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APOLOGETICS

"The Apologist: An interview with Dinesh D'Souza, author of *What's So Great About Christianity*" [1] by Marcia Segelstein — first, one must get past the writer-interviewer's moonstruck remarks. In referring to D'Souza, she tells us that "he knows, deep down, that he's smarter than you" and that "D'Souza has quickly become the world's foremost religious apologist."

In response to a question regarding what's behind the "new 'missionary atheism'" (as seen from the likes of Richard Dawkins), D'Souza observes: "Atheists have been able to surf on the wave of 9/11 by generalizing the crimes committed in the name of Islam to crimes committed in the name of God. This has given modern atheism a certain sort of relevance, currency, and confidence."

Other noteworthy remarks from D'Souza: "This idea that it is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven is Satan's motto, and it turns out that this is also the motto of contemporary atheists...."

"If you really look at the motivations of contemporary atheists, you'll find that they don't even really reject Christian theology. It's not as if the atheist objects to the resurrection or the parting of the sea; rather, it is Christian morality to which atheists object, particularly Christian moral prohibitions in the area of sex." *Salvo*, #7 - 2008, pp31-35. <www.tinyurl.com/6lk5o3>

CULTURE

"Spirituality, Not Religion, Makes Kids Happy" (no byline) — "The link between spirituality and happiness is pretty well-established for teens and adults. More spirituality brings more happiness. Now a study has reached into the younger set, finding the same link in 'tweens' and in kids in middle childhood.

"Personal aspects of spirituality (meaning and value in one's own life) and communal aspects (quality and depth of inter-personal relationships) were both strong predictors of children's happiness...."

"However, religious practices were found to have little effect on children's happiness...."

"Religion is just one institutionalized

venue for the practice of or experience of spirituality, and some people say they are spiritual but are less enthusiastic about the concept of God.

"Other research has shown a connection between well-adjusted and well-behaved children and religion, but that is not the same, necessarily, as happiness." *U.S. News & World Report*, Jan 9 '09, <www.tinyurl.com/74ybwh>

Christotainment: Selling Jesus Through Popular Culture, Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kinchloe, eds. [2] — "This book of essays has a worthy subject: the comfortable marriage between popular culture and conservative Christianity. Both editors teach at Canadian universities, which could give them detachment on the subjects of music, film, toys and NASCAR. They've chosen instead to wage ideological warfare in the guise of critical analysis. The book takes an approach sometimes too narrow, equating, for example, conservative Christian politics with the rather narrower philosophy of Christian dominionism, a far-left bogeyman. Sometimes the analysis is too broad: Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is viewed in the context of a Manichean war on terrorism by the Bush-Cheney administration. The catchy title concept is the only instance of clever use of language. The rest of the book is hidden in a thicket of academic-leftist jargon. Marx might agree that 'stock car and political intermediaries have ordered the confluence of the sign value of stock car iconicity to the "surplus value of rapture" to reproduce the iniquitous conditions of production,' but pity the graduate student in media criticism wading through this." *Publishers Weekly*, Feb 9 '09, n.p. <www.tinyurl.com/a2mwv7>

EDUCATION

"As Home-Schooling Surges, the Evangelical Share Drops" by Dan Gilgoff — "Long the heart of the home-schooling movement, conservative evangelicals are cheering a new Department of Education report that shows the number of home-schooled students has

(continued on next page)

EDUCATION (continued)

surged by 74 percent over the past eight years, to 1.5 million....

“The Department of Education report, which finds that 83 percent of home-schooled students’ parents cite ‘providing religious or moral instruction’ as one reason that they home-school — up from 72 percent who said so in a 2003 survey....

“According to the Department of Education report, released in late December, 36 percent of home-schooling parents reported that providing religious or moral instruction as the most important reason behind their decision, followed by ‘concern about the school environment’ (21 percent) and ‘dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools’ (17 percent)....

“Brian Ray, president of the National Home Education Research Institute, says recent studies suggest that evangelicals still account for roughly 70 percent of home-schooling families. But the picture has changed dramatically since the 1980s, when conservative Christians launched the movement, he says. ‘In the early years, you had to be a pretty big believer in something to home-school because there was a lot of adult peer pressure not to do it,’ he says. ‘There are a lot of people who now consider home-schooling who would have never 10 or 15 years ago.’

“The National Home Education Research Institute, which supports home schooling, puts the number of home-schooled students above the Department of Education’s estimates, at just over 2 million. The institute’s research has found that home-schooled students score about 15 to 30 percentile points above their public-school peers on standardized achievement tests.” *U.S. News & World Report*, Jan 9 ‘09, <www.tinyurl.com/93sbot>

ORIGINS

The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design, by Ronald L. Numbers [3] — former president of the Evangelical Theological Society and recent convert to Roman Catholicism, Francis J. Beckwith uses his review to set the record straight regarding the dismissal of William A. Dembski from his position as the director of the Michael Polanyi Center at Baylor University in 2000.

Yet, Beckwith’s remarks about the book are worth noting. “Not only was the first edition highly successful as a meticulous piece of scholarship, its readability was sec-

ond to none. It is often rightly held up as an example of what a historian dealing with a controversial topic can accomplish if he offers a fair-minded portrayal of the case of characters and the issues that animated them. In this revised edition, Numbers adds two chapters. With the exception of some minor changes, the rest of the book remains identical to the first edition....

“Although there are two new chapters in this edition, in this review I want to focus on Chapter Seventeen, which concerns the rise of Intelligent Design (ID). (The other new Chapter, Eighteen, deals with the global scope of anti-evolutionism.) Numbers is careful to show that ID is not the same as Creationism, although the two points of view, Numbers notes, do share common allies, common foes, and an overlapping history.”

Actually, Beckwith does little to review even the 17th chapter. First he notes that “subtle, though important, distinctions are sometimes lost on critics of ID,” and thus finds it not surprising that “Judge John E. Jones, a devout Lutheran, in his opinion in *Kitzmiller v. Dover* should make [such a] mistake the centerpiece of his judgement.” Then Beckwith comes to Dembski and explains “I feel obligated to offer clarity to Numbers’ largely accurate account.” Ultimately, “Instead of offering an olive branch and conciliatory tone at the moment of victory” after a review committee put together by Baylor administration officials concluded by recommending support for the Center in its final report, Dembski “angered many faculty members and embarrassed his benefactors and supporters at Baylor” in his triumphal response to that report. “In short, Dembski snatched defeat out of the jaws of victory.” *Journal of Law and Religion*, 28:2 - 2008, pp735-738. [4]

SOURCES: Monographs

1 - *What’s So Great About Christianity*, by Dinesh D’Souza (Tyndale, 2008, paperback, 368 pages) <www.tinyurl.com/9crpbk>

2 - *Christotainment: Selling Jesus Through Popular Culture*, Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kinchloe, eds. (Westview Press,

2009, paperback, 304 pages) <www.tinyurl.com/79bn6g>

3 - *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, by Ronald L. Numbers (Harvard Univ Prs, 2006, expanded edition, paperback, 624 pages) <www.tinyurl.com/8bdtg3>

SOURCES: Periodicals

4 - *Journal of Law and Religion*, <www.hamline.edu/law/jlr>

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