

# Kevin Seamus Hasson: The Right to Be Wrong: Ending the Culture War Over Religion in America

by David L. Gregory

(Catalyst 12/2005)

*The Right to be Wrong: Ending the Culture War Over Religion in America* is the latest, and perhaps the most engaging and lucid, entry in the burgeoning "culture war" literature. But, unlike all of the others, this book proposes an interesting way to end hostilities.

The author of the book, Kevin (Seamus) Hasson, has been the Chairman of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty since 1994. The Becket Fund is a stalwart ally of the Catholic League, defending the free expression and exercise of all religious traditions. Hasson, armed with graduate degrees in law and theology from Notre Dame, brings formidable scholarly insights, a superb litigator's rhetorical eloquence and an obvious ability to tell engaging stories to this fine book.

Hasson writes with verve and tenacity; he tells remarkable stories in page-turning style. His tragic-comic metaphors of the "Pilgrims" (who believe that their religious truth requires them to suppress the free exercise rights of others) and the "Park Rangers" (who believe that all must remain silent in public, rather than make any claims about transcendent truth), are certain to become part of the constitutional law lexicon. Indeed, the first sentence of the book refers to Pilgrim/Park Ranger annual "trench warfare" and the inevitable flurry of litigation: "Every December some group is suing to take both the Nativity scene and the menorah

off the courthouse steps.”

Deciphering the disastrous incoherence of what purports to be constitutional jurisprudence will not be made any easier in the wake of the decisions this past summer by the United States Supreme Court on the displays of the Ten Commandments. In two 5-4 decisions, with Justice Breyer the crucial swing vote in both cases, the Court allowed a six foot granite statue of the Ten Commandments on public land in Texas, but rejected as unconstitutional establishment of religion the posting of framed copies of the Ten Commandments in a Kentucky state courtroom. Decided in the Supreme Court’s building, complete with a frieze of the Ten Commandments, where the Court opens each session with the prayer that “God save the honorable Court,” and whose Chief Justice administers the oath to the newly elected President who vows “so help me God,” go figure.

It is not a conundrum that Kevin Hasson, or anyone else, I am afraid, is likely to solve any time soon. A possible preview of coming attractions may be the decision in 1999 by Judge Alito, now nominated to the United States Supreme Court. In *American Civil Liberties Union v. Schundler*, he wrote the majority opinion for the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, holding that a holiday display in Jersey City was not an unconstitutional establishment of religion because, in addition to the Nativity crèche and the menorah, Kwanzaa, Frosty the Snowman and a banner proclaiming diversity were also present in the display at City Hall (thanks to the “Park Rangers!”)

In 1984, the Supreme Court endorsed a similar Park Ranger display in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. But in 1988 in Pittsburgh the crèche display was unconstitutional because it was displayed under a banner that proclaimed (that’s right, in Latin!) “*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*” (which was just too much for Justice O’Connor who cast the deciding vote of its obvious unconstitutionality.)

*The Right to be Wrong* is in the direct legacy of the pioneering scholarship of Judge John Noonan, the great jurisprudential champion of the free exercise of religion who taught for many years at the Notre Dame and Berkeley law schools before being appointed to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit by President Reagan. Likewise, the book continues in the tradition of the path-breaking *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, written by Reverend Richard John Neuhaus in 1984.

Hasson, just as Noonan and Neuhaus, asserts that all religious traditions should be fully protected in the free exercise of religion, which will enrich and invigorate the life of the nation. By recognizing and protecting one another's "right to be wrong," all religious traditions, and the broader civic society, will more fully flower.

Extremists have dominated the terrain since the Pilgrims disembarked from the Mayflower. The Pilgrims, the first extremists, banned (or executed) religious dissenters, and imposed religious tests for public office. There are some heroes: Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, and the Quaker conscientious objectors to the military draft, beginning with the Civil War, are prominently featured.

The first six chapters blend synoptic, crisp colonial era and early republican history with tragic-comic contemporary vignettes, illustrating the madness of the "Pilgrims versus the Park Rangers." With the Orwellian ascendancy of the "Park Ranger" bureaucrats, Christmas and Hanukkah are replaced by the "holiday season," Halloween becomes the "fall festival," St. Valentine's Day becomes "special person day," and Easter is trumped by "special bunny day."

Chapters seven through ten trace the evolution from tolerance to natural rights. Disestablishment in Virginia, the counterproductive Thomas Jefferson, and the compromised efforts of James Madison failing to make the individual states

immediately and completely subject to the First Amendment are highlighted.

According to Hasson, tolerance has become intolerable, because, unfortunately, tolerance has been usurped by government bureaucracy. In the government's hands, Hasson calls the notion of tolerance "a Rasputin of an idea." Government arrogantly marginalizes and trivializes religious faith and practice, regarding tolerance of religion as a governmental prerogative rather than as, in fact, the fundamental right of the people.

The free exercise right in the First Amendment, according to Hasson, did not unequivocally apply to all of the states. Therefore, the states continued to deny rights to, and viciously persecuted, religious minorities. For many decades, Catholics and Jews were the special targets of persecution in many states.

Chapters 11 through 13 propose "authentic freedom." Hasson examines the roots of religious liberty, grounded in universal truth—in God—rather than left to the contingencies and vagaries of government bureaucracy. Hasson implicitly invokes St. Augustine's observation that we will be restless and thirsty unless and until we rest in God.

Hasson then directly states his proposed way out of the morass of the Pilgrims versus the Park Rangers. It is profoundly simple; we must allow all religions to operate without restraints and in the authentic pluralism that opens the public square to all faiths. When the free exercise rights of all religions operate, as Madison insightfully observed, it necessarily precludes the unconstitutional establishment of religion.

This respect for the conscience of everyone to practice their religion without any governmental interference, Hasson submits, is the solution to ending the culture war. He

maintains that we can recognize everyone's right to free exercise of their religion without compromising our own religious beliefs. Everyone will thus strenuously protect everyone else's "right to be wrong."

The book has many strengths. The legal history is concisely, cogently, and provocatively presented. It is extraordinarily well-written, and it is a pleasure to read. The descriptive aspects of the book are especially compelling. Hasson surely diagnoses the many difficulties caused by the Pilgrims and the Park Rangers throughout our history.

I doubt, however, that the book ultimately provides a workable, achievable agenda for ending the culture wars. That is a very tall order indeed. I fear that the culture wars are bound to continue unabated. To offer one example, the United States Senate Judiciary Committee has announced that it will not commence hearings on the confirmation of President Bush's nominee to the United States Supreme Court, Judge Alito, until January 9, 2006. So for the next two months, the culture wars will be at fever pitch. Respecting the free exercise rights of all in the public square will, unfortunately, not prevent or resolve the cultural battle royale already commenced over the Alito nomination.

We are more diverse, but we are not necessarily more pluralistic. We may, alas, be even more brittle in our diversity, and more wary and suspicious of the other.

Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington wrote, more than a decade ago, the book that is becoming the classic book of the post-Cold War era—*The Clash of Civilizations*. His thesis was that Muslims in the West are an "indigestible minority." Hasson takes a more optimistic view. He properly celebrates, for example, being taken seriously by Al-Jazeera TV (despite a call-in from "Mohammed from Mecca" who condemned him as an infidel) because he successfully defended the free exercise right of two Newark Police Officers, who were Sunni Muslims,

to wear beards and to keep their jobs. "I had demonstrated respect for their consciences by successfully defending their rights. This, in turn, had won me a respectful hearing as to just why they should dialogue with this infidel rather than peremptorily wage jihad on me."

Terrific. Unfortunately, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Danny Pearl, who also unfailingly treated Muslims with great respect, found that was no defense when Islamofascists brutally beheaded him.

While Kevin Hasson is an astute scholar and a terrific lawyer, he may underestimate the growing clash of civilizations—tellingly, the great book is not cited, let alone addressed, in *The Right To Be Wrong*. For the foreseeable future, the culture wars will continue to rage. The good news is that the intrepid Kevin Hasson and the Becket Fund will continue their important positive work undeterred. Perhaps in a subsequent volume, or, better yet, in a spring 2006 epilogue to the present book, and after the Alito nomination plays out, Hasson will be able to chart an even more compelling path out of the culture wars.

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# **Philip Hamburger: The Separation of Church and State**

*by Joseph De Feo*

*(Catalyst 12/2002)*

In defending school choice or God in the Pledge of Allegiance, it is too easy to find oneself on the wrong side of the “wall of separation” between church and state. But as Professor Philip Hamburger reveals in his timely and well-researched tome, *Separation of Church and State*, few know the secret history of this American doctrine.

The phrase “separation of church and state” was employed most famously by President Thomas Jefferson in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802; he asserted that the principle was established by the First Amendment. According to the “separation myth,” there is a straight line from Jefferson’s letter to Justice Hugo L. Black’s 1947 decision in *Everson v. Board of Education*, in which the “wall of separation” became official constitutional law. But Hamburger shows that the real truth is rarely pure and never simple.

Far from being the intention of the Founders, the idea of separation of church and state began as a slur. Though the First Amendment guaranteed religious freedom and prohibited the federal establishment of any church, the states were free under the Constitution to have officially supported churches. Most states had established churches with ministers receiving state salaries. Dissenters, members of religions that were not officially sanctioned, had often to pay taxes to support the ministers of the established churches; these often urged disestablishment. In a gross caricature of the dissenting position, establishment ministers accused dissenters of attempting to separate church and state, undermining the foundations of the state. Far from it, the dissenters railed against the union of church and state, which they associated with Catholic Europe and Anglican England, while maintaining that there existed an important sociological connection between religion and government. They believed that religion provided a moral foundation for government, which should govern in a manner consistent with Christianity while not tampering with religious freedom. The antiestablishment

position was to restrain government, but not churches. There was, in other words, a complex middle ground between union and separation of church and state; but heated rhetoric and wild accusations made it difficult to see.

Interestingly enough, the letter Jefferson sent to the Danbury Baptists was nearly forgotten. The Baptists who received the letter had been pressing merely for disestablishment of the Congregational church in Connecticut. But in Jefferson's letter they got more than they bargained for; perhaps conscious of their delicate position and not wanting to espouse anything so radical as to expose them to public backlash, they demurred and never advertised that President Jefferson supported them. For decades afterward, dissenters who did not want a union of church and state still wanted some elements of religion reflected in government, such as prosecution for blasphemy and obscenity, the appointment of government chaplains, and presidential proclamation of fast days and days of thanksgiving (something Jefferson steadfastly refused to do).

Although the separation myth treats the separation as an established principle since the passing of the Bill of Rights, the evidence shows otherwise. Various parties proposed amendments to the Constitution to secure the separation of church and state, since the First Amendment clearly was not sufficient to do so. After attempts to amend the Constitution, champions of separation adopted a new tactic: historical revision. They declared that separation had been implied by the First Amendment all along, and that everyone knew it.

The idea of separation only gradually lost its status as a slur in American politics. Democratic-Republicans pressed for a version of it in the election of 1800, both to silence largely Federalist establishment clergy who assailed Jefferson for his ungodliness, and to attract the votes of dissenting clergy. Although many thought the language of separation extreme, an interesting reversal occurred. The idea gained

ground among dissenting Protestants, who wanted both disestablishment and a further check on the more organized established churches. The dissenters offered a particularly Protestant and increasingly anticlerical reading of "separation of church and state," in contradistinction to "separation of religion and state." Organized, hierarchical churches (such as the Catholic and Episcopalian churches) would be restrained from influencing the regime, while the private judgement of individual Protestants would be incorporated into government.

This interpretation of separation caused a sordid turn in the development of separation. Hamburger deftly details the reconceptualization of what it meant to be American in the 19th century. The glorification of egalitarianism, individualism, and mental independence from authority and superstition ushered in an expanded anticlericalism. No longer was it merely a non-conforming Protestant ideal to reject the clergies of the hierarchical churches; it became an American value. To this day, Hamburger remarks, groups supporting separation of church and state rely on the implicit characterization of their opposition as "un-American."

In the 19th century an increasing specialization was encouraged, calling for clergy to stick to their business of saving souls while governors would do the governing. This set limits on the functions of the clergy, calling for them not to preach on political matters as though there were areas where God did not matter. It tended to create a sphere of government impenetrable to religion; governors would have to leave their religion at home.

These cultural changes accompanied shifting immigration patterns that brought in increasing numbers of Irish and German Catholics. These immigrants with their foreign religion provided an easy target: the hierarchy with foreign ties, rigid claims of authority, and apparent superstition to boot. In addition, Protestants viewed Catholics as enslaved by their

clergy and lacking individual judgement. This represented the very antithesis of the newly reformulated Protestant American ideal. Separation of church and state became a separation of *the Church* and state. Fears of "Romish" ambitions in the government of the United States gave the move for separation extra momentum. Generic anti-clericalism erupted into anti-Catholicism. What had once been a struggle among various brands of Protestantism became a convenient vent for anti-Catholic and nativist fears, and lent some unity to American Protestantism in the process.

Hamburger notes that the extent of the connection between anti-Catholicism and the growth of the ideal of separation of church and state has been expunged from the separation myth. But the facts are undeniable—and not without irony. Among various proposed safeguards of religious liberty were loyalty tests and oaths for Catholics, barring them from office or voting, and even a proposed constitutional amendment that would sever the American Catholic Church from Rome. Public monies were denied to Catholic schools from the 1840s onward, although it was granted to the public schools, which taught Protestant doctrine. The difference, the reasoning went, was that public monies could not be used to educate children according to the dictates of the Catholic Church, although it could be used to educate children according to the dictates of the majority of individual Protestant consciences.

Many nativist and racist organizations naturally saw a way to limit the power of Catholics in promoting separation. The Ku Klux Klan included a promise to uphold separation in its membership oaths, and campaigned heavily against the Catholic Church and for separation. Even the man who finally made separation official federal law, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, was a prominent Klansman.

Other groups that supported separation were the secularists. They and other non-Christians wished to eliminate the Protestant interpretation of the First Amendment and instead

sever government connections to all religion whatsoever. With their help, separation ultimately grew from a restraint placed only on the government to a restraint applied discriminatorily to a few churches, to a restraint replaced on all churches. By the time this evolution occurred, Hamburger comments, it was too late for the Protestants who opened this door to do anything about it.

Despite the almost irresistible opportunities for irony provided by his material, Hamburger's tone is sober. He points out that the idea of separation has prevented clearly constitutional transactions between church and state, has worked to restrain rather than protect religion, and has become an instrument for enforcing "a majority's oddly conformist demands for individual independence and strangely dogmatic rejections of authority." Although skeptical of the wall of separation's ultimate value, Hamburger concentrates more on history than polemics.

Hamburger does not concentrate heavily on more recent applications of the separation principle. The fact that it is still used in a less-than-scrupulous manner supports his case. Separation supporters wink at candidates canvassing for votes in black churches while they scream bloody inquisition over the Catholic Church's opposition to abortion. And the principle of separation is not even applied consistently against the Catholic Church: although her position on abortion is met with cries of violation of the separation of church and state, her stance on social justice and the pope's position on the death penalty are quoted without qualms.

In his effort to remove some of the whitewash slapped over the history books, Professor Hamburger is moderate and exacting. He identifies a conspicuous gap in the scholarship of American religious freedom scholarship, and fills it ably.

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*philosophy, was editor of the Yale Free Press, an undergraduate journal, and co-founded the Yale Pro-Life League.*

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# Garry Wills: Why I am a Catholic

*by Bronwen McShea*

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Garry Wills is devoted to the so-called “spirit of Vatican II,” which he claims was hijacked by a backward-looking papacy. He wrote *Why I Am A Catholic* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002) to flesh out his differences with Rome, and to offer hope to “conscientious” Catholics that “reformation” is in the wings, that the true spirit of the Council will rise again.

Wills presents himself as a kind of oracle for this Vatican II “spirit.” He envisions an empowered laity, unencumbered by Roman assertions of authority or “petty” concerns about orthodoxy and obedience, and cheerfully building up the “people of God.” It is a vision of outreach, of a glorious harvest of Christ-like understanding, tolerance, and love. In writing his book, Wills purports to be following the Vatican II way, witnessing to his faith as a layman, offering his pen and public influence as God’s instruments for touching hearts.

It is time to call Wills’s bluff. For all of his posturing, the example he sets is not one of genuine outreach, tolerance, or love. He willfully mistreats the Church’s scriptural and historical foundations, undermining Catholic claims that often prove decisive in winning converts from other traditions. And

he indulges unjustly and uncharitably his distaste for fellow Catholics who, in remaining faithful to Roman teachings on a host of subjects, offer a fighting strength to the “people of God” against the pitfalls of the modern age—among them the enervating materialism and moral relativism that find commonplace expression through our culture’s sexual fixations.

A former Jesuit seminarian, Wills deals with the Scriptural foundations of the papacy with a carelessness to make even the most anti-papal Protestant cringe. Looking askance at Matthew 16, where Simon is renamed “the Rock,” Wills wonders whether Christ was only “teasing Peter when he called him ‘Rocky,’ *ab opposito*, as when one calls a not-so bright person Einstein.”

Yes, that’s right: Wills reduces a most solemn moment in the Gospel to a humorous interlude. He portrays Saint Peter—the man who identified Jesus of Nazareth as “the Son of the living God” *before* Christ acknowledged as much to any man—as a hopeless buffoon who “invariably takes the wrong action.”

Peter is denied his saintly dignity in Wills’s narrative in order to undermine the ancient principle that the successors to the Roman See are uniquely authorized by Christ to shepherd His people until the Second Coming. Wills replaces this principle with incoherent remarks about how the papacy—while always “indispensable”—can somehow keep the Church unified around the mysteries of the Apostles’ Creed without the power to arbitrate definitively on the innumerable disputes arising from the faith and its application in the world. This papacy would represent with infirm affability Wills’s rarefied view of Church unity while being unable to instruct the faithful on the Creed, the sacraments, or morality with any degree of clarity.

