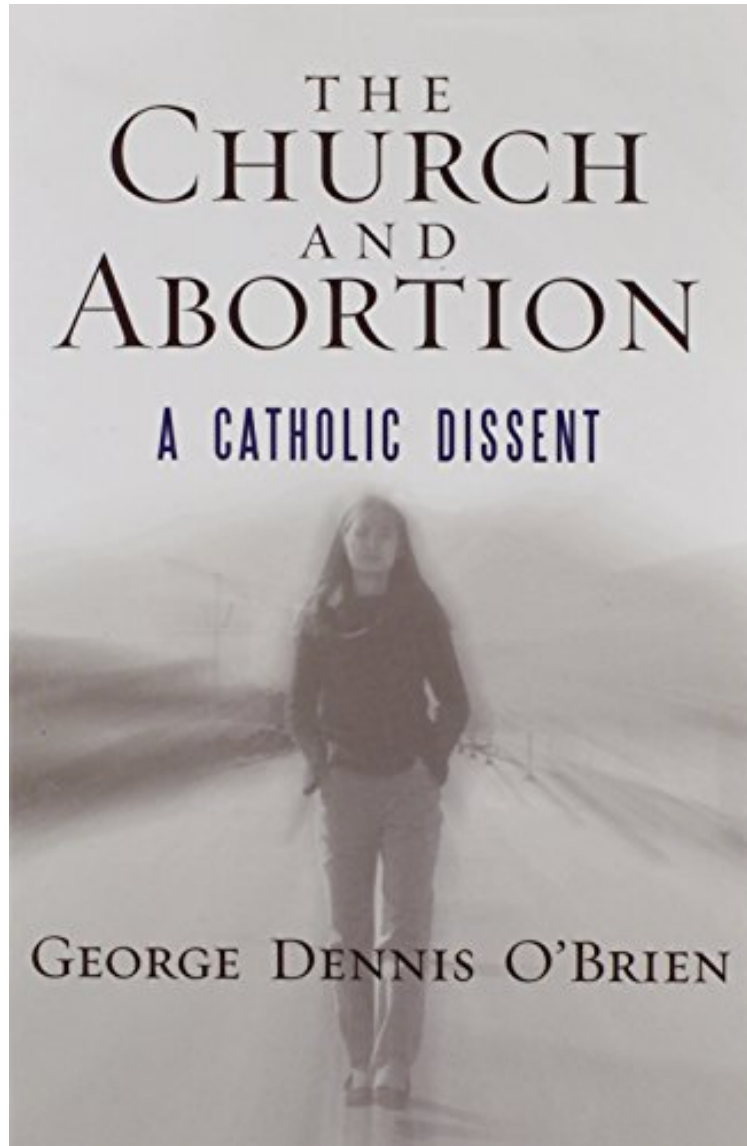


[Pdf free] The Church and Abortion: A Catholic Dissent

The Church and Abortion: A Catholic Dissent

George Dennis O'Brien

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George Dennis O'Brien : The Church and Abortion: A Catholic Dissent before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Church and Abortion: A Catholic Dissent:

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Kosuke NishinagaFast shipping and came in as expected1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Well-Written Approach to Abortion that Ultimately Conveys the Pro-Choice MessageBy Craig StephansO'Brien writes with a measured tone and generates an engaging dialogue regarding the issue of abortion. He approaches the issue as a Roman Catholic and discusses it widely in the

