

CORNWELL'S LATEST FOLLY: TRYING TO SMEAR POPE JOHN PAUL II

By Ronald Rychlak

For about 20 years, author John Cornwell wrote as a disenchanted, former Catholic. Some of his early books sold well, but he really hit the big time in the past five years. He still writes books highly critical of the Catholic Church. Now, however, he writes not as a bitter former seminarian, but as a Catholic who is more 'hurt and confused' than angry.

In his latest book, *The Pontiff in Winter: Triumph and Conflict in the Reign of John Paul II*, Cornwell tries to convince the reader that this is a good-faith, balanced portrait of Pope John Paul II. Some of the promotion even suggests that it is sympathetic to the great man. Nothing could be further from the truth. Anyone who reads the book will understand why the subtitle of the British edition is: *The Dark Face of John Paul II's Papacy*.

This is Cornwell's third consecutive book critical of Pope John Paul II. The first, *Hitler's Pope*, purported to critique Pope Pius XII, who reigned from 1938 to 1958. Those readers who made it to the end of the book, however, learned that Cornwell's real target was not Pius but John Paul II and the papacy itself. [See "Cornwell's Errors: Reviewing Hitler's Pope," *Catalyst*, December 1999.] In fact, in this new book Cornwell backs away from his claims about Pius XII. He now says that it is impossible to judge the Pope's motives "while Rome was under the heel of Mussolini and later occupied by the Germans." The charges he made against John Paul II, however, remain in place.

Cornwell's second book critical of John Paul II was entitled

Breaking Faith. In that book, not only did Cornwell voice the typical “liberal” complaints about the Pope and the Church’s position on celibacy, women priests, contraception, and popular election of bishops; he also raised enough “conservative” criticisms about liturgical abuse, bad music, and the loss of ritual to be rewarded with a favorable interview/article in the conservative Catholic magazine, *Crisis*. [“See Guess Who’s Back?” *Catalyst*, Jan-Feb. 2002].

Now, in *The Pontiff in Winter*, Cornwell argues that John Paul has “taken a bit of the Iron Curtain with him” to the Vatican to mold a rigid, authoritarian papacy. He writes: “The Pope speaks but does not engage in dialogue; he hears but does not listen; he studies but does not learn.” Cornwell not only blames John Paul for the spread of AIDS, but also for global terrorism. He also says that John Paul has developed a “medieval patriarchalism” towards women and his “major and abiding legacy... is to be seen and felt in various forms of oppression and exclusion...”

Cornwell criticizes the Pope’s positions on social issues including the September 11 attacks, the clash between Islam and Christianity, and statements regarding Mel Gibson’s “The Passion.” His strongest criticisms, however, relate to the Church’s teaching on homosexuality, abortion, AIDS, the sexual abuse crisis, divorce, and the ordination of women. Cornwell charges that the Catholic teachings voiced by the pontiff have “alienated generations of the faithful” and that “John Paul’s successor will inherit a dysfunctional Church fraught with problems... A progressive pope, a papal Mikhail Gorbachev, could find himself presiding over a sudden and disastrous schism as conservatives refuse to accept the authenticity of progressive reforms.”

It is revealing of the polemic nature of this book that Cornwell uses Gorbachev for the example. In contrast, he denigrates John Paul II’s friend, Ronald Reagan at every opportunity. Cornwell even writes that in the office of

Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, there were files on dead children whose murderers were “trained by Reagan’s compatriots.” The implication Cornwell tries to raise, however, cannot stand. Romero was killed before Reagan was even elected President.

Cornwell suggests that John Paul has an illogical (perhaps unhealthy) devotion to the Virgin Mary. He scoffs at the Pope’s conviction that she saved his life when an assassin’s bullet nearly killed him. He also writes that John Paul once told a crowd that, when he was a teenager, the Virgin Mary granted him “special interviews.” He uses this to build the case that the Pope has an enlarged ego. In reality, what the Pope told the crowd was that he and his fellow students had been granted “audiences” by Mary – in other words, she listened to their prayers. That completely changes the story.

At one point in the book, Cornwell feigns sympathy for John Paul. He writes: “Whatever the character of the man who becomes pope, the papal role, in time, begins to take over the human being, the personality of the individual elected to the strangest, most impossible and isolating job on earth.” In other words, the problem is not the man, but the office. For Cornwell, the problem is inherent in the papacy.

The Economist reports that Cornwell was “chastened” by the arguments and the evidence about Pope Pius XII that followed the release of *Hitler’s Pope* and he is “now a better biographer.” The only obvious lesson he has learned, however, is not to make false claims that are easy to disprove. In that book, Cornwell claimed to have had access to secret archives that he used to learn dark secrets about the Vatican. Those phoney claims were easy to disprove. This time, Cornwell instead cites a personal, inside-the-Vatican, deep throat: Monsignor *Sotto Voce*.

Taking Cornwell at his word, and accepting his description of Monsignor *Sotto Voce*, *The Pontiff in Winter* gives us an

“inside account” from a disgruntled and burned-out Vatican official who trades secrets for a good meal and a couple of bottles of wine. The great advantage for Cornwell, of course, is that this lets him write almost anything, and no one can prove it is false. Thus, without support, Cornwell:

1. Writes about “indications” that John Paul “probably” transferred money to Poland through the Vatican Bank and there is a “rumor” that the Mafia was involved.
2. Hints at a romantic affair in the 1970s with a married woman, and reports that secrets are contained in letters that are kept “under lock and key in an archive at Harvard.”
3. Raises the implication that as a younger priest, John Paul was “voyeuristic,” even though he admits that none of the people who knew the future Pope thought so.

In 2001, Cornwell wrote in the London *Sunday Times* that John Paul II was barely competent. When he was challenged, he wrote a letter to the monthly journal *First Things* (which Cornwell calls a “reactionary Catholic quarterly”):

I was given the information about the Pope on what seemed to be good authority at the time.... I have now double-checked the facts.... In consequence I acknowledge that mistake publicly through your periodical and I shall seek to correct the error also at an appropriate point in the *Sunday Times*.

Not only did Cornwell never make that correction in the *Sunday Times*, he reasserted the same error (about that same time period) in this new book.

Cornwell takes many cheap evaluative shots in *The Pontiff in Winter*. He says that John Paul’s writing not only has a “usual aptitude for inelegant phraseology” but at times also reflects a “gaucheness” of “conceit.” As for the Pope’s (elsewhere highly praised) work as a young philosopher, Cornwell says that it shows that he was “academically, completely out of his

league.” In fact, despite the praise that others have lavished on the future Pope’s writing, Cornwell mocks it as a “punishment for priests in Purgatory.” As Tim Carney wrote in the *New York Sun*:

Without a single footnote to substantiate his claims and in many cases lacking specific examples, Mr. Cornwell’s latest book looks less like a polemic and more like a half-hearted effort to cash in on his reputation as a disaffected Catholic writer. Even those who found the previous book compelling or controversial should see this books as the lame attack it is.

Damien Thompson, in London’s *Daily Telegraph*, denounced the book as “a hatchet job,” and called Cornwell a “sensationalist hack.” Suggesting that some of Cornwell’s earlier books had at least some limited value, Thompson wrote: “This new book is indeed a record of intellectual decline, but not quite in the way that its author intended.”

