

# THE CRIMINAL HISTORY OF THE PAPACY

*The history of greed, blood-lust and depravity of many of the popes and the Roman Church hierarchy has been falsified by modern Church historians to present images of piety and humility.*

*Part 3 of 3*

by Tony Bushby  
© December 2006

Correspondence:  
c/- NEXUS Magazine  
PO Box 30  
Mapleton, Qld 4560, Australia  
Fax: +61 (0)7 5493 1900

## Pope Julius II, "Warrior of Rome"

The papacy continued on its way into degeneracy with no parallel in the history of world religion, and that brings us to another militaristic and disbelieving pope. He was Giuliano della Rovere (1443–1513) and he called himself Julius II (1503–13). He fought and intrigued like a worldly prince and was famous for his long and bloody wars. He was constantly in the field leading his army, firmly convinced of the rightness of his frightful battles. He led his Catholic troops into combat dressed in full armour and at one stage was almost captured.

Florentine-born Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), the ablest historian of the time and papal governor of Modena and Reggio, remarked that Julius II had nothing of the priest but the name, writing that he was "...a soldier in a cassock; he drank and swore heavily as he led his troops; he was wilful, coarse, bad-tempered and difficult to manage. He would ride his horse up the Lateran stairs to his papal bedroom and tether it at the door" (*Istoria d'Italia* ["History of Italy"], Francesco Guicciardini, 1537, 1832 ed.; quoted in *A History of the Popes*, Dr Joseph McCabe, C. A. Watts & Co., London, 1939, vol. 2, ch. viii, "The Inevitable Reformation"). He is acknowledged to have had three or five children while he was a cardinal and was confidently accused by the leading nobles of Rome of unnatural vices. It is not important in this outline whether he had three children or five, as most acknowledge, but other aspects of his conduct must be noticed.

Ferdinand Gregorovius (1821–91), the great German theological historian who was never unduly prejudiced against popes, considered him "one of the most profane and most unecclesiastical figures that ever occupied the chair of St Peter", and said that there was "not a trace of Christian piety in him" (*Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter* ["History of Rome in the Middle Ages"], 1859–72, trans. 1895–1902; quoted in *Crises in the History of the Papacy*, Dr Joseph McCabe, Putnam, 1916, ch. vi, "The Papacy in the Decline"). Christian historians writhe when they read Pope Julius's declaration expressing a papal belief that "Christians are the unstable, unlettered, superstitious masses" (Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, 1759), and we can clearly understand why he is dismissed as an embarrassment.

He was not disturbed by a delegation of monks who approached him expressing criticism of the clergy and the morals of his cardinals. He had heard the like before; people for centuries past had complained that popes, cardinals, bishops and priests lived immoral lives, and that popes loved sex, power and wealth more than being Vicars of Christ. The pope advised his secretary to take three mistresses at one time, "in memory of the Holy Trinity", and frankly admitted that he loved the title "Warrior of Rome" applied to him by the populace. He had tired of seeing Giulia Farnese playing Virgin Mary on the fresco; he wished to move into the four chambers once used by Pope Nicholas V (1447–55), and he wanted these rooms decorated with paintings congenial to his self-perceived heroic stature and aims.

In the summer of 1508, Julius summoned Raphael (1483–1529) to Rome, and around the same time commissioned Michelangelo (1474–1564) to create an array of works for the Vatican. Michelangelo subsequently carved a marble statue of him, and Julius II examined it with a puzzled expression, asking, "What is that under my arm?" "A Bible, your Holiness," replied Michelangelo. "What do I know of Bibles?" roared the Pope; "I am a warlord; give me a sword instead" (*Istoria d'Italia*, op. cit.; quoted in *A History of the Popes*, *ibid.*). His preference for a sword over a Bible had its effect in Rome and he became known as "Pope Dreadful" and "Pope Terror" (*ibid.*).

Upon his death on 21 February 1513, the populace breathed a sigh of relief. Unfortunately for them, one of the most disgraceful popes who ever sat in the papal chair then arrived in the Vatican, complete with his entourage of military advisers. He was the fat and amiable Giovanni de' Medici (1475–1521), a former commander of Pope Julius's papal army.

### Pope Leo X and his infamous proclamation

On 11 March 1513, Giovanni was elected pope and assumed the name of Leo X. He had not yet been ordained a priest, but this defect was remedied on 15 March at a Vatican celebration for the anniversary of the death of Divine Julius (Julius Caesar) (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3rd ed., Edinburgh, 1788–97, vol. ix).

