

Does History Condemn the Church?

The Crusades, the Inquisition, Galileo, Slavery, and the Scandals—
Conceded, Corrected, and Weighed

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I. The Indictment, Taken Seriously

The most effective argument against Christianity has never been philosophical. It is historical, and it can be delivered in a list: the Crusades, the Inquisition, Galileo, the wars of religion, slavery blessed and defended, and, within living memory, the abuse of children by priests and the shielding of the abusers by bishops. Christopher Hitchens put the thesis in his subtitle—religion poisons everything—but the argument is far older than the New

Atheists and is made most painfully not by enemies of the Church but by her own history. If the Church is what she claims—a body founded by God, guided by His Spirit, teaching in His name—why does her record look so much like the record of every other human institution given power? That question deserves a better answer than embarrassment, and a better answer than denial. This essay attempts one.

Paul knew the shape of the problem in the first century: “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (Romans 2:24). He was quoting Isaiah, at Israel; the sentence has been quotable against the people of God in every generation since. Nothing in what follows will suggest the problem is new, small, or invented by the Church’s enemies.

II. What Is Conceded Before Anything Is Argued

Concessions first, and not through gritted teeth. Christians slaughtered the inhabitants of Jerusalem in 1099. The Church tried men for heresy, handed them to the state, and watched them burn; a papal bull of 1252, *Ad extirpanda*, authorized the use of torture in the process. Galileo was silenced by the Holy Office and died under house arrest. Christians bought, sold, and defended the buying and selling of human beings, and some did it with Scripture open on the table. For a thousand years Christian Europe taught contempt for the Jewish people—ghettos, including in papal Rome; forced sermons; expulsions—working the soil in which a later and greater horror grew, as the Church’s own examination of conscience, *We Remember*, has acknowledged. Priests abused children, and bishops moved the priests rather than protect the children. None of these sentences will be taken back in the pages that follow.

Nor is the concession merely this author’s. In the Jubilee year 2000, John Paul II led a public liturgy of repentance for the sins of the Church’s children across two millennia—“Let us forgive and ask forgiveness!”—and named the categories aloud: “Let us ask pardon for the divisions which have occurred among Christians, for the violence some have used in the service of the truth and for the distrustful and hostile attitudes sometimes taken towards the followers of other religions.” The violence some have used in the service of the truth: that is the Inquisition and the Crusades, named from the chair of Peter, in penance. Whatever else may be said, the Catholic Church is not in the position of denying her sins. She confesses them in public liturgy, which is more than can be said of most institutions with two thousand years of files.

III. The Standard the Indictment Borrows

Before the cases, notice the standard by which they are judged. The indictment assumes that religious wars are worse than other wars, that coercing conscience is an abomination,

that the strong owe protection to the weak, that a child's innocence is sacred, and that hypocrisy in the holy is viler than honesty in the pagan. Every plank of that standard entered the world's moral vocabulary through the faith being indicted. Antiquity did not think conquest needed excusing; it thought conquest was glory. The unique horror we feel at crusader and inquisitor is the horror of men betraying a standard—and it is the Church's own standard, preached by her against herself. As the observation usually attributed to this argument runs: when the Church is judged and found wanting, the scales used are the ones she built. This does not acquit her. It does mean the indictment is, at bottom, Christian moral teaching applied to Christians—which is what the Church, on her worst days, asked for.

It follows that the argument “the Church did evil, therefore the faith is false” needs a middle premise it never states: that a true faith would make its adherents incapable of betraying it. Judge a philosophy by its abuse and no philosophy survives—not liberalism, not science, not reason itself, each of which has been wielded by torturers. The serious question is not whether Christians have sinned, which the Church's own doctrine guarantees, but whether the faith taught the sin or condemned it. That question has to be answered case by case, and the cases follow.

And the charge of never being detectably ahead of the moral curve must reckon with the men who bent it: when the conquest of the Americas posed a question no pagan ethic had asked, it was friars who forced it—Las Casas before the crown at Valladolid, Vitoria inventing international law from a Salamanca lectern—centuries before any secular voice took it up. Ahead of the curve is exactly where they stood. The scandal, which this essay does not hide, is how rarely the faithful followed them.

