

# FULTON J. SHEEN, CATHOLIC CHAMPION

by Thomas C. Reeves

When American history textbooks mention Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen at all, it is briefly and in connection with the allegedly “feel good” Christianity of the 1950s. To some Americans, Sheen was merely a glib, superficial television performer and pop writer who blossomed briefly on the national scene and rapidly disappeared.

Many orthodox Catholics have a clearer understanding of Sheen, for more than a dozen of his books remain in print, several anthologies of his writings are for sale, and his television shows and tapes continue to be popular. The Eternal Word Television Network regularly features Sheen videotapes. Moreover, an effort is underway, formally inaugurated by the late Cardinal O'Connor of New York, to have the Archbishop canonized.

In preparing *America's Bishop: The Life and Times of Fulton J. Sheen* (Encounter Books, 2001) I discovered a brilliant, charismatic, and holy man who has been underestimated by historians, largely overlooked by the contemporary mass media, and forgotten by too many Catholics. Indeed, I came to the conclusion that Fulton J. Sheen was the most important Catholic of twentieth century America.

Sheen was born in tiny El Paso, Illinois, in the north central part of the state, in 1895. His father was a modestly prosperous farmer in the Peoria region, his mother a hard-working and popular farm wife and mother of four boys. The Sheen children were gifted with high intelligence (one, Tom, had a photographic memory), trained to work hard (for most of his life Fulton would work a nineteen hour day, seven days a

week), and encouraged to advance themselves through education. The parents also stressed the importance of their Catholic faith. The Sheen boys went to parochial schools, and the family attended church regularly and said the Rosary together nightly.

Fulton excelled in his school work from the start, and was an extremely popular youngster. Rather short (five foot seven) and slim, he was unable to compete effectively in athletics and so poured his energy into becoming a skilled collegiate debater. His beautiful speaking voice, penetrating eyes (inherited from his mother), pleasing personality, and outstanding academic preparation proved effective in competitions.

From Fulton's earliest years, there seemed to be a consensus of opinion in the family that he would become a priest. After graduating from St. Viator College in Bourbonnais, Illinois, he went to seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. From there he went to the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. to earn a doctorate in philosophy. After ordination in 1919 and receiving two degrees from CUA in 1920, Sheen went to the prestigious Louvain University in Belgium. Here he earned a Ph.D. in philosophy with the highest distinction and was invited to try for a "super doctorate," the *agregé en Philosophie*. He was the first American ever to receive such an offer. Sheen earned the honor in 1925, again passing with the highest distinction. He transformed his dissertation into a prize-winning book and won the respect and admiration of G. K. Chesterton, among others.

After a brief and successful stint in a slum church in Peoria (a test given by his bishop to see if he would be obedient), Sheen became an instructor at Catholic University. He was to remain on the CUA faculty, teaching philosophy and theology, from 1926 until 1950.

While proving to be a popular professor, Sheen's interests

were primarily off-campus. After writing two scholarly books, he began publishing a lengthy list of more or less popular books and articles that would earn him honors and praise throughout the country. In 1928, he went on the "Catholic Hour," a nationally broadcast radio program. He quickly became the program's most popular preacher and for more than two decades was asked to preach during Lent and at Holy Days. Vast quantities of letters and financial donations poured in on "Catholic Hour" officials whenever Sheen spoke.

Sheen was soon in demand throughout the country and Western Europe as a preacher, retreat leader, and teacher. He preached annually at St. Patrick's Cathedral, where he packed the huge church and received much attention in the press.

Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York, one of the most powerful figures in the Roman Catholic Church, took Sheen under his wing after World War II, and in 1948 invited him to join a world-wide tour and assume the bulk of the journey's preaching duties. The two men greatly appreciated each other's talents (the Cardinal was a superb administrator and fundraiser), and in 1950 Spellman had Sheen named to head the American branch of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Church's principal source of missionary funds. The appointment came with a miter, and in 1951, Sheen was consecrated in Rome. Sheen flung himself into his new duties, revealing his great skill as a fund-raiser. He continued to produce books, articles, and newspaper columns at an astonishing rate, and accepted invitations to preach throughout the country and across the world. Sheen's personal success at winning converts—the list included writer Clare Boothe Luce, industrialist Henry Ford II, and ex-Communist Louis Budenz—attracted national attention. Unmentioned in the press were the thousands of average Americans who came into the Church because of Sheen's efforts.

When, in 1951, the Archdiocese of New York decided to enter the world of television, Sheen was a natural choice to appear

on screen. The initial half-hour lectures were broadcast on the tiny Dumont Network, opposite big budget programs by comedian Milton Berle, "Mr. Television," and singer-actor Frank Sinatra. No one gave Sheen a chance to compete effectively. Soon, however, Sheen took the country by storm, winning an Emmy, appearing on the cover of Time magazine, and entering the "most admired" list of Americans. In its second year, "Life Is Worth Living" moved to the ABC Network and had a sponsor, the Admiral Corporation.

Sheen's talks, delivered in the full regalia of a bishop, were masterful. He worked on each presentation for 35 hours, delivering it in Italian and French to clarify his thoughts before going on television. He at no time used notes or cue cards, and always ended on time. The set was a study with a desk, a few chairs, and some books; the only prop was a blackboard. A four-foot statue of Madonna and Child on a pedestal was clearly visible. Sheen's humor, charm, intelligence, and considerable acting skill radiated throughout the "Life Is Worth Living" series, captivating millions eager to hear Christian (only indirectly Catholic) answers to life's common problems.

Some of Sheen's talks and writings dealt with Communism, which the Bishop, a student of Marxism and a personal friend of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, thought a dire threat to the nation and the world. But at no time did Sheen appear with or praise Senator Joe McCarthy (he had little use for politicians of any stripe) or directly support the Second Red Scare, which swept through the country during the early 1950s.

Sheen was also a student of Freud, and was consistently critical of Freudian psychology. Sheen's best-selling book, *Peace Of Soul*, presented his views on the subject forcefully. At about the same time, the bishop wrote a powerful book on the Virgin Mary, *The World's First Love*, followed a few years later by an equally impressive *Life of Christ*.

For all of his concerns about worldly issues, Sheen was above all a supernaturalist, who fervently believed that God is love, that miracles happen, and that the Catholic Church best taught the divinely revealed truths about life and death. As he put it in *Peace Of Soul*, “nothing *really* matters except the salvation of a soul.”

Still, Sheen was not a plaster saint. Vanity was a constant problem for him, and he knew it. As both priest and bishop, Sheen lived and dressed well and enjoyed the publicity he received in the media and the applause of adoring crowds. Perhaps more serious was an offense that was not discovered until twenty years after his death: while a young teacher at Catholic University, in order to expedite his academic career, he invented a second doctorate for himself.

Sheen could also be difficult at times when his authority was challenged. In the early 1950s, he and Cardinal Spellman, a very proud man, engaged in a bitter feud largely over the dispersal of Society funds. The struggle led to a private audience before Pius XII, who sided with Sheen. In a rage, Spellman terminated Sheen’s television series, made him a local outcast, and drove him from the Archdiocese. In 1966, Sheen became the Bishop of Rochester.

Bishop Sheen had been an active participant in the Vatican II sessions in Rome and thoroughly endorsed the reforms that followed. He tried to make his diocese the bridge between the old and new Catholicism, enacting sweeping reforms and making headlines in the process. Without administrative skills, Sheen alienated many in Rochester, and in 1969 he resigned and returned to New York.

During the last decade of his life, while battling serious heart disease, Sheen continued at a breathtaking pace to travel, speak, and write. During the course of his more than 50 year career in the Church, he wrote 66 books and countless articles. No other Catholic figure of the century could match

his literary productivity. (Book royalties and television fees went almost exclusively to the Society. Sheen estimated that he gave \$10 million of his own money to the organization he headed.)

In October, 1979 Sheen met John Paul II in the sanctuary of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Thunderous applause greeted their embrace. The Pope privately told the 84-year-old Archbishop that he had been a loyal son of the Church. Nothing could have been more pleasing for Fulton Sheen to hear. He died on December 9, in his chapel before the Blessed Sacrament.

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## A TIME FOR REDEMPTION

BY DAVID REINHARD

I think the Roman Catholic Church has turned the corner on its priest sexual abuse scandal. Yes, turned the corner.

True, the stories about pedophile priests—the crimes and cover-ups—will fill the news and fuel the outrage of Catholics, non-Catholics and anti-Catholics for some time to come. The courts, civil and criminal, will continue to mete out some measure of justice in these cases for a good while.

And commentators of all stripes, faiths and motivations will offer their opinions on what ails the Catholic priesthood.

But, in recent weeks, the church has finally moved to right itself, and not because of any recent statements from the Vatican or American bishops, welcome as they may be. I've seen the first fitful steps at two churches in Portland [Oregon], and I'm sure many other Catholics have witnessed the same thing at their churches. It happens when a priest breaks from discussing the daily scripture readings and devotes his homily to today's all-too-routine headlines. It happens when a priest marshals the courage and grace to speak about the unspeakable—a priest's sexual abuse of children, what Philadelphia's Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua calls "the most depraved of moral aberrations."

How difficult it must be for these priests to address this with their congregations, particularly with altar boys or girls and other youngsters in attendance. It must be uncomfortable as, well, hell. Certainly, it is for the most faithful Catholics.

But silence will not suffice. Screening out unfit candidates for the priesthood and maintaining zero-tolerance for priests who have sex with minors—a category that extends beyond pedophilia, which is about adult sexual attraction to prepubescent children—are important. It's encouraging that most dioceses have taken action. But sometimes talk is as important as action, particularly when the actions have occurred in the church's bureaucratic warrens and within secret legal settlements.

Facing this scandal head-on—finally speaking about the unspeakable—is, I think, vital for the priests and their parishioners, not to mention the church. Priests and parishioners need each other now more than ever. Their responses to the scandal are probably not so different.

That became clear—painfully and comfortingly—on a recent day when Father Paul Peri stood in the center aisle at St. Michael's in downtown Portland and poured out his heart. He

wanted to talk about the proverbial elephant in the living room, the Catholic topic everyone and no one was discussing at church services. So he talked to the congregation.