One thing going for *Pontiff in Winter* is that it has a great cover photo of Pope John Paul II. The same photo, however, also appears on Sophia Press’s recent republication of *The Church on Earth: The Nature and Authority of the Catholic Church, and the Place of the Pope Within It*, by Msgr. Ronald Knox (1888-1957). Readers who want quality content with the same cover should buy that book. Alternatively, for a solid insider’s account that covers the same ground as *Pontiff in Winter*, but does so from an honest perspective, one might try John Allen’s *All the Pope’s Men : The Inside Story of How the Vatican Really Thinks*.

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Tim LaHaye: The Left Behind Series

by Carl E. Olson

(Catalyst 12/2004)

Two years ago I was engaged in an e-mail exchange with a Fundamentalist pastor, who wrote:

But as an effort to still save your soul, if indeed my concerns for you are true, may I urge you to reexamine the Mariolatry of the Church you have bought into. I will not badger you with the unscriptural practice of making Mary “the mother of God” or “the Queen of Heaven” which comes from Babylonish paganism not Christianity or Scripture.

It was typical Fundamentalist fare, but the man who penned it was no ordinary Fundamentalist. He was Dr. Tim LaHaye, one of the most influential Christians—Catholic or Protestant—in America over the past thirty years. A founding member of the Moral Majority, LaHaye is best known today as creator/co-author of the mega-selling *Left Behind* books, the most popular works of Christian fiction in history. Since 1995, when the first *Left Behind* novel appeared, the “end times” series (now twelve volumes strong and with two more coming) has sold some sixty million copies.

Since entering the Catholic Church in 1997, I’ve written over two dozen articles and a major book about the *Left Behind*

theology propagated by LaHaye and many others through books, television, and radio. As a former believer in the “Rapture” and premillennial dispensationalism (the most common form of the *Left Behind* theology), I know how confusing this topic can be for Catholics. But I was—and still am—surprised by how many Catholics fail to see how biased against Catholicism are the *Left Behind* novels and companion volumes produced by LaHaye.

For example, one Catholic fan of the *Left Behind* books scoffed at my concerns about the novels. “You know,” he said, “they actually have the Pope raptured. So they cannot be anti-Catholic.” I encouraged him to read the books more closely since the passage he referred to, from the second book of the series, *Tribulation Force*, is actually an example of how the Catholic Faith is attacked in the *Left Behind* books:

“A lot of Catholics were confused, because while many remained, some had disappeared—including the new pope, who had been installed just a few months before the vanishings. He had stirred up controversy in the church with a new doctrine that seemed to coincide more with the ‘heresy’ of Martin Luther than with the historic orthodoxy they were used to.” (Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Tribulation Force: The Continuing Drama of Those Left Behind* [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995], p. 53.)

In other words, the new pope is secretly Raptured despite being Catholic because he embraces the views of Martin Luther and has therefore renounced Catholic teaching. So those Catholics who *reject* the Catholic Faith can be “saved” and Raptured, with the logical conclusion being that Catholics who are loyal to the Church are not “saved,” are not true Christians, and will not be Raptured.

The leading Catholic character, the American Cardinal Mathews, is a greedy, power-hungry, Biblically-illiterate egomaniac whose devious actions apparently result from his adherence to “normal” Catholic beliefs and practices (*Tribulation Force*,

pp. 271-278). He becomes the new pope and the head of Enigma One World Faith, an evil, one-world religion. Taking the title *Pontifex Maximus Peter*, he declares war on anyone believing in the Bible. His anger is especially directed towards true Christians from “house churches, small groups that met all over the suburbs and throughout the state,” an obvious reference to Fundamentalist and Evangelical Protestants.

Cameron “Buck” Williams, “a senior staff writer for the prestigious newsmagazine *Global Weekly*” presses Cardinal Mathews for his explanation of the disappearance of millions from earth and his interpretation of Ephesians 2:8-9:

“‘Now you see,’ the archbishop said, ‘this is precisely my point. People have been taking verses like that out of context for centuries and trying to build doctrine on them.’ ‘But there are other passages just like those,’ Buck said.”
(*Tribulation Force*, p. 54-55.)

Afterwards Buck writes an article in which “he was able to work in the Scripture and the archbishop’s attempt to explain away the doctrine of grace.” In other words, Catholicism is a false religion based on works, not grace, and the Catholics who were Raptured were those who went against official Church teaching.

This reflects LaHaye’s beliefs in *sola fide* (salvation by “faith alone”) and *sola scriptura* (no authority except the Bible), two cornerstones of the Protestant Reformation. In *Revelation Unveiled*, his commentary on the final book of the Bible, LaHaye writes, “Rome’s false religion too often gives a false security that keeps people from seeking salvation by faith. Rome is also dangerous because some of her doctrines are pseudo-Christian. For example, she believes properly about the personal deity of Christ but errs in adding Babylonian mysticism in many forms and salvation by works” (*Revelation Unveiled*, p. 269). Anyone familiar with the early ecumenical councils will find this amusing, but Fundamentalists

unfamiliar with Church history take LaHaye's depiction of the Catholic Church as Gospel truth.

When a reader complained online that *Tribulation Force* was anti-Catholic, *Left Behind* co-author Jerry B. Jenkins vehemently insisted that the books are "not anti-Catholic" and that "almost every person in the book who was left behind was Protestant. Astute readers will understand where we're coming from. True believers in Christ, regardless of their church 'brand' will be raptured" (Amazon.com, August 26, 1999). In June 2003 the Illinois Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement condemning the *Left Behind* books and related materials as anti-Catholic. LaHaye responded by insisting that "our books are not anti-Catholic. In fact, we have many faithful Catholic readers and friends" (Religion News Service, June 26, 2003).

He added that the series is "not an attack on the Catholic church" and, according to a *Chicago Tribune* column (June 13, 2003), "said the bishops are 'reading into these books something that's not there.' The books don't suggest any particular theology, he said, but try to introduce people to a more personal relationship with Jesus." In an interview with the *Chicago Sun-Times* (June 6, 2003), LaHaye explains that the character of Cardinal Mathews is simply that: a character. "What [the bishops] don't seem to realize," he said, "is that every church has some renegade people in it, and we just picked one out of theirs."

But in that same column I insist that LaHaye is "a rabid anti-Catholic." Why? Because LaHaye "is convinced, and he teaches very clearly in his nonfiction books, that the Catholic Church is apostate, it is false, and it is not Christian." He has established a lengthy and consistent pattern of harshly condemning the Catholic Church, attacking her beliefs, and using inflammatory language and factually baseless statements in the process.

LaHaye resorts to the sort of nativist attacks on Catholicism common in the United States during the 1800s, notably in the writings of Alexander Hislop, a Scottish pastor whose book *The Two Babylons the Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife* (originally written in 1853-1858) attempted to prove that every distinctive Catholic belief and practice is pagan in origin and Satanic in orientation. In *Revelation Unveiled* LaHaye writes that “the greatest book ever written on [Babylonian religion] is the masterpiece *The Two Babylons* . . . This book, containing quotations from 275 authors and to my knowledge never refuted, best describes the origin of religion in Babylon and its present-day function.” (p. 266). He summarizes Hislop’s main ideas: Catholicism is idolatrous, Satanic in origin, based on secrecy and fear, and filled with pagan doctrines and practices. He then proclaims that “[a]fter reading the above quotations, you may be inclined to think me anti-Catholic, but that isn’t exactly true; I am anti-false religion” (p. 269).

