

CATHOLICS AND CATHOLICISM: CONFRONTING THE EVIL OF NAZISM

*Donald J. Dietrich, Human Rights and the Catholic Tradition.
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Hardly anyone disagrees today about how bad Hitler and the Nazi regime were for the world. Besides unleashing World War II, Hitler had plans to exterminate entire peoples—plans which he proceeded to carry out before the eyes of a too-long unbelieving world in his Holocaust against the Jews and others considered subhuman, and which surely did mark some kind of evil low point even amidst all of the other violence and horrors that characterized the unhappy 20th century.

Nazism was especially bad for the Germans themselves. They lived under it longer than anyone else and suffered greatly from it, even though as a people they also furnished the principal means by which Hitler was able to inflict it upon the rest of the world for a time. German Catholics, in particular, were placed in the unenviable position of living under a government run by elements who only later finally came to be seen as criminals and madmen. While these criminals and madmen were in power, however, they constituted for German Catholics “the governing authorities” to whom St. Paul teaches Christians must be “subject,” since “there is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom 13:1). The Church has generally interpreted this teaching to mean that good Christians must normally obey the duly constituted “powers that be” where they live—but obviously not to the point of falling into sin themselves.

Thus, living under the Nazi regime did constitute a genuine moral dilemma for Catholics and for the Church. This was

especially true at first, when it was not always as easy for people living at the time to see the evil of the regime as it is for us today looking back. As the regime's evils unfolded, many of them could be interpreted, at least for a while, as mere aberrations or excesses. If the Western powers themselves went on for years trying to "do business with Hitler," it is at least understandable that Christians living under the regime should perhaps have tried to do the same more extensively and for a longer period of time than we would consider to be wise or even moral today.

So while resisting pretty much from the outset some obvious evils—such as the Nazi takeover of the media, education, youth activities, and the like—the Church did also try to accommodate the regime in other ways. For example, the concordat which Pope Pius XI concluded with the Nazi regime in 1933—it was signed by the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who would later become Pope Pius XII—is much criticized today, but nevertheless provided the legal basis for the Church to try to deal with the regime at all.

Donald J. Dietrich is a professor of theology at Boston College and a specialist in German Catholic history. He has written other books, notably on the subject of why some Catholics in Germany supported and others opposed the police state. In *Human Rights and the Catholic Tradition*, he focuses on the experience of German Catholics as they attempted, in the light of their faith, to deal with the barbarism of the Nazi era and the problems and conflicts brought about by Nazism and the Second World War.

One of the author's basic premises is the incompatibility of Catholic moral teaching with Nazism. Hence, as the true nature of the regime became clearer, both the Church and individual Catholics generally became more opposed to it and more inclined to mount various forms of resistance to it (although the penalties for resistance of any kind could sometimes be drastic!). But these developments were neither automatic nor

particularly rapid. As Dietrich notes, "until it was too late, most Germans...did not realize that the Nazis wanted something totally revolutionary."

The incompatibility between the Catholic faith and the Nazi regime was real. Dietrich examines and documents how Catholic moral teaching came to be applied to what was actually going on in Germany. His main focus is not on what the Church or the Catholic bishops were doing or reacting to, but rather on what Catholics themselves were doing and reacting to. In particular, he covers in some detail how various Catholic theologians and thinkers gradually came to see, and hence to condemn, the evils being perpetrated by the Nazis.

Not only did these thinkers and theologians finally reject the tenets of the regime. In the course of the Nazi era, they succeeded in developing a new personal and existential theology of the human person—emphasizing the dignity of the human person—which became one of the pillars of the official teaching adopted on this subject by the Second Vatican Council. This new approach proved essential in enabling the Church to participate as a full partner in the debates and discussions concerning democracy and human rights that took place after World War II. Both the vocabulary and the concepts of this new theology were largely developed by German theologians in reaction to the brutality of the Nazis. Some of these same German theologians also proved to be very influential at Vatican II.

The major achievement and importance of this book, in fact, lies in Dietrich's survey and analysis of the thinking of a number of major Catholic thinkers and writers who developed this new theology in reaction to Nazism. They include such still well known figures as Karl Adam and Romano Guardini, or, in the next generation, the Jesuits Gustav Gundlach and Karl Rahner as well as the latter's student, Johannes B. Metz. The degree to which some of these writers at first thought they were obliged to come to some kind of accommodation with Nazism

was a surprise to this reviewer—although, of course, that stance did not endure.

The author also includes chapters on Nazi terror, sometime Catholic ambivalence towards the Third Reich (especially at first), the scope of Christian resistance, and resistance in the daily life of German Catholics. Dietrich is not uncritical of the overall Catholic record. He does not think the Church opposed Nazism as vigorously as she should have; this was because she continued to seek “institutional survival” instead. “Nazi ideology was critiqued by the Church when it affected the institution...but accepted when it focused on nationalistic patriotism.”

“Since the churches sought institutional survival,” he further generalizes, “meaningful resistance did not spring from Christian churches but from their members’ attempts to uphold their faith.” He includes an interesting chapter on how average German Catholics in practice often did act on their Catholic and Christian principles, contrary to what the Nazi regime was urging.

Dietrich is especially critical of what he sees as the inadequacy of the general Catholic reaction to Nazi anti-Semitism and aggression against the Jews in particular. He thinks Catholics and the Church tended to see and condemn only “pagan racism,” and hence did not always take the full measure of the evil of the virulent and indeed lethal brand of anti-Semitism which, in the hands of Hitler’s minions, led to Auschwitz and the Holocaust against the Jews.

Though he is critical, however, Dietrich’s book is in no way an attack on Catholics or on the Church in the way that has become familiar in the anti-Pius XII books which have continued to appear; the authors of these books accuse the wartime pope as well as German Catholics of being sympathizers and even collaborators with the Hitler regime. On the contrary, Dietrich himself documents many instances of

Catholic resistance even as he also judges that the Catholic resistance could have been stronger. Nevertheless, his own focus is so narrow in this book that he scarcely touches upon the Pius XII question at all, even though this would seem to be almost inescapably related to his own chosen subject matter. The period of German Catholic history with which he is concerned is exactly contemporaneous with the period during which the pope and the Church in Germany have been accused by a veritable legion of critics of having been "silent" in the face of Nazi persecution, if not actually enabling of it.

Not only is all this scarcely mentioned or even referred to, but Dietrich actually includes references to such anti-Pius authors as Susan Zuccotti, Michael Phayer, David Kertzer, and even Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, as if the biased, inaccurate, and agenda-driven "scholarship" of these writers merited serious consideration. Meanwhile he seems totally unaware of the considerable and formidable body of work produced by Catholics over the past decade in defense of the unjustly slandered wartime pope. This is a serious deficiency, considering the author's subject matter.

Again with his narrow focus, Dietrich also seems oblivious to the fact that another Holocaust is currently going on before our very eyes in the current war on the unborn being waged by means of legalized abortion. He correctly draws the conclusion from the Nazi period that "dehumanization...does seem to be the crucial component needed for sanctioned murder." Yet he also refers at one point to what he calls "the pro-choice culture of today" as if this were a wholly neutral fact and not another case of "state-sanctioned murder." Yet the great value of this book lies in how it brings out the way German theologians grew in their understanding of the evil being done around them and reacted creatively. Should we not be doing the same in the face of the Holocaust that confronts us?

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Pope Pius XII controversy can be found on the League's website: www.catholicleague.org.

Revisiting the Pius War

By Eugene J. Fisher

Patrick J. Gallo, editor, Pius XII, the Holocaust and the Revisionists: Essays. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2006. 218 pages. PB. NP.

Sister Margherita Marchione, Crusade of Charity: Pius XII and POW's (1939-1945). New York: Paulist Press, 2006. 284 pages.

Ronald J. Rychlak, Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII and the Catholic Church saved Half a Million Jews from the Nazis. Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 2005. 378 pages.

These three books, together with David G. Dalin's *The Myth of Hitler's Pope: How Pope Pius XII Rescued Jews from the Nazis* (reviewed in the September 2005 issue of *Catalyst*), absolutely decimate the attacks on the reputation of Pope Pius XII made in the spate of books by James Carroll, John Cornwell, Daniel Goldhagen, David Kertzer, Michael Phayer, Gary Wills and Susan Zucotti. They meticulously re-examine the charges against Pius, charges which sadly have become deeply embedded in the very grain of our culture.

David Dalin is a rabbi, while Ronald Rychlak, Margherita Marchione, and Patrick Gallo are Catholic. This is of some significance since much has been made of the fact that the anti-Pius attackers are either Jews (Kertzer, Goldhagen, Zucotti) or Catholics. Protestants, in the main, have stayed

out of the papal fray, having their own ambiguous history during the Holocaust with which to deal. The motivation of Jewish critics of the pope is complex. Historian Yosef Haim Yerushalmi put his finger on the nub of it in his response to Rosemary Radford Reuther in a 1974 conference when he noted that over the centuries when the Jews were in extremis they could look to the papacy for relief from attacks by secular powers, and usually received it. Thus, the inability of the Holy See to influence Nazism's genocide in the 20th century was profoundly shocking to Jews. Yerushalmi, however, goes on to note the relative weakness of the papacy in modern times in secular affairs, and to distinguish between medieval Christian anti-Jewishness and modern, racial, genocidal anti-Semitism, though noting, as have Pope John Paul II and then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, that the former was, in Yerushalmi's words, a "necessary cause" for explaining the latter, though not a "sufficient cause," being only one of a number of factors involved.

