

part) combines with a clear and honest assessment of where the Reformation has finally led the various Lutheran communities, the door to Catholicism is re-opened. To those who are at this point in their lives, *There We Stood, Here We Stand* has a great deal to say.

As an Eastern Catholic, the one thing I found rather disturbing about the book, although not entirely unexpected, was the almost exclusively Western way in which the discussions were framed. Most of the writers seemed to equate *Roman* Catholicism and the *Western* tradition with the Catholic Church and Holy Tradition. There seemed to be almost no awareness that this equation is somewhat problematic and that there exist other expressions of Catholicism, as equally authentic as the Latin expression, which might possibly offer insights into, and pathways out of, the legitimate issues raised by the Reformation. Perhaps, however, this is the next step for former Lutherans, whose heritage is heavily dependent on Western Augustinianism.

Despite these criticisms, I would recommend the book to anyone interested in things ecumenical, since it clearly raises some of the important problems with which ecumenism is authentically concerned and which cannot be ignored. Moreover, for those who enjoy "conversion" stories, of which there is an abundance at present in both Catholic and Orthodox literature, it is a good read. Grounded in the existential faith and lived experience of contemporary individuals, it reminds us all once again of our responsibility to be ready to offer a witness for the faith and hope that is in us. ■

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## **briefly reviewed**

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**Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order.** By Joseph Varacalli. *Lexington Books (800-462-6420). 133 pages.*

The thesis of this book can be put simply: "Catholic America has essentially failed, in any significant way, to shape the American Republic."

Varacalli is insistent that the natural law tradition, as embodied in Catholic social teaching, is exactly what Americans need to overcome the individualism inherent in our nation's life since its founding. Indeed, I cannot praise Varacalli enough for his recognition that the U.S., from its beginnings, has had a defective notion of liberty and a ten-

dency toward an individualism unconcerned with the common good. In this Varacalli differs from so many who are wont to contrast the supposed "Christian America" of an earlier time with the woes of the present. Varacalli points out that this individualism was kept in check to some extent both by Protestantism and by republicanism (the idealization of the heroes of ancient Greece and Rome and of some of the Founding Fathers). But what is happening now is simply the working out of ideas present since at least 1776. He quotes the statement from David Blankenhorn's *Fatherless America* that divorce "is so prevalent in this nation precisely because its roots run so deep in American history.... The vision of the good divorce — a vision of personal freedom — captures much of the essence of the American character. Our nation's founding document is a divorce document.... In no other nation is the idea of 'starting over' invested with such opti-

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mism and hope.”

Another area where Varacalli deserves praise is his awareness that capitalism is “but another variation of Enlightenment thinking,” and that neo-conservatives are therefore simply “right-wing Americanists.”

But why has the Church not influenced American society as might have been expected? In the beginning, of course, the largely immigrant Catholic community was too busy simply surviving. From the 1920s to the early 1950s, Catholics were starting to develop a self-confidence based on the superiority of Catholic thought to that of the modern world. Indeed, some have seen the period immediately after World War II as a golden age of the Church in the U.S., and in some respects it was. But Varacalli sees that even in the 1950s things were beginning to come undone, and of course after the Second Vatican Council both the institutional Church and the life of the Catholic community have been in grave crisis. From then on the Church has hardly been able to guide her own faithful, let alone have much in-

fluence on those outside.

But what is the purpose of affecting the larger American society and culture? Is it the conversion of our fellow countrymen to the one true Faith, or is it simply to have our rightful place in the sun and our due measure of influence? It is not always clear with which of these Varacalli is most concerned. But we Catholics must never lose sight of what must always be our ultimate goal: the conversion of our country, both individuals and the culture.

*Thomas Storck*

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**A Mind's Matter: An Intellectual Autobiography.** By Stanley L. Jaki, O.S.B. *Eerdmans*. 311 pages. \$25.

Fr. Jaki is the exponent *par excellence* of the thesis that science, properly speaking, would have been impossible to conceive of in any cultural context other than that of Christendom. His long and distinguished career, marked by being awarded the Lecomte du Nouy Prize in 1970

and the Templeton Prize in 1987, has been greatly devoted to establishing this arresting thesis, with physics constituting his main, but by no means exclusive, focus. Through very careful historical explorations and cogent analyses, Jaki has in his many writings and lectures made an extremely convincing case for his bold claim. The book under review is his own account, as a philosopher of science no less than a physicist and a historian, of his scholarly professional life, which is to say, the development of his philosophical position, so very much at odds with the prevailing scientific worldview.

Jaki contends that science and metaphysics, the former dealing exclusively with the measurable, the latter dealing fundamentally with the immeasurable — or non-measurable — are partners in the proper comprehension of the universe whose very existence science cannot even begin to prove since it cannot stand outside and look in. Accordingly, science, or natural philosophy, is of necessity dependent on the *philosophia perennis*, which constitutes the philosophical legacy of the Catholic Church. Put slightly differently, even the most philosophically positivist scientist necessarily takes for granted an assortment of facts that are the province of those parts of philosophy which he would reject — but the latter will have their due.

Jaki tells his life's story in terms of intellectual insights, explorations, and occupations that correspond to the subject matter of his most important books. It is a fascinating account, from the inside, of the evolution of his the-

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