IV. Wheat and Weeds: What the Church Said to Expect

One doctrine must be on the table first, because the indictment silently assumes its opposite. Jesus described His kingdom as a field in which wheat and weeds grow together until the harvest—the servants are told, to their surprise, not to pull the weeds now (Matthew 13:24–30)—and as a net holding good fish and bad. The Church He founded is promised indefectibility, not impeccability: preserved in her teaching, never in her members' behavior, and He said so in advance. A Church containing Judas was founded by a Lord who chose Judas. So the discovery that the Church's history contains scoundrels, time-servers, and criminals in high office is not a refutation of her claim. It is her claim—the half of it the world forgets she made. What would refute her is the other half failing: the gospel itself being corrupted into something that taught the crimes. That is the line to watch in every case that follows: what did the Church teach, and what did her members do?

V. The Crusades

The popular picture of the Crusades is of unprovoked religious aggression: Europe falling on a peaceful East to convert it by the sword. The picture modern crusade historians paint—Jonathan Riley-Smith and Thomas Madden foremost, and no apologists for atrocity—is different in its frame. By 1095 the Islamic conquests had taken, by war, roughly two-thirds of the old Christian world: Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Spain, Asia Minor falling. The First Crusade was preached as an armed pilgrimage to aid the Eastern churches and reopen access to shrines Christians had walked to for centuries. It was, in conception, a defensive and limited war—which is precisely why the Just War tradition could bless it.

And the concession must reach wider than Jerusalem: the Albigensian Crusade and the Baltic campaigns were wars against neighbors and against the baptized, defensible on no such frame—weeds among the wheat, by this essay's own test.

Conception is not conduct. The sack of Jerusalem in 1099 was a massacre; the Fourth Crusade never reached the Holy Land at all, sacking Christian Constantinople instead—an act the pope of the day condemned and a wound between East and West that John Paul II apologized for eight centuries later; and the crusading idea decayed, over centuries, into ventures no honest reading can defend. The record is what it is: a defensible cause, prosecuted by sinful men, with episodes of real wickedness. What the record is not is the cartoon—and the cartoon matters, because it is the cartoon that carries the argument “religion causes war.” The sober statistics on that thesis are treated on this site's page on faith, where the Encyclopedia of Wars' catalogue puts primarily religious wars at under seven percent of the whole.

VI. The Inquisition

The Inquisition is really two subjects: what happened, and what the nineteenth-century imagination made of it. On the first, the modern archival scholarship—Henry Kamen's revision of the Spanish record is the standard example, and it was work done in the Inquisition's own surviving files—has cut the legend down to fact: tribunals that were, by the criminal-court standards of their own age, procedurally careful; torture used, but more rarely than in the secular courts of the same centuries; death sentences numbering in the low thousands across three and a half centuries of Spanish operation, not the millions of the legend. Ironically, the Inquisition's skepticism about evidence made it an early brake on the witch panics: where its jurisdiction ran, witch burnings largely stopped, while the panics raged worst in lands with no Inquisition at all.

One more correction belongs on the record before its comfort is refused. The tribunals did not themselves execute anyone. An inquisitorial court's final sentence on the obstinate

was “relaxation to the secular arm”: the condemned was handed to the civil power, and it was the civil power, under civil law, that burned. Heresy had been made a capital crime by the state before the papal inquisition existed—Frederick II wrote death by fire into imperial law a generation before the first inquisitors were commissioned—and the Spanish Inquisition in particular was a crown institution: created at the request of Ferdinand and Isabella, its inquisitors appointed by the king, its confiscations flowing to his treasury. Within four years of its founding, Sixtus IV was protesting to the Spanish bishops that the tribunal was moved by lust for wealth rather than zeal for souls, describing in a papal document the faithful imprisoned, tortured, and handed to the secular arm without legitimate proof—and Ferdinand pressured him into retreat. The picture in which “the Church” burned while “the state” looked on has the mechanics nearly backwards.

