

HUMANISTS PARTICIPATE IN JESUS SEMINAR MARCH MEETING

JOE KLEEHAMMER ON "BECOMING A HUMANIST" ON APRIL 13

DICK TRICE TO REVIEW "AN ECONOMIC HIT MAN" ON MAY 11

HoFW WATCHES VIDEO "CRISIS IN RC CHURCH" AT MARCH MEETING

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

—Lord Acton, a Catholic, opposing papal infallibility

Eleven of us joined the Jesus Seminar at the First Methodist Church on March 8 to watch a video entitled "Crisis in the Roman Catholic Church" featuring James Carroll, a former priest, novelist, historian of the Catholic Church, newspaper pundit, teacher and advocate of radical reform of his church. The recent tribulations of the Catholic Church have been all over the press: four percent of the American church's priests have been charged with child molestation, 100 percent of the bishops have figured in the protection of child rapists, and more than 700 priests have left the ministry in recent years. Recruitment into the priesthood has fallen woefully short of demand. Many priests are having to serve three or four parishes. The church's endorsement of Mel Gibson's "Passion of the Christ" has thrown into relief the doctrinal retrogression of the church since the days of John XXIII and Vatican II.

Carroll finds not a whole lot to commend in the development of the church's theology beginning with the Council of Nicaea (323 CE) up to Vatican II. From the simplicity of the early Christianity its designation by Constantine the Great as the official religion was to bring a chain of events through which the church was almost constantly attempting to enhance its authority both in the spiritual and the temporal worlds. Its death-obsession ("cult of the cross") lent support to the "Christ-killer" charge against Jews. The church bears a large measure of responsibility for the periodic pogroms beginning with the Crusades and eventuating in the Holocaust. Its authoritarianism has aligned it with some of the most repugnant regimes of modern history. Socially, more often than not it has been reactionary, resisting birth-control, equal status for women and individual rights for gays.

Carroll calls on the church to renounce once and for all the doctrine of supersessionism (Christ is the only way to redemption). Religious toleration is firmly established only when each religion recognizes the legitimacy of its competitors, freedom of conscience and the dialectical nature of inquiry (truth is an unfolding process). The church also has to be democratized, Carroll says. He compares the current Pope to Leonard Brezhnev—holding on to a corrupt and doomed regime. He sees hope in a younger generation's demand for a voice in the selection of church authorities and in the management of the church. The clerical caste must be eliminated, women's rights recognized and freedom of expression endorsed. [Don't hold your breath.]

Vincent Browne, Columnist of Ireland's *Sunday Business Post* wrote the following:

[John Paul's] real enemies, aside from communism, were liberals and leftists in the church. He instituted a regime of authoritarian discipline on theological matters. He discarded the shoots of democracy in the church planted at the Vatican Council, and he stamped on liberation theology. ...He opposed the use of condoms to alleviate the AIDS epidemic worldwide, not least in Africa. His denial of equal status to women within the church affected the status of women everywhere. His obdurate opposition to marriage among clergy decimated the foot soldiers of the church. His reluctance to confront the scandal of clerical sex abuse damaged his church's reputation and inflicted further sufferings on the victims. It was during his reign that the Vatican and the Italian Church authorities shielded perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide.

He was also to see the limitations of his reach. His opposition to US-led wars proved futile. Neither had he any influence on the Middle East conflict. When he came to Ireland and appealed on his "bended knees" to the IRA to end violence, he was ignored. He made overtures to the Eastern Orthodox churches without these culminating in anything concrete. He made the right noises on ecumenism with protestant churches, but his heart wasn't really in it. He apologized to Jews for the crusades and the Catholic Church's inaction during the Holocaust, but he did not support a Jewish/Catholic historical project that would have thrown further light on these.

His successor will probably be very much in the John Paul mould; after all, he has packed the College of Cardinals with clones of himself. But it is unlikely his successor will have his charm or media skills and it will be difficult for the next Pope to undo the damage John Paul has done in relation to sex abuse, women and democracy.

For a less negative though still critical assessment of John Paul II, try the Economist magazine at www.economist.com/agenda/displayStory.cfm?story_id-3622703. The Economist opines John Paul will be remembered as a pope who resisted pressures to "modernize" the church's values—and a man who changed history by precipitating the fall of Soviet communism.