The motivation of Catholic critics of Pius is perhaps more subtle, though here again Yerushalmi shed light on it in 1974. While he acknowledges Reuther's "sincere and profound involvement in the fate of the Jews," he worries that for her it appears to be "part of a larger problem—that of the church itself," in which "she places the dawn of a new attitude toward the Jews within the context of an obvious hope for a total regeneration of the church." He goes on to note that "historically, reformist movements within the church have often been accompanied by an even more virulent anti-Semitism," citing the Cluniac reform, Martin Luther (who advocated the destruction of synagogues and the expulsion of Jews) and Calvin's Geneva, where Jews were forbidden to reside, though maintaining a legal right of residence and freedom to worship in Rome. The defenders of Pius, I believe, are quite accurate in noting similarly that for the authors of the anti-Pius books, the critique of the Church of the 1940's is in fact a part of a larger, contemporary reformist agenda,

which raises quite legitimate questions about their academic objectivity. Indeed, in the case of Reuther, the fact that she had used Jewish suffering to further her own agenda became patently clear only a few years later when she published a book rejecting the very existence of the Jewish state and declaring the Palestinians to be the true “Jews” of the time, thus placing Israel and real Jews into the category of “Nazis.”

The books reviewed here are for obvious reasons reactive in nature. As Joseph Bottum notes in the epilogue to the Gallo volume, we still await “a non-reactive account of Pius’ life and times, a book driven not by a reviewer’s instinct to answer charges but by the biographer’s impulse to tell an accurate story.” He adds, I believe wisely, that “before that can be done well, the archives of Pius XII’s pontificate will probably have to be fully catalogued and opened.”

Rychlak’s book, in a sense, comes closest to that goal, narrating Pius’ life within the context of his times. His estimate that the Church, through its nunciatures (which handed out false baptismal certificates by the tens of thousands to members of “the family of Jesus”) and through its monasteries and convents, rectories and other institutions saved some 500,000 Jews, is actually on the moderate side, with estimates ranging up to 800,000. Dalin, the rabbi, and Marchione agree with Rychlak that Pius in fact meets the criteria for a “Righteous Gentile” as defined by Yad va Shem, Jerusalem’s Holocaust museum, which Pope John Paul II visited so reverently and penitentially during his pilgrimage there in the Millennium Year. Gallo’s book is composed of essays, half of which were written by himself, half by such internationally prominent scholars as Matteo Napolitano of Italy and Juno Levai of Hungary. Half of the essays are new for this book, half published in journals before inclusion here. Readers will be treated to the trenchant wit of Justus George Lawler and the inexorable marshalling of evidence of Ronald Rychlak.

George Sim Johnson takes on the myths surrounding Pius XI's "hidden encyclical," which like a Brooklyn egg cream was in fact neither "hidden" nor an "encyclical" (since never promulgated, it remained simply a draft). Bottum himself in his essays fills in the gaps, such as the Ardeatine Massacre, and, as noted, comments incisively on the controversy as a whole.

Each volume, in its own way, attempts as well to explain why the attacks on Pius' reputation were made. Dalin, not without reason, calls it a phenomenon of the culture wars of our time, in which the "left wing," secular media latched on to the discrediting of Pius as part of its not-so-subtle attempt to discredit not just Catholicism, but religious faith in general. Gallo notes the continuity between the current charges against Pius and those made by the Soviet Union in its Cold War propaganda against the West, again with Pius as a symbolic target for a larger agenda. It is true that the current attackers have come from what would be called "the Left" and the defenders from "the Right." It may be that to adjudicate this issue, like those surrounding Pius himself as Bottum indicates, we will have to await a time when all the documentation is out and the war itself a bit more distant in time and emotions.

Dalin and Rychlak are both critical of the work of the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission, launched with great hope by the Holy See and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations in December 1999, which I was asked by Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, then President of the Pontifical Commission of Religious Relations with the Jews, to coordinate on the Catholic side. I would like to state that Professor Michael Marrus, on the Jewish side, and all three Catholic scholars acted with integrity and professionalism throughout what turned out to be for us all a grueling ordeal.

I believe those who read the actual statement of the group

will come away with a more positive view of what the group accomplished than its critics present. The statement praises the objectivity and thoroughness of the *Actes et Documents du Saint-Siege relatifs a la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, a 12 volume set of documents put together by four Jesuit scholars from the massive materials in the Holy See's "Secret Archives" for the period of WWII. The statement also praises the four papers produced by the group analyzing particular volumes, and the group's correspondence with its sponsors.

Marchione's *Crusade of Charity* is drawn largely from documents contained in *Actes et Documents*. It is her fourth book, all published by Paulist Press, on Pius XII. Whereas the first three were reactions to Pius' critics in general, this one centers on the massive efforts made by the Holy See during the Second World War to respond to enquiries about Prisoners of War, and family members in general, including Jewish family members who were among the missing. It shows a Holy See deeply involved in what was at the time among the most humanitarian of missions: helping people, whether Catholics, Jews or Protestants, to discover the fate of their loved ones. Page after page is touched with moving testimony to love at its most basic, and to the huge efforts of the relatively small and understaffed Vatican to cope with the thousands of requests coming to it in the midst of a world gone insane. Whatever one thinks of the Pius Wars, this is a book to read. It is a book which gives us models to emulate in one's own life.

Underlying the specific issue of Pope Pius, of course, is the deeper issue of the relationship between traditional Christian teaching on Jews and Judaism and the mindset not only of the perpetrators but also of the bystanders of Europe during the Holocaust. For whatever the ultimate, and hopefully dispassionate historical judgment of the actions of one pope, we Catholics, as Pope John Paul II reminded us time and again, must come

to grips with that history, repent its sins, and do what needs to be done to ensure that it will never happen again. A proper framing of this deeper issue can be found in

Catholic Teaching on the Shoah: Implementing the Holy See's "We Remember"

(USCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, 2001).

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(This is a revised and greatly expanded version of a review that first appeared in Catholic News Service.)

JIMMY BRESLIN'S INCOHERENT RANT

The Church That Forgot Christ

By Jimmy Breslin. Free Press. 239 pp. \$26

Reviewed by Kenneth Woodward

Ostensibly, this is a book about the clergy abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church. But like everything Breslin writes, it is really about himself. Or rather, it is about him writing a book about clergy abuse. He wants us to know that he has lost faith in the church of his childhood. "I need no person wearing vestments to stand between God and me," he proclaims up front, as if that were the clergy's function. Still, he wants us to believe that writing this book has caused him considerable pain. Having been taught by nuns in grade school

to believe everything the church says is true, he now finds he can believe nothing that the pope and the bishops have to say.

Who cares? Breslin has produced an incoherent rant that tells us nothing new about the abuse crisis, much that is demonstrably false and more than anyone would want to know about his loss of a very literal and childish faith. In chapters that read like a string of his newspaper columns, his rage erupts in spasms of paralyzing bathos. Among other self-indulgences, we get an imaginary interrogation of the pope, a running gag about consecrating Breslin bishop of his own church, and juvenile statements of outrageous scorn: "The church of Rome today cries 'abortion!' to distract us from crimes by all their pedophiles and pimps." Abortion is very much on Breslin's mind. In a typically implausible scene, for example, he reports a baptism in which the priest uses this intimate family occasion to denounce pro-abortion politicians. "We have been ordered that at every liturgical ceremony, we must make a statement against abortion," the unnamed priest replies when questioned by one of Breslin's friends. I've covered the Catholic church for as long as Breslin has been writing, and I don't believe this ever happened. If a priest ever did make such a claim, a serious journalist would investigate whether such a policy existed, not simply tell a story. But there are no footnotes or identifiable sources in this screed, nothing that would suggest that Breslin has done much more than wing it.

On issues surrounding the clergy abuse scandal, Breslin is single-minded in his prosecutorial approach. Most of the cases he discusses have been reported better and at length by others. What he gives us is a columnist's rewrite job. As a result, his book bristles with errors large and small.

For instance, Breslin consistently calls the predators "pedophiles," a term used to describe adults who are sexually fixated on pre-pubescent children. But in nearly all cases the victims have been adolescents—a very different syndrome that

requires different treatment for both the victims and the victimizers. And many are clearly cases of homosexual rape, a fact Breslin simply ignores.

As to causes, Breslin points to one—priestly celibacy—that he claims was suddenly forced on secular clergy by ecclesiastical fiat for purely economic reasons. In fact, celibacy was the Christian ideal for centuries before the church made it mandatory for secular clergy—a decision that owed as much to the influence of monasticism as it did to problems the medieval church had with married priests bequeathing church property to their children. Breslin apparently knows nothing of this history, still less of the numerous recent studies by Andrew Greeley and others showing no connection between celibacy and child abuse. In fact, most child abusers are men living with women.

