

# WHO'S AFRAID OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT? by Don Feder

Reviewed by Susan Fani

In his latest work, conservative columnist Don Feder of the *Boston Herald* examines the role of the so-called "religious right," in which he claims membership as an Orthodox Jew. In this volume, which is a combination of recent columns and new pertinent essays, Feder makes the case for the importance and legitimacy of religious voices in the national debate of issues.

In examining the religious right, Feder explains the mostly Christian movement and its goals for America, which are nothing but the restoration of old-fashioned values and morality. As a Jewish man who is conservative and in agreement with conservative Christians on morality, he sets out what is wrong with the nation's institutions and what needs to be done to make things right. In doing so, he explores all the key moral issues of the day: abortion, gay "rights," the culture war, family values, and the like.

After establishing what the religious right is—moral people who would like to see the triumph of their values—Feder disabuses liberal ideologues of any misconceptions they have about the movement being monolithic. He sarcastically points out, "We're all white evangelical Protestants like Roy Innis of the Congress for Racial Equality, Olga Gomez, Rabbi Shea Hecht, Howard Hurwitz of the Family Defense Council, and Cardinal John O'Connor, leaders of the successful effort to defeat the Children of the Rainbow Curriculum in New York City."

He also brings in his religious and cultural heritage to make a point about religion. Contradicting the stereotype that Jews

are liberal in light of voting patterns and causes the majority support, Feder explains that his is a conservative religion with Biblical admonitions as to right and wrong. The feel-good philosophy is one that cannot be espoused by a practicing Jew and neither can abortion, cultural decay, and gay rights. He answers his question as to what a Jewish conservative is with the answer, "A Jew who is a conservative in the name of Heaven."

He details the differences between the sacred and secular viewpoints. Each has an accompanying philosophical system which affects how people live and act. The secular (which he also designates "neopagan") is built on the premise that God does not exist or that, if He does, He is set apart from His creation. As a result, man is not holy, but another life form, inseparable from the rest of creatures. This makes morality relative; since law and right do not come from God, they are subject to majority rule or transient considerations. This in turn leads to situation ethics, which is usually shaped by "popularity and convenience." Life is the end and pleasure the goal. Two ideals are set up for the world without God—radical individualism and socialistic collectivism, the latter becoming the new "god." The religious viewpoint is in direct opposition to this paradigm.

In this collection are essays ranging in topic from school prayer, domestic violence, and gay marriage to Hollywood's outrages, the National Endowment for the Arts, and political correctness. Of special interest to league members are columns on the movie *Priest* which Feder condemns for the bigotry and hate it promotes against Catholicism. Also, he writes about how the media champions dissident Catholics while neglecting the opinions of practicing Catholics, especially when it comes to surveys.

There is a column about the yearly problem of displaying crèches and menorahs on public property. Although the legal obstacles are no longer a problem, secular opposition creates

headaches. Further, Feder opines on the Oregon initiative called the "Death with Dignity Act" by supporters; he sees their attacks on Catholicism as part of their strategy to disarm the moral opposition to assisted suicide. "If patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, Catholic-bashing is the first resort of the secular left."

This book contains the brilliance and wit that makes Don Feder a delight to read and a man to ponder. He writes plainly and with much common sense. He is open about his values; he has an agenda which he would like to see become dominant in American life. His embrace of the religious right provides a defense of what he considers to be a prominent, if controversial, movement. By clarifying what the movement really is all about, he has helped to make it that much easier for religious people to take their places in the public square.

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