the considerable and formidable body of work produced by Catholics over the past decade in defense of the unjustly slandered wartime pope. This is a serious deficiency, considering the author’s subject matter.

Again with his narrow focus, Dietrich also seems oblivious to the fact that another Holocaust is currently going on before our very eyes in the current war on the unborn being waged by means of legalized abortion. He correctly draws the conclusion from the Nazi period that “dehumanization...does seem to be the crucial component needed for sanctioned murder.” Yet he also refers at one point to what he calls “the pro-choice culture of today” as if this were a wholly neutral fact and not another case of “state-sanctioned murder.” Yet the great value of this book lies in how it brings out the way German theologians grew in their understanding of the evil being done around them and reacted creatively. Should we not be doing the same in the face of the Holocaust that confronts us?

Kenneth D. Whitehead is a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic League. His survey of the recent books on the Pope Pius XII controversy can be found on the League’s website: www.catholicleague.org.

Arthur Brooks: Who Really

Cares

September, 2007

Reviewed by William Donohue.

Every now and then I read a book that makes me want to stand up and cheer. The latest entry is *Who Really Cares* by Arthur C. Brooks, professor of public administration at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. We've become e-mail "pen pals," and I'm happy to say that Arthur is Roman Catholic.

Brooks has put together one of the most incredible indictments of the finger-pointing left-wing secular elites in recent memory. The same people who never stop lecturing the rest of us on our alleged greed, we learn, turn out to be the stingiest of them all. Others may have said this before, but no one has presented the data like Brooks. His evidence is overwhelming.

Who Really Cares pairs nicely with Paul Johnson's 1988 best-seller, *Intellectuals*, and Peter Schweizer's more recent book, *Do As I Say (Not As I Do)*. Johnson detailed the unbelievable hy-pocrisy of some of the West's greatest minds, from Marx and Rousseau to Sartre and Lillian Hellman; Schweizer did the same with today's celebrities, from Michael Moore and Hillary Clinton to Barbara Streisand and Edward Kennedy.

Unlike the Johnson and Schweizer contributions, Brooks doesn't focus on the big names—he makes comparisons based on demographic groups—but his rendering is similar: the reader walks away feeling a genuine contempt for the duplicity and arrogance of the lecturing class. And what will be of most interest to the readers of *Catalyst*, Brooks makes plain the wholly unearned reputation that secular liberals have in caring for the poor. They may have mastered the rhetoric of caring, but it is religious conservatives who are the

champions of actually doing something to help the dispossessed.

Brooks is nothing if not honest. He approached the subject of charitable giving through the lens of his graduate-school years, i.e., he took it as axiomatic that because secular liberals expressed greater interest in the poor, they were necessarily more generous. But as he learned, the data do not support this conclusion. Hence, he changed his mind. The "hence" should not be read flippantly: it is a rare scholar, in my experience, who allows the evidence to affect his conclusions; most are so ideologically driven that they do not let the evidence get in the way of their conclusions.

There are several myths that Brooks explodes in his book. One of them is that the American people are a selfish lot who turn their backs on the poor. Not true. "Private American giving could more than finance the entire annual gross domestic product (GDP) of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark," Brooks writes. And contrary to what many people believe, charitable giving cannot be explained by tax breaks afforded by the IRS. Only 20 percent of those who give to charities do so because of a tax deduction; 80 percent give because "those who have more should give to those who have less."

Charitable giving, as Brooks informs, should not be measured simply by writing checks. Using available data, he calculates time, as well as money. More than half of all Americans, for instance, volunteer their time to help some cause. Others, often the same people as it turns out, give blood; others may baby-sit for a neighbor. And so forth. Interestingly, those who give also appear to be more tolerant and maintain less prejudices than those who do not.

It is commonplace in the halls of academia to assume that conservatives are greedy and liberals are caring. But, in fact, it is conservatives who are by far the most generous—not only with their money, but with their time. It is not as

though they are richer: as Brooks shows, “liberal families earn on average 6 percent more per year than conservative families, and conservative families [give] more than liberal families within every income class, from poor to middle class to rich.” Similarly, Republicans give more than Democrats.

Why is the conventional wisdom wrong? Because liberals get brownie points for talking about the poor more than conservatives, even if their idea of “helping” the indigent is through government transfers. Quite frankly, they love to play Robin Hood with other people’s money, having never found an income redistribution scheme they couldn’t endorse. But as Brooks correctly notes, “*Government spending is not charity.*” (His italics.) The data also allow him to conclude that “People who think the government should redistribute income are less likely to donate to charity than people who don’t think so.”

All of this reminds me of Marx and Rousseau: Marx, the father of socialism, fathered a child out of wedlock (he impregnated his *maid*) and never gave his child a dime; Rousseau, another radical egalitarian, fathered five illegitimate kids and walked away from his responsibilities (though this didn’t stop him from writing a book on child rearing). For a modern day example of Brooks’ point, consider the Clergy Leadership Network founded by Rev. Brenda Bartella Peterson.

For Peterson, “paying taxes is a way of loving thy neighbor,” and for her clergy organization, slashing taxes is “inevitably an appeal to our greed, not to our generosity or compassion.” In other words, those who want to keep the money they’ve earned and spend it the way they choose (often on others) are the greedy ones. Those who want the government to pick the pockets of the rich are the altruists. They actually believe this!

The conventional wisdom is also wrong with regards to the generosity of the faithful vs. the faithless. It is a staple

of liberal thought that secularists are more charitable than churchgoers, but the evidence shows just the opposite. "Religious people are far more charitable than nonreligious people," writes Brooks. Indeed, he says that "In years of research, I have never found a measurable way in which secularists are more charitable than religious people."

What Brooks found was that the faithful are more charitable across the board. "Religious people are more charitable in every measurable nonreligious way—including secular donations, informal giving, and even acts of kindness and honesty—than secularists." They give more blood and are 57 percent more likely to give to the homeless than secularists. What is really astounding is that in the aftermath of 9/11, "People who never attended church were 11 percentage points less likely than regular churchgoers to give to a 9/11 cause (56 to 67 percent)."

Brooks drives his point home by comparing the charitable giving of San Franciscans to South Dakotans. Families in both groups give away about \$1,300 a year, but because the former make 78 percent more money than the latter, "The average South Dakotan family gives away 75 percent more of its household income each year than the average family in San Francisco." There's a reason for this disparity: "Fifty percent of South Dakotans attend their houses of worship every week, versus 14 percent of San Franciscans. On the other hand, 49 percent of San Franciscans never attend church, but the statistic drops to 10 percent for South Dakotans."

Could it be that those who are religious earn more than secularists, thus accounting for the discrepancy in giving? Not at all. Brooks details that "an average secularist nongiver earns 16 percent *more* money each year than a religious giver." (His emphasis.) Yet secular liberals "are 19 percent points less likely to give each year than religious conservatives, and 9 percent less likely than the population in general."

Family life is also an important explanatory variable. Married people give more than single people; they are also happier. And happiness is “strongly associated with high levels of giving.” To top it off, “American conservatives consistently report higher levels of subjective well-being than liberals.” These factors are all related. “Conservatives tend to enjoy more traditional, religious, and stable families than liberals,” says Brooks, and “these types of families bring ongoing happiness for most people.”

Brooks concludes that “religion, skepticism about the government in economic life, strong families, and personal entrepreneurship” are the four most important qualities that account for charitable giving. Because the poor actually are the most generous of all socio-economic classes—they give proportionately more than the middle class or the upper class—Brooks recommends that their charitable giving be given a tax break even if they don’t itemize. This makes eminently good sense.

As I said at the beginning, it is the non-stop lecturing we get from the educated talking heads in the classroom and in the media about the compassion they have for the poor—unlike those religious conservative types—that galls me most of all. Their idea of helping the poor comes down to higher taxes and soup kitchens, neither of which extracts a whole lot from them.

In the 1970s, I taught in an inner-city Catholic elementary school in Spanish Harlem during the day and went to New York University at night for my Ph.D. in sociology. In one class, after listening to hippie students blaming Exxon for the low achievement of inner-city students (I still haven’t figured that one out), I commended them for their interest in servicing the poor and then asked if they wanted to spare some time on a weekend tutoring my black and Puerto Rican students. No one spoke.