It is almost enough to say that apologists who make pretence of defending Alexander VI and Julius II abandon Leo X to the critical wolves. He satisfied only those "who looked upon the Papal Court as a centre of amusement" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Pecci ed., 1897, iii, p. 227). The belief that Leo began to indulge in unnatural vice after he became pope was so seriously held in Rome that the two leading historians of his time recorded the information.

Guicciardini noted that the new pope accepted the pagan enjoyment of life and was "exceedingly devoted to the flesh, especially those pleasures which cannot, with decency, be mentioned" (*Istoria d'Italia*, 1832 ed., lib. xvi, ch. v, p. 254).

Paolo Cardinal Giovio (Jovius), biographer of Leo X, after speaking of the pope's "excessive luxury" and "regal licence", claimed to have "penetrated the secrets of the night", adding: "Nor was he free from the infamy that he seemed to have an improper love of some of his chamberlains, who were members of the noblest families of Italy" (*De Vita*

*Leonis Decimi, Pontificus Maximus*, Paolo Giovio, 1897 English ed., lib. iv, pp. 96-99).

Modern churchmen, however, praise Leo as "a person of moral life and sincerely religious" (*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross, 1963, 2nd ed., p. 799; *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas, Zondervan, 1974, p. 591), adding that his pious qualities were responsible for his unanimous election by the cardinals. However, historical records reveal a different story:

"When Pope Julius died, Giovanni de' Medici (to become Leo X) was very ill of venereal disease at Florence and was carried to Rome in a litter. Later, an ulcer broke and the matter which ran from it exhaled such a stench that all the cells in the enclave, which were separated only by thin partitions, were poisoned by it. Upon this, the cardinals consulted with physicians of the enclave, to know what the matter was. They, being bribed earlier [by Giovanni de' Medici himself], said de' Medici could not live a month; which sentence occasioned his being chosen pope. Thus Giovanni de' Medici, then 38 years of age, was elected pope on false information and, as joy is the most sovereign of all remedies, he soon recovered his health, so that the old cardinals soon had reason to repent."

(*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3rd ed., op. cit., vol. ix, p. 788)

A hale and hearty Pope Leo X now filled the pontifical chair and

his first declaration was: "God has given me the papacy, now let me enjoy it" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 13th ed., xix, pp. 926-7). That was an indication of what was to come from the man who fully developed the sale of "indulgences" into Christianity and established the framework for yet another military strike (the 18th crusade since 1096). The Church made the following apologetic summary about him:

"As an ecclesiastic, his deficiency in professional knowledge, his utter indifference to the restraint of his character, the reputed laxity of his principles, his proneness to dissimulation, his deeply rooted voluptuousness and his fondness for the society of musicians, jesters and buffoons rendered him contemptible, or something worse. By a course of lavish expenditure in the indulgence of his own taste for luxury and magnificence, by the part which he took in the troublous politics of the day ... Leo completely drained the papal treasury."

(*Annales Ecclesiastici*, Caesar Baronius, Antwerp, 1592–97, folio iii)

Leo gathered about him a company of gross men: flatterers, purveyors of indecent jokes and stories, and writers of obscene comedies which were often performed in the Vatican with

cardinals as actors. His chief friend was Cardinal Bimmienna, whose comedies were more obscene than any of ancient Athens or Rome and who was one of the most immoral men of his time. Leo had to eat temperately for he was morbidly fat, but his banquets were as costly as they were vulgar and the coarsest jesters and loosest courtesans sat with him and the cardinals. Since these things are not disputed, the Church does not deny the evidence of his vices. In public affairs he was the most notoriously dishonourable Vicar of Christ of the Renaissance period,

**The Church had scarcely a pope more dedicated to expensive pleasures or by whom money was so anxiously sought than Leo X.**

but it is not possible here to tell the extraordinary story of his alliances, wars and cynical treacheries. His nepotism was as corrupt as that of any pope, and when some of the cardinals conspired to kill him he had the flesh of their servants ripped off with red-hot pincers to extract information (*Crises in the History of the Papacy*, op. cit., ch. v, "The Popes React with Massacre and Inquisition").

