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## Review: 'Inside the Vatican: the Politics And Organization of the Catholic Church'

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during a period of vicious religious persecution in the Soviet Union and also at a time when an impressive string of Communist political victories were being recorded throughout the world.

This volume is a welcome contribution to the present literature on a very important topic, which still holds a great deal of mystery. Perhaps its sequel will have more to say about the eventual successes enjoyed by the new papal policies (particularly in the Catholic and Orthodox East), which only came under the moderate conservative leadership of John Paul II. In this way, a second volume would help avoid the mistake of defining the effects of Vatican II and its relations with Moscow strictly in terms of John and Paul VI.

John D. Basil  
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*Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church.* By Thomas J. Reese. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996. xii + 317 pp. \$24.95 cloth.

Thomas Reese deftly lays out the intricate design of Vatican bureaucracy in *Inside the Vatican*. As a political scientist trained at the University of California, Berkley, Reese is attuned to and able to rationalize the structural complexities of an organization with international obligations that involve both ecclesiastical and civil politics. As a Jesuit with social science training, Reese offers the viewpoint of a sympathetic but critical insider who uses interviews with more than a hundred Vatican officials to delineate the personal dimensions of what can appear to be a highly impersonal bureaucratic structure. Using his journalist skills, evident in his recent appointment as editor in chief of the Jesuit periodical *America*, Reese clearly and concisely articulates why these complex bureaucratic structures came to exist, and why they continue; how the various components of this bureaucracy work in themselves, and how they relate to each other; and who are the people ensuring the daily operation of this multilayered institution.

This book is Reese's third in a series on contemporary Roman Catholic polity. With the self-explanatory titles *Archbishop: Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church* (1989), and *A Flock of Shepherds: The National Conference of Catholic Bishops* (1992), the first two volumes focus upon the Catholic Church in the United States. In this more recent work, Reese attempts to demystify the Vatican, highlighting strengths and weaknesses in its governance with an eye toward future reforms, particularly in the Roman curia.

The first seven of *Inside the Vatican's* ten chapters use familiar categories of Roman Catholic polity to organize the discussion. Reese first examines papal roles as monarch of the Vatican state and overseer of the civil bureaucracy, and then as head of the college of bishops. In the next three chapters, the author examines the functions of bishops and cardinals relative to the Vatican. After examining episcopal conferences and ecumenical councils in chapter 2, Reese dedicates the subsequent chapter to the synod of bishops. He explains the synod's original purpose and current practice, including selection of episcopal participants, the actual synodical procedures, and the production of a final document. The chapter's conclusion questions the effectiveness of synods in their current form and offers suggestions for improvement. In the fourth chapter featuring the roles of cardinals, Reese describes John Paul II's re-establishment of consistories (1979), papally initiated meetings exclusively

with the cardinals to treat major ecclesial issues (for instance, reform of the Roman curia, 1985). The chapter then details the political and procedural dimensions of papal elections with some speculation on the next election given the internationalization of the college of cardinals.

The fifth and sixth chapters are central to Reese's overall purpose in this text. Here he delineates the intricacies of the Roman curia, the key to understanding Vatican politics and its organization. The first of these two chapters outlines the complex network of dicasteries that oversee the work of the secretariat of state, tribunals, congregations, councils, and other agencies. The second introduces the reader to officials within some dicasteries, from cardinals heading congregations to priests trained as diplomats at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy. Building on the thorough description of the curia, the next chapter features the actual work of the pontiff with a special emphasis on the leadership of twentieth-century popes, especially John Paul II. Reese's narrative here provides an interesting perspective on how the pontiff's personality informs the office, even while each man operates within traditional institutional structures. A detailed look at the finances required to maintain such an operation appears in the eighth chapter. The ninth then considers the Vatican's influence through episcopal appointments, supervision of these appointees, and scrutiny and disciplining of contemporary theologians. The final chapter speculates on the future of the Vatican particularly in its relationship to the local churches in all their diversity.