Yet it’s hard to deny LaHaye’s unreasonable (he never provides citations from actual Catholic documents) and even hysterical animosity towards Catholicism in light of his claims that:

- Roman Catholicism, “apostate Protestantism,” Hinduism, and Buddhism will form a system of “pagan ecumenism” and will facilitate the rise of the Antichrist during the Tribulation era (*The Beginning of the End*, [Tyndale, 1972, 1981], 148-51).
- Hindus can become Catholic without renouncing any of their Hindu beliefs (*The Beginning of the End*, 151; *Revelation Unveiled*, p. 275).
- “All that inhibits the ecumenical movement today are the fundamental, Bible-believing Christians.... They are the group called ‘the Church’ that Christ is coming for ... so-called Christ-endom is divided basically into two main groups, the apostates and the fundamentalists” (*The*

Beginning of the End, 151-2).

- The Catholic Church is an apostate Church that has mixed paganism with Christianity, resulting in the “dark ages” and the existence of “Babylonian mysticism” (*Revelation Unveiled*, 65-68, 260-277; *Are We Living in the End Times?* [Tyndale, 1999], 171-176).
- “The Church of Rome denies the finished work of Christ but believes in a continuing sacrifice that produces such things as sacraments and praying for the dead, burning candles, and so forth. All of these were borrowed from mystery Babylon, the mother of all pagan customs and idolatry, none of which is taught in the New Testament” (*Revelation Unveiled*, 66-67).
- Catholics worship Mary, saints, and angels (*Are We Living in the End Times?*, 173).
- The Catholic Church, in large part due to Augustine, removed the Bible as the sole source of authority among Christians and “spiritualized” away the truths of Scripture, and kept the Bible from the common people (*Are We Living in the End Times?*, 174).
- The Catholic Church killed over forty million people during the “dark ages” when “Babylonian mysticism controlled the church” (*Are We Living in the End Times?*, 175).

The *Left Behind* books and their non-fiction companions are filled with poor writing, bad theology, and anti-Catholic bigotry. It’s best to leave them behind and rely on Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church when studying the end times—or anything else.

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Susan Jacoby: Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 10/2004)

“It is no secret that the Bush administration is engaged in the most radical assault on the separation of church and state in American history.” When I first read that sentence, I wondered about the sanity of the author. Upon reflection, I still do.

Susan Jacoby, who penned that line last spring, is not ready for the asylum, but she is ready to find a home in the asylum’s first cousin—the academy. Indeed, there are few colleges or universities that wouldn’t be proud to hire her. And that is because she entertains a radical secular world-view, one in total harmony with the elites on campus.

The most complete exposition of Jacoby’s work is now available in *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*. For those who believe in nothing, the book is a virtual bible. For the rest of us, it is a useful glimpse into the mind of those who hate religion.

Jacoby would protest this description. She would say she doesn’t hate religion—it’s just the intersection of religion and politics that scares her. But her animus against religion,

per se, is so deep that it exposes her hand. For example, it was Bush's defense of the "sanctity of marriage" in his State of the Union address last January that led Jacoby to accuse him of promoting "the most radical assault on the separation of church and state in American history." It is fair to say that there is more than just hypersensitivity at play here.

Jacoby knows this country was founded by Christians, but she tries to spin the truth by asserting that the Founders were more interested in separation of church and state than they were religious liberty. In making her case, she entertains the fiction (one that is by now taken as truth by the nation's most influential constitutional law professors) that there are two clauses in the First Amendment: a religious liberty clause and, its alleged opposite, an establishment clause.

John Noonan is one constitutional scholar who hasn't accepted this fiction: "There are no clauses in the constitutional provision. Clauses have a subject and a predicate. This provision has a single subject, a single verb, and two prepositional phrases." Therefore, no calculated disharmony between religious liberty and the establishment of religion was ever contemplated. There was one purpose: to prohibit government interference with religion.

Robert Ingersoll is Jacoby's hero. Ingersoll was a 19th century agnostic who pioneered the secular humanist agenda in America. The son of a Presbyterian minister, Ingersoll took great pride in helping to achieve what he called one of the greatest victories of the American freethought movement, namely the "secularization of liberal Protestantism." That he succeeded is disputed by no one, but that it is a plus for America is another matter altogether.

Jacoby's book is replete with convenient dualisms: the enlightened vs. the indoctrinated; the liberated vs. the enslaved; the tolerant vs. the intolerant, and so forth. This explains her need to rescue the early feminists and the

abolitionists from the ranks of the religious.

Jacoby reluctantly admits that the Grimké sisters, Angelina and Sarah, were “deeply religious” 19th-century champions of women’s rights. But she hastens to add, however, that they were also “anticlerical.” Jacoby says the same about feminist Lucretia Mott and abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Her point being that it is possible to cast these religiously motivated freedom fighters as secular surrogates. Similarly, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, two of the most powerful women’s voices of the 19th century, are described as Christians with “unconventional” religious views. And the black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, is seen as a “devout but unorthodox religious believer.”

In other words, much to Jacoby’s chagrin, the early feminists and the abolitionists were Christians, not so-called freethinkers. Indeed, her characterization of them as independent-minded persons also flies in the face of her stereotype of believers as nothing more than dupes.

This is not to say that some famous public figures cannot be claimed by the secularists. For example, there is the black author and activist, W.E.B. Du Bois, who fought Booker T. Washington in his early days and wound up a Communist at the age of 93. Walt Whitman, the poet and sexual degenerate, was a freethinker whose influence continues to this day; e.g., President Bill Clinton gave a copy of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* to Monica Lewinsky. Margaret Sanger, the ex-Catholic turned racial eugenicist and birth control guru, was a freethinker. Roger Baldwin, founder of the ACLU, was also a freethinker; he called himself an “agnostic Unitarian,” a description that would offend neither agnostics nor Unitarians.

It is not surprising that those who live a life in perpetual rebellion often wind up freethinkers. Angry at the human condition, they see oppression everywhere and salvation

nowhere. Save for communism. Jacoby knows that many socialists and communists have claimed residence in her freethinking camp, and for this she is not particularly happy. For example, she confesses that “nearly all socialists were atheists or agnostics,” as were the Social Gospel “Christians” of the 1890s, but she takes pains to distinguish between political radicals and committed freethinkers. The former, she maintains, see “religion as merely one pillar of an unjust society,” one that will collapse with the advent of a truly communist society. The latter, though, regards religion as “the foundation of most other social evils.”

Beginning in the period prior to the First World War, Jews became increasingly involved in radical politics and the secularist movement. Led by “Red Emma” Goldman, agnostic and atheistic Jews took up the cause of communism. Many of the same people played a major role in attacking any vestige of the nation’s religious heritage. To this day, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League are among the most fierce opponents of the public expression of religion in the U.S. All three are opposed to the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, though the American Jewish Congress, for purely pragmatic reasons, entered a brief in favor of the Pledge (it did so wholly because it feared a backlash among Christians that might spark the move for a constitutional amendment); the other two Jewish groups entered a brief to remove the words.

Jacoby also cites the role of secular feminists, many of whom are Jewish, in championing the abortion-rights movement. In 1972, in the first edition of Gloria Steinem’s *Ms. Magazine*, 53 feminists signed a declaration under the headline, WE HAVE HAD ABORTIONS; Steinem was one of the signatories. Today, Jewish newspapers like the *Forward* are radically in favor of every type of abortion procedure, including partial-birth abortion. Interestingly, one of the Jewish founders of the abortion movement, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, eventually came to

his senses and gave up his practice as an abortionist. He has since become an outspoken foe of abortion and has converted to Catholicism (something Jacoby doesn't mention).

