

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 19th and early 20th centuries, up until (and implicitly including) Pius XII were actually anti-Semites who paved the way for the Holocaust. Nowhere in his book is he able to document any modern Pope making any explicit statement in support of anti-Semitism, but he attempts to re-write history by focusing on a handful of issues taken out of context and without a full exploration of the evidence. The result, as Rabbi David Dalin recently wrote in *The Weekly Standard*: "is both false and unpersuasive."

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

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

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

"The Supreme Pontiff... as Head of the Catholic Church, which, faithful to its divine doctrines and its most glorious traditions, considers all men as brothers and teaches them to love one another, he never ceases to indicate among individuals, as well as among peoples, the observance of the principles of the natural law, and to condemn everything that violates them. This law must be observed and respected in the case of the children of Israel, as well as of all others, because it would not be conformable to justice or to religion itself to derogate from it solely on account of divergence of religious confessions."

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

Benedict was succeeded by Pope Pius XI who was decidedly supportive of Jews. In 1928, the Vatican under his leadership issued a statement that was cited by rescuers during the

Holocaust. It said that the Church “just as it reproves all rancours in conflicts between peoples, to the maximum extent condemns hatred of the people once chosen by God, the hatred that commonly goes by the name of anti-Semitism.” In November 1931, the chief rabbi of Milan thanked the Pope for his appeals against anti-Semitism and his continuing support for Italy’s Jews.

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

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

“Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community... whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God.”

Pius went on with further condemnations of racial theories:

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

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

On September 6, 1938, in a statement which – though barred

from the Fascist press – made its way around the world, Pius XI said:

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

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

So how does Kertzer try to convert Pope Pius XI, a celebrated champion of the Jews, into an anti-Semite? In imitation of John Cornwell (a quote from whom appears on Kertzer’s cover) he has found a previously published letter, noted some uncomfortable language within it, and attempted to use it to smear the reputation of a good and holy man.

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

In point of fact, Ratti had been sent to a largely Catholic nation with instructions to report back to Rome on any significant developments. It so happens at that time there was

a significant threat of a Communist revolution. Many of the leaders of this movement were Jewish. Ratti was reporting on what he saw, but he was no anti-Semite.

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

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

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

Kertzer charges that there was a Vatican "campaign" to popularize the infamous, anti-Semitic *Protocols of the Elders*

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

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

The truth is that the papacy stands out as the one of the few protectors of Jews during the period Kertzer examines. Selective evidence and crabbed interpretations cannot change that fact. Those who want to know more about this history are advised to consult a booklet published by the American Bishops entitled: *Catholics Remember the Holocaust*, which contains the full text of the Vatican's 1998 Shoah document, statements from various episcopal conferences, and Cardinal Cassidy's clarification and response to those (like Kertzer) who misread and misinterpret this important document.

The Papacy Under Attack

by Robert P. Lockwood

(5/2001)

In recent years there have been a series of books that have dealt both directly and indirectly with the accusation that Pope Pius XII bore responsibility for the Holocaust in World War II. Beginning with John Cornwell's "Hitler's Pope,"¹ through Garry Wills' "Papal Sin"² and concluding – at least at this point in time – with James Carroll's "Constantine's Sword,"³ all three books managed a short life on the *New York Times*' bestsellers list. The books have been influential in continuing the propaganda campaign that Pope Pius XII was a silent witness to the Holocaust who did virtually nothing to help the Jews. The charge is made that Pius refused to condemn Nazi atrocities because he wanted to maintain a strong Germany to serve as a counter-balance to the Soviet Union in Europe. At heart, these critics claim, Pius was more interested in maintaining and reinforcing a developing papal absolutism than in facing the Nazis. And this campaign for "papal absolutism" is at the heart of the papacy of Pope John Paul II they charge.

Each book, of course, has its own particular emphasis in addressing the subject. Cornwell portrays Pius as a monarchial pope with an anti-Semitic background whose primary agenda was increased centralization of Church power within the papacy. As such, Cornwell maintained that Pius XII "was the ideal Pope for Hitler's unspeakable plan. He was Hitler's pawn. He was Hitler's Pope."⁴ While Wills' disavows any in depth exploration of the papal role in the Holocaust, he assumes that Pius had a basically pro-German stance out of fear of Communism, and was locked into the Vatican's "own sorry history with regard to the Jews."⁵ This analysis of Pius

and the Church during World war II serves to introduce Wills' central thesis that the Church has in place "structures of deceit" created to artificially prop-up papal power.

Carroll relies primarily on Cornwell as a source for the role of Pius in the Holocaust⁶ He echoes Cornwell's theory of Pius as solely concerned with papal power, but also sees Pius' alleged lack of action in the face of the Holocaust as historically determined by 2,000 years of Church anti-Semitism, rooted in Scripture, theology and tradition. Echoing Wills, he states that "the Vatican's preference for its own power, as it pursued its vision of an absolutist papacy, was only a version of the choice countless Europeans made to pursue their own welfare without regard for those outside the circle of their concern – the Jews."⁷ Carroll argues that anti-Semitism was so central to Catholic thought that "Hitler's anti-Jewish program, even at its extreme, was simply not that offensive to the broad population of Catholics."⁸

The critical aspect of all three books is that authors identifying themselves as Catholic wrote them, and all have a different agenda in mind than merely condemning Pope Pius XII. One can quickly determine that Pius and the Holocaust, even in Cornwell's account, are only tools for the unifying premise that underlies all three books: that the papacy itself is the primary target, both in general, and specifically the papacy of Pope John Paul II. All three books use Pius XII, and exploit the Holocaust, as a means to make points in an internal Catholic debate over papal primacy – meaning the extent of papal juridical authority within the Church – and papal infallibility. While Cornwell's focus is narrower than both Wills and Carroll, to see any of these books as a serious investigation into Catholic-Jewish relations, and how the Church under Pius responded to the Holocaust, is to misunderstand their purpose.

Virtually all secular reviews highlighted these

books because of their charges concerning the role of Pius and the Church in regard to the Jews during the World War, and as negative portrayals of the Church in history. Yet, these are derivative works in their treatment of Pius XII, with little original scholarship or research on the era, by authors who are not historians.⁹ Their primary purpose is to attack the papacy as an institution within the Catholic Church as it is led by Pope John Paul II, rather than to more clearly understand the role Pope Pius XII played during the war years. Pius XII is simply a tool for a radical internal Church agenda. As is the Holocaust.

Pius XII is a convenient tool for a number of reasons. First, of course, he was the last pre-Vatican II pope. As such, identifying Pope John Paul II with him makes it far easier to paint the present pontiff as a reactionary figure representing the past rather than the future. Identifying the two means that discrediting the image of Pius XII, discredits the image of Pope John Paul II. Second, the movement for the beatification of Pius XII, protested in certain Jewish quarters, provided a useful spark. The possible beatification of Pius XII, along with the actual beatification of Pius IX in September 2000, could be portrayed as an endorsement of an "imperial papacy" by John Paul II (forgetting the fact that Pope John XXIII was beatified at the same time). Third, there was a small corpus of historical works in the last 40 years aimed at Pius XII that could supply ready secondary resources to build a case against him. Finally, there was a growing public awareness of the anti-Pius historical view in regard to the Holocaust with few contrary portraits. Pius has had over the last 40 years a good number of detractors but a comparatively small number of defenders, until recently. There was, therefore, a casual acceptance of the possibility of a negative portrait of Pius that made it unnecessary to build a rigorous case against him. Particularly in Wills and Carroll, the anti-Pius perspective is simply assumed, rather than carefully argued.

The Pius 'animus'

For the 13 years after World War II ended until his death on October 9, 1958, Pius XII was universally acclaimed for his efforts to save Jewish lives in the face of the Holocaust. There were no accusations during this period of a “silent” pontiff with pro-Nazi leanings. At the time of his death, numerous national and international Jewish organizations praised his wartime record, reflecting a 1942 *New York Times* Christmas editorial during the war that called Pius “a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent.” (Such Jewish praise would be dismissed later as Israeli politicking, rather than heartfelt – which is a rather cruel accusation to make, considering that at the time many of those praising Pius had lived through the Holocaust itself.)

The myth of Pius XII began with a 1963 drama by Rolf Hochhuth, an obscure German playwright. In “Der Stellvertreter” (“The Representative” or “The Deputy”) Hochhuth charged that Pius XII maintained an icy silence during the Holocaust. “The Deputy” is readily dismissed as serious history.¹⁰ Yet, five years after his death, the reputation of Pius was beginning to face serious historical revisionism.

Why this revisionism? Pius XII was unpopular with certain circles for the anti-Stalinist, anti-Communist agenda of his post-war pontificate. The Church under Pius XII was seen as the leading conservative force in post-war Europe. This was a period where leftist sentiments in the West were still tied to a flirtation with Communism, if no longer supportive of Stalinism. In leftist academic circles, particularly in Italy in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Pope Pius was seen as the standard-bearer for a political crusade, establishing the Church as a universal anti-Communist force. There was a concerted effort to

discredit both that crusade, and the pontificate that was perceived as generating it.

The general charges against Pius XII were that while he was not pro-Nazi during the war, he hated Bolshevism more than he hated Hitler. This lead him to ignore the fate of the Jews so Nazi Germany would not be demonized. It was claimed that the wartime pontiff's strategy was to maintain a strong Germany as a bulwark against Communism. He refused to excommunicate Hitler and his Nazi cronies with Catholic backgrounds, or to speak out boldly against Nazi atrocities, because he did not want to inflame anti-German passions as a strong Germany would be necessary to restrain the Soviet Union. Some even charged that the Vatican policy under Pope Pius XII covertly supported Nazi Germany in its attack on the Soviet Union, with papal plans to serve as the negotiator between Germany and the Western allies to follow after Communism's collapse. When that strategy failed, the pope then helped to create the anti-Soviet atmosphere that resulted in the "Cold War" in the late 1940s and 1950s. Hochhuth's charge of papal "silence" fit the theory that Pius XII refused to publicly criticize Nazi Germany's attacks on the Jews in order that the country could serve effectively as an ongoing block to Soviet expansion.

The theory, of course, has never been documented because there is no evidence that even suggests such a papal strategy. The 2000 interim report of the international Catholic-Jewish commission formed to study the Vatican role in the Holocaust, a group not in any way particularly friendly to the legacy of Pius, could find no such evidence of an anti-Soviet, pro-Nazi Vatican strategy during the war. The sources for such theories, such as they exist, were generally Nazi wishful-thinking that hoped for Vatican support in the war once the Soviet Union became the enemy. Yet, the myth persists and is cited as a major motivating factor in papal complicity with Nazism in all three books.^{[11](#)}

Pius certainly recognized Stalinism for what it was. The Church under his leadership, as well as the prior pontificate of Pius XI, had no illusions about what Communist domination would mean, both for Europe and the Church. Yet all evidence points to the fact that the Vatican under Pius XII recognized Nazi Germany as the far greater immediate threat. By August 1933, when Hitler had become German chancellor, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, expressed to the British representative to the Holy See his disgust with the Nazis and “their persecution of the Jews, their proceedings against political opponents, the reign of terror to which the whole nation was subjected.” When it was stated to him that Germany now had a strong leader to deal with the communists, Cardinal Pacelli responded that the Nazis were infinitely worse.¹² More important, his actions during the war belied any favorable strategy toward Nazi Germany at the Soviet Union’s expense. After Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union, the question quickly arose over aiding communists in the war against the Nazis. The issue became particularly important in the United States where aid was routinely supplied to the Allies and was to be extended to the Soviet Union. A number of bishops raised the issue and, very quickly, Pius XII settled the affair noting that aid to the “people” of the Soviet Union was not aid to communism. When the Soviets became part of the Allied war effort, Pius assured President Franklin Roosevelt that he would not issue any condemnations of Soviet atrocities against the Church. There is simply no evidence that Pius collaborated or compromised in any way with Nazi Germany in its war with the Soviet Union.

Of course, the whole idea of the “silence” of Pius XII – whatever the alleged strategies behind it – is a misreading of history if meant to imply a lack of papal concern or actions on behalf of the Jews. What the Church was able to accomplish in World War II under the direction of Pius XII was what no other agency, government or entity at the time was able to accomplish: saving Jewish lives. Pulitzer Prize

winning historian John Toland, no friend of Pius XII, summed it up when he wrote that the Church under the leadership of Pius “saved the lives of more Jews than all other churches, religious institutions and rescue organizations combined.”¹³ Pinchas Lapide, Israeli consul in Italy, estimated that the actions of Pius XII saved over 860,000 Jewish lives during World War II. If that were an exaggeration by half, and then half again, it would record more Jewish lives saved by the Church than by any other entity at the time. The critics of Pius have yet to suggest a strategy that he could have implemented that would have saved more lives.¹⁴

Despite the clear historical record, “The Deputy” took on far greater importance than it deserved. Carroll tells the story that as a young seminarian, “we passed contraband copies of The Deputy from hand to hand as if it were pornography.”¹⁵ Leftists used it as a means to discredit an anti-Communist papacy. Instead of Pius working with every means available to the Holy See to rescue European Jews in the face of complete Nazi entrapment, an image was created of Pius XII as a political schemer who would willingly sacrifice Jewish lives to stop the spread of Communism. “The Deputy” was merely the mouthpiece for an ideological interpretation of history that helped create the myth of a “silent” Pope Pius XII doing nothing in the face of Nazi slaughter.

This secular animus against Pius after his death had been generated throughout the 1960s and well into the 1970s. The animus against Pius within certain Catholic circles was certainly influenced by this agenda, but was not overly strong during the papacies of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI. Pope Pius XII remained a popular figure after his death among Catholics as a whole, admired for his anti-Communism, his war record, and a general perception of his personal sanctity. Questions about Pope Pius XII in certain Catholic circles, particularly in the United States, were limited to

concerns that his staunch anti-Communism had generated early support in the American hierarchy, particularly from Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York, for American involvement in Vietnam. But for the most part, Vatican II (1962-1965) and its aftermath overshadowed the papacy of Pius XII. If anything, he was viewed by progressives as a quaint remnant of a Church that was dramatically renewed after his papacy, rather than a regressive symbol or an anti-Semite with Nazi sympathies. It would not be until the papacy of Pope John Paul II that a stronger reaction began to develop against Pius within certain Catholic circles. As is clearly seen in Cornwell's book, that response against Pope Pius XII generally developed out of a reaction against the papacy of Pope John Paul II.

At the conclusion of "Hitler's Pope," Cornwell's case against Pius is revealed for what it is: an attack on the papacy as exercised by Pope John Paul II. "The progressives believed that this was a Pope (John Paul II) to implement the reforms of Vatican II. The traditionalists, however, trusted that a prelate reared in the Catholicism of Poland would restore the old disciplines and values. Few suspected the extent to which he would disappoint the progressive side of the Church divide."¹⁶ Under Pope John Paul II, Cornwell charges, "Pacelli's monolithic pyramidal model of the Church has once again reasserted itself, and the metaphors of the 'pilgrim Church on the move' and the 'People of God' are seldom employed. Pluralism and collegiality are characterized as antagonistic to central authority."¹⁷

Cornwell's essential theory is echoed in both Wills and Carroll. "So what accounts not only for the silence of Pope Pius XII, but for Eugenio Pacelli's complicity with Hitler in the early years?" Carroll asks, assuming both that alleged silence and alleged complicity. "The early years offer the clue, for it was then that Pacelli's determination to put the accumulation and defense of papal power above everything else showed itself for what it was. Above the fate of the

Jews, certainly, but also above the fate of the Catholic Church in Europe.”¹⁸ Wills portrays Pius as perhaps an unwitting victim, at best, of “structures of deceit” that force people to lie to defend papal authority. While stating that the actual role of Pope Pius XII during the war is still under debate¹⁹ Wills clearly presents his position by claiming that if Pius is canonized it will force his supporters to “make false claims in order to defend the words of a saint,” which “would make him the source of a new round of deceit structured into past dishonesties.”²⁰ Wills entire thesis is that in order to artificially prop-up papal power, the Church engages in ongoing theological, sacramental, historical and disciplinary lying. Pope Pius XII did what he had to do in the war, according to Wills, to maintain these structures of deceit that support papal power. Those who defend him today are “papalotors” caught up in these same structures.

All three books reference their views on Pope Pius XII both forward to Pope John Paul II and back to Pope Pius IX (Pio Nono) and the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). That Council’s definition of papal infallibility is seen as the foundation of Pius’ alleged obsession with a monarchical papacy, and Pope John Paul II’s exercise of papal authority. All three authors tend to mix the issue of papal infallibility – the Catholic understanding that when the pope solemnly defines doctrine he speaks infallibly – with papal juridical authority, which is the extent of the papacy’s authority within the institutional Church over matters such as the appointment of bishops. While these are two separate and distinct issues – historically and theologically – all three authors tend to lump them together.