Like any ordinary Catholic, Breslin is angry with bishops who transferred known predators and failed to protect the faithful and their children. But he makes no mention of priests falsely accused, including the famous case of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago. But then Chicago is a long way from Breslinland. He mocks the bishops for relying on canon law: Clearly, he does not realize that church law—like civil law—grants the right of due process to priests accused of misconduct.

The abundant mistakes in this book suggest that Breslin long ago lost touch with the Catholic Church. He complains that the church's anointing of the dying is no longer a sacrament. It still is, only the name has changed, from Extreme Unction to the Sacrament of the Sick and Dying. In outlining his new non-church Catholicism, he ascribes to St. Francis of Assisi a famous saying of St. Benedict—"to work and to pray"—and even gets the saying wrong. He dismisses Cardinal Francis Arinze, a Nigerian who works in the "scheming" backrooms of the Vatican, as an Uncle Tom "who hasn't been in Africa in twenty years." The truth is that Arinze, an Ibo, spends every summer in his

native city of Onitsha. Breslin is even careless in identifying close friends, describing writer Eugene Kennedy as a former Jesuit when in fact he was once a Maryknoll priest. And so it goes.

Sexual abuse is not the worst sin Breslin puts on exhibit. To paraphrase Big Daddy in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," the entire book smells of mendacity.

Kenneth L. Woodward is a contributing editor of Newsweek. This article is reprinted from the August 1, 2004 edition of the Washington Post, with permission.

GUESS WHO'S BACK?

by Ronald J. Rychlak

Remember John Cornwell? In his last book, *Hitler's Pope*, he claimed that he was a loyal, practicing Catholic who had the highest regard for Pope Pius XII and wanted to write a book defending him. He said he received special access to secret archives due to his previous writings defending the Church. He said he spent months on end in a dungeon-like room studying the documents. Ultimately he was left in a state of moral shock and concluded that Pius XII was the ideal Pope for Hitler's evil plans. This claim was repeated in virtually all of the early reviews, and it helped make *Hitler's Pope* somewhat of a best-seller.

Before long a number of problems developed with Cornwell's story. First came a statement from the Vatican denying that Cornwell had been granted any special privileges. As he has since admitted, the archives that he saw were not secret. They were from the years 1912-1922 and therefore contained nothing

about Hitler, the Nazis, or the Holocaust. Moreover, as he has now also admitted, Cornwell spent no more than three weeks doing archival work, not “months on end.”

The rooms, by the way, are not dungeon-like.

It also seems that, contrary to his self-promoting claims, Cornwell was not really out to defend Pius when he started the project. He had previously written comments critical of Pius XII, calling him “totally remote from experience, and yet all-powerful—a Roman emperor”; and an “emaciated, large-eyed demigod.” He had also written of “Pius XII’s silence on Nazi atrocities.” In fact, far from having defended the Church in his previous writings, to the extent they dealt with religious matters at all, Cornwell’s writings were critical of Catholic doctrine and the Catholic Church. Often he was openly hostile.

In 1989, Cornwell described himself as a “lapsed Catholic for more than 20 years.” In 1993 he declared that human beings are “morally, psychologically and materially better off without a belief in God.” He also said that he had lost his “belief in the mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.” As late as 1996, Cornwell called himself a “Catholic agnostic,” who did not believe in the soul as an immaterial substance. This undisputed evidence (which is never mentioned in *Hitler’s Pope*) conflicts with his claim to have been a devout Catholic convinced of Pius XII’s sanctity when he started that project in the early 1990s.

When commentators pointed to the numerous inconsistencies in his story, Cornwell ignored their legitimate arguments and instead played the part of a victim – a wounded, deeply offended Christian who has had his personal faith questioned. He elaborates on this response in his new book, *Breaking Faith: The Pope, the People and the Fate of Catholicism*. The book is an amalgam of personal theology, Church history, preachy sermonizing, and predictions about the future. Of central importance to the author, however, is his explanation

that although he left the Church as a young man and became a serious critic, a “miracle happened” in 1989, causing him to return to his faith.

In the first few pages of *Breaking Faith*, Cornwell explains why it is so important to him that he be recognized as a bonafide Catholic. He is an acknowledged critic of the Catholic Church, and “there is a world of difference between an authentic believing Catholic, writing critically from within, and a ‘Catholic bashing’ apostate who lies about being a Catholic in order to solicit an unwarranted hearing from the faithful.”

Although Cornwell assures us throughout the book that he is an “authentic believing Catholic,” his expressed faith is not in the Catholic Church of Pope John Paul II. He picks up where the last chapter of *Hitler’s Pope* left off: with an open attack on the papacy and the current Pontiff. One need go no further than the prologue to read: “John Paul is leaving the Catholic Church in a worse state than he found it.”

Cornwell argues that there has been a fundamental breakdown in communications between hierarchy and laity and that this was brought on by John Paul’s authoritarian rule. “Bullying oppression,” he writes, is driving people away from the Catholic Church. He blames virtually all of the Church’s modern problems on “the harsh centralized rules of Wojtyla’s Church.” He calls the Pope a “stumbling block” for “progressive Catholics and a vast, marginalized faithful.”

Cornwell warns that if a conservative Pope succeeds John Paul II, the Church could face a “sectarian breakup.” He argues that: “under a conservative pope the situation will deteriorate and expand rapidly, pushing greater numbers of Catholics toward antagonism, despair and mass apostasy.”

Cornwell’s evidence for a looming sectarian breakup is found in the decline in vocations and attendance at Mass, along with

opinion surveys suggesting that many Catholics have difficulty with Church teachings on contraception, abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. In fact, he cites so many opinion surveys that at points it interrupts the flow of the book. The most serious problem with these surveys, however, is the way he uses them.

Consider, for example, the survey cited on page 254 of *Breaking Faith*. Here we are told that 65% of American Catholic respondents “hoped for a Pope who would permit the laity to choose their own bishops,” and 78% “supported the idea” of the Pope having some lay advisors. Cornwell ominously reports that “for such a large proportion [of American Catholics] to challenge the authority of the Pope is remarkable.”

There is nothing remarkable here at all. These are innocuous findings. I have some priest-friends that I would like to see made bishops, and I assume that the Pope does listen to some lay advisors. Depending on how the survey questions were phrased (which is left unclear by Cornwell), my opinions might well have turned up in the numbers cited above, but I would certainly not be challenging the Pope’s authority.

Pope John Paul II is one of the most loved and respected men in the world, as opinion polls (unmentioned by Cornwell) continually show. Cornwell, however, uses only those polls suggesting that many American Catholics resist certain teachings. He interprets this as resistance to Papal authority, and the only solution that makes sense to him is to weaken the papacy and change the Church teachings. That, however, is not the Catholic way.

The very night that I finished reading *Breaking Faith*, I read an essay on John Henry Newman, one of the great Christian thinkers of the 1800s, who was made a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in 1879. One passage of the essay seemed almost to leap off of the pages: “Newman would not have condemned any view more strongly than the one holding that opinion polls decide

the truth. Nothing would have shocked him more than the thought that the faithful and not the Magisterium decide what is to be believed.”

Obviously, Cornwell is no Newman. He does not accept the Church as the repository of revealed truth. His prescription would turn the Catholic Church into a simple reflection of modern culture. What a sorry church that would be.

Regarding the current state of affairs in the Catholic Church, recent statistics suggest that the decline in vocations may be starting to turn around. Still, the problems identified by Cornwell do merit careful attention. A much better book dealing with some of these same issues, but written from a truly Catholic perspective, is Joseph Varacalli's *Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order* (Lexington Books). Varacalli concludes that the real problem is “secularization from within.” By this he means that too many Catholic academics, intellectuals, and opinion leaders have been embarrassed by the Catholic subculture. His solution calls for us to embrace Church teaching, not change it. Too bad that his book has not been given the attention that Cornwell's books have received.

Finally, while I hate to involve myself in this story, I must do so in order to clear up a false implication about certain Vatican officials. When *Hitler's Pope* was released, my book, *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*, was at the publisher and ready for publication. Because of the controversy, however, we delayed printing the book until I could travel to Rome and review the documents that Cornwell said had left him in a state of moral shock.

Representatives of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints provided me with office space and the documents that Cornwell had seen. They asked me to determine whether he had been fair. As I explained in my book and in these pages, (*Catalyst*, Cornwell's Errors: Reviewing *Hitler's Pope*, December 1999),

nothing in those files could lead an honest person into a state of moral shock. His claim was a fabrication.

Cornwell now writes that I spent my time in Rome studying – at the request of the Jesuits in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints – materials pertinent to *his* life. It implies that the Holy See has a thick file on John Cornwell, and that they shared it with me (their “favorite trial lawyer,” to quote Cornwell) so that I could discredit him. That is so far from the truth as to be delusional.

The only information I have about John Cornwell came from his books, his articles, or interviews that he gave to the press. I took those statements and contrasted them with what he was saying at the time to promote his book. There were so many inconsistencies that they could not have been the result of honest mistakes.

Today, even most critics of Pope Pius XII realize that they have to distance themselves from the deeply-flawed *Hitler's Pope*. Those who are honestly concerned about the future of the Catholic Church are similarly well advised to keep their distance from Cornwell's new book, *Breaking Faith*.