What Jacoby has to say about Catholics is fascinating. She concedes that "in late-nineteenth-century America—for the first time in Western history since the Christianization of the Roman Empire—distrust of the Catholic Church's intentions was far more widespread than distaste for religious Judaism." And while she is correct to say that Protestants reacted in horror to the establishment of parochial schools, she fails to say that it was anti-Catholicism that drove Catholics to create their own schools in the first place. What she has a hard time admitting, for understandable reasons, is the role which her beloved freethinkers have played in fostering anti-Catholicism.

In the 1930s, it is fair to say that prominent Catholic public figures were quite vocal in opposing obscene speech. Indeed, the Legion of Decency was very active in monitoring the movie industry. But it is nonetheless striking to read Jacoby speak of "heavily Catholic" places like Pennsylvania, St. Louis, Chicago and New Orleans where obscene fare was challenged. She even goes so far as to say that these are "all cities with Catholic police officials." One wonders what she would say if a non-Jewish author wrote about "heavily Jewish" places like Hollywood that make the offending movies.

And what are we to make of her claim that the Catholic Church labeled birth control "a communist conspiracy"? Her entire evidence for this extraordinary assertion is the statement of one person, whom she does not identify, who allegedly made such a comment before a congressional committee. Now it may be that some Catholic has testified that the earth is flat. I don't know. But I know this much—if someone did, Jacoby would blame the Catholic Church.

What is perhaps most disturbing about Jacoby's treatment of

Catholicism is her unwillingness to condemn anti-Catholic authors and organizations. Paul Blanshard, for instance, wrote *American Freedom and Catholic Power* in the post-war period, a book so laced with anti-Catholicism that the *New York Times* even refused to review it. This is not the way Jacoby sees it, however, which is why the best she can do is criticize the book for its “shortcomings.” Similarly, she cannot bring herself to condemn Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (now Americans United for Separation of Church and State), even though the organization’s roots are indisputably anti-Catholic.

It would be easy to simply dismiss Jacoby’s book as an attempt to put a rosy gloss on the history of secularism in the U.S. But it is more than that—it is a window into the way freethinkers see themselves and others. Their window, unfortunately, has been dirtied by ideology and made small by experience. Worst of all, theirs is a window that projects an incredible self-righteousness, one whose only cure lies in listening to the Word of God.

Jimmy Breslin: The Church that Forgot Christ

by Kenneth Woodward

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Ostensibly, this is a book about the clergy abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church. But like everything Breslin writes, it is really about himself. Or rather, it is about him writing a book about clergy abuse. He wants us to know that he has lost faith in the church of his childhood. “I need no person

wearing vestments to stand between God and me,” he proclaims up front, as if that were the clergy’s function. Still, he wants us to believe that writing this book has caused him considerable pain. Having been taught by nuns in grade school to believe everything the church says is true, he now finds he can believe nothing that the pope and the bishops have to say.

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

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

For instance, Breslin consistently calls the predators “pedophiles,” a term used to describe adults who are sexually fixated on pre-pubescent children. But in nearly all cases the victims have been adolescents—a very different syndrome that requires different treatment for both the victims and the victimizers. And many are clearly cases of homosexual rape, a fact Breslin simply ignores.

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

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

The abundant mistakes in this book suggest that Breslin long ago lost touch with the Catholic Church. He complains that the church’s anointing of the dying is no longer a sacrament. It still is, only the name has changed, from Extreme Unction to the Sacrament of the Sick and Dying. In outlining his new non-church Catholicism, he ascribes to St. Francis of Assisi a famous saying of St. Benedict—“to work and to pray”—and even

gets the saying wrong. He dismisses Cardinal Francis Arinze, a Nigerian who works in the “scheming” backrooms of the Vatican, as an Uncle Tom “who hasn’t been in Africa in twenty years.” The truth is that Arinze, an Ibo, spends every summer in his native city of Onitsha. Breslin is even careless in identifying close friends, describing writer Eugene Kennedy as a former Jesuit when in fact he was once a Maryknoll priest. And so it goes.

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

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

Robert Katz: The Battle for Rome: The Germans, the Allies, the Partisans, and the Pope

by Ronald Rychlak

(Catalyst 5/2004)

During World War II and for years after it ended, Pope Pius XII was heralded as a staunch opponent of the Nazis and a champion of their victims. Then in 1963, as the result of a piece of fiction written by German playwright Rolf Hochhuth, a controversy arose about whether the Pope had been sufficiently

outspoken about Nazi atrocities. One of the earliest papal critics of this era was Robert Katz. In his 1967 *Death in Rome* and in his 1969 *Black Sabbath*, Katz severely criticized Pope Pius XII for failing to take a firmer stand in opposition to the Nazis.

After the controversy re-erupted in the past few years, with the publication of several new books, authors like John Cornwell and Susan Zuccotti were justifiably criticized for relying on Katz's work, which pre-dated the extensive release of Vatican documents on this subject.

Now, in *The Battle for Rome: The Germans, the Allies, the Partisans, and the Pope* (Simon and Schuster: New York 2003) Katz re-asserts his old charges. Not only does he cite his out-dated books for authority, but coming full circle, he relies upon Zuccotti and Cornwell who had relied upon him! In fact, at one point (p. 54), Katz refers to a charge made by "one historian." Flipping to the endnotes, one finds an abbreviation. Only by further flipping to Katz's key does the reader learn that Katz's "historian" is journalist (not historian) John Cornwell and his discredited book, *Hitler's Pope*.

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Katz focuses on the period when German troops occupied Rome. The first important Vatican-related event took place in October 1943, when the Nazis rounded up about 1,200 Roman Jews for deportation. Katz concludes that the Allies had advance notice of the planned roundup and that Pope Pius had at least an unsubstantiated warning of it.

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Katz claims that the German Ambassador to the Holy See, Ernst von Weizsaecker urged the Pope to make "an official protest" on the day that the Jewish people were arrested. In support of this claim, Katz cites a telegram sent by the Consul at the German embassy to the Quirinal [seat of the Italian government] to the Foreign Office in Berlin. This telegram, however, was sent nine days before the roundup and said nothing about any plan urged on the Vatican.

In a conversation that Weizsaecker had with the Vatican Secretary of State on the day of the arrests, the ambassador expressly urged the Pope *not* to openly protest, since a protest would only make things worse. In fact, thanks in part to Vatican intervention, about 200 prisoners were freed. Moreover, there were no further mass arrests of Roman Jews (thousands of whom—with papal support—went into hiding in Church properties). Obviously, Pius acted with the best interest of the victims in mind.

The second event on which Katz focuses took place on March 23, 1944 after Italian partisans set off a bomb which killed 33 members of the German police. Hitler ordered the immediate execution of ten prisoners for every soldier killed. Within hours, 335 prisoners (most of whom were not Jewish; one was a priest) were led to the catacombs on the outskirts of Rome and shot. The massacre took place in complete secrecy.

Katz argues that the Pope knew of the retaliation in advance but that he did nothing to help. He cites as "proof" a memorandum that was received at the Vatican on March 24, about five hours before the prisoners were killed. That memo, which was published by the Vatican in 1980, said that "it is however foreseen that for every German killed 10 Italians will be executed."

First of all, this memo probably did not make it all the way to the Pope prior to the executions. More importantly, Pope Pius XII certainly was well aware of the likelihood of brutal Nazi retaliation before he got this memo, which provided no specific details or new information. In fact, historian Owen Chadwick cited the document as proof that Pius XII obviously did not know details of the reprisal.

When the memorandum made its way to him, Pius sent a priest to obtain more information and release of the prisoners. The Gestapo chief of police, however, would not receive the Pope's messenger. The executions were already underway. That officer (Herbert Kappler) testified during his post-war trial that "Pope Pius XII was not aware of the Nazis' plans before the massacre."