context of the Roman Catholic church's theological and philosophical arguments regarding abortion. He wades into scriptural waters but returns to where he is more comfortable. O'Brien concedes that abortion is intrinsically evil; however, he asserts that such an act must be situated in a context and that context may be so severely devastating that it softens and debilitates the generally evil nature of abortion. O'Brien makes the most reasonable and generous dissent of the Roman Catholic pro-life position that I have read. He shows sincere respect for the church and Christian faith and for mothers and children. O'Brien is able to make his dissent based on two factors: 1. The unborn child is not a human person; it is a fetus and therefore its rights and value are subordinated completely to the person and will of the mother, and 2. The mother's situation may warrant abortion for her good. Although he writes intelligently about many issues, I don't think he makes any sort of substantial argument that the unborn child is not a human person. I also don't think he makes a substantial, cogent argument that ordinary circumstances ever justify an abortion for the sake of the mother's circumstances. The examples he uses are extraordinary: incest, Nazi death camps, rape and abuse. O'Brien colors his pro-choice argument in flowery colors and sentimental frames; however, when it comes down to it he uses the same old abortion arguments: "it isn't a human," and "what about these horrible cases." O'Brien does confront the pro-life advocates with serious issues and questions to consider and take seriously. He challenges the compassion of Christians and the Roman Catholic church especially on all life-related issues. But he comes nowhere close to showing how one can consider abortion an action that in any way whatsoever is suggested or condoned by Scripture or the Christian faith. He toys around with Scripture. He asserts that the "Author-God of the Bible story is 'pro-choice.' He attempts to redefine abortion as a choice for life--the life of the valuable person of the mother. This is the standard pro-choice position that goes from point A to point B but he takes a detour into the Bible only to quickly get back on track to make it to point B: it's a tragic choice but it is an acceptable choice to abort a baby if God is fine with it because he is a God of choice. This is nonsense. Nothing he writes gets to the heart of the matter that this life in the womb is a work of God and a gift of God to the mother and to the human family. God is at work in the womb. He has been there in Jesus Christ and consecrated it for all time. Even in the midst of evil, he can turn it to good and to life. The impossible situations given like twins in the womb as the result of incest on a young pre-teen girl must be approached with faith, compassion and love and the sternest judgment for the offender not the victim or the babies. We cannot use such an offense to make the innocent guilty. 11 of 14 people found the following review helpful. A Learning Experience By Frank B. Nieman Dr. O'Brien brings a clear mind and a compassionate heart to the pro-choice/pro-life controversy around abortion. To the too-facile sound bites on either side, he brings the cautions of common sense and an awareness of the complexities of human living. Are you pro-choice? What would you say to a young lady who told you, 'I liked my third abortion best of all!?' Are you pro-life? What would you say to your daughter of ten pregnant with your husband's twins? With conciseness and clarity, Dr. O'Brien leads the reader through realms of the problem that most on either side fail to distinguish. Simply stated, you will not be of exactly the same position in this matter when you finish reading the work as when you started. A must read!

This provocative book takes a critical look at what is increasingly viewed as the central political issue for Catholics: abortion. From pro-choice politicians being denied communion to Democrats being called "the party of death," for some of the most vocal Catholic leaders, the abortion issue often trumps all others. The author, a practicing Catholic who is against abortion in principle, believes the Church is on the wrong course with this issue, with grievous results for the Church and American society more broadly. He gives a brief history of abortion legislation, then explores the issue from legal, moral, and Christian perspectives, presenting compelling reasons why Church leaders and Catholics should stop trying to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and reconsider the issue.

From Publishers Weekly O'Brien, former president of Bucknell University and the University of Rochester, has articulated a balanced perspective on abortion, which, given how contentious this issue has become, means it will probably please very few. Placing the words "Catholic" and "dissent" in the same title may turn some off, but this is hardly the primary purpose. The author's great contribution is in illustrating a way to navigate this thorny social issue while maintaining civility and respect. He is a master of well-crafted arguments and does not allow ad hominem attacks and overly emotional rants to rule the day. The author understands the weak points of each side of this ongoing debate. Criminalizing abortion, he contends, is a road with a dead end for the pro-life contingent. To the other side he insists that a human fetus is not simply chaff--it is deserving of respect and some moral consideration. O'Brien is well versed on the literature regarding abortion, and he frequently quotes numerous scholars. A reader needs to have an open mind to benefit from this author's work, but those who do will gain much. (Sept.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. George Dennis O'Brien recognizes that no one will agree with all that he has written on abortion, but every reader will be challenged and stimulated by this probing book. (Charles E. Curran, Scurlock University Professor of Human Values, Southern Methodist University) This book offers readers a balanced approach to abortion. O'Brien gives voice to what intelligent, fair-minded people feel, but lack the words to express. Clear, persuasive, honest arguments lay waste to the bumper-sticker bombast from both sides of the abortion divide. The book is a gentle and effective example of how hard issues need not harden hearts but rather can be occasions for us to grow in wisdom