Wills wants to have his cake and eat it too, and the weakness of his position is apparent to any attentive reader. Protestant converts to the Church, especially, can tell us how important Rome’s unique claims to authority have been to their

spiritual walk. They and the many non-Catholics who respect Rome's ancient and eminently rigorous tradition despite deep disagreements with it can only be disappointed by Wills's cavalier dismissal of papal authority alongside his non-Scriptural, essentially sentimental explanations for the papacy's continued existence.

Along with his flippant readings of Scripture, Wills the historian abuses his professional discipline to write a most tendentious, whirlwind account of Roman corruption, error, and folly throughout the millennia—again in order to undermine Vatican claims to authority. One of the more remarkable occasions of this is where he portrays King Henry VIII of England as a “loyal son of the Church” whose hand was forced by the incompetence of Pope Clement VII, who refused to condone the dumping of Queen Catherine for her vivacious and fecund lady-in-waiting, Anne Boleyn.

Yes, that's right: Wills lauds a tyrant king whose axe fell not only on two of his six wives, but also on Saints Thomas More and John Fisher, and a number of other “papists” who rejected Henry's revolutionary claims to be “Supreme Head of the Church of England.” This is the same Henry whose minions confiscated monastic lands all over England, looted Catholic sanctuaries, and desecrated the shrine of Saint Thomas of Canterbury.

Wills leaves out these facts of Henry's reign for the simple reason that he wants to take a cheap shot at a pope who ruled against a divorce. He continues along in this unscholarly fashion, remarkably, by blaming the persecution of English Catholics after Henry's reformation on the political interference of *popes* who gave them permission to resist a regime that oppressed them. Offering not a word on the messy English marriage of religion and politics responsible for dreadful persecutions, Wills claims that “the papacy's political ties to governments opposed to England robbed Catholics of their presumption of loyalty.” He goes so far as

to fault sainted martyrs of the Church for their "treason." According to Wills's formula for good Church and State relations, English and Irish Catholics should have just taken it on the chin when their masters arrested priests for saying Mass and sent all those presumptuous papists to the scaffold.

Wills desires a similar passivity from the "people of God" today in the face of cultural norms directly opposed to what the Church has always taught about the sacraments, the Mother of Christ, and just about all matters sexual. He insults fellow Catholics on points of particular sensitivity: the concept of Transubstantiation in the Blessed Sacrament, and the sinless nature of the Blessed Mother and her miraculous appearances around the world. He yawns at the Aristotelian arguments about "substance" used for centuries by the Church to describe the miracle of the Mass, suggesting the concept of Transubstantiation was one of the many "petty" developments at the reforming Council of Trent. And he sneers at "the Marian zealots" who uphold Mary's perpetual virginity against the tired protestations of amateur Scripture scholars, and who—with Pope John Paul II—believe in the "superstitious" "Fatima nonsense."

Furthermore, Wills calls Vatican teachings on holy matrimony and ordination "silly," suggesting that those who disagree are not "conscientious" Catholics like himself, but rather are trying to bring the Church back to the "dark days" preceding Vatican II. He accuses those who consider artificial contraception to be in any way immoral of "stubborn clinging to a discredited position" (leaving out, of course, by whom and in what way the position was discredited). He dismisses as "weird" the hope that a renewal of the culture of celibacy would help solve the shortage of priests. Without offering any thorough, reasoned counter-arguments, he sums up all the Vatican teachings concerning sexuality—the definition of holy matrimony, the Scripturally based prohibition on divorce and female ordination, natural law arguments against

homosexuality, contraception—as “dishonest, naïve, or stupid on their face.”

Yes, that’s right: the tolerant, understanding, liberal devotee of the “spirit of Vatican II” can hardly *mention* those who disagree with him without resorting to *ad hominem* assaults on their intelligence and character. At a time when our scandal-ridden Church is starving for charitable aid from her sons of influence and means, Garry Wills opts to expose fellow Catholics to great shame and ridicule and to increase the splinters between himself and all who adhere to the finer points of Roman teaching. His vindictive tone makes his calls to “the good will” engendered by Vatican II seem like so much hypocrisy and grandstanding.

The “people of God” can do without Wills’s instructions on insulting one another. And they deserve far better than the sort of faith he offers them—a faith that encourages their weaknesses, a faith so indulgent toward the moral relativism, the blinding naturalism, materialism, and sexual obsessions of our age. Wills wants millions of believers to sit by and ignore *their* consciences as liberal activists spread the Gospel of the Condom, the Gospel of the Priestess and Less-than-Immaculate Mary, and the Gospel of Divorce and Gay Unions throughout the world. Does he really believe that any of this would strengthen a Church so sorely in need of otherworldly virtues like restraint and self-denial? An academic with a Jesuit education under his belt should know better. Except for a sentimental attachment to rosary beads and an emasculated papacy, the Catholic Church according to Wills would be indistinguishable from our faltering secular society, with a dogmatic integrity and spiritual stamina to match it.

Wills audaciously equates his cause of reform to that of the medieval monastics and the conciliarists of the past few centuries. His is but a “lover’s quarrel” with the hierarchy of the Church, he says. Yet the greatest revelation from the pages of *Why I Am A Catholic* is that Wills needs to exercise

far greater charity and humility in his personal crusade for “reformation.” To this end, he might reread the texts of his beloved Vatican II and the writings of his favorite authors, St. Augustine, John Cardinal Newman, and G.K. Chesterton, who receive considerable mention in his book. Surely along with the many one-liners that can be quoted out of context to gratify Wills’s self-righteous agenda are pages and pages that speak to a far different “spirit” than the one he purports to know so intimately.

When Garry Wills matures further in his faith, he should write another book about it. In the meantime, let us wait with patient hope that the “people of God” will one day begin to benefit from the fruits of Wills’s “conscientious” labor.

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## **H.W. Crocker: Triumph**

*by Russell Shaw*

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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.

*Russell Shaw is a writer and journalist in Washington, D.C. His latest book is Ministry or Apostolate: What Should the Catholic Laity Be Doing? (Our Sunday Visitor, 2002).*

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## **John Cornwell: Breaking Faith**

*by Ronald Rychlak*

*(Catalyst 1/2002)*

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

Before long a number of problems developed with Cornwell's story. First came a statement from the Vatican denying that Cornwell had been granted any special privileges. As he has since admitted, the archives that he saw were not secret. They were from the years 1912-1922 and therefore contained nothing about Hitler, the Nazis, or the Holocaust. Moreover, as he has now also admitted, Cornwell spent no more than three weeks doing archival work, not "months on end."

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

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

In 1989, Cornwell described himself as a "lapsed Catholic for more than 20 years." In 1993 he declared that human beings are "morally, psychologically and materially better off without a belief in God." He also said that he had lost his "belief in

the mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.” As late as 1996, Cornwell called himself a “Catholic agnostic,” who did not believe in the soul as an immaterial substance. This undisputed evidence (which is never mentioned in Hitler’s Pope) conflicts with his claim to have been a devout Catholic convinced of Pius XII’s sanctity when he started that project in the early 1990s.

When commentators pointed to the numerous inconsistencies in his story, Cornwell ignored their legitimate arguments and instead played the part of a victim – a wounded, deeply offended Christian who has had his personal faith questioned. He elaborates on this response in his new book, Breaking Faith: The Pope, the People and the Fate of Catholicism. The book is an amalgam of personal theology, Church history, preachy sermonizing, and predictions about the future. Of central importance to the author, however, is his explanation that although he left the Church as a young man and became a serious critic, a “miracle happened” in 1989, causing him to return to his faith.

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

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

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

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

Cornwell's evidence for a looming sectarian breakup is found in the decline in vocations and attendance at Mass, along with opinion surveys suggesting that many Catholics have difficulty with Church teachings on contraception, abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. In fact, he cites so many opinion surveys that at points it interrupts the flow of the book. The most serious problem with these surveys, however, is the way he uses them.

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

There is nothing remarkable here at all. These are innocuous findings. I have some priest-friends that I would like to see made bishops, and I assume that the Pope does listen to some lay advisors. Depending on how the survey questions were phrased (which is left unclear by Cornwell), my opinions might well have turned up in the numbers cited above, but I would

certainly not be challenging the Pope's authority.

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

The very night that I finished reading Breaking Faith, I read an essay on John Henry Newman, one of the great Christian thinkers of the 1800s, who was made a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in 1879. One passage of the essay seemed almost to leap off of the pages: "Newman would not have condemned any view more strongly than the one holding that opinion polls decide the truth. Nothing would have shocked him more than the thought that the faithful and not the Magisterium decide what is to be believed."

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

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

it. Too bad that his book has not been given the attention that Cornwell's books have received.

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

Representatives of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints provided me with office space and the documents that Cornwell had seen. They asked me to determine whether he had been fair. As I explained in my book and in these pages, (Catalyst, Cornwell's Errors: Reviewing Hitler's Pope, December 1999), nothing in those files could lead an honest person into a state of moral shock. His claim was a fabrication.

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

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

Today, even most critics of Pope Pius XII realize that they have to distance themselves from the deeply-flawed Hitler's Pope. Those who are honestly concerned about the future of the

Catholic Church are similarly well advised to keep their distance from Cornwell's new book, Breaking Faith.

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# **Fr. Pierre Blet, S.J.: Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican**

*by Sr. Margherita Marchione, M.P.F.*

*(Catalyst 1/2002)*

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

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

Addressing the prelates of the Roman Curia (December 24, 1939), Pius XII stated that in order to establish world peace

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

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

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

When Germany began its war with Russia, Pius XII did not change his position. His work on behalf of peace increased in intensity. He worked "for a merciful peace which protects

against violence and injustice, which brings together and reconciles, which establishes for all former belligerents without exception supportable relations and the possibility of a prosperous development" (February 24, 1942). On March 1, 1942, he wrote: "Whereas Our Christmas radio message found a strong echo in the world, indeed beyond the circle of Christianity, We learn with sadness that it was almost completely hidden from the German Catholics."

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

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

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

done: reserve and prudent silence, or resolutely speaking out and vigorous action.”

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

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

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

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

In his *War Memories* de Gaulle reports on his impressions during a meeting the following month: “Pius XII judges everything from a perspective that surpasses human beings, their undertakings and their quarrels. ... His lucid thought

focuses on the consequences: the outbreak of ideologies identified with Communism and Nationalism in a large part of the world. His inspiration reveals to him that only Christian faith, hope, and charity, even if they be submerged for a long time and everywhere, can overcome these ideologies. For him everything depends on the policy of the Church, on what it does, on its language, on the way it conducts itself. This is why the Pastor has made the church a domain reserved to himself personally and where he displays the gifts of authority, of influence, of the eloquence given him by God. Pious, compassionate, political—in the highest meaning these can assume—such does this pontiff and sovereign appear to me because of the respect that he inspires in me.”

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

Sister Margherita Marchione is the author of *Yours Is a Precious Witness: Memoirs of Jews and Catholics in Wartime Italy* and *Pius XII: Architect for Peace*.

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# David Kertzer: The Popes Against the Jews

by Ronald Rychlak

(Catalyst 12/2001)

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 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> 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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# John Cornwell: Constantine's Sword

by Robert P. Lockwood

(1/2001)

When John Cornwell's book *Hitler's Pope*[\[1\]](#) was released in the United States in 1999 it generated intense media coverage. Cornwell painted Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) as virtually a silent collaborator in the face of Nazi Germany's "Final Solution." While the alleged "silence" of Pius XII was central to media coverage, Cornwell's thesis went deeper than that. There was a reason for the "papal silence" that had little to do with fear or even anti-Semitism (though he broadly hinted that Eugenio Pacelli was at best unsympathetic to Jews throughout his life).

According to Cornwell, Pope Pius XII willingly sacrificed the lives of Jews on the altar of papal power: "Pacelli's failure to respond to the enormity of the Holocaust was more than a personal failure, it was a failure of the papal office itself and the prevailing culture of Catholicism. That failure was implicit in the rifts Catholicism created and sustained – between the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the secular, the body and the soul, clergy and laity, the exclusive truth of Catholicism over all other confessions and faith. It was an essential feature of Pacelli's ideology of papal power, moreover, that Catholics should abdicate, as Catholics, their social and political responsibility for what happened in the world and turn their gaze upward to the Holy Father and, beyond, to eternity."[\[2\]](#)

Critics generally dismissed Cornwell's book as sensationalism with little serious or original scholarship. Ronald J. Rychlak in *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*[\[3\]](#) effectively rebutted most

of Cornwell's major assertions. Cornwell's aim was to discredit Pius XII, and through him, his successor, Pope John Paul II. Cornwell wrote that Pope John Paul II "has reinstated the ideology of papal power. Pluralism, he believes, can only lead to centrifugal fragmentation; only a strong Pope, ruling from the apex, can save the Church...Pacelli's monolithic pyramidal model of the Church has once again reasserted itself."[\[4\]](#)

It was striking that little attention was given to this important conclusion. Cornwell was using the Holocaust to advocate and argue for a particular position within the Church on the role of papal authority. His book was written as an advocacy paper against the leadership of Pope John Paul II within the Church and in favor of a particular so-called liberal vision of how the Church should function. It was surprising that few were struck, particularly Jewish commentators, by this use and abuse of the Holocaust for internal Church debate. In retrospect, it appears blasphemous to the memory of the millions slaughtered by the Nazis.

Similarly, Garry Wills in his recent book *Papal Sin* uses the Holocaust to score points in an attack on papal authority.[\[5\]](#) Wills' book is a wide-ranging screed in opposition to myriad Catholic beliefs.[\[6\]](#) *Papal Sin* refers to what Wills calls the "structures of deceit" that he contends are inherent to the papacy. Wills charges that the Catholic Church exists in a system of lies, falsifications, and misrepresentations meant to artificially prop up papal authority. The whole structure and belief system of the Church, from sacramental and moral theology, to ecclesiology, Marian beliefs and the essential understanding of Christ's death as atonement for the sins of mankind, are part of a fabricated "structure of deceit" according to Wills. In discussing the Nazis and the Holocaust, he essentially regurgitates Cornwell's thesis. Wills argues that all the actions of Pope Pius XII during the years of Nazi power were

calculated responses meant to defend papal authority. Again, like Cornwell, he uses the Holocaust as a means to put forth a particular anti-papal perspective within the Catholic Church. The horror of the Holocaust is utilized as a tool to make points in an internal Church debate.

The latest author to enter the field of the Church and the Holocaust is James Carroll. A former Paulist priest and award-winning novelist, Carroll's new book is *Constantine's Sword*.<sup>[7]</sup> Carroll's stated goal is to present a "history" of the Church and the Jews to show the linkage between Catholic belief and the Nazi Holocaust. "Auschwitz, when seen in the links of causality, reveals that hatred of Jews has been no incidental anomaly but a central action of Christian history, reaching to the core of Christian character. Jew hatred's perversion of the Gospel message launched a history, in other words, that achieved its climax in the Holocaust, an epiphany presented so starkly it cannot be denied...Because the hatred of Jews had been made holy, it became lethal. The most sacred 'thinking and acting' of the Church as such must at last be called into question."<sup>[8]</sup>

Cornwell, Wills and Carroll all state that they are practicing Catholics, and such is no doubt the reason all three books found publishers. It is not likely that mainstream publishers would have handled such works that evidenced what in a non-Catholic's hands would have appeared to be anti-Catholic diatribes. The Catholicity of the authors, to the publishers, gives all three works legitimacy, if you will, that would not exist if the authors were non-Catholics. (And makes the charge of anti-Catholicism, on the surface, easy to refute: how could a book be anti-Catholic if the author is Catholic?). But more to the point, the authors' Catholic identity gives a fundamental agenda to the collective works. In all three works, the essential issues dealt with are used to lay out an internal agenda within Catholicism. While Cornwell and Wills focus primarily on the role of papal authority, Carroll both

includes and expands on that theme to question fundamental Catholic beliefs.

Carroll's thesis is that the anti-Semitism, which resulted in the Holocaust, is central to Catholic theology and derived from the earliest Christian expressions of belief, namely the Gospel accounts themselves. He concludes his book with a call for a third Vatican Council to make a series of changes in basic Catholic belief that he envisions purging the Church of this alleged fundamental anti-Semitism. We will note these later. However, it is important to understand that fundamentally, Carroll's purpose is to put forth a laundry list of liberal bromides for Church reform and uses the context of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust to push this reform agenda, as both Wills and Cornwell. As Carroll himself observes, "Human memory is inevitably imprecise, and it is not uncommon for the past to be retrieved in ways that serve present purposes." [\[9\]](#) That neatly summarizes the whole point of this book. While Carroll may be more astute than Cornwell, and less virulent than Wills, his objectives are the same. Which, again, appears to be bordering on a blasphemous use of the horror of the Holocaust for Church politicking.

Carroll's book is described as a "history" of the Church and the Jews, but it is a great deal more personal rumination than serious historical, or theological, study. Throughout the book, the reader encounters a young Carroll with his mother, Carroll the student, Carroll's trials and tribulations as a priest, Carroll the father, Carroll the husband, along with dying friends, childhood buddies, and various pilgrimages throughout Europe. Half of the action seems to take place as Carroll ruminates at various sidewalk cafes or churches.

Carroll's main sources from a Catholic perspective are disaffected theologians such as Hans Kung and Rosemary Radford Ruether, or Scriptural scholars like John Dominic Crossan from the Jesus Seminar. His primary source on the Church and the

Holocaust, for example, is Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*, which he acknowledges in a footnote to have been "controversial," but that he had reviewed it favorably. His knowledge – or at least his citation – of mainstream Catholic sources is limited to non-existent. He makes a single apparent reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [\[10\]](#) but calls it the "World Catechism." [\[11\]](#) In its very early development stages some referred to the Catechism project as the "Universal Catechism," but it was never called the "World Catechism." And it has been in publication for eight years and a bestseller under the title, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This is not, therefore, a book that pays much attention to mainstream Catholic theological, scriptural or historical scholarship, nor attempts to portray and interpret Catholic beliefs with any degree of balance.