Katz's efforts to defame Pius XII are evident from the very beginning of this book. The text starts with a report from the Roman police chief on the activity of the clergy and Catholic Organizations. It says, "The clergy continues to maintain an attitude of cooperation with the Government." Since the book is about the era of Nazi occupation, one might think that the Church was in cahoots with the Germans. The date of the

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Katz contends that Pius was prejudiced not only against Jews but also against blacks. He cites a British memorandum indicating that after the liberation of Rome, the Pope requested that "colored troops" not be used to garrison the Vatican. This canard stems from a report the Pope received about French Moroccan troops. They were particularly brutal, raping and looting wherever they went. The Pope did not want these specific soldiers stationed in Rome (or anywhere else). He expressed his concerns about these men to British Ambassador Osborne, who broadened the statement in his cable back to London, saying that the Pope did not want "colored

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Sister Margherita Marchione: Crusade of Charity: Pius XII and POW’s

by Eugene J. Fisher

(Catalyst 4/2006)

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

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

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

These three books, together with David G. Dalin’s *The Myth of*

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

David Dalin is a rabbi, while Ronald Rychlak, Margherita Marchione, and Patrick Gallo are Catholic. This is of some significance since much has been made of the fact that the anti-Pius attackers are either Jews (Kertzer, Goldhagen, Zucotti) or Catholics. Protestants, in the main, have stayed out of the papal fray, having their own ambiguous history during the Holocaust with which to deal. The motivation of Jewish critics of the pope is complex. Historian Yosef Haim Yerushalmi put his finger on the nub of it in his response to Rosemary Radford Reuther in a 1974 conference when he noted that over the centuries when the Jews were in extremis they could look to the papacy for relief from attacks by secular powers, and usually received it. Thus, the inability of the Holy See to influence Nazism's genocide in the 20th century was profoundly shocking to Jews. Yerushalmi, however, goes on to note the relative weakness of the papacy in modern times in secular affairs, and to distinguish between medieval Christian anti-Jewishness and modern, racial, genocidal anti-Semitism, though noting, as have Pope John Paul II and then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, that the former was, in Yerushalmi's words, a "necessary cause" for explaining the latter, though not a "sufficient cause," being only one of a number of factors involved.

The motivation of Catholic critics of Pius is perhaps more subtle, though here again Yerushalmi shed light on it in 1974. While he acknowledges Reuther's "sincere and profound involvement in the fate of the Jews," he worries that for her

it appears to be “part of a larger problem—that of the church itself,” in which “she places the dawn of a new attitude toward the Jews within the context of an obvious hope for a total regeneration of the church.” He goes on to note that “historically, reformist movements within the church have often been accompanied by an even more virulent anti-Semitism,” citing the Cluniac reform, Martin Luther (who advocated the destruction of synagogues and the expulsion of Jews) and Calvin’s Geneva, where Jews were forbidden to reside, though maintaining a legal right of residence and freedom to worship in Rome. The defenders of Pius, I believe, are quite accurate in noting similarly that for the authors of the anti-Pius books, the critique of the Church of the 1940’s is in fact a part of a larger, contemporary reformist agenda, which raises quite legitimate questions about their academic objectivity. Indeed, in the case of Reuther, the fact that she had used Jewish suffering to further her own agenda became patently clear only a few years later when she published a book rejecting the very existence of the Jewish state and declaring the Palestinians to be the true “Jews” of the time, thus placing Israel and real Jews into the category of “Nazis.”

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

Rychlak’s book, in a sense, comes closest to that goal, narrating Pius’ life within the context of his times. His estimate that the Church, through its nunciatures (which handed out false baptismal certificates by the tens of thousands to members of “the family of Jesus”) and through its

monasteries and convents, rectories and other institutions saved some 500,000 Jews, is actually on the moderate side, with estimates ranging up to 800,000. Dalin, the rabbi, and Marchione agree with Rychlak that Pius in fact meets the criteria for a "Righteous Gentile" as defined by Yad va Shem, Jerusalem's Holocaust museum, which Pope John Paul II visited so reverently and penitentially during his pilgrimage there in the Millennium Year. Gallo's book is composed of essays, half of which were written by himself, half by such internationally prominent scholars as Matteo Napolitano of Italy and Juno Levai of Hungary. Half of the essays are new for this book, half published in journals before inclusion here. Readers will be treated to the trenchant wit of Justus George Lawler and the inexorable marshalling of evidence of Ronald Rychlak. George Sim Johnson takes on the myths surrounding Pius XI's "hidden encyclical," which like a Brooklyn egg cream was in fact neither "hidden" nor an "encyclical" (since never promulgated, it remained simply a draft). Bottum himself in his essays fills in the gaps, such as the Ardeatine Massacre, and, as noted, comments incisively on the controversy as a whole.

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

time and emotions.

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

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

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

and understaffed Vatican to cope with the thousands of requests coming to it in the midst of a world gone insane. Whatever one thinks of the Pius Wars, this is a book to read. It is a book which gives us models to emulate in one's own life.

Underlying the specific issue of Pope Pius, of course, is the deeper issue of the relationship between traditional Christian teaching on Jews and Judaism and the mindset not only of the perpetrators but also of the bystanders of Europe during the Holocaust. For whatever the ultimate, and hopefully dispassionate historical judgment of the actions of one pope, we Catholics, as Pope John Paul II reminded us time and again, must come to grips with that history, repent its sins, and do what needs to be done to ensure that it will never happen again. A proper framing of this deeper issue can be found in *Catholic Teaching on the Shoah: Implementing the Holy See's "We Remember"* (USCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, 2001).

Eugene J. Fisher is the Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC.

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

Daniel Silva: The Confessor

by Kenneth D. Whitehead

(book review, Catalyst 7/2003)

Daniel Silva, The Confessor,
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2003.
HB; 401 pages. \$29.95.

What Notre Dame philosophy professor Ralph McInerny has aptly called "the defamation of Pius XII"—in his excellent book with that title—has unfortunately been so widely successful in the culture at large that many people simply take it for granted that Pope Pius XII was guilty of a grave historical wrong in not speaking out more strongly against Adolf Hitler's efforts to exterminate the Jews. The recent film "Amen," by movie director Constantin Costa-Gravas, like the earlier play on which it is based, Rolf Hochhuth's "The Deputy," depicted Pius XII as a virtual accomplice in his willingness to mute public criticism of Hitler and the Nazis. Supposedly, the wartime pope was willing to remain silent both because he was pro-German and because he was acting in the interests of combating Communism through the advance of the German army into the Soviet Union. Pius XII is also severely criticized as well for maintaining Vatican neutrality in the war at a time when, as a moral leader, many say, he should have been more vigorously speaking out against the evil of the Nazis' "final solution." Evil the Nazis' final solution assuredly was. The alleged guilty silence and passivity of Pope Pius XII in the face of it is something else again, however, something a vast contemporary literature has examined in great detail. Far from the case against Pius XII having been proved by the various anti-Pius writers, though, rather the contrary has turned out to be the case: the less highly touted pro-Pius writers really have the better of the argument, as the present writer among others has shown in a review-article covering the principal recent anti-Pius and pro-Pius books (this review-article is available [here](#)).