State the corrections and then refuse the comfort of them. A tribunal that handed two thousand people to the fire is not acquitted by the observation that the legend says two million, and relaxation was a formality whose ending every party understood—moral responsibility does not launder through a handoff. Coercion of conscience was not an abuse of the system by bad men; for centuries it was the system, authorized at the top—*Ad extirpanda* is a papal document—and the Church’s full repudiation of religious coercion arrived only with the Second Vatican Council’s declaration on religious freedom, which grounded it where it should always have stood: in the dignity of the person and the freedom of the act of faith. The honest Catholic position is exactly the pope’s in 2000: the violence used in the service of truth was a sin against the truth it claimed to serve, and the Church that did it has said so, on her knees. What the case proves is that churchmen wielding coercive power sin like other men wielding it. What it cannot prove is that the gospel taught them to—the gospel’s own texts were the standing witness against the whole apparatus, which is why the apparatus finally fell to them.

VII. Galileo

Galileo’s case is one case, and its notoriety is a backhanded compliment: it is famous because it is rare. The Church that condemned him had been, and remained, the largest single patron of astronomy in Europe—cathedrals were built as solar observatories, Jesuits confirmed Galileo’s telescopic discoveries, and clergy from Copernicus (a canon) to Lemaître (a priest, father of the Big Bang) populate the history of the science. The affair itself was tangled with questions of scriptural interpretation, personal insult to a former patron pope, and a heliocentrism whose empirical proof did not yet exist—none of which excuses the tribunal. Galileo was right, the Holy Office was wrong, and it took the Church three and a half centuries to say so as plainly as John Paul II said it in 1992. One unjust condemnation in a relationship of centuries is a sin. It is not a war between faith and

science—that larger thesis is answered on this site’s science page—and no second Galileo has ever been produced when the challenge is to name one.

What the legend adds to the record should also be subtracted from it. Galileo was never held in a dungeon and never tortured. Through the 1633 proceedings he lodged in the Tuscan ambassador’s villa and, during the trial itself, in a prosecutor’s apartment in the Holy Office; the verdict was not heresy but the lesser “vehement suspicion” of it; and the formal sentence of imprisonment was commuted at once to house arrest—first as the guest of the archbishop of Siena, then at his own villa at Arcetri outside Florence. There he continued to work, received visitors, and wrote the *Discourses on Two New Sciences*, the foundation of modern physics, published in 1638. He died in his bed in 1642. An old man confined to a villa for teaching what was true is an injustice that needs no embellishment; the rack and the dungeon are the legend’s additions, and they are false.

VIII. Slavery

On slavery the record is double, and both halves must be told. Christians owned slaves in every century in which slavery existed, defended the institution from pulpits, and in the Americas built economies on it. Popes were among them: Nicholas V’s *Dum Diversas* (1452) and *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) authorized the enslavement of “Saracens and pagans,” and as late as 1866 the Holy Office could still hold that slavery in itself was not contrary to the natural law. Yet the same papacy condemned the enslavement of innocent peoples early, repeatedly, and in words that could not be plainer. In 1435—more than half a century before Columbus sailed—Eugene IV’s bull *Sicut Dudum* condemned the enslavement of the newly evangelized Canary Islanders and ordered the enslaved freed on pain of excommunication. In 1537 Paul III’s *Sublimis Deus* declared “that the Indians are truly men,” and decreed that they and “all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property... nor should they be in any way enslaved.” The line of condemnation runs on to Gregory XVI’s condemnation of the slave trade in 1839 and Leo XIII’s of slavery itself; it is real, but it is not unbroken. The scandal is not that the teaching was absent. The scandal is that popes and faithful alike, bishops and religious orders among them, fell below it for centuries when obedience would have cost them money—and that enforcement was not attempted with a tenth of the energy spent on doctrinal dissent. When abolition finally came, it came led overwhelmingly by Christians arguing from Christian premises: that the slave was a man, made in the image of God—which is *Sublimis Deus*, three centuries late and from other mouths.

