

# COLUMNISTS

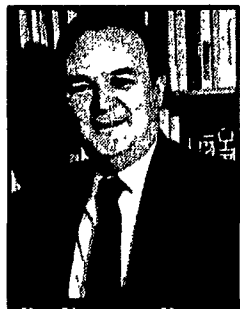
## Book renews debate over Pius XII

The publication of John Cornwell's new book, *Hitler's Pope: the Secret History of Pius XII* (Viking), has re-energized the longstanding debate about what the wartime pope, Pius XII, did or failed to do in the face of the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust against the Jews.

The reactions to the book thus far have covered the entire spectrum of views on Pius XII: from those who believe that he not only did no wrong, but that he was, in fact, a behind-the-scenes, saintly savior of the Jews; to those who regard him as a demonic, anti-Semitic religious despot concerned only with the Communist menace and threats to papal power. As in most cases, the truth lies somewhere in between.

One could not possibly resolve all or even most of the disputes about Cornwell's use of sources nor about the content of relevant archives, diaries, reports, trial transcripts, depositions and testimonies of various kinds. What is clear is that Pius XII was a pope of his times, which means he held the same inflated view of his office that most second-millennial popes have held, and particularly the three highly autocratic Piuses who preceded him: Pius XI (1922-39), Pius X (1903-14) and Pius IX (1846-78).

It would seem, therefore, that at least



essays in  
theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

one of John Cornwell's hypotheses rings true, namely, that in negotiating the ill-fated concordat with Nazi Germany, Cardinal Pacelli may have been motivated in large part by a desire to preserve and even to strengthen papal authority over local hierarchies and local churches. It is also clear from the record of his public pronouncements and devotional initiatives as pope (for example, his encouragement of devotion to Our Lady of Fatima in hopes of converting Russia) that he was more concerned with the threat of Communism than he was with the threat of Nazism and Fascism — which is not to say that he was "soft" on the latter two. But Cornwell makes a telling point: As pope, Pius XII imposed excommunication on those who voted Communist in post-war Italian elections, but no

Catholic had ever been excommunicated for supporting Hitler during this pontificate.

The recent flap over presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan's own new book, *A Republic, Not an Empire* (Regnery), is a reminder that, for many politically conservative Catholics of a wartime generation, including also Joseph Kennedy, the father of the late president, Communist Russia, not Nazi Germany, posed the only real threat to the United States and to the rest of the free world. And the same was true at the time of the Spanish civil war in the late 1930s. Catholics of similar political beliefs readily lined up with Francisco Franco, the Fascist, against the republican Loyalists, composed of Communists and non-Communists alike. During the Second World War, Franco Spain aided the Axis powers without actually entering the war.

The revulsion for Communism at the time was not misdirected. Communist ideology produced some of history's greatest evils against humanity. But when comparing two mortal sins, one cannot justify committing one because the other is thought to be worse.

To be sure, there was also an unmistakably positive side to the pontificate of Pius XII, beyond even his secret harbor-

ing of Jews in Rome. Whether he intended to do so or not, he laid the groundwork for the Second Vatican Council. His 1943 encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, on the church as the mystical body of Christ, prepared the way for the council's teaching that the church is the whole people of God (not just the hierarchy) and the temple of the Holy Spirit (a charismatic community as well as a hierarchical institution).

His encyclical of the same year on the renewal of biblical studies, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, also led to a renewal of Catholic theology by providing it with a stronger and deeper biblical foundation. Both together — an historically critical approach to the Bible and a biblically-based theology — informed and shaped the documents of Vatican II on the church, ecumenism, the salvation of non-Christians, revelation and religious liberty. Finally, in calling for a greater measure of lay participation in the church's worship, his 1947 encyclical *Mediator Dei* prepared the way for the council's groundbreaking Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the post-conciliar liturgical renewal. Meanwhile, the debate continues.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## Do we practice what we preach?

**31st Sunday of the Year (Oct. 31, 1999): (R3) Matthew 23:1-12 (R 1) Malachi 1:14-2:8-10. (R2) 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 13.**

Our Lord has given us few guidelines to judge the sincerity of our faith. The first is, do we practice what we preach? Many religious authorities of Jesus' day were excellent teachers. Unfortunately, they did not live up to their own teaching. That can happen to us and it does.

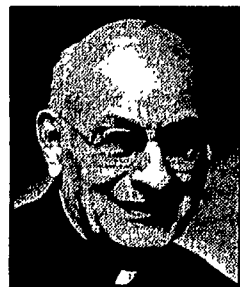
A man returning from a business trip was met at the airport by his wife. An extremely attractive stewardess walked by. Suddenly, the man came to life. Beaming, he said to the stewardess, "I hope we can fly together again, Miss Jones."

"How come you know her name?" his wife asked suspiciously.

The man replied smoothly, "You see, my dear, her name was posted right up front in the plane, under the names of the pilot and co-pilot."

To which the wife replied, "Okay, now give me the names of the pilot and co-pilot." The man's hypocrisy was uncovered.

Jesus spent some of his time uncovering the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his day. "Do whatever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice."



a word  
for  
sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

A man told a priest that he was a good church-goer, but that he needed "to clean up his act." Deep in his heart he realized that he had to change his life. The priest spoke to him about changing. The man listened. He returned home and told a friend, "A lot of our people are the same kind of hypocrite that I've been. I've cleaned up my act and made my peace with God. I'm going to try and help others to do the same."

Our lives should reflect what we believe. If they don't, it is time to clean up our act and make peace with God.

A second guideline Jesus gave us was, don't expect others to measure up to a standard that we don't keep ourselves. The Scribes and Pharisees had hundreds of rules and regulations. The Ten Commandments God had given his people

were elaborated by the Scribes and Pharisees into so many rules that the average person couldn't keep them.

Some time back, graffiti from the 1800s was found by workers renovating the Washington Monument. It reads: "Whoever is the human instrument under God in the conversion of one soul, erects a monument to his own memory more lofty and enduring than this." It is signed BFB. No one knows who that is, but the sentiment is on target.

Finally, is our faith centered in success or service? The Scribes and Pharisees wanted places of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces. They were more interested in recognition than service.

A panel at a college was to discuss, "How Faith Influences Your Choice of a Career." The panelists were asked to mention their particular vocations. One woman said, "I'm an attorney." A man said, "I'm in business. I own a computer company." A woman said, "I'm in real estate." Another said, "I'm a minister." A doctor got up and addressed the students. "We are here today to talk about vocation." He told them that the word vocation actually meant "calling."

"Well," the doctor told them, "my call-

ing in life is to be a Christian ... and one of the ways to do that is through the practice of medicine."

Later, the minister reflected, "That doctor wasn't being pompous or arrogant. He was a humble man who had a strong sense of partnership with God." Jesus said, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

### Daily Readings

**Monday, November 1**

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; John 3:1-3;  
Matthew 5:1-12

**Tuesday, November 2**

Daniel 12:1-3; Romans 6:3-9 or 6:3-4,  
8-9; John 6:37-40

**Wednesday, November 3**

Romans 13:8-10; Luke 14:25-33

**Thursday, November 4**

Romans 14:7-12; Luke 15:1-10

**Friday, November 5**

Romans 15:14-21; Luke 16:1-8

**Saturday, November 6**

Romans 16:3-9, 16, 22-27;  
Luke 16:9-15

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