Constantine's Sword: A Review Article

By Robert P. Lockwood

When John Cornwell's book, *Hitler's Pope* was released, many critics missed the point in the sensationalism surrounding his unfounded claim that Pius XII was a silent collaborator in the Holocaust. Cornwell wrote the book as an advocacy paper

against the leadership of Pope John Paul II within the Church and in favor of a particular so-called liberal vision of how the Church should function.

The latest author to exploit the Holocaust to present an internal Church agenda is James Carroll in his new book *Constantine's Sword*. Carroll's stated goal is to present a "history" of the Church and the Jews to show the linkage between Catholic belief and the Nazi Holocaust.

Carroll's thesis is that the anti-Semitism that resulted in the Holocaust is central to Catholic theology and derived from the earliest Christian expressions of belief, namely the Gospel accounts themselves. He concludes his book with a call for a third Vatican Council to make a series of changes in basic Catholic belief that he envisions purging the Church of this alleged fundamental anti-Semitism. As Carroll himself observes, "Human memory is inevitably imprecise, and it is not uncommon for the past to be retrieved in ways that serve present purposes." That neatly summarizes the whole point of this book. Which is bordering on a blasphemous use of the horror of the Holocaust for Church politicking.

Nazi anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and German acquiescence to it were not caused by religious differences between Catholics and Jews, or anti-Jewish outbursts during the First Crusade. Nazi hatred was of faith in anything but the Aryan race and the German nation-state. Hitler did not approach the world with a mode of thinking and belief rooted in the 1,900 years of Western civilization. Rather, he was rooted in the 150 years of elitist and racist thought that had abandoned the Judeo-Christian roots of Western civilization.

Carroll's book is described as a "history" of the Church and the Jews, but it is a great deal more personal rumination than serious historical, or theological, study. Half of the action seems to take place as Carroll ruminates at various sidewalk cafes or churches.

Carroll's main sources from a Catholic perspective are disaffected theologians such as Hans Kung and Rosemary Radford Ruether, or Scriptural scholars like John Dominic Crossan from the Jesus Seminar. His knowledge – or at least his citation – of mainstream Catholic sources is limited to non-existent. He makes a single apparent reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* but calls it the "World Catechism."

Carroll centers his discussion of the roots of alleged Catholic anti-Semitism on the Gospel accounts of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. The theory goes that the "Jesus movement" of the first century, at war with the Pharisees for control of the "true Israel," enveloped the Passion narrative in anti-Pharisee myths, that would in turn establish an anti-Jewish contempt in Christianity.

As to the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Carroll writes: "Immediately after Jesus' death, the circle of his friends began to gather. Their love for him, instead of fading in his absence, quickened, opening into a potent love they felt for one another. Their gatherings were like those of a bereft circle, and they were built around lament, the reading of texts, silence, stories, food, drink, songs, more texts, poems – a changed sense of time and a repeated intuition that there was 'one more member' than could be counted. That intuition is what we call the Resurrection." This appears to be an understanding of the Resurrection for the brie and white wine set, rather than a Catholic and Christian understanding.

Constantine's Sword is a slogging journey through the history of the Church over the two millennia. He touches down here and there when it suits his purpose. For example, while the treatment of the 12th through the 16th centuries is endless, he barely touches on the nearly eight hundred years from Constantine to the calling for the First Crusade – which leaves a rather sizeable gap in the alleged causal linkage of anti-Semitism in the Church from the Gospels to the Holocaust.

After meandering quickly through the age of the early Church fathers, Carroll arrives at what he sees as a decisive point: Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge in 312 AD. Before the battle, Constantine claimed to have seen a vision of the Cross, and the Christian symbol was placed on his standards on the day of battle. Carroll claims that this would lead to a central theological tenet of Catholicism that wrongly focused on the death of Jesus as atonement and reparation for sin. Thus the concept of salvation would come to dominate Christian thinking as the meaning of the life of Jesus, His death on the Cross an act of atonement for sin. This would lead to a "theology of contempt" that viewed the Jews as "Christ-killers."

At the same time, Constantine's exercise of authority in the Church, particularly in the name of Christian unity, brought a heretofore unheard of emphasis on defined doctrinal orthodoxy. Church authority (which would evolve into papal absolutism) now entered the Christian scene as well. Constantine, in Carroll's view, was a very busy man.

All this, of course, sounds a bit like a 16th Century anti-Catholic tract during the Reformation, or one of Jack Chick's contemporary pamphlets claiming Catholic descent from a Babylonian mystery religion. The over 275 years after Christ and preceding Constantine showed a steady development of an understanding of a distinct Christian faith as well as the development of a rich community, liturgical and theological life. Concerns over unity of belief are evident in the earliest years of the Church and a bewildering list of various heresies addressed by the Church long pre-date Constantine. The theological concept of Christ's atonement for sins was hardly a late-developing concept ingeniously inserted into Catholic life by a theologically illiterate Roman emperor, but is taught directly in the New Testament and in the writings of the early Church fathers.

Though Carroll's book can bend a coffee table at 756 pages,

his litany of anti-Jewish incidents in Western history is spotty and lacking historical nuance. He touches on various events within Western history and concludes, actually quite briefly, with the Holocaust. Throughout these diverse and complicated historical trends and events, he sees a theology of the Cross and Church teaching on the atonement as being the dominant factor in generating anti-Jewish violence and anti-Semitic racism.

The Church and Nazism is confined in Carroll's book to less than 70 pages, about the same length that he gives to his suggestions for Church reform. He begins by restating his essential charge that "(h)owever modern Nazism was, it planted its roots in the soil of age-old Church attitudes and a nearly unbroken chain of Jew-hatred. However pagan it Nazism was, it drew its sustenance from groundwater poisoned by the Church's most solemnly held ideology – its *theology*."

This is, of course, a gross mis-reading of history. Hitler and Nazism were created by a rampant social Darwinism, an ubiquitous European belief that it was a virtual biological imperative that the lower classes be dominated by their racial superiors, the ideology of imperialism, the birth of scientism that would dispel the "myths" of religion, the campaign to radically excise the Church from public life, the denial of the sacredness of the individual for the good of the State or, as in communism, the good of the class, the creation of the myth of the Nietzsche-like Superman who could undertake any evil for the good of his race, and the replacement of Christianity with neo-paganism. The soil and poisoned groundwater for these Nazi aberrations were the views of 19th century liberalism that were the conventional wisdom of the times. The Catholic Church – its *theology* – was viewed as the enemy of this modern thought. The Church was not the progenitor of the beliefs that created Nazism. It was one of the last remaining bulwarks in Europe against it.

Carroll's book is not history at all, but an amateur's

meditation on various historical events skewed to reflect the prejudices of his own thesis. This is not careful scholarship. This is simply a very long anti-Catholic essay.

The last section is Carroll's vision of an agenda for "Vatican III." The Church must abandon claims to universal and objective truth, realize the Gospels are anti-Semitic, abandon theology of the atonement by Christ for the sins of mankind, reject papal infallibility, ordain women, elect bishops, dismantle the "medieval clerical caste," forget the belief that Jesus is the only means of salvation, This will allow the Church "to embrace a pluralism of belief and worship, of religion and no religion, that honors God by defining God as beyond every human effort to express God." And while they are at it, forget nonsense like priestly celibacy and birth control.

Rather clearly, the objective solution Carroll has in mind already exists: Unitarianism.

No one can argue that members of the Church throughout the centuries, going to the highest leadership within the Church, engaged and endorsed at times anti-Jewish words, sentiments and actions. At the very same time, many within the Church officially condemned such actions and it was the very Church leadership that Carroll hopes to be abandoned that was most vociferous in that condemnation.

It was not the belief of the Church, the New Testament, the Church centered in Jesus, the understanding that Christ died for the sins of mankind, or the Church belief in an objective and universal truth that persists in Christ that created the horror of the Holocaust. It was the rejection of those, and the attempt to substitute for Judeo-Christian civilization a secularist pseudo-scientism of race, class and nationalism as the meaning of life.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOLOCAUST, 1930-1965

By Michael Phayer, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis (2000)

Reviewed by Robert P. Lockwood

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) faced Nazi Germany, as Secretary of State to Pius XI and as pope, with a remarkable consistency. The Nazis considered him an implacable foe, and he was hailed both during and after World War II as the strongest voice – often the only voice – speaking out in Europe against the Nazi terror. Pius' combination of diplomatic pressure, careful but sustained criticism while maintaining an essential neutrality in war-torn Europe, as well as direct action through his nuncios and the local Church where possible, saved hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives.

Yet, in the face of this clear historical record, Pope Pius XII has come under attack since his death. Accused of an alleged “silence” in the face of the Holocaust, recent critics have gone further, insinuating that he may have been a crypto-Nazi sympathizer.

Michael Phayer, professor of history at Marquette University, has authored a new book on the Catholic response to the Holocaust. In *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Indiana University Press, September 2000), Phayer states that his purpose is to go beyond the issue of the alleged silence of Pope Pius XII. His intent is to explore how the Church in various countries, and through various individual Catholics, responded to the Holocaust, and how that response eventually led to the Church's formal rejection of

anti-Semitism during the Second Vatican Council. But throughout the book, he paints Pope Pius XII as a meek pontiff unwilling to engage the Nazis. He sees the pope as driven by a desire for a negotiated peace that will leave a powerful Germany as a European defense against an aggressive communist Soviet Union.