There is more than hypocrisy involved. These hand-wringing leftists are quick to condemn the pro-life community for its alleged fixation on the unborn, yet it is the faithful who are more generous to the poor than the faithless. Yet all Castro has to do is don his fatigues and talk compassionately about the oppressed—all the while grinding his boots into their faces—and he is a saint in their eyes.

Ronald Reagan once defined a conservative as someone who sees someone drowning from a pier, throws him a rope, but intentionally throws one that is a bit short, thus making the needy one work a bit before he's rescued. A liberal, by contrast, throws a rope that is plenty long enough, and when the needy one picks up his end, the liberal drops his and then goes off to help someone else.

Reagan would have loved Brooks' book. You most certainly will.

Patrick M. Garry: Wrestling with God: The Courts' Tortuous Treatment of Religion

By William A. Donohue

"I spent twenty years looking for a government that I could overthrow without being thrown in jail. I finally found one in the Catholic church." That is how Frances Kissling, the president of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), explained her mission to a reporter from the magazine, Mother Jones. As the record shows, her rhetoric is anything but empty.

One way that Kissling works to attack the Catholic Church is to challenge

the status of the Holy See at the United Nations. The Holy See is a sovereign state and has maintained a diplomatic corps since at least the 15th century. Kissling is determined to try to convince the 170 countries around the world that exchange diplomats with the Holy See that it is unworthy of such recognition. To that end, she has orchestrated a "See Change" campaign to strip the Vatican of its permanent observer status at the U.N.

"Vatican representatives have misrepresented, distorted and lied about what women want." This is the language that Kissling chose to characterize the Holy See at the outset of the Fourth U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing. Following the precedent she set in Cairo, Kissling sought to remove the Vatican delegation from the Beijing Conference. She failed in that attempt but not in her quest to condemn the pope and the entire Catholic Church.

CFFC is often described as the nation's largest Catholic pro-choice organization. This is twice wrong: it is not Catholic and it is not an organization. It has been openly denounced by both the Vatican and the U.S. bishops as being a fraud, and it has no members. Funded almost entirely by pro-choice foundations, CFFC is not only an oxymoron, it is the establishment's most persistently anti-Catholic letterhead.

CFFC was founded in 1973, setting up shop in the headquarters of New York's Planned Parenthood office building. Once Roe v. Wade legalized abortion, CFFC joined with the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, moving decisively to counter efforts for a Human Life Amendment. Its first president, Father Joseph O'Rourke, was expelled from the Jesuits in 1974; he served as CFFC president until 1979. Kissling took over in 1982 and has been responsible for shaping the anti-Catholic agenda of CFFC more than anyone else.

Kissling has long thrived on direct confrontation with the Vatican. In October 1984, CFFC ran an ad in the New York Times titled "Catholic Statement on Pluralism and Abortion." The ad, which was designed and placed through Planned Parenthood, maintained that there were differing "legitimate Catholic positions" on abortion. Such reasoning has become a staple of CFFC thought and informs its approach to Catholicism in general. For Kissling, there can never be enough dissent from the Catholic Church.

The credibility of CFFC hangs on its alleged Catholicity. The media court CFFC because it allegedly offers a contrasting voice within the Catholic community on the subject of abortion. Now no one doubts that there are some Catholics (approximately one-third) who differ with the Catholic Church's position on abortion. The question, however, is to what extent can CFFC be considered a Catholic group? Deny it the status of a Catholic organization and CFFC collapses to simply another player in the pro-abortion lobby.

The following statement is typical of the way CFFC distorts Catholic teaching: "The bishops won't tell you, but CFFC will: There is an authentic prochoice Catholic position." It was due to misrepresentations like this one that on November 4, 1993, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) released a statement stating, "many people, including Catholics, may be led to believe that it [CFFC] is an authentic Catholic organization. It is not. It has no affiliation, formal or otherwise, with the Catholic Church." The bishops added that CFFC "is associated with the pro-abortion lobby in Washington, D.C." and "attracts public attention by its denunciations of basic principles of Catholic morality and teaching...." And in May 2000, the president of the NCCB, Bishop Joseph Fiorenza, denounced the group for its rejection and distortion of the Church's teachings on life issues.

Despite what the bishops have said, Kissling continues to appropriate the Catholic label in descriptions of both herself

and CFFC. It is true that at one time she spent six months in a convent. But it is also true that her procurement of abortions, done illegally overseas in abortion clinics that she founded, is enough to merit her excommunication from the Catholic Church.

Kissling herself does not dispute the fact that her identification with Catholicism is based on her own definition of what it means to be a Catholic. "When I say I came back to the Church, I never came back on the old terms.... I came back to the Church as a social change agent; I came back to woman-church." Admitting that she is "not talking about coming back to Sunday Mass, confession," and the like, Kissling asserts that the hierarchy of the Church "doesn't deserve our respect."

Perhaps the most severe blow to the reputation of CFFC came on April 21, 1995. That was the day the National Catholic Reporter printed a letter by Marjorie Reiley Maguire blasting the reputation of CFFC. Maguire, an attorney who is divorced from the ex-Jesuit and Marquette theology professor, Dan Maguire, was for years a prominent CFFC activist. Indeed, she and her radical husband were once the CFFC's poster couple. But like many others who came of age in the sixties, Maguire began to have second thoughts. Included in her intellectual migration were second thoughts about CFFC and Catholicism.

In her letter, Maguire branded CFFC as "an anti-woman organization" whose agenda is "the promotion of abortion, the defense of every abortion decision as a good, moral choice and the related agenda of persuading society to cast off any moral constraints about sexual behavior." She explains that it is not the Catholic Church that is "hung up on sex." Rather it is liberals who are obsessed with sex. Questioning the right of CFFC to call itself Catholic, Maguire said, "When I was involved with CFFC, I was never aware that any of its leaders attended Mass. Furthermore, various conversations and experiences convinced me they did not."

In spite of all this, the media continue to portray CFFC as a Catholic organization in good standing. Yet even a perusal of CFFC's literature should be enough to convince anyone that CFFC has no love for the Catholic Church or for any organization that proudly defends the Church. Its 1994 publication, "A New Rite: Conservative Catholic Organizations and their Allies," lists as "the enemy" groups that range from the National Catholic Conference of Bishops to the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

At the top of the "enemies list" for CFFC is Pope John Paul II. At the time of the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, Kissling wrote, "If there is a devil in Cairo, it can only be released by the pope's obstructionist meddling." In similar fashion, Kissling stokes the fires of anti-Catholicism by charging that "The Vatican cannot be allowed to set policy for the whole world," as if the delegation from the Holy See was doing something untoward by simply stating its position as a duly elected member of the United Nations.

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This first appeared as a guest column in the October 10, 2002 issue of The Daily Catholic (vol. 13, no. 113), www.dailycatholic.org

By William A. Donohue

"I spent twenty years looking for a government that I could overthrow without being thrown in jail. I finally found one in the Catholic church." That is how Frances Kissling, the president of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), explained her mission to a reporter from the magazine, Mother Jones. As the record shows, her rhetoric is anything but empty.

One way that Kissling works to attack the Catholic Church is to challenge

the status of the Holy See at the United Nations. The Holy See is a sovereign state and has maintained a diplomatic corps since at least the 15th century. Kissling is determined to try to convince the 170 countries around the world that exchange diplomats with the Holy See that it is unworthy of such recognition. To that end, she has orchestrated a "See Change" campaign to strip the Vatican of its permanent observer status

at the U.N.

“Vatican representatives have misrepresented, distorted and lied about what women want.” This is the language that Kissling chose to characterize the Holy See at the outset of the Fourth U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing. Following the precedent she set in Cairo, Kissling sought to remove the Vatican delegation from the Beijing Conference. She failed in that attempt but not in her quest to condemn the pope and the entire Catholic Church.