IX. The Abuse Crisis

The abuse crisis is the hardest case, because it is not history; the victims are alive. Say the whole of it first. Catholic priests sexually abused children and adolescents—thousands of them, over decades. Bishops who knew moved the men from parish to parish, treated the crimes as sins to be absolved and scandals to be managed, sent abusers to treatment programs and returned them to ministry, and called the police almost never: in the American data, police were contacted regarding fourteen percent of the accused, and many of those reports came only after the statute of limitations had run. The cover-up was not an aberration of a few bad dioceses. It was the default institutional reflex, and it compounded the crime with betrayal by the very office that existed to protect the flock. Nothing in the paragraphs that follow qualifies this one.

The data, for the record, come from the Church's own commissioned study—the John Jay College reports, built on the files of nearly every American diocese. Accused priests numbered 4,392 of the 109,694 who served between 1950 and 2002: four percent, ranging from three to six across regions. Four percent is a catastrophe, not a comfort, and this essay declines the usual next sentence—comparisons to other institutions—both because the data for fair comparison are poor and because “others too” is not a defense the Church that wrote Matthew 18:6 is entitled to make. What the case establishes, with a clarity none of the historical cases can match, is the distinction this essay has used throughout: the teaching and the men. No reading of Catholic doctrine produces the abuse of a child; the catechism the abusers were ordained to teach condemns what they did in the plainest words it has. The crimes were committed against the teaching, and concealed by men whose office made the concealment sacrilege. That is the wheat-and-weeds doctrine at its darkest—and it is also, for what it is worth, the reason the Church could be reformed rather than merely exposed: the standard by which her bishops stood condemned was her own, and the reforms since—review boards, mandatory reporting, the laicizations—were demanded by Catholics on Catholic grounds.

X. The Church and the Jewish People

The concessions named this count at the outset, and it belongs among the gravest: for a thousand years Christian Europe taught contempt for the Jewish people. Ghettos stood in papal Rome; Jews were compelled to hear conversionist sermons; expulsions swept kingdom after kingdom; the Fourth Lateran Council ordered distinctive dress. Popes repeatedly condemned the blood libel—Innocent IV declared the accusation false in 1247, and his successors repeated him—while the popes' own city kept its ghetto into the nineteenth century, which is the double record of this whole essay in miniature. The Church's examination of conscience, *We Remember* (1998), acknowledges what that teaching of contempt did: it worked the soil in which a later and greater horror grew.

The horror itself must be handled with precision, because a legend and a debate have fused. The legend is “Hitler’s Pope”—Pius XII as the Nazis’ silent ally—and it does not survive the record. Pacelli helped draft *Mit brennender Sorge*, the 1937 encyclical against Nazi ideology that was smuggled into Germany and read from every Catholic pulpit. As pope he mourned, in his Christmas address of 1942, the hundreds of thousands consigned to death for no fault but their nation or race—words the New York Times praised at the time as a lonely voice in the silence of a continent. Convents, monasteries, seminaries, and the papal properties themselves hid Jews; his nuncio in Budapest, Angelo Rotta, issued protective documents by the thousand and is honored at Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations; thousands of Catholic priests, most of them Poles, were themselves imprisoned in the clergy barracks at Dachau. When Pius died in 1958, Golda Meir sent Israel’s tribute for a voice raised for the victims, and the chief rabbi of wartime Rome had already taken, at his baptism, the pope’s own name.

The debate, unlike the legend, is real, and this essay will not dissolve it. The Vatican’s archives, opened to scholars in 2020, confirm that detailed reports of the exterminations reached the pope early, and that he chose diplomatic caution over public denunciation—fearing reprisals of the kind that followed the Dutch bishops’ protest of 1942, when the occupiers answered a pastoral letter by deporting Catholic converts from Judaism, Edith Stein among them, and fearing for the thousands then hidden in Church houses. Serious historians divide over the choice: some judge that the quiet diplomacy saved more lives than thunder would have; others that the office of Peter owed the world a louder word whatever it cost. Both judgments are held in good faith, and the Church’s own document expresses repentance for the failures of her sons and daughters rather than a verdict on the strategy. The collaboration of nationalist Catholic factions—the Ustaše regime in Croatia above all, where some priests joined atrocities that other bishops fiercely condemned—is part of the record too, and stains it.