Phayer does not examine the allegation of silence on the part of Pope Pius XII, but merely accepts it as a given, bowing to contemporary conventional wisdom rather than the historical record of what was accomplished for Jews by Pius and the Church during the horror of the *Shoah*. For a book that claims to go beyond the debate over the alleged papal silence, his indictment of Pius is draconian. He claims that Pius "did little for Jews in their hour of greatest need." While acknowledging that working through his papal nuncios he was able to save Jewish lives, his "greatest failure...lay in his attempt to use a diplomatic remedy for a moral outrage."

Phayer argues that if Pius XI had lived five more years, Church reaction would have been different to the Holocaust and to Nazi Germany. In doing so, Phayer ignores or downplays the important role played by Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, in determining Vatican reaction to the Nazis in the 1930s. Phayer cites a series of events under Pius XI that he interprets as signaling a new direction under Pius XI that was reversed under Pius XII. He notes, for example, the 1937 encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Mit brennender sorge*, which condemned racism and idolatry of the State. He makes no mention that it was Cardinal Pacelli who drafted the encyclical. In 1938, Phayer describes how Cardinal Theodore Innitzer of Vienna was called to Rome for a dressing-down after he publicly welcomed the Nazi *Anschluss* of Austria. He does not mention that it was Cardinal Pacelli who summoned Cardinal Innitzer to Rome and told him he must retract his statement. He states that when Hitler visited Rome on an official visit to Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy, "the pope

snubbed the dictators by leaving the city." He fails to mention that Cardinal Pacelli departed with the pontiff.

He charges that Pope Pius XII contributed by his silence in the Nazi slaughter of Catholics in occupied Poland, particularly from 1939 to 1941. Yet Phayer himself acknowledges that Vatican Radio was the first to inform the world of the depths of the Nazi atrocities in Poland just months after its occupation through broadcasts in January, 1940, broadcasts given at the direction of Pope Pius XII. The pope raised the issue in his Easter and Christmas messages in 1940 and 1941, in articles in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, as well as in the first encyclical of his pontificate, *Summi Pontificatus*. In a March 1940 confrontation with Joachim von Ribbontrop, Hitler's foreign minister, Pius XII read to him in German a detailed report on Nazi atrocities in Poland aimed at both the Church and the Jews. That meeting received in depth coverage in the *New York Times*. The nuncio to Germany was also instructed by Pius repeatedly, as Phayer himself notes, "to plead for better treatment of Polish priests and lay people." Yet, Phayer proclaims papal silence and complains that "Pius XII chose a diplomatic rather than a moral approach," without citing what other approach would have been feasible or successful in the face of Nazi aggression.

In his annual Christmas message of 1942, Pius XII condemned totalitarian regimes and mourned the victims of the war, "the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction." The statement was loudly praised in the Allied world. German leadership was it as the final repudiation by Pius XII of the Nazis. Oddly, Phayer claims that this Christmas message was not understood and that "no one, certainly not the Germans, took it as a protest against the slaughter of the Jews." He states this despite the negative German reaction, Allied praise for the statement, and

a prominent Christmas Day 1942 editorial in the *New York Times* lauding the pope for speaking out.

Phayer makes a number of broad statements that are at best open to contrary interpretation, and at worst seem to misstate the facts. Phayer claims that the Vatican “refrained from promoting a separate Italian peace with the Allies because it would necessarily weaken Germany.” Pius had, in fact, pressed Mussolini to negotiate a separate peace and advised the Badoglio regime that succeeded him to do so as well. Phayer states that while Archbishop Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, engaged in the rescue of many Jews, he quotes another historian who claims that he may have done so without Vatican orders and “possibly even against them.” This would make Archbishop Roncalli a liar as he clearly stated that as nuncio he acted at the direction of Pope Pius XII.

The central thesis in Phayer’s book is that Pius wanted a strong Germany to face down the threat of Soviet communism. Yet, nowhere in the book does Phayer cite documented statements of Pope Pius XII to support that assertion. Pius XII did not change his position when Germany began its war with Russia, and he never spoke, even by means of allusion, about a “crusade” against Bolshevism or a holy war. There is no documented evidence of such a policy. But much is known to the contrary. It is known, for example, that Pius intervened to assure American supplies to the Soviet Union. Pius also agreed to an American request not to publicly raise Stalin’s past persecution of the Church after he joined the Allied cause.

There are elements in Phayer’s book that are interesting and worthy. He outlines well what the Church – and individual Catholics – were able to accomplish in rescuing Jews. He makes clear that the Church did not sit by idly as the Jews were taken to slaughter. Of particular interest is his overview of what the Church did and did not do within Nazi Germany itself.

Yet, rather than “go beyond” the issue of Pius XII as he claims to be the intent of his book, Phayer returns to him repeatedly. “To the extent that Pope Pius chose to intervene at all, he did so through intermediaries, the nuncios, rather than by responding to the Holocaust publicly from Rome. In other words, when the pope chose to deal with the murder of Jews, he did so through diplomatic channels rather than through a moral pronouncement such as an encyclical.” But that is precisely the point. There was no absolute “papal silence” on the Holocaust. Pius XII spoke carefully, certainly. But the Holy See and its representatives condemned Nazism and its atrocities long before any governments raised the issue. Yet Pius XII was primarily concerned with saving lives, rather than high-minded pronouncements that would have accomplished little or nothing.

The Church under Pius saved more Jews from the Holocaust than any other entity in that terrible time. That is the undeniable fact that critics of Pius, whatever their motivation, must answer. Phayer does not.

For a complete understanding of the role of Pope Pius XII in World War II, we strongly recommend Ronald Rychlak’s *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (Our Sunday Visitor Press, \$19.95 plus shipping and handling. Call 1-800-348-2440). While there are a few good sections in Michael Phayer’s book, his overall treatment of Pius XII is prejudiced and unconvincing.

GALILEO AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

For over three and a half centuries, the trial of Galileo has

been an anti-Catholic bludgeon wielded to show the Church as the enemy of enlightenment, freedom of thought and scientific advancement. In the cultural wars of our own day, Galileo has become an all-encompassing trump card, played whether the discussion is over science, abortion, gay rights, legalized pornography, or simply as a legitimate reason for anti-Catholicism itself.

The story of Galileo and the Church is re-told in *Galileo's Daughter* by Dava Sobel (Walker & Company, New York, NY, 1999). The book provides a balanced presentation of the conflict that evolved between Galileo and Church authorities, as well as Galileo's own deep Catholic faith. Readers who expected an anti-Catholic, ultra-feminist manifesto from *Galileo's Daughter* will be disheartened, or pleased.

Galileo Galilei was born in Pisa on February 18, 1564. The Council of Trent, which confirmed the Church's formal response to Martin Luther's revolt of 1517, had ended the year prior to his birth. It was a Europe where the deadly plague still erupted, and the glories of the Renaissance had succumbed to an unhappy desolation brought on by the breakdown in the unity of Christian culture through Luther's Reformation.

In the midst of this unhappy desolation, the era would see the beginnings of modern science. Contrary to the assorted black legends that have come down to us, most of the early scientific progress in astronomy was rooted in the Church. Galileo would not so much discover that the earth revolved around the sun. Rather, he would attempt to prove with his studies and propagate through his writings the theories of a Catholic priest who had died 20 years before Galileo was born, Nicholas Copernicus.

The world generally accepted what the senses told and had been taught since Ptolemy (2nd century A.D.), that the earth was fixed and the sun, stars and planets revolved around it. Through mathematical examination Copernicus came to believe

that the sun was at the center and the planets, earth included, revolved around it. Pope Leo X (1513-1521) was intrigued by his theories and expressed an interest in hearing them advanced. Martin Luther, calling Copernicus a fool, savaged his theory, as did John Calvin.

For the most part the Church raised no objections to his revolutionary hypothesis, as long as it was represented as theory, not undisputed fact. The difficulty that both the Church – and the Protestant reformers – had with the theory is that it was perceived as not only contradicting common sense, but Scripture as well where it was taught that Joshua had made the sun stand still and the Psalmist praised the earth “set firmly in place.”

The myth we have of Galileo is that of a “renegade who scoffed at the Bible and drew fire from a Church blind to reason,” as Sobel described it. In fact, “he remained a good Catholic who believed in the power of prayer and endeavored always to conform his duty as a scientist with the destiny of his soul.” Galileo heard of the invention of a spyglass that allowed one to see objects that were far away. From this spyglass, Galileo would develop the telescope and turn his eyes toward the exploration of the heavens. In the *Sunspot Letters* (1613) Galileo forcefully argued for a Copernican understanding of the universe and alienated much of the scientific community that upheld the Ptolemaic principles, particularly many within the Church.

In 1616, Galileo traveled to Rome to defend himself. Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine was a leading figure in the Catholic Counter Reformation. In 1615, Cardinal Bellarmine had stated his personal belief that the Copernican theory was not viable as it defied human reason. However, he found no reason for it not to be treated as a hypothesis. More important, he noted that if the Copernican theory was ever proven – which he doubted could ever be accomplished – then it would be necessary to re-think the interpretation of certain Scriptural

passages. It was a vital point that would be forgotten in 1616 and in the trial of Galileo in 1633.