CFFC is often described as the nation’s largest Catholic pro-choice organization. This is twice wrong: it is not Catholic and it is not an organization. It has been openly denounced by both the Vatican and the U.S. bishops as being a fraud, and it has no members. Funded almost entirely by pro-choice foundations, CFFC is not only an oxymoron, it is the establishment’s most persistently anti-Catholic letterhead.

CFFC was founded in 1973, setting up shop in the headquarters of New York’s Planned Parenthood office building. Once Roe v. Wade legalized abortion, CFFC joined with the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, moving decisively to counter efforts for a Human Life Amendment. Its first president, Father Joseph O’Rourke, was expelled from the Jesuits in 1974; he served as CFFC president until 1979. Kissling took over in 1982 and has been responsible for shaping the anti-Catholic agenda of CFFC more than anyone else.

Kissling has long thrived on direct confrontation with the Vatican. In October 1984, CFFC ran an ad in the New York Times titled “Catholic Statement on Pluralism and Abortion.” The ad, which was designed and placed through Planned Parenthood, maintained that there were differing “legitimate Catholic positions” on abortion. Such reasoning has become a staple of CFFC thought and informs its approach to Catholicism in general. For Kissling, there can never be enough dissent from the Catholic Church.

The credibility of CFFC hangs on its alleged Catholicity. The media court CFFC because it allegedly offers a contrasting voice within the Catholic community on the subject of abortion. Now no one doubts that there are some Catholics (approximately one-third) who differ with the Catholic Church's position on abortion. The question, however, is to what extent can CFFC be considered a Catholic group? Deny it the status of a Catholic organization and CFFC collapses to simply another player in the pro-abortion lobby.

The following statement is typical of the way CFFC distorts Catholic teaching: "The bishops won't tell you, but CFFC will: There is an authentic prochoice Catholic position." It was due to misrepresentations like this one that on November 4, 1993, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) released a statement stating, "many people, including Catholics, may be led to believe that it [CFFC] is an authentic Catholic organization. It is not. It has no affiliation, formal or otherwise, with the Catholic Church." The bishops added that CFFC "is associated with the pro-abortion lobby in Washington, D.C." and "attracts public attention by its denunciations of basic principles of Catholic morality and teaching..." And in May 2000, the president of the NCCB, Bishop Joseph Fiorenza, denounced the group for its rejection and distortion of the Church's teachings on life issues.

Despite what the bishops have said, Kissling continues to appropriate the Catholic label in descriptions of both herself and CFFC. It is true that at one time she spent six months in a convent. But it is also true that her procurement of abortions, done illegally overseas in abortion clinics that she founded, is enough to merit her excommunication from the Catholic Church.

Kissling herself does not dispute the fact that her identification with Catholicism is based on her own definition of what it means to be a Catholic. "When I say I came back to the Church, I never came back on the old terms.... I came back

to the Church as a social change agent; I came back to woman-church." Admitting that she is "not talking about coming back to Sunday Mass, confession," and the like, Kissling asserts that the hierarchy of the Church "doesn't deserve our respect."

Perhaps the most severe blow to the reputation of CFFC came on April 21, 1995. That was the day the National Catholic Reporter printed a letter by Marjorie Reiley Maguire blasting the reputation of CFFC. Maguire, an attorney who is divorced from the ex-Jesuit and Marquette theology professor, Dan Maguire, was for years a prominent CFFC activist. Indeed, she and her radical husband were once the CFFC's poster couple. But like many others who came of age in the sixties, Maguire began to have second thoughts. Included in her intellectual migration were second thoughts about CFFC and Catholicism.

In her letter, Maguire branded CFFC as "an anti-woman organization" whose agenda is "the promotion of abortion, the defense of every abortion decision as a good, moral choice and the related agenda of persuading society to cast off any moral constraints about sexual behavior." She explains that it is not the Catholic Church that is "hung up on sex." Rather it is liberals who are obsessed with sex. Questioning the right of CFFC to call itself Catholic, Maguire said, "When I was involved with CFFC, I was never aware that any of its leaders attended Mass. Furthermore, various conversations and experiences convinced me they did not."

In spite of all this, the media continue to portray CFFC as a Catholic organization in good standing. Yet even a perusal of CFFC's literature should be enough to convince anyone that CFFC has no love for the Catholic Church or for any organization that proudly defends the Church. Its 1994 publication, "A New Rite: Conservative Catholic Organizations and their Allies," lists as "the enemy" groups that range from the National Catholic Conference of Bishops to the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

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Kevin Phillips: American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century

by William Donohue

(Catalyst, June 2006)

American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion,

Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century

by Kevin Phillips

Viking, 480 pp., \$26.95

Remember when presidential candidate George W. Bush was asked in 1999 to name his favorite philosopher, and he named Jesus? For the secularists—those men and women who are more frightened by the public expression of religion than by its

absence—this was a pivotal moment in American history. For everyone else, Bush's answer was seen as being very nice.

One of those who has never gotten over Bush's response is Kevin Phillips. Now he has written a book, *American Theocracy*, that records his concerns. Though only a third of the book deals with the subject's title (the rest touches on the federal debt and our dependence on oil), the section on politics and religion is getting most of the attention.

Phillips has come a long way since his first book, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, was published in 1969. Written at a time when Richard Nixon won a narrow victory over Hubert Humphrey, Phillips spotted a trend where others only saw anecdotes: He maintained that the key to an ascendant Republican majority lay in the abandonment of the Democratic party by Southern voters. He proved to be correct.

While it is true that the Republicans and Democrats have changed a great deal over the past several decades, it is also true that Kevin Phillips changed as well. Whatever affinity he once had for Republican politics has long since disappeared. Now he is happier writing an excerpt of his new book in the left-wing *Nation* magazine than in the conservative *National Review*.

Phillips is a worried soul these days. What worries him are people like you and me. Catholic League members, along with traditional Christians and Jews, are a problem. That's because most of these people believe it is wrong to kill innocent human beings. Moreover, most of us refuse to sanction a wedding between a couple of guys. It's the practical application of a religiously informed conscience that is deeply troubling to him: when people of faith bring their convictions to bear on public policy issues, they are promoting a theocracy. Or so he believes.

It's too bad we're not like the Europeans and Canadians,

Phillips says. What he means by this is that it's too bad we continue to go to church in relatively large numbers. For example, he correctly observes that the Europeans and Canadians are marked by "a secular and often agnostic Christianity." And he is honest enough to say that "none of the western countries in which Reformation Protestantism bred its radical or anarchic sects nearly five hundred years earlier—England, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands—still [have] congregations of any great magnitude adhering to that theology."

Phillips does more than just make an observation about the decline in church attendance in Europe and Canada—he finds it comforting. Indeed, he is not pleased that "even sympathetic commentators" in Europe talk about the "catastrophic decline" in church attendance. Why should the near absence of Christians in church be labeled "catastrophic," he reasons, especially when those making such determinations are not unhappy with the results?

Unfortunately for the U.S., Phillips avers, we're not following the lead of our more enlightened European brothers. As a matter of fact, we're plagued with a Jesus-fearing president and a Republican party that has captured the heart and soul of the faithful. That's what makes us a theocracy—we're a nation ruled by religion. How did we get that way?

At one point in his book, Phillips says, "In the 1960s and 1970s, to be sure, secular liberals grossly misread American and world history by trying to push religion out of the public square, so to speak. In doing so, they gave faith-based conservatism a legitimate basis for countermobilization." Fair enough. So what's the problem? The very next sentence shows his political colors: "But in some ways the conservative countertrend itself has become a bigger danger since its acceleration in the aftermath of September 11."

To know what Phillips is talking about, consider the issues he thinks has the imprint of the theocrat written all over them: abortion, euthanasia, the Equal Rights Amendment for women, gay marriage, etc. Phillips thinks that those who are opposed to these “rights” are dangerous. That’s his choice, but in doing so he also shows some sloppy thinking.

Take abortion. It’s not just those who go to church who are against abortion—many Americans of little or no faith oppose killing the unborn. For example, one of the most consistently pro-life voices over the last few decades is that of Nat Hentoff. Nat, who is a good friend of the Catholic League, is a Jewish, atheist, left-wing writer whose commitment to civil rights includes protection of the unborn. And what about all those young people today, many of whom are not exactly weekly attendees at church, who are convinced that sonograms don’t lie: They’ve seen the pictures and know that a fetus is a human being.