The doctrinal repudiation is *Nostra Aetate* (1965), which repudiated the deicide charge and condemned every persecution of the Jewish people. The deeper point is the one that runs through every case in this essay: the contempt stood condemned the whole time by the Church’s own Scriptures, which never stopped calling the Jews beloved for the sake of their forefathers, their gifts and their calling irrevocable. What the teaching of contempt betrayed was not an ambiguity in the gospel but its plain text—and when the Church finally said so, she was submitting, as she always eventually must, to premises she cannot escape.

XI. Where the Legend Was Made

The inflation this essay keeps correcting is not an accident of memory. Much of it was manufactured, and the manufacture is documented—in large part by a Catholic scholar.

Herbert Thurston, an English Jesuit, spent a career running anti-papal stories to their sources, and his *No Popery: Chapters on Anti-Papal Prejudice* (1930) is a case-file of the results. The lurid “secret life” of Pius IX that still echoes in popular anticlericalism was the work of Léo Taxil, a man expelled by his own Masonic lodge and repeatedly prosecuted for libel—this of a pope whose personal integrity even his political enemies conceded at his death. Thurston’s chief witness on the point is Nicolini, Pius IX’s fellow townsman and declared political antagonist, honest about what his own eyes had seen and credulous the moment he passed beyond it. A generation later, *Love Affairs of the Vatican* sold as scholarship what Thurston showed to be gossip pieced together without an archive behind it.

The selectivity has a shape, and Thurston named it: darkening the shadows. Real abuses are recounted without their context; worst cases stand for the norm; the historians of the school of Lea and Coulton rake the scandals of a thousand years into a single picture and present the heap as the Middle Ages. The habit is not confined to historians. When a diplomatic forgery made news after the Great War, *The Times* ran a retrospective of famous historical forgeries that dwelt on those discreditable to Rome—and passed in silence over the forged Parnell letters the same paper had published in 1887.

What makes Thurston worth citing is not that he acquits. It is that he refuses to. He rebuked Catholic apologists for denying too much, insisting that serious corruption existed and that at this distance its extent cannot be measured; he found the charges still overdrawn; and he pointed at the thing the prosecution’s picture cannot explain—in every sick century, the vigorous life fighting the disease. A sound constitution, he argued, shows itself not in immunity but in recovery. Boccaccio built a tale on the same observation: a Jew goes to Rome, sees the curia at its worst, and becomes a Christian, reasoning that no merely human institution could have survived such management. That is this essay’s argument told as a comedy. The Church’s survival of her own scandals is not evidence against her claim; it is the odd, back-handed evidence for it.

XII. The Other Side of the Ledger

An audit that lists only debits is not an audit. The same institution whose crimes fill the indictment invented the hospital as a duty owed to strangers, built the university, preserved classical literacy through the collapse of the western empire, created the framework of international law in defense of conquered peoples, and supplied the moral vocabulary of every reform movement the West has produced—including the ones aimed at her. The sciences grew up in her schools; the abolition of the ancient world’s universal slavery, twice, was driven by her teaching; the very notion that the weak have claims against the strong, which antiquity found absurd, entered law through men who had it from the gospel. None of this cancels a single crime. Ledgers do not work that way, and

neither does repentance. But the indictment's implied history—in which the Church contributed cruelty and nothing else—requires not reading any history at all. The sober summary is the one this essay has argued case by case: an institution of sinners, carrying a teaching better than its carriers, which over twenty centuries has done both enormous evil against that teaching and enormous good because of it.

XIII. What the Record Proves, and What It Cannot

What, in the end, does the record prove? It proves that Catholics, given power, abuse it at rates that ought to humble every triumphalist. It proves that the Church's holiness is not the holiness of her personnel, exactly as her founding documents said. What it cannot prove is the proposition the indictment needs: that the faith is the source of the crimes. On every count examined, the crime stood condemned by the criminal's own creed—the massacre by the pilgrimage's law, the coercion by the gospel's freedom, the slaver by the bull he ignored, the abuser by the catechism in his own hands. A poison poisons; a medicine betrayed is not poison. The twentieth century ran the control experiment, at scale: regimes founded on the explicit rejection of the Church's creed, and of the God behind it, produced in seven decades a mountain of corpses higher than two millennia of Christendom's worst—a comparison developed on this site's page on faith, and one no honest accounting can omit.