NEWS ON A FORMER SPEAKER: We hope you all had the opportunity to watch the Dateline special on Benny Hinn, the Dallas-based televangelist and self-proclaimed healer. Part of the program was a rerun of an earlier special on Hinn and part consisted of new investigations. Ole Anthony was again interviewed for his take on how Hinn is able to gain the cooperation of those participating in his healing sessions to play their roles by the script.

According to Dateline, Hinn receives \$89-100 million annually in contributions from the faithful. Of that sum, he donates some \$220,000 a month to an India-based charity and perhaps minor amounts elsewhere. In other words, probably no more than about three percent of his annual take goes to charitable causes and the other 97 percent to administrative expenses and to his own upkeep.

As a religious organization, the Benny Hinn organization doesn't have to and doesn't provide an audit to the public. NBC, however, was able to dig up a lot of information on his high style of living: a \$10 million estate overlooking the Pacific, two \$80,000 Mercedes vehicles, a plane rented at a cost of \$114,000 a month, layovers at plush hotels in Europe and Canada (one in Milan cost \$10,800 a night) and shopping at the most expensive clothing stores in Europe and the U.S.

Of the five instances of miraculous healing submitted by Hinn, NBC found that three had died not long afterwards, a fourth was in no better condition than he was before his "healing" and a

fifth refused to provide documentation from his doctor either as to his condition prior to his healing or subsequent to Hinn's ministrations.

HoFW NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

APRIL MEETING: This month's meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 13, 7:00 p.m., at Friends of the Fort Worth Public Library Bookstore, 5332 Trail Lake Drive, located in Wedgeworth shopping center just off Gorman. From I-20 take Granbury Road south to Gorman. Make a left-turn onto Gorman and then left again into the Wedgeworth shopping center. We will be discussing candidates for HoFW offices. Do not be shy about putting yourself forward as a candidate.

APRIL SPEAKER: Joe Kleehammer's presentation is entitled "From Conservative Christian to a Liberal Life."

MAY SPEAKER: Dick Trice will review the book "Confessions of an Economic Hit Man".

PRE-MEETING DINNER: 5:30 p.m. at Johnny Carino's Italian Restaurant, 5900 South Hulen Street (in front of Wal-Mart's and across from Krispy Kreme).

REMINDERS: Dues for 2005 are owing since March (if you haven't already paid): \$18 for individual memberships, \$24 for persons receiving the Newsletter by regular mail; \$24 for couples.

CHALK ONE UP FOR SCIENCE

Our thanks to all who responded to Don Ruhs' appeal for letters to the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History to protest their decision not to show *Volcanoes of the Deep Sea*. The New York *Times* had reported in its March 19 edition that the Fort Worth Museum and a few other science museums, mostly in the South, had rejected *Volcanoes* because of references to the Big Bang and to evolution. Several fine letters appeared a couple of days later in the *Star-Telegram* objecting to the Museum's bowing to pressure from the religious right. Subsequently, a piece written by the Chairman of the Museum's Board of Trustees and the Museum President appeared on the op-ed page of the *Star-Telegram* clarifying policy with respect to the showing of films at the museum. Most germane is the following:

" We want to ensure that the public knows the museum supports the position that evolution is a major unifying concept of science. We use scientific evidence in our wide-ranging presentations and interpretations of how life has changed over time." *Volcanoes* has now been shown.

THE AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION'S 64TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE – MAY 5-8, 2005. ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO. Features 2005 Humanist of the Year Murray Gell-Mann, Nobel prizewinner in physics, Distinguished Fellow of the Santa Fe Institute, and the Robert Andrews Millikan Professor of Theoretical Physics Emeritus at the California Institute of Technology. Also featured are Jim McCollum and Ellery Schempp receiving the Humanist religious Liberty Award and Robert Tapp, dean of the Humanist Institute, receiving the Horace Mann Humanist Education Award.

Conference information is continually updated on the AHA website, www.AmericanHumanist.org or you can call toll free, 1-800-837-3792. For more information on the conference location call the Hyatt Regency at 1-505-842-1234, log onto www.Albuquerque.hyatt.com, or write the Hyatt

Regency, 300 Tijeras, Albuquerque. NM, 87102. The AHA's special room rate is \$89 single or double.

