Chapter seven, "The Spiritual Brain—Finding the Soul within the Body," analyzes the neurological, psychophysiological, electrophysiological, and computational aspects of mind-material-brain. This chapter is worth the price of the whole book, and it renders at least "plausible" that there is life after death.

The best evidence of contemporary neuroscience is that the mind cannot be equated with the brain, and while the deterioration of the brain might impede the operation of the mind, the two are separate, which makes it possible that our immaterial minds and consciousness might survive the termination of our physical frames. (125)

D'Souza's analysis of consciousness, free will, and immaterial self are adequate. His chapter on philosophy of reason, phenomena, subjectivity/objectivity (ch. 9) is transcendent. He quotes the atheist Schopenhauer: "Your real being knows neither time, nor beginning, nor end.... Your immortal part is indestructible" (162). Thus, the first modern atheist proves his theophobia as he proclaims immortality—Schopenhauer, like them all, cannot bring himself to say "God"; and the psychology of

unbelief can be seen as a mental disorder more delusional than any accusations or book by Richard Dawkins.

The significance of the book is that only those who act will win. Believers cannot sit on their hands. One must provoke in order to gain respect and receptivity from the man from Tonga and all others. One would be deaf, dumb, and blind not to see the nothingness of what atheists believe and the contrary transcendental cornucopia of a life after death. This book made me reread the book (which I recommend to all) by Anthony Rizzi, *The Science Before Science*.¹

Atheism is the prevention of evolution—it is the stagnating prevention of the human spirit. It is a polluting regression into non-being. It is soviet. D'Souza has defeated them all. One must read the book and embrace the exhaustive, deep case D'Souza makes for *Life after Death*.

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Note

¹ Anthony Rizzi, *The Science Before Science: A Guide to Thinking in the 21st Century* (Bloomington, IN: Press of Institute for Advanced Physics, 2004).

Christians in the Movies: A Century of Saints and Sinners

by Peter Dans

Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009. xviii + 410 pp.

"There must be something better you can be doing with your time." My confessor made this comment one day after I told him about a movie I watched recently, a war movie complete with scenes of not only violence but also of some of the more crude aspects of life experienced by men in combat. This priest was pointing out to me that my time could be used better by doing something—anything—other than watching that movie. Father's words kept coming back to me as I read the later part of

Peter Dans's book: *Christians in the Movies: A Century of Saints and Sinners*. Thankfully, Dr. Dans has spared all of us hours of constructive time by watching—and reviewing—numerous movies as the movie reviewer and critic for Pharos, the quarterly publication of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. Out of the considerable list of movies he has watched over the past twenty years, he has selected nearly two hundred which feature either Catholics or Christians in prominent roles.

In *Christians in the Movies*, Dr. Dans observes that respect for Christians, and the religious in particular, has gradually eroded over the past century of motion pictures.

This is not the first book in which Dr. Dans has reviewed how Hollywood portrays various parts of our society. In 2000, he published *Doctors in the Movies: Boil the Water and Just Say Aah* (Bloomington, IN: Medi-Ed Press, 2000). I suspect this book would also be interesting to readers of *The Linacre Quarterly*.

In his preface, Dans relates how the obligations of work and family kept him away from the movies for a long period, during which there were tremendous changes in American society as well as the film industry. Most of the priests and religious featured in the movies which he enjoyed as a child were admirable characters. This kind treatment of both Catholic, Protestant, and—to a lesser extent—Jewish ministers, had changed when he started reviewing films in the early 1990s.

As a practicing Catholic, I was also struck by the ridicule of organized religion, especially Christianity. The movie clergymen of my youth were tough-yet-good-hearted priests, often portrayed by the big stars like Spencer Tracy, Pat O'Brien, and Bing Crosby. Now it appeared that all orthodox clergy and believers were either vicious predators or narrow-minded, mean-spirited Pharisees. (xv)

Dans asks and answers the question “Why had Christians gone from being portrayed as saints in the early and mid-century films to sinners in later ones?” (xvi). He makes the point that any religion which requires a commitment to an orthodox set of beliefs or rules is denigrated by Hollywood. Most present-day films glorify a society in which there is no definite right or wrong, and rejecting any moral code in favor of personal freedom is seen as true heroism. Any institution which contradicts this trend of modernity has to be rendered ineffective; hence, Christians are belittled

in all types of the media, especially film. It is ironic that while I was writing this, I came across this quote from a book which described our present society rather accurately: “How long had it been in England since anyone had seen a play? For generations, people had lain on their backs in the darkness of their bedrooms, their eyes on the blue watery screen on the ceiling: mechanical stories about good people not having children and bad people having them, homos in love with each other, Origen-like heroes castrating themselves for the sake of global stability.” This quote is from *The Wanting Seed*, a dystopian novel written by Anthony Burgess in 1962. It describes the world in 2011 rather well, and Dr. Dans’s book clearly shows how the film industry, by gradually rejecting Christian beliefs and morals, have contributed to society’s condition.

Dr. Dans has written a well-organized book which is easy to read either straight through or by randomly selecting a place to start. He begins by discussing the establishment of various organizations which were responsible for determining the appropriateness of films produced by Hollywood, such as the Motion Picture Production Code and the Legion of Decency. Following that, each decade of movies is presented in a separate chapter. Dr. Dans begins each chapter with a brief synopsis of the major events of that decade; for example, the 1940s are known for World War II and other changes in society such as the role of women in the work force. He also discusses how the movies of that particular decade depict religious characters. What follows are several in-depth reviews of selected films, complete with commentary by the author. In addition, Dr. Dans includes what he calls “Backstories,” which focus on stories about directors, actors, or historical vignettes which add to the appreciation of the role of Christianity in movies. I found these stories behind the stories to be sometimes more interesting than the movies.

There is one thing which I found questionable in this book. In the chapter on the 1960s, Dr. Dans reviews a movie called *The Cardinal*. Apparently in this movie, a character is faced with the choice of either

having an abortion (i.e., crushing the skull of the unborn child) or dying. To add a bit of controversy to the plot, one reads that the unfortunate woman is the sister of the cardinal himself. Dr. Dans ends the discussion of this movie with the sentence, "Most important is the abortion issue and the need to obey the law spouted by a priest who seems not to remember that Catholic teaching permits sacrificing the child to save the life of the mother" (168). I still cannot reconcile this sentence with what I know of Catholic morality; specifically, I do not see how crushing the skull of a living, unborn child can satisfy several of the conditions of the doctrine of double effect.

Another thing which I found rather disturbing as I read the last several chapters of this book was the depiction of religious characters and homosexuality in movies. When did sodomy become entertainment? It is bad enough that the marital act has been desecrated in so many films, but where is the beauty of seeing one man violate another? At least in years past the religious characters were tempted and fell to a

natural inclination for the opposite sex, and perhaps homosexuality was avoided as a taboo subject. Not so any more. I asked this question out loud one day, when only my wife and adult children were within earshot. Without hesitation, my oldest daughter replied that we are living in what amounts to Sodom and Gomorrah. This appears to be the case.

Dr. Dans has written an excellent book on a subject which affects all of us. As Catholics who are trying to practice the art and science of medicine in accordance with the Magisterium, it is good to see how our Faith has been torn down by one of the most influential forms of communication in our society. For those who are looking for good Catholic movies to add to a DVD library, this book is an excellent review of some of the greatest movies ever made. For those who are inclined to view some of the more recently released movies, this book may keep them from also deciding that their time could have been spent better by reading a book.

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