He talked about how sad he was for the victims of this abuse. He talked about how angry he was at those who had brought shame on the church and, yes, the media's hyping this story out of proportion. He talked about the shame he feels and his worry that this scandal will turn away men seeking the priesthood. He talked, as well, about the priests he knows.

They're probably not so different from the 40,000 other priests across the nation. They get up each day, celebrate Mass, teach and minister to the poor, the lonely, the dispossessed. They're not without sin, but they are without scandal. They live in the light, not the darkness. Yet they are not the public face of the Catholic clergy these days—Boston's defrocked priest John Geoghan is—and the scandal of this maddening reality was Peri's own cross to bear this Lent.

He ended on an upbeat note that day, but it was not Peri's hopeful words that seemed to move his flock. It was the mere discussion of "the issue" and the fact that his feelings—his sorrow, anger, shame, and frustration—mirrored their own. Did the tears come from witnessing Peri's pain or from a relief that our common scandal was brought out of the darkness and into the light?

Parishioners, of course, cannot know what it means to be a priest these scandal-filled days. If you're a priest, how does anyone know you haven't molested a child? How do you defend yourself against suspicions when the crime itself occurs in private? You almost have to prove something didn't happen; you almost have to prove a negative.

It's an impossible burden that makes an often lonely calling lonelier. In the current atmosphere, the clerical collar



becomes a kind of choker. As one priest told me, “You stand up there and feel people who don’t know you suspect you of being a child molester.”

This has been a season of suffering for the Catholic clergy and laity. You hear or read the stories of clerical sexual abuse, as well as reports that molester-priests were shuffled from one parish to another. You’re outraged on almost every level. You know this goes on in other institutions. The news is full of reports of sexual abuse in other religions and helping professions. There’s scant evidence that pedophilia is any more prevalent in the Catholic Church than in the larger population.

But the gap between the church’s moral teaching and these acts—the hideous behavior and the church hierarchy’s apparent tolerance of it—is great. It makes the church a natural and legitimate target of special outrage. You know these pedophile priests are a relative handful of men who’ve served in the priesthood over the years. You know these cases most often go back decades when pedophilia was seen more as a moral failing—“go and sin no more”—than an intractable psychological pathology.

But you also know that a single instance of sex abuse is one too many, particularly when it’s committed by an alleged man of God and facilitated by the church’s actions; particularly when it alienates a young person or family from God’s love.

If Peri’s homily put the current scandal in human context, Father Emmerich Vogt’s homily a few days later at Portland’s Holy Rosary Priory placed today’s news in a historical and cultural context.

This is not the first time that scandal has rocked the church. In fact, said Vogt, the church was born in the scandal of Judas. “Judas priests” have been with the church throughout history and continue to this day—not only in today’s pedophile

priests, but in priests and other religious figures who soft-pedal the church's moral teaching on abortion, homosexuality, adultery, illegitimacy and pornography. Even the papacy has had its scandal. Pope Alexander VI's four illegitimate children in the 15th century are but one example.

This certainly isn't the first time Catholics have been called on to speak out against scandalous clerical behavior. As Vogt noted, St. Francis de Sales was asked to do so in his day. "Those who commit these types of scandals are guilty of the spiritual equivalent of murder," said the 17th-century bishop. Their terrible example destroys the faith of others in God.

The church might be a divine institution, but it's filled with imperfect humans who are inevitably products of their time and culture. And look at our era's sexed-up atmosphere. What should we expect? Our priests come from our culture's families. Vogt said it's mystifying to witness a secular culture that celebrates or tolerates all of today's degradation now zeroing in on the church's sex scandal.

Yes, the stories of abusive priests command attention. Nobody's more eager to bring justice to these priests than the parishioners who love their church and children, or the priests who are unfairly tarred.

But, as a Catholic, the attention often seems outsized to me. Is the church being singled out for special scrutiny here? Is it because the church has resisted the postmodern moral order? Is it because the church maintains an unshakable belief in absolute truth and opposes all of today's media-friendly hobbyhorses—abortion, relaxed sexual mores and all the rest? Is it because there are many other agendas at work?

What else to conclude when Catholics and non-Catholics offer up as fixes such things as ending priestly celibacy or opening the Catholic priesthood to women? In New Jersey, an Orthodox rabbi will soon go to trial on charges of groping two teen-age

girls. In South Carolina, a Baptist minister is serving a 60-year prison sentence for sexually abusing 23 children. In Maryland, a former Episcopal priest was convicted recently of molesting a 14-year-old boy. In Portland, the Mormon Church announced last fall a \$3 million settlement in a lawsuit brought by a man claiming he was abused by a high priest in the early 1990s. Celibacy and the all-male clergy didn't lead to the sins of these religious leaders.

And yet, however disproportionate the current targeting of the Catholic Church may be, this sad reality remains: Some Catholic priests violated their vows and their parish's children, and the hierarchy didn't respond in the best interests of its children. Priests and parishioners together must say, "Enough." Today's Judas priests must find no sanctuary in the Catholic Church.

Past scandal, Vogt assured his flock, has always produced good men and women to renew the church. We've seen the first stirrings of this in places like St. Michael's, Holy Rosary and other parishes across the country.

Yes, the sex-with-minors scandal is infuriating, depressing and embarrassing. But there's worse to endure. As St. Francis de Sales also said about scandal in the church, "While those who give scandal are guilty of the spiritual equivalent of murder, those who take scandal—who allow scandals to destroy their faith—are guilty of spiritual suicide."

Yes, the church will have to carry this cross well beyond Lent. But Catholics are ever a hopeful people who believe in the redemptive power of suffering. We are, this day reminds us, an Easter people.

*David Reinhard is an associate editor for the Oregonian newspaper. This article originally appeared in the March 31 edition of the Sunday Oregonian.*

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# TRIUMPH: AN ANSWER TO CATHOLIC REVISIONISTS

By Russell Shaw

In the last several years the culture war against the Catholic Church has been extended to a new battleground—the writing of history. It is not the first time this has happened, since it has long been known that he who gets to tell the story of the past his way can reasonably hope to shape the future. Think of the “Black Legend” concocted against colonial Spain. Still, it would be hard to think of any previous era that witnessed a more concentrated attack on Catholicism in the pages of newly penned historical or pseudo-historical works than this one has.

It is a notable feature of this assault on the Church that some of its leading figures are themselves Catholics. Among these are John Cornwell (*Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*, Viking, 1999), Garry Wills (*Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit*, Doubleday, 2000), James Carroll (*Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews*, Houghton Mifflin, 2001), Thomas Cahill (*Pope John XXIII*, Viking, 2002), and others. Quotations suggest the flavor of their historiography. Wills, dismissing the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, says it implies that the Virgin Mary's “very flesh was...like kryptonite, unable to die.” Cahill, raging against Pope St. Pius X for his campaign against Modernism, tosses off the line, “He may have been clinically paranoid.” Say one thing for these Catholic writers, they've got class.

Why has this been happening? A simple desire to fill in unexplored gaps in the history of the Church, admit mistakes,

and correct failings would be commendable. That is the intention underlying Pope John Paul II's program of "purification of memory," which has included such welcome steps as setting the record straight on the mishandling of the Galileo case and on the Holy Office's condemnation of a number of propositions attributed to the innovative religious founder and theologian Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (1797-1855) but now acknowledged not to be his. Honesty like this regarding embarrassments out of the past is praiseworthy and constructive.

But the new revisionists have more in view than setting the record straight. In fact, they have an agenda. It is to reinterpret the record in line with their own progressive ideology, defame historical figures whom they dislike, and use the resulting caricature of the Church of the past as a club against the Church of the present in order to pave the way for the Church of the future. Cornwell candidly predicts a "cataclysmic schism" in the near future between Catholic traditionalists seeking to uphold a Church modeled on the "pyramidal" model associated with Pius XII and progressives like himself who seek to promote the ascendancy of a decentralized, pluralistic, democratized model of the Church. In this struggle books like his—and Wills's and Carroll's and Cahill's—are meant to play an important part. To take just one example: When a writer like Cahill assails Pius X on the subject of Modernism, it is because he thinks Modernism's relativizing, psychologizing religious vision is correct and hopes it will prevail.

Against this background it is a distinct relief to turn to H.W. Crocker's new one-volume popular history of Catholicism *Triumph* (Prima Publishing, 2001). The book's subtitle says it all: "The Power and the Glory of the Catholic Church." Along with being history, this is an unabashed love song to Catholicism, written by a Catholic convert author who has worked as a journalist, speechwriter, and book editor.

To get the feel of it, compare Crocker's version of certain

historical events with their treatment by the Catholic revisionists.

Here is Cahill on the Cathars (Albigensians), the bizarre, body-hating sect of Manichean origin which provoked a bloody military struggle in southern France in the thirteenth century: "The Albigensians held austere beliefs not unlike those of the Franciscans." And here is Crocker: "The Albigensians were a sort of Pro-Death League, opposed to marriage, children, and pregnancy (a calamity for which abortion was recommended); and if one could not follow a Pauline path of celibacy, the next best thing was fornication that did not perpetuate the species." Cahill is talking nonsense, while Crocker, despite the somewhat breezy style, has got it right.

Here is Wills on Blessed Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*: "Though the Pope thought of each stage of this campaign [the definition of the Immaculate Conception, the *Syllabus*, Vatican Council I] as dealing out punishment to the diabolical schemes of modernity, the *Syllabus* was nearly a knockout blow delivered to himself. He was lucky that some took it as a joke..." Here is Crocker: "[Pius IX's] most memorable contribution was *The Syllabus of Errors* (1864), which targeted liberalism—and its spin-offs communism and socialism—in a list of eighty mistaken ideas....*The Syllabus of Errors* is a consistent attack on the power of the state and on the idea, which is explicitly condemned, that might makes right. In the context of twentieth-century politics, these are the striking passages." Wills is mouthing the politically correct progressive line, a tired cliché by now; Crocker has something new and interesting to say.

Note that Blessed Pius IX is a favorite whipping-boy for the revisionists. His unpardonable sin from their point of view was his outstanding success in the religious sphere (though certainly not the political). "His religious achievements were enormous," Crocker writes; he did more than anyone else to

create the doctrinally, devotionally, and structurally strong Catholic system of modern times that flourished up to the 1960s and that the progressives now seek to destroy.