Cornwell begins his book after Italian national troops had seized the Papal States from Pope Pius IX. He invents a picture of Pope Pius IX just prior to the First Vatican Council that dramatically fits the theme of a papally-

rigged council that would impose a new understanding of the papacy on the Church, an understanding that would determine the reaction of Pius XII to the rise of Hitlerism, World War II and the Holocaust, as well as that being resurrected presently by Pope John Paul II:

“Pio Nono had erected upon himself the protective battlements of God’s citadel; within, he raised the standard of the Catholic faith, based on the word of God as endorsed by himself, the Supreme Pontiff, Christ’s Vicar upon earth. Outside were the standards of the Antichrist, man-centered ideologies that had been sowing error ever since the French Revolution, And the poisonous fruit, he declared, had even affected the Church itself: movements to reduce the power of the popes by urging national Churches independent of Rome. Yet just as influential was a long-established tendency from the opposite extreme: ultramontaniam, a call for unchallenged papal power that would shine out across the world, transcending all national and geographic boundaries. Pio Nono now began to prepare for the dogmatic declaration of just such an awe-inspiring primacy. The world would know how supreme he was by a dogma, a fiat, to be held by all under pain of excommunication.”²¹

Wills describes the First Vatican Council’s definition of papal infallibility as a rigged event strong-armed by Pius IX on an unwilling hierarchy; where opposition was silenced and careers threatened. He quotes Lord John Acton, castigating the bishops who had “yielded to tyranny”: “They approved what they were called on to reform, and solemnly blessed with their lips what their hearts knew to be accursed. The Court of Rome became thenceforth reckless in its scorn of the opposition, and proceeded in the belief that there was no protest they would not forget, no principle they would not betray, rather than defy the Pope in his wrath.”²² Carroll states that “Vatican I hauled the Church

higher into the misanthropic wind, a course from which not even John XXIII, given his successors, was able to bring about.”²³

The essential argument of each author is that the First Vatican Council of the 19th Century fundamentally changed the Church by creating out of whole cloth a doctrine of papal infallibility. This doctrine greatly enhanced a centralization of juridical power within the Church under the papacy. It was the machinations of Pope Pius IX, resenting the end of the temporal power of the papacy, which caused this allegedly revolutionary development. Pope Pius XII was raised in the Church in an atmosphere where this new papal power was being codified and confirmed. As Secretary of State under Pope Pius XI, and as pope, this papal autocracy would be the driving force behind every decision and policy, including Church reaction to Nazism and the Holocaust. Wills, Cornwell and Carroll portray Cardinal Pacelli under Pius XI selling out the Catholic Center Party of Germany to the Nazis in order to directly control the German Church, without regard to what the Nazis ascent to power would mean, particularly to the Jews. His alleged silence in the face of the Holocaust is explained as simply another example of papal grandiosity, as speaking out might compromise his neutrality and not allow him to be the mediator of world peace. The co-joined narrative continues that after Pius is gone, the Second Vatican Council is called by Pope John XXIII to limit this papal autocracy, but is undermined by his death and his predecessor, Paul VI, who was trained under Pope Pius XII. Pope John Paul II is then portrayed as engaged in a complete dismantling of whatever reforms the Second Vatican Council managed to enunciate in the areas of collegiality.

Carroll gives his own synopsis of this mini-history: “Liberalism and modernism were seen as bearing the destruction of civilization itself...so the Catholic strategy of arming the leader of the Church with the spiritual mace of

infallibility made some sense....Vatican II would do little to alter that course...Pius IX represented to Catholic liberals of my generation the Church's great stumble. We associated him with old battles that would never need to be refought, or so we thought. We had a first hint that we were wrong when the Vatican revoked Hans Kung's *missio canonica*, his right to teach as a Catholic, in 1979. Kung was the dominant theological model of our generation, and what brought the wrath of the Vatican down on him, revealingly, was his book *Infallible? An Inquiry*. Published in 1970, the work drew the Vatican's full fire once John Paul II had come to the throne in 1978, and it soon became clear that he took Kung's challenge personally. John Paul II, holding back a second tidal wave of liberalism, had reason to identify with Pius XI's resistance to the first wave. Both men were shaped by early traumas, both saw the very existence of the Church at stake, and both, for that reason, when their authority to defend the Church was challenged, responded by claiming that authority more resolutely than ever. It was with survival in mind that Pius XI demanded the ultimate gesture of support from the bishops of his Vatican Council."²⁴

All of which is a simplistic reading of history tied to a fixation on the papacy and alleged papal power. This is why the authors feel little compunction exploiting the Holocaust for matters of internal Church debate. Their obsession is with the papacy as conducted by Pope John Paul II, whom they tie intimately with Pius IX and Pius XII. Belittling Pius IX and tying Pius XII directly to the Holocaust are means to an end: pushing a particular vision of Catholicism and the papacy to which Pope John Paul II stands in stark contradiction.

Since there is so much historical distortion here, it is briefly necessary to revisit two concepts: The First Vatican Council's definition of papal infallibility in 1870, and the juridical authority of the papacy as seen in the

appointment of bishops, which Cornwell calls “the key issue.”²⁵ The issues raised in these books concerning Pius and the Holocaust are only a front for these two issues that are critical to the agenda of all three authors.

In 1867, when Pope Pius IX called for a general council of the Church., it was originally thought that the Council would be pastoral in tone, dealing with the need to update Church canonical law and the status of the growing foreign missions. However, it soon became obvious that there was a need to discuss the authority of the papal office itself. Many of the events of the previous 40 years had centered on the office of the papacy and the nature of papal authority and there were various movements at play within the Church. On the one hand, a strong movement – referred to as “ultramontanism” – believed that papal authority must be understood in virtually limitless terms. Supporters of this view of the papacy believed that a strong papacy provided protection to the local Catholic communities overwhelmed by aggressively anti-Catholic states and stood as a voice for the universality of the Church. This was particularly evident in states where the Church was under attack or subject to government control. On the other hand, there were historic movements such as Gallicanism which saw the pope as simply a “senior bishop among bishops,” which would dramatically limit papal authority in the face of national Churches. Similarly, there were strains of Conciliarism that sought to center the authority of the Church in general councils. There was even “Josephenism” which would subject the local Church to the control of the State.

But at this point in the 19th Century, many of those movements to limit the historic nature of the papacy had lost serious momentum within the Church. 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. Virtually no one in the hierarchy of the Church outright rejected the theological concept of papal infallibility – that when the Pope formally addressed matters of faith and morals as the Vicar of Christ, he was guided by the Holy Spirit and therefore not subject to error. However, it had never been clearly defined as to the extent of that infallibility and that is where true divisions existed. Examples were papal encyclicals such as the controversial *Syllabus of Errors* of Pius IX (1864) – was that an infallible papal statement, true for all times and for all people? Was every public statement of the pope to be considered infallible? The ultramontanes certainly believed so.

Pope Pius IX certainly leaned heavily toward the ultramontane definition of infallibility. Others, however, were far less certain. There were two prominent schools within the hierarchy, all in minority to the ultramontanes. There were some that rejected outright any definition of papal infallibility. While acknowledging the authority of the pope, they thought it theologically dangerous to attempt to define it. They believed that the authority of the Church had historically existed, that all Catholics believed it, and to define it would simply mean to limit it, or to misunderstand it. Others, called “inopportunists,” felt that in the disrupted state of the world at the time, it was not “opportune” to define papal infallibility. This was the position of Cardinal John Henry Newman of England, as well as a number of prominent American bishops. They believed that a definition would cause difficulties within the liberal democracies for the Church, as well as in relations with other Christian traditions. Finally, there were extreme anti-infallibilists such as Lord John Acton of England, a prominent Catholic layman, who dreaded any such definition.

Acton believed that a definition of papal infallibility would somehow contradict the historical fact

that there had been bad popes and bad decisions of the past. As with many critics of infallibility, he defined it in his own mind too broadly, assuming that papal infallibility applied to virtually any papal policy or papal pronouncement. Acton also believed that authority in the Church should be greatly limited. His teacher, the historian and theologian Father Ignaz von Dollinger, shared many of Acton's ideas. Both are heroes to Garry Wills in *Papal Sin*.

The general accusation – shared by Wills – was that the Council was manhandled by Pius IX and the Curia to force a definition of papal infallibility not in keeping with Catholic tradition. Yet even Acton, who loathed Pius and looked for curial conspiracies everywhere, had to acknowledge that debates were open and ideas freely exchanged. He wrote in his journal, "Nobody molested on account of hostile opinion. Letters carefully examined, and much espionage. But no serious hindrance put in the way of distributing documents, pamphlets, etc. Newspapers frequently stopped; but distributed to the bishops, so that their effect on the course of events was not prevented."²⁶ In fact, the debate over the definition of papal infallibility went on for months. And the final definition of papal infallibility fell far short of the desires of the ultramontanes. 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. Subsequent popes have issued one *ex cathedra* statement (Pope Pius XII defining Catholic teaching on the Assumption of Mary in 1950) and did so only after extensive consultation with the world's bishops. The definition of papal infallibility as determined by the First Vatican Council was not created or mandated by Pope Pius IX. It was a reaffirmation of a consistent teaching of the Church as subsequent history has clearly shown.

Wills and Cornwell then focus on the area of episcopal appointments, seeing this as a critical area in the late 19th and early 20th Century where papal juridical “control” of the local Church expanded enormously. Both see this as a nefarious plot to extend papal power. Cornwell: *“The ideology of papal primacy, as we have known it within living memory, is an invention of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.* (Italics his own for emphasis.) In other words, there was a time, before modern means of communication, when the pyramidal model of Catholic authority – whereby a single man in white robes rules the Church in a vastly unequal power relationship – did not exist...The more elevated the Pontiff, the smaller and less significant the faithful. The more responsible and authoritative the Pontiff, the less enfranchised the people of God, including bishops, the successors to the apostles...Pacelli, more than almost any other Vatican official of his day, helped to enhance the ideology of papal power.” [27](#)

The theory is that with the end of the Papal States in 1870, the Church attempted to replace its “temporal” power with spiritual authority. The practical means to do this was to artificially prop-up papal juridical authority through the definition of papal infallibility, wresting away from secular governments and local control the appointment of bishops, and enhancing the power of the Curia – as an extension of papal power – over local and national churches. This centralizing of power in Rome, particularly through control of the bishops, would create an alternative to the loss of temporal authority. Wills sees this “power grab” as a plot virtually from the earliest centuries of the Church that “lead papal Rome to acquire a monopoly over priestly ordination. That power was seized not from the people themselves but from political rulers who had, in time, assumed even greater control over the nomination and acclamation power of Christian communities...When ‘lay investiture’ controversies

arose, in later centuries, the power to ordain did not return to its original locus, the people of each community, but was wrested from secular rulers by an expanding and aggressive papacy."²⁸

Wills sees the First Vatican Council in 1870 and subsequent events as part of the whole: an attempt by the papacy and curialists to seize power through the control of the appointment of bishops and, therefore, priestly ordinations. Of course, Wills sees all Catholic history and belief as a manipulated series of events whose cumulative aim is the enhancement of papal power. Sacramental theology, Scripture, a male priesthood, priestly celibacy, Christ's atonement on the Cross, the Mass, Marian devotion – all become to Wills part of the "structure of deceit" that is fundamental to the Church. And at the heart of this structure of deceit is the papacy. The true Church, according to Wills, "would not bring in substitutes for the Holy Spirit, making the Pope the monarch of the Church...(Augustine) would have said that the new papal sin, of deception, is worse than the vivid sins of material greed, proud ambition, or sexual license. It is spiritual sin, an interior baffling of the Spirit's access to the soul. It is a cold act, achieved by careful maneuvering and manipulation, a calculated blindness, a shuttering of the mind against the light."²⁹

While Wills argues his point, and Cornwell sees Pacelli as the agent provocateur for amassing papal power even in the face of the Holocaust, both are reading evil into a centuries-long movement by the Church to free itself from local control. The "lay investiture" controversies were considered fundamental to reform of the Church. It was a centuries-long attempt to free the Church from the control of the local rulers, the single most critical cause of hierarchical and local Church scandal throughout history. It is true that the movement to secure the appointment of bishops exclusively through the Holy See is a development that

accelerated over the last quarter of the 19th and early 20th century. But the historical reasons for this are hardly the sinister plots suggested by Cornwell, Wills and, eventually, Carroll. The governments of Europe that, to varying degrees, still had power over the appointments of bishops had become aggressively secular. While this was never an issue in the United States, the Church had to establish its freedom from State control and dominance throughout Europe (The Austrian monarchy still had veto power over the election of popes in the early 20th century.) Additionally, the Holy See certainly provided a counterbalance for local Catholic populations and Church structures facing extensive restrictions and interference from the modern states. Securing the right to manage its own affairs, including the appointment of bishops, was far from creeping papal absolutism. It was, in fact, liberating the Church from State domination. (In our own day, this is still very much an issue, particularly in China, where the State refuses the right of the Vatican to appoint bishops and has set-up its own "Patriotic National Church.")

Of course, the point here is not to argue over the extent of legitimate papal juridical power within Catholic tradition, or over the definition of papal infallibility. Rather, it is to see these books for what they are: exploitations of the Holocaust to argue for a particular anti-papal viewpoint within the Church. Pope Pius XII is not the enemy, even though Cornwell paints him large. The enemy is Pope John Paul II, who Cornwell sees as "Pius XII Redivivus," and fears that a "papal autocracy, carried to the extreme, can only demoralize and weaken Christian communities." He sees the John Paul II model of the papacy as reaffirming "the right of the man in the white robe to rule autocratically from the apex, with a domineering Curia imposing conformity, and the diocesan bishops abdicating their proper authority and freedom. This vision of the Church is increasingly inimical to Christian ecumenism, insistently male-dominated and celibate.

Marian devotion prevails, with an emphasis on miraculous and gnostic-style revelation.”³⁰

Carroll’s book neatly sums-up the similar agenda of all three authors in his call for a Vatican III at the end of “Constantine’s Sword.”³¹ Again, a book that is sold and reviewed as an exploration of the roots of the Holocaust concludes with a litany of bromides for Church reform aimed at limiting the papacy and recreating Catholic theology, Scripture and belief to the author’s own liking. The purpose here, again, is not to argue with the author’s wants and desires. Rather, it is to reflect on the purpose of all three of these non-histories sold as histories that use Pius and the Holocaust to put forth their own anti-papal agenda for Church reform.

Carroll has written a 608-page book whose chronology begins with the founding of the future Jerusalem in the Middle Bronze Age and concludes with the beatification of Pope Pius IX by John Paul II in September 2000. He has put all this together as virtual introduction to the last 70-odd pages that outline his personal agenda for Church reform. Carroll argues that a Third Vatican Council is necessary because, reflecting Wills and Cornwell, the Second Vatican Council, a historic beginning, was undermined by Pope Paul VI, a “devoted factotum to Pius XII.”³² Pope Paul VI turned back the reforming trend of the Second Vatican Council, in a “program of medieval restoration” that “has been vigorously continued by Pope John Paul II.”³³

Carroll’s Third Vatican Council would address, among other items, the anti-Jewish texts of the New Testament that show that the Church, even in its first generation, was capable of betraying the message of Jesus. This would establish once and for all that ‘the Church as such’ can sin.”³⁴ Vatican III will then abandon the “primary-enforcing

ideas of Roman supremacy and papal infallibility.”³⁵ The “doctrine of papal infallibility amounts to the low point in the long story of patriarchy, a legitimization of Church exceptionalism, a reversal of the meaning that Jesus gave to ministry, and, finally, an abuse of power.”³⁶

Vatican III should have a “new Christology” that abandons concepts such as the immortality of the soul, or Christ’s death as atonement for sin. Freed from this and the papacy, the Church will be able “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.”³⁷ The Church in Vatican III will abandon “its internal commitment to methods that undergird totalitarianism”³⁸ The Church will embrace the democratic ideal and abandon “the idea that there is one objective and absolute truth, and that its custodian is the Church.”³⁹ Bishops should be chosen by the people, the whole clerical caste eradicated, and women ordained (though ordination to exactly what is never clarified).

Wills shares most of the same agenda. Cornwell defines his goals, in sympathy with “progressive” elements within the Church as: to “continue to declare that the Pope and the Curia have failed to apply the crucial decision of the Council for collegiality. They are happy to forgo the certainties of a pope who provides an infallible mechanism as the need arises. They deplore the machinery whereby the Pope intervenes to appoint bishops the world over, frequently against local wishes, for that is not the way in which colleges are formed or work. They want a Pope who will preside over the Church in charity as a final court of appeal. They argue that the modern ideology of papal power lacks tradition, that it rejects the historic wisdom and authority of the conciliar Church.”⁴⁰

In his 2001 book "Papal Primacy in the Third Millennium"⁴¹ Russell Shaw describes the movement within certain Catholic circles to "tame the pope." With varying degrees of radical approaches, he describes this movement as "removing authority from the papacy through a systematic program of decentralization, and vesting it in other places – the Synod of Bishops, national bishops' conferences, local or 'particular' churches (that is, dioceses), perhaps even other structures that don't yet exist. The watchwords of this decentralizing program are collegiality, subsidiarity, inculturation, pluralism, and – sometimes – democracy."⁴² Shaw cites Father Richard McBrien's 1973 book, "The Remaking of the Church" as an example of this post-Vatican II advocacy of limitations on papal authority. Father McBrien, sharing the disappointment of Wills, Carroll and Cornwell over two decades before their books were published, that the alleged promise of Vatican II had not been realized, advocated his own "Agenda of Reform."

As outlined by Shaw, Father McBrien recommended: "replace 'monarchical absolutism' in Church governance with 'some form of constitutionalism'; recognize the principle of subsidiarity in Church affairs; make national pastoral councils – such as the Dutch Pastoral Council – the policy-making bodies for the Church at the national and local levels; return to 'the ancient and longstanding practice of the election of bishops by the clergy and laity'; and much else."⁴³

In a more recent proposal, Shaw notes that an American group called the "Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church" and certain European Catholics proposed in 1999 a document to serve as a "constitution" for the Church. In addition to the usual call for women's ordination, "freedom of conscience" in matters of morality, and the right to divorce and remarry, the document defines a new structure for the papacy. According to Shaw, regarding

“Church governance, the constitution declares its unreserved commitment to subsidiarity, as well as to the principle that people in leadership positions should be elected for specific terms. ‘Representative councils’ made up of elected members are the ‘principal decision-making bodies’ at every level, international, national, diocesan, and local. For the universal Church, the constitution envisages a system whereby, every ten years, the national Councils would elect a five-hundred-member General Council responsible for ‘policies and regulations concerning doctrine, morals, worship, education, social outreach...Its co-chairpersons would be the pope and a layperson elected by the council. And what of the pope? The General Council is responsible for choosing him or her, although here the constitution grows unaccountably vague.”⁴⁴ This, essentially, is the same agenda for Cornwell, Wills and Carroll.