*Constantine's Sword*, at the risk of understatement, is a lengthy book that actually argues little but avers grandly. Like Garry Wills in *Papal Sin*, Carroll makes assertions, backs them up when possible with assertions of others who share those assertions, then considers the matter settled. He asks is "it possible that the dominant memory of Christianity's foundational events [reviewer's note: the New Testament], a memory that features Jesus' conflict with the Jews and then his followers' conflict with the Jews...has enshrined a falsehood?" He then cites Crossan that, indeed such is the case and refers to various aspects of the New Testament as the "longest lie." [\[12\]](#)

Carroll's goals are worthy: an investigation into the source and history of anti-Jewish acts, atrocities and polemics within the 2000-year history of the Church and within the course of Western civilization. To deny that such a history exists would be to live a lie. Understanding that history, and knowing that it may have been a factor in allowing European Catholics and Protestants to turn a blind-eye toward Nazi atrocities against the Jews is to acknowledge a painful, and

indeed horrifying, reality. This was central to the Vatican's statement on the *Shoah*[\[13\]](#) and to that part of the papal apology of March 2000. But to make the assertion, as Carroll does (despite a few protestations that the Nazis did, in fact, carry out the "Final Solution," not the Catholic Church) that Catholic theology, history and belief were fundamental and direct causes of the Holocaust is scurrilous and betrays another agenda more fully spelled-out in the concluding section of *Constantine's Sword* when Carroll calls for his Third Vatican Council.

In recent years, of course, it has become part of conventional wisdom that Pius XII was silent in the face of the Holocaust and that the Catholic Church, despite saving more Jewish lives than any other entity at the time, was virtually a collaborator in the "Final Solution." Why has this essentially baseless charge become accepted as fact? Robert George in an afterword to Rychlak's *Hitler, the War and the Pope*, charges bluntly that "the myth that Pius XII was 'Hitler's Pope' lives and breathes on anti-Catholic bigotry. It can do so for the simple reason that anti-Catholicism remains 'the anti-semitism of the intellectuals'...The defamatory falsehoods...originate in, and are to a large extent sustained as part of, a larger effort to undermine the credibility and weaken the moral and cultural influence of the Catholic Church. Why? Because the Catholic Church – and, within the Church, the institution of the papacy – is the single most potent force on the side of traditional morality in cultural conflicts with communism, utilitarianism, racial individualism, and other major secular ideologies." [\[14\]](#)

It is also necessary to make the Church the cause of the Holocaust because so much of what passes as contemporary enlightened thought and views have their roots not in Catholicism or Christianity, but in the very secular ideologies that laid the true foundation for the Holocaust. So-called enlightened views on euthanasia or abortion, for example, find their philosophical origins in late 19<sup>th</sup> century

racial eugenics that propagated Hitler's attack on the Jews. That is a reality the chattering classes want to ignore. To scapegoat the Catholic Church as the cause of the Holocaust makes a secular examination of conscience unnecessary.

The roots of Hitler's anti-Semitic racist frenzy, and that of European society as a whole, are found not in Catholic belief but in the cultural rejection of Catholic belief in the Enlightenment and pseudo-scientism of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rather than a continuum from a beginning in the New Testament, rabid racial anti-Semitism was born in the stew of competing 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal ideologies of nationalism, racialism and eugenics, ideologies fought almost solely by the Church and that still have impact in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These were the views of the elite and enlightened, who scoffed at the Church and invented a hundred secular legends still with us today to show the Church as the enemy of this new, modern thinking. Carroll, of course, is not ignorant of the impact of these theories or that the Church stood almost alone in opposition to them. To Carroll, however, these theories were merely part of a whole. Though such theories that led to and created the Holocaust were a fundamental rejection of thousands of years of Judaic and Christian thought, Carroll sees them differently. He sees these enlightenment theories as ideas that grew naturally from Christian origins, rather than an outright rejection. One was merely grafted on the other. "If Hitler's paranoia about Jews was fueled by the grafting of the secular and neo-pagan racism of modernity to the stock of ancient and medieval Jew-hatred, why does that remove Christian history from the center of the story? The stock remains the stock. Modern secularists found a new language with which to slander Jews, but their impulse to do so – here is the point – was as rooted in the mystery of religion as any grand inquisitor's." [\[15\]](#) But it is that fundamental premise that is wrong. Hitler's anti-Semitism was not caused by

religious differences between Catholics and Jews, or anti-Jewish outbursts during the First Crusade. His hatred was a fundamental rejection of both Christianity and Judaism. His hatred was of faith in anything but the Aryan race and the German nation-state. His beliefs and his rationalizations derived from the stew of anti-Catholic secularist philosophies, not Catholicism. He did not approach the world with a mode of thinking and belief rooted in the 1,900 years of Western civilization. Rather, he was rooted in the 150 years of elitist and racist thought that had abandoned the Judeo-Christian roots of Western civilization.

Carroll finds the foundation error of Christianity in the construction of the New Testament itself. The Gospels writers, he argues, laid the foundation for anti-Semitism in the very way they wrote the Gospels. They did this, Carroll charges, by de-emphasizing the Roman responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus in order to placate Roman authorities. The evangelists and New Testament writers also reflected in their scripture a division between the Jesus movement, (Carroll's general term for nascent Christianity), and Jews who would not accept Jesus. Finally, in a phrase borrowed from Crossan, a "prophecy historicized," [\[16\]](#) distorted their work. This means that seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies led to outright falsehood about the life, teachings and, in particular, the death and resurrection of Jesus. The charge is that the story of Jesus was re-written and elements "invented" in order to tie Jesus more closely to messianic prophecies from the Old Testament. This is the "longest lie" of the New Testament, according to Carroll.

Of course, this is a far cry from mainstream post-Vatican II biblical scholarship, represented by the late Father Raymond Brown, that generally view the Gospel texts as fairly accurate recollections of the life and teachings of Jesus written by those close to Him in time. Carroll's sources represent an extremist view of biblical scholarship and he bases his

fundamental theory of Scriptural interpretation on the shaky – at best – conclusions of the Jesus Seminar activists. His whole thesis is based on invention and speculation 2,000 years after the fact.

There can be little doubt that a way of reading New Testament scripture could lead to anti-Jewish sentiment or, rather, be an excuse for anti-Jewish sentiment. This certainly happened. However, the roots of Christian-Jewish divisions are more clearly found in both the Christian understanding of who Jesus was – the promised Messiah – and in early Church history where Jews and Christians became deeply divided, than in Scriptural directives. False scriptural interpretation and misunderstanding have often infected Christian life (and was the source of the difficulty in the famous case of Galileo[\[17\]](#)) but that does not mean that Scripture is wrong. It means that the interpretation given by some to Scripture is wrong. As Carroll states at one point, if “Christian Jew-hatred did not originate with the Jew Jesus, no matter how it developed, then it is not essential to Christian faith.”[\[18\]](#) All would agree with that assessment. Unfortunately, Carroll himself does not. He believes that the New Testament is clearly anti-Semitic and, therefore, caused anti-Jewish sentiment which, in turn, eventually evolved into the philosophies that created the Holocaust. Rather than arguing that bad Scriptural interpretation in the past was used by some to declare that all Jews shared the blame in the death of Jesus, Carroll would rather agree that this is the proper meaning of Scripture. He sees anti-Semitism as fundamental to the Christian message as presented in the New Testament.

Carroll centers his discussion of the roots of alleged Catholic anti-Semitism on the Gospel accounts of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. “Scholars agree,” Carroll writes, “that within a relatively short period of time, the followers of Jesus had constructed an account of his last days

that would become the source of each of the four Gospels' Passion narratives...Where scholars differ – and this difference is relative to our attempt to name the ultimate source of anti-Jewish contempt – is on the question of whether the Passion story thus told is essentially a historical or literary composition.” [19] Clearly, we will find that Carroll believes that most of the Passion account reflects a “prophesized history” rather than “history remembered.” [20] The theory goes that the “Jesus movement” of the first century, at war with the Pharisees for control of the “true Israel,” enveloped the Passion narrative in anti-Pharisee myths that would in turn establish an anti-Jewish contempt in Christianity. And so, Carroll dismisses a good part of the historicity of the Gospel accounts and of the whole concept that Jesus died on the cross as a saving act of atonement for mankind. As to the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Carroll is circumspect at best: “Immediately after Jesus’ death, the circle of his friends began to gather. Their love for him, instead of fading in his absence, quickened, opening into a potent love they felt for one another. Their gatherings were like those of a bereft circle, and they were built around lament, the reading of texts, silence, stories, food, drink, songs, more texts, poems – a changed sense of time and a repeated intuition that there was ‘one more member’ than could be counted. That intuition is what we call the Resurrection.” [21] This appears to be an understanding of the Resurrection for the brie and white wine set, rather than a Catholic and Christian understanding.

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

## Semitism in the Church from the Gospels to the Holocaust.

After meandering quickly through the age of the early Church fathers, Carroll arrives at what he sees as a decisive point: Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge in 312 AD. Briefly, Constantine was battling for eventual control of the Roman Empire. At the Milvian Bridge he would secure control of the Western Empire and, in 324, become sole emperor of the Roman Empire. Before the critical battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine claimed to have seen a vision of the Cross, and the Christian symbol was placed on his standards on the day of battle. After his victory, the Edict of Milan was issued ending the persecution of Christians. Ruling until his death in 337 AD, Constantine promoted Christianity as the religion of the Roman state and involved himself closely in internal Church affairs, though he was not actually baptized a Christian until a few days before his death. Though his ending of the Christian persecution was a critical point in Church history, his imperial involvement in Church affairs established a long-standing dispute over the rights of rulers in temporal and ecclesiastical affairs of the Church.

Carroll sees Constantine in a different light. Though his "political impact on Christianity is widely recognized," Carroll writes, "his role as a shaper of its central religious idea is insufficiently appreciated." Carroll claims that the "place of the cross in the Christian imagination changed with Constantine."[\[221\]](#) This would lead, according to Carroll, to a central theological tenet of Catholicism that wrongly focused on the death of Jesus as atonement and reparation for sin. Thus the concept of salvation would come to dominate Christian thinking as the meaning of the life of Jesus, His death on the Cross an act of atonement for sin. This was an intention that Jesus never had, according to Carroll.

At the same time, Constantine's exercise of authority in the Church, particularly in the name of Christian unity, brought a

heretofore unheard of emphasis on defined doctrinal orthodoxy. Church authority (which would evolve into papal absolutism) now entered the Christian scene as well.[\[23\]](#) Constantine, in Carroll's view, was a very busy man. In any case, Carroll contends that the combination of these theological and legalistic forces centered on Constantine boded ill for the Jews who would be seen as the ones who "killed Christ" on a newly-emphasized cross, and whose failure to recognize their own Messiah was the ultimate heresy, the ultimate insult to Christian evangelization, and made them the first "dissenters" from unity of faith.

All this, of course, sounds a bit like a 16<sup>th</sup> Century anti-Catholic tract during the Reformation, or one of Jack Chick's contemporary pamphlets claiming Catholic descent from a Babylonian mystery religion. The over 275 years after Christ and preceding Constantine showed a steady development of an understanding of a distinct Christian faith as well as the development of a rich community, liturgical and theological life. Concerns over unity of belief are evident in the earliest years of the Church[\[24\]](#) and a bewildering list of various heresies addressed by the Church long pre-date Constantine. The anti-Nicene fathers of the Church, apologists such as St. Justin Martyr, and early theologians such as St. Irenaeus, who described a world wounded by Adam's sin but healed in Jesus, show an early Church developing an ordered set of beliefs rooted in Christ, distinct liturgy, and an insistence on Christ as the means toward salvation and eternal life. The theological concept of Christ's atonement for sins was hardly a late-developing concept ingeniously inserted into Catholic life by a theologically illiterate Roman emperor, but is taught directly in the New Testament and in the writings of the early Church fathers. Constantine certainly had a strong impact on the early Church that would last for centuries. But Carroll attributes to him far too much impact in the areas of theology, ecclesiology, doctrinal theology and the Church's

hierarchical structure. These were areas of the Church developing for two centuries prior to Constantine and did not spring fully born from a Roman emperor with only a minimal understanding of the faith he embraced to under gird his Empire.

Carroll's central thesis is that emphasis on the Cross as both a form of devotion and source for a theological understanding of the Christian message – enhanced by the legend of Constantine's mother Helena finding the True Cross in Jerusalem – had a devastating impact on Christian self-understanding and on the attitude the Church would develop toward the Jews. Seeing the death of Jesus as central to God's redemptive plan, the Cross ushered in a "teaching of contempt" toward Jews, a teaching that will lead over the centuries to the Nazi Final Solution. The actual destruction of the Jews once Christianity is backed by Roman imperial power, Carroll contends, is only prevented by the theological intervention of St. Augustine (354-430). Augustine would argue in *The City of God* that Jews had a specific role in God's saving plan in that "a continuing Judaism would serve as a source of authenticity for the prophecy-based claims of Christianity." [25] At the end of the Sixth Century, Pope Gregory the Great would forbid any violence against Jews. Carroll argues that with the foundational theology of contempt established, however, the seeds of anti-Semitism had been planted by the Church, such official proclamations notwithstanding.

It can be argued, of course, that the opposite holds true. Racial anti-Semitism had existed in the Roman Empire long before Christianity was a majority faith or even a known faith distinct from Judaism. Particularly with the Jewish *Diaspora* from the Holy Land throughout the Empire after their revolution was defeated by Roman soldiers in 70 AD and the temple destroyed, the Jews were viewed as a people apart. By the practices tied to their faith that reinforced their separateness from Roman society, the Jewish people were

considered a distinct and disliked racial minority. Anti-Jewish attitudes were certainly inherited among Christians as the infant Church more aggressively attracted non-Jews to the burgeoning faith. But to claim that the reason for anti-Jewish attitudes in Western culture was a result of Christian Scripture and Christian theology requires that a history of anti-Semitism older than Christianity be ignored.

The pagan faiths disappeared over the centuries from Constantine to Pope Gregory the Great as the Roman world became essentially Christian. Judaism, however, did not disappear. Carroll suggests that the reason for this is an inherent anti-Semitism within Christianity that required the continued existence of the Jews. The logic doesn't hold. He blames the Church for a cultural phenomenon that preceded it, and points to confirmation in the fact that the Church tried to limit both the severity and violence of anti-Jewish acts through the intervention of Augustine and the proclamation of Gregory the Great. The Jews survived the first thousand years of Christianity by the strength of their own faith and because the Church did not attempt to forcefully eradicate their faith. If Carroll's premise was true, or as basic to the Christian faith as he contends, Judaism would have disappeared by Christian force and no "ambivalence" in Christian attitude would have stopped it.

After establishing his central premise – that Christianity is anti-Semitic in its foundational texts and that Constantine by his centralizing notions and "theology of the Cross" formalized anti-Semitism within the Church's structure and devotion – Carroll proceeds to describe what he sees as a linkage through history of the Church to the Final Solution by portraying anti-Jewish actions in European history. Leaping ahead from Augustine to the Crusades 700 years later, where Jews were violently attacked, (attacks consistently condemned by the popes and the hierarchy), Carroll claims a "miscarried cult of the cross is ubiquitous in this story, from Milvian

Bride to Auschwitz. The 'way of the cross,' which is another way of saying 'crusade,' is the definitive epiphany, laying bear the meaning of what went before and what went after, even to our own time." [\[26\]](#)

Though Carroll's book can bend a coffee table at 756 pages, his litany of anti-Jewish incidents in Western history is spotty and lacking historical nuance. He touches on various events within Western history such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Plague, the Council of Trent and its aftermath, the French Revolution, the Dreyfus Affair, the *Kulturkampf* and concludes, actually quite briefly, with the Holocaust. Throughout these diverse and complicated historical trends and events, he sees a theology of the Cross and Church teaching on the atonement as being the dominant factor in generating anti-Jewish violence and anti-Semitic racism. This just doesn't hold to be the causative factor that Carroll alleges in these complicated events.

Serious historians, for example, acknowledge an upswing in anti-Jewish actions in parts of Europe at the time of the calling for the First Crusade in 1096. The reasons given by historians for this development vary. Some point toward resentment that Jews were primarily the moneylenders of an infant capitalist Europe as the Church taught money lending for interest sinful among Christians. Others point to a growing urbanization that was disrupting old forms of civil life. Still others have pointed to a re-born sense of both evangelization and conformity within society. Led by a stronger papacy, the Church saw its mission to sanctifying the world through a combination of the Church's need to reform its institutional life, free itself from control by secular lords, and to build a Christian society. There was also the growing fear that, "Those who dissented from belief or behaved in a manner that was explicitly defined as un-Christian appeared no longer as erring souls in a temptation-filled world, but as subverters of the world's new course..." [\[27\]](#) This certainly

played a role in enhancing a view of the Jews as outsiders in the creation of the Christian world.

Carroll, however, attributes the rise in anti-Jewish outbreaks directly with the Crusades and its emphasis on the Cross. While certainly crusading rhetoric involved at times slander of Jews – and violent anti-Jewish outbursts – the era was far more complicated than Carroll's simplistic notion of cause and effect. Certainly, there was a renewed emphasis on evangelization and religious conformity. But the primary concern of the era for the Church in Europe was internal reform that would lead to spiritual awakening among Christians. Additionally, a stronger papacy would lead to greater protection – rather than a greater threat – for the Jewish population of Europe. The Church and the hierarchy roundly condemned attacks on Jews by the first crusaders. Pope Calixtus III (1119-1124) issued the papal bull *Sicut Iudaesis* that condemned any violence against the Jews, a bull reaffirmed by 20 of his successors. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who preached the Second Crusade, would speak out forcefully against anti-Jewish violence and is generally held responsible for limiting such incidents. Though Carroll tries to link a stronger papacy with increased anti-Jewish acts, [28] the opposite appears true. A stronger Church and papacy that can influence secular authorities in European history rather than be controlled by secular authorities, the less likely were anti-Jewish outbreaks. (This would be clearly seen in the Reformation where anti-Semitism exploded in Protestant Germany where the local church was under the complete control of local authorities.)