Thomas Reese cogently describes the complex institution identified simply as "the Vatican." He illustrates this complexity not only by demarcating the bureaucratic layers that have accumulated over two thousand years but also by depicting the truly international nature of twentieth-century Roman Catholicism. He acknowledges competing interests Vatican bureaucrats face in weighing ecumenical, cultural, and civil interests. Reese effectively uses his numerous interviews to illustrate the personal dimension of this bureaucracy—how one man can transform for ill or good a congregation or council within the curia. At times, the quotes or observations drawn from the interviews lend themselves to a tone reminiscent of clerical gossip, not malicious but rather giving the reader the feel of being privy to conversations among insiders.

Like most of us analyzing contemporary Roman Catholicism, Reese's analysis suffers from the imprecision of the liberal/conservative distinction, especially in the first two and final chapters. In his final chapter, he describes liberal and conservative rejections of papal authority but omits discussion of the small but vocal group of laity, including younger men and women, whose allegiance to Rome requires serious consideration by social scientists such as Reese. The book's contemporary focus, while an asset in terms of understanding the Vatican's current institutional structures, proves problematic in featuring specific persons, such as speculation about Joseph Cardinal Bernadin's influence at the next papal election.

Methodologically Reese is clearly a political scientist who provides only brief historical sketches in each chapter. At times, his lack of endnote citations also proves frustrating, as in an assertion that the number of theologians being "investigated, silenced, or removed from office is at an all time high, even exceeding the Modernist crisis" (260). While I do not doubt the possibility, I want some statistical data or at least a source for the data. Other examples could be noted. These flaws detract little from the work's value as an introduction to the politics, institutional structure, and people guiding the

Vatican at the end of the twentieth century. Its readability makes it accessible to undergraduates, and its clarity and accuracy especially in delineating Vatican infrastructure make it useful to the scholar of twentieth-century Catholicism.

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*African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture.* Edited by Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau. New York: Routledge, 1997. vii + 467 pp. \$24.99 paper.

This compilation of previously published articles allows this volume to function as a textbook in African-American religious history. The editors categorize these interpretive essays under headings that are both topical and chronological. Most importantly, at the beginning of the book David Wills, Charles Long, and Sidney Mintz and Richard Price in their respective essays suggest how the African-American religious experience can be interpreted broadly. Other articles discuss the content of black religion including its musical, millennial, evangelical, and Pentecostal components. Struggles against slavery and racial discrimination in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and against legalized racial segregation and discrimination in the twentieth century showed how black churches and religious leaders in their institutional roles addressed social and economic issues crucial to African Americans. Similarly, essays on gender, culture, conjuring, and consciousness demonstrate how the study of the African-American religious experience has benefited from multidisciplinary approaches.

The interpretive breadth of this volume is illustrated in other ways. The editors, for example, acknowledge other influences that shaped black religious life. Although black religiosity was expressed primarily through Christianity, the editors also include essays that discuss African-American Muslims and African survivals in black religion on the North American mainland and in the Caribbean. Moreover, the editors suggest that studies on black women and the black church will call for fresh assessments of African-American religious history. Hence, Fulop and Raboteau include Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's writings on the pivotal influence of women leaders among black Baptists and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes's research on church mothers among black Pentecostals. These essays introduce readers to the burgeoning field of black women's religious history, to which other scholars like Glenda Gilmore, Judith Weisenfeld, and Bettye Collier-Thomas have contributed.

This reader also features the work of anthropologists Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer on the typologies of black sects. The essay discusses the rise of diverse religious movements that challenged mainline Baptist and Methodist churches for the allegiance of African Americans. Fulop and Raboteau wisely include the Baer and Singer article because these groups persist as important vehicles for black religious expression.

Denominationalism among African Americans, however, deserves similar coverage. Although numerous essays draw examples from black denominational sources, fresh perspectives about the phenomenon of denominationalism are left unaddressed. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, for example, suggests that denominations developed their own institutional culture and ethos that attached at times to black and biracial churches. This juxtaposition to the Baer

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