The Church had scarcely a pope more dedicated to expensive pleasures or by whom money was so anxiously sought than Leo X. Pope Julius II had earlier bestowed indulgences on all who contributed towards building the basilica of St Peter in Vatican City, and Leo X rapidly expanded upon the doctrine. An indulgence was the sale of dispensations to secure mainly the rich from the threat of burning or the bogus release from sins such as murder, polygamy, sacrilege, perjury and witchcraft (*Indulgences: Their Origin, Nature and Development*, Quaracchi, 1897). For a sum of money, property or some penitential act, a pardon was conveyed, or a release from the pains of purgatory or guilt or the forgiveness of sins was granted to any person who bestowed wealth upon the Church. The year after his election, he sold the archbishopric of Mainz and two bishoprics to a rich, loose-living young noble, Albert of Brandenburg, for a huge sum and permitted him to recover his investment by the sordid traffic in indulgences which a few years later inflamed Martin Luther. The rich were not the only group he targeted:

"Here ... the love of money was the chief root of the evil; indulgences were employed by mercenary ecclesiastics as a means of pecuniary gain ... money was extracted from the simple-minded among the faithful by promising them perpetual happiness in this world and eternal glory in the next."

(*Catholic Encyclopedia*, vii, p. 787)

And that was some 500 years before the Vatican received its first banking licence. Lord Bryce (1838–1922), British jurist, author and statesman, summarised the mental and moral qualities of the priesthood that indulgences reflected. He said that its concept was "a blatant fraud against the naïve ... a portentous falsehood and the most unimpeachable evidence of the true thoughts and beliefs of the priesthood which framed it" (*The Holy Roman Empire*, Lord Bryce, 1864, ch. vi, p. 107; Latin text, extracts, p. 76).

To replenish the coffers and maintain his "luxuriant abundance", Leo expanded the sale of indulgences into a major source of Church revenue and developed a large body of priests to collect the payments. In forming his plans, he was assisted mainly by his relative Laurentius Pucci, whom he made Cardinal of Santi-quattro, and Johann Tetzel, a former military officer of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia. They appointed a series of retailers to keep pace with the disposal of goods given to pay for indulgences, and he and his team then set off on a mission through Italy to entice more sales. This picturesque overview is drawn from Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, and provides one reason why Pope Clement XIII (1758–69) ordered all volumes destroyed immediately after its publication in 1759 (*The Censoring of Diderot's 'Encyclopédie' and the Re-established Text*, D. H. Gordon and N. L. Torrey, Columbia University Press, New York, 1947):

"The indulgence-seekers passed through the country in gay carriages escorted by thirty horsemen, in great state and spending freely. The pontiff's Bull of Grace was borne in front on a purple velvet cushion, or sometimes on a cloth of gold. The chief vendor of indulgences followed with his team, supporting a large red wooden cross; and the whole procession moved in this manner amidst singing and the smoke of incense. As soon as the cross was elevated, and the Pope's arms suspended upon it, Tetzel ascended the pulpit, and with a bold tone began, in the presence of the crowd, to exalt the efficacy of indulgences. The pope was the last speaker and cried out, 'Bring money, bring money, bring money'. He uttered this cry with such a dreadful bellowing that one might have thought that some wild bull was rushing among the people and goring them with his horns."

(Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, 1759; expanded upon in *History of the*

*Great Reformation of the 16th Century*, J. H. Merle d'Aubigné, 1840, London ed. trans. Prof. S. L. MacGuire, 1942, vol. 2, p. 168)

Tetzel and the priests associated with him falsely represented their task and exaggerated the value of indulgences so as to lead people to believe that "as soon as they gave their money, they were certain of salvation and the deliverance of souls from purgatory" (Diderot's *Encyclopédie*).

So strong was the Protestant movement's opposition to the sale of indulgences that Pope Leo X issued a bull called *Exsurge Domine*, its purpose being to condemn Martin Luther's damaging assertions that "indulgences are frauds against the faithful and criminal offences against God" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3rd ed., op. cit., vol. ix, p. 788; also, James Moore's Dublin Edition, 1790–97, "Medici" entry). Around 45 years later, the 18-year-long Council of Trent pronounced "anathema against those who either declare indulgences to be useless or deny that the Church has the power to grant them" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, vii, pp. 783–4).

