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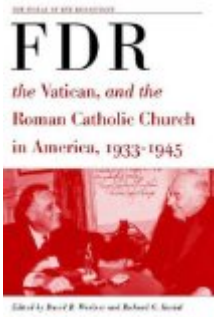

David B. Woolner, Richard Kurial, eds.. *FDR, the Vatican, and the Catholic Church in America, 1933-1945.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. xvii + 295 pp. $59.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4039-6168-6.

Reviewed by Kathleen Riley

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Reviewing the panorama of this nationâ??s history, the prominent historian Arthur Schlesinger Sr., once observed that anti-Catholicism was the "the deepest-held bias in the history of the American people."[1] In light of the recent scholarly interest in both the history of anti-Catholic prejudice, and the complicated relationship between the Vatican and the government of the United States during the World War II era, this book, a collection of essays from the proceedings of an academic conference held at the Roosevelt Presidential Library Hyde Park, New York, and Marist College in 1998, makes a significant and timely contribution to several current historical discussions. It was during the years of Franklin Delano Rooseveltâ??s administration that some of the tension between the Catholic Church and the American nation waned. However, some perennial sources of friction continued unabated and new sources of discord arose. In one sense, the New Deal and the gathering storm of the Second World War brought to the surface some of the "best of times" and the "worst of times," although the overall effect on future relations between the Vatican, the American government, and the Catholic Church in the United States was generally a positive one.

The sixteen essays are organized into four sections, and focus on a wide variety of subjects. They range from more familiar topics previously explored by historians: the relationship between FDR and Al Smith, Monsignor John A. Ryan and Fr. Charles Coughlin, and the mission of Myron Taylor as representative to the Vatican in 1939. Other subjects are more "off the beaten path," like Upton Sinclair and California Catholics, the Roosevelt administrationâ??s recognition of the potential value of the Vatican in gathering intelligence, and the dealings of the Apostolic Delegation with the State Department on important diplomatic issues. The delicate "dance of diplomacy" is a pervasive theme, whether the focus is on personal interaction between well-known figures, or the communication between official agencies of the United States government and the Vatican as well as the American Church. Each chapter sheds light on important historical questions as a result of scholarly forays in new directions, and the book concludes with a thoughtful reflection

on the road ahead, that the study of past times of peril might yield the promise of "dialogue, understanding, faith and trust" (p. xvii) in the future.

The first section presents two essays on the broad topic of "Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Catholics." They are an exercise in contrast. One is written by a journalist and the other offers an in-depth analysis by a historian who has devoted much of his career to exploring the complex relationship between the Vatican and the American hierarchy. Michael Barone, editor at *U.S. News & World Report*, examines the phenomenon of "A Protestant Patrician in a Catholic Party," and argues that the tension, while never fully resolved, was quite productive, as FDR built a powerful Democratic coalition which included American Catholic voters who supported him in record numbers, despite his opposition to Tammany-style New York politics. Rooseveltâ??s genius succeeded in "including the excluded" (Jews as well as Catholics), and he appointed more Catholics to high profile political offices than any of his predecessors. Among these appointees was Joseph P. Kennedy and James A. Farley. The second phase of his administration was more problematic for he lost Catholic support in the more muddled international waters of the Spanish Civil War; though pressured by Catholic interest groups to support Franco, Roosevelt maintained neutrality, which was a disappointment. Nevertheless, Roosevelt "expanded the happy elastic definition of what it means to be an American" by reaching out to Catholics, and that was "no mean achievement" (p. 10).

In "Roosevelt and the American Catholic Hierarchy," Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J. presents a well-documented scholarly assessment of the alliances built between the Roosevelt administration and the leading movers and shakers in the American Catholic hierarchy: Mundelein, Mooney, Oâ??Connell, Dougherty, Hayes, and the often unpredictable Spellman. Moving from the difficult relationship which characterized the relationship in the World War I era, to the alliance built during the New Deal, forged on the commonalities of Catholic social teachings and progressive-style reform, Fogarty argues that Mundelein was "Rooseveltâ??s champion," and served the administration well as the Catholic spokesman against Nazi aggression. When Eugenio Pacelli became Pope Pius XII in 1939, the star of his friend, Francis Spellman, began to rise, and he became the "Vaticanâ??s man" in the American hierarchy. It was during the World War II years that some things began to unravel, and Fogarty covers a lot of ground here. Noting that American Catholic attitudes toward neutrality or intervention often reflected their ethnic origins, once the United States entered the war on the side of the allies, several contentious issues were predominant. One was the bombing of Rome, the "shoal" upon which the cordial relationship foundered; the close alliance between Catholics and the Roosevelt administration ended in 1944, "with the feeling among Catholic prelates that the president subordinated the interests of Catholics to transitory military expediency influenced by British policy"(p. 39).

In the second section of the book, attention shifts to "Catholic Friends/Catholic Foes" and more particular investigations. Anthony Burke Smith writes on "John A. Ryan, the New Deal, and Catholic Understandings of the Culture of Abundance," noting the "disconnect" between the New Dealâ??s ushering in of a consumer society in twentieth century America, and the "traditional moral and cultural assumptions of Catholic social teaching" outlined in the papal encyclicals, ***Rerum Novarum*** and ***Quadragesimo Anno*** (p. 49). In "Al and Frank: The Great Smith-Roosevelt Feud," Robert Slayton assesses the deeper reasons behind the broken friendship between the product of an Irish neighborhood in New York Cityâ??s Fourth Ward and the privileged Protestant patrician from Hyde Park. Both men had competing visions of America. FDR logically emerged as "the

ultimate target" of Smithâ??s "frustration, anger and sadness" (64).