Carroll sees the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, under Pope Innocent III, as another part of the linkage between the early Church and the Holocaust. Citing Hans Kung's interpretation, he sees the council as fundamentally changing the situation of the Jews both legally and theologically. [29] The Council was a historic event in Church history, solidifying two centuries of

Church reform. The Council “tackled an enormous range of issues, all of them practical: the establishment of orthodox teaching, especially on the sacraments – this was the Council which defined the doctrine of Transubstantiation – new regulations requiring every Christian to get to confession and communion at least once a year, improvements in record-keeping in Church courts...rules for the better discharge of episcopal duties and especially preaching and catechizing in the language of the people, and reform of the monasteries. Behind much of this the distinctive concerns of the Pope can be detected, and the Council was the high point of the medieval papacy’s involvement with and promotion of the best reforming energies in the Church at large.”[\[30\]](#)

Carroll points out that certain conciliar decrees, however, placed restrictions on Jews and such legislation did isolate the Jewish community more formally. Among the restrictions the Council asked for was a special form of dress so that Jews could be more clearly identified, that Jews should be forbidden to go out during Holy Week and that they be forbidden from holding public office. It is clear that in such anti-Jewish regulations, Church leadership was reflecting some of the worst aspects of contemporary culture. At the same time, it is also clear that any number of such regulations were also intended – from the perspective of the time – to protect Jews from attacks. The Holy Week legislation, for example, was clearly intended for their protection, as Holy Week became in certain areas a time for attacks on Jews.

Carroll was more concerned, however, that this Council clearly showed the “universalist absolutism of Roman Catholic claims” to the teaching of Christ which “is causally related to the unleashing of Catholic anti-Judaism.”[\[31\]](#) In other words, Carroll sees a stronger Church, with a stronger papacy and with certitude of belief as generating anti-Semitism because Jews are “the original dissenters.” Yet, such a causal link is never established. In fact, greater centralization of the

Church would generally result in a lessening of anti-Jewish practices. As will be seen in the discussion of the Spanish Inquisition, severe anti-Jewish activities took place more often where papal authority was co-opted by local authorities, or where Church authority had succumbed to secular authority. For example, anti-Jewish actions increased during the Plague years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century where Church authority was less effective. "Blood libel" stories had evolved, claiming that Jews would sacrifice Christian children, or that Jews conspired to poison wells. The papacy quickly condemned such stories, but they persisted in different areas by local legend. Carroll's history consistently shows the opposite of what it intends. Anti-Jewish activities persisted in history despite the Church, rather than because of the Church. When Church authority was weakened, the outbreaks tended to increase. When dangerous racial anti-Semitism would grow in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Church was effectively at its weakest in influencing government or society.

Carroll, of course, does not see the anti-Jewish legislative aspects of the Lateran Council as its most damaging aspects. Papal authority and "Catholic absolutism" are his greater concerns. And most important, he sees the Council as firmly establishing in Catholic thinking the theological concept of Christ's death as atonement for sin. To Carroll's thinking, this central Catholic belief is fundamental to anti-Jewish attitudes as the "longest lie" created by New Testament writers. What Carroll does not concede, however, is that central to the concept of Christ's atonement in Catholic belief is that He died for the sins of all mankind. Proper understanding of that belief means, as has been understood in Catholic doctrine since the days of the early Church fathers, that Christ died because of sin. The concept of "Jewish deicide" – that the Jews "killed" Christ – is contradictory to that essential Catholic belief. Christ died, according to ancient Catholic belief, because of the sins of all, not the

actions of a few.

There can be no doubt that ignorance and false Scriptural interpretation helped to create an atmosphere of anti-Judaism within Western society. There was, as Carroll shows, an “ambivalence” toward Jews within Catholic teaching that contributed to anti-Jewish actions. While Church leadership forthrightly condemned violence against the Jews, it tolerated abusive anti-Jewish homilies and pronouncements. Church leadership too often shared in the sentiments of the culture. However, Carroll’s fundamental flaw is in arguing that anti-Semitism was the conscious creation of the Church, rather than a cultural legacy to which many in the Church too often compromised. His claim that a “theology of atonement” generated anti-Semitism is self-contradicting, as such an understanding removed any concept of alleged Jewish “guilt” in the death of Christ by teaching that all mankind was guilty.

When Carroll moves on to discussion of the Inquisition he falls into the historical trap of seeing the Inquisition both as a consistent papal-dominated institution that existed in a clear line from the 13<sup>th</sup> century virtually to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, as he considers his one encounter with the Index of Forbidden Books in the seminary as “my inquisition.”[\[32\]](#) Carroll states that the Inquisition was the means that “Catholic medieval absolutism exacerbated anti-Jewish religious hatred, fueled new levels of violence, and sponsored an even more hysterical conversionism, which, when up against continued Jewish resistance, finally led to modern anti-Semitic racism.”[\[33\]](#)

To speak of *the Inquisition* fails to understand that no such individual universal entity existed. The Inquisition as a single unified court system directly responsible to the pope and controlled solely by the papacy is a historical fiction. Even within the Papal States in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the papacy had difficulty maintaining effective control over local

inquisitions. The local church in alliance with local secular authority usually controlled inquisitorial courts. Though it began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as a papal-designated juridical system to remove “heresy-hunting” from control of the mob or secular authorities, it evolved rather quickly as a device of the local church and secular authorities to address local, and later national or dynastic goals. There were many inquisitions, rather than a singular “Inquisition.”

The many inquisitions that took place existed sporadically in different regions, at different times, and to meet different local needs. The medieval inquisition barely existed, for example, in Spain and Portugal. For hundreds of years, the inquisition in many places existed only sporadically, if at all. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it existed primarily in Spain, Portugal, the Papal States and other Italian cities. It existed sporadically – dominated by the state – in France and, early, in England.

Carroll’s argument is that the Spanish Inquisition created “racial” anti-Semitism and, as such, was generated by the Church and linked directly to Nazism. Spanish anti-Semitism was not a religious prejudice, but a racial one. It derived from the success in Spanish culture of Jewish converts to Catholicism and the goal of a racially unified Iberian peninsula, free of the “foreign” Muslims and Jews. In 1391, anti-Jewish riots swept through Spain. More religious than racial – though this has been disputed – these riots led to major forced conversions of Jews to Christianity. These Jewish converts would be called *conversos* or New Christians, to distinguish them from traditional Christian families. The *converso* identity would remain with such families for generations.

*Converso* families were welcomed into a full participation in Spanish society not available to Jews and they would soon become leaders in government, science, business and the

Church. Though it was legislated in certain areas that those forced to convert could return to their own religion, many did not. These *converso* families obviously faced the scorn of those who remained Jews. At the same time, however, over the years the Old Christians saw them as social-climbing opportunists. They claimed that they secretly maintained the faith of their forefathers. It would be complaints about these alleged “secret Jews” that would lead to the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition. [\[34\]](#) Curiously, Carroll argues, with no documentation, that most of these converts remained “secret” Jews. It is a curious argument because it accepts as fact the reason given for Spanish persecution of the Jews. In fact, after a generation, most of these converts were as Catholic as the Old Christians. But racial prejudice against their Jewish ethnic roots remained. They were considered racially apart. The children’s children of these converted Jews were not considered “pure” Spaniards and would become the primary target of the Spanish Inquisition.

Carroll points out that in 1449, the city council of Toledo passed an ordinance decreeing that no *converso* of Jewish descent may hold office. Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455) responded furiously, excommunicating the drafters of the regulation. He wrote that “all Catholics are one body in Christ according to the teaching of our faith.” The King of Castile, however, formally approved the regulation.

“If the beginning of what we think of as modern antisemitism can be located anywhere, it is here,” Carroll writes. “The shift from religious definition of Jewishness to a racial one is perhaps the most decisive in this long narrative, and its fault lines, reaching into the consciousness of Western civilization, will define the moral geography of the modern age. The Church’s worry, for example, that its very own *conversos* were corrupting Christians would find a near permanent resonance in the modern European fantasy of Jews as parasites – successful and assimilated, but feeding on the

host society. The ultimate example of this image would emerge in Germany, of course, but the fear that led Nazis to regard Jews as bloodsuckers to be excised was anticipated by the Iberian suspicion that Jews were more to be feared as assimilated insiders than as dissenting outsiders.”[\[35\]](#)

It is true that the racial prejudice against Catholic families of Jewish stock was the primary instigator of the Spanish Inquisition. However, it contradicts, rather than confirms, Carroll’s basic thesis that anti-Semitism that led to the horror of the Holocaust came from essential Christian theology. Spanish anti-Semitism was aimed at Jews racially. Religion was used as a club of enforcement to knock ethnic Jews down from the successful heights they had attained as Catholics. But the faith was the excuse, not the cause, of Spanish racial anti-Semitism. And that is why Pope Nicholas, and successor popes, would deplore the actions of the Spanish Inquisition against the *conversos*. In Rome, it was viewed not as an attempt to root out heresy, but as a means to attack generations of successful covert.

In March 1492, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand ordered the expulsion – or conversion – of all remaining Jews in Spain. Many *conversos* had already fled to Rome and the Papal States where they would be free of persecution. Those who remained Jews fled to Rome as well, known as the most tolerant of European cities toward Jews. The intent of the declaration of expulsion was more religious than racial, as Jewish conversion was certainly the intent, not “the beginning of a strategy of elimination”[\[36\]](#) as Carroll contends. While many Jews fled, a large number converted, thus aggravating the popular picture of secret Judaizers within the Christian community of Spain. Up through 1530, the primary activity of the inquisition in Spain would be aimed at pursuing *conversos*. The same would be true from 1650 to 1720. While its activities declined thereafter, the inquisition continued to exist in Spain until its final abolition in 1824.

The attacks in Spain on the *conversos* were viewed as despicable in Rome and condemned by the popes. Italians “felt that Spanish hypocrisy in religion, together with the existence of the Inquisition, proved that the tribunal was created not for religious purity, but simply to rob the Jews. Similar views were certainly held by the prelates of the Holy See whenever they intervened in favor of the *conversos*. Moreover, the racialism of the Spanish authorities was scorned in Italy, where the Jewish community led a comparatively tranquil existence.”[\[37\]](#)

If there is a connection between the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust generated by the German Nazis it is in the racial hatred that motivated both. It is not, however, to be found in a connection between Catholic Spain and Protestant Germany. And it is certainly not to be found in the faith whose leadership spoke out forcefully against the attacks on the *conversos*, or a theology that argued that conversion knew no racial boundaries.

Carroll leaps from the early Spanish Inquisition to the Council of Trent (1545-1563), called by the Church in response to the Reformation. He points out that the Council had very little to say about the Jews. The Council primarily concerned itself with Church renewal in light of the Reformation and defending clear Catholic teaching in response to Protestant attacks. Among those clear Catholic teachings confirmed, as Carroll points out, was that “responsibility for the death of Jesus belonged to sinners – to all persons, that is, in their having sinned. The old question Who killed Jesus? Was explicitly answered: Human sinners did.”[\[38\]](#) The declaration by Trent was another contradiction of what Carroll asserts throughout his book: that the theology of the atonement created anti-Semitism by blaming Jews for the death of Jesus and led directly to the Holocaust.

But Carroll argues that if “this perception had maintained its

firm hold on the moral imagination of Christians, the history of Jews would be quite different. That something else happened, beginning with the Gospels' own scapegoating of Jews, only proves Trent's point that 'we' are sinners." [39] Perhaps, however, the exact opposite is true. The thesis that the "Jews killed Jesus" was a popular misinterpretation of the New Testament that the Church taught as wrong in its theology of atonement. If anti-Semitism persisted, it was because it was persistent in the popular imagination, not in the teachings of the Church as Carroll claims. Again, anti-Semitism existed despite essential Church teachings, not because of them, as Carroll charges.

The inquisition in Rome was established during the Reformation period and has generally been regarded by historians as one of the more lax courts. The inquisition court in Rome should not be understood as a universal court, but as one of the inquisition courts within the Papal States. As in most regions, the local Roman court focused primarily on clergy wrongs and on issues of lifestyle – adultery, drunkenness and other forms of impropriety as Rome did not have a racial problem with *conversos*, [40] and the Inquisition itself had nothing to do with the Jewish population. Pope Paul III (1534-1549) had authorized the inquisition in Rome as a means of protecting the Church there from the influence of the Reformation in 1542. He was a protector of the Jews who banned various anti-Jewish activities. Pope Paul IV (1555-1559), however, had a short but troubled reign. It was Pope Paul IV who established the separate Jewish ghetto in Rome, enforced segregationist regulations on Jews and, mistakenly, affirmed the "blood purity" statute in Toledo that had rightly been condemned by previous pontiffs. Carroll sees both events as a definitive sign of the Church embracing, despite the reforms of Trent, a definitive anti-Semitic stance, particularly in its seeming endorsement of the Spanish racial policy of *limpieza de sangre* aimed at the *converso* families of Jewish ethnic heritage. Carroll explains that the "culture-wide

trauma of the Reformation was part of what prompted the shift in papal strategy toward the Jews," [\[41\]](#) a shift that Carroll sees as momentous.

*Limpieza de sangre* was part of the "blood purity" restrictions on Jews who had converted to Catholicism and limited their ability to hold public office or offices within Spain. This was the ugly racial element that had infected Spanish society. As we have seen, Pope Nicholas V rightly condemned *limpieza* vociferously. Pope Paul IV as a cardinal "had singlemindedly devoted his whole life to reform of the Church...(yet) under Paul IV reform took on a darker more fearful character. Creativity was distrusted as a dangerous innovation, theological energies were diverted into the suppression of error rather than the exploration of truth. Catholicism was identified with reaction...For the rest of the Tridentine era, Catholic Reformation would move between those poles, and it would be the task of the popes to manage the resulting tensions." [\[42\]](#) Depending on the perspective of the individual pontiff, restrictions on Jewish life within the Roman ghetto would wax and wane. His decision on *limpieza*, however, was reversed and generally abandoned from Catholic life outside of Spain. A few orders with strong Spanish roots, such as the Jesuits, maintained a form of *limpieza*. But no serious student of history would make the claim that this unique Spanish cultural prejudice reflected overall Church practice. Carroll himself recognizes that the anti-Jewish racial theories of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that created the anti-Semitism of the Nazis had no relationship to Spanish *limpieza*.

Pope Paul IV's pontificate was short. New popes would reverse his policies – his approval of *limpieza* was quickly abandoned – and treatment of the local Jewish community in Rome would vary from pontiff to pontiff. Popes would change and policies would change. These policies were generated as papal governance of the Papal States, however, not pronouncements of the universal Church. And what Carroll sees as a continuous

linkage was shifting sand. There was no uniform anti-Jewish policy aimed at the local Jewish community from papacy to papacy. The policies reflected the emphasis and mind-set of individuals. However, the different perspectives popes adopted show anything but a continuous chain that is the fundamental thesis of Carroll's book; nor were there theologically infallible papal statements of defining Catholic belief. The Jewish ghetto in Rome is a dark spot on Church history. The long-held notion that popes must be rulers of an independent Papal States or the papacy would be dominated by secular rulers, while theoretically understandable and with historical roots from earlier centuries, placed popes in the difficult position of holding secular authority. Not a few of them exercised that secular authority poorly. That ended in 1870 when Italian nationalist troops occupied the city as "liberators." But within a generation after, that nationalist tide would also result in the emergence of Benito Mussolini and the Italian Fascist state.

Carroll marches quickly through the early Enlightenment, represented by Voltaire, touches on Spinoza and the French Revolution, then on to Vatican I (1869-1870) and the declaration of papal infallibility. "Liberalism and modernism," Carroll writes, "were seen as bearing the fruits of the destruction of civilization itself, and the dark side of the new order would make itself all too clear in the twentieth century. There was much in the new age the Church was right to suspect, so the Catholic strategy of arming the leader of the Church with the spiritual mace of infallibility made some sense." [\[43\]](#)

His understanding of the definition of papal infallibility as conferred on the papacy in 1870 is not, of course, the definition given by the Council. Vatican I dealt with the office of the papacy and the nature of papal authority because these issues were at the very center of the life of the Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The emergence of the modern liberal states

had reconfirmed to many within the Church the vital importance of the ancient belief of the central authority of the bishop of Rome as the successor of St. Peter. There were divisions over such a definition, however. Some argued that it would be inopportune to make such a definition in the turmoil of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, while others wanted papal infallibility applied to virtually everything the pope said or wrote. The accusation is made that a definition of papal infallibility was demanded by Pope Pius IX and forced on an unwilling Council by papal pressure, curial conspiracies, and squelched debate. However, debate went on for months, and the final definition of papal infallibility fell far short of the desires of the "ultramontanes" who wanted an elevated definition of infallibility. The fact was that consensus emerged, except for extremists on each side, which spelled out a definition of papal infallibility clearly in line with Church tradition and the theology of the papacy. The Council proclaimed no new teaching that extended papal authority beyond a point the Church had understood for centuries.

Carroll sees the definition of papal infallibility as a "pivotal event" for his story as "the Church's relationship to the modern fate of the Jews is intertwined, in a particular way, with efforts to extend the political power of the papacy." [\[44\]](#) Carroll will therefore look himself in early to the Cornwell thesis that the sole motivation of Pius XII in World War II was the extension of papal power. At the same time, there is Carroll's blithe acknowledgement of what was taking place in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: "the dark side of the new order would make itself all too clear in the 20<sup>th</sup> century." That is Carroll's primary reference to what in fact was going on in European thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and what it would lead to in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The culture of thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century – secularism,

communism, racialism and nationalism – would lead to the First World War, the Communist revolution in Russia, Stalin's pogroms, the rise of Fascism and Nazism, World War II and the Holocaust. That is the dark side to which Carroll refers. It also makes a mockery of his essential argument that the anti-Semitism that played its own role in so much of this horror was the creation of the Church, or sustained by the Church. The stew of secular philosophies that led to these 20<sup>th</sup> century horrors was a creation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that had limited roots in the so-called Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These philosophies were definitive breaks with Christian thinking, not evolutions. As Paul Johnson notes, they involved the "birth of the modern" – an entirely new way of viewing self, one's role in culture, one's entire mode of thinking and acting. These were not subtle changes or a grafting on to Christianity. These were philosophies that the Church fought against because they were a fundamental break, a fundamental confrontation, with an entire Christian philosophy, theology, culture and worldview. Carroll's failure to present that adequately in order not to upset his thesis that the Church was to blame for the Holocaust is the fundamental flaw of his book. The fundamental blasphemy is that he would do so in order to put forth a meager list of liberal bromides for alleged Church reform.