To further finance his lifestyle, Leo borrowed prodigious amounts of money from bankers at 40 per cent interest. The booming brothels simply did not bring in enough tax money, even though there were 6,800 registered prostitutes servicing a male citizenry of fifty thousand. His gifts to relatives, friends, artists, writers and musicians, his lavish maintenance of an unprecedented court, the demands of the new St Peter's, the expense of the Urbino war and payments to Tetzel for preparation for the next crusade were all leading him to bankruptcy.

Leo's army was defeated when the French king Francis I (1494–1547) successfully invaded Italy in 1515, and the Vatican was forced to concede the loss of the control—and the revenue—of the entire French Church. In Rome, however, the bankers despoiled themselves. The Bini firm had lent Leo 200,000 ducats, the Gaddi 32,000, the Ricasoli 10,000; moreover, as Cardinal Pucci had lent him 150,000 and Cardinal Salviati 80,000, the cardinals would have first claim on anything salvaged. Leo died worse

than bankrupt (*Crises in the History of the Papacy*, op. cit., ch. vi). As security for his loans, he'd pledged the freehold of churches, monasteries, nunneries, the Villa Medici, Vatican silverware, tapestries, valuable manuscript collections, jewellery and the infamous Chair of Peter, built by King Charles the Bald in 875 and falsely displayed in the Vatican foyer until 1656 as a true relic upon which St Peter once sat.

To replenish his treasury, Leo had created 1,353 new and saleable offices, for which appointees paid a total of 889,000 ducats (US\$11,112,500 in 1955 values). He nominated 60



This sketch of Pope Leo X is attributed to Sebastiano del Piombo (1485–1547), a renowned illustrator and portraitist of the time. Leo was the son of Lorenzo de' Medici, the Magnificent, a notable patron of the arts and a great collector of Etruscan antiquities. Pope Leo's expansion of the doctrine of indulgences was the immediate cause of Martin Luther's uprising. The modern Church said of Leo X: "He was a weak and extravagant man who squandered the wealth of the Church" (*The Papacy*, George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, London, 1964, p. 119). (© The Collection of the Masters, Film Library, Milan, Italy)

additional chamberlains and 141 squires to the 2,000 persons who made up his ménage at the Vatican, and received from them a total of 202,000 ducats. In July 1517, he named 31 new cardinals, chosen "not of such as had the most merit, but of those that offered the most money for the honour and power". Cardinal Porizzetti, for example, paid 40,000 ducats and altogether Leo's appointees on this occasion brought in another half a million ducats for the treasury. Even blasé Italy was shocked, and the story of the pope's financial transactions made Germans share in the anger of Luther's October 1517 revolt. Some cardinals received an income from the Church of 40,000 ducats a year and lived in stately palaces manned by as many as 300 servants and adorned with every art and luxury known to the time. All in all, Leo spent 4,500,000 ducats during his pontificate (US\$56,250,000 in 1955 values) and died owing 400,000 more (*A History of the Popes*, op. cit., vol. 2). A favourite satire that developed around him was called the "Gospel according to Marks and Silver", which said:

"In those days, Pope Leo said to the clergy: 'When Jesus the Son of Man shall come to the seat of our Majesty, say first of all, 'Friend, wherefore art Thou come hither? And if He gives you naught in silver or gold, cast Him forth into outer darkness.'"

(*A History of the Popes*, Dr Joseph McCabe, ibid., vol. 2, chapter on "The Age of Power")

It was Pope Leo X who made the most infamous and damaging statement about Christianity in the history of the Church. His declaration revealed to the world papal knowledge of the Vatican's false presentation of Jesus Christ and unashamedly exposed the puerile nature of the Christian religion. At a lavish Good Friday banquet in the Vatican in 1514, and in the company of "seven intimates" (*Annales Ecclesiastici*, Caesar Baronius, Folio Antwerp, 1597, tome 14), Leo made an amazing announcement that the Church has since tried hard to invalidate. Raising a chalice of wine into the air, Pope Leo toasted: "How well we know what a profitable superstition this fable of Christ has been for us and our predecessors."

The pope's pronouncement is recorded in the diaries and records of both Pietro Cardinal Bembo (*Letters and Comments on Pope Leo X*, 1842 reprint) and Paolo Cardinal Giovio (*De Vita Leonis Decimi...*, op. cit.), two associates who were witnesses to it.