This anti-papal trilogy of books is not a serious exploration of the Holocaust or of the role of Pius XII during the war years. Instead, the purpose in these books is to set forth an agenda, already enunciated in 1973, for “taming the papacy.” These are books focused on internal Church disputes over theology and the juridical authority of the papacy. They are merely exploiting the Holocaust – without seriously reflecting on what Pius was able to accomplish – to argue Church politics and theology in the age of Pope John Paul II. Their enemy is actually not Pius XII, but the papacy.

SUMMARY POINTS

- John Cornwell’s “Hitler’s Pope,” Garry Wills’ “Papal Sin” and James Carroll’s “Constantine’s Sword,” have been influential in popularizing the view that Pope Pius XII was a silent witness to the Holocaust who did virtually nothing to help the Jews. At heart, these critics claim, Pius was more interested in maintaining

and reinforcing a developing papal absolutism than in facing the Nazis.

- Pius and the Holocaust are only tools for the unifying premise that underlies all three books: that the papacy itself is the primary target, both in general, and specifically the papacy of Pope John Paul II.
- All three books use Pope Pius XII, and exploit the Holocaust, as a means to make points in an internal Catholic debate over papal primacy – meaning the extent of papal juridical authority within the Church – and papal infallibility. To see any of these books as a serious investigation into Catholic-Jewish relations, and how the Church under Pius responded to the Holocaust, is to misunderstand their purpose.
- Pius XII was unpopular with certain circles for the anti-Stalinist, anti-Communist agenda of his post-war pontificate. The Church under Pope Pius XII was seen as the leading conservative force in post-war Europe. This was a period where leftist sentiments in the West were still tied to a flirtation with communism, if no longer supportive of Stalinism. In leftist academic circles, particularly in Italy in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Pope Pius was seen as the standard-bearer for a political crusade, establishing the Church as a universal anti-Communist force.
- The general charges against Pius were that while he was not pro-Nazi during the war, he hated Bolshevism more than he hated Hitler. This lead him to ignore the fate of the Jews so Nazi Germany would not be demonized. It was claimed that the wartime pontiff's strategy was to maintain a strong Germany as a bulwark against communism.
- The 2000 interim report of the international Catholic-Jewish commission formed to study the Vatican role in the Holocaust, a group not in any way particularly friendly to the legacy of Pius, could find no such evidence of an anti-Soviet, pro-Nazi Vatican strategy

during the war. The sources for such theories, such as they exist, were generally Nazi wishful-thinking that hoped for Vatican support in the war once the Soviet Union became the enemy.

- The whole idea of the “silence” of Pius XII – whatever the alleged strategies behind it – is a misreading of history if meant to imply a lack of papal concern or actions on behalf of the Jews. What the Church was able to accomplish in World War II under the direction of Pius XII was what no other agency, government or entity at the time was able to accomplish: saving Jewish lives.
- It would not be until the papacy of Pope John Paul II that a stronger reaction began to develop against Pope Pius XII within certain Catholic circles. As is clearly seen in Cornwell’s book, that response against Pius generally developed out of a reaction against the papacy of Pope John Paul II.
- At the conclusion of “Hitler’s Pope,” Cornwell’s case against Pope Pius XII is revealed for what it is: an attack on the papacy as exercised by Pope John Paul II. Cornwell charges that “Pacelli’s monolithic pyramidal model of the Church has once again reasserted itself, and the metaphors of the ‘pilgrim Church on the move’ and the ‘People of God’ are seldom employed. Pluralism and collegiality are characterized as antagonistic to central authority.”
- Cornwell’s essential theory is echoed in both Wills and Carroll. “So what accounts not only for the silence of Pope Pius XII, but for Eugenio Pacelli’s complicity with Hitler in the early years?” Carroll asks, assuming both that alleged silence and alleged complicity. “The early years offer the clue, for it was then that Pacelli’s determination to put the accumulation and defense of papal power above everything else showed itself for what it was. Above the fate of the Jews, certainly, but also above the fate of the Catholic Church in Europe.” Wills portrays Pope Pius XII as perhaps an unwitting victim,

at best, of “structures of deceit” that force people to lie to defend papal authority.

- All three books reference their views on Pope Pius XII both forward to Pope John Pail II and back to Pope Pius IX (Pio Nono) and the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). That Council’s definition of papal infallibility is seen as the foundation of Pius’ alleged obsession with a monarchical papacy, and Pope John Paul II’s exercise of papal authority. All three authors tend to mix the issue of papal infallibility – the Catholic understanding that when the pope solemnly defines doctrine he speaks infallibly – with papal juridical authority, which is the extent of the papacy’s authority within the institutional Church over matters such as the appointment of bishops.
- The essential argument of each author is that Vatican I changed the Church by creating out of whole cloth a doctrine of papal infallibility that also greatly enhanced a centralization of juridical power within the Church under the papacy. It was the machinations of Pius IX, resenting the end of the temporal power of the papacy, which caused this allegedly revolutionary development. Pope Pius XII was raised in the Church in an atmosphere where this new papal power was being codified and confirmed. After Pius XII is gone, the Second Vatican Council is called by Pope John XXIII to limit this papal autocracy, but is undermined by both his death and his predecessor, Paul VI, who was trained under Pope Pius XII. Pope John Paul II is then portrayed as engaged in a complete dismantling of whatever reforms the Second Vatican Council managed to enunciate in the areas of collegiality.
- All of which is a simplistic reading of history tied to a fixation on the papacy and alleged papal power. This is why the authors feel little compunction exploiting the Holocaust for matters of internal Church debate. Their obsession is with the papacy as conducted

by Pope John Paul II who they tie intimately with Pius IX and Pius XII. Belittling Pius IX and tying Pope Pius XII directly to the Holocaust are means to an end: pushing a particular vision of Catholicism and the papacy to which Pope John Paul II stands in stark contradiction.

- The definition of papal infallibility as determined by the First Vatican Council was not created or mandated by Pope Pius IX. It was a reaffirmation of a consistent teaching of the Church as subsequent history has clearly shown.
- The theory the authors share is that with the end of the Papal States in 1870, the Church attempted to replace its “temporal” power with spiritual authority. The practical means to do this was to artificially prop-up papal juridical authority through the definition of papal infallibility, wresting away from secular governments and local control the appointment of bishops and establishing the Curia – as an extension of papal power – to limit the authority of the local churches. Wills sees this “power grab” as a plot virtually from the earliest centuries of the Church that “lead papal Rome to acquire a monopoly over priestly ordination.”
- Securing the right to manage its own affairs, including the appointment of bishops, was far from creeping papal absolutism. It was, in fact, liberating the Church from State domination.
- It is important to understand see these books for what they are: exploitations of the Holocaust to argue for a particular anti-papal viewpoint within the Church. Pope Pius XII is not the enemy, even though Cornwell paints him large. The enemy is Pope John Paul II, who Cornwell sees as “Pius XII Redivivus,” and fears that a “papal autocracy, carried to the extreme, can only demoralize and weaken Christian communities.”
- Carroll argues that a Third Vatican Council is necessary because, reflecting Wills and Cornwell, the Second

Vatican Council, a historic beginning, was undermined by Pope Paul VI, a “devoted factotum to Pius XII.” Pope Paul VI turned back the reforming trend of the Second Vatican Council, in a “program of medieval restoration” that “has been vigorously continued by Pope John Paul II.”

- The Church at Carroll’s Vatican III will abandon “its internal commitment to methods that under gird totalitarianism.” The Church will embrace the democratic ideal and abandon “the idea that there is one objective and absolute truth, and that its custodian is the Church.” Bishops should be chosen by the people, the whole clerical caste eradicated, and women ordained (though ordination to exactly what is never clarified).
- In his 2001 book “Papal Primacy in the Third Millennium,” Russell Shaw describes the movement within certain Catholic circles to “tame the pope.” With varying degrees of radical approaches, he describes this movement as “removing authority from the papacy through a systematic program of decentralization, and vesting it in other places.”
- As outlined by Shaw, Father Richard McBrien in 1973 recommended a “taming of the papacy” to include: “replace ‘monarchical absolutism’ in Church governance with ‘some form of constitutionalism’; recognize the principle of subsidiarity in Church affairs; make national pastoral councils – such as the Dutch Pastoral Council – the policy-making bodies for the Church at the national and local levels; return to ‘the ancient and longstanding practice of the election of bishops by the clergy and laity’; and much else.”
- An American group called the “Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church” and certain European Catholics proposed in 1999 a document to serve as a “constitution” for the Church. In this constitution, according to Shaw, representative councils “made up of

elected members are the 'principal decision-making bodies' at every level, international, national, diocesan, and local. For the universal Church, the constitution envisages a system whereby, every ten years, the national Councils would elect a five-hundred-member General Council responsible for 'policies and regulations concerning doctrine, morals, worship, education, social outreach...Its co-chairpersons would be the pope and a layperson elected by the council. And what of the pope? The General Council is responsible for choosing him or her, although here the constitution grows unaccountably vague." This, essentially, is the same agenda in spirit for Cornwell, Wills and Carroll.

- This anti-papal trilogy of books is not a serious exploration of the Holocaust or of the role of Pope Pius XII during the war years. Instead, the purpose in these books is to set forth an agenda, already enunciated in 1973, for "taming the papacy." These are books focused on internal Church disputes over theology and the juridical authority of the papacy. They are merely exploiting the Holocaust – without seriously reflecting on what Pope Pius XII was able to accomplish – to argue Church politics and theology in the age of Pope John Paul II.

FOOTNOTES

¹ *Hitler's Pope, the Secret History of Pius XII*, by John Cornwell (Viking Press, 1999)

² *Papal Sin, Structures of Deceit*, by Garry Wills (Doubleday, 2000)

³ *Constantine's Sword, The Church and the Jews*, by James

Carroll (Houghton Mifflin, 2001)

⁴ *Cornwell*, pp. 296-297

⁵ *Wills*, pp. 67, 68

⁶ *Carroll*, p. 681 footnote citation

⁷ *ibid.* p. 535

⁸ *ibid.* p. 534

⁹ Cornwell, a journalist by trade, claimed to have had unique access to archival material but the material he specifically cited as new has long been available – and both used and published – by students of the period.

¹⁰ Cornwell in *Hitler's Pope* describes *Der Stellvertreter* as "historical fiction based on scant documentation...(T)he characterization of Pacelli (Pius XII) as a money-grubbing hypocrite is so wide of the mark as to be ludicrous. Importantly, however, Hocchuth's play offends the most basic criteria of documentary: that such stories and portrayals are valid only if they are demonstrably true" (p. 375)

¹¹ *Cornwell*, p. 112, *Wills*, p. 35, *Carroll*, p. 511-512

¹² *Hitler, the War and the Pope*, by Ronald Rychlak (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000) p. 49

¹³ *Adolf Hitler*, John Toland (Ballantine Books, 1984) p. 549

¹⁴ For a detailed defense of the actions of Pius XII during World War II see The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights research paper, "Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust." For the most in depth book on the subject, see Rychlack's *Hitler, the War and the Pope*.

¹⁵ *Carroll* p. 44

¹⁶ *Cornwell*, p. 365

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 369

¹⁸ *Carroll*, p. 533

¹⁹ *Wills*, p. 65

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 68

²¹ *Cornwell*, p. 11-12

²² *Wills*, p. 259

²³ *Carroll*, p. 558

²⁴ *ibid.* pp. 443-444

²⁵ *Cornwell*, p. 362

²⁶ Cited in *Lord Acton*, by Rolland Hill (Yale University Press, 2000) p. 407

²⁷ *Cornwell*, pp. 3, 4

²⁸ *Wills*, p. 154

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 312

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 370

³¹ *Carroll*, pp. 547-604

³² *ibid.* p. 551

³³ *ibid.* p. 552

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 556

³⁵ *ibid.* p. 575

³⁶ *ibid.* p. 576

³⁷ *ibid.* p. 587

³⁸ *ibid.* p. 589

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 591

⁴⁰ *Cornwell*, p. 370

⁴¹ *Papal Primacy in the Third Millennium*, by Russell Shaw (Our Sunday Visitor, 2001).

⁴² *Shaw*, p. 14

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 22

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 30

Pope Pius IX

by Robert P. Lockwood

(9/2000)

Shortly before the joint beatification of Pope John XXIII and Pope Pius IX on September 3, 2000, Catholic News Service

published a story contrasting popular reaction to the two men.¹ The report noted Italian television specials planned on Pope John XXIII, gift shops crowded with holy cards, books and videos on his life, and pilgrims still flocking to his tomb. This was contrasted with virtual silence over Pope Pius IX, whose tomb at the Basilica of St. Lawrence was closed to the public as workers wrestled with a drainage problem.

Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) remains "Papa Giovanni" in the public imagination. Though pope for only five years (he was elected as an "interim" pontiff at the age of 77), he is recalled as the pope who convened the Second Vatican Council. His encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* were considered landmarks in the development of modern Catholic social doctrine. On the popular level, he is remembered as much for his approachable demeanor and down-to-earth spirituality after the seemingly esthetic, mystical later years of his predecessor, Pius XII. The pope of ecumenism, John XXIII's popularity extended well into the non-Catholic world and *Time* magazine named him its "Man of the Year" in 1962.

Pope Pius IX is a man of another century. He served as pope from 1846 to 1878, the longest and one of the most difficult pontificates in history. (St. Peter's pontificate was traditionally listed as 25 years and, until Pius IX, it was assumed that no pope would ever reign longer than the first pontiff.) He was immensely popular in his own times throughout much of the Catholic world, though certainly not in the leadership of the burgeoning 19th century republics or in radical circles. He was the first public pope of the modern era.

Pope Pius IX, or *Pio Nono*, as he was both affectionately and not so affectionately called in Italian, has been treated less kindly by the world. Though Pope John XXIII himself spoke well of Pius IX and reinvigorated the

investigation of his possible canonization,² the popular portrait of his papacy has him as a diehard reactionary adverse to the modern world. He is pictured as interested only in amassing papal power, and through the First Vatican Council he substituted a definition of papal infallibility for the loss of the papacy's temporal kingdom in the nineteenth-century creation of the Italian State. He is seen as an anti-Semite who collaborated in the kidnapping and forced conversion of a Jewish child, with the dark hint of a papacy that helped generate the mindset in Catholic Europe that would lead to the Holocaust. Finally, he was the enemy of the freedoms of the modern world through his infamous *Syllabus of Errors* that condemned all that was right in modern thinking. This image of Pius IX persists. It is certainly encouraged within certain Catholic circles that have never forgiven the First Vatican Council's definition of papal infallibility. They create an image of Pius IX forcing such a definition on an unwilling hierarchy.³

Beatification and canonization in the Church involve judgments of sanctity on the merits and holiness of an individual's life. The reasons for the beatification of Pope Pius IX certainly center on those aspects of his life, not necessarily on the impact or results of the policies of his papacy. Yet, various pundits have put forward their own explanations of his beatification by Pope John Paul II. These range from an attempt to balance an allegedly "liberal" Pope John XXIII with the caricature of a "conservative" Pius IX, as well as the more realistic view of connecting the popes of the First and Second Vatican Councils. In any case, the alleged purpose of his beatification beyond recognition of his own personal sanctity is simply conjecture. What is of concern, however, are the historical caricatures created of Pope Pius IX. Painting Pius as the anti-Semitic enemy of freedom interested only in exercising power over lives fits a portrait of Catholicism common in the bitterly anti-Catholic world of

19th century Europe and America. The caricature also fits comfortably with contemporary anti-Catholic sentiment. Yet, Pius IX and his world – as well as his reaction to it – are far more complicated than the secularized propaganda that greeted his beatification.

Though Pope Pius IX would serve for 32 years, the modern caricature of his papacy surrounds four events: his resistance to Italian unification and political trends in 19th century Europe; the *Syllabus of Errors* that appeared to set the Church squarely against democratic ideals; the “kidnapping” of Edgardo Mortara, a Jewish child taken from his family by authorities after his Christian baptism was discovered; and the definition of the doctrine of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council of 1870. It is these events that bear closer inspection, while keeping in mind the larger agenda of a pontificate that would see the Church reborn and revitalized after it appeared to be virtually destroyed at the beginning of the century.

Background

The future Pope Pius IX was born Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti in Senigallia in the Papal States, the ninth child of a minor count in 1792. He was born into a troubled world. Before he had reached the age of 21, French authorities imprisoned two popes and, without the bravery of those popes, the Church would have become an effective puppet of France. The Church in revolutionary France had been virtually destroyed and the old Catholic dynasties of Europe seemed destined to collapse.

In 1797, Pope Pius VI was forced by the French to accept the virtual destruction of the Papal States, the “patrimony of St. Peter” that the popes had ruled for over a thousand years. After a riot broke out over the planting of “Liberty Trees” around Rome, French troops entered the city

and Pius VI, terminally ill, was carted off as a prisoner. He died under French imprisonment in August 1799. His successor fared no better. Pope Pius VII had returned to Rome when Napoleon had assumed complete power and appeared to moderate his position against the Church. He concluded an agreement with Pius over the reconstruction of the French hierarchy. Pius VII was forced to take part in Napoleon's self-coronation as emperor in 1804.