The intentional killing of Terry Schiavo did more to spur a long overdue national discussion on the merits of doctor-assisted suicide and euthanasia in general than all the books on the subject combined. To think that those who defended her right to live are mostly theocratic warriors is nonsense.

Phillips talks about “the excitement of women” in the 1970s who wanted an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and the “minimal” support the ERA got from traditional Christians and Jews. Evidently, he is wholly unaware of the fact that when the ERA was put on the ballot in a referendum in New York and New Jersey, women turned out in record numbers to overwhelmingly defeat it. That’s not my interpretation—it’s what was reported in the New York Times. These are hardly the kind of theocratic zealots that Phillips would have us believe: New York and New Jersey are not part of the Bible belt.

“To religious traditionalists,” Phillips writes, “homosexuality threatened the institutions of family and

marriage.” He admits that in all eleven states where there was a referendum on this issue, it lost. He further notes that in seven of the eleven states, “conservative denominations [were] strong.” What he declines to say is that even in places like Oregon—where church attendance is notoriously low, and where agnostics and atheists are a sizable segment of the population—the voters turned against gay marriage.

Like all writers, Phillips chooses his words carefully. When speaking of the plight of Terry Schiavo, he uses terms like “a vegetative patient’s right to die.” And when he talks about crimes against fetuses, he always makes sure the reader gets his point about “crimes against fetuses.” Regarding the latter, Phillips has in mind things like the federal Unborn Victims of Violence Act, a bill that makes it a crime to intentionally assault a pregnant woman’s baby. In his mind, only theocrats want to protect the baby from being harmed or killed.

Like so many others who are terrified of the faithful bringing their religion to bear in the public square, Phillips frames the issue as those who favor science versus those who favor theology. Evidently he never heard of Pope John Paul II’s encyclical on faith and reason. Nor is he aware of the Catholic tradition that sees no inherent tension between the two. This is what happens when a writer draws mostly on the thinking that is prevalent in some Protestant circles, and concludes that all of Christianity adheres to such positions.

To get an idea of how the false dichotomy between faith and reason works, consider abortion. Phillips would have us believe that if practicing Christians are more pro-life than their more secular cohorts, then that makes abortion a religious issue. But it is not the Bible that teaches that human life begins at fertilization: it is what science teaches. It was scientists, not theologians, who discovered DNA, and it was they who determined that all the properties that make us human are present at conception (and not at some

later stage). To acknowledge this scientific reality hardly makes one a theocrat.

Though Phillips does not come right out and say it, the inescapable conclusion of his book is that secularists need to seize control of society and the faithful need to have their wings clipped. The former, he is convinced, are the good guys who don't want to impose their morality on anyone; the latter are the bad guys who want to shove their religion down everyone's throat.

Here's how it works. Phillips holds that those who want to overturn thousands of years of tradition by radically restructuring the institution of marriage so that two guys can marry really have no interest in imposing their morality on the rest of us, but those who resist are considered judgmental and intolerant. That the proponents of gay marriage want unelected judges to trump the authority of the people's representatives is similarly seen as democratic, even at the cost of jettisoning the consent of the governed, a hallmark of democratic rule. It takes more than arrogance to reach this conclusion.

John Adams once wrote that the Constitution "was made only for a moral and religious people." That's because self-government depends on a self-governing people, and it is difficult to reach this objective absent the cultivation of a morally sound and religiously observant public. This doesn't mean that a free society is enhanced by allowing religious zealots to take command of the reins of government, but neither does it mean that the faithful are a menace to liberty whose place in society needs to be curtailed.

Kevin Phillips has no real reason to worry—most of the people he thinks are theocrats are no more inclined to live under theocratic rule than he is. It is we who need to worry about the solutions people like him have for problems they sincerely believe exist.

Joseph A. Varacalli: The Catholic Experience in America

by Kenneth D. Whitehead

(4/2006)

The Catholic Experience in America

by Joseph A. Varacalli

Greenwood Publishing Group, 12-30-05

The Greenwood Press is currently publishing a valuable series of books on "The American Religious Experience." The books in the series are intended to be basic reference books, possibly even textbooks, on the subjects they cover. At the same time they are supposed to be informative and readable volumes for the general reader who wants to acquire a basic knowledge about the "American" religion covered in a particular volume—Mormonism, for example, or even Buddhism, or, in the present case, Catholicism as it is found in this country. The Catholic Church, of course, is today by far the largest organized religious community in America. How this position was achieved in what was originally "Protestant America" is a fascinating and compelling story in itself, and it is the subject of this very interesting book.

In selecting Catholic sociologist Joseph A. Varacalli to write the volume entitled *The Catholic Experience in America*, the publisher made a wise and fortunate choice. Varacalli has established his credentials on this subject matter in such previous books of his as *Toward the Establishment of Liberal*

Catholicism in America (1983) and *Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order* (2001). He teaches at the Nassau Community College in Garden City, Long Island, New York, and is director of the Center for Catholic Studies there—one of the few study centers in a secular institution devoted to the study of the Catholic Church.

In this fast-paced survey of many aspects of the Catholic Church in America, the author does something most social scientists fail to do: he constantly reminds the reader of the truth of what the Catholic Church *is*. In other words, while he does not neglect describing the rich immigrant history of Catholicism in America, he goes beyond the sociological. Dr. Varacalli emphasizes that the Catholic Church remains the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church of the Nicene Creed—the world's oldest and largest continuously existing institution, one which originated with the apostles of Jesus Christ and which carries on today as a worldwide community under the leadership of the Catholic bishops of the world, successors to those same apostles, in communion with the successor of the chief apostle, Peter, the bishop of Rome, the pope.

This basic truth about what the Catholic Church is, as Dr. Varacalli demonstrates, can easily get lost in an era of either widespread “dumbing down” of the faith to a lowest common denominator in an America in which some type of generic “civil religion” now so largely prevails; or an outright abandonment of supernatural faith in a thoroughly secularized America in which the original ethnically oriented and village “church-bell Catholicism” of the original immigrant groups is now often little more than a dim memory.

Even while describing the Church as a contemporary social reality in America today, Dr. Varacalli never lets the reader forget, in other words, that the Catholic Church possesses a Creed; insists upon a definite faith content proclaimed and defined by the Church's magisterium, or teaching authority; and is not just what contemporary American Catholics might

decide they would like the Church to represent or to be. This author stresses Catholic truth and Catholic *doctrine* to an unusual if not unique extent in a book that is still basically a historical and sociological survey of the Catholic experience in America.

Within this basic framework of a community which professes a definite faith, the author looks at the undeniable diversity within Catholicism today, including the various national and ethnic origins of American Catholics as well as the unfortunate American "nativism" that arose in reaction to the huge successive waves of Catholic immigrants—and which eventually issued in America's still too widespread anti-Catholicism today. The author also examines the major turning points in American Catholic history, including the Baltimore provincial and plenary councils of the American bishops which so largely shaped Catholicism in America and produced such things as the Catholic school system and the *Baltimore Catechism*. He covers major church and state issues and the eventual election of the first Catholic president, John F. Kennedy. He does not neglect how the Church has dealt with such traditional issues as the basic rights of working people or of justice in the world, and how she is dealing today with such hot-button moral issues as birth control, abortion, homosexuality, and the biotechnological revolution.

A recurring theme in the book concerns the question of the degree to which American Catholics have remained—or should remain—loyal to Church authority, especially to that of the pope in Rome, and the degree to which American Catholics may accommodate themselves to American customs, practices, and usages without compromising or abandoning the faith.

Since the author is a sociologist, his treatment of what he calls the Catholic subculture is particularly impressive. He sees that the strength of the Church at her best has lain in her ability both to create a Catholic subculture and community into which American Catholics could be assimilated and formed;

and to sustain that subculture through the creation of supporting institutions such as Catholic schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, orphanages, a Catholic press, and a diversity of Catholic associations and societies.