In February 1616, a council of theological advisors to the pope ruled that it was bad science and quite likely heresy to teach as fact that the sun was at the center of the universe. Cardinal Bellarmine met with Galileo, advised him of the panel's ruling. He explained to Galileo that he could not present his theories on the earth's orbit of the sun as fact. Galileo agreed, but with a crucial misunderstanding. He believed that this ruling still allowed him to present those views as theoretical. Cardinal Bellarmine seemed to share that interpretation. However, the panel's ruling may have been far more forceful, stating that the theory of the earth's orbit should not be raised at all. This would be critical at his trial in 1633.

In 1623, Cardinal Antonio Barberini was elected Pope Urban VIII. Galileo met with the new pope and believed he had secured the pope's permission to continue to discuss the Copernican theory as hypothesis. In February, 1632, Galileo published the Dialogue. He so weighted his argument in favor of Copernican theory as truth – and managed to insult the pope's own expressed view that complex matters observed in Nature were to be simply attributed to the mysterious power of God – that a firestorm was inevitable.

The difficulty that Galileo encountered was that he had no acceptable proof for his belief that the earth revolved around the sun as 17th century science simply was incapable of establishing that in fact. He also appeared to be openly challenging the 1616 edict to which he had agreed. Galileo was told to come to Rome to explain himself. The trial began in February 1633. It was at this point that a fearful document emerged from the files of Galileo's dossier from 1616. It purported to prove, as Sobel writes, "that Galileo had been officially warned not to discuss Copernicus, ever, in any way at all. And so, when Galileo had come to Urban in 1624,

testing the feasibility of treating Copernican theory as hypothetical in a new book, he had in fact been flouting this ruling. Worse, it now appeared he had intentionally duped the trusting Urban by not having had the decency to tell him such a ruling existed. No wonder the pope was furious." Galileo was certainly not aware of the more restrictive notice in his file and in all likelihood an enemy had placed it there. It is doubtful that Galileo was being duplicitous in his understanding that he could discuss the Copernican theory as hypothesis, or that he had purposely misled the pope.

Seven of the 10 tribunal cardinals signed a condemnation of Galileo. His book was prohibited, he was ordered jailed, to publicly renounce his beliefs, and to perform proper penance. The finding against Galileo was from one canonical office, not a determination by the Church that set out a clear doctrinal interpretation. Rene Descartes, the French philosopher and friend of Galileo, noted the censure was not confirmed by a Council or the pope but "proceeds solely from a committee of cardinals." This was disciplinary action, not doctrinal definition in intent. Galileo would continue to have friends and supporters within the Church, including the archbishop of Sienna who would provide him with his residence for part of his "house arrest." However lenient the treatment, the condemnation was unjust. The Church tribunal had handled a bad situation badly. The theologians who interrogated him acted outside their competence and confused the literary nature of Scripture with its theological intent.

Galileo died in 1642. In 1741, Pope Benedict XIV granted an imprimatur to the first edition of the complete works of Galileo. In 1757, a new edition of the Index of Forbidden Books allowed works that supported the Copernican theory.

The Galileo affair soon entered the mythological corpus of Western secularism as symbolizing the Church as anti-intellectual, anti-science and anti-freedom. The trial is most often portrayed as Galileo the scientist arguing the supremacy

of reason over faith; the tribunal judges demanding that reason abjure to faith. The trial was neither. Galileo and the tribunal judges shared a common view that science and the Bible could not stand in contradiction. If there appeared to be a contradiction, such a contradiction resulted from either weak science, or poor interpretation of Scripture. In context, the trial exhibited both faults. Galileo's technology was far too limited at the time to in any way scientifically prove his assertion of the earth's double rotation. At the same time, the tribunal judges were at fault for a literal interpretation of biblical passages and making scientific judgments never intended by the Scriptural authors.

The Galileo case had, of course, been long settled when, in 1981, Pope John Paul II asked a pontifical commission under Cardinal Paul Poupard to study the Ptolemaic-Copernican controversy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his report, Cardinal Poupard briefly summarized the findings. Referring to Cardinal Bellarmine's letter of 1615, if the "orbiting of the Earth around the sun were ever to be demonstrated to be certain, then theologians...would have to review biblical passages apparently opposed to the Copernican theories so as to avoid asserting the error of opinions proven to be true. (T)heologians...failed to grasp the profound, non-literal meaning of the Scriptures when they describe the physical structure of the created universe. This led them unduly to transpose a question of factual observation into the realm of faith."

PAPAL SIN IS PALPABLE

NONSENSE

by Robert Lockwood

A sad sign of the times is that there are those Catholics who let their own vision of what the Church should or should not be poison their public comments. They often engage in the most shocking anti-Catholic rhetoric to push a particular agenda within the Church, with little interest in the impact such rhetoric might have on the image of the Church in the general culture. In many cases, these attacks can be more vicious than that of the most engaged secular anti-Catholic or fundamentalist. Worse, they carry greater weight because the source is Catholic.

Such is the nature of Garry Wills' new book *Papal Sins: Structures of Deceit* (Doubleday). In this book, Wills employs rhetoric against Catholicism that would never be handled by a reputable publisher if the author did not identify himself as Catholic. If the author were not Catholic and prominent, *Papal Sins* would have only found a home in a far right fundamentalist publishing house or a small humanist press.

Garry Wills currently teaches history at Northwestern University, though his public career goes back well into the early 1960s. Wills began as a protégé of William Buckley at *National Review*. He rather quickly had a change of ideological heart and became a well-known liberal author. He won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for his book, *Lincoln at Gettysburg* and recently published a short study of the life and thought of Saint Augustine.

Wills has written a number of books on Catholicism, including *Politics and Catholic Freedom*. Written in 1964 when he was still within the *National Review* orbit, that book was an attempt by Wills to explain how Catholics in the context of American political life could legitimately dissent in the

arena of the Church's social teachings as defined by the pope. His right-wing analysis in dismissing Pope John XXIII's social vision in *Mater et Magistra* laid the foundation for his dissent from Paul VI's moral teaching in *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. In *Papal Sin* Wills takes the last steps in the pilgrimage by denying papal authority altogether and in questioning foundational Catholic belief.

The level of rejection of basic tenets of Catholic belief within this book is profound, considering that the author firmly claims his Catholic identity and describes himself as a practicing Catholic. There is the standard fare concerning active support for women's ordination, dismissal of celibacy, and the embracing of artificial contraception. Wills goes further than any involved in Catholic dissent by also professing unqualified support for abortion rights. But he does not stop there. In the course of the book he rejects the teaching authority of the Church if exercised without lay involvement and agreement, the concept of papal infallibility and any possibility of divine guidance to papal teaching, the ordained priesthood, the doctrine of Real Presence in the Eucharist and that the priest has sacramental powers along to consecrate the Eucharist. Apostolic succession, the Immaculate Conception and Assumption, and Church teaching on homosexuality are dismissed as well. For the most part, the right of the Church to teach at all in the area of sexual morality is generally dismissed if it involves the actions of consenting adults.

In *Papal Sin*, Wills comes across as a Catholic with a heavy-handed agenda. Wills states, for example, that the arguments for much of "what passes as current church doctrine are so intellectually contemptible that mere self-respect forbids a man to voice them as his own." Such language would demand an immediate retraction and apology if its source were non-Catholic. Wills – and Doubleday – believe that it is acceptable as long as the author of the statement claims

Catholicism as his own.

The public difficulty is that this book will be utilized by those outside the Church with an anti-Catholic agenda to reinforce their prejudices. While Wills certainly sees his book as a call to arms within a certain cadre of Catholics, the greater impact will be to reinforce anti-Catholic prejudices and assumptions within the secular culture.

Though the title is catchy, *Papal Sin* is not a collection of anti-clerical tales from the dark ages, meant to poke fun at the papacy. Rather, "papal sin" refers to what Wills calls "structures of deceit" that he contends are inherent to the papacy. Wills charges that the Catholic Church exists in a system of lies, falsifications, and misrepresentations meant to prop up papal authority. And not only popes deceive. The whole structure and belief system of the Church, from sacramental and moral theology, to ecclesiology, Marian beliefs and the essential understanding of Christ's death as atonement for the sins of mankind, are part of a fabricated "structure of deceit."

The very title of the book – and the general thesis concerning "structures of deceit" – reflects classic themes of anti-Catholic post-Reformation propaganda. Much like Protestants in 17th Century England, or today's anti-Catholic fundamentalists, Wills is not content to merely argue that Catholic beliefs are wrong. He argues that they are consciously wrong. Church leaders know these teachings are wrong, yet they still attempt to impose such beliefs on the Catholic laity.