YOUR OFFICERS AND HOW TO REACH THEM

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LEGAL FRONT

FFRF AMICUS BRIEF DEBUNKS MYTH OF COMMANDMENTS DISPLAY

A "friend of the court" brief filed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation before the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the lawsuit challenging a Ten Commandments monument on the Capitol grounds in Austin refutes the contention that a similar text is on display at the Supreme Court building. Below are relevant excerpts from the FFRF's amicus brief:

The State of Texas, like numerous other state and local governments throughout the U.S., has chosen to display on public property a tablet-shaped stone monument engraved with a version of the Ten Commandments. The stone monument was a gift to the State from the Fraternal Order of Eagles, who made many such gifts in the 1950s and 1960s as part of its Youth Guidance Program intended to combat juvenile delinquency by providing a code of conduct for young persons. The State of Texas has participated in the Eagles' Youth Guidance program by accepting the monument and displaying it on the state capitol grounds. The State itself has thereby unequivocally endorsed the Ten Commandments--including those first four inherently sectarian precepts as a proper code of conduct for Texas citizens. Judaism and Christianity thus bear the imprimatur of the State of Texas.

Despite the fact that Texas citizens are legally free to worship however they choose, only Christians and Jews practice a faith that has been publicly approved by the State. For this reason, the 1961 resolution of the Texas legislature accepting the monument and agreeing to display it on government property is a law respecting the establishment of religion, and it contravenes the First Amendment. ...The Fifth Circuit [Court of Appeals], like other courts and commentators, finds a precedent for the display of the Eagles monument in the depictions of Moses at the Supreme Court Building....The Fifth Circuit has overlooked a crucial distinction between the representations of Moses in the Supreme Court building and the Eagles monument at the Texas Capitol. The Eagles monument bears the entire text of a version of the Ten

Commandments, whereas the text of the Ten Commandments is not displayed at the Supreme Court.

...Moses is also depicted among the "procession of 'great lawgivers of history,'" which portray the development of the law in the North and South Courtroom friezes. The friezes portray eight allegorical figures and eighteen historical lawgivers, which include the religious figures of Moses and Muhammad, as well as the secular figures of William Blackstone, John Marshall and Napoleon. Muhammad is depicted with the Qu'ran, and Moses is depicted in the frieze holding two overlapping tablets, written in Hebrew. Commandments six through ten are partially visible....Each of these lawgivers and events is commemorated, even celebrated, at the Supreme Court. But even though some of the lawgivers are religious figures, each is celebrated for his contribution to the development of the law, not for his contribution to religion....no reasonable viewer would understand the commemorative artwork at the Supreme Court to convey a message of endorsement of the specific precepts set down by all the diverse lawgivers from Hammurabi to Napoleon...

.In contrast to the depictions of Moses at the Supreme Court, the display of the Eagles monument, dominated by the literal text of the Ten Commandments, inevitably communicates the endorsement of the specific precepts of the Commandments. These specific precepts are inherently religious, and they cannot be legitimately presented by a government, unless it is in a context that negates the message of endorsement. The grounds of the Texas State Capitol does nothing to negate that message. (Freethought Today)

HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION OBJECTS TO COMMANDMENTS DISPLAYS

The Hindu American Foundation has filed an interesting amicus brief in one of the commandments' cases currently before the Supreme Court. Speaking on behalf of several thousand Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, the brief notes that members of these faiths do not accept the theology behind some of the commandments. Hindu concepts of "panentheistic monotheism"—the idea of a God who assumes many manifestations in nature—and the practice of using consecrated images in worship directly conflict with some commandments. The brief makes it clear that while members of these faiths respect the Ten Commandments, they believe its display by government "implies political and social exclusion of Hindus, Jains and Buddhists alike." (C&S)

OPENING SALVO TO CHRISTIANIZE THE NATION?

These cases are about more than a Ten Commandments monument in front of a state capitol or hanging on the wall of a courthouse. They are about the kind of America we are going to have. Despite the claims of the Religious Right, there is no non-religious rationale for government to display the Ten Commandments in these cases. The often-heard claim that the ancient code is the basis of U.S. law was demolished in a friend-of-the-court brief filed by a group of legal scholars.