Steven M. Avella examines "California Catholics and the Gubernatorial Election of 1934," concentrating on Upton Sinclairâ??s failure to win the Catholic vote, due largely to the hostility he expressed toward organized religion in general and Catholicism in particular in his 1918 book, ***The Profits of Religion***. Even though Sinclair lost his bid for office, he "left in his wake a rejuvenated California Democratic party" (86), and the growing influence of Catholics in California politics and future Catholic governors. Probing into the relationship between "The Practical Personalism of the Catholic Worker and the Pragmatic Policies of the New Deal" is the task of Francis Sicius. He reaches a bit too far in drawing parallels between the social justice thought of Peter Maurin, a poor French activist who worked outside the system and Franklin Roosevelt, a pragmatic and powerful politician and President. Another essay examines "A Neo-Scholastic Legal Scholarâ??s Ambivalent Reaction to the New Deal." Ajay K. Mehrota delineates the experience of Father Francis Lucey of the Georgetown University law center, who advocated a "middle way" between the more well-known Coughlin and Ryan as he traced the ancestry of American democracy back to the natural law tradition" (p. 106).

Philip Chenâ??s "Religious Liberty in American Foreign Policy, 1933-41" maps some of the precedents for modern-day Bush doctrine, as he demonstrates that the ideas of religious freedom (one of FDRâ??s "Four Freedoms") and democracy "had always been linked to â?¦ American foreign policy" (121). Through the pages of ***America*** and ***Commonweal***, Chen analyzes four policies during the Roosevelt administration: diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union, Mexican anticlericalism, the Spanish Civil War, and Soviet lend-lease. He makes a good case in recognizing the perennial "ambiguities that are an eternal part of the challenge" of conducting foreign policy with a respect for the issue of religious liberty (p. 136).

The common subject of the third section of the book is "Searching for a New World Order," with seven chapters revolving around FDRâ??s relations with the Vatican in the context of the Second World War. The effort of Pope Pius XII to open up the lines of communication with the American government is paramount. John Conway fixes his attention on the Myron Taylor mission, and sees Rooseveltâ??s motives as "essentially pragmatic" in seeking the Popeâ??s support "for a quick end to hostilities and the restoration of peace" (p. 145). According to the editors of the book, "papal diplomacy â?¦ constituted an exercise in survival â?¦ determining the possible in an increasingly impossible situation" (p. xiv), and Conway detects a tragic note in the strained relationship between Catholics and Jews during the Holocaust. The reforms of the Second Vatican Council, however promising, were "50 years too late" (p. 151). In "Catholics, Jews and the Bombardment of Rome," Michael Phayer castigates the Pope for his narrow focus on preserving Rome and the Vatican, arguing that his moral vision was asserted only late in the war, and that he was too pre-occupied with the threat of communism.

Peter Kentâ??s treatment of the war aims of the papacy in "Toward the Reconstitution of Christian Europe" takes a broad retrospective view, sparked by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the 1990s. "The aims of the Holy See during World War II had been focused on a postwar reconciliation of Christian Europe, in order to impede the spread of Soviet Communism" (p. 165). This was a dream delayed, but justly fulfilled almost a half century later. Sadly, in the editorsâ?? view, Pius XII was caught and paralyzed between fears of fascism and communism, and the "self-inflicted wounds" suffered by the Vatican during the war, undermining its ability to exercise a more creative diplomatic stance, would take "years to heal" (p. xv). In "Diploma-

cyâ??s Detractors," Michael Carter evaluates the wave of anti-Catholicism that accompanied the Myron Taylor appointment. His is an intriguing thesis, aided by an analysis of reaction in both the secular press and the pages of ***The Christian Century***: the ambassadorship served as a lightning rod "to renew Protestant political activism and interdenominational unity" (181). Ultimately, it was a failed attempt at "redefining American Protestant social identity in reference to Protestantismâ??s original adversary" (p. 203).

Another comprehensive essay written by an eminent historian of American Catholicism is Monsignor Robert Triscoâ??s "The Department of State and the Apostolic Delegation in Washington during WWII." This and the Fogarty essay contain the most insightful analyses of the entire volume, and the richest fodder for future scholarship. Trisco points to the productive dialogue between Archbishop Cicognani and Undersecretary of State Sumner Wells, which started even before the outbreak of war in Europe. Once open, these lines of communication dealt with issues from the bombing of Rome and prisoners of war to humanitarian relief and intervention for the threatened Jews. Trisco concludes that this dialogue was "characterized by intelligence, dignity, persistence and unflagging energy" and "fostered Rooseveltâ??s and Pius XIIâ??s parallel endeavors for peace" (pp. 242-243). Two final essays, by David Alvarez and Charles Gallagher, deal respectively with American intelligence and the Vatican and the controversy surrounding radio priest Charles Coughlin. Gallagher places much of the blame for Coughlinâ??s attacks on the Jews on Monsignor Joseph Patrick Hurley, who was also intensely anti-Semitic.

In an addendum, Remi Hoeckman, O.P., takes up the challenge of the 1998 document, ***We Remember; A Reflection on the Shoah***. Noting that a fruitful dialogue between Christians and Jews has been opened, he sees signs of hope in accepting responsibility "for facing history and for forging new traditions of human and spiritual solidarity" (p. 284). This sentiment mirrors the larger value of the conference and the book it produced; reminiscent of the words of the proverbial "wise man" once quoted by journalist Bill Moyers in the opening narrative of his PBS series, ***A Walk Through the Twentieth Century***: "In remembrance resides the secret of redemption." As we walk now in the twenty-first century, there is still more valuable work of historical interpretation to be done.

Note

[1]. John Tracy Ellis, ***American Catholicism*** (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 151.

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