The fact that the case against Pius XII does not hold up on the evidence—that the continuing denigration of the wartime pope is a defamation—has not prevented those convinced of the

pope's guilt from going ahead to trumpet it to the four winds anyway. Such is the approach of the recent book by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*. Goldhagen relies on sources whose evidence has been shown to be thin, shaky, biased, unsubstantiated, and even patently false—and then he goes on to accumulate many more errors of fact and judgment of his own. Just as the myths of Aryan racial superiority and Jewish racial pollution drove the Nazi extermination program, so the myth of the supposed complicity of Pius XII in the crimes of the Nazis drives the continuing campaign to vilify the good and honorable pope and man that Pius XII was. A scapegoat is needed to explain the failure of European civilization to counter the murderous ideology of the Nazis, and so the wartime head of the Catholic Church is targeted.

One of the newest entries into the field of Pius XII defamation is a new thriller novel entitled *The Confessor* written by Daniel Silva. It appeared on the New York Times bestseller list almost as soon as it was published. Its author has enjoyed a growing reputation as a writer of popular thrillers, and he is, in fact, a skilled practitioner of the genre. In two recent books of his, *The Kill Artist* and *The English Assassin*, he introduced a superhero operative, Gabriel Allon, who is a talented restorer of fine paintings by day but is also a clandestine Israeli agent who always turns out to be more than a match for the Arab terrorists he encounters preying on Jewish victims. In *The Confessor*, however, the predators pursuing Jewish and other victims are no longer Arab terrorists; they are traditionalist Catholics operating out of the Vatican in an effort to cover up the evidence of Church collaboration with the Nazis in World War II.

The novel's action is based on the taken-for-granted "fact" of the culpable silence of Pius XII during the Holocaust against the Jews as well as upon the true fact that some individual

churchmen were pro-Nazi. It would have been surprising if there had not been a few pro-Nazi churchmen, considering that the mesmerizing Adolf Hitler once held a good part of Europe in his thrall, and for more than just a few years. Probably a majority of Germans continued to consider him the savior of Germany well past the time when it had become pretty clear that what he was bringing about was the ruin of Germany.

That some individual churchmen were pro-Nazi, and a few even actively collaborated in the atrocities of Hitler's so-called New Order, however, in no way establishes that the Vatican's policy was even remotely pro-Nazi. That the contrary, in fact, has conclusively been shown in, e.g., Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican by Pierre Blet, S.J., has simply not registered with a writer such as Daniel Silva. He relies on the anti-Pius sources instead. His main plot is based on a supposed secret wartime meeting between an archbishop high up in the Vatican and an official of the German Foreign Office. At this meeting, the Vatican official is depicted as expressly acquiescing in the Nazi plans for the Final Solution. Supposing such a thing ever happened—and there is no evidence for it—it is hard to see why the personal moral guilt of Pius XII would not in fact be diminished if he were shown to be acting on the recommendations of a trusted official who was really, unbeknownst to the pope, working for the Germans.

The novel implies nothing of the kind: Pius XII remains the bad guy, and both the author and his characters from time to time give vent to their feelings about this supposedly flawed and failed pope. Some of these asides seem lifted almost verbatim from anti-Pius books such as Susan Zuccotti's tendentious *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust*, in which Pius XII is made to be somehow personally responsible for the 1,000-plus Jews who were rounded up in Rome in October, 1943 and deported to Auschwitz. What is not mentioned, either by Zuccotti or by Silva, is the truth

recently brought out once again by the Jewish historian, Sir Martin Gilbert, namely, that around 4,000 of Rome's 5,000 Jews were hidden in Roman seminaries and convents—where the breaking of the rule of cloister in the latter institutions would have required papal approval—and were thereby saved from deportation.

The action of this thriller novel revolves around a fictitious new pope, Paul VII, who has just succeeded John Paul II, and who is a “liberal” pope who intends at long last to ‘fess up and admit the Church’s World War II guilt in failing to save the Jews. A far-right secret society of traditionalist Catholics headed by an ice-cold cardinal character—the kind of person the anti-Pius people seem to imagine Pius himself was—is determined to stop this admission of Church guilt even if it means assassinating the new pope, Paul VII. As the “confessor” of the book’s title, this wicked and implacable cardinal sends out assassins with the promise of automatic absolution in the confessional for their deeds.

The nefarious Catholic traditionalists, however, fail to reckon with the Israeli superhero, Gabriel Allon. He is not only instrumental in saving the new pope from assassination, his exposé of the wartime sins of the Church through various acts of derring-do establish the need for the fictitious Paul VII to apologize for these wartime sins. In this regard, John Paul II’s actual “apologies,” at Rome’s synagogue in 1986 and again as recently as February, 2003, at the Wailing Wall several years back, and in his 1998 “We Remember” document, are evidently not enough; the only thing that will ever satisfy the anti-Pius people, apparently, is a total admission that Pope Pius XII was indeed guilty as charged.

It is dispiriting to realize that this author’s skill as a writer of popular thrillers will probably help persuade many readers about the “guilt” of Pius XII, thus expanding and perpetuating the defamation of the wartime pope to an even greater extent than is already the case. Unfortunately, among

the sources acknowledged at the end of his book are such “anti-Catholic Catholics” as James Carroll, John Cornwell, and Garry Wills; but relying on such sources in trying to render anything like the proper “feel” of authentic Catholicism and how the Vatican functions is about as reliable as consulting the Jews for Jesus for insights into orthodox Jewish beliefs. These writers are arguably not even Catholic any longer, in spite of their pretence of being legitimate critics operating from “inside” the Catholic Church. With sources like these, Daniel Silva was never likely to get it right about the Church and the pope, and *The Confessor* as a novel has to be added to the already large body of literature perpetuating the defamation of Pius XII.

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Daniel Dreisbach: Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation between Church and State

by Joseph De Feo

(Catalyst 3/2003)

Justice Felix Frankfurter wrote, “A phrase begins life as a

literary expression; its felicity leads to its lazy repetition; and repetition soon establishes it as a legal formula, indiscriminatingly used to express different and sometimes contradictory ideas." The foregoing lines represent an apt condensation of Professor Daniel L. Dreisbach's thesis in his book *Thomas Jefferson and the Separation between Church and State*. This slim volume consists of a relatively short essay on Jefferson's "wall of separation" metaphor, some primary sources, and a wealth of notes. Although Dreisbach calls the work merely a "sourcebook"—and it is an excellent one—it is hard for the reader to glance over the bare facts of the case without sincere and grave doubts about both the legitimacy and the desirability of the concept of a "wall of separation."

Unlike many other recent treatments of church-state relations, Dreisbach's study concentrates on the life of a metaphor—the "wall of separation between church and state"—and how it compares to the actual Constitutional law it is meant to represent. Thomas Jefferson used the phrase in 1802 in his response to the Danbury Baptist Association, which had written to the president to congratulate him on his electoral victory. He wrote, "...I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State."

Dreisbach makes the persuasive case that Jefferson wrote his famous letter to "hurl a brick" at his Federalist opponents, who had branded him an atheist in the bitter election of 1800; his pious tone and offer of prayer were meant to silence his foes: "I reciprocate your kind prayers for the protection and blessing of the common Father and Creator of man, and tender you for yourselves and your religious association, assurances of my high respect and esteem."

Jefferson wrote also to appease some of his supporters—the

Danbury Baptists, who voted Democratic-Republican and suffered under harsh regulation from the Congregationalist (and mostly Federalist) establishment in Connecticut. Connecticut in the early 19th century, like many states, had an established church. The state was firmly Congregational, with ministers on state salaries; dissenting religious groups, such as the Baptists, usually paid for the support of the established church, and did not enjoy the same privileges as Congregational ministers (e.g., for a time they could not even perform legal marriage ceremonies). This was perfectly legal, because the Constitution only prohibited the federal government from passing laws “respecting an establishment of religion”; and the Bill of Rights provides, through the tenth amendment, that, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.” The power to establish a state religion, then, though denied to the United States, was reserved to the individual states.