However, not only is Dr. Varacalli very aware that the once solid and substantial Catholic subculture in America has been seriously compromised if not jeopardized by developments in recent years; his book provides one of the best brief accounts currently in print of just how and why this jeopardy has come about—and how both external pressures and dissension within the Church have weakened the seemingly solid American Catholicism that characterized the era of Pope Pius XII. While he understands the legitimacy of Vatican Council II as a genuine ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, he both sees and documents how liberal and dissenting elements in the Church sometimes exploited the Council and the legitimate changes it mandated in order to introduce “changes” in furtherance of their own agendas.

We are living with the effects of all this still, particularly with respect to a contemporary Catholic population of whom many apparently no longer believe all the teachings of the Church as declared by the magisterium; rather, they are “cafeteria Catholics,” who pick and choose what they wish to believe. Dr. Varacalli analyzes and explains this problem in terms that the dissident Catholic sociologist, Father Andrew Greeley, has styled “communal Catholicism,” or the acceptance of many of the symbols, practices, and way of life of Catholicism without necessarily believing in the truths of the faith.

The author also sees how the widespread acceptance of the doctrinal dissent which came about in the Church, especially following the issuance by Pope Paul VI of his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, has helped undermine the Catholicity of the very schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, and such that did so much to maintain the Catholic subculture in

America. At the moment, many of these institutions are badly in need of re-Catholicization.

While he is respectful of legitimate Church authority on principle, especially that of the Holy Father, Dr. Varacalli is both knowledgeable and candid about some of the failures of the Church's leadership in recent years. He believes much more could and should have been done to quell dissent and uphold authentic Catholic teaching and discipline.

Of special interest to many readers will be the author's excellent Chapter 20 on "Historical Events before Vatican II," and his relatively lengthy Chapter 21 on "Contemporary Issues after Vatican II"—this latter chapter being one of the better existing surveys of what has happened in and to the Catholic Church since the Council. Unlike some of the bland accounts that characterize Vatican II and the post-conciliar era as unalloyed successes for the Church, Dr. Varacalli understands that the Church has in fact been undergoing a major crisis. Better than in most accounts he understands and explains both the causes and the possible remedies for this crisis. In particular, he lauds the leadership of the late Pope John Paul II, who did so much to restore authentic Catholicism (though, needless to say, he did not do everything). Similarly, he counsels loyalty to Pope Benedict XVI as the road Catholics should continue to follow: he titles his final chapter, appropriately: "Staying the Course with Pope Benedict XVI."

Since this book is intended to be a basic reference text, it contains a number of Appendices with valuable information on the Church in America. It is thus worth having to refer to as well as to read through. You should inquire at your public library asking for this book—if only to motivate the librarians to order the book. It is the kind of book that should be available in the library for citizens doing research on the Church or for students writing papers and such.

Kenneth D. Whitehead is the author, among other books, of One,

Holy, Catholic and Apostolic: The Early Church was the Catholic Church (Ignatius, 2000). He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic League.

Ronald J. Rychlak: Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII and the Catholic Church Saved Half a Million Jews from the Nazis

by Eugene J. Fisher

(Catalyst 4/2006)

Patrick J. Gallo, editor, Pius XII, the Holocaust and the Revisionists: Essays. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2006. 218 pages. PB. NP.

Sister Margherita Marchione, Crusade of Charity: Pius XII and POW's (1939-1945). New York: Paulist Press, 2006. 284 pages.

Ronald J. Rychlak, Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII and the Catholic Church saved Half a Million Jews from the Nazis. Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 2005. 378 pages.

These three books, together with David G. Dalin's *The Myth of Hitler's Pope: How Pope Pius XII Rescued Jews from the Nazis* (reviewed in the September 2005 issue of *Catalyst*), absolutely decimate the attacks on the reputation of Pope Pius XII made

in the spate of books by James Carroll, John Cornwell, Daniel Goldhagen, David Kertzer, Michael Phayer, Gary Wills and Susan Zucotti. They meticulously re-examine the charges against Pius, charges which sadly have become deeply embedded in the very grain of our culture.

David Dalin is a rabbi, while Ronald Rychlak, Margherita Marchione, and Patrick Gallo are Catholic. This is of some significance since much has been made of the fact that the anti-Pius attackers are either Jews (Kertzer, Goldhagen, Zucotti) or Catholics. Protestants, in the main, have stayed out of the papal fray, having their own ambiguous history during the Holocaust with which to deal. The motivation of Jewish critics of the pope is complex. Historian Yosef Haim Yerushalmi put his finger on the nub of it in his response to Rosemary Radford Reuther in a 1974 conference when he noted that over the centuries when the Jews were in extremis they could look to the papacy for relief from attacks by secular powers, and usually received it. Thus, the inability of the Holy See to influence Nazism's genocide in the 20th century was profoundly shocking to Jews. Yerushalmi, however, goes on to note the relative weakness of the papacy in modern times in secular affairs, and to distinguish between medieval Christian anti-Jewishness and modern, racial, genocidal anti-Semitism, though noting, as have Pope John Paul II and then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, that the former was, in Yerushalmi's words, a "necessary cause" for explaining the latter, though not a "sufficient cause," being only one of a number of factors involved.

The motivation of Catholic critics of Pius is perhaps more subtle, though here again Yerushalmi shed light on it in 1974. While he acknowledges Reuther's "sincere and profound involvement in the fate of the Jews," he worries that for her it appears to be "part of a larger problem—that of the church itself," in which "she places the dawn of a new attitude toward the Jews within the context of an obvious hope for a

total regeneration of the church.” He goes on to note that “historically, reformist movements within the church have often been accompanied by an even more virulent anti-Semitism,” citing the Cluniac reform, Martin Luther (who advocated the destruction of synagogues and the expulsion of Jews) and Calvin’s Geneva, where Jews were forbidden to reside, though maintaining a legal right of residence and freedom to worship in Rome. The defenders of Pius, I believe, are quite accurate in noting similarly that for the authors of the anti-Pius books, the critique of the Church of the 1940’s is in fact a part of a larger, contemporary reformist agenda, which raises quite legitimate questions about their academic objectivity. Indeed, in the case of Reuther, the fact that she had used Jewish suffering to further her own agenda became patently clear only a few years later when she published a book rejecting the very existence of the Jewish state and declaring the Palestinians to be the true “Jews” of the time, thus placing Israel and real Jews into the category of “Nazis.”

The books reviewed here are for obvious reasons reactive in nature. As Joseph Bottum notes in the epilogue to the Gallo volume, we still await “a non-reactive account of Pius’ life and times, a book driven not by a reviewer’s instinct to answer charges but by the biographer’s impulse to tell an accurate story.” He adds, I believe wisely, that “before that can be done well, the archives of Pius XII’s pontificate will probably have to be fully catalogued and opened.”

Rychlak’s book, in a sense, comes closest to that goal, narrating Pius’ life within the context of his times. His estimate that the Church, through its nunciatures (which handed out false baptismal certificates by the tens of thousands to members of “the family of Jesus”) and through its monasteries and convents, rectories and other institutions saved some 500,000 Jews, is actually on the moderate side, with estimates ranging up to 800,000. Dalin, the rabbi, and

Marchione agree with Rychlak that Pius in fact meets the criteria for a "Righteous Gentile" as defined by Yad va Shem, Jerusalem's Holocaust museum, which Pope John Paul II visited so reverently and penitentially during his pilgrimage there in the Millennium Year. Gallo's book is composed of essays, half of which were written by himself, half by such internationally prominent scholars as Matteo Napolitano of Italy and Juno Levai of Hungary. Half of the essays are new for this book, half published in journals before inclusion here. Readers will be treated to the trenchant wit of Justus George Lawler and the inexorable marshalling of evidence of Ronald Rychlak. George Sim Johnson takes on the myths surrounding Pius XI's "hidden encyclical," which like a Brooklyn egg cream was in fact neither "hidden" nor an "enclyclical" (since never promulgated, it remained simply a draft). Bottum himself in his essays fills in the gaps, such as the Ardeatine Massacre, and, as noted, comments incisively on the controversy as a whole.

