FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

God and the Gun: The Church and Irish Terrorism
Martin Dillon
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Kurt Vonnegut once said that everything he had written could be neatly boiled down to a single sentence. After a broad confession like that, a person might respond: Why bother reading the rest of it?

Not until the last fifth of the book do readers finally get to the crux of Dillon's expose on the church and terrorism in Ireland. "It is reasonable to conclude that the churches on both sides failed their communities and society at large. It was left to individuals to make courageous efforts to address the causes of violence and encourage meaningful dialogue."

Unless one has a near forensic interest in the hooligans on both sides of the Ulster equation, it is a serious question. Many of the players who make up the cast of what is benignly referred to as its "Troubles" are painstakingly interviewed, and faithfully reproduced, by Dillon. While this dialog is at once riveting, (many, after all, were in prison when the author interviewed them), the words are ultimately unsatisfying in answering the question Dillon postulates.

Dillon, who is seen as a leading authority on twentieth-century Ireland and has written three other titles on the subject, seeks to unravel the eternal Gordian Knot of how a Christian people can invoke the name of Christ while performing the most unspeakable acts of evil against fellow human beings. And further, what could possibly make them stop if not the presence of a loving, living God?

The answer of course, as Dillon points out, ultimately is found in the hearts of "courageous individuals." Unfortunately for Dillon and God and the Gun, the answer to a question of such enduring truth is not deducible by scientific inquiry.

John Arens