Carroll approaches the age of Pius XII and the Holocaust itself after winding his way through the German *Kulturkampf* and the Dreyfus affair in France. He adds nothing new to his story in either recital. Successful Catholic action in response to the *Kulturkampf* is seen as setting what could have been a standard in reaction to Hitler, forgetting that Bismarck was not Hitler and the Germany of 1870 was not the Nazi Germany of 1933. The Dreyfus affair – where a Jewish officer in the French army was convicted of treason – was a high-profile case of anti-Semitism within the French army. Carroll uses it to excoriate the French Catholic

newspaper "La Croix." The newspaper, operated by a religious order, engaged in hot anti-Jewish rhetoric during the Dreyfus affair. While Carroll points to this as symbolizing the entrenched nature of Catholic anti-Semitism, it far more reflected a turn-of-the-century Europe where anti-Semitism was increasing as the influence of the Church decreased in the modern secular states and "modern" thought predominated.

The Church and Hitlerism is confined in Carroll's book to less than 70 pages, about the same length that he gives to his suggestions for Church reform. He begins by restating his essential charge that "(h)owever modern Nazism was, it planted its roots in the soil of age-old Church attitudes and a nearly unbroken chain of Jew-hatred. However pagan Nazism was, it drew its sustenance from groundwater poisoned by the Church's most solemnly held ideology – its *theology*." [45] This is, of course, a gross mis-reading of history. Hitler and Nazism were created by a rampant social Darwinism, an ubiquitous European belief that it was a virtual biological imperative that the lower classes be dominated by their racial superiors, the ideology of imperialism, the birth of scientism that would dispel the "myths" of religion, the campaign to radically excise the Church from public life, the denial of the sacredness of the individual for the good of the State or, as in communism, the good of the class, the creation of the myth of the Nietzsche-like Superman who could undertake any evil for the good of his race, and the replacement of Christianity with neo-paganism. The soil and poisoned groundwater for these Nazi aberrations were the views of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism that were the conventional wisdom of the times. The Catholic Church – its *theology* – was viewed as the enemy of this modern thought. The Church was not the progenitor of the beliefs that created Nazism. It was one of the last remaining bulwarks in Europe against it. The Nazis killed the Jews. For reasons of an internal agenda against the Church, Carroll would prefer to dismiss that, like a revisionist who would claim the Holocaust never took place, and shift the blame to the Church for his

own agenda.

As noted earlier, Carroll regurgitates the central thesis of Cornwell. Like Cornwell, he sees the revision of Canon Law promulgated in 1917 – in which a young priest Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII was involved – as the motivating factor in the Church's reaction to the rise of the dictators. According to the theory, papal absolutism was the driving force of Vatican foreign policy. The Vatican would surrender anything – and bargain with the devil himself – in order to gain authority over, for example, the appointment of bishops. He sees the Concordat that Cardinal Pacelli negotiated with Hitler as giving a first blessing and recognition to the regime (which forgets that prior to the concordat, Hitler had concluded a peace agreement with the western powers, including France and Great Britain, called the Four-Power Pact. and a similar agreement was concluded between Hitler and the Protestant churches). Though Carroll dismisses such claims, the Vatican had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. Pius XI would explain that it was concluded only to spare persecution that would take place immediately if there was no such agreement. The concordat would also give the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action in the years prior to the war and after hostilities began. It provided a legal basis for arguing that baptized Jews in Germany were Christian and should be exempt from legal disabilities. Though the Concordat was routinely violated before the ink was dry, its existence allowed for Vatican protest, and it did save Jewish lives.

Carroll doesn't really spend much time on the Holocaust itself or a detailed look at the entire World War and how the Church responded. [\[46\]](#) He states that from the onset of Nazism, the "Church, for its part, had come to a decision it would stick with, almost without exception, – that the 'wretched fate' of the Jews was unconnected to its own fate, or that of anyone

else.”[\[47\]](#) Carroll says such things without any necessity for proving that was the Church’s policy. The first formal protest filed by the Vatican under the concordat was against the Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses. In 1937, Pope Pius XI issued “Mit brennender sorge,” which spoke out forcefully against Nazi racist policy. It assumes that a calculated decision by Pius to work behind the scenes through his papal representatives and through the existing vehicles of the Church to save as many lives as possible was a callous decision to leave Jews to their fate. It assumes that hurling thunderbolts from the Vatican – which all who lived through Nazism understand would have had no possible impact on Hitler – would have accomplished something or saved more lives. This is mere conjecture based on hindsight. None of the critics of Pius have yet been able to put forth a concrete alternative that Pius could have developed to save more lives than were saved by the Church in that period. Throughout the war years, the Church would save more Jewish lives than any entity that existed at the time.

Disagreeing, however, with the tactics of Pius is one thing. Stating that the Church abandoned the Jews does not reflect any kind of reality. Which is one of the most frustrating aspects of Carroll’s entire “history” of the Church and the Jews. It is not history at all, but an amateur’s meditation on various historical events skewed to reflect the prejudices of his own thesis. This is not careful scholarship. This is simply a very long anti-Catholic essay.

Carroll concludes his treatment of the Holocaust by the need to go after the death of Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to Catholicism who was murdered in the Holocaust and declared a saint by Pope John Paul II. Echoing Garry Wills, he sees the canonization of Stein as an attempt by the Church to claim victimhood in the Holocaust and to “reaffirm the religious superiority of Christianity over Judaism.”[\[48\]](#) Like Wills, he can cite no source for this conjecture, or documentation that

cites any such reasoning from Church leadership. Or anybody within Catholic circles for that matter. Pope John Paul II stated, which is a fact, that she died at the hands of the Nazis because she was a Jew and a Catholic, in retribution for the Church speaking out against Nazi deportations of the Jews in the Netherlands. The death of Edith Stein – and the death of Maximilian Kolbe – are the only cases of people slaughtered by the Nazis in the concentration camps that a certain circle within Catholicism feels comfortable publicly degrading.

The last section of Carroll's book begins immediately after the degradation of the canonization of Edith Stein. This is when we find out the true purpose of Carroll's lengthy attack on the New Testament and the Christian belief in Christ's passion and death as atonement for sin. This is why he has attempted to set up the Church as the ultimate cause of the Holocaust, while inventing a simplistic history of the Church as the progenitor of an anti-Semitism that preceded its existence. He sees its essential theology as anti-Semitic, its leadership only interested in power. It allowed the Jews to be slaughtered in the Holocaust because it simply didn't care, and the Church was wrong – fundamentally – in the very Scriptures of the New Testament that is its heart and soul. If anyone else truly believed this, he or she would abandon the Church. Carroll would rather stick around to argue papal infallibility, women's ordination and priestly celibacy.

Carroll describes the Second Vatican Council as the "beginning of the long-overdue demise of Constantinian imperial Catholicism, as it had been shaped by a medieval papalism hardened in the fires of the Counter-Reformation...The Church's failure in relation to Adolf Hitler was only a symptom of the ecclesiastical cancer Pope John was attempting to treat." [\[49\]](#) This is a ludicrous picture of the intent of the Council and of Pope John XXIII's view of the Church. Critical to Pope John XXIII's thinking was that the Church must reach out to the world and not see itself as a faithful remnant that

hides from the world. The purpose in John's mind was to certainly remove liturgical encrustation, defensive theological formulations and aspects of the culture of Catholicism that prevented outreach to the modern world. However, the purpose of such was not to convert the Church to modernism, but for the Church to be better able to evangelize the modern world. This has been the hallmark of the papacy of Pope John Paul II, who as a bishop attending the Council and was a strong supporter of the intent and spirit of Vatican II.

Of course, Carroll – much like Garry Wills – argues that while the Council was a historic beginning, it was undermined by Pope Paul VI, a “devoted factotum to Pius XII.”[\[50\]](#) Of Pope Paul VI: “His was the first effort to turn back the tide of Church reform that the Vatican Council initiated, and that program of medieval restoration has been vigorously continued by Pope John Paul II.” [\[51\]](#) Of course, Carroll argues that hopes were too high for Vatican II. A Church incapable of allowing priests to marry or couples to practice contraception is hardly ready for the reform he demands. He calls for a Third Vatican Council that would address the following agenda:

*First*, the “offensive character (of the New Testament) is part of what the Church must not only admit but to claim. The anti-Jewish texts of the New Testament show that the Church, even in its first generation, was capable of betraying the message of Jesus, establishing once and for all that ‘the Church as such’ can sin.”[\[52\]](#) The Church must understand the New Testament narratives are invented and that any “Christian proclamation that says that redemption, grace, perfection, whatever you call it, has already come is unbelievable on its face.”[\[53\]](#)

*Second*, Vatican III will abandon the ethos of Constantinian imperial power and the “primary-enforcing ideas of Roman supremacy and papal infallibility.”[\[54\]](#) The “doctrine of papal infallibility amounts to the low point in the long story of

patriarchy, a legitimation of Church exceptionalism, a reversal of the meaning that Jesus gave to ministry, and, finally, an abuse of power.”[\[55\]](#)

*Third*, Vatican III should initiate a “new Christology” that abandons concepts such as the immortality of the soul, messiahship of Jesus, Christ’s death as atonement for sin, the belief that Jesus is the only means of salvation, as well as the very concept of salvation. (“The coming of Jesus was for the purpose of revelation, nor salvation – revelation, that is, that we are already saved.”[\[56\]](#)) This will allow the Church “to embrace a pluralism of belief and worship, of religion and no religion, that honors God by defining God as beyond every human effort to express God.”[\[57\]](#)

*Fourth*, the Church in Vatican III will abandon “its internal commitment to methods that undergird totalitarianism”[\[58\]](#) In addition, of course, to abandoning such things as excommunication, bannings, censorship and anathemas, this means the Church must also abandon “the idea that there is one objective and absolute truth, and that its custodian is the Church.”[\[59\]](#) The papal apology, Carroll writes, “did not confront the implications of that still maintained idea of truth” and that universal claims “for Jesus as the one objective and absolute truth” must be abandoned. “Vatican III must retrieve for the Church the deep-seated intuition that mystery is at the core of existence, that truth is elusive, that God is greater than religion.”[\[60\]](#) Bishops should be chosen by the people, the whole clerical caste eradicated, and women ordained (though ordination to exactly what is never clarified).

*Fifth*, and only after the prior four agenda items are completed, the Church must have a complete act of repentance, a repentance of a “failed and sinful Church.”[\[61\]](#)

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

The five-point agenda for Vatican III is the purpose of Carroll's book. I do not doubt the sincerity of his horror in the Holocaust, or his disgust at the anti-Jewish history that exists within the history of Western civilization and that members of the Church have been a part of it. But his purpose, clearly, is for "the past to be retrieved in ways that serve present purposes." Those purposes are Carroll's five-point agenda for creating a Catholicism that would fit his particular vision. He would do so by undermining the Gospels, dismissing 2000 years of Catholic theology and dismantling the papacy and the priesthood. He would, finally, have a Church that would disconnect from Jesus as the source of truth – that truth can be known, and truth can be evangelized.

Much like Wills found it necessary to re-state that he is Catholic no matter what the positions he holds, Carroll concludes this epic with a personal plea for his Catholicity no matter what he believes. Though confessing his shame about his Catholicity, he confesses as well his own collusion in this historic record of the Church that "sanctified the hatred of the Jews." [62] Despite that, he states that the "most deadly prospect at this point would be to find myself alienated from the community that has been the focus of my 'backward glance.'" [63]

Perhaps acknowledging that his central thesis is flawed can relieve those fears. No one can argue that members of the Church throughout the centuries, going to the highest leadership within the Church, engaged and endorsed at times in anti-Jewish words, sentiments and actions. At the very same time, many within the Church officially condemned such actions and it was the very Church leadership that Carroll hopes to be abandoned that was most vociferous in that condemnation. It was not the belief of the Church, the New Testament, the Church centered in Jesus, the understanding that Christ died for the sins of mankind, or the Church belief in an objective and universal truth that persists in Christ, that created the

horror of the Holocaust. It was the rejection of those, and the attempt to substitute for Judeo-Christian civilization a secularist pseudo scientism of race, class and nationalism that generated Nazism and the Holocaust. Nazism and the Nazis killed the Jews, and the philosophies that created them still bubble just below the surface. But not in the Catholic Church. Rather, they persist in a vicious secularism and pseudo-scientism that divorces faith from modernity, believes that truth cannot be known, and attempts to convince mankind that it is its own god.

### SUMMARY POINTS

John Cornwell in *Hitler's Pope*, Garry Wills in *Papal Sin* and now James Carroll in *Constantine's Sword* all identify themselves as Catholic. The authors' Catholic identity gives a fundamental agenda to the collective works. In all three works, the essential issues dealt with are used to lay out an internal agenda within Catholicism. While Cornwell and Wills focus primarily on the role of papal authority, Carroll both includes and expands on that theme to question fundamental Catholic beliefs.

Carroll's thesis is that the anti-Semitism which resulted in the Holocaust is central to Catholic theology and derived from the earliest Christian expressions of belief, namely the Gospel accounts themselves. He concludes his book with a call for a third Vatican Council to make a series of changes in basic Catholic belief that he envisions purging the Church of this alleged fundamental anti-Semitism.

Carroll's main sources from a Catholic perspective are disaffected theologians such as Hans Kung and Rosemary Radford Ruether, or Scriptural scholars like John Dominic Crossan from the Jesus Seminar. His primary source on the Church and the Holocaust, for example, is Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*, which he

acknowledges in a footnote to have been “controversial,” but that he had reviewed it favorably. His knowledge – or at least his citation – of mainstream Catholic sources is limited to non-existent.

It is necessary to make the Church the cause of the Holocaust because so much of what passes as contemporary enlightened thought and views have their roots not in Catholicism or Christianity, but in the very secular ideologies that laid the true foundation for the Holocaust. So-called enlightened views on euthanasia or abortion, for example, find their philosophical origins in late 19<sup>th</sup> century racial eugenics that propagated Hitler’s attack on the Jews. To scapegoat the Catholic Church as the cause of the Holocaust makes a secular examination of conscience unnecessary.

Though theories that led to and created the Holocaust were a fundamental rejection of thousands of years of Judaic and Christian thought, Carroll sees them differently. He sees these enlightenment theories as ideas that grew naturally from Christian origins, rather than an outright rejection. One was merely grafted on the other.

Hitler did not approach the world with a mode of thinking and belief rooted in the 1,900 years of Western civilization. Rather, he was rooted in the 150 years of elitist racist and nationalist thought that had abandoned the Judeo-Christian roots of Western civilization.

Carroll believes that the New Testament is clearly anti-Semitic and, therefore, caused anti-Jewish sentiment that, in turn, eventually evolved into the philosophies that created the Holocaust. Rather than arguing that bad Scriptural interpretation in the past was used by some to declare that all Jews shared the blame in the death of Jesus, Carroll would rather agree that this is the proper meaning of Scripture. He sees anti-Semitism as fundamental to the Christian message as presented in the New Testament.

Carroll dismisses a good part of the historicity of the Gospel accounts and of the whole concept that Jesus died on the cross as a saving act of atonement for mankind. As to the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Carroll is circumspect at best.

Constantine certainly had a strong impact on the early Church that would last for centuries. But Carroll attributes to him far too much impact in the areas of theology, ecclesiology, doctrinal theology and the Church's hierarchical structure. These were areas of the Church developing for two centuries prior to Constantine and did not spring fully born from a Roman emperor with only a minimal understanding of the faith he embraced to under gird his Empire.

Carroll blames the Church for a cultural phenomenon that preceded it, and points to confirmation in the fact that the Church tried to limit both the severity and violence of anti-Jewish acts through the intervention of Augustine and the proclamation of Gregory the Great. The Jews survived the first thousand years of Christianity by the strength of their own faith and because the Church did not attempt to forcefully eradicate their faith. If Carroll's premise was true, or as basic to the Christian faith as he contends, Judaism would have disappeared by Christian force and no "ambivalence" in Christian attitude would have stopped it.

Pope Calixtus III (1119-1124) issued the papal bull *Sicut Iudaesis* that condemned any violence against the Jews, a bull reaffirmed by 20 of his successors. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who preached the Second Crusade, would speak out forcefully against anti-Jewish violence and is generally held responsible for limiting such incidents. Though Carroll tries to link a stronger papacy with increased anti-Jewish acts, the opposite appears true. A stronger Church and papacy that can influence secular authorities in European history rather than be controlled by secular authorities, the less likely were anti-Jewish outbreaks.

Carroll's history consistently shows the opposite of what it intends. Anti-Jewish activities persisted in history despite the Church, rather than because of the Church. When Church authority was weakened, the outbreaks tended to increase. When dangerous racial anti-Semitism would grow in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Church was effectively at its weakest in influencing government or society.

There can be no doubt that ignorance and false Scriptural interpretation helped to create an atmosphere of anti-Judaism within Western society. There was, as Carroll shows, an "ambivalence" toward Jews within Catholic teaching that contributed to anti-Jewish actions. While Church leadership forthrightly condemned violence against the Jews, it tolerated abusive anti-Jewish homilies and pronouncements. Church leadership too often shared in the sentiments of the culture. However, Carroll's fundamental flaw is in arguing that anti-Semitism was the conscious creation of the Church, rather than a cultural legacy to which many in the Church too often compromised.

It is true that the racial prejudice against Catholic families of Jewish stock was the primary instigator of the Spanish Inquisition. However, it contradicts, rather than confirms, Carroll's basic thesis that anti-Semitism that led to the horror of the Holocaust came from essential Christian theology. Spanish anti-Semitism was aimed at Jews racially. Religion was used as a club of enforcement to knock ethnic Jews down from the successful heights they had attained as Catholics. But the faith was the excuse, not the cause, of Spanish racial anti-Semitism.

