

Fall 2002

## Review: 'The A to Z of Catholicism'

Dennis M. (Dennis Michael) Doyle  
*University of Dayton*, [ddoyle1@udayton.edu](mailto:ddoyle1@udayton.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/rel\\_fac\\_pub](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/rel_fac_pub)



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

---

### eCommons Citation

Doyle, Dennis M. (Dennis Michael), "Review: 'The A to Z of Catholicism'" (2002). *Religious Studies Faculty Publications*. 5.  
[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/rel\\_fac\\_pub/5](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/rel_fac_pub/5)

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Religious Studies at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religious Studies Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact [frice1@udayton.edu](mailto:frice1@udayton.edu), [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu).

up on the author's careful analysis of the origins of the first amendment in his 1987 book, *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment* (New York: Oxford University Press).

The author, now an auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese of Los Angeles, is an erudite and careful scholar. He weaves together a large amount of material on the way in which the Supreme Court in some fifty decisions since 1947 has approached religion. Bishop Curry seems to approve of the general thrust of these decisions but not the way they define the first amendment. That is, he disapproves the idea of a "wall of separation" but praises the many decisions in which the Supreme Court has extended religious freedom to diverse groups like the Jehovah Witnesses. But he is less than clear in his approach to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act passed by Congress in reaction to a Supreme Court decision in 1990 written by Justice Scalia. The Supreme Court invalidated the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in ways that disappointed many observers of the struggle to maintain religious freedom. Bishop Curry does not seem to apply his thesis to these events.

The author regularly retells the story of the isolation and even persecution of Catholics in the early or middle decades of the American republic. Some readers will feel that the unfortunate incidents during that period are not directly relevant to church-state relations today.

The author is an undisputed expert on the history and the origins of the first amendment. He uses that background to assert that the Supreme Court has somehow not clarified this understanding of the sixteen words about religion in that Amendment.

Readers may not understand the point of the title *Farewell to Christendom*. Bishop Curry is very clear in his approval of the historic declaration of Vatican II reversing centuries of tradition and exalting religious freedom. His praise of the work of Jesuit John Courtney Murray is extensive and full.

This careful study will be essential reading for the ever more numerous groups of scholars and activists who are involved in the study of the relationship of government and religion in America.

Georgetown University Law Center

ROBERT F. DRINAN, S.J.

*The A to Z of Catholicism*. By William J. Collinge. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001. xviii + 593 pages. \$34.95 (paper).

This reference work is an updated version of Collinge's 1997 *Historical Dictionary of Catholicism*, also published by Scarecrow Press. The new title reflects its place in a series that includes works on the "A to Z" of Buddhism and of Hinduism. The present edition has one new article, on Hans Urs von Balthasar, and contains many minor revisions and corrections and additions to the previous articles. An impressive seventy-four page bibliography that graced the first edition has been cut down to four pages in the new one.

Collinge draws upon Karl Rahner's well-known threefold division of church history, from Jewish Christianity to Hellenistic Christianity to the con-

temporary world church, to explain that the dictionary focuses mainly on the huge middle period. It is thus neither a Bible dictionary nor a dictionary of current events, but rather concentrates on Catholic concepts, terms, and practices from the patristic period through the Second Vatican Council. Items include doctrines and heresies, theologians and saints, popes and literary figures, movements and religious orders and congregations, church fathers and medieval mystics, as well as a host of other things Catholic. There are entries on Cardinals and Cardinal Virtues; on Easter Duty and Eastern Orthodox Churches; and on Salvation and Salvation Outside the Church. Other entries include topics such as African American Catholicism, French Revolution, Hospitals, Private Property, and Theological Notes. In addition to the dictionary itself, the book contains a chronology (timeline), an index, and five appendices covering popes, councils, Vatican II documents, papal encyclicals, and prayers. Much useful information can be gleaned from browsing.

The dictionary contains many entries on topics of theological interest, such as Catholicity, Christology, Ecclesiology, Ecumenism, Eucharist, Feminism, Grace, Liberation Theology, Sacrament, Social Teaching, Thomas Aquinas, Thomism, Trinity, and many others. I am happy to report that these sensitive theological entries appear to be as meticulously accurate and as free of bias as humanly possible.

As appropriate to a dictionary, the majority of entries are very short. Collinge consistently chooses the most important and relevant details to give his reader an initial grasp of meaning and perspective. The author's skillful sensitivity to historical context is evident throughout. The entry on Birth Control, for example, makes several clear, technical definitions and distinctions, but also appropriately treats the subject in terms of its historical development and discussion. The entry on the Resurrection, while not taking up controversies, expresses the basic meaning and importance of the doctrine not only with accuracy but also with theological nuance.

For individuals and small parish offices that already own the earlier edition, it is probably not necessary to upgrade. Serious libraries should get the updated and revised edition of this very useful reference tool.

*University of Dayton*

DENNIS M. DOYLE