Be clear about what that comparison is for, since this essay has forsworn “others too” as a defense: it mitigates nothing and is not offered to. It tests the specific thesis that religion is the poison—for if it were, its explicit rejection should have cleared the water, and what happened was the reverse.

One objection remains, and it is the shrewdest: that the corrections arrive from outside—toleration pressed on the Church by the Enlightenment, the abuse reforms following the newspapers and the subpoenas—when a divinely guided institution ought, at least once, to have been ahead of its age's conscience rather than dragged behind it. Two things are true at once here. The dragging is real, and it is to the Church's shame; grace does not spare her the ordinary institutional sins of denial and delay, and the essay has conceded every instance. But look at what did the dragging. The Enlightenment's case for tolerance was built on the dignity of conscience—a Christian inheritance, argued back against its custodian; the journalists' case in 2002 was that sacred trust had been betrayed, which is a category the gospel created. The Church's critics keep winning arguments against her with her own premises, and she keeps—slowly, shamefully late, but really—submitting, because the premises bind her. An institution merely human would have relativized the standard long ago. This one cannot, and that inability, visible precisely in her humiliations, is a strange fact for the purely sociological theory of the Church to digest.

The Church's own verdict on her history was spoken in St. Peter's in the year 2000, and it is the verdict this essay ends on: forgiveness asked, without excuse, for the violence, the divisions, and the betrayals—by an institution that believes it will answer for them. An institution that confesses is not thereby innocent. But it is doing the one thing the indictment, for all its force, has never explained: judging itself by a standard it did not invent, could not have invented, and cannot escape. Where that standard came from is the real question, and it is the question this whole section of the site exists to press.

Endnotes

1. Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Twelve, 2007); the subtitle is the thesis. Romans 2:24, RSV, quoting Isaiah 52:5.
2. John Paul II, homily for the Day of Pardon, 12 March 2000, vatican.va; both sentences quoted exactly. The accompanying study is the International Theological Commission's *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past* (2000).
3. Matthew 13:24–30, 47–50; Matthew 7:16, RSV. On indefectibility as distinct from impeccability, see this site's essay *One Church, or Many?*, and Ott on the Church's attributes.
4. The framing of the Crusades as defensive in conception follows the modern historiography associated with Jonathan Riley-Smith and Thomas Madden, summarized here rather than quoted; a popular presentation is Steve Weidenkopf, *The Glory of the Crusades* (Catholic Answers Press, 2014). The Fourth Crusade's sack of Constantinople was condemned by Innocent III; John Paul II's apology came in 2001 and 2004.
5. Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (Yale, 4th ed. 2014), summarized here rather than quoted: procedural care by the standards of the age, torture rarer than in contemporary secular courts, and executions in the low thousands over three and a half centuries. On the Inquisition as a brake on witch panics, the Spanish instruction following Alonso de Salazar Frías's investigations is the standard case. *Ad extirpanda* (Innocent IV, 1252) authorized torture within stated limits; the fact is undisputed and no quotation is offered here. *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) grounds religious freedom in the dignity of the person. On relaxation to the secular arm, the capital character of heresy in civil law (Frederick II's imperial constitutions preceded the papal inquisition), the crown character of the Spanish tribunal, and Sixtus IV's protest of 1482, Kamen again, summarized here rather than quoted.
6. On Galileo: the affair's tangled particulars are surveyed in the library's sources (*Light on the Galileo Case*; *Galileo in Rome*); John Paul II's address closing the reexamination came on 31 October 1992. The corrections of the legend—no dungeon, no torture, the

ambassador's villa and the prosecutor's apartment, Siena and Arcetri, the Discourses of 1638—follow Shea and Artigas, Galileo in Rome, summarized. Copernicus was a canon of Frauenburg; Georges Lemaître, priest and father of the expanding-universe theory, is treated on the science page.