Each volume, in its own way, attempts as well to explain why the attacks on Pius' reputation were made. Dalin, not without reason, calls it a phenomenon of the culture wars of our time, in which the "left wing," secular media latched on to the discrediting of Pius as part of its not-so-subtle attempt to discredit not just Catholicism, but religious faith in general. Gallo notes the continuity between the current charges against Pius and those made by the Soviet Union in its Cold War propaganda against the West, again with Pius as a symbolic target for a larger agenda. It is true that the current attackers have come from what would be called "the Left" and the defenders from "the Right." It may be that to adjudicate this issue, like those surrounding Pius himself as Bottum indicates, we will have to await a time when all the documentation is out and the war itself a bit more distant in time and emotions.

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International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission, launched with great hope by the Holy See and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations in December 1999, which I was asked by Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, then President of the Pontifical Commission of Religious Relations with the Jews, to coordinate on the Catholic side. I would like to state that Professor Michael Marrus, on the Jewish side, and all three Catholic scholars acted with integrity and professionalism throughout what turned out to be for us all a grueling ordeal.

I believe those who read the actual statement of the group will come away with a more positive view of what the group accomplished than its critics present. The statement praises the objectivity and thoroughness of the *Actes et Documents du Satin-Seige relatifs a la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, a 12 volume set of documents put together by four Jesuit scholars from the massive materials in the Holy See's "Secret Archives" for the period of WWII. The statement also praises the four papers produced by the group analyzing particular volumes, and the group's correspondence with its sponsors.

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Whatever one thinks of the Pius Wars, this is a book to read. It is a book which gives us models to emulate in one's own life.

Underlying the specific issue of Pope Pius, of course, is the deeper issue of the relationship between traditional Christian teaching on Jews and Judaism and the mindset not only of the perpetrators but also of the bystanders of Europe during the Holocaust. For whatever the ultimate, and hopefully dispassionate historical judgment of the actions of one pope, we Catholics, as Pope John Paul II reminded us time and again, must come to grips with that history, repent its sins, and do what needs to be done to ensure that it will never happen again. A proper framing of this deeper issue can be found in *Catholic Teaching on the Shoah: Implementing the Holy See's "We Remember"* (USCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, 2001).

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Patrick J. Gallo, Ed.: Pius XII, the Holocaust and the Revisionists: Essays

by Eugene J. Fisher

(Catalyst 4/2006)

Patrick J. Gallo, editor, Pius XII, the Holocaust and the Revisionists: Essays. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2006. 218 pages. PB. NP.

Sister Margherita Marchione, Crusade of Charity: Pius XII and POW's(1939-1945). New York: Paulist Press, 2006. 284 pages.

Ronald J. Rychlak, Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII and the Catholic Church saved Half a Million Jews from the Nazis. Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 2005. 378 pages.

These three books, together with David G. Dalin's *The Myth of Hitler's Pope: How Pope Pius XII Rescued Jews from the Nazis* (reviewed in the September 2005 issue of *Catalyst*), absolutely decimate the attacks on the reputation of Pope Pius XII made in the spate of books by James Carroll, John Cornwell, Daniel Goldhagen, David Kertzer, Michael Phayer, Gary Wills and Susan Zucotti. They meticulously re-examine the charges against Pius, charges which sadly have become deeply embedded in the very grain of our culture.

David Dalin is a rabbi, while Ronald Rychlak, Margherita Marchione, and Patrick Gallo are Catholic. This is of some significance since much has been made of the fact that the anti-Pius attackers are either Jews (Kertzer, Goldhagen, Zucotti) or Catholics. Protestants, in the main, have stayed out of the papal fray, having their own ambiguous history during the Holocaust with which to deal. The motivation of Jewish critics of the pope is complex. Historian Yosef Haim Yerushalmi put his finger on the nub of it in his response to Rosemary Radford Reuther in a 1974 conference when he noted that over the centuries when the Jews were in extremis they could look to the papacy for relief from attacks by secular powers, and usually received it. Thus, the inability of the Holy See to influence Nazism's genocide in the 20th century was profoundly shocking to Jews. Yerushalmi, however, goes on to note the relative weakness of the papacy in modern times in secular affairs, and to distinguish between medieval Christian

anti-Jewishness and modern, racial, genocidal anti-Semitism, though noting, as have Pope John Paul II and then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, that the former was, in Yerushalmi's words, a "necessary cause" for explaining the latter, though not a "sufficient cause," being only one of a number of factors involved.

The motivation of Catholic critics of Pius is perhaps more subtle, though here again Yerushalmi shed light on it in 1974. While he acknowledges Reuther's "sincere and profound involvement in the fate of the Jews," he worries that for her it appears to be "part of a larger problem—that of the church itself," in which "she places the dawn of a new attitude toward the Jews within the context of an obvious hope for a total regeneration of the church." He goes on to note that "historically, reformist movements within the church have often been accompanied by an even more virulent anti-Semitism," citing the Cluniac reform, Martin Luther (who advocated the destruction of synagogues and the expulsion of Jews) and Calvin's Geneva, where Jews were forbidden to reside, though maintaining a legal right of residence and freedom to worship in Rome. The defenders of Pius, I believe, are quite accurate in noting similarly that for the authors of the anti-Pius books, the critique of the Church of the 1940's is in fact a part of a larger, contemporary reformist agenda, which raises quite legitimate questions about their academic objectivity. Indeed, in the case of Reuther, the fact that she had used Jewish suffering to further her own agenda became patently clear only a few years later when she published a book rejecting the very existence of the Jewish state and declaring the Palestinians to be the true "Jews" of the time, thus placing Israel and real Jews into the category of "Nazis."

The books reviewed here are for obvious reasons reactive in nature. As Joseph Bottum notes in the epilogue to the Gallo volume, we still await "a non-reactive account of Pius' life

and times, a book driven not by a reviewer's instinct to answer charges but by the biographer's impulse to tell an accurate story." He adds, I believe wisely, that "before that can be done well, the archives of Pius XII's pontificate will probably have to be fully catalogued and opened."

Rychlak's book, in a sense, comes closest to that goal, narrating Pius' life within the context of his times. His estimate that the Church, through its nunciatures (which handed out false baptismal certificates by the tens of thousands to members of "the family of Jesus") and through its monasteries and convents, rectories and other institutions saved some 500,000 Jews, is actually on the moderate side, with estimates ranging up to 800,000. Dalin, the rabbi, and Marchione agree with Rychlak that Pius in fact meets the criteria for a "Righteous Gentile" as defined by Yad va Shem, Jerusalem's Holocaust museum, which Pope John Paul II visited so reverently and penitentially during his pilgrimage there in the Millennium Year. Gallo's book is composed of essays, half of which were written by himself, half by such internationally prominent scholars as Matteo Napolitano of Italy and Juno Levai of Hungary. Half of the essays are new for this book, half published in journals before inclusion here. Readers will be treated to the trenchant wit of Justus George Lawler and the inexorable marshalling of evidence of Ronald Rychlak. George Sim Johnson takes on the myths surrounding Pius XI's "hidden encyclical," which like a Brooklyn egg cream was in fact neither "hidden" nor an "encyclical" (since never promulgated, it remained simply a draft). Bottum himself in his essays fills in the gaps, such as the Ardeatine Massacre, and, as noted, comments incisively on the controversy as a whole.

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Raymond Arroyo: Mother Angelica: The Remarkable Story of a Nun, Her Nerve, and a Network of Miracles

(Catalyst, October 2005)

Like most Catholics, I know Mother Angelica through EWTN (Eternal World Television Network). Now, thanks to Ray Arroyo's inspiring portrait of her, I know her much better. The subtitle of *Mother Angelica* accurately reads, *The Remarkable Story of a Nun, Her Nerve, and a Network of Miracles*. Yes, it is all that and more—it is a gripping tale of a woman who suffered greatly yet always managed to beat the odds.

Born Rita Rizzo, and reared in Canton, Ohio, Mother Angelica experienced poverty, a broken home, maltreatment, multiple physical ailments, jealousy, back stabbing, betrayal—she was even shot at—but nothing could stop her determination. It does not exaggerate to say that the object of her determination never had anything to do with her—it always had to do with God.

