

TRINITY FOUNDATION LOOKS AT CATHOLICISM

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We get so much anti-Catholic literature sent to us from Protestant, mostly Evangelical, sources that it's enough to make me wonder whether the Reformation ever ended. Some of it is just plain stupid, but there is also some pretty sophisticated stuff being published. This is not the place for a rigorous analysis of what's out there (interested readers should consult the magazines *This Rock* and *Envoy* for more extended treatment), but I do want to bring to your attention some recent developments.

"The structure of the Roman Catholic Church is a totalitarian hierarchy." Furthermore, "It must never be forgotten that the Roman Papacy is an absolute, unlimited, tyrannical monarchy, a worldly, secular government." It never will be forgotten, at least to those who heard Richard Bennett's words: for three straight days, October 8-10, a small group of Catholic-hating Christians assembled in Erwin, Tennessee to hear claptrap like this at the first annual Trinity Foundation Conference on Christianity and Roman Catholicism. The Catholic League sent its own Arthur Delaney to spy on the conference and bring home the bacon, so to speak. He did not disappoint.

There was the usual Mary-bashing that one would expect at such a meeting, e.g., Timothy F. Kauffman concluded his paper on "Marian Superstition" by exclaiming, "Roman Catholicism is literally in league with the devil." Books, videos, pamphlets and other material were on sale, as well as compendiums that compared the Bible to Vatican II Documents and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (you can guess which source came out on top). Organizational charts of the "Roman Catholic State-Church" were thoughtfully provided.

John W. Robbins opened the meeting with a lecture called, "Bleating Wolves: The Meaning of Evangelicals and Catholics Together." Suffice it to say that he is opposed to any such embrace. Robbins has a particular vendetta against Charles Colson, the Evangelical who is leading a serious dialogue with Catholics like Father Richard John Neuhaus. So angered is he (and speaker James E. Bordwine) by the good relations that Colson and Neuhaus have forged, that Robbins blasts today's Protestant churches as being "almost as corrupt and apostate as the Roman State-Church herself." Almost. But we're still number one.

Robbins, who was a legislative assistant in the 1980s to Congressman Ron Paul of Texas, not only purports to understand "Romanist history," he even takes a shot at predicting the future. Billy Graham, he says, will continue down the path of his corruption by endorsing "future pro-Romanist statements." Worse, Graham's son, Franklin, "will make further approaches to Rome." But these overtures will not go unanswered, Robbins assures us, as he and his Trinity Foundation buddies will battle back.

"All of my prognostications," Robbins announces, "assume that history is drawing to a close, that the time of judgment has come, and that we are entering the final conflict." That goes without saying. But wait, he gives himself an out: "But that may not be so." So which is it? "Perhaps a gracious God will grant repentance to millions as the remnant proclaim his Gospel in ever clearer and bolder terms." The operative word is "perhaps." But perhaps not, in which case it's all over but the shouting. Alleluia.

What I don't quite get is Robbins' fixation on this business of "justification by faith alone." Even he doesn't believe it. On page 3 of his paper, he thanks the supporters of the Trinity Foundation for hanging in there, acknowledging that there is almost no support for what he's doing in the Protestant community. Of his backers, he says, "They will

receive a great reward in Heaven for the help they have given us." So acts count after all.

Robbins saved his big guns for the last day of the conference. That was when he took aim at "The Political Thought of the Roman State-Church." His one-hour talk was an historical overview of what is wrong with Catholicism (how would you like to listen to that at 8:00 on a Saturday morning?). No doubt he could fill a library with his thoughts.

Robbins began by noting that "this is still a free country—no thanks to the Roman State-Church, of course." But of course. He then informed the True Believers that "if the Roman State-Church had her way, meetings such as this would be proscribed; those of you in attendance would be arrested, questioned, and possibly imprisoned; while those of us who speak would be judicially condemned to prison or perhaps to execution—all in the name of God and Jesus Christ." No mention of torture, but that was just an oversight.

"This absolute world monarchy," is how Robbins describes the Catholic Church in world history, "developed into the first totalitarian power in the West, and the mother of twentieth century totalitarianism." So the Church gave birth to fascism and communism. Given the fact that Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot brutalized members of all faith communities—and had particular disdain for Roman Catholicism—it is amazing that someone like Robbins, who has read so much, has learned so little.

A quick tour of Robbins' mind looks like a mental rummage sale. He labels Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger "the current Grand Inquisitor." Ratzinger, who functions as the pope's chief executive, shouldn't feel bad: just last year that title was branded on me, and by a Catholic magazine, no less (*America*).

Robbins finds great fault with such Catholic principles as solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good. Solidarity may

sound nice, but the way the Vatican understands it, it is nothing more than a “vague collectivist notion” that the Church uses “in building its argument for world fascism.” And all along I thought it had something to do with “Love thy neighbor.” Now I know it is a Hitlerian doctrine.

Consult the Catechism and you will find that the principle of subsidiarity means that the Church has a preference for servicing people with agencies that are close to the people. It’s a fairly elementary understanding of human organizations, one that fits well with the American system of federalism. But for Robbins, this teaching is a ruse, a mendacious way to manipulate the masses. “There is little accommodation needed,” he writes, “between the principle of subsidiarity and the theory behind the fascist regimes of the twentieth century.” Chalk up two victories for Hitler.

You guessed it—what the Church means by the common good constitutes a third Hitlerian influence. To be fair, Robbins credits Aristotle as the source of the Church’s idea of the common good. But in a footnote, he quotes another deep-thinking Trinity Foundation malcontent, Gordon Clark, who says: “Now if Plato’s theory is a form of communism, perhaps Aristotle could be called fascist.” Why not? And perhaps Robbins could be called a scholar.

Given the Church’s love for fascism, it is not surprising to learn that Robbins blames the Vatican for collaborating with the Nazis. He says that this is “one of those topics rarely discussed in polite society,” which tells me he doesn’t read the *New York Times*, listen to NPR or watch PBS.

“The spirit of the Antichrist has been working relentlessly for two thousand years to achieve a worldwide consolidation of ecclesiastical and political power.” With all this overtime, I would have thought that the Church’s dream of a world government would finally be at hand. Robbins concedes that it hasn’t happened yet, but if the Catholic Church “fails to

reach her goal within the next hundred years, she will not quit." Good girl. "She will continue to work tirelessly for world power, even if it should take another two millennia." We do take the long view, don't we.

After perusing Robbins' paper (to read it carefully would be to subject myself to a penance that even I haven't earned), I couldn't wait to get to the conclusion. It was worth the wait. "The Roman State-Church," he declares, "is a monster of ecclesiastical and political power." "Her political thought is totalitarian, and whenever she has had the opportunity to apply her principles, the result has been blood repression."

Then, in words that would chill the spine (or at least give it a tickle) of any True Believer, Robbins states that "if and when" the Church recovers from a mortal wound, "she will impose the most murderous regime that the planet has yet seen." Move over, Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot, HERE COMES THE POPE.