The attacks in Spain on the *conversos* were viewed as despicable in Rome and condemned by the popes. Italians, Henry Kamen has written, "felt that Spanish hypocrisy in religion, together with the existence of the Inquisition, proved that the tribunal was created not for religious purity, but simply

to rob the Jews. Similar views were certainly held by the prelates of the Holy See whenever they intervened in favor of the *conversos*. Moreover, the racialism of the Spanish authorities was scorned in Italy, where the Jewish community led a comparatively tranquil existence.”

The thesis that the “Jews killed Jesus” was a popular misinterpretation of the New Testament that the Church taught as wrong in its theology of atonement. If anti-Semitism persisted, it was because it was persistent in the popular imagination, not in the teachings of the Church as Carroll claims. Again, anti-Semitism existed despite essential Church teachings, not because of them, as Carroll charges.

Treatment of the local Jewish community in Rome would vary from pontiff to pontiff. Popes would change and policies would change. These policies were generated as papal governance of the Papal States, however, not pronouncements of the universal Church. And what Carroll sees as a continuous linkage was shifting sand. There was no uniform anti-Jewish policy aimed at the local Jewish community from papacy to papacy. The policies reflected the emphasis and mind-set of individuals. However, the different perspectives popes adopted show anything but a continuous chain that is the fundamental thesis of Carroll’s book.

The fact was that at the First Vatican Council consensus emerged, except for extremists on each side, which spelled out a definition of papal infallibility clearly in line with Church tradition and the theology of the papacy. The Council proclaimed no new teaching that extended papal authority beyond a point the Church had understood for centuries.

The stew of secular philosophies that led to these 20<sup>th</sup> century horrors was a creation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that had limited roots in the so-called Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These philosophies were definitive breaks with Christian thinking,

not evolutions. As Paul Johnson notes, they involved the “birth of the modern” – an entirely new way of viewing self, one’s role in culture, one’s entire mode of thinking and acting. These were not subtle changes or a grafting on to Christianity. These were philosophies that the Church fought against because they were a fundamental break, a fundamental confrontation, with an entire Christian philosophy, theology, culture and worldview. Carroll’s failure to present that adequately in order not to upset his thesis that the Church was to blame for the Holocaust is the fundamental flaw of his book.

Carroll regurgitates the central thesis of Cornwell. He sees the revision of Canon Law promulgated in 1917 – in which a young priest Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII was involved – as the motivating factor in the Church’s reaction to the rise of the dictators. According to the theory, papal absolutism was the driving force of Vatican foreign policy. The Vatican would surrender anything – and bargain with the devil himself – in order to gain authority over, for example, the appointment of bishops.

Though Carroll dismisses such claims, the Vatican had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. Pius XI would explain that it was concluded only to spare persecution that would take place immediately if there was no such agreement. The concordat would also give the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action in the years prior to the war and after hostilities began. It provided a legal basis for arguing that baptized Jews in Germany were Christian and should be exempt from legal disabilities. Though the Concordat was routinely violated before the ink was dry, its existence allowed for Vatican protest, and it did save Jewish lives.

Carroll assumes that a calculated decision by Pius to work behind the scenes through his papal representatives and

through the existing vehicles of the Church to save as many lives as possible, was a callous decision to leave Jews to their fate. It assumes that hurling thunderbolts from the Vatican – which all who lived through Nazism understand would have had no possible impact on Hitler – would have accomplished something or saved more lives. This is mere conjecture based on hindsight. None of the critics of Pius have yet been able to put forth a concrete alternative that Pius could have developed to save more lives than were saved by the Church in that period. Throughout the war years, the Church would save more Jewish lives than any entity that existed at the time.

Disagreeing with the tactics of Pius is one thing. Stating that the Church abandoned the Jews does not reflect any kind of reality. Which is one of the most frustrating aspects of Carroll's entire "history" of the Church and the Jews. It is not history at all, but an amateur's meditation on various historical events skewed to reflect the prejudices of his own thesis.

Echoing Garry Wills, Carroll sees the canonization of Stein as an attempt by the Church to claim victimhood in the Holocaust and to reaffirm the religious superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Like Wills, he can cite no source for this conjecture, or documentation that cites any such reasoning from Church leadership. Pope John Paul II stated, which is a fact, that she died at the hands of the Nazis because she was a Jew and a Catholic, in retribution for the Church speaking out against Nazi deportations of the Jews in the Netherlands. The death of Edith Stein – and the death of Maximilian Kolbe – are the only cases of people slaughtered by the Nazis in the concentration camps that a certain circle within Catholicism feels comfortable publicly degrading.

Critical to Pope John XXIII's thinking was that the Church must reach out to the world and not see itself as a faithful remnant that hides from the world. The purpose in John's mind

was to certainly remove liturgical encrustation, defensive theological formulations and aspects of the culture of Catholicism that prevented outreach to the modern world. However, the purpose of such was not to convert the Church to modernism, but for the Church to be better able to evangelize the modern world. This has been the hallmark of the papacy of Pope John Paul II, who as a bishop attending the Council, was a strong supporter of the intent and spirit of Vatican II.

The five-point agenda for Vatican III is the purpose of Carroll's book. One cannot doubt the sincerity of his horror in the Holocaust, or his disgust at the anti-Jewish history that exists within the history of Western civilization and that members of the Church have been a part of it. But his purpose, clearly, is for "the past to be retrieved in ways that serve present purposes." Those purposes are Carroll's five-point agenda for creating a Catholicism that would fit his particular vision. He would do so by undermining the Gospels, dismissing 2000 years of Catholic theology and dismantling the papacy and the priesthood. He would, finally, have a Church that would disconnect from Jesus as the source of truth – that truth can be known, and truth can be evangelized.

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

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[\[1\]](#) John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope* (Viking Press, 1999).

[2] Ibid, p. 295.

[3] Ronald J. Rychlak, *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000).

[4] Cornwell, pp. 367, 369.

[5] Garry Wills, *Papal Sin, Structures of Deceit* (Doubleday, June 2000).

[6] For my review of *Papal Sin* see the Catholic League's website at [www.catholicleague.org](http://www.catholicleague.org)

[7] James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword, The Church and the Jews* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001). All further references to Carroll will be by page number alone.

[8] p. 22.

[9] p. 109.

[10] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana). Second edition. Available from Our Sunday Visitor.

[11] p. 305.

[12] p. 70.

[13] *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* (1998).

[14] Rychlak, p. 310.

[15] p. 425.

[16] p. 129.

[17] See Dava Sobel, *Galileo's Daughter*. (Walker & Company, 1999).

[18] p. 92.

[19] p. 126.

[20] p. 129.

[21] p. 124.

[22] pp. 173, 175.

[23] pp. 188-189.

[24] See "First Letter of St. Clement of Rome to the Corinthians," (88 – 97 AD) and the Apostles Creed from the Second Century A.D and the early *Didache*.

[25] p. 218.

[26] p. 250.

[27] Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1989) p. 40.

[28] p. 283.

[29] p. 283.

[30] *Saints and Sinners*, Eamon Duffy (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 112.

[31] p. 283.

[32] p. 319.

[33] p. 318.

[34] See Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (Yale University Press, 1997).

[35] pp. 347-348.

[36] p. 365.

[37] Kamen, p. 309.

[38] p. 372.

[39] p. 372.

[40] Peters, p. 110.

[41] p. 377.

[42] Duffy, pp. 169-170.

[43] p. 453.

[44] p. 440.

[45] p. 476.

[46] The interested reader on this topic should review Ronald Rychlak's *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*. Though dismissed by Carroll, as it does not fit his thesis, it is worth reading for a documented – as opposed to simply the author's own interpretations – history of this era.

[47] p. 510.

[48] p. 539.

[49] pp. 548, 550. Carroll repeats on page 550 the old canard that when Pope John XXIII was dying he was asked what the Church should do against Rolf Hocchuth's play "The Deputy" that began the revisionism concerning the actions of Pius XII in World War II, he responded "Do against it? What can you do against the truth?" Though in a 1997 story in *The New Yorker*, Carroll conceded that this story was possibly apocryphal, he repeats it here as fact. The story was first raised, it appears, by Hannah Arendt in a 1964 essay and never attributed or documented. Pope John XXIII evidenced throughout his papacy a strong devotion and respect for Pius XII. It was Pope John who issued the order that in response to "The Deputy" that the Vatican record should be published, which led to the 11-volume "Acts and Documents" of the Holy See during World War II.

Regarding his help in saving Jews during the war, Pope John said “in all these painful matters I have referred to the Holy See and simply carried out the Pope’s orders: first and foremost to save Jewish lives.” In his last encyclical just two months before his death, *Pacem in Terris*, there are 32 references to the writings of Pius XII. It seems unlikely that there is any truth to this alleged quote.

[\[50\]](#) p. 551.

[\[51\]](#) p. 552.

[\[52\]](#) p. 566.

[\[53\]](#) p. 567.

[\[54\]](#) p. 575.

[\[55\]](#) p.576.

[\[56\]](#) p. 585.

[\[57\]](#) p. 587.

[\[58\]](#) p. 589.

[\[59\]](#) p. 591.

[\[60\]](#) p. 593.

[\[61\]](#) p.604.

[\[62\]](#) p. 610.

[\[63\]](#) p. 613.

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# Michael Phayer: The Catholic Church and the Holocaust 1935-1960

*By Michael Phayer Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis*

*(2000)*

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), as Secretary of State to Pius XI and as pope, faced Nazi Germany with a remarkable consistency. The Nazis considered him an implacable foe,<sup>1</sup> and he was hailed both during and after World War II as the strongest voice – often the only voice – speaking out in Europe against the Nazi terror.<sup>2</sup> The Church under his leadership is credited with saving more Jewish lives in the face of the Holocaust than any other agency, government or entity at the time.<sup>3</sup> Pius' combination of diplomatic pressure, careful but sustained criticism while maintaining an essential Vatican neutrality in war-torn Europe, as well as direct action through his nuncios and the local Church where possible, saved what some have estimated as 860,000 Jewish lives.<sup>4</sup> If that estimate is accurate by only half, it remains a historic effort for a Church fighting without weapons against the most horrific campaign of genocide the world had yet seen.

Yet, in the face of this clear historical record, Pope Pius XII has come under attack since his death. Beginning with Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy* in 1963, a revisionism set-in Pius five years after his death and a new picture of Pius was created.<sup>5</sup> Accused of an alleged "silence" in the fact of the Holocaust, critics have gone further, insinuating that he may have been a crypto-Nazi sympathizer. In John Cornwell's

*Hitler's Pope*<sup>6</sup> he is portrayed as an anti-Semitic, silent bystander to the Holocaust.

In an afterword to Ronald J. Rychlak's masterful defense of Pius XII, *Hitler, the War and the Pope*<sup>7</sup>, Robert P. George examines this defamation of Pius XII. George sees two sources for this new myth: "anti-Catholic bigots and anti-papal Catholics have a large stake in preserving the myth that Eugenio Pacelli was 'Hitler's Pope.' The myth is of enormous utility in their continuing efforts to undermine the credibility of the Catholic Church and the teaching authority (magisterium) exercised by the Pope and the bishops in communion with him...(The myths) originate in, and are to a large extent sustained as part of a larger effort to undermine the credibility and weaken the moral and cultural influence of the Catholic Church. Why? Because the Catholic Church – and, within the Church, the institution of the papacy – is the single most potent force of traditional morality in cultural conflicts with communism, utilitarianism, radical individualism, and other major secular ideologies."

George hints at an often understated but important aspect to the revisionism concerning Pius XII: his anti-communism and his image as a Cold War pontiff. John Cornwell's book on Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust, *Hitler's Pope* was an amateur's hatchet job that exploited the Holocaust to attack the papacy of Pope John Paul II. Cornwell is a self-described Catholic who sees a strong papacy as standing in the way of his own vision of proper Church reform. The Holocaust is simply a weapon to be used by Cornwell in this inter-Church debate.<sup>8</sup> Editorials in the *New York Times* tend toward the more surreal, anti-Catholic position, lumping in the alleged silence of Pope Pius XII with a laundry list of complaints about Catholicism: the Church's refusal to ordain women, its opposition to abortion, and its teaching on homosexuality.<sup>9</sup>

An additional, critical source of the myth of Pius as Holocaust collaborator comes from certain students of history who loathed Pius for his anti-communism. This was an important aspect that served Hocchuth's interpretation. Popular in the late 1950s through the 1970s, this school of revisionist historians saw anti-communism as a dangerous threat, and all tainted by it deserving nothing but approbation. Pius certainly fit such a category.

Michael Phayer, professor of history at Marquette University, has authored a new book on the Catholic response to the Holocaust. Phayer seems particularly affected by that "anti-anti-communism" school of thought on Pope Pius XII. He assumes "papal silence," and attributes it primarily to a fear of communism. In *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* <sup>10</sup> Phayer states that his purpose is to go beyond the issue of the silence of Pope Pius XII to explore how the Church in various countries, and through various individual Catholics, responded to the Holocaust, and how that response eventually led to the Church's official rejection of anti-Semitism during the Second Vatican Council. Yet throughout the book, he paints Pope Pius XII as a meek pontiff unwilling to engage the Nazis. He states that Pius was motivated by the hope that he could secure a negotiated peace that would leave a powerful Germany as a European defense against an aggressive communist Soviet Union.

Yet, Phayer does not examine the allegation of silence on the part of Pope Pius XII, but merely accepts it as a given, bowing to contemporary conventional wisdom rather than the historical record of what was accomplished for Jews by Pius and the Church during the horror of the *Shoah*. In doing so, Phayer does not present a prosecutor's case for Pius' alleged silence, nor for his motives in being silent. Instead, he assumes that silence and postulates motives to fit that alleged reality, without proving that such motives existed.

Though Phayer's book shows serious professional historical study and background on the events of World War II, it has similarities to Cornwell's screed. Phayer's prejudices against Pius determine the scholarship he brings to bear on the issue. Phayer's book requires a more serious response than one would give to Cornwell's ravings. Yet, it is a deeply flawed work that will play its own role in the ongoing slander of Pope Pius XII.

Phayer does not portray Pius XII as a Nazi sympathizer, or as a closeted anti-Semite. But for a book that he claims is meant to go beyond the debate over the alleged papal silence, his indictment of Pius is draconian. He claims that Pius "did little for Jews in their hour of greatest need."<sup>11</sup> While acknowledging that working through his papal nuncios he was able to save Jewish lives, his "greatest failure...lay in his attempt to use a diplomatic remedy for a moral outrage."<sup>12</sup> At the same time, he charges that the "image that emerges of Pope Pius is that of a pontiff whose deep concern about communism and the intact physical survival of the city of Rome kept him from exploring options on behalf of the Jewish people."<sup>13</sup> He charges that in the immediate post-war period the Vatican under Pius XII consciously assisted Nazi war criminals to escape and "worked against U.S. policies that sought to make German society responsible for the murder of the Jews."<sup>14</sup> Why? To maintain a strong Germany in response to the communist threat, and to keep unsullied the enhanced image of the Church in Europe as a result of its actions during the War. While Phayer spends a small portion of his book presenting heroic stories of individual Catholics who engaged in rescue work, he returns consistently to the theme of a silent, almost cowardly Pope Pius XII, whose only desire was to limit communist expansion, even if it meant ignoring the plight of the Jews. Yet while Phayer states this case, he never makes it. He over relies on Nazi interpretation of Vatican action, as well as the editorial opinion of secondary

sources rather than documentation.

Phayer argues that if Pius XI had lived five more years, Church reaction would have been different to the Holocaust and to Nazi Germany.<sup>15</sup> While that is unknowable, of course, and Pius XI was certainly a different personality than Pius XII, Phayer ignores or downplays the important role played by Cardinal Pacelli in determining Vatican reaction to the Nazis in the 1930s. Phayer cites a series of events under Pius XI that he interprets as signaling a new direction that would be reversed under Pius XII. He notes, for example, the 1937 encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Mit brennender sorge*, which condemned racism and idolatry of the State. He makes no mention that it was the future Pius XII, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who drafted the encyclical.<sup>16</sup> In 1938, Phayer describes how Cardinal Theodore Innitzer of Vienna was called to Rome for a dressing-down after he publicly welcomed the Nazi *Anschluss* of Austria, a rebuke distributed throughout Vatican diplomatic channels. He does not mention that it was Cardinal Pacelli who summoned Cardinal Innitzer to Rome and told him he must retract his statement.<sup>17</sup> Finally, he notes that when Hitler visited Rome on an official visit to Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy, "the pope snubbed the dictators by leaving the city."<sup>18</sup> He fails to mention that Cardinal Pacelli departed with the pontiff.

Clearly, the future Pope Pius XII had a strong hand in the development of the Holy See's attitude toward both the Nazi movement and its anti-Semitic policies during the pontificate of Pius XI. There was no difference in substance between the two pontificates in addressing Nazism and anti-Semitism. The differences in approach between the two pontificates, such as they were, centered on the fact that within six months of the election of Pope Pius XII, Germany invaded Poland and Europe was at war.