These displays have a religious purpose. At a courthouse or a seat of government they send the message: "This government has a favorite religious code, and here it is. If you accept it, good for you. If you don't, you're a second-class citizen." A triumphalist message like that would be expected in Iran or Afghanistan under the Taliban. In the United States, it runs counter to our constitutional principles and the vision of the Founding Fathers. The Religious Right would like to use the battle over the Commandments as an opening salvo to "Christianize" this nation. For the sake of America's traditions of inclusivity, fair courts and religious liberty, they must not succeed. (C&S editorial)

CHURCH & STATE

FFRF PURSUES RIGHT TO SUE WHITE HOUSE "FAITH-BASED" OFFICE

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit to reinstate the Foundation's legal challenge over creation of the White House and other federal 'faith-based' offices. The Foundation argues that executive branch actions are subject to Constitutional dictates and court review.

A federal judge ruled on Nov. 11 that taxpayers do not have standing to challenge executive branch officials who engage in constitutionally suspect activities funded by general Congressional budget appropriations. U.S. District Court Judge John C. Shabaz of the Western District of Wisconsin ruled that the Foundation's individual plaintiffs do not have taxpayer standing to sue the faith-based offices because Congress did not enact the offices. Bush created the faith-based initiative through executive order. In doing so, he used funding provided by general Congressional budget appropriations. "The dismissal of our standing places the president's executive action above judicial scrutiny. It denies legal recourse to the taxpayers who are forced to support these unconstitutional programs," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the Foundation.

The lawsuit alleges that the faith-based offices violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment by supporting activities endorsing religion, and by granting faith-based organizations "preferred positions as political insiders." These activities include the many White House and federally sponsored conferences to recruit faith-based applicants, "at which conferences faith-based organizations are singled out as being particularly worth of federal funding because of their religious orientation, and the belief in God is extolled as distinguishing the claimed effectiveness of faith-based social services," the brief states. (Freethought Today)

CONSERVATIVE CRITICIZES EVANGELICALS FOR SUPPORTING GOP

The Republican Party of Lincoln has become a party of theocracy.

-- Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.)

The GOP/Bush bandwagon is losing a few Religious Right allies. John Whitehead, founder and president of the Rutherford Institute, has been warning evangelicals about the dangers of aligning too closely with a partisan movement. Whitehead has gone so far as to warn of "a startling parallel between the road America is traveling and that of pre-Nazi Germany....Turning to the present day, the close identification of evangelical churches and organizations with the Republican Party, and in particular the current Bush Administration, has, in the opinion of some, resulted in their being manipulated and co-opted by political power...In fact, some of the scandals surrounding George W. Bush—Enron, Halliburton, the lack of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the Abu Ghraib tortures, to name a few—could have toppled a president 30 years ago." (C&S)

SENTENCE REDUCED AFTER JURORS DISCUSS BIBLE

Ruling that juries cannot turn to the Bible for advice during deliberations, a divided Colorado Supreme Court threw out the death penalty for a convicted murderer because jurors discussed

verses from Scripture. The ruling said the Bible and other religious writings are considered "codes of law by many" in Colorado. But noting that it takes a unanimous jury to impose a death sentence there, the court said "at least one juror in this case could have been influenced by these authoritative passages when he or she may otherwise have voted for a life sentence." (AP)

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH SEEKS END TO DEATH PENALTY

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops began a renewed campaign against the death penalty on March 21, including an education program in parishes, schools, universities and seminaries and expanded advocacy efforts in Congress and state legislatures. "We cannot teach that killing is wrong by killing," said Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, archbishop of Washington, D.C. "We cannot defend life by taking life."

"In past surveys, Catholic support for the death penalty was as high as 68 percent, pollster John Zogby said. "In our November survey, we found that less than half of the Catholic adults in our poll now support the use of the death penalty." The survey also found that the more often Catholics attend Mass, the less likely they are to support the death penalty, that Catholics 18 to 28 years old are less likely to support it and that a third of Catholics who supported the death penalty in the past now oppose it. (LAT)

TOP OF THE NEWS

CONGRESS GETS TOUGH ON [SOME] DEBTORS

The recently passed Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act, by imposing a means test, makes it much harder for most people to get their debts wiped away by the mere act of filing under Chapter 7 of the bankruptcy code. But is the system really being abused? In fact, evidence suggests that the boom in personal bankruptcies has more to do with the piling on of consumer debt than with debtors playing the system. Opponents fear that the means test, which they think too harsh and arbitrary, will drag those who rightly belong in Chapter 7 unfairly into court.