Caesar (Cardinal) Baronius (1538–1607) was Vatican librarian for seven years and wrote a 12-volume history of the Church, known as *Annales Ecclesiastici*. He was the Church's most outstanding historian (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, New Edition, 1976, ii, p. 105) and his records provide vital inside information for anybody studying the rich depth of falsification in Christianity. Cardinal Baronius, who turned down two offers to become pope in 1605, added the following comments about Pope Leo's declaration:

"The Pontiff has been accused of atheism, for he denied God and called Christ, in front of cardinals Pietro Bembo, Jovius and Iacopo Sadoletto and other intimates, 'a fable' ... it must be corrected".

(*Annales Ecclesiastici*, op. cit., tomes viii and xi)

In an early edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Pecci ed., iii, pp. 312-314, passim), the Church devoted two-and-half pages in an

attempt to nullify the most destructive statement ever made by the head of Christianity. It based the essence of its argument on the assumption that what the pope meant by "profitable" was "gainful", and "fable" was intended to mean "tradition". Hence, confused Catholic theologians argued that what the pope really meant was, "How well Christians have gained from this wonderful tradition of Christ". But that isn't what he said.

It is from Christianity's own records that Pope Leo's statement became known to the world. In his diaries, Cardinal Bembo, the Pope's secretary for seven years, added that Leo:

"...was known to disbelieve Christianity itself. He advanced contrary to the faith and that in condemning the Gospel, therefore he must be a heretic; he was guilty of sodomy with his chamberlains; was addicted to pleasure, luxury, idleness, ambition, unchastity and sensuality; and spent his whole days in the company of musicians and buffoons. His Infallibility's drunkenness was proverbial, he practised incontinency as well as inebriation, and the effects of his crimes shattered the people's constitution."

(*Letters and Comments on Pope Leo X*, ibid.)

On behalf of the Church, Cardinal Baronius officially defended Pope Leo's declaration, saying it was "an invention of his corroded mind" (*Annales Ecclesiastici*, op. cit., tome iv), but in applauding the pope's tyrannical conduct supported the essence of his testimony on the grounds of the infallibility of the Church of Rome:

"Of his wicked miscarriages, we, having had before a careful deliberation with our brethren and the Holy Council, and many others, and although he was unworthy to hold the place of St Peter on Earth, Pope Leo the Great [440–461] originally determined that the dignity of Peter suffers no diminution even in an unworthy successor [see *Catholic Encyclopedia*, i, pp. 289, 294, passim].

In regard to the keys, as Vicar of Christ he rendered himself to put forth this knowledge truly; and all do assent to it, so that none dissent who does not fall from the Church; the infamy of his testimonial and conduct is readily pardoned and forgotten."

(*Annales Ecclesiastici*, ibid.)

Later, John Bale (1495–1563) seized upon Pope Leo's confession and the subsequent Vatican admission that the pope had spoken the truth about the "fable of Christ" and "put forward this knowledge truly" (*Annales Ecclesiastici*, ibid.). Bale was an Englishman who had earlier joined the Carmelites but abandoned the order after the Inquisition slaughtered his family (*Of the Five Plagues of the Church* [originally titled *The Five Wounds of the Church*], Count Antonio Rosmini [Catholic priest and papal adviser], 1848, English trans. by Prof. David L. Wilhelm, Russell Square Publishing, London, 1889). He became a playwright and in 1538 developed lampooning pantomimes to mock the pretended godliness of the Catholic Church and "parodied its rites and customs on stage" (*The Complete Plays of John Bale*, ed. Peter Happé, Boydell & Brewer, Cambridge, 1985). After the public disclosure of the hollow nature of Christianity, "people were rejoicing that the papacy and the Church had come to an end" (*Of the Five Plagues of the Church*, op. cit.), but later Christian historians acrimoniously referred to the popular theatrical

**Raising a chalice of wine into the air, Pope Leo toasted: "How well we know what a profitable superstition this fable of Christ has been for us and our predecessors."**

production as "that abominable satire", dishonestly claiming that it was the origin of Pope Leo's frank admission (*De Antiqua Ecclesiae Disciplina*, Bishop Louis Dupin [Catholic historian], Paris folio, 1686).