7. Eugene IV, *Sicut Dudum* (1435); Paul III, *Sublimis Deus* (1537), quoted exactly from the translation at papalencyclicals.net; Gregory XVI, *In Supremo* (1839); Leo XIII, *In Plurimis* (1888). The other half: Nicholas V, *Dum Diversas* (1452) and *Romanus Pontifex* (1455); Holy Office instruction of June 20, 1866. The defense is Joel S. Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery* (Alba House, 1996), summarized in the library; the critical standard is John T. Noonan, Jr., *A Church That Can and Cannot Change* (Notre Dame, 2005). Both are cited so the reader can weigh them.

8. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950–2002* (2004) and *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950–2010* (2011): 4,392 accused of 109,694 serving (4 percent; 3–6 percent by region); police contacted regarding 14 percent of accused. Both figures are from the reports directly. Matthew 18:6.

9. *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* (1998); *Nostra Aetate* 4 (1965); Romans 11:28–29, RSV, summarized. *Mit brennender Sorge* (1937); the Christmas radio address of 1942 and the New York Times editorials of 25 December 1941 and 1942 are summarized rather than quoted. On the range of judgments on Pius XII, John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* (1999) and Rabbi David Dalin's *The Myth of Hitler's Pope* (2005) mark the poles, both summarized; the Pius XII archives were opened to scholars in March 2020. Angelo Rotta is recognized at Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. On the Dutch bishops' protest of 1942 and its reprisal, the case of Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross) is the standard instance.

10. Herbert Thurston, S.J., *No Popery: Chapters on Anti-Papal Prejudice* (Sheed & Ward, 1930), summarized rather than quoted throughout—the chapters on the campaign against Pius IX and the modern slanderers, on papal forgeries, on “darkening the shadows,” and on what prejudice ignores; Taxil's expulsion and prosecutions, Nicolini's double character, and the *Times* retrospective are all documented there. The Boccaccio story is *Decameron* I.2; Thurston retells it. The book is held in the site's reference library.

11. The control-experiment comparison—the explicitly anti-theistic regimes of the twentieth century—is developed with its sources on the faith page (Phillips and Axelrod, *Encyclopedia of Wars*, and the discussion there).

For Further Reading

Day of Pardon Homily, by John Paul II, 12 March 2000—the Church’s public confession, quoted in both panels. Free online at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2000/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20000312_pardon.html.

The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests, John Jay College (2011)—the primary data both panels cite, unfiltered.

The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision, by Henry Kamen—the archival scholarship behind the corrected record.

Sublimis Deus, by Paul III (1537)—“the Indians are truly men”: the condemnation of slavery, in full. Free online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul03/p3subli.htm>.

Dignitatis Humanae, Second Vatican Council (1965)—the repudiation of religious coercion, on the Church’s own grounds. Free online at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html.

No Popery: Chapters on Anti-Papal Prejudice, by Herbert Thurston, S.J. (1930)—a Jesuit historian traces the anti-papal legends to their sources; readable at the Internet Archive. Free online at <https://archive.org/details/nopoperychapters0000thur>.

God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, by Christopher Hitchens—the indictment, from its most eloquent modern prosecutor.

The Popes and Slavery, by Joel S. Panzer—the fullest treatment of the papal condemnations; readable at the Internet Archive. Free online at <https://archive.org/details/popesslavery0000panz>.

The Glory of the Crusades, by Steve Weidenkopf—the modern historiography of the Crusades in popular form. Free online at <https://shop.catholic.com/the-glory-of-the-crusades/>.

Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.

Matthew 13:30

* * *

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.*

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A Note on Authority

This essay represents the author's articulation of *the Catholic assessment of the Church's historical record*, drawing on Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Church Fathers, and the major theological tradition. It is offered as a personal defense, not as an official statement of the Church's teaching. Where this defense is fortunate enough to align with the magisterial teaching of the Church, the credit belongs to the tradition that formed it. Where it falls short, the responsibility is the author's alone.