The difficulty, of course, is that Wills' theory is based both on an inaccurate understanding of the teaching authority of the Church and of the papacy. Similar to anti-Catholic Protestants in the 19th century, Wills distorts Catholic understanding of papal authority and then proceeds to knock down that straw man: "The Pope alone...is competent to tell

Christians how to live"; defenders of orthodox Catholicism believe that "the whole test of Catholicism, the essence of faith, is submission to the Pope." Catholics, of course, recognize the difference between the ordinary magisterium and infallible Church teachings. They also understand the teaching role of the papacy and its essentially conservative nature, in the best sense of that phrase, in defending the deposit of faith. The difference is that Wills summarily rejects any papal authority to teach and, as such, it has led him down a road that moves from quiet dissent on social issues to outright rejection of fundamental Church teachings.

Wills' book is filled not so much with argument and documentation as with statements. He makes assertions and those assertions are the only substantiation for his positions. Most of the book cites opinions sanctified by secondary sources that are as biased as Wills himself. His major source on priestly pedophilia, homosexuality and heterosexual activity is A.W. Richard Sipe, whose research has been seriously questioned both in its methodology and studied bias.

Wills also misstates even friendly sources. For example, he states as fact that today "80 percent of young priests think that the Pope is wrong on contraception, 60 percent of them think he is wrong on homosexuality, yet the Vatican keeps up the pressure to have them voice what they do not believe." His cited reference for these statistics is *American Catholic*, by Charles Morris, page 293. In checking Morris, one discovers first, that Morris clearly identifies that these were opinions of young priests analyzed in the mid 1980s – 15 years ago. Wills presents them as contemporary viewpoints and never recognizes that these statistics were seriously challenged.

In the discussion of abortion, he wanders off into the unanswerable issue of "ensoulment," (at what point that God "infuses" the soul into unborn life). He then speaks of abortions in nature, when the body spontaneously "aborts" and

snidely wonders if this means that God Himself aborts millions of souls to "Limbo." Of course, Wills knows that what we commonly refer to as "abortion" these days is the conscious choosing to abort life, not a natural miscarriage.

Wills slashes and burns, inventing evil motives, distorting doctrine and history, and resorts at last to ridicule. He refers to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as a teaching that would "muddy and confuse the nature of the Incarnation" and scoffs that Mary's "very flesh was a cosmic marvel, like kryptonite, unable to die." He refers to Mary and Marian doctrine as creating "an idol-goddess" that replaced the Holy Spirit as the object of Catholic devotion. Quoting Sipe, he calls devotion to Mary a sign of male immaturity rampant in the clergy and hierarchy, and that if one sees oneself as a "child of Mary" this can "infantilize spiritual life."

Wills' book is an exercise in anti-Catholic rhetoric. He tosses out offensive phrases and charges that would never see the published light of day if he did not hide under the cloak of his Catholicity. He cynically states that Pope John Paul II "makes sex so holy that only monks are really worthy of it."

Wills takes delight in calling priests "the peoples eunuchs." In one of the saddest sections of the book, Wills makes fun of an old priest for whom he used to serve at the altar. The priest would carefully and piously pronounce the Latin words of consecration over the Eucharist. He chuckles that the priest was "making sure the magic formula was given all its force." One wonders if he has lost all sense of decency.

Wills states without any documentation that priestly celibacy has chased out heterosexual priests and created a gay clergy. He also cites the practice of celibacy as a primary reason for cases of priestly pedophilia, this despite absolutely no clinical evidence to support such a monstrous charge, and the simple fact that many pedophiles are married. He concludes by

calling the Church “a victimizer with Satan,” a perfect coda for a perfectly awful anti-Catholic diatribe.

Wills goes so far out that even the most liberal of Catholics will find this a distasteful exercise. In the end this book will only be supported by those who already actively hate the Catholic Church.

CORNWELL’S ERRORS: REVIEWING HITLER’S POPE

Ronald J. Rychlak

John Cornwell’s new book, *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*, turns out to be a deeply flawed attack on Pope John Paul II. That’s right, the final chapter is actually an attack on the current plaintiff. Cornwell is disturbed by John Paul’s “conservative” positions on celibate clergy, women priests, artificial contraception, and abortion. He is especially concerned about the Pope’s opposition to direct political activity by the clergy.

Cornwell apparently decided that the easiest way to attack the Pope of today was to go after Pius XII. If he can prove that Pius was flawed, then he establishes that popes can be wrong. If that is the case, then he can argue that John Paul II is wrong about the whole catalogue of teachings that tend to upset many modern Catholics.

Cornwell’s thesis is that Eugenio Pacelli—Pope Pius XII—was driven by the desire to concentrate the authority of the Church under a strong, central papacy. Cornwell argues that as Pacelli worked toward that end, he created a situation that

was easy for Hitler to exploit. Cornwell denies that Pacelli was a "monster." In fact, he recognizes that Pacelli "hated" Hitler. His theory, deeply flawed though it may be, is that Hitler exploited Pacelli's efforts to expand Roman influence. Unfortunately, many reviews, like those in the *New York Post* and the *London Sunday Times*, missed that point. They simply reported that "Pius XII helped Adolf Hitler gain power," as if the two worked together. That is certainly not Cornwell's point.

Some of the mistakes reported in the press are obvious to anyone who read Cornwell's book. For instance, *The Indianapolis News* reported that Pius knew of Hitler's plan for the Final Solution "in 1939 when he first became involved with the German leader." First of all, the Nazis did not decide on the course of extermination until 1942. Perhaps more telling, this statement is at odds with two things in the book: 1) Cornwell argues that Hitler and the future Pope Pius XII first "became involved" in the early 1930s, and 2) Cornwell expressly notes that Pius XII's first reliable information concerning extermination of the Jews came in the spring of 1942, not 1939.

Similarly, the *New York Post* reported in a couple of different editions that "Pacelli... met with Hitler several times." This is not true. The two men never met, and Cornwell does not claim that they did. The most common error made by reviewers was that of accepting Cornwell's assertions without checking out the facts. On some of these points, the reviewer's oversight might be forgiven. For instance, Viking Press has marketed this book as having been written by a practicing Catholic who started out to defend Pius XII. One is always reluctant to say what another person's beliefs are, so reviewers could be forgiven had they simply remained silent about that issue. Instead, the vast majority took delight in calling Cornwell a good, practicing Catholic.

Having decided to report on Cornwell's religious beliefs, the

reviewers might have noted that his earlier books were marketed as having been written by a "lapsed Catholic for more than 20 years" and that reviewers said he wrote "with that astringent, cool, jaundiced view of the Vatican that only ex-Catholics familiar with Rome seem to have mastered." They might also have reported that during the time he was researching this book he described himself as an "agnostic Catholic." Finally, it might have been worth noting that in a 1993 book he declared that human beings are "morally, psychologically and materially better off without a belief in God." Instead, they presented only that side of the story that Cornwell and his publisher wanted the public to hear.

The Vatican had not yet spoken, so a reviewer might be excused for not knowing that Cornwell lied about being the first person to see certain "secret" files and about the number of hours that he spent researching at the Vatican. When, however, he claimed that a certain letter was a "time bomb" lying in the Vatican archives since 1919, a careful reviewer might have mentioned that it had been fully reprinted and discussed in *Germany and the Holy See: Pacelli's Nunciature between the Great War and the Weimar Republic*, by Emma Fattorini (1992).

That letter at issue reports on the occupation of the royal palace in Munich by a group of Bolshevik revolutionaries. Pacelli was the nuncio in Munich and a noted opponent of the Bolsheviks. The revolutionaries sprayed his house with gunfire, assaulted him in his car, and invaded his home. The description of the scene in the palace (which was actually written by one of Pacelli's assistants, not him) included derogatory comments about the Bolsheviks and noted that many of them were Jewish. Cornwell couples the anti-revolutionary statements with the references to Jews and concludes that it reflects "stereotypical anti-Semitic contempt." That is a logical jump unwarranted by the facts. Even worse, however, is the report in *USA Today* that Pacelli described Jews (not a specific group of revolutionaries) "as physically and morally

repulsive, worthy of suspicion and contempt." Again, it is a case of the press being particularly anxious to report the worst about the Catholic Church.

Cornwell claims that he received special assistance from the Vatican due to earlier writings which were favorable to the Vatican. Many reviewers gleefully reported this and he asserted "moral shock" at what he found in the archives. A simple call to the Vatican would have revealed that he received no special treatment. If the reviewer were suspicious about taking the word of Vatican officials, a quick consultation of Cornwell's earlier works (or easily-available reviews thereof) would have revealed that he has never been friendly to the Holy See.

Cornwell stretched the facts to such a point that any impartial reader should be put on notice. For instance, Cornwell suggests that Pacelli dominated Vatican foreign policy from the time that he was a young prelate. One chapter describes the young Pacelli's hand in the negotiation of a June 1914 concordat with Serbia (he took the minutes), and leaves the impression that he was responsible for the outbreak of World War I.

Certainly Cornwell, who describes Pope Pius XI as "bossy" and "authoritarian," knows that Pacelli was unable to dominate Vatican policy as Secretary of State, much less as nuncio. Any fair reviewer should have at least questioned this point.

Another point that would be a tip-off to any critical reviewer is Cornwell's handling of the so-called "secret encyclical." The traditional story (and the evidence suggests that it is little more than that) is that Pius XI was prepared to make a strong anti-Nazi statement, and he commissioned an encyclical to that effect. A draft was prepared, but Pius XI died before he was able to release it. His successor, Pius XII, then buried the draft.

