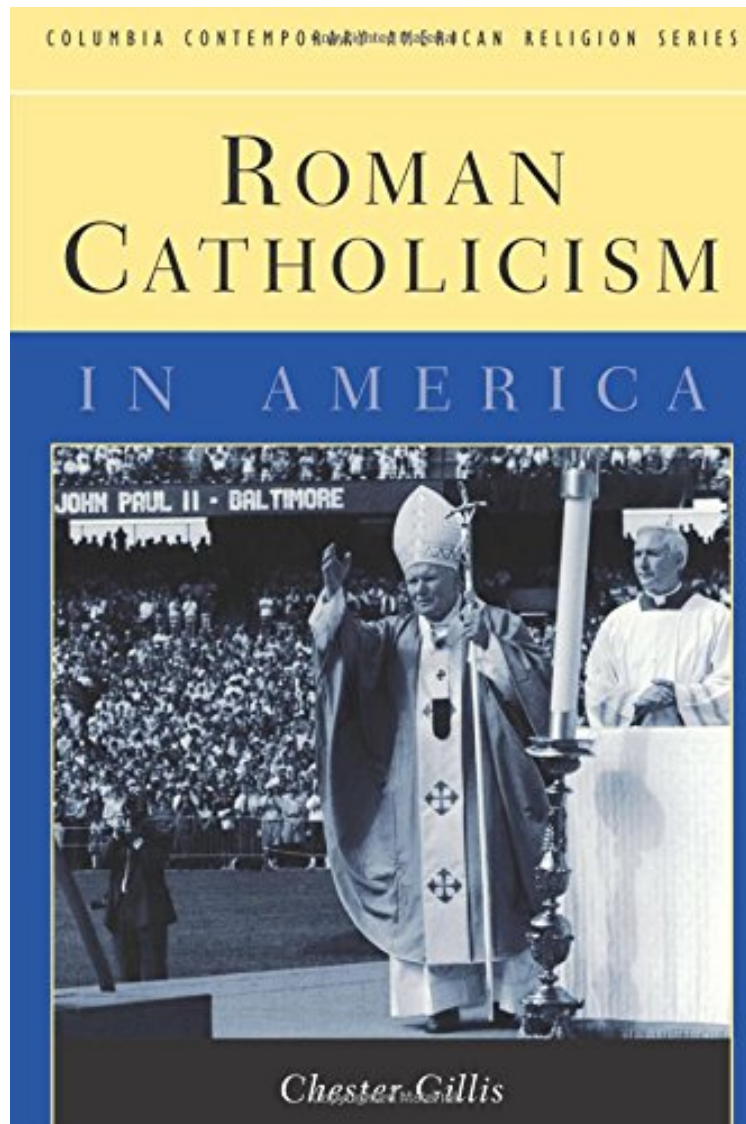


Roman Catholicism in America

Chester Gillis

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Chester Gillis : Roman Catholicism in America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Roman Catholicism in America:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. An admirable,unbiased,reader-friendly account of CatholicismBy A CustomerChester Gillis has favored us with an engrossing account of one of the world's leading religions with this account of Catholicism, yesterday and today, in America. Using reader-friendly text, suitable for the general public, he delineates the history of American Catholics, their beliefs and practices, over the last four centuries. Yet the account is

by no means sterile or dry; instead, the author uses anecdotes, letters, and attributed quotes to give the text an immediacy and relevance which is most refreshing. Gillis covers such disparate topics as the Black Experience in the Catholic Church, Hispanics and their influences, ethnic groups of all kinds; controversies surrounding abortion, homosexuality, women's rights--including ordination, clerical misconduct, academic freedom, etc. In all, he is thorough and insightful. He traces the rise and fall of parish life in metropolitan areas and the state of religious life among vowed and unwowed members of the church. In fact, it is impossible to think of an area he hasn't covered. Photographs, charts, and graphs strengthen the statistical data; notes containing bibliographical material serve for further research or corroboration; a valuable glossary of terms, an impeccable index, and an offering of modern Internet sources will satisfy students or curious readers desirous of more information about specific topics. This book is suitable for Christians and non-Christians alike, for it presents a valuable insight into the lives and beliefs of a people who continue to influence the world and shape the policies of nations.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Better Understanding By K. Kriesel I read this to gain a better understanding of my strict Catholic upbringing; Gillis went above and beyond my expectations! Because I can now understand the empty traditions, hostility, and control exerted by the staff, administration and clergy, I'm one step closer to forgiving them. The fact that this was written before Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who, as recanted in this book, is a destructive slimbebal) became Pope Benedict and before the pedophilic scandals came to their worst point is actually a strength. It's easy to read the book from this point and see how the Catholic church does change drastically over time whether it wants to or not.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A thorough, yet not too academic summary, suitable for all. By A Customer This is the kind of book ordinary people will like. It is complete, but not so detailed that the reader would lose the main thought. Mr. Gillis poses questions the "man or woman in the street" has pondered, but never had answered before; and he doesn't try to evade or white-wash problems or controversies. He gives credit to the simple, ordinary people who try to live their lives in accord with the laws of God, in simple faith and in caring service to their neighbors. The book makes me feel good about all the truly good people out there--people who work and struggle to find meaning in their lives. Mr. Gillis has done us all a great favor in showing the difficulties others have gone through, yet still kept trying.