*Triumph* is not a perfect book. The style, though certainly readable, now and then is a mite too breezy. In its eagerness to present the Church in a good light, moreover, the book leaves out some important elements of the story: e.g., the "Donation of Constantine," a forged document, probably of the fifth century, which supposedly showed Constantine bestowing entitlements on Pope Sylvester and which played an important part in the endless pope-emperor, church-state wrangles of the Middle Ages. We still lack an entirely adequate replacement for Philip Hughes's *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (Macmillan, 1953). In this regard, it should be noted that Crocker's aim in part is to provide an alternative to Thomas Bokenkotter's widely circulated *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* (Image Books, 1990), which Crocker describes as "focused on liberal Catholicism."

Like the well-known elephant in the living room, there is one issue—or, perhaps, cluster of issues—standing head and shoulders above the rest in the recent writing of revisionist histories of Catholicism. It is the role of Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church in regard to the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. The Catholic revisionists invariably talk about it—Cornwell and Carroll produced entire books on the subject—and lately they have been joined by Jewish writers.

Surely the most egregious of the latter up to now is Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, who in the January 21 issue of *The New Republic* devoted a long review-article (well over half the magazine) to accusing the Pope and the Church of anti-Semitism. He is author of a book published by Knopf called *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* and of a forthcoming volume with the ominous title *A Moral Reckoning: The Catholic Church During the Holocaust and Today*. It should be a pip.

Goldhagen is not simply angry but over the edge. Anti-Semitism among European Catholics and other Christians deserves serious study, but invective is no help. In one casual aside—a comparatively mild one at that—the author calls the Catholic Church “a self-proclaimed authoritarian institution, seeking ever more to clamp down on its members.” Elsewhere he dismisses the New Testament account of Jesus’ death as fiction. (Jews had no hand in it, you see.) If a Catholic writer attacked Judaism as Goldhagen attacks Catholicism, he would correctly be called an anti-Semite; if Goldhagen attacks the Catholic Church this way, what does that make him (and *The New Republic* too)?

To say Pius XII was anti-Semitic is a laughable charge, and the evidence offered for it is correspondingly laughable. From the end of World War II until years after his death in 1958, Jews universally praised him as a friend who worked hard to help Jews during the war. The campaign against him began in 1963 with Rolf Hochhuth’s play *The Deputy*. Its caricature of a venal pope bore no relation to fact, but the campaign has continued ever since, with Cornwell’s dishonest volume of 1999 marking a new escalation. Now the floodgates are open. The boldness of this project is astonishing. The ultimate target of these critics, it now is clear, is not what some Catholics did in the past but what Catholics believe in the present. The only way for Catholics to appease them would be to abandon the faith.

Crocker calls the attack on Pope Pius and the Church a “backhanded compliment.” No one asks why Protestants or Anglicans or the Orthodox did not do more to help Jews; rather, as he points out, echoing Arnold Toynbee, in such world crises “only one Christian voice and one Christian institution” really count—the voice of the pope, the institution called “the Church.” *Triumph* may not be a history book for the ages, but here and now it is something almost as good: a book of uncommon decency and much common sense.



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## **BIGOTRY'S NEW LOW: THE NEW REPUBLIC'S TAUNT**

The government of the United States, George Washington wrote to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport in 1790, "gives to bigotry no sanction." But now *The New Republic* does.

"The anti-Semitism of the intellectuals," Peter Vierek once shrewdly remarked, "is anti-Catholicism." In its January 21 issue, *The New Republic* has sunk into the swamp of bigotry as low as it could go. It gave 25 pages to Daniel Jonah Goldhagen so that he could offer Catholics a theological interpretation of what their faith entails, and hint broadly that the Church deserves destruction as an ally of the anti-Christ and enemy of humankind.

In Goldhagen's fevered view, the startling uniqueness of Adolf Hitler's totalitarian racial hatred, a uniqueness that preoccupied a generation of philosophers of history, has been diminished until Hitler for him is only a later "chapter" in the long history of Catholic perfidy and nefariousness toward the Jews.

The calm and objective assessment of wrong—with due regard for every circumstance—was not Goldhagen's aim, neither as moral judge nor as historian. His tirade is theological in form, making an argument about the theological nature of Catholicism, its doctrines, its criteria for martyrdom and for sainthood, its proper relation to Judaism, its conception of

what its mission as Church is (its ecclesiology), its relation to truth and its ideal relation to other religions.

In its title (chosen perhaps by his editors, but well justified by his closing questions), Goldhagen opens with a theological taunt: "What would Jesus do?" There is no evidence in Goldhagen's work, nor in the recent history of *The New Republic*, that such a question is one he himself or the magazine for which he writes takes seriously. Nor is there any sign that he, or the magazine, has examined the life, work, and words of Jesus to see just what Jesus in fact did in the circumstances of his day closest to those of today. In other words, not a serious question but a taunt.

Regarding Roman imperialism, the subjection of the Jews, the Roman practices of slavery and torture (such as Jesus was made to suffer himself), according to the New Testament Jesus was, well, silent. "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were of this world, do you doubt that my Father would send legions of angels to my aid?"

His silence infuriated his accusers.

Unlike Jesus, Pius XII was not silent regarding the Jews. As secretary of state to Pius XI, he almost certainly had a determining hand in the letter condemning Hitler, *With Burning Concern* (*Mit Brennender Sorge*). Through the broadcasts of Vatican Radio, regularly amplified for the English-speaking world through *The Tablet* of London and the British intelligence and broadcasting services, Pius XII was the first to tell the world about the sufferings of Jews (by name) and other minorities, including during the war years more millions of Catholics than Jews. Much that the New York Times and the London Times published about the plight of Jews, Poles, and other civilians during the early war years came from the Vatican, through its radio broadcasts, papal statements, and the Pope's newspaper (totally dependent on Mussolini for newsprint and less free than Vatican Radio) *Osservatore*

*Romano.*

Although I have not read them myself, I am told by people I trust that the sworn depositions for the evidentiary process of beatification and canonization of Pius XII contain testimonies by persons well-known for their efforts to help the Jews, who affirm that they received specific instructions from the Pope to do so.

Even those scholars who minimize what the Pope did have had to admit that his personal efforts saved scores of thousands of Jews (in Hungary, Goldhagen admits)—too little, too late, they say. Was not what Schindler and Raul Wallenberg did also too little, too late, and yet altogether noble?

One may argue with Pius XII's principles, but one cannot argue that they marked out the course from which he did not waver: (1) neutrality as between the belligerent powers, in the case that papal mediation might one day be sought; (2) timely and clear enunciation of relevant moral principles (platitudes, as Goldhagen calls them; the timeless moral law); and (3) the denunciation of egregious abuses of moral principles, such as mass murders, the imprisonment of civilians solely for racial or religious or ethnic reasons, and mass bombings from airplanes of civilian populations in cities.

The Pope did not lack courage, and he did not lack clarity of mind. Mistaken he may have been. Open to criticism like any other mortal he certainly is. He prayed much and suffered much internally under the pressure. But he did not waver. After the war, he received immense plaudits from the citizens of Italy, including the Jewish community of Rome, the nation of Israel, the Israeli Philharmonic that traveled to the Vatican in 1955 to give a concert in gratitude, and Jewish and other groups throughout the world. The rabbi of Rome became a Catholic, in large measure through being stirred by the assistance given Jews by the Pope and friendships formed in the process.

Though I am not a professional historian, I have read enough

on Pius XII—and have a sizable personal library on the period—that I see the transparent tendentiousness of nearly every historical point that Goldhagen raises. In every case, he selects accounts or facts that set the Pope in the light he wishes to put popes into, and ignores facts, testimonies, and accounts that sharply contradict his version of events.

Yet let us suppose for a moment that every accusation Goldhagen makes against Pius XII is true. So then we had, as publisher Martin Peretz has it, a “wicked man” as pope. Well, it wouldn’t have been the first one. Indeed, Goldhagen says there is a danger in concentrating on Pius XII, because his personal behavior isn’t the issue. What is wrong with Christianity runs through all the popes. It infects the core of Christian theology itself. It corrupts the very essence of the Church. What Goldhagen calls for is nothing less than the extermination of the Church as it now is and has been since the beginning. *Ecrasez l’infame*.

The great sin of which Goldhagen accuses the Church is its “supersessionist creed,” namely, its clear teaching that the New Covenant supersedes the Old Covenant. Even to speak of “New” and “Old,” Goldhagen quotes a soulmate, “is inherently supersessionist.”

As John Paul II has made clear, however, the Jewish Testament remains valid; God can no more become unfaithful to His covenant with the Jews than He can to His covenant with Christians. The relation between Jews and Christians, therefore, is asymmetrical. Christians must understand and accept Jewish faith, in order to accept Christian faith. Their God is also the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Apart from the background, principles, and prophecies of the Jewish Testament, the Christian Testament does not make sense. Christians, in order to be Christians, must be Jews in belief (though not in circumcision and ritual), in a way that, in order to be Jews, Jews need not be Christians. That is the asymmetry.

To put this another way, in order to go deeper into their own faith as Christians, it is both common and altogether necessary for Christians to go deeper into the Jewish Testament and plumb all they can of Judaism, the Judaism of serious reflection today, as well as of yesteryear. For this reason, Christians today need a vital, believing Jewish community that will lead them into the depths of Jewish faith. The reverse can scarcely be said of Jews, many of whom feel no need whatever, in order to be Jews, to study Christian doctrine or history.

The reason Goldhagen is quite guilty of the charge of anti-Catholicism lies in the breadth and passion of the smears he spreads across a broad history, the distortion and hysteria of his tone, the extremity of his rage, and the lack of proportion in his judgments—dwarfing Hitler and making Pius XII a giant of evil, and then diminishing Pius XII so as to indict the whole of Christian theology down the ages. It is disingenuous of him to stop at Christ, the good and gentle Christ of his parody, and at the edges of the Christian Testament, which is our main source for knowledge about the character and teachings of Christ.