More troubling is the part of the legislation that makes it harder for poorer debtors, not likely to be the abusers of the system, to file for bankruptcy. Some 84% of all filers are too poor to qualify for the new law's means test. But they will still be put through a great deal of rigmarole to get relief. For example, all debtors will have to get credit counseling before they file—a costly process, and one which does little to steer people out of bankruptcy. The bill also requires people to produce all sorts of paperwork, from payroll stubs to tax returns. Those who have not kept strict records will have to give up or pay for a lawyer to plead their case in court.

Other quirks of the legislation make one wonder why credit-industry groups are so keen on it. One loophole allows rich debtors to go on shielding assets in special trust accounts that are legal in a few states. And debtor's fancy homes in Texas and Florida, will still be off-limits to creditors. The bill's backers say that fear of trampling on states' rights stopped them closing such loopholes. [As shown by special legislation for Terri Schiavo, they can be very selective about respecting states' rights.] But it smells rather pervasively like special treatment for the rich. (Economist)

ONE BRANCH SHOWS GOOD JUDGMENT IN THE SCHIAVO CASE

...Congress leaned on the courts to consider a case that had little merit and to take a step within that case that the law would not support easily. To their credit, up and down the appellate

ladder, the courts refused....The message is a blunt and welcome rejection of a crude maneuver by Congress. While judges have a duty to interpret and apply the law as Congress writes it, they also have a duty to stand up to politicians when the law so requires. Perhaps the only happy outcome of this most unhappy case is that the federal judiciary did not let itself become an instrument of political manipulation. (WP editorial)

ON DELAY'S HYPOCRISY IN SCHIAVO CASE

At every opportunity [House Majority Leader] Tom Delay has sanctimoniously proclaimed his concern for the well-being of Terri Schiavo, saying he is only trying "to ensure she has the chance 'we all deserve'". Just last week, Delay marshaled a budget resolution through the House of Representative that would cut funding for Medicaid by at least \$15 billion, threatening the quality of care for people like Terri Schiavo. --Center for American Progress, a liberal foundation

GAY-MARRIAGE BAN IS REJECTED

In a victory for city officials, a San Francisco County Superior Court Judge ruled March 14 that California's ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, overturning a statewide proposition passed in 2000 that defined marriage as a relationship between a man and woman. Judge Richard A. Kramer said "the denial of marriage to same-sex couples appears impermissibly arbitrary," violating the equal protection clause of the state constitution. "This was not a good decision for us, I acknowledge that," said Glen Lavy, attorney for the Alliance Defense Fund, a Christian group based in Arizona. He added, however, that it was only "the first stop in the judicial battle in California." (NYT)

CONNECTICUT CLOSER TO APPROVING CIVIL UNIONS; KANSAS FARTHER

Connecticut could become the second state in the nation to legalize civil unions for same-sex couple—and the first to do so without a court order. Legislation that would create civil unions, and give them legal status equivalent to marriage, has passed three House-Senate committees and could come before the full Senate as soon as April 6. Democrats, who have lined up behind the measure, hold overwhelming majorities in both houses. Connecticut would join Vermont, which authorized same-sex civil unions in 2000, and Massachusetts, where same-sex marriage became legal last May, as the only states to recognize such relationships. (WP)

Voters in Kansas overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment April 4 banning same-sex couples from marrying or entering into civil unions. (AP)

ILLINOIS PHARMACIES ORDERED TO PROVIDE BIRTH CONTROL

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich filed a rule April 1 requiring Illinois pharmacies to accept and dispense prescriptions for birth control and emergency contraception. Instances have arisen in Illinois, as well in other states, where pharmacists have refused to honor prescriptions they deemed immoral. (NYT)

California and four other states are considering similar requirements. Four states, however, have exempted pharmacists from having to honor prescriptions they find morally objectionable. (ABC News)

REOPENING GOVERNMENT

Openness in government has diminished during the Bush administration. Classification actions rose 75 percent between 2001 and 2004. Immigration authorities kept secret the names of hundreds of detainees rounded up after Sept. 11, as did military authorities for detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Legal memorandums authorizing key tactics in the war on terrorism were needlessly kept secret. The administration has stiffed Congress on oversight requests across a wide range of areas, and it has aggressively sought to withhold material—even such obviously nonsensitive data as aggregate intelligence spending from the late 1940s—under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Some secrecy is inevitable during wartime, but that's not the whole story, too often the Bush administration has viewed it as a positive value.

