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# *Beyond Abortion: The Theory and Practice of the Secular State*

Charles E. Rice

*Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, Ill., 1978. 159 pp., \$8.95.*

From the point of view of jurisprudence and the natural theology it presupposed, Charles E. Rice has given us a masterful account of the American present and the future it holds *if* we do not act now to change our direction. The prophecy is bleak and well-known. Rice sums it up with the words of Alexis de Tocqueville in his conclusion: "Despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot." Yet it would be wrong to imagine that Rice writes only to prophesy doom. That he does in a spine-chilling way, but he does much more. He diagnoses the disease and suggests the remedies. Therefore, the doom he announces is not inevitable, but is merely the alternative to applying right remedies now.

Rice diagnoses our disease in terms of three key concepts: positivism, secularism and rejection of the gift of life. All three name a rejection of God. Positivism is a disease of the law whereby its provisions are thought to be merely conventional and thus implicitly arbitrary, i.e., there is no objective moral law by which the provisions of law can be measured. Rice traces the contemporary history of this view from the Austrian constitution after the First World War through the rise and fall of Hitler. The argument is compelling and well worth knowing thoroughly. Who did win the Second World War?

Secularism is now the established religion of the United States. As such, it violates both the letter and the spirit of our Constitution. One does not have to be a seer to know that such a violation will have disastrous effects of a tyrannical character. Rice adds to this commonplace trenchant observations regarding the nature of secular tyranny.

Secularism adds to tyranny a compelling need to, and a rationale for destroying man's soul. It must not be thought that man has any life or destiny beyond the reach of the state. Therefore, the state feels free to kill, and to kill in the name of the life the more powerful are living now. Or, in more academic jargon, since there are no transcendent goals, the immanent goals of those with the power to pursue them take precedence over all other considerations. "Kill the unborn baby now so that we can do with our relationship what we want" leads with devastating logical and psychological force to further and further killing.

Thus we reject the gift of human life which implies rejecting the giver, God, for all along that was the real goal of positivism and secularism. After we understand that, Rice suggests what we can do about it.

A spate of books has been appearing recently on this question of rejecting life: Nathanson's *Aborting America*; Noonan's *A Private Choice*; and *Life and Death with Liberty and Justice* by Grisez and Boyle. All are good. The book by Grisez and Boyle is excellent! All need what Rice has done as a complement. He has provided the broad theory which makes it easy to locate the other contributions on our intellectual maps, to appreciate them better and to use them more wisely. So, in addition to his own direct contribution, mastering his succinctly and clearly stated analysis will enable us to take better positive action in the midst of this crisis over the value of human life.

— Rev. Richard R. Roach, S.J.  
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