Goldhagen went over the top in disqualifying Catholics from any moral standing, so long as they hold to Catholic faith as it is. He wants a new type of Catholicism to supersede the old. In this, he reminds me not a little of Voltaire and other haters of the Church. The Enlightenment, too, was supersessionist in its self-conception, its light triumphing over the darkness of Rome—and not just of Rome, but of Jerusalem as well.

We have all had to learn that we must accept one another's reality as we are, without trying to make others over into our own image of what they ought to be. We can appeal to one another in argument and in debate, in mutual searching, and even in mutual fraternal correction of one another's oversights and errors. But mutual honor and respect are the

first preconditions of dialogue. It is sad that The New Republic went over to the side of a bigotry that makes dialogue impossible. After many centuries of woe, we need every moment of dialogue that we can get.

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*Novak's latest book is: On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding (Encounter). \$23.95. To order call (800) 786-3839. We highly recommend it.*

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# THE POPES AGAINST THE JEWS

by Ronald J. Rychlak

A couple of years ago, when critics charged that Pope Pius XII had shown a callous indifference to the plight of the Jews, the common refrain was that if only he had been more outspoken on behalf of the Jews, like his predecessors, thousands of more lives might have been saved. The traditional view of Popes is that they defended the life and safety of Jews, even when some Catholics were not as Christian as they should have been.

Now, along comes a book by David Kertzer, *The Popes against the Jews*, in which he argues that far from being defenders of Jewish people, Popes of the 19th and early 20th centuries, up until (and implicitly including) Pius XII were actually anti-Semites who paved the way for the Holocaust. Nowhere in his book is he able to document any modern Pope making any

explicit statement in support of anti-Semitism, but he attempts to re-write history by focusing on a handful of issues taken out of context and without a full exploration of the evidence. The result, as Rabbi David Dalin recently wrote in *The Weekly Standard*: “is both false and unpersuasive.”

Kertzer says he was motivated to write his book after reading the 1998 Vatican document, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*. That statement explained the difference between anti-Judaism, of which the Vatican admitted “Christians have also been guilty,” and the racial anti-Semitism embraced by the Nazis. This latter evil contradicts core Catholic beliefs, and the Church has always condemned it.

The difference is illustrated in Kertzer’s discussion of Pope Pius IX and Edgardo Mortara (which took place when slavery was still legal in the United States). This Jewish boy was baptized by a Catholic servant, removed from his family, and brought up by the Pope. Church rules prevented the Christian child from returning to his family (though they were allowed to visit and could have converted to have him returned). It seems very harsh today, but it was not racial anti-Semitism. There was no hatred here. Edgardo and Pius developed a father-son relationship, and the boy grew up to become a priest. Kertzer seems not to understand that such a result would have been unthinkable for an anti-Semite.

Discussing Pope Benedict XV, Kertzer overlooks the most significant, direct piece of evidence. In 1916, American Jews petitioned Benedict on behalf of Polish Jews. The response was as follows:

“The Supreme Pontiff... as Head of the Catholic Church, which, faithful to its divine doctrines and its most glorious traditions, considers all men as brothers and teaches them to love one another, he never ceases to indicate among individuals, as well as among peoples, the observance of the principles of the natural law, and to condemn everything that

violates them. This law must be observed and respected in the case of the children of Israel, as well as of all others, because it would not be conformable to justice or to religion itself to derogate from it solely on account of divergence of religious confessions.”

Kertzer fails to mention this express papal condemnation of anti-Semitism, which was published in the Jesuit Journal *Civiltà Cattolica* – though he does seem to quote every anti-Jewish comment published by that journal.

Benedict was succeeded by Pope Pius XI who was decidedly supportive of Jews. In 1928, the Vatican under his leadership issued a statement that was cited by rescuers during the Holocaust. It said that the Church “just as it reproves all rancours in conflicts between peoples, to the maximum extent condemns hatred of the people once chosen by God, the hatred that commonly goes by the name of anti-Semitism.” In November 1931, the chief rabbi of Milan thanked the Pope for his appeals against anti-Semitism and his continuing support for Italy’s Jews.

In 1937, Pius issued the papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*. This encyclical still stands as one of the strongest condemnations of any national regime that the Holy See has ever published. Kertzer reports that *Mit brennender Sorge* contains no explicit reference to anti-Semitism. His citation for this: the much discredited Hitler’s Pope by John Cornwell. It causes one to seriously question Kertzer’s qualifications as an historian.

*Mit brennender Sorge* strongly condemned the neo-paganism of Nazi theories. It stated in part that:

“Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community... whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to



an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God.”

Pius went on with further condemnations of racial theories:

“None but superficial minds could stumble into concepts of a national God, of a national religion; or attempt to lock within the frontiers of a single people, within the narrow limits of a single race, God, the Creator of the universe, King and Legislator of all nations....”

No one who read this document at the time had any illusion about the gravity of these statements or their significance.

On September 6, 1938, in a statement which – though barred from the Fascist press – made its way around the world, Pius XI said:

“Mark well that in the Catholic Mass, Abraham is our Patriarch and forefather. Anti-Semitism is incompatible with the lofty thought which that fact expresses. It is a movement with which we Christians can have nothing to do. No, no, I say to you it is impossible for a Christian to take part in anti-Semitism. It is inadmissible. Through Christ and in Christ we are the spiritual progeny of Abraham. Spiritually, we are all Semites.”

This statement was made while the most powerful nation in Europe had an officially anti-Semitic government and was poised only a few hundred miles to the north of Rome. Everyone understood their significance, especially the victims. In January 1939, *The National Jewish Monthly* reported that “the only bright spot in Italy has been the Vatican, where fine humanitarian statements by the Pope have been issuing regularly.”

So how does Kertzer try to convert Pope Pius XI, a celebrated champion of the Jews, into an anti-Semite? In imitation of John Cornwell (a quote from whom appears on Kertzer’s cover)

he has found a previously published letter, noted some uncomfortable language within it, and attempted to use it to smear the reputation of a good and holy man.

Monsignor Achille Ratti, the future Pius XI, served as papal nuncio to Poland after World War I. In one of his reports back to Rome he stated: "One of the most evil and strongest influences that is felt here, perhaps the strongest and the most evil, is that of the Jews." To Kertzer, this brands him evermore as an anti-Semite.

In point of fact, Ratti had been sent to a largely Catholic nation with instructions to report back to Rome on any significant developments. It so happens at that time there was a significant threat of a Communist revolution. Many of the leaders of this movement were Jewish. Ratti was reporting on what he saw, but he was no anti-Semite.

Even in the early years, Ratti was known to be on good terms with the Jews. As a young priest in Milan he learned Hebrew from a local rabbi. He enjoyed warm relations with Italian Jewish leaders in the early years of his priesthood. During his tenure in Poland, amid Europe's largest Jewish population, he saw anti-Semitic persecution. This led the future pope to denounce anti-Semitism and make it clear "that any anti-Semitic outbursts would be severely condemned by the Holy See."

Instructed by Pope Benedict to direct the distribution of Catholic relief in postwar Poland, Ratti provided funds to impoverished Jews who had lost their homes and businesses. Whereas Kertzer asserts that Ratti only met once with Poland's Jews, and studiously tried to avoid them, better scholars have documented that he greeted and assisted Jews all throughout his three-year stay in Poland.

Kertzer's other attempts to smear the papacy are similarly lacking in balance. He devotes three chapters to the ancient

charge that during the Passover, Jews ritually murdered Christian children, to get their blood. This "blood libel" was not an invention of the Popes, nor for that matter of Catholics, but Kertzer implies that being duped by a fabrication is as bad as inventing it, and he makes very little mention of the numerous papal condemnations of the blood libel charge. Moreover, Kertzer charges Fr. August Rohling with being one of the primary causes of anti-Semitic agitation in the Austrian empire during the 1880s, but he gives no mention of the Vatican's rebuke of Rohling for furthering the blood libel.

Kertzer charges that there was a Vatican "campaign" to popularize the infamous, anti-Semitic *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. His evidence for this is that a French priest tried to do that in the 1920s. Of course Kertzer ignores that another French priest, Fr. Pierre Charles, SJ, wrote an article in the 1930s thoroughly debunking the forgery and that Fr. Leslie Walker, S.J. devoted much of his work to exposing the *Protocols* as a historical fraud. In fact, according to the *Boston Pilot*, September 1942, "again and again the charge that there exists an organized Jewish conspiracy against Christian civilization has been proved by Catholic scholars to be an impious forgery."

Discussing the treason trial of Alfred Dreyfus, Kertzer's emphasizes the French Catholics who contributed to the persecution of an innocent man, but he fails to mention the Papacy's opposition to this anti-Semitic campaign. In a book about *Papal* anti-Semitism, this is a rather serious oversight. What we do get about Pope Leo XIII is buried in a footnote: two years before this case developed, Leo came out strongly defending Jews and opposed to anti-Semitism.

The truth is that the papacy stands out as the one of the few protectors of Jews during the period Kertzer examines. Selective evidence and crabbed interpretations cannot change that fact. Those who want to know more about this history are

advised to consult a booklet published by the American Bishops entitled: *Catholics Remember the Holocaust*, which contains the full text of the Vatican's 1998 Shoah document, statements from various episcopal conferences, and Cardinal Cassidy's clarification and response to those (like Kertzer) who misread and misinterpret this important document.

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## WAR ON PIUS XII HITS A NEW LOW

By William A. Donohue

The war on Pius XII hit a new low when *Commentary* magazine published a piece by Kevin Madigan in its October issue. In the article, "What the Vatican Knew About the Holocaust, and When," Madigan argues, "The Vicar of Christ knew enough, but did not care enough, to speak more forcefully or to act more courageously than he did." Madigan teaches the history of Christianity at the Harvard Divinity School.

Did not care enough? When a charge of this magnitude is made, convincing proof is demanded. On this score, Madigan offers not one scintilla of evidence. Indeed, his charge is slanderous.

Madigan is right to say that Pius XII knew during the war what was happening to Jews. Though the pope was not "silent," I will not contest Madigan's charge that he did not speak out in a "forceful" manner. What is being contested is Madigan's ability to read the pope's mind: Madigan impugns the pope's character by concluding that the Holy Father just didn't care.

