provides for individuals who participate in it a sense that the message being propagated is real and of central importance." In layman's terms, plausibility structures are organizations like religious orders, schools and colleges, orphanages, hospitals, lay associations like the Knights of Columbus, and newspapers, magazines and other forms of communication. These institutions and other tangible reference points are where Catholics look in carrying out the Faith in their daily lives and help shape the character of their endeavors.

For American Catholics, plausibility structures took shape after WWI, hit their full stride in 1940s and '50s, and were severely weakened by both internal and external forces post-Vatican II. The energy and vigor of these organizations go a long way in both the proper formation of Catholics and in helping evangelize the outside culture. Ideally, these structures should support and reaffirm the Church's teaching in every aspect of Catholic lives. Without an effective Catholic plausibility structure, what shapes individuals is not "the mind of the Church" but whatever is the prevalent and defining cultural message at any given moment. Today that is a Godless secularism.

How do we regain control of our plausibility structures? Varacalli suggests that a counter-revolution (my words, not his) be approached on three levels. First, individuals and families must have a conversion of the heart, with Catholic education and evangelization geared again toward saving souls. Second, the Church's infrastructure network of organizations and complementary associations must be rebuilt by orthodox Catholics becoming active in parish and other Catholic activities. This will take intense group pressure and strong institutional support from Rome but is absolutely essential in restoring authentic Catholicism to the Church's plausibility structures.

Finally, the culture at large can be changed by reinfiltrating key idea-generating sectors of American society government, corporations, mass media, education, entertainment, and others with well-catechized Catholics. Further, with their newly regained "plausibility," Catholic institutional structures which have provided the proper formation of armies of Catholic individuals and groups can then perform their tasks of enculturation, evangelization, and character formation in civil life.

Varacalli argues that the reassertion of authentic Catholicism must always be guided by the Magisterial authority, and each of the three parts of the counter-revolution must work cooperatively with each other. By a fundamental restructuring of a decaying American civilization along lines derived from Catholic social doctrine and the natural law, not only will the Church regain her influence but our society will again bloom and prosper.

James Bemis
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The resurgence of political conservatism after World War II was a complex social and political movement that had a significant impact on public policy and electoral politics. Given this complexity and impact, this movement is worthy of greater study than it has hitherto received. Smant makes an excellent contribution to the growing literature on American conservatism in this thoroughly researched and thoroughly readable work, which is the first book-length treatment of Frank Meyer (1909-1972).

American conservatism is generally regarded as having had three main components in the late 1940's and 1950's: traditionalists, devotees of free market economics, and anti-communists. It was also a movement made up of intellectuals, organizational leaders and activists, and those engaged in electoral politics. There was religious diversity within the conservative movement as well. It included both Protestants and Catholics, and to lesser degree Jews and those with no religious practice. William Buckley, Russell Kirk, and Willmoore Kendall were among the Catholics prominent in the early days of Post-WW II conservatism.

Meyer, while not as well known as other luminaries of American conservatism, is suited for serious study because, more than just about anyone else, he had strong ties to and an interest in anti-communism, traditionalism, and free market economics. The primary intellectual project of his life was to draw together the tenets of free market economics and traditionalism, an approach that came to be known as fusionism. Moreover, Meyer was something of a public intellectual for conservatism, authoring books and serving as an editor at the flagship publication of the conservative movement, *National Review*. He was, to a lesser degree, a movement activist through his work as a founding board member of the American Conservative Union, and he had some involvement in the electoral politics through his work with the Conservative Party in New York state. Meyer also represents the religious diversity within conservatism, as he came first to the movement as a non-observant Jew. After much soul-searching, he converted to Catholicism at the end of his life. In fact, he was received into the Church on Holy Saturday, April 1, 1972, just six hours before his death.

The chapters in the work describe episodes within this life that are often thematic and provide insight into both Meyer's life and thought and into the conservative movement. For example, there are chapters discussing the
Goldwater candidacy, Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement, and the Nixon presidency.

The book begins with two chapters that briefly recount Meyer's early life in New Jersey and his education in Great Britain. While studying at Oxford in the early 1930's, he joined the British Communist Party and served as activist there while a graduate student at the London School of Economics (LSE). After being kicked out of the LSE, he returned the US to work as a Communist Party USA organizer in the Midwest. He became disillusioned with communism and finally rejected it in 1945. A spirited man, he became a committed anticommunist in the late 1940's and conservative writer by the early 1950's. Smant describes his conversion to conservatism as having been brought about, in part, by the reading of Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, a widely influential defense of free markets; and Richard Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequence*, a significant book by a traditionalist conservative. He started his work in conservatism as a contributor to several journals of opinion.

In several chapters, Smant considers Meyer's involvement with *National Review (NR)*, which was established in 1955 by William F. Buckley and became a prominent voice for the conservative movement. He describes Meyer's work as the book editor and some of the controversies surrounding his reviews and interactions with writers. Smant's account of Buckley's editorship is quite interesting. Smant describes serious thinkers and passionate men at work in the shaping of a movement. The most interesting chapter looking at episodes within the life of *NR* is the chapter discussing the criticism of the John Birch Society, a fast growing and extremist conservative organization prominent in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Smant not only describes the articles criticizing the JBS, but he is able to reconstruct the reasoning behind the timing of the articles and show the significance of *NR*'s editorial stand for the entire conservative movement.

There is a particularly good account of Meyer's most significant book, *In Defense of Freedom*, published by Regnery in 1962. Smant carefully describes Meyer's attempt at fusionism. Meyer's attempt to combine elements of capitalism and traditionalism is a serious project and is a political teaching that has been influential in modern conservatism. In fact, Ronald Reagan's conservatism could be called a popular version of Meyer's fusionism.

Another theme in the work is the tension between realism and idealism in political activists. Smant describes Meyer in most cases as an idealist and unwilling to make pragmatic compromises. James Burnham, another *National Review* editor, is often presented as a political realist wishing to win elections, rather than suffer quixotic defeats. This theme is particularly evident in the chapter looking at the conservative movement and the Nixon campaign of 1968. In this case, Meyer uncharacteristically acts the realist in endorsing Nixon as better than other available candidates.
The final chapter sheds light on his Christian conversion and considers the larger impact he had on the conservative movement. Using personal letters and accounts from family members and friends, Smant shows a man who struggling with precepts of Christianity while cancer is ravaging his body. Smant also shows the significance of Meyer for later conservative thinkers and activists.

Smant's work is an excellent look at a developing social movement, a movement that was attractive to many Catholics, and the role of a thinker and activist within that movement. Catholic readers will also be attracted to a story of a man drawn toward the church.

Michael Coulter
Grove City College


In his foreword to Ethics and Human Life, John Cardinal O'Connor uses the language of Pope John Paul II in Evangelium Vitae to describe Dr. Joseph M. Mauceri as among the "guardians and servants of human life," as one who has committed himself as a physician to "absolute respect for human life and its sacredness." "The Gospel of Life serves a double function," His Eminence continues, "not only to critique and retard the 'culture of death'," but also to build up the 'culture of life.' Dr. Mauceri responds to both calls in his work Ethics and Human Life."

The Kingston, New York physician, who shares with his late father also a medical doctor an almost legendary reputation as a Catholic caring for the sick and the poor, in his discussion of euthanasia and the "Culture of death" writes with a refreshing and disarming forthrightness about Modern man's, and his own, predicament. "In a world without God and redemption, euthanasia would be ethically right. If life

has no meaning beyond the grave, and the least amount of pain or suffering is the goal of life, then euthanasia becomes a heroic act.

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