Within a short time, however, Napoleon's desire to become "King of All Italy" and to secure the Pope's alliance in his war against the allies led to French occupation of Rome and cannons aimed at the papal residence. In July 1808, like his predecessor, Pope Pius VII was arrested by French troops when he refused to abdicate as sovereign of the Papal States. He would live as a monk (he had been a Benedictine monk prior to his election) in the episcopal residence at Savona for four years before being forced to France in 1812. He was unable to exercise any authority and on more than one occasion, came close to virtually surrendering his authority over the Church to the whim of the Emperor. But with Napoleon's defeat, Pius returned to Rome on March 24, 1814, welcomed as a living martyr.⁴

Before Giovanni Mastai-Ferretti had been ordained a priest in 1819, two popes had been imprisoned and the Church in Europe nearly destroyed by the revolutionary movements and nationalist fervor that swept out of France and across the continent. At age 15, the young man had begun to suffer from epileptic seizures and he needed a special episcopal dispensation before ordination. It required that he not celebrate Mass without the assistance of another priest. However, his career soon progressed rapidly. He was assigned to the papal diplomatic corps (he would serve for a time in Chile) and in 1827 became archbishop of Spoleto and, in 1832, bishop of Imola near Bologna.

The Church had been dramatically affected by the chaos of the French Revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath. The seizure and restoration of the Papal States had a strong impact on how the Church viewed itself and what was necessary for it to continue its mission in the 19th century. The Papal States were lands in Italy directly ruled by the Holy See, stretching back over the centuries. Though tradition held that they came by donation of the Emperor Constantine in the Fourth Century, they can directly be traced to the "Donation of Pepin" in 756. Varying in size, but always centered in Rome, the Papal States were ruled directly by the Pope as a temporal sovereign. Napoleon had annexed the Papal States to the French Empire in 1809. The reconstruction of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 restored the Papal States.

The surrender of the Papal States by Pius VII and his virtual incarceration by Napoleon reinforced in the Church the vital need for the pope to maintain his position as a temporal ruler. Without the Papal States, the Emperor dominated Pius and his spiritual authority compromised. It became clear to the Church at the time what history appeared to teach: without the Papal States, the pope could become merely a pawn of whatever European ruler dominated at any given point. The pope should be a citizen of no country and not subject to the laws of individual rulers. Free exercise of the papal ministry was equated with the freedom guaranteed by being a temporal ruler subject to no other ruler or nation. "On the lips of Napoleon the call for the Pope to lay down his temporal sovereignty and to rely on spiritual authority had been blatant code for the enslavement of the papacy to French imperial ambitions. Without his temporal power, Pius VII...had come within a whisker of signing away his spiritual authority. If the Pope did not remain a temporal king, then it seemed he could no longer be the Church's chief bishop."⁵ That firm belief was central to Church's understanding from 1814 on. But it would directly clash with the movement for Italian

unification as a nation-state. The Papal States cut Italy in half and was centered in Rome, Italy's most important and historic city.

While the Church struggled to rebuild after the devastation of the Napoleonic wars, the restoration of the monarchies established by the Congress of Vienna would prove a chimera. A new world was emerging where national identity – rather than identity with ancient royal houses – would become a driving force in both politics and how people thought of themselves. It was an era when racial identity, and racism, became a growing and dangerous part of “modern” thinking. This new “racialism” would underlie many of the tragedies that would be faced by Giovanni Mastai-Ferretti when elected pope in 1846.

The two major predecessors of Pio Nono, Pope Leo XII (1823-1829) and Pope Gregory XVI (1831-1846)⁶ faced this new world sternly. Pope Leo worked diligently – some would say harshly – to reestablish firm control over the Papal States. Pope Leo re-instituted difficult rules against Jews living in the Papal States and followed a diplomatic policy that supported the royal houses of Europe. It was this seeming alliance between “throne and altar” in an age where there were growing movements toward more representative forms of government that was to be a difficult inheritance for Pius IX. Pope Gregory would carry this policy so far that he condemned a Polish Catholic uprising against the Russian Czar who viciously persecuted the Polish Church. Facing rebellions in his own Papal States, Gregory would not consider compromising to the principle of revolution.

At the same time, however, the severity of what the Church faced must be understood. The new, “liberal” regimes that would arise in Europe were not as we might picture them. The separation of Church and State, for example, was not a constitutional prescription for both to operate independently

of each other. It meant, instead, that the Church would be dominated by the new regimes. Church property was confiscated, religious orders suppressed, the Church banned from education. The government would determine Church appointments and anti-clerical legislation would be widespread. Papal authority to work with the bishops within the nation states would be severely limited, and government permission was needed – and routinely denied – for the publication of papal edicts and encyclicals. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Pope Gregory confronted over and over again governmental attempts to limit and suppress Church life. As will be seen in the section on papal infallibility, pressure for a clearer definition came from many bishops who had seen the papacy as their means of protection against state persecution and control.

At the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope Gregory had made what would be seen as a disastrous decision. Gregory had needed to call on the assistance of Austrian troops in the summer of 1831. The 1830 revolution in France overthrew the Bourbon monarchy reestablished at the Congress of Vienna and replaced it with the so-called “Citizen King,” Louis Phillippe, who would rule until overthrown in the revolution of 1848 that would return a Bonaparte to power. This sparked uprisings in Italy where there was growing popular movement for a unified Italian state. It was the birth of the “risorgimento,” the Italian reunification movement. Within weeks of Gregory’s election, rebels controlled many cities throughout the Papal States. He called on the Austrian government to help suppress the rebellion. “It was a fateful moment for the papacy, in which it threw its lot in with the big battalions, against a growing Italian desire for liberty and self-determination. The aftermath in the Papal States was disastrous. The papal prisons filled up, and exiles schooled Europe in anti-papalism.”⁷ Gregory’s rule of the Papal States, protected and propped up by foreign troops, was hated in Italy and became a symbol in Europe – unfairly when compared to most contemporary governments – of the worst in reactionary

authority.

This was the legacy that would be inherited by Pope Pius IX: a commitment of the Church to the Papal States as the only means to assure the freedom of the popes to spiritually rule the Church; a rise in nationalism and racialism as the dominant aspects of European life; a growing reliance on papal authority as the only means to protect the Church from the anti-Catholic repression of the new “liberal” states; and an unfortunate reliance on foreign troops to maintain papal authority within the Papal States, forcing the pope to be seen as a hindrance to Italian dreams of unification.

Pope Pius IX, Nationalism and the Italian Risorgimento

When Pope Pius IX was elected at the surprisingly young age of 54 the more conservative forces in Europe shuddered. At first glance, he appeared to be sympathetic to the new liberal nationalism. He was elected in only two days, one of the shortest conclaves in history. He was elected primarily by Italians, who made up 54 of the 62 cardinals.⁸ The new pope immediately ordered amnesty for prisoners and exiles, most of whom had been had been revolutionaries. The new pope was hailed a “liberal,” and Europe proclaimed him a hero. In Italy and in certain Church intellectual circles, it had often been expressed that the pope could provide the monarchical leadership of a united Italy under a constitutional government. In Pius IX, many Italians felt they had found such a man.

It was a misreading of Pius that would help create an image of an early, “liberal” pope that would be replaced by a reactionary once he faced revolution in Rome. This is a common understanding in historical interpretation of his reign, but needs to be modified. In fact, Pius from his first days could not be defined politically. He was moderate, deeply spiritual, yet also a simple man. He would be known for a playful sense of humor (as well as a sharp temper), and had an

almost naïve, caring soul. Even when his temper gained the best of him, he did not bear grudges and was almost always self-effacing and apologetic at the next meeting with those who had generated his anger. Even his most strident enemies, once having met him, uniformly praised his charm, spirituality and simplicity. Most important, he was completely and totally a man of the Church who saw God's providence in all the events of his reign. Even in the loss of the Rome and the Papal States he would see the mysterious action of God. Though certainly sympathetic early to Italian patriotic movements, his concern was with the Church and, through the Church, for the salvation of souls. Ascribing to Pius a consistent and driving political philosophy or a political agenda separate from the Church is to misunderstand the man. Even his loyalty to the Papal States was not a temporal matter. He saw his rule as part of the Patrimony of Peter and as an absolute necessity for the spiritual independence of the Church.

Pius IX began rudimentary representative political reforms in the Papal States. He removed many of the restrictions on Jews and tore open the gates of the Jewish ghetto in Rome. In 1847, he demanded that the Austrians withdraw from a border city within the Papal States. When the Austrians withdrew, he was seen as a hero to Italian patriots. (It is said that the revolutionary Garibaldi, living in Brazil, offered his service to the papal representative upon hearing the news.) More and more, Italian patriots came to believe that unification could be had by throwing the Austrians out of Italy, overthrowing the "foreign rulers," and establishing Pope Pius IX as a constitutional monarch.

In the year 1848, revolutions swept Europe. Louis Phillippe lost his throne in France and rulers throughout the states of Germany faced uprisings. In Austria, the architect of the Europe that arose from the Congress of Vienna, Chancellor Metternich, was overthrown. In a short time, Italy was in flames. Pius IX had instituted reforms in the

government of the Papal States that were promising, and in 1848 he established elected municipal government in Rome. But the fear remained that whatever happened, revolutions in Italy would be squelched by Austrian or French troops. When war broke out in northern Italy against the Austrians, it was hoped that the Pope would order papal troops to join the battle. He did not. Instead, on April 29, 1848, he announced that he could not send men to war on a Catholic nation. He renounced any tactic to name him king of a unified Italy, and called for an end to violent revolution. Throughout Italy, it was believed that the Pope had abandoned the cause of liberty.

Pius struggled over the next few months to maintain the integrity – and neutrality – of the Papal States against the Austrian army, while keeping civil peace within the Papal States. Rome itself was seething with violence and potential revolution. Pius appointed Pelligrino Rossi to be his prime minister in September. Rossi “cleansed the police force of unreliable men, ordered an army battalion out of Rome, protected the Jews in the old ghetto who were at risk from the mob, brought in a strong force of police from outside Rome, and ejected to Naples a couple of well-known revolutionaries...”⁹ He hoped to counter the king of Piedmont in northern Italy who was making strong moves to head up a federated Italian state. He cleaned up the streets of Rome and made them safe. He gave all the appearances of a man putting down a rebellion. He was. And on November 15th he was stabbed to death.

Mob violence exploded in Rome. Outside the papal residence, the Quirinal palace, a mob demanded a new government, and a monsignor standing next to the Pope was killed by gunfire. When a revolutionary government was forced on the Pope, he decided to flee Rome and went to Gaeta under the protection of King Ferdinand of Naples. In Rome, the revolutionary government attempted to secure the Pope’s return but could not guarantee his freedom to reign over the Church,

let alone the Papal States. The Roman rebellion turned ugly and though the new government attempted to restrain the mobs, priests were killed and churches desecrated. Five bishops were arrested and the government took over Church property. However, the revolts throughout Italy began to collapse under the crush of Austrian troops. At that point, the French, now under the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon, deemed it wise to invade Rome and restore order, rather than see the Austrians occupy the city. Nine months later, on April 12, 1850, the Pope returned. He abandoned the Quirinal for the Vatican, a symbolic move from the palace of his temporal authority to the home of his spiritual authority. For 20 years, Pope Pius IX would retain temporal power but solely through the occupation of Austrian and French troops in Rome.

It was certainly true that Pope Pius became far less sympathetic to the cause of Italian unification after 1848. Wherever revolutions occurred, widespread violence and attacks on the Church took place. He had been shown clearly what revolution meant in this period of European history, with a priest shot dead next to him. The revolutionary Roman government was decidedly opposed to the Church and vowed to eliminate the Catholic impact on civil society. Pius had seen revolution and found it dangerous.

In the three decades of his papacy, Pius IX would develop an enormous personal following among Catholics worldwide. The Church was growing rapidly, particularly outside the chaos of continental Europe. The internationalization of the Church expanded as it never had before. And Pius was its leading public figure, not because of his political savvy but rather the strength of his faith and how well it resonated with the world's Catholics. "The strength of the authority of Pope Pius IX in the Catholic Church lay not in the crowned heads, nor in the need of clergy under pressure from governments to appeal to Rome for help, nor in better communications, nor even, in the world-wide

sense in Catholicism, that the Pope was in danger of persecution in the modern world...Pius IX shared the people's affection for a warmth of devotion, for the cults of the Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Heart, and the coming forms of eucharistic devotion. He was a religious man and a pastor by instinct, not at all a politician. The development of the Churches in Europe during the next three decades elicited all the priestly side of him, so that his personal influence upon the Catholic Church became greater than any of his predecessors..."¹⁰

After the revolutions of 1848 and 1849 and their suppression, Piedmont – with a constitutional government under the monarchy – became the hope for Italian unification by driving out the Austrians and taking over the Papal States. It became the darling of liberal and Protestant Europe, while the Papal States were tarred as a medieval throwback destined for the dustbin of history. Piedmont would launch a series of anti-Catholic legislative acts to prove its stripes in Europe and to maintain support toward its goal of assuming the leadership of the entire peninsula. Under the brilliant leadership of Count Camillo di Cavour, a consistent publicity campaign to undermine the credibility of papal rule was undertaken worldwide. The spreading impact of newspapers on the rising middle classes would be a tremendous source in undermining his reputation in Europe and America in particular. Newspapers of this era were little more than hysterical propaganda sheets, as this was long before there existed even the slightest commitment to objectivity and balance. (It would be an important concept to remember when the *Syllabus of Errors* would condemn the concept of freedom of the press. This was a reaction not to objective and responsible journalism, but rather to the concept of hate literature and irresponsible political propaganda of which most newspapers thrived in that period.)

Pope Pius IX inadvertently fueled this hate campaign

when he reestablished the British hierarchy in 1850. The Catholic population in England had been growing through Irish immigration and had accelerated during the disastrous famine of the 1840s. The Catholic Church in England was ruled previously by vicars reporting directly to Rome. The reestablishment of the hierarchy allowed for direct and quicker action. It made sense. Also, the Oxford Movement within Anglicanism – an attempt to recapture the apostolic and Catholic nature of the Church – had recently led to a number of prominent conversions to Catholicism, including that of John Henry Newman. Combined with the reestablishment of the hierarchy, England saw all this and went through one of its periodic bouts of “no-popery.” A practical result of this was England’s formal declaration in 1856 that the Papal State was a European scandal and demanded that Austrian and French troops should be withdrawn.¹¹

In the United States, the 1850s saw the rise of anti-Catholicism in the powerful Know Nothing movement. A political movement prior to the Civil War, the popular appeal of the Know Nothing Party was based on a growing anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiment. Catholics were considered illiterate and ignorant Irish immigrants. They were viewed as bible-burners eager to rob the public till to pass on their superstitious beliefs to a new generation in their own schools where dangerous doctrines were taught. The Know Nothing Party combined nativism, anti-Catholicism, temperance and anti-slavery into a potent political force that would dominate in Northern state houses in the late 1850s.¹²

The combination of many of these forces not only dramatically impacted on the history of that era, but upon that history’s portrayal. The propaganda spread by supporters of Italian unification, England’s consistent anti-Catholicism, and a receptive audience in the United States, helped to create fertile ground for the image of an intractable medieval Pope dominating an impoverished Papal States yearning for

freedom from theocracy. These sentiments in combination would support what was essentially a land grab against a virtually defenseless Papal States by the government of Piedmont.

Cavour secured the support of France to oust the Austrians from their strongholds in Northern Italy and war broke out in the Spring of 1859. Cities within the Papal States erupted in support of the popular war to oust the Austrians. (When a revolt in Perugia was ruthlessly suppressed by Swiss mercenaries, the papacy took another propaganda defeat in the eyes of Europe.) Under the pretext of war, Piedmont annexed a large section of the Papal States. This was simple aggrandizement and Pius IX could do nothing but thunder in protest. With Garibaldi's victories in Sicily and southern Italy, Victor Emmanuel, king of Piedmont, was declared king of a not-quite-united Italy in 1861. The Papal States by now virtually ceased to exist, leaving only Rome and a small strip of western Italy under papal control. Throughout Italy, the new Italian state would wage war on the Church with the Church fighting back by refusing the sacraments and not taking part in state celebrations. Bishops were jailed, monasteries and Catholic schools suppressed, convents disbanded. All that was left was the final taking of Rome. Prussia had overthrown Austrian power in 1866, leaving only the French troops in Rome to defend the Pope. In 1870, at the onset of the Franco-Prussian War, the French troops were withdrawn and Victor Emmanuel sent his soldiers to secure the city. On papal orders, only token resistance was offered. Italy was now unified, and the Pope declared himself a "prisoner" and retreated to the Vatican.¹³

While in the Catholic world Pope Pius was viewed as a martyr, his defense of the Papal States reinforced an image of him as a stern opponent of freedom. It is true that, in the end, the loss of the Papal States would actually serve to elevate the papal reputation worldwide. At the time, however, it was viewed as a stunning defeat by both the Church itself,

and a secular world that assumed the Church had received a mortal blow. The Church would quickly understand, however, that loss of temporal authority for the Pope did not destroy his spiritual authority. In fact, it enhanced it in the eyes of the world.

Pope Pius IX would live for another eight years after the final loss of the Papal States. The absorption of the Papal States was an act of raw piracy no matter how positively the outcome was viewed by the world and history. The Pope would speak out – excommunicating those involved in the seizure – but never truly adopted a policy to either regain the Papal States or directly undermine the new Italian government. If anything, he hoped for a miracle and if no miracle was forthcoming, it must be God's will.

The final political challenge that engaged Pius IX was the Prussian *kulturkampf* under Otto von Bismarck. When the Prussian armies defeated Louis Napoleon in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the Prussian state would turn on the Church as its paramount danger. Among other matters, a series of laws were promulgated against the Church, including convent inspections, the removal of the church from education, the ouster of the Jesuits, the right of the state to reject Church appointments, and for the local Church to be free of "foreign intrusion," meaning papal authority. This was how the separation of Church and State was defined in the period. With the growth of the national State apparatus, all aspects of civil life fell under State control. It was strongly believed, for example, that religious schools would undermine the secular State. Education should be the monopoly of the State and it was viewed as a violation of Church and State separation if religious controlled individual schools. Education was the duty of the State to raise children in proper nationalistic fervor.