For the sake of argument, let's assume that Madigan is right

about the pope's motive. If it is fair to conclude that an uncaring attitude explains why Pius XII didn't speak out more forcefully, then it should be fair to conclude that this motive applies equally to everyone else who acted in a similar manner. Take, for example, the reaction of American Jews.

When Hitler took over in 1933, he wasted no time showing his hatred for Jews. American Jewish leaders quickly got together to discuss public demonstrations against Hitler. Plans were made for an anti-Hitler parade in New York on May 10, 1933. But then the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith put out a joint statement condemning "public agitation in form of mass demonstrations." They feared it would only "inflame" matters. So there was silence.

In 1935, the Nuremberg race laws were enacted effectively stripping Jews of all civil rights. And what was the reaction of American Jews? Led by Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress, they worked against legislation that would make it easier for Jews to emigrate to the U.S. from Germany.

November 9-10, 1938, will always be remembered for Kristallnacht, the "Night of Broken Glass." Hitler's Storm Troopers in Berlin went on a rampage killing Jews, entering their homes, destroying their businesses, burning synagogues, etc. American Jewish leaders were shaken by these revelations but they nonetheless eschewed a "forceful" approach.

Indeed, on November 13 and December 13, at a meeting of the General Jewish Council, all the major Jewish organizations assembled to discuss their options. The American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee debated what to do about immigration reforms that would alleviate the plight of German Jews. In the end, they said, "at least for the time being, nothing should be done with regard to this matter." In addition, all of these Jewish organizations went on record saying, "there should be no parades, demonstrations or protests by Jews."

As Madigan correctly points out, it was in August 1942 when Gerhard Riegner of the World Jewish Congress notified his colleagues in London and New York of an "alarming report" depicting plans to exterminate Jews. But there is little evidence that this galvanized the Jewish leaders to act more courageously (the public was of yet unaware of the news). Indeed, the major Jewish organizations even failed to lobby on behalf of a bill sponsored by Rep. Emanuel Celler that would have made it easier for Jewish refugees to emigrate from France to the U.S. during Nazi persecution. The bill died in committee.

The news that Hitler had gone on a rampage against Jews was released by the State Department in November 1942 via Rabbi Wise; he was the head of the World Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Congress. Jewish-owned newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* treated the news with aplomb. For example, the *Times* reported that 2 million Jews had been killed in the Nazi extermination campaign. It placed the story on p. 10 surrounded by ads for Thanksgiving Day turkeys.

This enfeebled reaction of the *New York Times* was not an anomaly. It not only buried other stories of Nazi terror, the total number of editorials it ran criticizing the Nazis in the years 1941, 1942 and 1943 was nine (three each year). Even worse, when the Nazis arrested a cousin of Arthur Sulzberger, the *Times* chief instructed his Berlin bureau chief to do "nothing." Sulzberger said he didn't want to antagonize the Nazis (sound familiar?). The cousin, Louis Zinn, was so despondent that when he left prison he hanged himself.

I could go on but the point is obvious. Or is it? The point I want to make is that there were plenty of good reasons why Jews *weren't* more vocal. Any change in immigration quotas for one country surely would have raised serious moral questions regarding what to do about other countries where Jews were suffering. Would asking for special treatment anger other Americans at home? Was there not the specter of rising anti-

Semitism at home? Wasn't it realistic to think that if protests mounted in the U.S. that the plight of Jews might only get worse in Europe?

In hindsight, perhaps the reasons Jews gave for not speaking up more forcefully are unpersuasive. But if someone today were to conclude that Jewish inaction was a function of not caring enough, I would conclude that the accuser is anti-Semitic. This is why I believe Madigan's charge that Pius XII didn't care what was happening to the Jews is so scurrilous.

There were plenty of good reasons why the pope did not use the bully pulpit. For one thing, many prominent Jews begged him not to stir the pot. Moreover, the pope knew that the Nazis were monitoring every word he said very closely and that is why he wanted to avoid making a bad situation worse. Here is what he said in June 1943: "Every word from Us in this regard to the competent authorities, every public allusion, should be seriously considered and weighed in the very interest of those who suffer so as not to make their position even more difficult and more intolerable than previously, even though inadvertently and unwillingly." These are not the words one would expect from someone who just didn't care.

Even in 1964, in the wake of Hochhuth's wretchedly anti-Catholic play, "The Deputy," the ADL said, "A formal statement [on the part of the pope] would have provoked the Nazis to brutal retaliation and would have substantially thwarted further Catholic action on behalf of Jews."

Like many other critics of Pius XII these days, Madigan assumes that the pope had some magical powers to deter Hitler. Historian William D. Rubinstein sheds important light on this issue: "In all likelihood—a likelihood probably amounting to a near certainty—Hitler would have paid no heed whatever to any pronouncement on the Jews made by the Vatican (which had denounced Nazi anti-semitism before the war began)." Rubinstein also considers other measures that might have been

taken. "Theoretically," he says, "and in hindsight, the Pope might have excommunicated all Catholic members of the SS (or of the Nazi Party) although the only likely effect of such a pronouncement would have been that the Nazis denounced the Pope as an agent of 'Judeo-Bolshevism' and an imposter."

Sir Martin Gilbert, one of the most noted historians in Europe and an expert on World War II, provides a mature understanding of how we can realistically judge the behavior of Pius XII. The test for the pope, he says, "was when the Gestapo came to Rome in 1943 to round up the Jews." Gilbert writes, "And the Catholic Church, on his direct authority, immediately dispersed as many Jews as they could." Which is why only 17 percent of Italy's Jews perished. This figure not only stacks up well against what happened in other European countries, it reflects something else: more Jews were saved proportionately in Catholic countries than Protestant countries. This explains why Hitler biographer John Toland said that as of 1943, "The Church, under the Pope's guidance, had already saved the lives of more Jews than all other churches, religious institutions and rescue organizations combined, and was presently hiding thousands of Jews in monasteries, convents and Vatican City itself."

But Madigan will have none of it. He knows he can't deny that Catholics saved hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives, so the best he can do is say the pope had nothing to do with it. Madigan says the pope "permitted" Catholics to rescue Jews; Pius also "allowed" Catholic properties to shelter Jews.

This is a remarkable conclusion, but it is not unusual among the critics of Pius XII. Susan Zuccotti, in her book, *Under His Very Window*, takes the same position. English historian Owen Chadwick disposes of this view rather handily. Zuccotti, he says, acknowledges the heroic acts of priests, monks and nuns. But as Chadwick observes, "She keeps emphasising that these courageous and life-risking endeavors were carried out without any instruction, order, encouragement, from the



Vatican.” Chadwick sees the hole in the argument: “But why should they have been? The most bull-on-the-breakfast-table papist does not demand an order from the Pope before a Christian needs to behave like a decent person when faced by murder.”

One final comment. Isn't it strange that the same Pius XII who is routinely painted as an autocrat is now described as someone who simply bows to the wishes of the faithful? If he was the authoritarian that his critics say he was, then someone needs to explain his accommodating behavior in these instances. Either that or stop with the propaganda.

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# THE LIE OF MARIA MONK LIVES ON

By Robert P. Lockwood

She was one of the most famous imposters in the history of the United States, yet her story can still be found in the bookstores and is widely available on the Internet. Maria Monk was the 19th century woman who claimed to be a nun that finally escaped after years of torture and sexual degradation at a convent in Canada.

Her book describing her horrendous tale, commonly referred to as *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, took America by storm in an era when Nativist anti-Catholicism was about to explode in riots and the growth of the Know-Nothing anti-Catholic political party. While *The Awful Disclosures* did not cause 19th Century anti-Catholicism in America, it was a popular propaganda tool to spread hatred of the Church. (The formal title of the 1836 release was *The Awful Disclosures of Maria*

*Monk as Exhibited in a Narrative of Her Life and Sufferings during a Residence of Five Years as a Novice and Two Years as a Black Nun in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal).*

Since its first release in January 1836, *The Awful Disclosures* became a staple of anti-Catholic literature and appears never to have been out of print in 165 years. Originally released by a dummy corporation set up by Harper Brothers Publishing of New York to keep it an arm's-length away from what was considered salacious material, it sold an estimated 300,000 copies before the Civil War. It was second in sales at that time only to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Since the 19th Century it has been reprinted by an endless number of publishers and has sold untold millions of copies. A 1997 paperback edition, for example, was released in England by Senate, an imprint of Random House in the United Kingdom. The earliest edition was published in the 19th Century by T.B. Peterson of Philadelphia.

Tales of sexual perversion in the Catholic Church were common enough prior to the appearance of *The Awful Disclosures*. But Maria's extraordinary fabrication would soon outshine all the competition. *The Awful Disclosures* begins with Maria's birth, background and early introduction to Catholicism. Though Protestant, she attended schools taught by nuns who instructed her on the "evil tendency" of the Protestant Bible. Converting as a child, she claimed to be introduced to offensive sexual questioning by priests in the confessional. Despite this, she decided to become a nun. Yet even as a novice, she wrote, the priests "heard me confess my sins, and put questions to me, which were often of the most improper and revolting nature, naming crimes both unthought of and inhuman."

After four years as a novice, Maria reported that she decided to flee and entered into a hasty marriage. But changing her mind, she returned to the convent to prepare for taking her

final vows. After taking her vows she was told that "one of my great duties was to obey the priests in all things; and this I soon learnt, to my utter astonishment and horror, was to live in the practice of criminal intercourse with them." She was also told that because of this, infants "were sometimes born in the Convent, but they were always baptized, and immediately strangled." She was then forced to submit to a night's orgy with three priests.

And so her tale goes on, containing all the classic elements of anti-Catholic literature. Disloyal and disobedient nuns were kept in dungeons in a cellar. Some were murdered outright and in one scene she detailed the death of a nun suffocated under a mattress at the order of the local bishop. Lime was poured over the pit in the basement where the remains of the strangled infants and recalcitrant nuns had been thrown. A "subterranean passage to the seminary" allowed priests to come and go as they pleased without being seen by the public. Money was extorted from naïve parents, and nuns were taught to perfect the art of lying to cover the sins of the convent. Tortuous penances were commonplace, including "drinking the water in which the Superior had washed her feet." The Superior "would sometimes come and inform us that she had received orders from the Pope to request that those nuns who possessed the greatest devotion and faith, should be requested to perform some particular deeds, which she named or described in our presence, but of which no decent moral person could ever venture to speak." She even claimed that arms and ammunition were hidden in the convent and smuggled out for use during election riots in Montreal.