In her lifetime, Mother established the Poor Clare Nuns of Perpetual Adoration and gave birth to the Franciscan Friars of the Eternal Word and the Sisters of the Eternal Word. She built the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament, as well as the largest shortwave network in the world and the world's first Catholic satellite network. Not bad for a high school graduate

who had everything going against her.

Her father was abusive, both physically and verbally, and eventually abandoned her (he tried to reconcile with her later in life). It took such a toll on her that she wondered why God would ever subject a little girl to such a miserable family. It also meant that she missed out on what other kids were used to, so much so that one of her cousins would later say of her, "She was an adult all her life. She never had a childhood."

The nuns she met in school were anything but kind. Their opposition to divorce unfortunately led them to oppose the children of divorce, and this was something the young Rita couldn't bear (the priests her mother encountered were just as condemning). Some family members were just as cruel, including an uncle who verbally beat up on her mother so badly that Rita literally threw a knife at him.

Yet there were miracles. There was the time when, at age eleven, she was crossing a street only to see two headlights staring her right in the face. She thought she was dead. Incredibly, she was able to jump high enough that she avoided being hit. The driver called it "a miracle," while Rita and her mother dubbed it a graceful "lifting."

Her stomach ailments were so bad that she was forced to wear a corset. The doctors tried to help, but to little avail. Then she met a stigmatic, Rhoda Wise, and that's when things began to change. One day, when she was 20, a voice told her to get up and walk without the corset, and she did just that. Immediately, her suffering was relieved. Her doctor, of course, insisted it had to with his treatments, but Rita knew better.

Her mother wasn't too happy when she learned that Rita had decided to enter a Cleveland monastery. After all, she had first been abandoned by her husband, and now her daughter was leaving her as well. But in time she would come to accept it.

As for Rita, her failing knees (and the five stories of steps she had to traverse at the monastery), led to her being dispatched back home to Canton.

After nine years in the cloister, Sister Angelica took her solemn vows. Her legs and her back were so twisted she could hardly walk (she wore a body cast), leading her to beg God to allow her to walk again in exchange for a promise: she would build a monastery in the South. What she wanted was a “Negro apostolate,” a cloistered community in service to poor blacks. After undergoing spinal surgery, and after being rebuffed initially by her bishop, she got her way; approval was given to build a monastery in Birmingham. Then came to the hard part—coming up with the bucks to pay for it.

In 1959, the year before she became Mother Angelica, she spotted an ad in a magazine for fishing lure parts. She decided that the nuns would go into the fishing-lure business, thus was St. Peter’s Fishing Lures born. In 1961, *Sports Illustrated* honored her with a plaque for her “special contribution to a sport.” Remarkably, this half-crippled nun with no business experience was able to garner national attention for her entrepreneurial acumen. It was just the beginning.

Building a monastery in the South in the early 1960s, especially one that would service African Americans, was not exactly a popular enterprise. It didn’t take long before local opposition mounted, even to the point of violence: Mother Angelica was shot at one night by one of the protesters (he barely missed).

Amidst what seemed like eternal struggles to keep the revenue coming, Mother started the Li’l Ole Peanut Company. Score another hit: By the end of 1968, she paid off all the monastery debt. Over the next decade, she would write books and give talks, managing to walk with an artificial hip.

In 1978, her life was forever altered when she was introduced to a TV studio in Chicago. Instantly, she got the bug: she had to have one of her own. Then came the first of many disappointments dealing with the bishops. When she contacted them about a Catholic TV show, none replied. Undeterred, she secured funding from New York philanthropist Peter Grace, and in 1981 got a young lawyer and Catholic deacon, Bill Steltemeier, to craft a civil corporation called the Eternal Word Television Network. Bill would remain a loyal and talented ally throughout the tumultuous times to come.

When word reached Rome that a cloistered abbess was traveling the country in pursuit of her broadcasting dream, she ran into trouble with both American bishops and Vatican officials. But thanks to Cardinal Silvio Oddi, head of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, she prevailed.

It was never easy. Every time Mother Angelica thought she was in the clear, another bishop would raise objections to her venture. Indeed, the bishops tried to outdo her by launching their own effort, the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America (CTNA). It was clear from the beginning that Mother Angelica was seen as a threat: EWTN had a traditional orientation and CTNA took a modernist stance. EWTN won. CTNA collapsed.

It was not easy for the bishops to watch their own creation flounder while EWTN won the admiration of Pope John Paul II. Adding to their chagrin was their inability to get Mother Angelica to switch to a new interfaith satellite network. As to her own operations, Mother Angelica did not take kindly to those clerics who questioned her authority to showcase some bishops, but not others. "I happen to own the network," she instructed. When told that this would not be forever, she let loose: "I'll blow the damn thing up before you get your hands on it."

In 1989, a report by the bishops complained that EWTN rejected

“one out of every three programs submitted by the bishops conference.” The bishops and Mother Angelica were clearly on a collision course: she had no tolerance for the theological dissidence that was tolerated by many bishops and their staff. The last straw came when the bishops conference sent a show to be aired featuring a cleric promising female ordination under the next pope.

The dissent, whether voiced by the Catholic Theological Society of America, or by feminist nuns who favored gender-neutral language in the Catholic Catechism, distressed Mother badly. She even had to endure being lobbied to push for “inclusive” language in the Catechism by the likes of “conservatives” such as Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston. That he failed should surprise no one.

Mother was more than distressed—she was angered beyond belief—when a woman portrayed Jesus doing the Stations of the Cross at World Youth Day in Denver, 1993. “Try it with Martin Luther King,” she said on the air. “Put a white woman in his place and see what happens.”

She was not prepared for what happened next. The reaction of leading bishops to her outburst was swift and vocal. Archbishop Rembert Weakland, who like Law would later be forced to resign in disgrace, blasted her for what he labeled “one of the most disgraceful, un-Christian, offensive, and divisive diatribes I have ever heard.” He had nothing to say about the incident that provoked her.

The bishops weren’t finished with her. In retaliation, they recalled priests who had been assigned to work at EWTN, and attempts were made to get EWTN thrown off diocesan TV channels around the country.

Just when it seemed things couldn’t get any worse, Mother Angelica and Roger Cardinal Mahony locked horns. In 1997, she accused the Los Angeles archbishop of questioning the Real

Presence: “In fact,” she said, “the cardinal of California is teaching that it’s bread and wine before the Eucharist and after the Eucharist.” She added that she would not obey an Ordinary like him if she lived there, and hoped that those who did would no longer provide him with their assent.

That was it. Mahony exploded. But while demanding that Rome punish Mother Angelica—and this went on for years—Mahony’s archdiocese was home to “a cavalcade of dissenters and anti-Vatican agitators.” This is the stuff that drives orthodox Catholics mad.

While she survived in the end, Mother Angelica had to ward off attempts by the bishops to take control of EWTN (one archbishop allegedly told her that certain bishops “want to destroy you”). To make sure this would never happen, Mother Angelica resigned from the network in order to save it: the bishops would have no lien on a purely autonomous, lay-run, civil entity.

Twenty years ago, Ben Armstrong of the National Religious Broadcasters aptly dubbed her, “the Bishop Fulton Sheen of this generation.” Cardinal J. Francis Stafford was also right when he observed that “Mother Angelica represented the plain Catholic, who is 90 percent of the Church.” Let it also be said that she overcame all kinds of adversity, and she did it all—and continues to do it all—for Jesus.

Rabbi David G. Dalin: The Myth of Hitler’s Pope

by William Doyno, Jr.

(Catalyst 9/2005)

Every day, the secular media bombards us with the idea that the Catholic Church is a backward, repressive institution, unfair to its own members and prejudiced against those outside its communion. Is it any wonder that so many Jews, and other non-Catholics—not to mention “anti-Catholic Catholics” ignorant of their own faith—have a distorted or incomplete understanding of Catholicism? Anti-Catholicism so saturates the media that even the *Jerusalem Post*, trying to correct the record, got its story wrong: there have been no fundamental “changes” in Catholic theology regarding Jews because Catholic teaching against anti-Semitism was not introduced at Vatican II, but merely developed (with the assistance of the Holy Spirit), and applied more conscientiously to the modern world.

