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## [Book Review of] *Doctors, Death and Doomsday*, by "Henry Cabot" (pseudonym)

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refuse legitimate forms of medical treatment and then demand that God perform miracles. Unless we are going to turn Christianity into Christian Science, and rely only on faith healing, we must articulate some principles which enable us to make decisions in difficult cases.

The book would be quite useful for people who are, or wish to become, involved in the political struggle to place legal restrictions on the burgeoning new industries which deal in human reproductive materials. An appendix provides a state by state list of some of the organizations which are the worst offenders, so that they can be targeted for political purposes. I am somewhat concerned, however, that her lack of rhetorical control and her failure to draw clear distinctions among different sorts of technological interventions, may needlessly give offense to medical practitioners who might otherwise profit from her book, make it easier for opponents to dismiss the book as a kind of romantic "back to nature" tract, and generate more heat than light.

Yet I believe that much can be learned from her insightful treatment of these extremely important issues, and that her challenge to the medical establishment deserves a serious hearing.

—Celia Wolf-Devine, Ph.D.  
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## *Doctors, Death and Doomsday*

by "Henry Cabot" (pseudonym)

*Excalibur Press, London*

The characters in this book, by a well-known New Zealand obstetrician, are priceless and recognizable. There is the pompous and self-righteous chairman of the obstetrics department trying to obscure his avarice under a cloak of feminism. There is Father Rex, the trendy and theologically illiterate cheerleader from pastoral care, and the physically well-endowed female staff member trying to disguise herself as one of the boys. The protagonist, Dr. Luke Downing, a slightly too intrepid obstetrician, nevertheless manages to proclaim the author's admirable medical philosophy on numerous occasions to a receptive house staff and colleagues who either groan with disdain or silently and covertly approve.

The plot of the novel often seems contrived, however, with Hollywood formulaic situations such as attempted murder by the sideswiping mystery automobile and elaborate kidnapping schemes by the evil agents of Debrit. The byplay between the hero and the heroine evolves into a believable relationship after a far-fetched beginning in which the obstetrician proposes to his patient on the first office visit.

One aspect of the story which deserves credence is the conspiracy on the part of an international organization to undermine a society by attempts to reduce its birth rate. The mindless promotion of abortion and contraception by foundations and federal agencies (augmented by press and media hoopla) has resulted in declining populations throughout Western Europe and the free world. It is obvious that the tragic mistakes of the last half of the 20th century are going to result in aging populations, stagnation and loss of vitality throughout the 21st century. To a large extent these trends are irreversible as cohorts of women in the reproductive age groups shrink dramatically. Since falling birth rates coincided with the cold war period, the notion of planned propaganda against the West is quite believable.

The plot development is entertaining, if not always to be taken seriously, and the reader

will benefit most from the author's mellow pro-life philosophy enunciated vicariously by the leading characters.

—Eugene F. Diamond, M.D.  
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## *Passion of a Believer*

by Eugene F. Diamond

*Liferose Press, 1105 S. St. Louis Ave., Chicago, IL 60655, 168 pp., \$7.95.*

*Passion of a Believer* is a timely Catholic novel. It is not a pietistic or religious story in which life is sacramentalized to the virtual exclusion of the natural order — as if angelism is the human goal, not Christian humanism, as if grace, which helps make good the promise of nature, works apart from nature and not through her. Neither is it an attempt to give vent to the feelings of rebellious groups who blame their discontent on the failure of the Church to be what it isn't — a chameleon whose beliefs and moral teachings change with the times and which caters to women who want to be priests, and priests who want to be married, and homosexuals who want the seal of approval placed on their aberrant genital practices, and others who want the Church to be democratized so as to be run from the bottom up rather than from the top down. The *Passion of a Believer*, however, is not contaminated by the above trends, whether trendy or otherwise. Rather the strength of this refreshing and engrossing story is its sharp-eyed account of Catholics who are off course and how they get back on course, not through preaching or argumentation, but through what the believer is and what he does.

The novel centers about a type of Irish middle class family which unreflectively succumbs to prevalent mores which seem to liberate one from the moralistic straight jacket of an outmoded religious tradition. Along with this is the story teller's striking ability to include in its principal plot and various subplots, many of the tensions and conflicts of the post-conciliar American experience. The characters are memorable with the protagonist, Dalton, much like a Graham Greene character with his internal torments and his limitless capacity to be misunderstood. The writing is also reminiscent of Edwin O'Connor with its depictions of intra-familial conflict and cantankerousness, as well as its touches of humor. Walker Percy, the noted Catholic novelist extolled in both literary and religious circles, who had "strong fellow feelings" with the author particularly enjoyed his "portrayal of nutty nuns".

The author benefits from the insights of many years of medical practice and deep involvement in the pro-life movement for which he has been an eloquent and brilliant spokesman. The treatment of the medical themes, particularly as they relate to abortion and contraception, have authenticity and impact. He also benefits from having raised to young adulthood, through the tumultuous '60s, '70s, and '80s, a large family with its admixture of daughters and sons.

Joe Dalton is a familiar man of the times, a Vietnam veteran whose delayed vocation to the priesthood is the result of a battlefield commitment. His orthodoxy and the intensity with which he upholds it brings him into an inevitable confrontation with a modernist seminary faculty and, ultimately, into an impasse with the family he dearly loves. Other memorable characters, sympathetic and otherwise, enrich the narrative. Nuns of the "new" church, old breed Irish politicians, rogue Marine combat infantrymen, Mafia lieutenants and clerical consolers and connivers, make entrances and exits. The Dalton family has a recognizable and credible identity. There is the world-mother older sister who compromises in order to be upwardly mobile; the ne'er do-well younger brother who turns an unheroic tour of military