Discovering that she was pregnant by a "Father Phelan," she decided to finally flee the convent. She escaped to New York but was pursued everywhere by agents of the Church until rescued by brave Protestant ministers. There the story ended with the warning: "The priests and nuns used often to declare that of all the heretics, the children from the United States

were the most difficult to be converted; and it was thought a great triumph when one of them was brought over to the 'true faith.'"

It was a fabulous tale and also an out-and-out fraud exposed as such almost immediately. According to the mother, as a child the girl had been rammed through the ear with a pen and had been uncontrollable since, engaging in wild fantasies. Her mother had committed Monk to a Magdalen Asylum under Catholic auspices in Montreal. That was her only formal contact with the Catholic Church. She left the asylum after becoming pregnant. She then, at age 18, hooked up with a William Hoyte of the Canadian Benevolent Society, a Protestant missionary association with a strong anti-Catholic approach to its work. Hoyte took her to New York where she met a group of rather unscrupulous Protestant clergymen. Whether Monk's story was her invention or that of the ministers is not clear, though certainly the ministers – most notably Rev. J.J. Slocum – were the actual writers. Advanced notice of the book appeared in the popular anti-Catholic newspapers of the era, particularly one published in New York called *The American Protestant Vindicator*. (Its editor would eventually distance itself from the story when it became more and more clear that the book was a fabrication).

The book was such a success upon release that Slocum and Monk immediately became embroiled in lawsuits with the other ministers for a cut on the profits. But nothing seemed to dampen the public's enthusiasm for what they saw as the first real portrayal of convent life. Rave reviews appeared throughout the Protestant press and the small Catholic community could do little but protest that it was a hoax. But cracks in her story quickly began to appear. Two Protestant clergymen traveled to Montreal and reported that the Hotel Dieu was nothing like the physical description given in Maria's book. A Protestant journalist investigated the story and pronounced it a complete hoax. All critics, however, were

dismissed as Jesuits in disguised or bribed by the Church. In Canada, the story had enraged many, both Protestant and Catholic, as the Hotel Dieu was actually a widely respected charitable hospital and convent whose nuns had recently served heroically during a cholera epidemic.

Maria Monk did nothing to aid her cause. She disappeared in August 1837, only to resurface again in Philadelphia where she claimed to have been kidnapped by priests. It was discovered, however, that she had simply run off with another man under an assumed name. Another book was published under her name that year, claiming pregnant nuns from Canada and the United States were being hidden on an island in the St. Lawrence River.

In 1838, Monk became pregnant again, though she claimed it was a Catholic plot to discredit her. She married but her husband soon abandoned her. In 1849 she was arrested for pickpocketing at a house of prostitution. She died a short time later at age 33 in either a charitable house or, as some claimed, in prison. The child of that last marriage published a book in 1874 telling the story of Maria's final days as well as her own conversion to Catholicism.

*The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* was important in that it popularized so many of the anti-Catholic stereotypes that would persist in the American consciousness well into the 20th Century. Monk painted a Catholic faith based on medieval superstition, inquisitorial tortures, crafty "Jesuitical" manipulation, suppression of the Bible and oppression of liberty. It was a Church foreign to democratic ideals eager to convert and undermine America. It would engage in any act, including murder, to pursue its nefarious ends. Soon and for decades to follow various state legislatures and local authorities would pass "convent inspection laws" in order to search for nuns held against their will. In the 1890s, the American Protective Association (APA) would claim that caches of weapons were hidden in convents and Catholic Church basements for an uprising on the feast of St. Ignatius Loyola.

Maria's story is still popular and available in the more virulently anti-Catholic fundamentalist bookstores as well as on the Internet. More important, however, is that much of today's secular anti-Catholic stereotypes prominent in the news media, the arts and entertainment are simply Maria's inventions stripped of their religious pretensions. The Church as oppressive of women, interested only in power, prudish but at the same time secretly lascivious, a threat to freedom and choice, and Catholics as ignorant dupes of medieval superstitions, are commonly accepted caricatures of Catholicism in conventional wisdom. *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* is still with us today, not just in sleazy corners of the Internet, but in many of the prejudices of the cultural elite.

*Robert P. Lockwood, the league's former director of research, is now the director of communications at the Diocese of Pittsburgh.*

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## **POPE PIUS XII STUDY GROUP: A WASTED OPPORTUNITY**

by Ronald J. Rychlak

The self-destruction of the Catholic-Jewish Pope Pius XII study group came as little surprise to those who had been following its progress closely. From the very beginning, several members of that group rejected their mandate and instead sought to force a change in Vatican archival policy. When the Vatican stood its ground and demanded that the team finish its agreed assignment, the scholars suspended their work. The charges and accusations that followed have damaged

the work of Pope John Paul II to bring Catholics and Jews closer together. The shame is that this all could have been avoided.

The situation began in 1999, when Cardinal Edward Cassidy – then President of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews – and Mr. Seymour D. Reich, Chairman of International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations announced the appointment of a team of six scholars charged with examining the 11 volumes of archival material published by the Holy See's Secretariat of State (*Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre*, or "ADSS.")

The ADSS contains the diplomatic correspondence of the Holy See's Secretariat of State, as well as notes and memoranda from meetings with diplomats and Church leaders from various countries during the period of the Second World War. These documents were culled from Vatican archives by a team of four Jesuit scholars between 1965 and 1981. The documents are published in the languages in which they were originally written (primarily Italian, French and German, but also some in Latin and English), but the editorial commentary is in French. Volume three is split into two books, which accounts for occasional reference to 12 volumes.

The archives from which the ADSS collection was taken remain sealed. Many researchers, this author included, would like to have access to the archives, but like most world governments, the Holy See keeps records confidential for an extended period of time to make certain that secret governmental information will not be revealed and that living people will not be embarrassed by disclosure of private information. Only recently were most (not all) of the American OSS World War II files made public, and similar French and British files also remain secret. (One member of the Pius XII study group, Fr. Gerald P. Fogarty from the University of Virginia, tried to do research in the recently declassified OSS archives, but every

relevant document was still under seal.)

The difference between the Catholic-Jewish study group and most other researchers is that most researchers accept governmental restrictions and work with the best available evidence to reach an accurate historical understanding. In the case of Pope Pius XII, the ADSS gave researchers a rare opportunity to see archives that would not normally be available. Unfortunately, although they agreed to study those documents when they accepted their positions, many members of the study group failed to carry out this task.

A report on the contents of the 11 volumes could have been a tremendous service for those in search of the truth. A careful study of those documents makes clear that Pope Pius XII was very concerned with the welfare of all people, including Jews. In fact, these volumes contain enough information to refute all the recent slanderous charges against the wartime Pope. Unfortunately, from the very beginning, the study group was more interested in getting into secret archives than in learning what took place during the war.

At the time of the group's formation, Leon Feldman, Emeritus Professor of History at Rutgers University and "Jewish coordinator" for the study group said he thought there was a "smoking gun" in the archives and that was the reason the Vatican kept them closed. Professor Robert Wistrich of Hebrew University told the press that to read the volumes without having access to the archives would be "a farce." Of course, that was exactly the charge that the team accepted.

In accepting the mandate to study the ADSS, members of the study group agreed to pursue their work in a clearly defined way. They did not, however, drop their demand for full access to the archives. In fact, that demand was ultimately placed ahead of the desire to find the truth. This became evident when the team traveled to Rome to meet with Vatican officials.



In April 2000, Dr. Eugene Fisher, Catholic coordinator for the study group, called Fr. Peter Gumpel, *relator* for the cause of Pius XII's sainthood, wanting to set up a meeting at which the study group could question him. Fr. Gumpel agreed, but he asked that questions be submitted to him in advance so that he would have time to prepare his answers with supporting documentation.

The study group ultimately came to Rome during the month of October 2000. About two weeks prior to their arrival, they sent ahead 47 questions for Fr. Gumpel. Inexplicably, the questions had been formatted as a "Preliminary Report." The charge given to the group had not called for a preliminary report. It seems to have been an invention of the scholars designed to apply more pressure on the Vatican to open sealed archives.

When Fr. Gumpel saw the 47 questions, he thought that the study group wanted them answered, and he felt that it would take several days to address them all. As it ended up, however, he was given only three hours with the group. As such, he was able to address only a handful of questions. Perhaps that is just as well. The vocal representatives of the group (notably Wistrich, Reich, and Dr. Michael Marrus of the University of Toronto), made clear that they were not interested in answers to their questions. They wanted Fr. Gumpel to join in their call for the opening of the archives. Nothing short of that would be acceptable.

Fr. Gumpel pointed out that while it is legitimate for a historian to seek archival information, there was sufficient information already available to answer the questions that the study group had presented to him. He set about answering the 47 questions, with references to available Vatican documents, books, memoirs, and other archival sources.

The study group would have nothing to do with this; the scholars wanted Vatican archives. At one point, Seymour Reich

even said that Fr. Gumpel could not possibly answer the group's question, because the question did not ask what happened, but what the archives indicated had happened. (Fr. Fogarty and Fr. John Morley, another member of the group, did however thank Fr. Gumpel for identifying relevant authority that had not been considered by the group.)

Fr. Gumpel complained about previous breaches of confidentiality on the part of the study group. He was assured that the group itself was outraged and that steps had been taken to assure that there would be no further "leaks." Unfortunately that was not the case, while the team was still in Rome, the preliminary report, with all 47 questions, was leaked to the press and published around the world.

The Associated Press called the preliminary report "explosive." The *New York Times* said it expressed the dissatisfaction of the six panel members with Vatican records. *Le Monde* of Paris said it pointed to failures of the Pope and Church. Of course, the editors of these papers thought that the preliminary report was really about Pope Pius XII. They did not know that it was nothing more than a ploy to have the Vatican open the archives.