Throughout Phayer's book, he suggests that Cardinal Pacelli's work on the 1933 Concordat between Hitler and the Holy See "linked the Vatican with the new Nazi regime" and its maintenance became an obsession with Pius XII, thus limiting his ability – or desire – to protest the treatment of the Jews.<sup>19</sup> The concordat was concluded at a time when the Vatican was forced to deal with the reality of Hitler's rise to power. In June 1933 Hitler had signed a peace agreement with the western powers, including France and Great Britain, called the Four-Power Pact. At the same time Hitler expressed a willingness to negotiate a statewide concordat with Rome. The concordat was concluded a month later, preceded by both the Four-Power Pact and a similar agreement concluded between Hitler and the Protestant churches. The Church had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. Pope Pius XI explained that it was concluded only to spare persecution that would take place immediately if there was no such agreement. The concordat would also give the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action. For example, it provided a legal basis for arguing that baptized Jews in Germany were Christian and should be exempt from legal disabilities. Though the Nazis routinely violated the Concordat before the ink was dry, its existence allowed for Vatican protest, and it did save Jewish lives. The first protest filed with the Nazi government under the terms of the concordat concerned the Nazi government-sponsored boycott of Jewish businesses.<sup>20</sup>

Phayer cites as another example of the laxity of Pius XII the case of Bishop Alois Hudal – the "Brown Bishop" – an Austrian Nazi sympathizer. Phayer states that even with his well-known anti-Semitism and pro-Nazi sympathies, Hudal "won an appointment as the rector of the Collegia del Anima in Rome, the school of theology for Austrian seminarians. There he remained throughout the Nazi era acting on occasion as an

intermediary between Pius XII and Nazi occupational forces, and, after the war, helping Holocaust perpetrators to escape justice.”<sup>21</sup> Rather than winning his appointment, Hudal was in Rome to be kept on ice. Though he claimed influence in Vatican circles, both the curia and the pope ignored him. Even the Nazis dismissed Hudal as having no influence. (He could not even influence his seminarians that embarrassed Hudal by making themselves absent during Hitler’s state visit to Italy in 1938.) Pius XII did use him once, to serve as an intermediary with the Germans to halt the arrest of Jews during the Nazi occupation of Rome.<sup>22</sup> Though Hudal may have personally assisted Nazis to escape after the war, there is no connection between him and the Holy See, or that Pius XII had any knowledge of such actions. Phayer cites no documentation or source other than anti-papal conjecture.<sup>23</sup>

He charges that Pope Pius XII contributed by his silence in the Nazi slaughter of Catholics in occupied Poland, particularly from 1939 to 1941. Yet, Phayer himself acknowledges that Vatican Radio was the first to inform the world of the depths of the Nazi atrocities in Poland just months after its occupation through broadcasts in January, 1940, broadcasts given at the direction of Pope Pius XII.<sup>24</sup> Phayer alleges that the broadcasts were suspended in the face of German threats on the Vatican. The Nazis did protest and make veiled threats, but they were hinting at retaliation on the helpless Poles, not the Vatican itself. For a short time, Vatican Radio ceased comment on the Polish situation, though this was done over concern with how the British were altering and re-broadcasting Vatican reports as propaganda.<sup>25</sup> By the following January, Vatican Radio was continuing its vociferous critique of German atrocities in Poland.

Pius XII had raised the issue of Poland in Easter and Christmas messages, in articles in the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, as well as in the first encyclical of

his pontificate, *Summi Pontificatus*. The Vatican also refused to cooperate with the German demand to control the appointment of bishops in occupied Poland. In a March 1940 confrontation with Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's foreign minister, Pius XII read to him in German a detailed report on Nazi atrocities in Poland aimed at both the Church and the Jews. That meeting received in depth coverage in the *New York Times*. The nuncio to Germany was also instructed by Pius repeatedly, as Phayer himself notes, "to plead for better treatment of Polish priests and lay people."<sup>26</sup> Yet, Phayer proclaims papal silence and complains that Pius XII chose a diplomatic rather than a moral approach, without citing what that moral approach would have been, or how it could have been feasible or successful in the face of Nazi aggression.

Phayer raises the complaint that Pius would not join in a public statement from the allies in 1942 condemning Nazi atrocities in Poland. He states that Pius XII would not join in the statement, quoting a British diplomat at the time, because he was determined to act as a mediator between Germany and the Allies to end the war. The real reason was that this would be an official statement of the Allied governments and it was impossible for Pius XII, representing a neutral state, to join the effort. However, in his annual Christmas message of 1942, Pius XII condemned totalitarian regimes and mourned the victims of the war, "the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction." He called on Catholics to shelter any and all refugees. The statement was loudly praised in the Allied world. In Germany, it was seen as the final repudiation by Pius XII of the Nazis: "(H)e is virtually accusing the German people of injustice toward the Jews, and makes himself the mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminal." Oddly, Phayer claims that this Christmas message was not understood and that "no one, certainly not the Germans, took it as a protest against

the slaughter of the Jews.”<sup>27</sup> He states this despite the negative German reaction and Allied praise for the statement. A prominent Christmas Day 1942 editorial in the *New York Times* stated: “No Christmas sermon reaches a larger audience than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world at this season...When a leader bound impartially to nations on both sides condemns as heresy the new form of national state which subordinates everything to itself...when he assails violent occupation of territory, the exile and persecution of human beings for no other reason than race or political opinion...the ‘impartial judgment’ is like a verdict in a high court of justice.”<sup>28</sup>

Phayer makes a number of broad statements that are at best open to contrary interpretation, and at worst seem to misstate the facts. He claims that a private audience between Croatian Fascist leader Ante Pavelic and Pius XII, and the appointment of a nuncio, was a victory for Fascist Croatia.<sup>29</sup> However, Pius XII refused to greet Pavelic as a head of state and formal recognition was never extended. Pavelic left Rome in an insulted rage, rather than “satisfied” as Phayer contends.<sup>30</sup> The Vatican refused to recognize an independent state of Croatia and did not receive a Croatian representative. The pope’s representative in Croatia, Archbishop Marcone, would work tirelessly in defense of the Croatian Jews.

Phayer states that the Vatican “refrained from promoting a separate Italian peace with the Allies because it would necessarily weaken Germany.”<sup>31</sup> Pius had, in fact, pressed Mussolini to negotiate a separate peace and advised the Badoglio regime that succeeded him to do so as well.<sup>32</sup> Phayer cites an underling’s memo to von Ribbentrop that the only obstacle to a “loyal relationship between the church and National Socialism is the latter’s euthanasia and

sterilization policies. The murder of Jews was left out of the equation.”<sup>33</sup> He seems to take at face value Nazi interpretations of the position of the Vatican as, in fact, the Vatican’s position.

He states that while Archbishop Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, engaged in the rescue of many Jews, he quotes another historian who states that may have done so without Vatican orders and “possibly even against them.”<sup>34</sup> This would make Archbishop Roncalli a liar as he clearly stated that as nuncio he acted solely at the direction of Pope Pius XII.

Phayer charges that the Vatican had prior knowledge of the German roundup of 1,200 Jews in Rome on October 16, 1943 and did nothing to forewarn them.<sup>35</sup> He relies for this charge on self-serving German diplomatic explanations, and then makes the preposterous case that it was the German diplomatic corps that “saved” Roman Jews. Throughout Italy, Jews were hidden by the Church. When it seemed certain that German troops would soon occupy the city, Pius helped Jews to evacuate and to hide. Many of those not evacuated, about 5,000, were in hiding in Church buildings when 60,000 Nazi troops occupied Rome. On October 16, the Nazis initiated a roundup of the Jews not in hiding. There is no evidence that Pius had specific prior knowledge, or concealed such knowledge. Reason dictated, of course, that such a raid could happen at any moment. There was little ignorance of what the Nazis were capable of doing to the Jewish community. The Germans had invaded the main Roman synagogue a month earlier and secured a list of Jewish families.

Immediately upon being notified of the German seizure, Pius demanded that the arrests be halted. He even used Bishop Hudal as a go-between to bring an end to the arrests. The Nazis stopped large-scale roundups and the Jews in hiding in Rome were protected.

The central thesis in Phayer's book is that Pius refused to speak out against the Holocaust and sought a negotiated peace because he wanted a strong Germany to face down the threat of Soviet communism. Yet, nowhere in the book does Phayer cite documented statements of Pope Pius XII to support that assertion. Though he charges <sup>36</sup> that Pius wanted the Soviet Union abandoned by the Allies in order to free up Germany to destroy the Soviet Union, the source for such a conclusion seems to be Nazi wishful-thinking than documented Vatican positions. "Pius XII did not change his position when Germany began its war with Russia, and he never spoke, even by means of allusion, about a 'crusade' against Bolshevism or a 'holy war.'" <sup>37</sup>

Which is not to argue that Pope Pius XII was unrealistic concerning Stalin's Russia. He was certainly more realistic about Stalin's intentions than were the U.S. and Great Britain during the war. During Stalin's rule from 1928 to 1953, historians estimate that he was responsible for at least 20 million deaths. His all-out war against religion, and the Catholic Church in particular, was well known to Pius XII. Yet there is no case for arguing that Pius modified positions against Germany, or refused to speak out on the Holocaust, to somehow prop up Germany and divide the Allies. While anti-papal historians consistently assign that motive to Pius, there is no documented evidence of such a policy. But much is known to the contrary. It is known, for example, that Pius intervened to assure American supplies to the Soviet Union. When some American Catholics raised the issue that giving such supplies was aiding communism, the Holy See assured them that assistance to the Russian people unjustly attacked by Nazi Germany was appropriate. Pius also acceded to an American request not to publicly raise Stalin's past persecution of the Church after he joined the Allied cause. As cited in *Hitler, the War and the Pope* <sup>38</sup> Pius wrote to Myron C. Taylor, Roosevelt's personal representative to the pope: "(A)t the

request of President Roosevelt, the Vatican has ceased all mention of the Communist regime.. But this silence that weighs heavily on our conscience, is misunderstood by the Soviet leaders who continue the persecution against churches and the faithful. God grant that the free world will one day not regret my silence." As Rychlak noted, ironically, "he would later come to be attacked for a different silence."

Historians such as Phayer assume this anti-Soviet strategy because of Pius' concern over the Allied demand for complete and total German surrender. Pius did make clear his belief that failing to attempt to negotiate a peace and demanding complete and total German surrender would only prolong the war and the killing. But that was his reason for the position, a position one would expect from the Vicar of Christ in any war. Certainly, it was not a position without merit. It can be argued – and has been argued – that peace could have been obtained earlier with many lives saved if the Allies had not demanded an unconditional surrender, but rather the removal of Hitler and his Nazi cronies. Many share the view that this did, indeed, both prolong the war and help keep Hitler in power to the very end. Others argue, of course, that the hope for a negotiated peace was simply impossible as Hitler remained in absolute control until his death in a Berlin bunker. In any case, the papal position was viable. And there was nothing in such a papal position that implied anything more than the desire to save lives. To see the papal call for a negotiated peace as either a grandiose ploy on the part of the pontiff to set himself up as the great peacemaker of Europe, as Phayer contends, or to maintain a strong Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, as Phayer also contends, is to invent motives that are historically undocumented.

There are elements in Phayer's book that are interesting and worthy. He outlines well what the Church – and individual Catholics – were able to accomplish in rescuing

Jews. He makes clear that the Church did not sit by idly as the Jews were taken to slaughter. Of particular interest is his overview of what the Church did and did not do within Nazi Germany itself. He points out that there were those within the Church who were able to accomplish more than many assume within Nazi Germany in defense of the Jews, though he cannot help but add that they went "further than Pius XII."

Rather than "go beyond" the issue of Pius XII as he claims to be the intent of his book, Phayer returns to Pius repeatedly. "To the extent that Pope Pius chose to intervene at all, he did so through intermediaries, the nuncios, rather than by responding to the Holocaust publicly from Rome. In other words, when the pope chose to deal with the murder of Jews, he did so through diplomatic channels rather than through a moral pronouncement such as an encyclical." <sup>39</sup> But that is precisely the point. First, there was no absolute "papal silence" on the Holocaust. Pius XII spoke carefully, certainly, but the Holy See and its representatives condemned Nazism and its atrocities long before any governments raised the issue. Yet Pius XII was primarily concerned with saving lives rather than high-minded pronouncements that would have accomplished little.

As outlined in the Catholic League's research paper on Pius XII and as exhaustively detailed in Rychlak's definitive work, *Hitler, the War and the Pope* and Pierre Blet's *Pius XII and the Second World War*, work behind the scenes and at the scenes through the papal nuncios was more effective than issuing public statements from the safety of the Vatican. As Phayer himself acknowledges, there was little the Holy See could do to force the Nazis to end their campaign for a "Final Solution." But Pius could save lives. Dramatic anti-Nazi gestures could have severely limited, if not ended altogether, the Church's capability to save lives, particularly in Germany and the Axis satellite states. The Jewish lives saved by actions of the Church under the

direction of Pius XII accomplished what no other agency, government or entity at the time was able to accomplish. Phayer claims that if Pius XII had issued a formal bombshell, more lives would have been saved. He does not, however, explain how that could have been accomplished and it appears to be wishful conjecture.

Phayer concludes that immediately after the war, the Holy See under Pius XII attempted to undercut Allied efforts to prosecute German war criminals and to provide the means for Nazis to escape Europe. As the Soviet threat grew more ominous, Pius was perceived to be “uncannily wise to western statesman. Only he had followed a pro-German course consistently.”<sup>40</sup> Finally, Phayer states that because of Pius, the Church would not address the issue of anti-Semitism for years after the war had ended. It would only be after his death at the Vatican Council that the Church would squarely address the issue.

That Pius followed a consistently pro-German course during the war is simply wrong. From the outset of the War, Pius was on shaky ground maintaining the semblance of Vatican neutrality as he clearly and consistently led the Church in a position that supported the defeat of Hitler. Nazi authorities over and over again described Pope Pius XII as the enemy of the Reich, and Hitler went so far as to plot his kidnapping.<sup>41</sup> There is no evidence, of course, that the Holy See aided in an organized way the escape of Nazis. While individual Catholics supplied help, and certain Nazis hid their identities and used Holy See-sponsored refugee services to escape, charges that there was any kind of general policy of Vatican assistance to German war criminals have been completely debunked. Phayer believes that Pius encouraged consistently encouraged clemency for Nazi war criminals as part of his strategy for maintaining a strong Germany. Some German bishops intervened for specific acts of clemency. German bishops would complain about the defamation of all the German people over the actions of the

Nazis, yet the Holy See was relatively mute on the issue, though it did oppose in certain cases direct executions. Pope Pius' personal representative to postwar Germany and liaison to the Allied military authorities, Bishop Aloysius Muench of the United States, advised the Vatican not to intervene and, for the most part, this was the policy that was followed.

Concerning the issue of anti-Semitism, the Church had never endorsed the racial anti-Semitism of the Nazis. As early as 1928, when the Nazi part was still in its infancy, the Church had condemned anti-Semitism. The Church, certainly spurred by the horror of the Holocaust, moved to eliminate religious anti-Jewish sentiments that existed within Catholic theology and devotional life. When the Second Vatican Council issued *Nostra Aetate*, its powerful declaration against anti-Semitism, it is impossible to argue that this somehow contradicted the papacy of Pope Pius XII. Theological and Scriptural studies encouraged by Pius, as well as the very atmosphere of his pontificate and that of Pius XI, were the foundations for *Nostra Aetate*. The bishops who supported the statement, including a young Polish prelate, Karol Wojtyła, were for the most part those raised to the episcopacy during his pontificate.

Pius was praised throughout the war and throughout his pontificate for the actions he took in defense of Jews during the war. The actions of the Church in the face of Nazism greatly enhanced its image in the post-war world. Phayer's primary contentions in this book – that Pius XII was pro-German, placed an anti-Communist agenda ahead of both concern for the Jews and the defeat of Nazi Germany – are not supported by any documented evidence. Most important, no case is built for an alternative strategy by Pope Pius XII that could have saved more Jewish lives. The Church under Pius saved more Jews from the Holocaust than any other entity in that terrible time. That is the undeniable fact that critics

of Pius, whatever their motivation, must answer. Phayer does not.

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

## **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Pius XII's combination of diplomatic pressure, careful but sustained criticism while maintaining an essential Vatican neutrality in war-torn Europe, as well as direct action through his nuncios and the local Church where possible, saved what some have estimated as 860,000 Jewish lives. If that estimate is accurate by only half, it remains a historic effort for a Church fighting without weapons against the most horrific killing machine the world had yet seen. Yet in the years after his death, a myth of Pius as a "silent collaborator" in the Holocaust has grown.
- A critical source of the myth of Pius XII as Holocaust collaborator comes from certain students of history who loathed Pius for his anti-communism. Popular in the late 1950s through the 1970s, this school of revisionist historians saw anti-communism as a dangerous threat, and all tainted by it deserving nothing but approbation. Pius certainly fit such a category.
- In *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Indiana University Press 2000) Michael Phayer states that his purpose is to go beyond the issue of the silence of Pope Pius XII to explore how the Church in various countries, and through various individual

Catholics, responded to the Holocaust, and how that response eventually led to the Church's official rejection of anti-Semitism during the Second Vatican Council. Yet throughout the book, he paints Pope Pius XII as a meek pontiff unwilling to engage the Nazis. He states that Pius was motivated by the hope that he could secure a negotiated peace that would leave a powerful Germany as a European defense against an aggressive communist Soviet Union.

- Phayer does not present a case for Pius' alleged silence, nor for his motives in being silent. Instead, he assumes that silence and postulates motives to fit that alleged reality, without proving that such motives existed.
- Phayer claims that Pius "did little for Jews in their hour of greatest need." While acknowledging that working through his papal nuncios he was able to save Jewish lives, his "greatest failure...lay in his attempt to use a diplomatic remedy for a moral outrage."
- Phayer argues that if Pius XI had lived five more years, Church reaction would have been different to the Holocaust and to Nazi Germany. While that is unknowable, of course, and Pius XI was certainly a different personality than Pius XII, Phayer ignores or downplays the important role played by Cardinal Pacelli in determining Vatican reaction to the Nazis in the 1930s.
- The future Pope Pius XII had a strong hand in the development of the Holy See's attitude toward both the Nazi movement and its anti-Semitic policies during the pontificate of Pius XI. There was no difference in substance between the two pontificates in addressing Nazism and anti-Semitism. The differences in approach between the two pontificates, such as they were, centered on the fact that within six months of the election of Pope Pius XII, Germany invaded Poland and Europe was at war.
- Phayer suggests that Cardinal Pacelli's work on the 1933

Concordat between Hitler and the Holy See “linked the Vatican with the new Nazi regime” and its maintenance became an obsession with Pius XII, thus limiting his ability – or desire – to protest the treatment of the Jews. The concordat was concluded at a time when the Vatican was forced to deal with the reality of Hitler’s rise to power. The Church had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. The concordat also gave the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action. Its existence allowed for Vatican protest and it did save Jewish lives. The first protest filed with the Nazi government under the terms of the concordat concerned the Nazi government-sponsored boycott of Jewish businesses.