Bismarck's *kulturkampf* backfired. Strong resistance united Catholics under Pius IX. By 1877, Bismarck knew the

policy was a failure and would slowly withdraw it. When Pius IX died in 1878, Bismarck offered a toast and felt free to abandon the policy completely. Curiously, Pius is often blamed for the vehemence of the *kulturkampf*. The argument is made that the definition of papal infallibility promulgated by the First Vatican Council triggered repression of the Church in Germany. This was not the case. Bismarck viewed the Church as an enemy to control long before the First Vatican Council. Germany, he believed, could not be united with a strong Catholic presence as a counterpoint to the power of the State. Wherever the new nation states arose Catholicism was seen as a force that undermined nationalism.¹⁴

The endless battles of Pope Pius IX with the new Europe that was emerging throughout his long pontificate dramatically affected how he would be viewed by history. From a liberal “hero” in the first two years of his pontificate, Pius’ refusal to wage war on Austria in the cause of Italian unification turned “thinking” Europe against him almost overnight. Much of the popular knowledge of his pontificate is forever colored by the incessant propaganda of his political enemies. We also tend to forget that the “liberalism” of the growing nation states of Europe was not how we define liberalism today.

The nation states developing in Europe – fiercely anti-Catholic and highly nationalistic – were the forerunners of the totalitarian states of the 20th century. Bismarck’s Prussia and Cavour’s Italian kingdom, would become Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The seeds of this horrific development were planted in racialism, nationalism and communism that grew directly from the philosophy of liberalism of 19th century Europe. From that perspective, the political policies of Pius IX make much greater sense than merely a reactionary bigotry most often portrayed, particularly when the beatification of the pope was treated in the popular

press. It also helps to frame at least an understanding of the vehemence of his *Syllabus of Errors* and the concerns that were behind it.

The Syllabus of Errors

No other document of Pope Pius IX generated more controversy in his own time than the *Syllabus of Errors*. It became a document cited consistently – and to our own day – by fundamentalist critics of the Church. At the time it was issued, it was viewed by liberal Europe as proof that the Catholic Church was an anachronism doomed to extinction.

The *Syllabus of Errors* was issued as an attachment to an 1864 encyclical of Pius IX, *Quanta Cura*. The encyclical itself and the *Syllabus* had been in the planning stages for a number of years, though the immediate cause was a speech given in France by a liberal Catholic, Count Charles Montalembert in 1863. He argued that the Church must accept the rise of independent democracies and the new world that was emerging. The old Catholic regimes were dying, and absolutism was dead. The Church must forget the concept of Catholic states and enter the turbulent world of the new democracies. His view was summarized as a call for a “free Church in a free state.” It was better to tolerate error, as long as the Church was free to respond with the truth.

The speech irked conservatives within the Church who demanded a clear refutation. Particularly from the Italian perspective, they looked at the world of the so-called “free states” and saw confiscated property, nuns and priests driven from their Religious Orders, bishops arrested, the Church drummed out of any role in education or the public arena, heated anti-Catholic rhetoric in newspapers and legislatures, and the confiscation of the Papal States by armed force. They wondered if this was the future of a “free Church in a free State.”

By early 1860, many within the Church had argued that a formalized response to the errors of the modern world was necessary. The Church was being portrayed universally as the enemy of thought and civilization, representing a return to the Dark Ages. This disgusted Catholics who saw the Church as the converter of barbarian Europe, the preserver of ancient knowledge, the creator of the glories of the Renaissance, and the salvation of the world through Christ. To their minds, what had modern civilization created – slums, crime, political chaos, hatred, racism, war, agnosticism and atheism. They looked at the world since the French Revolution, and they saw not the rebirth of civilization, but its collapse.

The *Syllabus* itself was a collection of 80 statements from the Church responding to specific propositions. The *Syllabus* read as propositions to be condemned. For example, condemned were the propositions that “All action of God upon man and the world was to be denied”¹⁵; and “The State, as being the origin and source of all rights, is endowed with a certain right not circumscribed by any limits.”¹⁶

The encyclical and the *Syllabus* went through any number of drafts and, over time, Pius seemed to have lost interest in it and may not have read the final draft.¹⁷ The encyclical with the *Syllabus* was released in 1864 and caused an almost immediate firestorm. The encyclical in many ways was a fair statement against a host of current thought that remain worthy of condemnation today – indifferentism, atheism, rationalism. The *Syllabus* itself contained 80 condemned propositions, many of which are similarly worthy of rebuke: denying the existence of God and the truth of Scripture, the Church’s right to teach is dependent on the consent of secular authority, the equation of human reason with Divine Revelation, the all-inclusive authority of the State.

Other areas provided more graduated degrees of

difficulty, particularly if read in the context of today's understanding of the ideas involved. The condemnation of separation of Church and State seems archaic. What must not be forgotten is how such separation was defined at the time. It certainly meant in many countries, such as Bismarck's Prussia, that the Church was absolutely subservient to the State and must be divorced entirely from civil life. When the encyclical condemned freedom of the press, it was being drafted at the time of a viciously anti-Catholic press and a journalism that had no norms of objectivity or balance.

There are areas in the *Syllabus* that are both prophetic and a grim reminder of the philosophy of State and race that was growing more and more popular in Europe, particularly in the growing acceptance of the thesis that as the State represented the race of people, the State has the right to wield complete authority over the individual as the representative of the people.

The most serious difficulties in the public perception of the *Syllabus*, however, were in the last four condemned propositions. These propositions supported the concept of the Catholic Church being the official religion of a State and appeared to deny religious tolerance to non-Catholics. The 80th and last proposition would be greeted with hilarity and satire, when it condemned the notion that the "Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization."¹⁸

"The *Syllabus* was in fact a far less devastating document than it appeared at first sight. Its 80 propositions were extracted from earlier papal documents, and Pio Nono repeatedly said that the true meaning of the *Syllabus* could be discovered only by referring to the original context. So, the offensive proposition 80 came from the brief *Iam dudum Cernimus* of 1861. Its apparently wholesale condemnation of 'progress, liberalism and modern civilization' in fact

referred quite specifically to the Piedmontese government's closure of the monasteries and Church schools."¹⁹ That was the explanation given to the *Syllabus* in an immensely popular pamphlet written by the bishop of Orleans, Felix Dupanloup. Pius IX accepted the bishop's interpretation as accurate. Citing each of the propositions, Dupanloup noted the exact source of the condemnation in reference to an exact event or statement. This gave vital historical context to the *Syllabus* as well as a clear frame of reference. It roots the *Syllabus* in its specific point in time, and gives it a greater understanding than when read with contemporary eyes.

With Bishop Dupanloup's explanation in hand, much of the initial furor over the *Syllabus* died out. The *Syllabus* generated the most difficulty in the United States, where it was often used as anti-Catholic fodder in making the case that the Church was fundamentally opposed to the separation of Church and State, religious tolerance, public schools and free speech. It is still used today in that regard by some fundamentalist critics, forgetting the time and the context in which it was written.

The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara

In recent years, no event more surprised Catholics than the story of a young Jewish boy taken from the home of his parents during the papacy of Pius IX to be raised as a Catholic. Though it caused an international furor in its time, the story had been generally forgotten until resurrected in David Kertzer's, "The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara" published in 1997.²⁰ Kertzer theorizes that the story had disappeared because Jews were embarrassed that the young boy would eventually become a priest, and Catholics were simply embarrassed by the whole affair.²¹

Kertzer, however, makes the additional argument that the Mortara affair was also a sign of the roots of racial

anti-Semitism that would emerge in Italian Fascism, and as such the Church played a role in establishing the framework for the Italian racial laws of 1938.²² This misunderstands the motivations involved in the Mortara affair at the time, and forgets that it was the Church that protested vehemently the 1938 laws and was the single greatest protector of Italian Jews during the war years.²³

Pius IX was considered a friend and protector of the Jews during the early years of his pontificate. Rome had its own Jewish ghetto in 1846, established in the late 16th century. (Most other cities in Europe with Jewish populations had similar ghettos.) The ghettos existed both to “protect” Christians from possible apostasy in contact with Jews, and to protect Jews from mob attack. Jews were allowed outside the ghetto during the day, but were expected to return in the evening. Four synagogues existed within the Jewish ghetto in Rome, the only non-Catholic religious facilities allowed to function within the city. Upon becoming Pope, Pius IX ordered the end to various insulting traditions aimed at the Jewish community in Rome: anti-Jewish comedies, parading of rabbis in costume during Carnival, and the necessity that representatives of the community be forced to hear sermons once a year exhorting them to conversion. The walls enclosing the ghetto were torn down. To the Jews, “the liberal regime of Pius IX felt to them like a miracle.”²⁴

After the revolt in Rome in 1848, Pius IX initially withdrew these liberal statutes, angered at Jewish participation in the revolt (three Jews served on the Roman municipal council during the revolt). It was alleged – and doubtful – that Jews had robbed churches during the uprising. But though the restrictions were back on the books, and the insulting conversion sermon was reestablished, most of the anti-Jewish laws were no longer enforced and Jews were no longer confined to the ghetto. In different areas within the

Papal States, the Jews could generally live, work and move about freely, such as in Bologna.

"The knock came at nightfall. It was Wednesday, June 23, 1858." Thus Kertzer begins his study of the Edgardo Mortara affair. Bologna was still part of the Papal States and the Mortara family had settled there after the end of the uprisings of 1848 and 1849, rather well off as part of the new middle-class. Edgardo, age six, was one of eight children of Marianna and Momolo Mortara. The Mortaras had employed a Christian servant to help in raising the children. It was not an uncommon practice, though by law Jews were not to employ Christian servants. It had come to the light of Church authorities in Bologna, specifically the Dominican head of the local Inquisition, that the servant girl had baptized young Edgardo as an infant when she thought he was in danger of dying. (This was one of the very clear reasons why Christians were not supposed to be employed in Jewish households. It was against the law for Jews to be baptized without consent and fear of just such cases was at the heart of the legislation.) The law in the matter was clear: a baptized Christian could not be raised in a Jewish home. To do so at that time would be seen as being a party to apostasy, a denial of the validity of Baptism, and endanger the soul of the baptized. Edgardo was taken from his parent's home and transported to Rome, where he would be raised a Catholic.

The Mortara affair would create an international furor. It was quickly utilized by the enemies of the Church, and Pius IX, as a symbol of papal backwardness and viciousness. Just two years before most of the Papal States would be seized by the Kingdom of Piedmont in the rush to Italian unification, it became a valuable propaganda tool in the effort to present the Church as a medieval institution, and the Pope as an intolerant fanatic.

The difficulty for the Church, and Pius as he became aware of the affair, was that it was left with little choice

at the time. While it is impossible today to understand the position of Pius and the Church in taking a child from his parents, the action was not without precedent and was not uncommon. It was simply considered impossible for a baptized child to remain in a home where he would not – could not – be raised Christian. Such experiences were commonplace even decades later in America. As late as the early 20th century, it was common for Irish Catholic children to be plucked off the streets of New York and transported to the West to be raised by solid Protestant families. It was considered an act of charity and evangelization, assuring that the children would be raised good Protestants.²⁵ Later, out of sensitivity to such actions of the past, it became common practice by the mid 20th century to place orphan children in adopted homes of the same faith. It continues today in the area of racial adoptions, where it is preferred that an adopted child be of the same race as the adopting parents.

As the young Edgardo was transported to Rome, it was claimed that he showed immediate signs of the desire to live the Catholic faith, eagerly following the guards into church to celebrate Mass. The exact story, of course, will never be known of these early days as it became wrapped up in propaganda from both sides. Supporters of the Church would argue that the reality of Edgardo's baptism could be seen as soon as he was placed in a Catholic environment. Supporters of the parents argued that he was merely trying to please his kidnappers and longed to be returned to his parents. Edgardo would disagree later in life with that interpretation, though it is easy to understand how he was influenced by the Catholic environment that quickly enveloped him as a young child.

Pope Pius IX would eventually be asked to use his authority to have Edgardo returned to his parents. By then, of course, the papal hands were even more tightly bound by the international publicity surrounding the case. To give in,

would be to surrender to the enemies of the Church. Edgardo had also become a favorite of the pope, and could be seen scurrying around the papal rooms. He would eventually study for the priesthood and be ordained. When Rome was absorbed into the unified Italian State in 1870, Edgardo was 18 and had begun his studies for the priesthood. When another Jewish boy who had claimed conversion to the Church was seized and returned to his parents,²⁶ Edgardo fled to Austria. He eventually made peace with his mother and family, though his father passed away before they could be reconciled.²⁷ He remained a monk and died in 1940 at the age of 88 at a Belgian abbey where he lived and studied for many years.

The Mortara affair supplied the enemies of Pius IX with a strong propaganda weapon at a point when the Papal States were about to collapse. The extent of the vitriol aimed at Pius was enormous and worldwide. Adopting the anti-Catholic rhetoric of the Know Nothings, Jewish groups in the United States saw it as a Jesuit-inspired conspiracy of "soul-less lackeys," compared Pius to the "Prince of Darkness" and reminded their Protestant audience of the "history of these incarnate fiends, written in the blood of millions of victims."²⁸ For Cavour, who aimed at Italian unification, it was one more weapon to be used in the propaganda arsenal.

Was Pius XI's refusal to return Edgardo Mortara an act of pure anti-Semitism? In the context of the times, it clearly was not. This did not involve racial prejudice. The Church in Rome had a long history of defending Jewish converts to the faith and accepting them completely after such a conversion, as was done in the case of Edgardo Mortara. The Church in Rome viewed with disgust and disdain the Spanish Inquisition's attacks on *conversos* – Jewish converts to Catholicism accused in later generations to be secretly practicing the Jewish faith – as simple racial prejudice, or a means to extort Jewish money.²⁹ The motivations of Pius IX were

not anti-Semitic, though they certainly were offensive to the Jewish faith. But in his actions, Pius reflected both the generally accepted norms of the time concerning families of mixed religion, as well as the law as it stood within the Papal States. To return Edgardo would have been, to Pius IX, denial of the validity and sacredness of the sacrament of baptism.

The actions of Pius IX are not defensible in today's understanding, and would not be defended by the Church. Yet his motivations were not racially motivated. It was not understood by him to be an anti-Jewish act, but an act to assure the salvation of a soul. His motivation was primarily religious. He believed unquestionably that a baptized child could not be raised in an unbaptized household. That is why he so firmly rejected returning the boy, despite the favorable publicity it would have engendered for him in perilous times.

Papal Infallibility

In 1867, a huge gathering of bishops from around the world was held in Rome to celebrate the eighteenth hundredth anniversary of the deaths of St. Peter and Paul. It was both a celebration – and a reminder to the world – of the universality of the Church. It was to this assembly that Pius announced his plans for a General Council of the Church. The Curia opposed the plan, fearful that in those dangerous times a Council could show the world a divided Church. Pius had no such fears. It was originally thought that the Council would be pastoral in tone, dealing with the widely felt need to update Church canonical law and the status of the growing foreign missions. However, the agenda quickly turned doctrinal in intent. It was generally concluded that a Council was necessary to discuss the authority of the papal office itself.

Why? Many of the events of the previous 40 years had centered on the office of the papacy and the nature of papal authority. There were various movements at play within the

Church. On the one hand, a strong movement – referred to as “ultramontanism” – believed that papal authority must be understood in virtually limitless spiritual terms. Ultramontanism – from the Latin for “beyond (or across) the mountains” – traditionally referred to those European Catholics who supported papal authority over the concept of regional churches. These people believed that a strong papacy provided protection to the local Catholic communities and stood as a voice for the universality of the Church. This was particularly evident in states where the Church was under attack or subject to government control. There were other historic movements, such as Gallicanism which saw the pope as simply a “senior bishop among bishops,” which would dramatically limit papal authority in the face of national Churches. Similarly, there were strains of Conciliarism that sought to place the authority of General Church councils over the Church, or even “Josephenism” which would subject the local Church to the control of the State.

But at this point, many of those historic movements to limit the papacy had lost serious theological momentum within the Church. Even before the devastating events of the French Revolution and the wars of Napoleon, they had lost much of their theological steam. But those events, combined with 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. Virtually no one in the hierarchy of the Church outright rejected the theological concept of papal infallibility – that when the Pope addressed matters of faith and morals as the Vicar of Christ, he was guided by the Holy Spirit and therefore not subject to error. However, it had never been clearly defined as to the extent of that infallibility and that is where true divisions existed. A perfect example was the *Syllabus of Errors* – was that an infallible papal statement, true for all times and for all people? Was every public statement of the pope on doctrine and

morals to be considered infallible? The ultramontanes certainly believed so.

Pope Pius IX certainly leaned heavily toward the ultramontane definition of infallibility. Others, however, were far less certain. There were two prominent schools within the hierarchy, all in minority to the ultramontanes. There were some that rejected outright any definition of papal infallibility as unclear within Catholic tradition. While acknowledging the authority of the pope, they thought it theologically dangerous to attempt to define it. They believed that the authority of the Church had historically existed, that all Catholics believed it, and to define it would simply mean to limit it, or to misunderstand it. Others, called "inopportunists," felt that in the current state of the world, it was not "opportune" to define papal infallibility. This was the position of Cardinal Newman of England, as well as a number of prominent American bishops. They believed that a definition would cause difficulties within the liberal democracies for the Church, as well as with other Christian traditions. Finally, there were extreme anti-infallibilists such as Lord John Acton of England, a prominent Catholic layman, who dreaded any such definition.