That John Paul II increased the warmth and trust between the two communities is undeniable; but that John Paul II began the rapprochement between the Catholic and Jewish communities—as if everything up to his pontificate was something to regret—is a myth, which he himself would rebel against, were he still alive to refute it.

Fortunately there are many Catholics and Jews who have dedicated their lives to trying to set the historical record straight. One man in that mold is Rabbi and historian David Dalin, who first came to the attention of Catholics when he published a much-discussed essay on Pius XII and the Jews in the influential *Weekly Standard* (February 26, 2001). In it, he staked out his position in defense of Pius XII, and argued that many of the wartime pope’s critics—particularly embittered, dissenting Catholics—were not really interested in the tragedy of the Jewish people but merely sought to exploit it for their own anti-papal agenda. “Jews, whatever their feelings about the Catholic Church,” he wrote, “have a duty to reject any attempt to usurp the Holocaust and use it for partisan purposes.” That remarkable essay was re-published in the important anthology Dalin co-edited, *The Pius War:*

Responses to the Critics of Pius XII (See, "Why We Published *The Pius War*," in *Catalyst*, April, 2005, pp. 8-9).

Even before he came to the attention of the wider Catholic community, Dalin was known as an exacting scholar of Judaism, having already authored several important books, and written for such journals as *Commentary*, *Conservative Judaism* and *American Jewish History*. His knowledge of Catholicism and Catholic-Jewish history is no less impressive. And unlike so many who delve into this complicated area, Dalin has impeccable credentials: he received his B.A. degree from the University of California at Berkley, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He received his M.A. and Ph.D from Brandeis University, and his Rabbinic Ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary in America. Dalin, in other words, is an authority on this subject, not an amateur making stray and superficial comments.

Because of his body of work and reputation, Rabbi Dalin is a much sought-after speaker and lecturer, and now teaches at Ave Maria University in Naples, Florida, where he is a Professor of history and political science.

In his new book, *The Myth of Hitler's Pope*, Dalin directly refutes the thesis of John Cornwell's notorious book, *Hitler's Pope*. He uses the occasion to explore the whole history of Catholic-Jewish relations, and compares them to Jewish-Muslim relations, which are at the heart of current geopolitical debates today.

The Myth of Hitler's Pope covers three areas of concern for Catholics and Jews. The first, of course, is the life and record of Eugenio Pacelli, who served as Pope Pius XII during the Second World War and beginning of the Cold War. Against the polemicists and mythmakers of our time, Rabbi Dalin demonstrates the humanity, courage and charity of Pius XII, both before and after he became pope.

At every stage of his life, Dalin argues, Pacelli was an outspoken foe of every aspect of Nazism. With careful documentation, much of it new, from recently released archives, Dalin proves that Pacelli, did, in fact “speak out” against anti-Semitism, racism, warmongering and the atrocities of the Holocaust. His record as papal nuncio in Germany (1917-1929), as well as when he was Cardinal Secretary of State to Pius XI (1930-1939), is quite impressive. This is true notwithstanding the much-maligned 1933 Concordat between the Holy See and Germany, which Pacelli negotiated (on behalf of Pius XI) to protect the Church’s freedom against the onslaught of the Nazis. (By doing so, he preserved at least some mobility for the Church to protect persecuted Catholics and Jews.) As pope himself, from 1939-1958, Pius XII was the architect of the Catholic Church’s world-wide rescue efforts during the Holocaust, going to great lengths to protect Europe’s persecuted Jewish community.

One of the most important parts of Rabbi Dalin’s book is where he demolishes the claim that Pius XII was uninvolved in these rescue efforts, as if all Catholic rescue was spontaneous and independent of the pope. In fact, as Dalin proves, Pius XII gave direct orders and explicit instructions to his subordinates to rescue Jews; the result was that countless numbers of them were saved from Hitler’s death camps. This was recognized at the time, after the War, and after Pius XII’s death, by almost all major Jewish leaders and organizations. Dalin rightly criticizes those who attempt to diminish or explain away these powerful testimonials on behalf of Pius. Contemporary scholars like Sir Martin Gilbert, whom Dalin cites as a renowned authority, estimate that the wartime Church, under Pius XII’s leadership, saved “hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives.”

The second subject concerns a little known figure—Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem; according to Dalin’s research, he played a significant role in Hitler’s

Third Reich. Al-Husseini was one of the fathers of today's radical Muslim extremists and, therefore, a notorious anti-Semite who sanctioned Hitler's policies against the Jews. And Husseini did this, openly and publicly, at the very time that Pius XII was rescuing Jews in Rome and elsewhere. The story Dalin tells about this pro-Nazi cleric—who became a hero to Yasser Arafat, and whose theories are at the root of modern-day terrorism—is truly astonishing: he juxtaposes the actions of the two men, and chastises anti-Pius ideologues for ignoring al-Husseini's appalling record, while defaming a good and noble pope.

Writes Dalin:

“One of the most damaging side effects of the myth of Hitler's pope is that it perpetuates the myth that the Catholic Church, rather than radical Islam, has been and remains the preeminent source of anti-Semitism in the modern world...Today, sixty years after the Holocaust, the wartime career and historical significance of Hitler's mufti...should be better remembered and understood. The ‘most dangerous’ cleric in modern history, to use John Cornwell's phrase, was not Pope Pius XII but Hajj Amin al-Husseini, whose anti-Jewish Islamic fundamentalism was as dangerous in World War II as it is today. While in Berlin, al-Husseini met privately with Hitler on numerous occasions, and called publicly—and repeatedly—for the destruction of European Jewry. The grand mufti was the Nazi collaborator *par excellence*. ‘Hitler's Mufti’ is truth. ‘Hitler's pope’ is myth.”

The final and perhaps most important theme of Dalin's book is the strength of Catholic-Jewish relations—not just today, but throughout the ages. For a number of years, numerous commentators—many of them Catholics, alas—have depicted the history of Catholic-Jewish relations as one long trail of tears. But while it is true that there have been difficult chapters in this relationship, it is also true that a philo-Semitic or pro-Jewish tradition has always existed in the

Church—and it didn't begin at Vatican II. Employing all his skills as an historian, and without whitewashing any particular act of injustice, Dalin recounts how, with few exceptions, pope after pope, from ancient times to the present, raised a helping hand for the Jewish community:

"The historical fact is that popes have often spoken out in defense of the Jews, have protected them during times of persecution and pogroms, and have protected their right to worship freely in their synagogues. Popes have traditionally defended Jews from wild anti-Semitic allegations. Popes regularly condemned anti-Semites who sought to incite violence against Jews. Popes employed Jewish physicians in the Vatican and counted Jews among their personal confidants and friends. You won't find these facts in the liberal attack books, but they are true."

Noting that many of Pius XII's detractors also assailed Mel Gibson's masterful "Passion of the Christ," Dalin concludes his book with the observation that secularist ideologues who attack Pius XII—or John Paul II or Benedict XVI—are really engaged in the larger cultural war, against the Judeo-Christian values they represent. Rabbi Dalin calls upon both Jews and Catholics committed to their respective faiths to wake up, recognize what is going on, and fight back. As a first step, he proposes that Pope Pius XII be formally recognized as a "Righteous Gentile" by the state of Israel, as it has recognized other heroes who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

That proposal may shock those committed to the myth of "Hitler's Pope," because of ignorance or prejudice, but if they read this book, they may well change their mind and agree with Dalin's informed and heartfelt judgment. May Israel one day so recognize Pius XII; may the Vatican beatify and canonize him; and may Rabbi Dalin, a courageous and prophetic figure for our cynical age, live long enough to see both occur.

William Doyno Jr. is a Catholic author and commentator. A contributing editor to Inside the Vatican, he has been published in such journals as National Review, Modern Age, and Crisis, and is now researching and writing a book on the Vatican's role during the Second World War.