- Phayer states that Bishop Alois Hudal, an Austrian Nazi sympathizer, “won an appointment” as rector of the Collegia del Anima in Rome, the school of theology for Austrian seminarians. There he remained throughout the Nazi era acting on occasion as an intermediary between Pius XII and Nazi occupational forces, and, after the war, helping Holocaust perpetrators to escape justice.” Rather than winning his appointment, Hudal was in Rome to be kept on ice. Though he claimed influence in Vatican circles, both the curia and the pope ignored him. Even the Nazis dismissed Hudal as having no influence. Though Hudal may have personally assisted Nazis to escape after the war, there is no connection between him and the Holy See, or that Pius XII had any knowledge of such actions. Phayer cites no documentation or source other than anti-papal conjecture.
- He charges that Pope Pius XII contributed by his silence in the Nazi slaughter of Catholics in occupied Poland, particularly from 1939 to 1941. Yet, Phayer himself acknowledges that Vatican Radio was the first to inform the world of the depths of the Nazi atrocities in Poland

just months after its occupation through broadcasts in January, 1940, broadcasts given at the direction of Pope Pius XII.

- Phayer raises the complaint that Pius would not join in a public statement from the allies in 1942 condemning Nazi atrocities in Poland. The reason was that this would be an official statement of the Allied governments and it was impossible for Pius XII, representing a neutral state, to join the effort. However, in his annual Christmas message of 1942, Pius XII condemned totalitarian regimes and mourned the victims of the war, "the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction." The statement was loudly praised in the Allied world. In Germany, it was seen as the final repudiation by Pius XII of the Nazis.
- Phayer states that the Vatican "refrained from promoting a separate Italian peace with the Allies because it would necessarily weaken Germany." Pius had, in fact, pressed Mussolini to negotiate a separate peace and advised the Badoglio regime that succeeded him to do so as well.
- He states that while Archbishop Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, engaged in the rescue of many Jews, he quotes another historian who states that he may have done so without Vatican orders and "possibly even against them." This would make Archbishop Roncalli a liar as he clearly stated that as nuncio he acted solely at the direction of Pope Pius XII.
- Phayer charges that the Vatican had prior knowledge of the German roundup of 1,200 Jews in Rome on October 16, 1943 and did nothing to forewarn them. He relies for this charge on self-serving German diplomatic explanations, and then makes the preposterous case that it was the German diplomatic corps that "saved" Roman Jews. Immediately upon being notified of the German

seizure, Pius demanded that the arrests be halted. He even used Bishop Hudal as a go-between to bring an end to the arrests. The Nazis stopped large-scale roundups and the Jews in hiding in Rome were protected.

- Though he charges that Pius wanted the Soviet Union abandoned by the Allies in order to free up Germany to destroy the Soviet Union, the source for such a conclusion seems to be Nazi wishful-thinking than documented Vatican positions. Pius XII did not change his position when Germany began its war with Russia, and he never spoke, even by means of allusion, about a “crusade” against Bolshevism or a “holy war.”
- There was nothing in the papal position for a negotiated peace that implied anything more than the desire to save lives. To see the papal call for a negotiated peace as either a grandiose ploy on the part of the pontiff to set himself up as the great peacemaker of Europe, as Phayer contends, or to maintain a strong Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, as Phayer also contends, is to invent motives that are historically undocumented.
- There are elements in Phayer’s book that are interesting and worthy. He outlines well what the Church – and individual Catholics – were able to accomplish in rescuing Jews. He makes clear that the local Church did not sit by idly as the Jews were taken to slaughter. Of particular interest is his overview of what the Church did and did not do within Nazi Germany itself. He points out that the Church was able to accomplish more than many assume within Nazi Germany in defense of the Jews.
- Phayer states: “To the extent that Pope Pius chose to intervene at all, he did so through intermediaries, the nuncios, rather than by responding to the Holocaust publicly from Rome. In other words, when the pope chose to deal with the murder of Jews, he did so through diplomatic channels rather than through a moral

pronouncement such as an encyclical.” But that is precisely the point. First, there was no absolute “papal silence” on the Holocaust. Pius XII spoke carefully, certainly, but the Holy See and its representatives condemned Nazism and its atrocities long before any governments raised the issue.

- Pius XII was primarily concerned with saving lives rather than high-minded pronouncements that would have accomplished little. Working behind the scenes and at the scenes through the papal nuncios was more effective than issuing public statements from the safety of the Vatican. As Phayer himself acknowledges, there was little the Holy See could do to force the Nazis to end their campaign for a “Final Solution.” But Pius could save lives. Dramatic anti-Nazi gestures could have severely limited, if not ended altogether, the Church’s capability to save lives, particularly in Germany and the Axis satellite states.
- The Jewish lives saved by actions of the Church under the direction of Pius XII accomplished what no other agency, government or entity at the time was able to accomplish. Phayer claims that if Pius XII had issued a formal bombshell, more lives would have been saved. He does not, however, explain how that could have been accomplished and it appears to be wishful conjecture.
- That Pius followed a consistently pro-German course during the war is simply wrong. From the outset of the War, Pius was on shaky ground maintaining the semblance of Vatican neutrality as he clearly and consistently led the Church in a position that supported the defeat of Hitler. Nazi authorities over and over again described Pope Pius XII as the enemy of the Reich, and Hitler went so far as to plot his kidnapping.
- There is no evidence that the Holy See aided in an intentional and organized fashion the escape of Nazis. While individual Catholics supplied help, and certain

Nazis hid their identities and used Holy See-sponsored refugee services to escape, charges that there was any kind of general policy of Vatican assistance to German war criminals have been completely debunked.

- When the Second Vatican Council issued *Nostra Aetate*, its powerful declaration against anti-Semitism, it is impossible to argue that this somehow contradicted the papacy of Pope Pius XII. Theological and Scriptural studies encouraged by Pius, as well as the very atmosphere of his pontificate and that of Pius XI, were the foundations for *Nostra Aetate*. The bishops who supported the statement, including a young Polish prelate, Karol Wojtyla, were for the most part those raised to the episcopacy during his pontificate.
- Pius was praised throughout the war and throughout his pontificate for the actions he took in defense of Jews during the war. Phayer's basic contentions in this book – that Pius XII was pro-German, placed an anti-Communist agenda ahead of both concern for the Jews and the defeat of Nazi Germany – are not supported by any documented evidence. No case is built for an alternative strategy by Pope Pius XII that could have saved more Jewish lives. The Church under Pius saved more Jews from the Holocaust than any other entity in that terrible time. That is the undeniable fact that critics of Pius, whatever their motivation, must answer. Phayer does not.
- For a complete understanding of the role of Pope Pius XII in World War II, we strongly recommend Ronald Rychlak's *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (Our Sunday Visitor Press, \$19.95 plus shipping and handling. Call 1-800-348-2440). While there are a few good sections in Michael Phayer's book, his overall treatment of Pius XII is prejudiced and unconvincing.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Hitler, the War and the Pope*, by Ronald J. Rychlak (Our Sunday Visitor 2000) p. 95 for Nazi reaction to Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli as Secretary of State. The German ambassador to the Holy See, Diego von Bergen, spoke to the College of Cardinals on February 16, 1939 after the death of Pius XI and issued a "veiled warning against the election of Cardinal Pacelli." P. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, December 25, 1942

<sup>3</sup> *Adolf Hitler*, John Toland (Ballantine Books, 1984) p. 549

<sup>4</sup> Estimating the exact number of Jews assisted by the Church during the Holocaust virtually impossible. By its very nature, this kind of work did not involve the keeping of records. In *Three Popes and the Jews* (Hawthorn Books 1967), Pinchas E. Lapidé estimated 860,000 Jewish lives were saved by Church action.

<sup>5</sup> *The Deputy*, by Rolf Hochhuth (The John Hopkins University Press, 1997)

<sup>6</sup> *Hitler's Pope*, by John Cornwell (Viking Press, 1999)

<sup>7</sup> *Rychlak*, p. 310

<sup>8</sup> *Cornwell*, pp. 360-371

<sup>9</sup> *New York Times*, March 14, 2000 editorial

<sup>10</sup> *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965*, by Michael Phayer (Indiana University Press 2000)

<sup>11</sup> *Phayer*, p. xi

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. xii

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. xv

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. xvi

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. xv

<sup>16</sup> Curiously, Phayer somewhat dismisses *Mit brennender sorge* as failing directly to condemn Hitler or National Socialism. But considering that the encyclical was written in German, rather than Latin, smuggled into Germany for printing and distribution on Palm Sunday, referred to by the Nazis as “almost a call to do battle against the Reich government,” that printers who had made copies and those caught distributing it were arrested, it would seem that it was rather clear who and what the encyclical targeted.

<sup>17</sup> *Rychlak*, p. 101-102

<sup>18</sup> *Phayer*, p. 2

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>20</sup> See *Rychlak*, pp. 57-64

<sup>21</sup> *Phayer*, p. 12

<sup>22</sup> *Nothing Sacred: Nazi Espionage Against the Vatican, 1939-1945*, by David Alvarez and Robert A. Graham, SJ (Frank Cass Publishers 1997) pp. 98-100

<sup>23</sup> *Phayer*, p. 166

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25

<sup>25</sup> *Rychlak*, p. 156

<sup>26</sup> *Phayer*, p. 27

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49

<sup>28</sup> *New York Times*, December 25, 1942

<sup>29</sup> *Phayer*, p. 44

<sup>30</sup> *Rychlak*, p. 304.

<sup>31</sup> *Phayer*, p. 59

<sup>32</sup> *Rychlak*, p. 198-199

<sup>33</sup> *Phayer*, p. 59

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59

<sup>37</sup> *Pius XII and the Second World War*, by Pierre Blet (Paulist Press 1999) p. 63

<sup>38</sup> *Rychlak*, p. 164

<sup>39</sup> *Phayer*, p. 82

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161

<sup>41</sup> *Rychlak*, pp. 265-266

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# Mark Jordan: Silence of Sodom

*by Robert P. Lockwood*

(7/2000)

One of the striking points of anti-Catholicism in American culture – in addition to its persistence – is the sameness of it all. Down through the years, there is a tiresome repetition of old clichés about Catholics and Catholicism inherited from the Reformation in England. The difference in today's popular anti-Catholicism is that the religious language has been stripped away, leaving the clichés to be re-stated from a secular focus. This allows today's bigot to think that he is presenting some startling new thesis, when he is actually simply regurgitating canards hundreds of years old.

One such long-standing cliché of anti-Catholicism is to take contradictory swipes at the priesthood based on the practice of celibacy. On the one hand, it is argued that celibacy is the source of an unnatural prurience in Church teaching on sexual morality. Rather than being built on Scripture, natural law and a faith-based understanding of sexuality, the cliché argues that Catholic moral teaching comes from “old celibate males” who are anti-sex and concerned solely with imposing an unrealistic puritanical agenda. At the same time, however, all these old celibate males are portrayed as secretive sexual predators. Since celibacy is unnatural the anti-Catholic propagandist argues it can only lead to unnatural practices.

Such a self-contradicting attack on the priesthood was at the heart of 19th-century anti-Catholic literature, aptly described as “puritan pornography.” It is also the underlying assumption of the Kansas City Star series on AIDS in the

priesthood, where it was argued that the unnatural requirement of celibacy attracts the sexually dysfunctional to the priesthood, leading to unsafe and secret sexual activity.

It is also at the heart of a new book by Mark D. Jordan, a former Catholic seminary instructor who teaches religion at Emory University. In *The Silence of Sodom, Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism*. (The University of Chicago Press, 2000) Jordan argues that, "the most important theological facts about Catholicism and homosexuality are not the bureaucratic words that Catholic authorities speak. The truly significant facts concern the homosexuality of the Catholic Church itself – of members of its priesthood and its clerical culture, of its rituals and spiritual traditions." The Jordan argument is the old self-contradicting attack on the priesthood: the Church teaches against homosexual practices because it is at heart a clerical homosexual institution.

A self-described "openly gay man," Jordan drafted his book while on a paid fellowship from the John S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. He also identifies himself as Catholic: "The Catholic tradition is my Christian tradition."

In the first section of the book, Jordan simply dismisses recent Church statements on homosexuality as reminiscent of "European fascists of the 1920s and 1930s." He purposely presents no arguments to which one can reply as he finds such efforts simply being lured into wasteful Church bureaucratic language and thinking. Instead, he revels in bombast. He describes the 1986 letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons as filled with logic "by which the church could hand over or relax 'sodomites' to the secular arm for public execution."

He similarly dismisses the 1998 U.S. Bishops' statement, "Always our Children," which was generally considered a moderate pastoral approach to parents of homosexual children. Jordan says that if the parents are strange enough to be

disturbed by a child's active homosexual lifestyle, the problem is caused by homophobic church indoctrination, not the lifestyle itself.

Jordan then arrives at his central thesis. He finds in Catholicism in general, and the priesthood in particular, a dominant "homoerotic" culture. It is central to liturgy, the sacraments, and the priesthood itself. Church teachings that condemn homosexual practices are vicious "efforts to keep the dreaded 'secret' from being spoken." That secret, he argues endlessly but with no factual support, is that most priests are either active or closeted gays. "Catholic clerical arrangements...produce rich articulations of male-male desire, both because of compulsory priestly celibacy and because of the enormous development of all-male religious orders."

It is an argument that would be familiar to 16th-century anti-Catholic propagandists and, in fact, Jordan cites reams of early hate literature that charged Catholic prelates, including popes, of engaging in homosexual activities. Though acknowledging that such charges were unfounded and most often grounded in political and theological agendas, such is unimportant to Jordan. "We need not consider the truth of papal sodomy, but it's usefulness," by which he means how useful it was as a charge against the Church. The whole Church was allegedly engaged in covering up the "secret" of a homosexual clergy. Such charges were therefore useful propaganda in undermining the Church in the eyes of the faithful. Truthfulness was never very important in the political or theological agenda. A similar agenda might be on Jordan's mind today. In fact, he acknowledges that "my writing only fuels anti-Catholic bigotry" and that "it can always be used by anti-Catholics to confirm their view of the 'whore of Babylon.'"

An old Catholic joke has a group of high school sophomores being told by their teacher that the average boy has a sexually related thought every 10 seconds. This shocks the

boys, but one is more shocked than the rest. He asks: "What do they think about for the other nine seconds?"

Jordan's book will remind the reader of that sophomoric sex-obsessed boy. He sees homoeroticism everywhere in Catholicism. The seminary, spiritual direction, the liturgy, church art and architecture, vestments, rectory life, religious education: all are expressions of a clerical culture "deeply colored by gay tastes and gay fantasies." Though Catholics may want to define these things as part of living the faith, they are to Jordan "expressions of gay sensibilities... the homosexuality of the Catholic ruling class." In his more offensive chapter, he describes clerical life as "gay camp" and speaks of "priests who don't think they are doing anything odd when they dress up in silks on Sunday morning to promenade, sing, act, and host a meal." He describes the sacramental act of consecration of the Eucharist as a homosexual fantasy of creating the Perfect Male. It is ugly stuff that speaks more of the path Jordan has taken in life and his own obsessions, rather than any kind of an honest view of the priesthood and the Catholic faith.

"The Silence of Sodom" stoops so low as to cite two classics of American anti-Catholicism in an allegedly legitimate academic work – Charles Chiniquy's 19th-century *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, most recently published by Jack Chick's rabidly anti-Catholic press; and *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, the 1835 classic soft-porn "nuns-in-sexual-slavery" fraud. Maria Monk's revelations were seen as fraudulent when it was discovered by a Protestant journalist that the convent she claimed to have escaped from had no hidden rooms as she wrote about, nor did the convent resemble in any way her description of it. Jordan sees Maria's story as having the value of a parable: just as she could not prove her story of "hidden rooms," you will not find the "secret" of male gay actions in the priesthood because there is "no suite

of inner rooms sheltering all gay clergy. There is no well-established rituals or sweeping histories or even enduring networks of supports." Which might lead the unbiased reader to conclude that just as Maria's story had no basis in fact, Jordan's charges are built on his own sexual ideology rather than any real facts.

Jordan's book is filled with the illogical argument that denial of his case proves his case. He states that "conservative" Catholics who are loyal to the teaching of the Church are closeted homosexuals. When a journalist charged without any substantiation that Pope Paul VI had engaged in homosexual activity, the papal denial was proof that the allegations must have been true. Priestly actions in the liturgy are "gay camp" and made even more so by priestly denial that they are anything of the sort. Rejecting his thesis of this immense Catholic homosexual culture is succumbing to denial of the "secret." In one of the oddest arguments in the book, Jordan links the reported cases of pedophilia by priests as one proof of this alleged homosexual culture even though it is generally understood that pedophilia is a severe psychological disease that is not directly linked with homosexuality. Certainly gay activists would be terribly distraught at such a linkage.

In an interesting sidebar to that discussion, Jordan writes that he knew Rudy Kos, the infamous pedophile from the diocese of Dallas. Jordan says that Koss was a student in his class on scholastic philosophy at Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas. "I was too preoccupied with my own fierce combat against desires for men. *Like so many in Catholic education* (emphasis added), I was simply incapable of helping anyone with homoerotic secrets." Kos passed his course.

Jordan concludes with a call to gay and lesbian Catholics to consider alternative communities to live out their faith. "You must leave the Church," he writes, "to become a Catholic."

This is a book of opinion – outrageous opinion – based on little more than the author's own fantasy life. He ascribes to Catholicism, the Catholic priesthood, and the Catholic Mass itself a homoeroticism that exists solely in his own mind. From its cliched assumptions, through its bigoted citations, and to its conclusion that people should leave the Catholic Church at once, the book is an exercise in anti-Catholicism.

I do not fault Jordan so much for the tired prejudices that come from his difficult life. One can't help wondering, however, about the motives of The University of Chicago Press for publishing such a profoundly anti-Catholic book, and the John S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for funding the author's fantasy life.