Having expressed regret for earlier leaks, one might have expected the study group to have issued a condemnation of this breach. Perhaps Bernard Suchecky, who was responsible, might have been suspended. Instead, certain members of the team were emboldened. Professors Marrus and Wistrich were both widely quoted as saying that the ball was now in the Vatican's court. They had posed their 47 questions, and they would await the Vatican's reply. No mention was made of answers that were provided by Fr. Gumpel, Cardinal Cassidy, Cardinal Laghi, and then Archbishop (now Cardinal) Mejía, all of whom met with the study group in Rome.

Earlier this year, when Cardinal Cassidy stepped down from his post as President of the Holy See's Commission for Religious

Relations with the Jews, he was replaced by Cardinal Walter Kasper, a German theologian. Cardinal Kasper was not influenced by the history that had shaped the study group up until this point. He looked at what was taking place, and he did not like it.

In an interview published June 21, 2001, Cardinal Kasper said: "The commission failed to do what it was charged to do – to read the Vatican's 11 published volumes on Pius' pontificate. They must read the 11 volumes; they have never done the work they were asked to do in a proper way." [See *Catalyst*, Dec. 2000: The Pope Pius XII Study Group: Read the Documents!, making this same point.] Regarding the leaks, he called them unacceptable, "unethical" behavior.

On the same day that the interview was published, Cardinal Kasper sent a letter to the study group asking for a "final report on this project." He noted that he did not expect the final report to provide the whole answer to these issues, nor would it signal the end of discussion on this matter. It would, however, fulfill the mandate given to the study group. Cardinal Kasper also noted that some of the 47 questions had been answered by Fr. Gumpel and that others had been forwarded to the Vatican Secretariat of State, which controls the archives. The Cardinal also made clear that the group would not be granted access to sealed Vatican archives.

On July 20, in a letter to Cardinal Kasper, the five remaining scholars on the team ( Dr. Eva Fleischner having resigned for personal reasons) suspended their work, saying that they could not complete their assignment without "access in some reasonable manner to additional archival material." This is when everything really began to fall apart.

Although Cardinal Kasper did no more than restate the agreement that had been in place from the very beginning of the project, Professor Wistrich imputed bad faith to the Holy See. "The Vatican is not really interested in allowing us to

pursue our work further. Whatever expectation they had of the panel – that we would give carte blanche to Pius's beatification, or that the situation would be defused without probing too deeply – they were wrong.... They moved the goalposts." Seymour Reich, expressed "deep disappointment" that the Vatican would not open all its wartime archives to the scholars and suggested that the letter from the scholars was a form of protest.

Fr. Fogarty then issued a statement disassociating himself from what Reich had said. Eugene Fisher also condemned "Reich's attempt to twist the statement of the scholars to say what it did not intend to say." He called it "inexplicable and inexcusable." Unfortunately, the mainstream press picked up on Wistrich and Reich, not on the rebuttals.

The truth, as explained by Fr. Fogarty, was that "there were two different sets of expectations and two different agendas from the very beginning, and they finally clashed."

Some members of the study group viewed the project as a vehicle to press for open access to the archives, but that was never their charge. They were supposed to conduct a thorough study of the ADSS. "It is a fact, we could not work together with some people wanting greater access and others saying we can do more work; there was no point in saying we could work together as a group," Fr. Fogarty explained.

Had the group carried out its assignment without delving into polemics and political posturing, it could have answered almost all of the questions about Pope Pius XII's conduct during the war. Those documents, which were meticulously edited by world-renowned scholars, make clear that the Pope was not silent, that he assisted the Allies, opposed Nazi racial atrocities, and that the Church fed, sheltered, and clothed victims of all races, religions, and nationalities.

A historian might legitimately ask whether a different

approach to the situation would have worked better to oppose the Nazis, but the documents leave no doubt about where the Holy See stood. Pope Pius did everything that he thought possible and appropriate to help Jews and other victims of the Nazis. Had the group carried out its assignment, that would have been made clear, and that would have gone a long way toward healing the division between Catholics and Jews. Unfortunately, that is not what happened.

Rather than seeking truth, too many people put their personal desires to enter the sealed archives above the agreed aim of the project. They did this at the expense of both truth and the continued viability of the project. The results that they obtained only raised suspicions and doubts. What a shame. What a wasted opportunity.

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# THE BATTLE OVER THE CRUSADES

By Robert P. Lockwood

Mention the Crusades and the assumption is of a ruthless Church driving Europe into a barbaric war of aggression and plunder against a peaceful Islamic population in the Holy Land. As the common portrait paints it, led by mad preachers and manipulating power-hungry popes, the Crusades were a Church-sponsored invasion and slaughter that descended into a massacre at Jerusalem, the sack of Constantinople and the persecution of European Jews.

The Crusades, of course, are a far more complicated series of events in history than these anti-Catholic assumptions. Narrowly and traditionally defined, the Crusades involved a military attempt under a vow of faith to regain the Holy Land – containing the sites of the Gospel accounts of the life of

Jesus – from its Islamic conquerors.

This papal purpose, however, would become caught up in dynastic feuds, schism and heresies, economic warfare over Mediterranean trade, the reunification and rise of an aggressive Islamic military movement, and the final destruction of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Jerusalem had been captured from the Byzantine Empire in 638 by Islamic forces just six years after the death of the prophet Mohammed. It was part of an aggressive military campaign that would seize Syria, North Africa and Spain from the old Roman Empire now based in Constantinople.

At the same time, differences within the Church as it developed in the East and West became more pronounced over the centuries. The Eastern Church resented the juridical authority of Rome. Thorny theological issues would divide the Church in the East far more than the West. Schisms and heresies would breakdown the unity of the Church in the East even before the major break between East and West in the schism of 1054.

The invasion of the Byzantine Empire by the Islamic Seljuk Turks in the 11th Century was the direct cause of the First Crusade. Imperial forces were destroyed at the battle of Manzikert in 1071. Ten years later, Alexius Comnenus would assume the imperial throne when it appeared that the entire Empire was on the verge of collapse. He quickly developed a cordial relationship with Pope Urban II who held a council of the Church in 1095 in which representatives of the Empire were in attendance. In desperate need of soldiers, they begged for assistance from the West to hold off the Seljuk advance. In November 1095 at a Church council in Clermont, France, Pope Urban II issued the formal call for a Crusade to rescue eastern Christendom and recover the Holy Land to make it safe for pilgrimage.

Why did Urban support the idea of a Crusade to the Holy Land

and put the weight of the Church behind it? Clearly, the return of the Holy Land and the defense of the Christian communities in the Near East were the first objectives. But there were additional concerns. There was the clear threat of the Seljuks. If Constantinople fell, all Eastern Europe would be wide open to Islamic advance. Additionally, the pope certainly believed that allying with Constantinople could heal the disunity of Christianity caused by the schism of 1054.

But even more was involved. Urban was of the line of the great reforming popes that had greeted the new millennium and would continue through the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Led by a strong papacy, the goal was to sanctify the world through a combination of the Church's need to reform its institutional life free from control by secular lords, and to build a Christian society. The defense and unity of this goal of a new Christendom was at stake.

An additional part of this reformation of Christian life was to somehow end, or deter, the incessant warfare that plagued the European community. The incessant Christian slaughter of Christians had led to the "truce of God" movement in the 11th Century as part of the general attempt at creating this new Christendom. While it seems contradictory to encourage a Crusade in the interest of peace, there was certainly the papal hope that turning the incessant warring fervor outward to defend Christendom was greater than the continuing scandal of Christians slaughtering Christians.

There were other forces at work in the Crusades, however, that would negatively impact both the image and the results of the Crusades. The Frankish lords taking part in the First Crusade viewed it as an opportunity for conquest and new lands to rule. At the same time, the Emperor Alexius in Constantinople viewed the Crusaders as recapturing land for the Empire. These contrary expectations would increase the bad blood between East and West. In the Holy Land itself, various Islamic

dynasties would see the crusaders as much as potential allies than enemies. The “kingdoms” established after the First Crusade would be caught up in the regional power disputes of the Islamic leaders, as well as their own dynastic ambitions. And finally, there was the ambition of the Italian cities to extend their rising commercial power. They saw the Crusades as an opportunity to dominate trade in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Three events of the Crusades are most commonly used as a club against the Church: the anti-Jewish riots in the Rhineland of Germany and the massacre at Jerusalem in the First Crusade; and the sack of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade.

Shortly after the call for a Crusade, mobs of the poor began to assemble and “march” toward Constantinople. In the Rhineland these disparate mobs of peasants and townsfolk began to launch attacks on the Jews. Throughout the Rhineland, however, the Church became the sole protector of the Jews in the face of these mobs. At Worms, the bishop opened up his home to protect the Jewish community, but the mobs broke in and slaughtered them. As the rag-tag army approached Cologne, Jews were hidden in Christian homes and the archbishop was able to protect most of them. At Trier, most of the Jewish community was protected in the archbishop’s palace. Eventually, these peasant armies were destroyed – by Christians and Turks – and most of western Christendom viewed it as just penalty for their anti-Jewish atrocities. When the Second Crusade was preached, St. Bernard of Clairvaux went to the Rhineland to stamp out anti-Jewish riots, and they effectively ceased as part of the crusading movement.

The First Crusade with papal blessing was made up of four Frankish armies that assembled at Constantinople. It successfully took advantage of Islamic Arab disunity and, on July 15, 1099, the Crusaders took Jerusalem. The papal legate, however, had died. Without his restraint, the crusading army – reduced to about 12,000 – stormed the walls and engaged in a horrific slaughter of the Islamic and Jewish population. .



The Crusaders essentially held four areas in the Holy Land – Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa and Tripoli. They had only small numbers to defend themselves and would need to rely on western military aid to survive. After first seeing the Crusaders as possibly useful allies in their internecine conflicts, the Islamic world in the Near East became more unified in its resistance. In 1144, Edessa was retaken. A Second Crusade failed and in 1169, Saladin came to power in Egypt and in 1187 Jerusalem was retaken. Tyre, Antioch and Tripoli remained as the only Christian-held outposts.