One of the problems that most critics of Pius XII have with this theory is that the original draft contained anti-Semitic statements. These critics are reluctant to attribute such sentiments to Pius XI. Cornwell resolved this problem by accusing Pacelli of having written the original draft (or of having overseen the writing) when he was Secretary of State, then burying it when he was Pope. It is really such a stretch that any good reviewer should have questioned it. Instead, most merely took Cornwell at his word and reported that an anti-Semitic paper was written by Pacelli or under his authority. (In actuality, there is no evidence that either Pope ever saw the draft.)

Perhaps more startling than anything else is the way reviewers avoided any mention of the last chapter of Cornwell's book, entitled "*Pius XII Redivivus*." In this chapter, it becomes clear that the book is a condemnation of Pope John Paul II's pontificate, not just that of Pius XII. This chapter also reveals a serious flaw in Cornwell's understanding of Catholicism, politics, and the papacy of John Paul II.

Cornwell argues that John Paul II represents a return to a more "highly centralized, autocratic papacy," as opposed to a "more diversified Church." The over-arching theory of the book, remember, is that the centralization of power in Rome took away the political power from local priests and bishops who might have stopped Hitler. Accordingly, Cornwell thinks that John Paul is leading the Church in a very dangerous direction, particularly by preventing clergy from becoming directly involved in political movements, including everything from liberation theology to condom distribution.

Cornwell, of course, has to deal with the fact that John Paul II has played a central part in world events, including a pivotal role in the downfall of the Soviet Union. Cornwell's answer is that John Paul was more "sympathetic to pluralism" early in his pontificate, but that he has retreated into "an intransigently absolutist cast of mind" and has hurt the

Church in the process.

Cornwell misses the important point that is so well explained in George Weigel's new biography of John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*. John Paul's political impact came about precisely because *he did not primarily seek to be political, or to think or speak politically*. The pontiff's contribution to the downfall of Soviet Communism was that he launched an authentic and deep challenge to the lies that made Communistic rule possible. He fought Communism in the same way that Pius XII fought Nazism: not by name-calling but by challenging the intellectual foundation on which it was based.

John Paul has recognized the parallels between his efforts and those of Pius XII, perhaps better than anyone else. He, of course, did not have a horrible war to contend with, nor was he threatened with the possibility of Vatican City being invaded, but given those differences, the approach each Pope took was similar. As John Paul has explained: "Anyone who does not limit himself to cheap polemics knows very well what Pius XII thought of the Nazi regime and how much he did to help countless people persecuted by the regime." The most disappointing thing is that the modern press seems unable to recognize cheap polemics, at least when it comes to the Catholic Church.

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INCONTESTABLE EVIDENCE

by

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An extraordinary new book, a scholarly compendium of vital historical documents, *Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican* (Paulist Press, 1999) by Father Pierre Blet, S.J., greatly expands our knowledge of what Pope Pius XII did to help victims of Nazi oppression in Europe during World War II. The author of this essential work is one of a team of four Jesuit historians who edited the Vatican documents published from 1965-1981 in 12 volumes.

Blet's book is a summary, not only of the Vatican's assistance to all Nazi victims but it also counters many of the accusations launched against Pius XII, as it carefully establishes the historical record of his compassion and heroism, and documents his opposition to all totalitarian movements, especially Nazism.

Addressing the prelates of the Roman Curia (December 24, 1939), Pius XII stated that in order to establish world peace with order and justice, it was necessary (1) to assure each nation, whether large or small, its right to life and independence; (2) to free nations from the burden of an arms race through a mutually agreed upon, organic, and progressive disarmament; (3) to rebuild and create international institutions while bearing in mind the weaknesses of previous ones; (4) to recognize, especially in the interests of European order, the rights of ethnic minorities; (5) to recognize above all human laws and conventions "the holy and immovable divine law."

In his letters to the bishops, Pius XII spoke out in favor of a peace "with justice for all and for each of the belligerents, [a peace] that need not be ashamed when measured by Christian principles and, for this reason, a peace carrying in itself the guarantee of security and of time" (Letter to Cardinal Faulhaber, January 18, 1940).

Pope Pius XII's was aware that his messages were not reaching the German episcopate. In a message to the German bishops, dated August 6, 1940, he allows us to understand his position: "After seeing and experiencing during the years of Our work in Germany how harshly the German people had to suffer the continuing and humiliating effects of their defeat, and after Ourselves witnessing the way in which the previous peace treaty's lack of proper balance has brought forth as a fatal consequence the contrasts whose elimination by violent means has the earth tremble today, We can only express our ardent hope that when the war ends, at a time known only by Providence, the eyes of the victorious will be opened to the voice of justice, equity, wisdom, and moderation, without which no peace treaty, no matter how solemn its ratification may be, can last and can have the happy consequences desired by all people."

When Germany began its war with Russia, Pius XII did not change his position. His work on behalf of peace increased in intensity. He worked "for a merciful peace which protects against violence and injustice, which brings together and reconciles, which establishes for all former belligerents without exception supportable relations and the possibility of a prosperous development" (February 24, 1942). On March 1, 1942, he wrote: "Whereas Our Christmas radio message found a strong echo in the world, indeed beyond the circle of Christianity, We learn with sadness that it was almost completely hidden from the German Catholics."

Pius XII reminded Germany and Soviet Russia of their responsibilities: "Your conscience and your sense of honor

should lead you to treat the people of occupied territories with a spirit of justice, of humanity, and with broadness of outlook. Do not impose any burden upon them that you have judged or would judge to be unjust if you were in a situation like theirs Above all, keep in mind that God's blessing or curse upon your own country may depend on your conduct toward those who, because of the fortunes of war, have fallen under your power."

Pius XII did not want to provoke reprisals against the Church in Germany. In keeping with Vatican protocol, he delegated the task of speaking out to the bishops. He explained to Cardinal Preysing (April 30, 1943): "We give to the pastors who are working on the local level the duty of determining if and to what degree the danger of reprisals and of various forms of oppression occasioned by episcopal declarations—as well as perhaps other circumstances caused by the length and mentality of the war—seem to advise caution to avoid greater evil despite alleged reasons urging the contrary."

Writing to the archbishop of Cologne (March 3, 1944), Pius XII spoke about "the superhuman effort necessary to keep the Holy See above the quarrels of the parties, and the confusion, almost impossible to unravel, between political and ideological currents, between violence and law (incomparably more so in the present conflict than in the last war) to the extent that it is extremely difficult to decide what must be done: reserve and prudent silence, or resolutely speaking out and vigorous action."

The Vatican's Holy Office had issued a formal decree on March 25, 1928, condemning anti-Semitism: "Moved by Christian charity, the Holy See is obligated to protect the Jewish people against unjust vexations and, just as it reprobates all rancor and conflicts between peoples, it particularly condemns unreservedly hatred against the people once chosen by God; the hatred that commonly goes by the name of anti-Semitism."

Blet's book reveals that Pius XII applied this teaching and spoke out repeatedly against the outrages of Nazism by exhorting his representatives to oppose the racial laws and to intervene on behalf of persecuted Jews.

The Pontiff was aware that speaking out explicitly against Hitler's purges would have aggravated the Führer's anger and accelerated the Nazi efforts to exterminate the Jews, a concern borne out by the Nazi retaliation that included the martyrdom of Edith Stein shortly after the Dutch Bishops denounced Hitler.

Personally and through his representatives, Pius XII employed all the means at his disposal to save Jews and other refugees during World War II. As a moral leader and a diplomat forced to limit his words, he privately took action and, despite insurmountable obstacles, saved hundreds of thousands of Jews from the gas chambers. The Pope was loved and respected. Of those mourning his death in 1958, Jews—who credited Pius XII with being one of their greatest defenders and benefactors in their hour of greatest need—stood in the forefront.

In his *War Memories* de Gaulle reports on his impressions during a meeting the following month: "Pius XII judges everything from a perspective that surpasses human beings, their undertakings and their quarrels. ... His lucid thought focuses on the consequences: the outbreak of ideologies identified with Communism and Nationalism in a large part of the world. His inspiration reveals to him that only Christian faith, hope, and charity, even if they be submerged for a long time and everywhere, can overcome these ideologies. For him everything depends on the policy of the Church, on what it does, on its language, on the way it conducts itself. This is why the Pastor has made the church a domain reserved to himself personally and where he displays the gifts of authority, of influence, of the eloquence given him by God. Pious, compassionate, political—in the highest meaning these can assume—such does this pontiff and sovereign appear to me

because of the respect that he inspires in me.”

Father Blet, former professor of Ecclesiastical History at the Gregorian University in Rome, stated that “the monumental work of 12 volumes of documentation include all the official documents in which the Jewish communities, the Rabbis of the world, and other refugees, thank Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church for all the help and work in their favor. ... The Pope was conscious of what he had accomplished to prevent the war, to alleviate its sufferings, to reduce the number of its victims, everything he thought he could do. The documents, insofar as they allow one to probe the human heart, come to the same conclusion.”

****To order a copy of Father Pierre Blet's book, "Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican," please call Paulist Press at 1-800-218-1903; the book costs \$29.95 plus postage.*