Who are American Catholics and what do they believe and practice? What is distinctive about the expression of Catholicism in America and how have Catholics influenced and been influenced by American culture and society? What different types of Catholics make up the church today? Chester Gillis offers a cogent survey of U.S. Catholic history, emphasizing the post-Vatican II era, and goes on to explore the various roles and missions of the church in education, health care, charity, and more. One of the themes running through the narrative is the persistent tension between Rome and the American church, which is shaped by a thoroughly modern, dynamic, and secular culture. Also discussed is the changing role of authority and how Catholic notions of authority have changed over the past forty years and why.

From Publishers Weekly In this new study, Gillis (*Pluralism: A New Paradigm for Theology*) provides a broad overview of the history and practice of Catholicism in America at the end of the 20th century. He attempts to offer an explanation of Roman Catholicism and its rites and practices for an American public for whom, he says, Roman Catholicism's doctrine and polity remain a mystery. In addition, the author examines the tensions between Roman Catholicism's universality (its doctrines, dogmas and papal encyclicals that are the same worldwide) and its particularity (the ways in which the American Church interprets these universal principles for its particular context). In his opening chapter, Gillis combines sociological analysis and case studies to answer the question "Who are American Catholics?" He offers five categories that describe the variety of contemporary Catholics: "By the Rules Catholics," "Bend and Break the Rules Catholics," "Ignore the Rules Catholics," "Rules Don't Pertain to Me Catholics," and "Don't Know the Rules Catholics." Gillis then provides a historical overview of the development of the Catholic Church in America from colonial times to the present, including brief glimpses of the popes and other religious leaders who played significant roles in shaping that history. Final sections explore specific Catholic teachings and beliefs, ranging from the infallibility of the pope to the Sacraments and the ways in which American Catholics incorporate these beliefs into their practice. One appendix includes brief profiles of selected American Catholics from the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin to film star Martin Sheen. Another offers a time line highlighting events in American Catholic history from 1634 to the present. Gillis's inviting prose and discerning insights make this a fine introduction to American Catholicism. (July) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal This new series, written by leading scholars for students and general readers, portrays the diversity and complexity of religious life in America, focusing on the influence of Western society as a major challenge that religious groups will face in the 21st century. Both works contain profiles of noteworthy individuals, suggestions for further reading, glossaries, chronologies, and a list of web sites. Gillis (theology and Catholic studies, Georgetown Univ.) provides an excellent survey. In the chapter "Who Are the American Catholics?" for example, he breaks down types of Catholics by geography, ethnic background, and income; charts and informative statistics supplement the text without becoming

tedious. This title includes a detailed synopsis of the history of Catholicism, with special emphasis on Vatican II and the tensions between Rome and America. A partially due to issues such as women's ordination, birth control, and abortion rights. Smith (Islamic studies, Hartford Seminary) writes a general introduction to Islam as practiced by American Muslims. Islam in America outlines the influences of a secular and materialistic Western culture, the keenly felt prejudices on the part of non-Muslims, and the misunderstandings between Muslims that often arise when they try to balance cultural expectations with the value system of the conservative Middle East. Of special interest is the chapter on African American Muslims and other smaller groups. Highly recommended for academic and public libraries. [For more on Islam, see "Bridging the Gap: Islam in America," LJ 10/1/98, p. 59-63. AEd.]

Michael W. Ellis, Ellenville P.L., N.-A Michael W. Ellis, Ellenville P.L., NY Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. Gillis writes as an authentic insider, focusing on American Catholic identity and community and addressing an audience that specifically includes non-Catholics who are searching for what it is that distinguishes Catholics from their American culture. (D.W. Ferm Choice) This sturdy, well presented and well written portrait of Catholicism in the USA fills a serious gap in the marketplace. Centering on Catholic identity and community, Gillis performs an unenviable task well, of providing a useful introductory account of the largest religious group in the USA. (Journal of Contemporary Religion) This new series... portrays the diversity and complexity of religious life in America. (Library Journal) Gillis, the lead-off batter in the new Columbia Contemporary Religion series, has made a solid hit into left center field with this clear, engaging and reliable introduction to U.S. Catholicism... If the rest of the books in this series meet the standard set by Gillis, they will be an invaluable resource for interfaith understanding and harmony in this religious smorgasbord of a country. (Jon Nilson Christian Century) Gillis's inviting prose and discerning insights make this a fine introduction to American Catholicism. (Publishers Weekly)