and grace. Would that it could be required reading for all our Catholic bishops. (Denise Carmody, Jesuit Community Chair in Religious Studies, Santa Clara University) O'Brien takes on a highly vexed topic in a fresh and compelling way. He identifies overblown abortion rhetoric as a barrier to civility in the Church, to honest discernment of abortion's real moral costs, and to more effective ways to reduce abortion. But unlike other works decrying U.S. Catholic abortion politics, *The Church and Abortion* accessibly rounds out the full picture of Christian existence biblically and theologically. Appealing to God's Creation and Jesus' community of faith, hope, and love, O'Brien gives eloquent testimony to the mystery of Christian identity, to Christian compassion, and to a genuine commitment to Life. (Lisa Sowle Cahill, J. Donald Monan Professor of Theology, Boston College) Dr. George Dennis O'Brien agrees with the American Catholic Bishops that abortion is an intrinsic evil but, after that, there is little agreement on this issue: 'While it sounds harsh, abortion is an intrinsic evil, though one that may be licit or even required, given other serious moral foundations,' he argues in *The Church and Abortion*. An accomplished scholar and administrator—he taught philosophy at Princeton and Middlebury College and was President of the University of Rochester and Bucknell University—O'Brien has applied the wisdom gained through his experience in writing this important book. While debate about abortion often features uncompromising positions and assaultive language, O'Brien has managed to write in a reasoned, almost gentle, tone that expresses sensitivity to both the gravity of the event itself and to the tragic moral choice being made by the woman faced with the decision. He does not, however, avoid confrontation. He challenges the Catholic Bishops directly, noting that various Catholic spokesmen have called abortion 'homicide,' 'murder,' and 'genocide.' But, he argues, 'When launched into the political arena these claims mislead the faithful and do a disservice to the nation and the Church. Whatever the moral issues surrounding abortion—and they are serious—as political guidance these episcopal proclamations are sinful.' This conclusion is supported by a basic gap in the Bishops' ethical argument. O'Brien notes a 'fundamental principle in all ethical argument: who wills the end must will the means.' Failing to supply the means to reach the end espoused constitutes a half-truth. The Catholic Bishops either do not know the means to reach their stated goal of eradicating abortion or are not prepared to examine the required means. Examples in which pro-life advocates fail to support the logical means to attain their stated goals include attempts in South Dakota in 2006 and 2008 to pass restrictive laws criminalizing abortion, but which specifically excluded any criminal penalties for the woman obtaining an abortion. 'If the bishops are to be helpful moral guides, they should give some indication of what would constitute prudence in public policy.' Well-reasoned and thought-provoking, this book provides constructive guidance to anyone seeking insight into this issue, and a useful paradigm by which to analyze other public policy issues. It should be read by anyone interested in policy and the Churches' role in public debate—and anyone eligible to vote. (Foreword s) O'Brien, former president of Bucknell University and the University of Rochester, has articulated a balanced perspective on abortion, which, given how contentious this issue has become, means it will probably please very few. Placing the words 'Catholic' and 'dissent' in the same title may turn some off, but this is hardly the primary purpose. The author's great contribution is illustrating a way to navigate this thorny social issue while maintaining civility and respect. He is a master of well-crafted arguments and does not allow ad hominem attacks and overly emotional rants to rule the day. The author understands the weak points of each side of this ongoing debate. Criminalizing abortion, he contends, is a road with a dead end for the pro-life contingent. To the other side he insists that a human fetus is not simply chattel; it is deserving of respect and some moral consideration. O'Brien is well versed on the literature regarding abortion, and he frequently quotes numerous scholars. A reader needs to have an open mind to benefit from this author's work, but those who do will gain much. (Publishers Weekly) George Dennis O'Brien has written a potent critique of the efforts of the Catholic bishops to make abortion illegal once again. Focusing on their lurid language, their heavy-handed pressure on Catholic legislators, and the incoherence and inconsistencies of their stance on the legal details of anti-abortion legislation, he makes clear that they have a weak case, even in their own terms. (Daniel Callahan, senior research scholar and president emeritus, The Hastings Center, author of *Medicine and the Market*) In this short, easy-to-read book, O'Brien delves into the ramifications of the bishops' position on the issue and argues their single-minded devotion to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* is impractical, shortsighted, and has caused a rift in political discourse that gets in the way of the cause and misleads Catholics. (National Catholic Reporter) An insightful observation regarding the present tendency of religions to reduce their teachings to ethics. . . . O'Brien calls us back to a balanced perspective on the matter. (Commonweal) About the Author George Dennis O'Brien is former president of the University of Rochester and Bucknell University. He has also been a professor and dean at Princeton University and Middlebury College. He is the author of several books on Catholicism or higher education, including *Finding the Voice of the Church* and *The Idea of a Catholic University*.