It is, consequently, encouraging to see a bipartisan consensus slowly emerging that open government needs a helping hand. A Senate Judiciary subcommittee held a hearing last week on a bill by Sens. John Cornyn and Patrick J. Leahy to bolster FOIA. The act creates a presumption that government documents are available to the public on request, subject to a limited number of exemptions....It would clarify timetables for agencies to respond to requests, create penalties for capricious denials, authorize the payment of attorneys' fees for people who prevail in litigation under the law and modernize agency processing of requests. Another bill that Mr. Cornyn and Mr. Leahy have introduced would establish a commission to study FOIA delays and make recommendations for improvements. An important separate bill introduced by Mr. Leahy would close a major loophole in the law Congress created when it formed the Department of Homeland Security. These bills are encouraging if they signal new bipartisan attention to the erosion of FOIA and of openness more generally. (WP editorial)

BOOK CORNER

Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews. A History. By James Carroll.

Constantine's Sword is a big dose of history, comprehending as it does two millennia, and a rather large amount of memoir. At 621 pages it is a long read for all but really ardent students of the subject. For those who are (and let's hope that it gets well-thumbed in Christian seminaries and by a large number of the faithful as well) it's a very rewarding read. Few of us who think that we are fairly well informed on the subject will come away not realizing how much more there was we should have known.. If you have been puzzled by such events as the hostile Jewish reaction to the setting up of a cross at Auschwitz and the canonization of Edith Stein, you will appreciate why after perusing Carroll's tome.

James Carroll had a privileged childhood. His father was an Air Force general at Wiesbaden, Germany, when Carroll was a teenager and he was later to become the first Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. His mother was a leading functionary in a Catholic laywomen's organization. His mother, apparently a very pious Catholic, took him and his younger brothers to visit most of the hallmarks of German Catholicism during their two-year residence at the Rhine-Main Air Force Base. Trier and Cologne, two of three early Rhineland bishoprics, were particular favorites of his mother. Although the third, and in pre-unification days (i.e., before 1871) the most important, Mainz, was only a few miles down the Main River and across the Rhine from Wiesbaden, it was carefully avoided during their tour of duty in Germany. Years later he was to realize the reason why: the Mainz Cathedral had not been reconstructed yet following its destruction by Allied bombing in World War II. Better to avoid being reminded of what was probably a senseless air attack on a great landmark of the Catholic Church. By contrast, evidence of ancient barbarities at Trier and Cologne (as well as at Mainz) had long since been erased and probably forgotten by virtually all Gentiles: the murderous attacks on Jews during the First Crusade.

Carroll insists that there was no inevitability about the age-old persecution of Jews by Christians. To be sure, there was a good deal of friction between the early Christians and their Jewish brothers. The New Testament relates violent attacks on followers of Jesus by other Jews. But since the first five books of the New Testament are gospel, not history, we can't be sure of their correspondence to fact. An uneasy live and let-live attitude seems to have generally prevailed between the two communities throughout the Roman Empire up until the time of Constantine the Great (Emperor from 312 CE to 337 CE). Constantine might have chosen another religious vehicle for exercising virtually total control over his imperium, even the Jewish religion, says Carroll. Presumably Constantine saw advantages in the Christian religion absent in the others. For whatever reason, this wife-killer and son-killer became a Christian and the Church the only sanctioned religion of the Empire.

