

## **CHRISTIAN SOCIAL THOUGHT**

### **American Catholic Religious Thought**

**Patrick W. Carey (Editor)**

Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2004 (486 pages)

According to Patrick Carey, *American Catholic Religious Thought* came about by happenstance. When he began teaching at Marquette University, Carey could not find many books to assign on American Catholic intellectual history. Consequently, he began assembling his own collection of essays from key thinkers. In 1987, he published an anthology, and, in 2004, he has produced a revised and expanded edition.

Carey begins his book with a 100-page introduction that provides readers with a very helpful overview of his subject. He charts American Catholic responses both to secular movements such as the Enlightenment and Romanticism and to worldwide Catholic phenomena such as Modernism and Neo-Thomism. He recognizes the influence that these movements had on American Catholics, but he also demonstrates that Catholic thinkers were able to put their own distinctive imprint on each development. By the end of his introduction, Carey has shown that American Catholics produced an impressive body of scholarship between 1800 and the advent of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. He notes that even after Pope Pius X's 1907 condemnation of Modernism, Catholic scholars continued to do innovative work in a variety of disciplines from anthropology to psychology to theology. In arguing that Catholics made creditable contributions to the intellectual life of America and to the Church as a whole, Carey is helping to correct the more pessimistic views put forth in the 1950s and 1960s by church historians such as John Tracy Ellis.

Carey follows his introduction with selections from roughly a dozen thinkers. Some of his authors were prominent bishops such as John England and John Hughes while others, such as Orestes Brownson and Dorothy Day, were laypersons. For each contributor, Carey provides a short biographical sketch and a detailed list of primary and secondary sources that readers can consult if they want to study the person in more depth.

All of the selections are lengthy enough to give readers a good sense of the complexities of each author's perspective. For John England, Carey chose his 1826 address to Congress. In this lecture, England tried to defend the Catholic Church from the charges of nativists but also spelled out his very American—and not necessarily orthodox—vision of the Church. Likewise with Dorothy Day, Carey has chosen interesting pieces from the *Catholic Worker* in which Day explicates her thoroughly countercultural worldview. In one essay, Day condemned capitalism, collectivism, and all forms of war and called on Catholics to evangelize the nation's downtrodden.

Readers of this journal will be especially interested in the essays by Bishop John Hughes and Monsignor John Ryan. In an 1844 lecture, Hughes outlined his understanding of a Christian economy. He offered sharp criticisms of what he took to be the unrestrained capitalism of his day and blamed these excesses on the Protestant individualist spirit that he saw dominating the country. Ryan, a professor at the Catholic University of America and an ally of Franklin Roosevelt, critiqued both capitalism and socialism and searched for an economic philosophy that would draw on the strengths of both systems.

With anthologies there is always the question of why an editor includes one author and not another. Carey admits that he has omitted key Catholic thinkers such as Archbishop John Carroll, Thomas Merton, Bishop Fulton Sheen, and the civil rights advocate Father John LaFarge, S.J. There are other omissions as well.

When discussing slavery, Carey presents editorials from both the proslavery paper of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the abolitionist-oriented paper of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. These sharply contrasting essays give readers a vivid understanding of how divided Catholics in the North were in the 1850s and 1860s. Regarding some other issues, however, Carey emphasizes only one perspective. For example, in his chapter on the Americanist controversy (1880–1900), he highlights the writings of Archbishop John Ireland, who was a leading Americanist, but pays less attention to the anti-Americanists. Likewise, he includes the writings of Father John Courtney Murray, S.J. on religious liberty but not those of Murray's critics such as Monsignor Joseph Fenton and Father Francis Connell, CSSR. In both of these cases, it would have been helpful if Carey had published the exchanges between the two camps.

Still, this is a minor criticism of an excellent work of scholarship. Engaging and rich with insights, *American Catholic Religious Thought* will prove to be an indispensable resource for all serious students of American religious and intellectual history.

—John F. Quinn

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