Jefferson’s acknowledgement of this federalist structure is evident in his conduct in office: he refused to proclaim federal days of prayer or fasting while president, breaking with the tradition of his predecessors; on the other hand, he drafted resolutions in support of such days of prayer while in the Virginia House of Burgesses and as governor of Virginia. Jefferson, Dreisbach shows, held a jurisdictional view of the First Amendment.

It is clear from Jefferson’s letter to the Danbury Baptists that he did hope in time to “see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights...”; he here referred to the eventual disestablishment of the various churches in the states, to match the federal government. But he would never have considered that the First Amendment could be used to do this, because he was committed both to federalism and to limited

central government; he would have thought it a transgression for the federal government to stomp on the states' sovereignty.

Of course, a belief in disestablishment does not entail hostility to religion in government. Jefferson frequently showed his belief that the federal government is permitted to perform acts of hospitality toward religion without threatening the First Amendment. Not only did he ask listeners to join him in prayer in his second inaugural address; Dreisbach notes that he "personally encouraged and symbolically supported religion by attending public church services in the Capitol," in January of 1802 and with some frequency thereafter. He also negotiated a treaty with the Kaskaskia Indians designating federal moneys to pay for the construction of a Catholic church and the salary of a Catholic priest. His notion of a "law respecting the establishment of religion" was obviously more robust than the stark image of the "wall of separation."

Despite Jefferson's nuanced thought on the relationship between church and state, jurists have seized on one phrase in his letter, presenting a caricature of Jefferson's views to promote their secularization of the U.S. government—which Dreisbach suggests Jefferson might have found objectionable.

The metaphor is not truly analogous to the Constitutional arrangement of church and state. The wall of separation presupposes that government and religion are wholly distinct and can be divided as though by a physical structure. A strict wall would eliminate practices that even supporters of strict separation now take for granted: for instance, military chaplains and tax exemptions for religious organizations. And it would be outrageous to ask legislators to leave their religion at home—not to mention harmful; the Bible is not *Mein Kampf*, although the ACLU and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State might sooner allow the latter than the former to be read in Congress. The wall also tends to

undermine the proper idea of freedom of religion, which should be like freedom of the press: the free press is protected from government interference. Banning the press from the public square would be viewed as an outrage; not so with religion.

What is more puzzling than the continual historical distortion of Jefferson's views is the fact that they matter at all in this debate. Jefferson's metaphor has become a canonized gloss on the First Amendment, despite the man's noticeable absence from this country during both the Constitutional Convention and the debate on the Bill of Rights during the First Federal Congress (he was the U.S. Minister to France); not to mention the fact that Jefferson was never on the Supreme Court. And there is no evidence that the phrase to which so much attention is now paid, was ever again uttered or written by Jefferson after he penned it in 1802.

Dreisbach attributes the phrase's continuing power partly to the unique advantages of metaphor in legal analysis. Metaphors liven up legal language, provide concrete images of the abstract, and engage the reader, causing him to make comparisons between the metaphor and that which it represents; all of which make the concept more memorable.

But this does not fully explain the wide currency of Jefferson's wall. To tell the whole story, one would have to take into account societal developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (namely, the increasing numbers of Catholic immigrants and the matching waves of nativist sentiment) as well as the biographies and psychologies of key proponents of the wall (for example, Justice Hugo L. Black's membership in the Ku Klux Klan and abiding anti-Catholicism). Dreisbach makes only passing mention of these factors, since he has limited the structure of his work to that of a legal sourcebook; nonetheless, any picture of the metaphor's life-span without these details lacks depth.

A major shortcoming of the use of metaphor in legal analysis

is that a metaphor, in equating two distinct objects, can easily lend itself to faulty comparisons. For instance, a wall restricts parties on both sides; but the First Amendment was meant to restrict only the federal government. When Justice Hugo Black in his decision in the 1947 *Everson v. Board of Education* case called Jefferson's wall the definitive interpretation of the First Amendment, he capitalized on the image, declaring, "That wall must be kept high and impregnable." This is an even greater broadening of the First Amendment's scope. Dreisbach notes that some have called a high and impregnable wall a "wall of spite," and that good neighbors would prefer a low New England stone wall, at which neighbors can meet and speak. An amicus brief filed in *Everson* warned against turning the wall of separation into an iron curtain. Others have suggested the images of a wall with doors or guarded gaps, like the Great Wall of China; a barbed wire fence; and even a prison wall. The fact that all of these conceptions of the wall with their conflicting legal corollaries can be (and are) drawn from Jefferson's wall demonstrates how problematic the metaphor is.

Different readings of the wall metaphor result in an inconsistent array of decisions dealing with church and state: confusion over school vouchers, prayer or crèches in public schools, the tune "God Bless America," the words "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, etc. More often than not, the metaphor's ambiguity has made it an easy cudgel to be used by radical secularists and other unprincipled partisans to promote their political agendas. It should be unsurprising that then-Justice Rehnquist in 1985 said of the wall of separation: "[It] is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned."

Professor Dreisbach takes great pains to present an impartial study. He even concludes with an even-handed presentation of arguments for and against the "wall of separation." Despite

his mostly descriptive tenor, the facts of the matter tend to highlight what is prescriptive: nothing short of a serious reconsideration of the metaphor as a condensation of Constitutional law.

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John Cornwell: The Pontiff in Winter: Triumph and Conflict in the Reign of John Paul II

by Ronald Rychlak

(Catalyst 3/2005)

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

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

Cornwell's thesis is that Eugenio Pacelli—Pope Pius XII—was

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

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

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

about that issue. Instead, the vast majority took delight in calling Cornwell a good, practicing Catholic.

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

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

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

logical jump unwarranted by the facts. Even worse, however, is the report in *USA Today* that Pacelli described Jews (not a specific group of revolutionaries) "as physically and morally repulsive, worthy of suspicion and contempt." Again, it is a case of the press being particularly anxious to report the worst about the Catholic Church.

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

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

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

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

he was able to release it. His successor, Pius XII, then buried the draft.

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

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

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

Cornwell, of course, has to deal with the fact that John Paul II has played a central part in world events, including a pivotal role in the downfall of the Soviet Union. Cornwell's

answer is that John Paul was more “sympathetic to pluralism” early in his pontificate, but that he has retreated into “an intransigently absolutist cast of mind” and has hurt the Church in the process.

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

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

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Daniel Goldhagen: A Moral Reckoning

by Bronwen McShea

(Catalyst 1/2003)

Daniel J. Goldhagen's latest book, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*, purports to be a much-needed "moral philosophical" contribution to a troubled field of scholarship. Standing on the shoulders of other critics of Pope Pius XII's wartime Church—James Carroll, Garry Wills, David Kertzer, to name a few—Goldhagen calls upon all Catholics to own up to the deep-seated antisemitism in their Church's past which he calls "a necessary cause" of the Holocaust.

As Goldhagen's "inquiry" proceeds, it becomes increasingly clear that his program for "moral reckoning" has less to do with the historical record of Catholic involvement in the Holocaust, criminal or otherwise, than it does with the author's opinion of Catholicism itself—that it is inherently flawed, and must be reformed out of all recognition.