Finding themselves, perhaps to their surprise, in a dominant position vis-à-vis other religions and schismatic Christian sects, Roman Christians quickly set about eliminating the competition. If Saint Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, then the administrative capital of the Empire, had had his way, the Jews would have suffered the same fate as Christian heretics and pagans who refused to acknowledge the orthodox faith. Fortunately for Europe's Jews, Saint Augustine came to the rescue before persecution had gone very far: "the Jews may survive but may not thrive." After all, it was not so easy for Christianity's greatest theologian to ignore Saint Paul: "I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!" (Romans 1:11)

Despite continuing pressure by the Church for conversion, the Jews, except for small numbers, steadfastly clung to their own religion over the centuries. The anarchic conditions that generally prevailed following the collapse of the Empire in the West afforded some protection to the Jews. But from the turn of the first millennium pressure began to mount as both spiritual and temporal power became consolidated in the papacy. A thousand years seemed like a long time to wait for the conversion of the Jews. Moreover, so long as Jews held fast, and in particular if they thrived, Christians could never feel certain that the New Covenant had replaced the Old. Things took an especially nasty turn when the papacy decided that the Holy Land had to be retaken from the Saracens. (Nothing like a crusade to suppress domestic discord.) An unintended (by the Church) consequence was a venting of long suppressed popular antagonisms against usurers and traders. Pogroms in Germany and France ensued at the start of each new crusade. A sorry record of persecution was to persist for nine centuries, a result of the Church's persistent demeaning of the Jewish religion and of popular resentment and ignorance.

In only one instance was the Church successful in converting large numbers of Jews—in 15th century Spain where some 200,000 Jews had followed the Moors from North Africa in the 8th century. With the expulsion of the Moors by Ferdinand and Isabel, the Jews lost their Muslim protectors. A resurgent Christianity demanded the Jews either convert or leave. Finding a refuge for such large numbers was probably all but impossible. Many sincerely chose to convert but many also opted to take the great Jewish sage Maimonides' recommendation to accept the external tokens of the Christian faith but to retain in their homes the practices of their old faith. The Spanish Church was even more uncomfortable with Jews in Christian ranks than it had been with them outside. The upshot was the Inquisition and the judicial murder of thousands. More ominously, it gave birth to the concept of racial purity ("limpieza de sangre") for judging a person's commitment to the Christian faith. A relic of this strain of racialism was to be found in the Jesuit Order into the 20th century: a candidate for admission to the Order had to prove none of his forbears back through his great-grand parents were Jews.

Jews were first to see an improvement in their political status in Christian Europe with the French Revolution. All residents of France were given citizens' rights without distinction of religion. Napoleon spread secularist ideology wherever his armies marched and in Rome pulled down the walls of the Jewish ghetto in the shadow of the Vatican. Although Waterloo brought in

its tow political retrenchment, enlightenment ideals of religious toleration and wider participation in governance continued to gain ground in central and west Europe. The Catholic Church was generally on the side of the losers: the protagonists of tradition and communal values. Jews as the harbingers of change and as quintessential dissenters became, if anything, even more detested by the Church and its acolytes. A wrongful charge of espionage against a Jewish French Army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, and his being found guilty despite evidence of his innocence was to rock French society for a decade, a case that pitted secularists against Catholics.

In the 20th century the most stinging rebuke to the Church was precipitated by its failure to do very much to stem the Holocaust. A lot of ink has been spilled concerning the complicity of Pope Pius XII in Hitler's taking total power in the German Reich (Pius XII provoked the disbandment of the Catholic Center Party in 1933 shortly after Hitler became Reich Chancellor) and his failure to act as the Nazis went about the Final Solution. In particular, the Pope did nothing in 1943 against the German round-up of Rome's Jews, a time when the Allies were drawing a noose around the Axis. It is particularly galling to many Jews, and many others as well, that John Paul II has asked for his canonization.

Despite the many efforts of John Paul II to bring about reconciliation with the Jews (visiting the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and a synagogue in Rome, something no other pope had done), Carroll insists that the Catholic Church has not done nearly enough. The Church, he says, has to acknowledge the many slanders of the New Testament against the Jews, recognize the equal status of Old and New Covenants through an elimination of the distinction between the two Testaments, and admit Church responsibility (not just the errors of the faithful) for centuries of persecution. Carroll calls for the convoking of a Vatican III to reform Church doctrine in this and other areas. I suspect such Church-shaking reforms, if some of them ever come about, will take a long time to jell. Folk religion still has a tight grip on many Catholics. For example, John Paul's canonizing 482 saints, more than had been canonized in the previous five centuries, seems to have been very popular with the faithful. Are they ready for the 21st century?

That's it for this month's *Cowtown Humanist*