

Current Books

years. But none of this proves that the citizens of the United States and every other successful democracy need to subscribe to Transcendent Idealism. The Bush administration will be happy to think they should. The citizens of the free societies of old Europe will say, "*Pas du tout.*"

—MARK SILK

THE NEW ANTI-CATHOLICISM: *The Last Acceptable Prejudice.*

By Philip Jenkins. Oxford Univ. Press.
258 pp. \$27

What might the United States look like without the Catholic Church to kick around? If not for parochial schools and the Papacy's dogmatic rejection of artificial contraception to rail against, public schools and abortion on demand likely wouldn't exist in their current forms. Were it not for the Catholic Church, perhaps, Americans would still be British subjects; Britain's reluctant decision to recognize the Catholic religion in Quebec helped sow seeds of unrest among the colonists, unrest that led to the Revolutionary War.

According to Philip Jenkins, a professor of history and religion at Pennsylvania State University, anti-Catholicism is nearly as American as apple pie. *The New Anti-Catholicism* grew out of his response to the crisis over pedophilic priests, which has figured so prominently in recent headlines. The author of *Pedophiles and Priests* (1996), Jenkins watched with a sort of bemused horror as much of the media coverage in 2002 "slid" beyond the current scandals "into much more dubious attacks on the Church as a whole."

Most of the familiar anti-Catholic tropes were trotted out: priests as sexually frustrated perverts who prey upon the young, bishops as calculating Machiavels, lay Catholics as subservient sheep, too timid to raise a fuss until

The Boston Globe began exposing some of the most horrific offenders. Newspaper cartoonists and late-night talk shows adopted the basic formula Priest = Child Molester. Some priests reportedly stopped wearing their religious garb in public to avoid the glares and spittle.

Jenkins argues that the reaction was hysterical. According to the available evidence, "sexual misconduct [by clergy] appears to be spread fairly evenly across denominations," its incidence rate hovering somewhere between two and three percent among the cleric population. Further, many of the cases that have been labeled pedophilia were actually relationships between priests and young people well above the age of consent. But anti-Catholic attitudes are too ingrained to be displaced by facts. "Of course bishops hate women and gays, priests molest children, and the Church supported the Holocaust: everybody knows that," Jenkins writes. These prejudices are so pervasive "that they are scarcely even recognized as prejudices."

The book's survey of anti-Catholicism in America is brief but convincing. From the Know-Nothing movement of the 19th century to the iconoclastic gay rights protests of the 1980s and '90s, critics of the Catholic Church have demonstrated a remarkable ability to overlook any truth, any scrap of goodness, that the church might offer. In the last chapter, Jenkins urges reporters, entertainers, and professors to give the Catholic Church a fair shake, but he doesn't expect the call to be heeded. Even if a hypothetical Vatican III were to edge Rome closer to modern liberal Protestantism, he writes, the "indestructible" prejudice would simply mutate: "Its strength lies in its flexibility, its capacity to adapt to almost any circumstances." Quite a depressing thought.

—JEREMY LOTT

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

NO END TO WAR: *Terrorism in the 21st Century.*

By Walter Laqueur. Continuum.
288 pp. \$24.95

The first great merit of Walter Laqueur's

characteristically judicious book on the new terrorism is its comprehensiveness. For cool and clear-eyed analysis of the differences between the narcoterrorists of Colombia and traditional national terrorists such as the