Acton believed that a definition of papal infallibility would retroactively extend to bad popes and bad decisions of the past. He thought it historically a disaster. Acton also believed that authority in the Church should be greatly limited. It prevented the free exchange of ideas with modern culture. Truth existed within the Church, Acton believed, but authoritative statements were not in keeping with the spirit of the times. His teacher, the historian and theologian Father Ignaz von Dollinger, shared many of Acton's concerns.³⁰

Acton would be of three-fold importance to the Council. First, he became an outside agitator demanding

intervention from various governments to prevent a definition of papal infallibility. (It was later argued that Acton's rhetoric against the definition was utilized by Bismarck as a reason for the *kulturkampf*. Bismarck had his own reasons, however, and Acton's rhetoric was unnecessary to sour him on the Catholic Church.) Second, Acton was in Rome for the Council and provided accounts of the Council through his contacts with those opposed to a definition to von Dollinger. Under the pen name "Qurinus," von Dollinger re-wrote the letters and published them in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, an Augsburg newspaper. The accounts from an anti-infallible perspective were read internationally and became the basis for most historical accounts of the Council. Finally, Acton's Roman apartment became a center for strategizing the anti-infallible positions.³¹

Pius IX exerted as much pressure as he could to secure the definition of papal infallibility, proclaiming famously to one cardinal, "I am the church! I am the tradition!" Yet even Acton, who loathed Pius and looked for curial conspiracies everywhere, had to acknowledge that debates were open and ideas freely exchanged. He wrote in his journal, "Nobody molested on account of hostile opinion. Letters carefully examined, and much espionage. But no serious hindrance put in the way of distributing documents, pamphlets, etc. Newspapers frequently stopped; but distributed to the bishops, so that their effect on the course of events was not prevented."³²

The accusation is made that a definition of papal infallibility was demanded by Pius IX and forced on an unwilling Council by papal pressure, curial conspiracies, and squelched debate. Garry Wills charged that the Council was rigged and opponents silenced.³³ However, he has no explanation for the debate that openly went on for months, or that the final definition of papal infallibility fell far short of the

desires of the ultramontanes. The fact was that consensus emerged, except for extremists on each side, that spelled out a definition of papal infallibility clearly in line with Church tradition and the theology of the papacy. As the conciliar fathers grew closer to consensus and understanding, a definition emerged that was far from ultramontane. The Council proclaimed no new teaching that extended papal authority beyond a point the Church had understood for centuries. Subsequent popes have issued one *ex cathedra* statement (Pope Pius XII defining Catholic teaching on the Assumption of Mary in 1950) and did so only after extensive consultation with the world's bishops.

The definition of Papal infallibility by the First Vatican Council was not created or mandated by Pope Pius IX. It was a reaffirmation of a consistent teaching of the Church as subsequent history has clearly shown.

Conclusion

The legacy of Pius IX has suffered much at the hands of 19th century anti-Catholic propaganda as seen in contemporary negative reaction to his beatification. Pius was not an anti-Semite. His response to the "liberalism" of his day was not a response to liberalism as we define it. "The heritage of the eighteenth-century rationalism, however, together with the anti-religious or atheist element of the French Revolution, survived in the development of Continental liberalism and the centralized modern state. Belief reigned in the unstoppable advance of science, in Darwinism, in modern technology, economics, capitalism. The educated elite and the working classes constituting a new urban proletariat became increasingly divorced from religious influences. Politics and economics mattered as never before; political passions replaced the religious zeal of old."³⁴ It was a "modernism" that would lead not to a secular utopia, but to the horrors of the world wars of the 20th century and national, political and

racial ideologies gone mad.

Pius was not an anti-Semite, though he certainly was a man of his times in regard to the questions of religious tolerance. He defended the thousand-year existence of the Papal States not for monarchial pretensions, but for defense of the freedom of the papacy to exercise its spiritual authority. He defended the Church against modern propositions that were high-sounding, but utilized to arrest bishops, shoot priests, close Catholic schools, disband religious orders and force the Church out of civil society. Though firm in his belief in papal infallibility, he did not force a definition on the First Vatican Council that was greater than the tradition of the Church.

The greatest enemies of Pius IX never questioned the deepness and sincerity of the faith he believed and lived. His incessant promotion of a rich devotional life within the Church led to a renewal of popular Catholic spirituality that had not been seen for over a century.

Pius IX was certainly the first “popular” pope of the modern era, recognized and esteemed by Catholics worldwide. “The Catholic world knew this pope as no pope was known before...He was the first pope in the history of the papacy to be, in the modern sense of the word, news.” ³⁵

During his long pontificate, “the Church had been transformed in every aspect of its life. Almost the entire episcopate had been re-appointed during his reign. The religious orders had experienced a renewal and growth unimaginable a generation earlier, not merely by the expansion of existing orders, but by the creation of new ones. Many of these new orders were dedicated to apostolic work in schools, hospitals and overseas missions, and they represent an astonishing flowering of Christian energy.”³⁴ The Church grew enormously and the internationalization of the episcopacy

began in earnest. The hierarchy was reestablished in England, and the Church in the United States expanded at an enormous rate.

The long papacy of Pope Pius IX rescued the Church from its darkest days in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In 1815, the Church as an institution in continental Europe had nearly been destroyed. Two popes had been imprisoned, religious orders destroyed, the Church in chaos. When Pius IX died on February 7, 1878, after a 32-year reign, the Church had been reborn.

RESOURCES

The best biography of Pope Pius IX is not available in English – Father Giacomo Martina's three-volume work, "Pio Nono" is considered the best study of his pontificate. Eamon Duffy's "Saints and Sinners" gives an overview of his papacy. The section on Pius IX in Owen Chadwick's "A History of the Popes: 1830 – 1914" gives a solid overview as well. We await an English translation of "Pio Nono."

SUMMARY POINTS

- . Beatification and canonization in the Church involve judgments of sanctity on the merits and holiness of an individual's life. The reasons for the beatification of Pope Pius IX certainly center on those aspects of his life, not necessarily on the impact or results of the policies of his papacy.
- . Though Pope Pius IX would serve for 32 years, the modern caricature of his papacy surrounds four events: his resistance to Italian unification and political trends in 19th century Europe; the *Syllabus of Errors* that appeared to set the Church squarely against democratic ideals; the "kidnapping" of Edgardo Mortara, a Jewish child taken from his family by authorities after his Christian baptism was discovered; and the

definition of the doctrine of Papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council of 1870.

- . Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti was born into a troubled world. Before he had reached the age of 21, the French imprisoned two popes and, without the bravery of those two popes, the Church would have become a virtual puppet of the Empire. The Church in revolutionary France had been virtually destroyed and the old Catholic regimes of Europe seemed destined to collapse.
- . A new world was emerging in the 19th century where national identity – rather than identity with ancient royal houses – would become a driving force in both politics and how people thought of themselves. It was an era where racial identity, and racism, became a growing and dangerous part of “modern” thinking.
- . This was the legacy inherited by Pope Pius IX: a commitment of the Church to the Papal States as the only means to assure the freedom of the popes to spiritually rule the Church; a rise in nationalism and racialism as the dominant aspects of European life; a growing reliance on Papal authority as the only means to protect the Church from the anti-Catholic repression of the new “liberal” states; and an unfortunate reliance on foreign troops to maintain papal authority within the Papal States, forcing the pope to be seen as a hindrance to Italian dreams of unification.
- . Ascribing to Pius IX a consistent and driving political philosophy or a political agenda separate from the Church, is to misunderstand the man. Even his loyalty to the Papal States was not a temporal matter. He saw his rule as part of the Patrimony of Peter and as an absolute necessity for the spiritual independence of the Church.
- . When war broke out in northern Italy against the Austrians, it was hoped that the Pope would order papal troops to join the battle. Instead, on April 29,

1848, he announced that he could not send men to war on a Catholic nation. He renounced any tactic to name him king of a unified Italy, and called for an end to violent revolution. Throughout Italy, it was believed that the Pope had abandoned the cause of liberty.

- . When a revolutionary government was forced on the Pope in 1848, he decided to flee Rome and went to Gaeta under the protection of King Ferdinand of Naples. On April 12, 1850, the pope returned. For 20 years, Pope Pius IX would retain temporal power but solely through the occupation of Austrian and French troops in Rome.
- . After the revolutions of 1848 and 1849 and their suppression, Piedmont – with a constitutional government under the monarchy – became the hope for Italian unification by driving out the Austrians and taking over the Papal States. It became the darling of liberal and Protestant Europe, while the Papal States were tarred as a medieval throwback destined for the dustbin of history. Piedmont would launch a series of anti-Catholic legislative acts to prove its stripes in Europe and to maintain support toward its goal of assuming the leadership of the entire peninsula.
- . The propaganda spread by supporters of Italian unification, England's consistent anti-Catholicism, and even a receptive audience in the United States, helped to create fertile ground for the image of an intractable medieval pope dominating an impoverished Papal States yearning for freedom from theocracy. This would combine to support what essentially was a land grab against a virtually defenseless Papal States by the government of Piedmont.
- . In 1870, at the onset of the Franco-Prussian War, the French troops were withdrawn from Rome and Victor Emmanuel sent his soldiers to secure the city. On papal orders, only token resistance was offered. Italy was now unified, and the Pope declared himself a "prisoner" and retreated to the Vatican.

- . We tend to forget that the “liberalism” of the growing nation states of Europe was not how we define liberalism today. The nation states developing in Europe – fiercely anti-Catholic and highly nationalistic – were the forerunners of the totalitarian states of the 20th century. Bismarck’s Prussia and Cavour’s Italian kingdom, would become Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The seeds of this horrific development were planted in racialism, nationalism and communism that grew directly from the philosophy of liberalism of 19th century Europe. From that perspective, the political policies of Pius IX make much greater sense than merely a reactionary bigotry most often portrayed.
- . By early 1860, many within the Church had argued that a formalized response to the errors of the modern world was necessary. The Church was being portrayed universally as the enemy of thought and civilization, representing a return to the Dark Ages. This disgusted Catholics who saw the Church as the converter of barbarian Europe, the preserver of ancient knowledge, the creator of the glories of the Renaissance, and the salvation of souls. To their minds, what had modern civilization created – slums, crime, political chaos, hatred, racism, war, agnosticism and atheism. They looked at the world since the French Revolution, and they saw not the rebirth of civilization, but its collapse.
- . The encyclical with the *Syllabus* was released in 1864 and caused an almost immediate firestorm. The encyclical in many ways was a fair statement against a host of current thought that remain worthy of condemnation today – indifferentism, atheism, rationalism. The *Syllabus* itself contained 80 condemned propositions, many of which are similarly worthy of rebuke: denying the existence of God, the truth of Scripture, the Church’s right to teach is dependent on

the consent of secular authority, the equation of human reason with Divine Revelation, the all-inclusive authority of the State.

- . The 80 propositions of the *Syllabus* were extracted from earlier papal documents, and Pío Nono repeatedly said that the true meaning of the *Syllabus* could be discovered only by referring to the original context. So the offensive proposition 80 came from the brief *Iamdudum Cernimus* of 1861. Its apparently wholesale condemnation of “progress, liberalism and modern civilization” in fact referred quite specifically to the Piedmontese government’s closure of the monasteries and Church schools.
- . The *Syllabus* generated the most difficulty in the United States, where it was often used as anti-Catholic fodder in making the case that the Church was fundamentally opposed to the separation of Church and State, religious tolerance, public schools and free speech. It is still used today in that regard by some fundamentalist critics, forgetting the time and the context in which it was written.
- . In recent years, no event more surprised Catholics than the story of a young Jewish boy taken from the home of his parents during the papacy of Pius IX to be raised as a Catholic. Though it caused an international furor in its time, the story had been generally forgotten until resurrected in David Kertzer’s, “The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara” published in 1997. Kertzer theorizes that the story had disappeared because Jews were embarrassed that the young boy would eventually become a priest, and Catholics were simply embarrassed by the whole affair.
- . The Mortara affair is portrayed as a sign of the Church’s part in creating the racial anti-Semitism in Italian fascism. As such, the Church played a role in establishing the framework for the Italian racial laws of 1938. This is both to misunderstand the motivations

involved in the Mortara affair at the time, and forgets that it was the Church that protested vehemently the 1938 laws and was the single greatest protector of Italian Jews during the war years.

- . Upon becoming Pope, Pius IX ordered the end to various insulting traditions aimed at the Jewish community in Rome: anti-Jewish comedies and the necessity that representatives of the community be forced to hear sermons once a year exhorting them to conversion. The walls enclosing the ghetto were torn down. To the Jews, the liberal regime of Pius IX felt to them like a miracle.
- . It had come to the light of Church authorities in Bologna, specifically the Dominican head of the local Inquisition, that a servant girl had baptized young Edgardo Mortara as an infant when she thought he was in danger of dying. This was one of the very clear reasons why Christians were not supposed to be employed in Jewish households. It was against the law for Jews to be baptized without consent and fear of just such cases was at the heart of the legislation.
- . The difficulty for the Church, and Pius as he became aware of the affair, was that it was left with little choice at the time. While it is difficult today to understand the position the Church took in taking a child from his parents, the action was not without precedent and was not uncommon. It was simply considered impossible for a baptized child to remain in a home where he would not – could not – be raised Christian. Such experiences were commonplace even decades later in America. As late as the early 20th century, it was common for Irish Catholic children to be plucked off the streets of New York and transported to the West to be raised by solid Protestant families. It was considered an act of charity and evangelization, assuring that the children would be raised good Protestants.

- . Edgardo Mortara eventually made peace with his mother and family, though his father passed away before they could be reconciled.²⁷ He remained a monk and died in 1940 at the age of 88 at a Belgian abbey where he lived and studied for many years.
- . In his actions, Pius reflected both the generally accepted norms of the time concerning families of mixed religion, as well as the law as it stood within the Papal States. To return Edgardo would have been, to Pius IX, the very denial of the validity and sacredness of the sacrament of baptism.
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- . Pius IX exerted as much pressure as he could to secure the definition of papal infallibility, proclaiming famously to one cardinal, “I am the church! I am the tradition!” Yet even Lord Acton, who loathed Pius and looked for curial conspiracies everywhere, had to acknowledge that debates were open and ideas freely exchanged.
- . The fact was that consensus emerged, except for extremists on each side, that spelled out a definition of papal infallibility clearly in line with Church

tradition and the theology of the papacy. As the conciliar fathers grew closer to consensus and understanding, a definition emerged that was far from ultramontane. The Council proclaimed no new teaching that extended papal authority beyond a point the Church had understood for centuries. The definition of papal infallibility by the First Vatican Council was not created or mandated by Pope Pius IX. It was a reaffirmation of a consistent teaching of the Church as subsequent history has clearly shown.

- . Pius was not an anti-Semite, though he certainly was a man of his times in regard to the questions of religious tolerance. He defended the thousand-year existence of the Papal States not for monarchical pretensions, but for defense of the freedom of the papacy to exercise its spiritual authority. He defended the Church against modern propositions that were high-sounding, but utilized to arrest bishops, shoot priests, close Catholic schools, disband religious orders and force the Church out of civil society. Though firm in his belief in papal infallibility, he did not force a definition on the First Vatican Council that was greater than the tradition of the Church.
- . The greatest enemies of Pius IX never questioned the deepness and sincerity of the faith he believed and lived. His incessant promotion of a rich devotional life within the Church led to a renewal of popular Catholic spirituality that had not been seen for over a century.
- . The long papacy of Pope Pius IX rescued the Church from its darkest days in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In 1815, the Church as an institution in continental Europe had nearly been destroyed. Two popes had been imprisoned, religious orders destroyed, the Church in chaos. When Pius IX died on February 7, 1878, after a 32-year reign, the Church had been reborn.

ENDNOTES

¹Vatican Letter, by John Thavis, August 25, 2000, "Balancing Act: Popes to be beatified were very different" (Catholic News Service).

²Ibid.

³For the case against Pius IX within Catholic circles, see *Commonweal*, August 11, 2000, "No! No! Pio Nono!"

⁴For an outline of the troubled pontificates of Pius VI and Pius VII, see *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, by Eamon Duffy (Yale University Press, 1997) pp. 195-214.

⁵Duffy, p. 214.

⁶Pope Pius VIII ruled for 17 months from 1829-1830. He had been imprisoned for six years under Napoleon for refusing to swear allegiance to the French government. As pope, he would relax Leo XII's restrictive measures in the Papal States and would recognize the regime of Louis Phillippe in France after the Revolution of 1830.

⁷Duffy, p. 219.

⁸ *A History of the Popes, 1830-1914*, by Owen Chadwick (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998) p. 63.

⁹ *Chadwick*, p. 81.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 112.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 114-115, 124-125.

¹² See *Nativism and Slavery*, by Tyler Abner (Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 127-161.

¹³ Chadwick, pp. 141-160, pp. 215-218.

¹⁴ See Chadwick, pp. 254-265.

¹⁵ *Syllabus of Pius IX* (2).

¹⁶ Ibid (39).

¹⁷ Chadwick, pp. 174-175.

¹⁸ *Syllabus of Pius IX* (80).

¹⁹ Duffy, p. 229.

²⁰ *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, by David I. Kertzer (Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

²¹ Ibid, p. 301.

²² Ibid.

²³ For Vatican reaction to the Italian racial laws of 1938 see *Hitler, the War and the Pope*, by Ronald J. Rychlak (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000) pp. 103-104.

²⁴ Chadwick, p. 129.

²⁵ See *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, by Linda Gordon (Harvard University Press, 1999) for the case of Catholic children transported to be raised by Hispanic Catholic families. The children were seized upon their arrival to protect them from being raised in a Catholic – and Hispanic – environment.

²⁶ Giuseppe Coen was a 9-year-old Jewish boy who lived in the Rome ghetto who had asked his employer to assist him in converting, or so the story is related. His parents believed that his employer forced the issue. When troops entered Rome, Coen was found and returned to his parents. He apparently wanted nothing to do with them and demanded he be set free. A court ordered him to his parents' custody. They took him out of the city. He would eventually return to Rome and become a priest.