At first Goldhagen focuses his attention on the hypocrisy of a Church whose wartime leaders preached "love and goodness" but failed in many instances to exhibit Christ-like heroism in defense of innocent Jews. In his excitement over what he considers an insightful use of the Catholic "sins of omission" concept, Goldhagen allows its definition to balloon to the point where he faults the Church for failing "to tend to the souls of the mass murderers and of the other persecutors of Jews." One wonders what Goldhagen pictured in his mind when writing such a line: a toddling Hitler and Goebbels in kindergarten, given less tender, loving care by

their nuns and priests than they deserved? Does Goldhagen honestly believe the Church was in a position to reach and reform all those who chose the demonic descent into Nazism?

The integrity of Goldhagen's arguments seem less a priority than taking swipes at the Church wherever he can. How else can we explain his frequent demands that the Church be held to the highest of standards—to live Christian love and goodness to perfection—and his simultaneous suggestions that the very faith which is the lifeblood of such love and goodness should be rejected? For indeed, while he asks the question, "What would Jesus have done," his contention that he is only concerned for Catholics to strive more fully in their faith quickly breaks down as soon as his program for a Catholic "moral reckoning" takes shape. Catholics, he proposes, to do right by the Jews, must effectively cease to be Catholics—must abandon their Scriptures, their Pope, and even the Cross itself.

"The Catholic Church has a Bible problem," writes Goldhagen matter-of-factly in the latter part of the book. "The antisemitism of the Bible is not incidental to it but constitutive of its story of Jesus' life and death and of its messages about God and humanity." Adding that "the structure of the Gospels in particular is antisemitic," Goldhagen proposes that the Pope and all those who teach the Catholic faith must teach as "falsehoods" some 80 "antisemitic" passages in Matthew, 40 in Mark, 60 in Luke, 130 in John, 140 in Acts, and so on. He then begs the question whether it would not also be just to demand that the Church expunge these several hundred passages from the Christian Scriptures. Goldhagen defines as "antisemitic" any passage in the Bible which in any way implicates Jews in the death of Christ, or which in any way suggests that Christianity has superceded Judaism as the faith of God's people. Apparently, we are supposed to reject as "null and void" the Gospels accounts of Judas's betrayal of his Lord, Christ's mockery of a trial

before the Sanhedrin and His being handed over to the Roman authorities, and the crowds of men and women who cheered for Christ's death sentence. Also, Goldhagen explicitly says that the phrase "New Testament" is itself offensive to Jews, as it implies the Old has been superceded or fulfilled by Christ's divine mission. His suggestion to Rome for righting this offense? It must declare and teach every last Catholic that Christianity has in no way superceded Judaism, and it must "renounce the Church's position that the Catholic Church is universal."

For it was fervent belief in the universality of the Church, Goldhagen argues, which animated Christian persecutions of Jews in the past, and made Europe's soil fertile for the Holocaust. Likewise, it was the Catholic identification of their Pope as the divinely-appointed leader of all Christians which encouraged them in "imperial aspirations" that were deadly for many Jews. Goldhagen's recipe for "moral reckoning" in this area is for Catholics, first, to renounce the doctrine of papal infallibility, and to acknowledge that its "authoritarian structure and culture, undergirded by the infallibility doctrine, is inherently dishonest." Second, the Church must "cease to be a political institution" and abdicate its rule over the Vatican city state. Additionally, the Church must stop its missions around the world, as missions are, in Goldhagen's opinion, inherently "political" ventures designed to forward the Pope's ultimate aim of acquiring "suzerainty" over all mankind. Lastly, this depoliticized Catholic Church must at every opportunity support and advocate for the interests of the state of Israel—this, Goldhagen believes, is the proper way of repaying a modicum of the debt Catholics owe the Jewish people.

It is perhaps when discussing the "political" nature of the Catholic Church where Goldhagen strays into his most offensive diatribes. "Seen from the outside, and certainly from the vantage point of a political scientist," he writes, "Catholic

doctrine, theology, and liturgy looks, historically and even today, more like the ideology of an imperial power, sometimes an antagonistic power, than a mere set of beliefs about God.” And an “antagonistic power,” of course, must be fended off by a society concerned for its well-being generally and the well-being of its Jews specifically. It is quite remarkable that Goldhagen feels so free to attack Catholic “doctrine, theology, and liturgy” in a book that is ostensibly about the Church’s comportment during the Nazi era. It is in such diatribes where Goldhagen shows his hand as a bigot whose concern is to actively undermine a faith he detests, rather than simply to seek justice for Jews in a manner appropriate to one who professes allegiance to the ideals of a pluralistic society.

At the heart of Catholic theology is the Crucifixion—the redemptive death of the God-man Christ, who was born of a Jewish virgin. The Crucifixion symbolizes many things for Catholics (not least the supernatural, self-sacrificing love and goodness Goldhagen reminds Catholics to imitate), but among them is the tragedy foretold in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be rejected by many of his own nation—the necessary, painful tragedy of the New Israel’s birth amidst the Old. Goldhagen, as a Jew, has every right as a free man to reject all such teachings about the Crucifixion, and every right to state his own belief in their error in a scholarly text on the subject. Yet he goes farther than this: he makes the inflammatory suggestion that the Cross, historically seen as “an antisemitic symbol and weapon,” is “all too likely to provoke further antipathy toward Jews.” Elsewhere in the book Goldhagen describes any such provocation as veritably criminal in light of the horrors endured by the Jewish people in the last century, and that the Church must take every step possible to avoid even “planting the seed” of antisemitism in any human heart.

We are left to conclude— though Goldhagen is not bold enough

to state it outright—that Goldhagen sees it as a duty, or at least a welcome idea, for Catholic leaders to remove the Cross from their churches—inside as well as out. If he can call for the expurgation of Catholic Holy Writ, surely he is capable of calling for the removal of all Catholic sacred symbols from any wall, any steeple, if those symbols give any kind of encouragement to antisemitism.

Goldhagen, for all his moral outrage at one of the most criminal treatments of any religious group or people known to history, openly encourages the suppression of Catholic teachings, Catholic symbols, and even Catholic autonomy from the world's political powers as it is entailed by the existence of the Vatican city state. How such a posture can benefit the cause of greater tolerance of, and accommodation for, any religious community is a great mystery which Goldhagen does not even attempt to answer in his fustian "moral philosophical inquiry."

After reading *A Moral Reckoning*, it is very easy to see why Rabbi David Rosen, international director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, a year ago criticized Goldhagen for his "unconcealed antagonism against the Catholic Church." Rosen is among many Jews who are embarrassed and angered by Goldhagen's imprudent, vicious posture against Catholics. Goldhagen is upsetting and retarding the already stormy (though recently fruitful) efforts by Jews and Catholics to arrive at better understanding of each other's communities. Jews and Catholics alike rightly regard Goldhagen's brand of "scholarship" as poison to productive dialogue and genuine moral philosophical inquiry.

The lukewarm to negative reviews the book has elicited from the critics have been its one saving grace. Even New York Times critic Geoffrey Wheatcroft threw up his hands at the close of his review and asked how Goldhagen "can in good faith plead with the church to abandon the very doctrines that

define it.” Nevertheless, such critiques have not prevented the editors of the Times and other newspapers from naming A Moral Reckoning one of the “best books” of 2002. That the organs of the popular press react with such knee-jerk favorability to any book—no matter its merits—which attacks the Catholic Church is perhaps the most important lesson to be drawn from Goldhagen’s efforts. In a way, Goldhagen ought to be thanked for reminding us yet again that unabashed anti-Catholicism is alive and well both in the press and in the academy.

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