The Third Crusade in response to Saladin's successes was launched and would create much of the romantic legends and myths that surround the Crusades. Richard the Lion Heart of England would engage Saladin in a ritual of attacks and counterattacks, as well as chivalrous courtesies. While he succeeded in the siege of Acre and securing the port of Jaffa, Richard was unable to retake Jerusalem and left the Holy Land in 1192, ending the Third Crusade.

The Fourth Crusade began as a fundamental part of the reforming zeal of Pope Innocent III. He negotiated with the Emperor Alexius III, who had ascended the imperial throne in 1195 after overthrowing his brother, for a healing of the schism and a joint effort to retake the Holy Land. But under the machinations of the Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, the Crusade was taken from papal hands and turned toward Venetian goals. An attack was launched for control of Dalmatia and a horrified pope condemned this betrayal of crusading goals. The armies then turned toward Constantinople where, in league with the son of the deposed Byzantine emperor, a revolution was hatched to secure Constantinople as a Venetian puppet. When the citizens of Constantinople rejected the young pretender and refused to pay-off the Crusaders, the city was attacked. It was virtually destroyed, its art works stolen or destroyed, its citizenry ruthlessly murdered. A Western Empire was set up that would last just a short time and

Innocent, seeing in it the hope of reunification of Christendom, finally accepted it. But the attack on Constantinople was never planned or ordered by the Church.

The sack of Constantinople ended the Fourth Crusade and effectively determined that the Crusades would not succeed in its original purpose. The empire would not recover and in 1453 the Turks would capture Constantinople, kill the emperor, and end the Byzantine Empire. The Church was not reunified, as the Greeks would never forgive the West for the atrocities at Constantinople. The schism of 1054 would become permanent. Other crusades followed, but by 1291 the Latin kingdom in the Holy Land came to an end.

Though initiated at the request of the Byzantine emperors and by the dream of successive popes for a safe Holy Land and a united Christendom, the Crusades and the crusaders were never controlled by the Church. Even the First Crusade, though inspired by lofty ideals, essentially became a means for Frankish knights to recreate small feudal kingdoms in a backwater of the Islamic empire. The negative results of the Crusades are clear in the sack of Constantinople and the hardening of the divisions in Christendom between East and West. But to point to the Crusades as a symbol of a power-crazed Church engaging in slaughter to pursue its own nefarious ends is to misunderstand history and simply to look for an excuse for contemporary bigotry.

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## **NARAL, Anti-Catholicism and The Roots of the Pro-Abortion**

# Campaign

By Robert P. Lockwood

The public debate over abortion was critical in a resurgent anti-Catholicism in the mid-1960s. With the cooperation of media, abortion became an ongoing battle waged with a war of words mired in anti-Catholicism.

Why did Catholicism become the issue in the abortion debate? It was in many ways a planned effort by the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League. Called by the acronym NARAL, it was organized at the First National Conference on Abortion Laws held in Chicago, February 14-16, 1969. It was a conglomeration of abortion referral services, interested state legislators, women's organizations, new feminists and old warriors from the birth control and eugenics crusades.

One of the primary motivations in NARAL's abortion campaign was the anti-Catholicism of its founder and first executive director, Lawrence Lader. Lader would effectively harness and use anti-Catholicism as a fundamental aspect of NARAL in abortion politics, legislating, public debate and media coverage. According to a recent interview with the Catholic League's Louis Giovino, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, one of NARAL's original members and a close confidant of Lader, this anti-Catholicism "was probably the most effective strategy we had."

In his book "Aborting America," Dr. Nathanson had described an early conversation he had with Lader. Nathanson had operated the largest abortion clinic in the world. But by 1974, he had begun to seriously reconsider his support for legalized abortion. He would later become a leading figure in the pro-life movement.

According to Nathanson, he and Lader were discussing the overall strategy for legalizing abortion in the United States

in October, 1967, six years before the Supreme Court would knock down all state laws that criminalized abortion in its *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions and two years before the formation of NARAL. Lader, as recalled by Nathanson, "brought out his favorite whipping boy":

"...(A)nd the other thing we've got to do is bring the Catholic hierarchy out where we can fight them. That's the *real* enemy. The biggest single obstacle to peace and decency throughout all of history.'"

Nathanson continued, "He held forth on that theme through most of the drive home. It was a comprehensive and chilling indictment of the poisonous influence of Catholicism in secular affairs from its inception until the day before yesterday. I was far from an admirer of the church's role in the world chronicle, but his insistent, uncompromising recitation brought to mind the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. It passed through my mind that if one had substituted 'Jewish' for 'Catholic,' it would have been the most vicious anti-Semitic tirade imaginable.'"

Lader had come to the abortion issue through his involvement with various leftist causes in New York politics after World War II. According to Nathanson, "[Lader] had a long history of being ultra-radical and anti-Catholic. He was for a time a political aide to Vito Marcantonio, who was the only card-carrying Communist ever elected to Congress."

Vito Marcantonio (1902-1954) was considered the most radical congressman to ever serve consecutive terms and ran in Communist circles. Representing New York's East Harlem from 1935-1937, 1939-1950, he espoused various radical causes and defended America's Communist Party. He ran for office when abandoned by Republicans and Democrats under the American Labor Party, which was considered a Communist front group. Through this early involvement with Marcantonio and extreme leftist circles, Lader was, according to Nathanson,

“inoculated with the anti-Catholicism virus” years before he was involved in the abortion movement.

Lader, who came from a wealthy family, became a wandering journalist developing articles on different causes until he joined Margaret Sanger’s birth control crusade in the 1950s. In 1955 he authored his first book, “Margaret Sanger and the Fight for Birth Control,” which nurtured his animus toward Catholics. In addition to Sanger, Lader was no doubt influenced to bring anti-Catholicism to the forefront of the abortion debate by Paul Blanshard, another veteran of the post-war New York leftist circles. Lader’s writings on the Church echoed Blanshard’s anti-Catholic theories.

In his landmark best-selling 1949 book, “American Freedom and Catholic Power,” Blanshard argued that there was an ascendant Catholic Church in America, dominated by the hierarchy, that was becoming a majority through the uncontrolled breeding of the laity. When Catholics became a majority, they would amend the Constitution making Catholicism the official religion, require the teaching of Catholic morality in public schools, and impose on America Catholic beliefs on marriage, divorce and birth control, Blanshard charged.

This was foundational to Lader and was re-stated in his 1987 book, “Politics, Power & the Church”: “The development of Catholic power – the influence of its religious morality and political aims on American society – has followed a careful design...By 1980, with the election of President Ronald Reagan, the Catholic church achieved what it had only grasped for before: national power that gave the bishops more access to the White House than any other religion, and made them one of the most awesome lobbying blocs on Capitol Hill.”

These would be the ideas that permeated the abortion debate in the United States. As many pro-life activists would discover early on, through Lader and NARAL the debate would not focus on abortion itself. Pro-abortion activists raised the specter

of "Catholic power" threatening civil liberties, and the machinations of the "Catholic hierarchy" and their "unquestioning constituents" marching in lockstep. It was more appealing to argue against Catholicism than for abortion. This strategy, Nathanson confirmed, "was strictly out of NARAL."

Lader's thesis was that Catholic pro-life activities were in opposition to true American "pluralism": "The attack on the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion...seems to threaten our whole pluralist tradition and could damage our social cohesiveness...Catholic power, allied with Fundamentalism, has threatened the American tenet of church-state separation and shaken the fragile balance of our pluralistic society."

Under Lader's leadership, NARAL would quickly move to make the abortion debate appear to be a "Catholic" issue. The strategy was simple: convince the media and the public that this was a case of the Catholic hierarchy attempting to impose its will on America. Portray all opposition from Catholics to legalized abortion as a power play by the Church with the laity marching in lockstep to its clerical overlords. Accuse the Church of abusing its tax exemption for a political power-grab. Paint legislators who were Catholics and pro-life as ignorant dupes of the bishops; those Catholic legislators who were pro-legalization were painted as heroes who refused to impose their beliefs on non-Catholic neighbors.

The NARAL anti-Catholic strategy took hold. Catholics addressing the issue publicly were portrayed as being sent out by the pope to foist Catholicism on democracy. From the late 1960s on, abortion was presented in the media as a peculiarly Catholic issue. In newspaper reports, pro-life legislators or pro-life spokesmen were consistently identified by their religion if they were Catholic, though no one else would be so identified. To newspapers and television reporters, abortion was a "religious" rather than a social issue, and the pro-life movement simply the vanguard of a repressive Catholic Church

hierarchy.

In 1973, the Supreme Court would wipe away the entire debate in the states by voiding every state law against abortion. In the majority decision in *Roe v. Wade*, Justice Blackmun would favorably cite Lawrence Lader's 1966 book "Abortion" eight times. At the end of his book "Abortion II" in 1973, the executive director of NARAL spelled out the attitude toward the Catholic Church. "What the Church fears is the rejection of its dogma by a large proportion of its communicants and the increasing use of abortion by Catholics as a backup to contraception. Concomitantly, it fears a sharp decline in the size of Catholic families...The whole structure of authority is further threatened when the single Catholic woman need no longer be forced into marriage against her will, or bear an illegitimate child for a Catholic foundling home – children that often become priests and nuns, who, when adopted, become the source of considerable financial contributions to the Church from adopting parents."

In 1975, Lader was forced out of his position as Executive Director at NARAL. He would go on to organize Abortion Rights Mobilization (ARM) whose primary function in the beginning was to attempt to have the Catholic Church's tax exemption removed because of its activities in opposition to abortion. The case was rejected for lack of standing by the Supreme Court in 1990. Lader then went on to campaign for the legalization and the distribution of the abortion drug, RU 486. His anti-Catholic strategies never left him, and he began to make a jumbled attack on a "Catholic-Fundamentalist" alliance which he claimed to have elected Ronald Reagan in 1980.

NARAL, of course, has continued as the leading pro-abortion organization in the United States. After *Roe v. Wade* it changed its name to the National Abortion Rights Action League and now calls itself the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, but has always maintained the same acronym. It is currently strongly involved in a series of

attacks on Catholic hospitals for refusing “reproductive services” and has been fighting conscience clauses that would exempt Catholic organizations from being forced to provide abortion coverage in medical insurance.