²⁷ In a curious aftermath, Edgardo's father was charged with murder in the death of a servant girl in his employ in 1871. He was convicted, then freed by an appeal's court when it was ruled the girl's death was a suicide. See Kertzer, pp. 266-294.

²⁸ Cited in Kertzer, p. 125, 126.

²⁹ See *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*, by Henry Kamen (Yale University Press, 1997), p. 309.

³⁰For a contemporary biography of Acton see *Lord Acton*, by Rolland Hill (Yale University Press, 2000).

³¹Hill, p. 200.

³²Ibid.

³²Ibid, p. 407.

³³ *Papal Sin*, by Garry Wills (Doubleday, 2000) pp. 252-256.

³⁴ Chadwick, 113.

³⁵ Duffy, p. 234.

Garry Wills: Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit

by Robert P. Lockwood

(6/2000)

It is a sad phenomenon of modern America that too often self-identified Catholics display anti-Catholicism or anti-Catholic rhetoric in the public arena. Anti-Catholic statements from Catholics, or those with Catholic roots, may seem to be an oxymoron. But it exists and those Catholics that engage in such inflammatory rhetoric against their own faith rarely see it as bigotry. Influenced by the dominant secular culture, they see anti-Catholicism as a product of enlightened thought, rather than an inherited prejudice.¹ Worse still, by the very nature of their Catholic background, their remarks gain a certain cachet in secular circles that would otherwise ignore them if the source were non-Catholic.

Generally, anti-Catholicism from Catholics comes from three particular sources. We begin with the "Uncle Pats."² These are Catholics who find Catholic beliefs and practices embarrassing in an age of enlightened secularism. Usually they are converts to contemporary agnosticism who consider themselves far too learned to practice the faith, yet identify themselves by their Catholic heritage. They do their best to show the secular world that they have "grown" by taking visceral pleasure in publicly denigrating Catholicism. When challenged for mocking Catholicism, their response is that they are "Catholic," though their practice of the faith might be minimal or non-existent.

Then there are those raised Catholic who convert to fundamentalist sects. Not all, of course, but too many of these former Catholics find it necessary to publicly heap scorn on their heritage. They are often bitterly anti-Catholic. They adopt a literal interpretation of Scripture and fling epithets at Catholic beliefs worthy of a 19th-century nativist.³ Curiously, one rarely finds Catholic converts from another Christian faith that behave in such a fashion toward their former denomination. For the most part, they have nothing but good things to say of their roots that they see as a positive part of their pilgrimage to Catholicism.

Finally, there are those Catholics who let their own vision of what the Church should or should not be poison their public comments. They often engage in the most shocking anti-Catholic rhetoric to push a particular agenda within the Church, with little interest in the impact such rhetoric might have on the image of the Church in the general culture. Their goal is to force change in the Church through assault. These are practicing Catholics who can come from any ideological perspective. However, they will engage in vicious and unfair attacks on the Church if they perceive that such attacks can bolster their particular viewpoint. In many cases, these attacks can be more vicious than that of the most engaged

secular anti-Catholic or fundamentalist. Worse, they carry greater weight because the source is Catholic.

In his study of news media treatment of priestly pedophilia, for example, Philip Jenkins found that many of the false and invalid assertions over the extent of the problem had been generated in the secular media by those within the Church. It was exaggerated to the media in order to advance a particular cause within the Church. The so-called right used it as a means to discredit what they perceived to be liberalism and laxity within the hierarchy and in seminary training; the so-called left used it to push an agenda that would eliminate priestly celibacy and allow for women's ordination within the Church. Both sides used the secular media to exploit and exaggerate the extent of the problem.⁴

All of which serves as an introduction to Garry Wills' new book *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit*.⁵ Wills seems to combine the worst features of all the above in a book that is both contrary to the teachings of the Church, and employs rhetoric against Catholicism that would never be utilized by a reputable publisher if the author did not identify himself as Catholic. If the author were not Catholic and prominent, *Papal Sin* would have only found a home in a far right fundamentalist publishing house or a small humanist press.

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

Wills has written a number of books on Catholicism, including *Politics and Catholic Freedom*.⁶ Written in 1964 when he was still within the *National Review* orbit, that book was an

attempt by Wills to explain how Catholics in the context of American political life could legitimately dissent in the arena of the Church's social teachings as defined by the pope. The book was written as a reaction to the battle that raged over Pope John XXIII's social encyclical, *Mater et Magistra* (*Mother and Teacher*). Written in 1961 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's great social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John XXIII's encyclical stressed the importance of social justice and human rights, addressed political and economic inequalities among peoples and nations, and voiced the concerns of underdeveloped countries. In response, an issue of *National Review* proclaimed, "Mater si; Magistra no."

It became a curious debate, as one looks back with the advantage of hindsight. To oversimplify, certain conservative Catholics took issue with the focus of the encyclical and complained of its "anti-capitalist" slant in a world where Communism threatened everywhere. Liberal Catholics defended Pope John XXIII's social agenda and argued that, as a papal encyclical, it should be accepted with "filial respect."⁷

Wills' 1964 book gave the conservative response, focusing not so much on *Mater et Magistra* but on the Catholic right to dissent from papal teaching, particularly in areas that do not touch on central notions of faith and doctrine. Wills' essential message was that papal encyclicals can err, and intelligent Catholics can legitimately disagree particularly when encyclicals deal with application of faith to contemporary issues.

Of course, when Pope Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 many flip-flopped. Conservatives argued the vital nature of papal teaching; liberals defended dissent. The difference, of course, was that the issue in 1968 involved matters of defined faith and morals. While Wills, for example, could argue in 1964 that many areas of *Mater et Magistra* did not involve clear and long-standing Church teaching, that argument could not be made in response to *Humanae Vitae*. Church teaching on

artificial contraception, though it had a convoluted history based on the weakness of scientific knowledge in prior centuries, could be traced directly back to the Church Fathers. Within the 20th century, Pope Pius XI had issued an encyclical in condemnation of the practice (*Casti Connubii*) and Pope Pius XII had reconfirmed that view in 1951.

That said, Wills was the rare bird in 1968 who was not caught having his own words thrown back at him. Wills had established a framework for dissent in 1964 that could be utilized again in 1968. His right-wing analysis in dismissing Pope John XXIII's social vision in *Mater et Magistra* had laid the foundation for his dissent from Paul VI's moral teaching in *Humanae Vitae* in 1968.

All of which serves as a lengthy introduction to *Papal Sin*. Wills had formally established a philosophy of dissent that moved from social teachings to moral theology, from interpretation of Catholic teaching on contemporary issues, to the level of assent granted to the exercise of the ordinary teaching authority of the pope in moral theology. In *Papal Sin* Wills takes the last steps in the pilgrimage by denying papal authority altogether and in questioning foundational Catholic belief. Unfortunately, it is a pilgrimage that too many Catholics have taken.

Papal Sin reads and argues at varying times as if its author can't decide if he is a Bible-thumping fundamentalist, a secular agnostic or a bitter ex-Catholic. But for the most part, Wills comes across as a Catholic with such a heavy-handed agenda that reasonableness or any attempt to accurately portray Church teaching has long since been abandoned for ideological zealotry. Wills states, for example, that the arguments for much of "what passes as current church doctrine are so intellectually contemptible that mere self-respect forbids a man to voice them as his own."⁸ Such language would demand an immediate retraction and apology if its source were non-Catholic. Wills – and Doubleday – believe that it is

acceptable as long as the author of the statement claims Catholicism as his own.

The level of rejection of basic tenets of Catholic belief within this book is profound, considering that the author firmly claims his Catholic identity and describes himself as a practicing Catholic. There is the standard fare concerning active support for women's ordination, dismissal of celibacy, and embracing of artificial contraception. Wills goes further than many involved in Catholic dissent by also professing unqualified support for abortion rights.⁹ But he does not stop there. In the course of the book he rejects the teaching authority of the Church if exercised without lay involvement and agreement,¹⁰ the concept of papal infallibility and any possibility of divine guidance to papal teaching,¹¹ the ordained priesthood,¹² the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist¹³ and that the priest has the sacramental power alone to consecrate the Eucharist.¹⁴ Apostolic succession,¹⁵ the Immaculate Conception and Assumption,¹⁶ and Church teaching on homosexuality are dismissed as well.¹⁷ For the most part, the right for the Church to teach at all in the area of sexual morality is generally dismissed if it involves the actions of consenting adults.

It will be left to others to expose the theological deficiencies in Wills' arguments. Wills' personal rejection of much of defined Catholic belief is his own sad business. The public difficulty, however, is that Wills' book will be utilized by those outside the Church with an anti-Catholic agenda to reinforce their prejudices. While Wills certainly sees his book as a call to arms within a certain cadre of Catholics, the greater impact will be to reinforce anti-Catholic prejudices and assumptions within the secular culture.

Though the title is catchy, *Papal Sin* is not a collection of anti-clerical tales from the dark ages meant to poke fun at the papacy. There is no reference here to the legend of Pope

Joan or the scandal of boy popes in the first millennium. Rather, "papal sin" refers to what Wills calls "structures of deceit" that he contends are inherent to the papacy. Wills charges that the Catholic Church exists in a system of lies, falsifications, and misrepresentations meant to prop up papal authority. And not only popes deceive. The whole structure and belief system of the Church, from sacramental and moral theology, to ecclesiology, Marian beliefs and the essential understanding of Christ's death as atonement for the sins of mankind, are part of a fabricated "structure of deceit."

The very title of the book – and the general thesis concerning "structures of deceit" – reflects classic themes of anti-Catholic post-Reformation propaganda. Much like Protestants in 17th Century England, or today's anti-Catholic fundamentalists, Wills is not content to merely argue that Catholic beliefs are wrong. He argues that they are consciously wrong. Church leaders know these teachings are wrong, yet they still attempt to impose such beliefs on the Catholic laity. Why would church leadership engage in such deceit? They do so solely in the name of power. "To maintain an impression that popes cannot err," Wills writes, "Popes deceive."¹⁸ Again, this goes far beyond theological exploration, dissent or disagreement with Catholic teaching. Wills is accusing the Church of conscious deception in fundamental beliefs. The Church knows these teachings are wrong, Wills charges, but they are taught anyway. These "pressures of deceit," Wills writes, "are our most subtle modern form of papal sin."¹⁹

Wills also embraces the "ignorant Catholic laity" portrait common to post-Reformation literature, though he gives his own twist to it. In this early Protestant argument, which thrives in today's secular world, Catholic laity believe in Church teaching only until they are exposed to enlightened thought. In Wills' twist, Catholic laity have been so informed and now dismiss most Church teaching. The difference is that in the

past, the assumption would be that Catholics would depart from the Church when properly enlightened. Today, Wills argues, there is no necessity for that because they are simply rejecting a “structure of deceit” that maintains an unwarranted papal authority that is not true to Catholic tradition. Those Catholic laity who maintain orthodox Catholic positions – “papalotors” Wills calls them – are silently cooperating with the “structures of deceit.” Catholics who reject these “structures of deceit” have, of course, grown.

The difficulty, of course, is that Wills’ theory is based both on an inaccurate understanding of the teaching authority of the Church and of the papacy. Similar to anti-Catholic Protestants in the 19th century, Wills distorts Catholic understanding of papal authority and then proceeds to knock down that straw man: “The Pope alone...is competent to tell Christians how to live”²⁰; defenders of orthodox Catholicism believe that “the whole test of Catholicism, the essence of faith, is submission to the Pope.”²¹ Catholics, of course, recognize the difference between the ordinary magisterium and infallible Church teachings. They also understand the teaching role of the papacy and its essentially conservative nature, in the best sense of that phrase, in defending the deposit of faith. The difference is that Wills summarily rejects any papal authority to teach and, as such, it has led him down a road that moves from quiet dissent on social issues to outright rejection of fundamental Church teachings. Catholics know that once it is denied that the Church can teach authoritatively through its foundation in Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in matters of faith and doctrine, one is reduced to a faith of his or her own creation.

Wills’ book is filled not so much with argument and documentation as with statements. He makes assertions and those assertions are the only substantiation for his positions. “Women,” he proclaims, were “censored out of the Last Supper,”²² without giving any Scriptural or historical

proof for such an assertion. And, "It is clear that the Spirit's presence in the community is what consecrates" the Eucharist²³ His sources are primarily secondary, and based solely on interpretations and expositions from those that share his views. Most of the book cites opinions sanctified by secondary sources that are as biased as Wills himself. His major source on priestly pedophilia, homosexuality and heterosexual activity is A.W. Richard Sipe, whose research has been seriously questioned both in its methodology and studied bias. Wills also misstates even friendly sources, or fails to acknowledge that reputable scholars seriously dispute the facts cited. For example, he states as fact that today "80 percent of young priests think that the Pope is wrong on contraception, 60 percent of them think he is wrong on homosexuality, yet the Vatican keeps up the pressure to have them voice what they do not believe."²⁴ His cited reference for these statistics is *American Catholic*, by Charles Morris, page 293.²⁵ In checking Morris, one discovers first that Morris clearly identifies that these were opinions of young priests analyzed in the mid 1980s – 15 years ago. Wills presents them as contemporary viewpoints. More important, the analysis that generated even these old statistics was strongly challenged for its accuracy at the time, and nowhere is that acknowledged. (Even in the vapid *Kansas City Star* survey taken in late 1999 to find out if priests were opposed to Church teaching on homosexuality, not even 20 percent of the priests responding advocated any change in Church teaching.)

Wills slips into a biblical fundamentalism when it serves his purpose. At times, he sounds like the anti-Catholic comic book publisher Jack Chick. He attacks the consecrated priesthood as an invention of the Church in the Fourth Century as a means to limit the growing popularity of the desert hermits. He declares that women were Apostles, stating that the reference by Paul to "Junias" in Romans 16: 7 is a cleverly edited reference to a female apostle, "Junia." (While one could make an unprovable argument that Junias could be a woman, it is

clear anyway that the use of the term “apostle” is generic and not referencing the Twelve.) Wills’ essential argument is that women should be ordained priests because there was no mention of ordained priests in the New Testament. Women can be priests because Christ did not *not* ordain women. Like a good fundamentalist, if a teaching cannot be cited chapter and verse in Scripture – a male-only priesthood – it cannot be doctrinal. At the same time, he ignores Scripture that contradicts his position. When the Gospels speak of the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist, it is clear in Matthew, Mark and Luke that only the Apostles are present. Wills simply dismisses this as censorship of the reality of women in attendance without establishing any foundation for such a charge.

Again, with almost a fundamentalist perspective Wills displays little understanding of Sacred Tradition and the development of doctrine. He dismisses the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a power grab by the Church to make the clergy “a hydraulic system pumping grace back into souls...a substitution of human agencies for the free action of the Divinity.”²⁶ He concludes that “grace is made a stuff controlled by the papal system of spiritual aqueducts and storage tanks. In a new form of idolatry, the Pope becomes a substitute for the Spirit.”²⁷

The Church has long understood the value of theological reflection and the necessity of forever growing in our understanding of the faith. Wills never sees any progression in the understanding of doctrinal truths and moral teachings. He responds to Church teaching on women’s ordination by refuting ancient arguments of ritual impurity. He attacks celibacy in a similar fashion with no expressed sense of the reasons for the historical development of that discipline. Every action of the Church is viewed from the prism of an insatiable papal power. One of the greatest sources of scandal historically within the Church – the control of the appointment of bishops by secular authorities – he simply

brushes aside. The desire to secure those appointments to the Holy See simply becomes another papal power grab.

While acknowledging at one point that Church teaching on artificial contraception is nearly as old as the Church itself and condemned by the Fathers of the Church, he states simply that we cannot “look for sanity” in their treatment of the issue. He condemns *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI’s encyclical that reasserted this traditional teaching as “truly perverse,”²⁸ while claiming that the only reason Pope Paul issued the encyclical was because he was “trapped by his predecessors.” *Humanae Vitae* “is about authority. Paul decided the issue on that ground alone. He meant to check the notion that church teaching could change.”²⁹ He offers no proof for that statement, of course, as the simple act of assertion is meant to make it fact.

In the discussion of abortion, he wanders off into the unanswerable issue of “ensoulment,” (at what point that God “infuses” the soul into unborn life). He then speaks of abortions in nature, when the body spontaneously “aborts” and snidely wonders if this means that God Himself aborts millions of souls to “Limbo.” Of course, the issue of ensoulment was debated in Church history to determine the stages of gravity of the sin but had nothing to do with the inherent evil in the killing of unborn life, acknowledged in the very earliest moral teachings of the Church (And it is foolish to equate Thomas Aquinas’ presentation of the issue of “ensoulment” and his understanding of fetal development in the 13th-century with contemporary science’s understanding in the third millennium). Of course, Wills knows that what we commonly refer to as “abortion” these days is the conscious choosing to abort life, not a natural miscarriage.

Wills berates pro-lifers that are willing to compromise on the issue in case of rape or incest, stating that this is proof of their fundamental dishonesty, rather than the realities that they face in combating legalized abortion within American

culture. Wills concludes his discussion on abortion by stating that he supports legalized abortion, but that "it is not a thing that can be proposed as an ideal and that women should not make the decision lightly."³⁰ He never states why he holds that position. If fetal life is not worthy of protection – if it is not "life" – then what possible difference could it make if women make the decision to abort lightly? And why would it not be "ideal"? If the fetus is nothing, issues of "ideals" are meaningless.

Wills moves into even shakier ground with his discussion of Vatican I and the definition of papal infallibility. Of course, he sees the definition of papal infallibility in the Vatican Council of 1870 as the ultimate power ploy by Pope Pius IX. He claims that Pius was attempting to establish a new doctrine and that the brave dissenters were silenced by papalotors in the Curia. Yet, as noted by Eamon Duffy, today's foremost Church historian, "Few nineteenth-century Catholics rejected out-of-hand the notion that the pope might teach infallibly. But many thought that it was dangerous to try to define just how and when that might happen. They thought it unnecessary, for the infallibility of the Church had never been defined, yet all Catholics believed it."³¹ Wills portrays the Council as an argument for or against infallibility, and a minority in opposition with the deck stacked against them and virtually silenced by papal manipulation. In fact, debate was hot and heavy throughout the Council. As the conciliar fathers grew closer to consensus and understanding, a definition emerged that was far from ultramontane (that virtually every formal utterance of the Holy Father was infallible). The Council proclaimed no new teaching that extended papal authority beyond a point it had held for centuries. Wills seems to think so, even though the subsequent popes issued one *ex cathedra* statement (Pope Pius XII defining Catholic teaching on the Assumption of Mary in 1950) and did so only after extensive consultation with the world's bishops.

In his discussion of the first Vatican Council, Wills canonizes Sir John Acton, a British Catholic who had developed a loathing for Pius IX and politicked behind the scenes to undercut any definition of papal infallibility. A student of Ignaz von Dollinger, a German priest who would leave the Church over the definition of infallibility, Acton's primary contribution to the Council was his attempt to undercut it by convincing secular governments to interfere. He began "a campaign to whip up public opinion and British, French and German action to prevent the definition. There was talk of the English Cabinet sending a gunboat."³² Acton actually managed to convince Otto von Bismarck's Prussian government to threaten to withdraw its ambassador from Rome, but the threat was never followed through. (Acton's rhetoric would eventually show its influence within the Prussian government. In 1871, the government launched the Kulturkampf against the Church, seeing Catholicism as an "alien" presence in Germany and the declaration of papal infallibility of Vatican I an internal threat because of alleged foreign loyalty. A series of vicious anti-Catholic laws were enacted and many clergy and prelates arrested.)

Wills sees his "structures of deceit" as an essential "dishonesty" in the Church over papal authority. He sees dishonesty in history and dishonesty in Catholic doctrine all to prop up papal authority. While his 1964 book was respectful in its dissent, *Papal Sin* has a distinct tone of viciousness that moves it from theological dissent to anti-Catholicism. Like an anti-Catholic polemicist, Wills slashes and burns, inventing evil motives, distorting doctrine and history, and resorts at last to ridicule. He refers to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as a teaching that would "muddy and confuse the nature of the Incarnation" and scoffed that Mary's "very flesh was a cosmic marvel, like kryptonite, unable to die."³³ Again reflecting the worst of fundamentalist rhetoric, he refers to Mary and Marian doctrine as creating "an idol-goddess"³⁴ that replaced the Holy Spirit as the object of

Catholic devotion.³⁵ Quoting Sipe, he calls devotion to Mary a sign of male immaturity rampant in the clergy and hierarchy, and that if one sees oneself as a "child of Mary" this can "infantilize spiritual life."³⁶

Wills sees the canonization by martyrdom of Edith Stein as an historical dishonesty. Stein, a Jewish convert to Catholicism who became a Carmelite nun, was murdered by the Nazis in the Holocaust. As a Christian of Jewish descent in a convent in Holland, Stein had first avoided arrest at the hands of the Nazis. But when the Archbishop of Utrecht publicly denounced Nazi deportation of the Jews, the exemption was canceled and Stein was caught in the roundup. She died at Auschwitz. Wills scoffs at her canonization as a martyr. Stein died because she was a Jew, Wills argued, and her Catholicity had nothing to do with it. Her canonization was a cold-blooded attempt to claim victimhood for the Church in the Holocaust, Wills states. Such an argument is loathsome. First, Stein died because she was a Jew and a Catholic, the very specific reasons for her arrest. Second, that is the reason for the canonization, not some attempt to claim victimhood for the Church. Pope John Paul II has worked tirelessly for improved Christian-Jewish relations. The canonization of Stein recognized both her heroic Catholic witness, and her Jewish heritage. In any case, Wills can cite nothing but second-rate charges by unfriendly sources to make a claim of the Church grasping for victimhood, rather than documented proof of any such strategy.

Wills' book proceeds in a similarly mean-spirited vein. He states that the Concordat that Pope Pius XI concluded with the German government in 1933 would prevent the Church from protesting against Nazi actions against Jews. First, the Church had no choice but to conclude such a Concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. Second, the Concordat gave 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, for example, that baptized Jews in Germany were Christian and should be exempt from legal disabilities. The first official protest by the Vatican under the terms of the Concordat dealt with the government-initiated boycott of Jewish businesses. Though the Concordat was routinely violated before the ink was dry, its existence allowed for Vatican protest, and it did save Jewish lives. Wills also claims that the Vatican wanted a strong Nazi Germany as a bulwark to the communist Soviet Union, though there is no evidence that the Vatican ever entertained such a policy. In fact, Pius XII intervened with the hierarchy of the United States to assure assistance to the Soviet war effort against Nazi Germany.

Wills tells the story of a "hidden encyclical," buried after the death of Pius XI, that would have condemned anti-Semitism. He concludes that the encyclical was killed because of that condemnation. However, he then quotes from the encyclical statements that are clearly anti-Semitic and bad theology as proof of how anti-Semitic the Church was at the time. It was this weakness of the encyclical draft that was the real reason it was never published, not some lurking anti-Semitism. Pius XII, an outspoken critic of anti-Semitism along with his predecessor Pius IX, would never have allowed such a poorly drafted encyclical to be released. But Wills does not accept that. The real reason, according to Wills, was that even though it was a terrible work, it still maintained a condemnation of anti-Semitism that the Vatican was loath to make. Wills' arguments are not only self-contradicting. They also fly in the face of an encyclical that already condemned Nazis and their treatment of the Jews (*Mit Brennender Sorge*, 1937), and additional written and public statements that would be issued by Pius XII and the Vatican throughout the war years, including his own 1939 encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, on the unity of human society.

Wills states that the document on the Holocaust (*We Remember*, 1998) denied that some priests and bishops supported the

Nazis. It did not. Wills then goes on to argue that since the Church is the People of God, if any members of the Church took an active role in the Holocaust, then the Church is "sinful." It's a curious theology that argues that any sin committed by any member of the Church becomes part of a collective guilt of the Church as the theological Body of Christ.

Such is the standard of reasoning throughout Wills book that he becomes so ludicrous as to proclaim that "Truth is a modern virtue."³⁷ That is stated about a Western culture that has as its bedrock value today that objective truth does not exist. Wills writes that the Church is "an institution that claims never to have been wrong, never to have persecuted, never to have inflicted injustice."³⁸ He does not state when the Church ever made such a claim, but certainly a hasty re-write will be necessary in light of the papal apology in March, 2000. But, once again, Wills makes these charges without ever documenting what clearly cannot be documented. Like a sidewalk evangelist in the old South, he asserts beliefs for Catholics that Catholics do not hold, then refutes them.

Wills' book is an exercise in anti-Catholic rhetoric. He tosses out offensive phrases and charges that would never see the published light of day if he did not hide under the cloak of his Catholicity. He calls *Humanae Vitae* "truly perverse teaching on contraception."³⁹ He decides that Vatican II was simply another Church exercise undertaken "within a structure of deceit."⁴⁰ He cynically states that Pope John Paul II "makes sex so holy that only monks are really worthy of it"⁴¹ and that his teaching is rooted in a "total devotion...to the virginity of Mary" so that "one man's devotion poses as the measure of divine truth. The rest of the Church must live in structures of deceit because this one man is true to his intensely personal devotion."⁴²

Wills takes delight in calling priests "the peoples eunuchs" and notes that a man considering the priesthood must question if he is "to become a eunuch, not for the heavenly reign, but

for the Pope's dominion."43 In a book sorely offensive to Catholics, Wills reserves his most offensive language toward the priesthood. Not only does he refer to priests as "eunuchs," but constantly calls the Eucharistic prayer of consecration at the Mass "magic." Even a Jimmy Swaggart at his most anti-Catholic bombastic would not stoop to such a level of pure insult to sacred Catholic belief. In one of the saddest sections of the book, Wills makes fun of an old priest for whom he used to serve at the altar. The priest would carefully and piously pronounce Latin words of consecration over the Eucharist (Wills calls them "the purported words of consecration"). He chuckles that the priest was "making sure the magic formula was given all its force."44 One wonders if he has lost all sense of decency.

Wills states without any documentation that priestly celibacy has chased out heterosexual priests and created a gay clergy. He also cites the practice of celibacy as a primary reason for cases of priestly pedophilia, this despite absolutely no clinical evidence to support such a monstrous charge, and the simple fact that pedophiles are very often married. He twists John Cardinal Newman's theological insight on the development of doctrine to mean moving from untruth to truth – or vice-versa – rather than to a richer understanding of the initial truth. He takes the concept of the "sense of the faithful" – an essentially conservative doctrine that recognizes the beliefs held by the laity for centuries have a role in doctrinal understanding – to mean that anything burped out in a contemporary survey has an equivalency to the deposit of faith. He concludes by calling the Church "a victimizer with Satan,"45 a perfect coda for a perfectly awful anti-Catholic diatribe.

Wills certainly considers his book some kind of affirmation for a small subset of Catholics who see the pope as the enemy and Church doctrine as a relic of the past. Unfortunately, Wills goes so far out that even the most liberal of Catholics

will find this a distasteful exercise. In the end this book will only be supported by those who already actively hate the Catholic Church.

SUMMARY POINTS

*Anti-Catholic remarks by Catholics gain a certain cachet in secular circles that would otherwise ignore them if the source were non-Catholic.

*There are Catholics who let their own vision of what the Church should or should not be poison their public comments. They often engage in the most shocking anti-Catholic rhetoric to push a particular agenda within the Church, with little interest in the impact such rhetoric might have on the image of the Church in the general culture.

*If Garry Wills were not Catholic, *Papal Sin* would have only found a home in a far right fundamentalist publishing house or a small humanist press. It would hardly have been taken seriously without the legitimacy conferred by its prominent author being Catholic.

*In *Politics and Catholic Freedom* in 1964, writing from a conservative perspective, Wills focused on the Catholic right to dissent from papal teaching, particularly in areas of social doctrine that do not touch on central notions of faith and doctrine. Wills' essential message was that papal encyclicals can err, and intelligent Catholics can legitimately disagree particularly when encyclicals deal with application of faith to contemporary issues.

*Wills had formally established a philosophy of dissent that moved from social teachings to moral theology, from interpretation of Catholic teaching on contemporary issues, to the level of assent granted to the exercise of the ordinary teaching authority of the pope in moral theology. In *Papal Sin* Wills takes the last steps in the pilgrimage by denying papal authority altogether and in questioning foundational Catholic

belief.

*The anti-Catholic sentiments and language used by Wills would demand an immediate retraction and apology if its source were non-Catholic. Wills – and Doubleday – believe that it is acceptable as long as the author of the statement claims Catholicism as his own.

*Wills exhibits the ordinary elements of dissenting Catholicism: active support for women's ordination, dismissal of celibacy, and embracing of artificial contraception. *Wills goes further by also professing unqualified support for abortion rights. But he does not stop there. In the course of the book he rejects the teaching authority of the Church if exercised without lay involvement and agreement, the concept of papal infallibility and any possibility of divine guidance to papal teaching, the ordained priesthood, the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist and that the priest alone has the sacramental power to consecrate the Eucharist. Apostolic succession, the Immaculate Conception and Assumption, and Church teaching on homosexuality are also subverted.

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

*Wills charges that the Catholic Church exists in a system of lies, falsifications, and misrepresentations meant to prop up papal authority.

*Wills is accusing the Church of conscious deception in fundamental beliefs. The Church knows these teachings are wrong, Wills charges, but they are taught anyway.

*His sources are primarily secondary and based solely on

interpretations and expositions from those that share his views. Most of Wills' book cites opinions sanctified by secondary sources that share his opinions.

*Wills' essential argument is that women should be ordained priests because there was no mention of ordained priests in the New Testament. Women can be priests because Christ did not *not* ordain women. Like a good fundamentalist, if a teaching cannot be cited chapter and verse in Scripture, it cannot be doctrinal. At the same time, he ignores Scripture that contradicts his position. When the Gospels speak of the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist, it is clear in Matthew, Mark and Luke that only the Apostles are present. Wills simply dismisses this as censorship of the reality of women in attendance without establishing any foundation for such a charge.

*Every action of the Church is viewed from the prism of an insatiable papal power. One of the greatest sources of scandal historically within the Church – the control of the appointment of bishops by secular authorities – he simply brushes aside. The desire to secure those appointments to the Holy See simply becomes another papal power grab.

*Wills speaks of abortions in nature, when the body spontaneously “aborts” and snidely wonders if this means that God Himself aborts millions of souls to “Limbo.” Of course, “abortion” refers to the conscious choosing of action to terminate a pregnancy, not a natural miscarriage.

*Wills states that he fully supports legalized abortion, but that “it is not a thing that can be proposed as an ideal and that women should not make the decision lightly.” If fetal life is not worthy of protection – if it is not “life” – then what possible difference could it make if women make the decision to abort lightly? And why would it not be “ideal”? If the fetus is nothing, issues of “ideals” are meaningless.

*Wills portrays Vatican Council I as an argument for or against infallibility, and a minority in opposition with the deck stacked against them. In fact, most 19th century Catholics clearly accepted the infallibility of the pope and the divisions at the Council concerned the necessity and extent of a formal definition.

*Those opposed to a formal definition at the Council were hardly silenced, as Wills charges. Debate was hot and heavy throughout the Council. As the conciliar fathers grew closer to consensus and understanding, a definition emerged that was not ultramontane (that virtually every formal utterance of the Holy Father was infallible).

*Like an anti-Catholic polemicist, Wills slashes and burns, inventing evil motives, distorting doctrine and history, and resorts at last to ridicule. He refers to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as a teaching that would “muddy and confuse the nature of the Incarnation” and scoffed that Mary’s “very flesh was a cosmic marvel, like kryptonite, unable to die.”

*Wills states that the canonization by martyrdom of Edith Stein was a cold-blooded attempt to claim victimhood for the Church in the Holocaust. Stein died because she was a Catholic and a Jew, the very specific reasons for her arrest. That is the reason for the canonization, not some attempt to claim victimhood. Pope John Paul II has worked tirelessly for improved Christian-Jewish relations. The canonization of Stein recognized both her heroic Catholic witness, and her Jewish heritage.

*Wills states that the Concordat that Pope Pius XI concluded with the German government in 1933 would prevent the Church from protesting Nazi actions against Jews. The reality is that the Concordat gave the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action. The first official protest by the Vatican under the terms of the Concordat dealt with the government-

initiated boycott of Jewish businesses. Though the Concordat was routinely violated before the ink was dry, its existence allowed for Vatican protest, and it did save Jewish lives.

*Wills calls priests “the peoples eunuchs” and notes that a man considering the priesthood must question if he is “to become a eunuch, not for the heavenly reign, but for the Pope’s dominion.” Wills reserves his most offensive language toward the priesthood. He calls the Eucharistic prayer of consecration at the Mass “magic.”

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

*Wills twists John Cardinal Newman’s theological insight on the development of doctrine to mean moving from untruth to truth, rather than to a richer understanding of the initial truth.

*Wills takes the concept of the “sense of the faithful” – an essentially conservative doctrine that recognizes the beliefs held by the laity for centuries has a role in doctrinal understanding – to mean that anything burped out in a contemporary survey has an equivalency to the deposit of faith.

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

FOOTNOTES

1See *Anti-Catholicism in American Culture*, edited by Robert P. Lockwood (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), chapter one, for an

historical outline of how anti-Catholicism remains an acceptable bigotry.

2A term first coined by Michael Schwartz in *The Persistent Prejudice* (Our Sunday Visitor). An excellent, if dated, review of anti-Catholicism, the work is currently out of print.

3There are any number of former Catholic anti-Catholics who could be quoted as representative. Bart Brewer, founder of "Mission to Catholics International" is a suitably hysterical example. Brewer, a former priest, was recently quoted as saying that the papal apology for past sins was part of a dark conspiracy "to rejoin separated brethren outside of Rome's control. Rome's mask will change, but the face remains the same. Catholicism is a political system." Quoted in the *Five Cities Gazette*, April 6, 2000.

4*Pedophiles and Priests*, by Philip Jenkins (Oxford University Press). Jenkins summarized his study in an article in the February, 1996 edition of *First Things*.

5*Papal Sin, Structures of Deceit* by Gary Wills (Doubleday, June 2000). All further references to Wills' book will give page number alone. Page numbers and content are from the bound galley edition provided by the publisher for review purposes.

6*Politics and Catholic Freedom* by Gary Wills (Henry Regnery Company, 1964).

7*America*, August 12, 1961.

8p. 5.

9p. 230.

10pp. 269-270.

11pp. 161-162.

12pp. 132-148.

- 13 "It is more the faithful who become the body and blood of Christ than bread and wine do." p. 140.
- 14 "The validity of the sacrament (is) in the recipient's unity with God, not in any preceding words of magic of the priest." p. 140.
- 15pp. 159-168.
- 16pp. 205-220.
- 17pp. 200-201.
- 18p. 7.
- 19p. 9.
- 20p. 163.
- 21p. 6.
- 22p. 118.
- 23p. 140.
- 24p. 6.
- 25 *American Catholics*, by Charles R. Morris (Times Books, 1997).
- 26p. 173.
- 27p. 173.
- 28p. 7.
- 29p. 74.
- 30p. 230.
- 31 *Saints and Sinners, A History of the Popes*, Eamon Duffy (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 230 ff.

32 *Ibid.*, p.231.

33p. 212.

34p. 212.

35p. 207.

36p. 213.

37p. 8.

38p. 45.

39p. 7.

40p. 85.

41p. 101.

42p. 102.

43p. 128.

44p. 136.

45p. 311.