### Pope Leo's successors and the sacking of Rome

Catholic apologists say that a "really religious pope" succeeded Leo X, but they do not freely say why or how. From what information we have about him, it seems that he was ridiculed by the people of Rome and lasted a little over a year. The Conclave that elected him, held at a time when half of Germany was in Protestant revolt, is described by Catholic professor F. H. Kraus in *The Cambridge Modern History* as "a spectacle of the most disgraceful party struggles ever seen in the papacy" (1902 ed., "Conclaves" entry). The conflicts of greed reached a deadlock and Adriaan Florenszoon Boeyens (1459–1523), a Dutchman from Utrecht who could not speak the Italian language, was subsequently elected pope *in absentia*. He later entered Rome as Pope Adrian VI (1522–23), promising reform in the Church and saying, "We, prelates and clergy, have gone astray from the right path, and for a long time there is none that has done good, no, no one" (*Secrets of the Christian Fathers*, Bishop J. W. Sergerus, 1685, 1897 reprint, p. 227).

Since it was standard procedure for Romans to drag statues of a pope through the mud after the pope's death, the new pope issued a bull declaring the practice illegal. After looting his wine cellar in response, the Roman populace laughed him out of existence. He died on 14 September 1523, and the Romans gave vent to their hatred for the foreigner in a pasquinade "in a language that had not been heard since the days of Bernard of Clairvaux" (d. 1153) (*The Papacy*, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, London, 1954, op. cit., pp. 137-139). The later Church frankly conceded that Pope Adrian VI "was hated by all and loved by none", adding that "however regarded, the pontificate of the last non-Italian pope was only an episode" (*ibid.*).

The next Conclave took 20 days and the cardinals were in such a hurry to receive another round of bribes that they strutted to the Sistine Chapel dressed in the garb of fashionable cavaliers, with plumed hats, gay vests, mantles, silver spurs and flowing robes. Giulio de' Medici (1478–1534), a bastard child of the great Florentine family, made them the highest bid and he became Pope Clement VII (1523–34). Under his papacy, Rome fell in 1527.

It is an extraordinary story, one which space prevents our giving a full account of, and is yet another little-known episode in the bizarre history of the Christian Church. Pope Clement was as treacherous and dishonourable in his public conduct as his cousin, Pope Leo X, and drew upon himself the contempt as well as hatred of all who had dealings with him. His excesses shocked Europe, and it was his crooked ways and his cowardly subterfuges which led to the taking and pillaging of Rome by Christian troops of the Spanish king Charles V (1500–58; later Holy Roman Emperor, 1530–58). Stung by Clement's perfidy, the emperor launched his cardinal-led army upon the city on 6 May 1527, and so savage was the attack that the population of Rome was reduced from 98,000 to



This engraving depicts Pope Clement VII with plumed and armed cardinals assisted by curates and attempting to escape during the "disastrous humiliation of the sack of Rome" (*The Papacy*, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, op. cit., pp. 137-139, passim). In the background are scenes of fighting and looting. The pope was captured and imprisoned in the Castel Sant' Angelo, the circular building shown in the top left area of the engraving. (© Film Library of Roman Antiquities, Milan, Italy)

32,000 in eight days. Included in the carnage were the deaths of 147 Swiss Guardsmen in the Vatican. Again, papal nepotism and the lust for territory had brought ruin upon the Romans: this time, arguably the worst rape of a great city in history. Rome was laid waste, its churches profaned, its treasures plundered, its libraries pillaged, people murdered, and nuns raped and tortured to death by what the Church called "a rabble of miscreants" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Pecci ed., ii. p. 166).

Catholic writers put against this the contemporary activity of various Church reformers in parts of Italy and the refusal of Clement to grant King Henry VIII a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. But, said Cardinal Cajetan, "it was a just judgment of the people ... the papacy aimed henceforth at becoming an 'ideal government' under a spiritual and converted clergy" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, xii, pp. 767-769). This was decades after the boasted "reformation in Head and members" of the Church assured by Pope Alexander VI (*Catholic Encyclopedia* xiv, pp. 32-33). So here the Augean stables were at length cleansed; the papacy, for the seventh time in its own editions of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, is recorded as having "sunk to its lowest ebb" but now promised to become an "ideal government", and the Vatican confessed that "the demand for reform in the Church was, in fact, not unjustified" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, xiv, pp. 264-265).

### The fraudulent *Book of the Popes*

What we may today call the "foreign policy" of the papacy during our 631-year overview brought an incalculable volume of savage warfare and bloodshed upon Italy and Europe. The papacy can only be relieved of the charge of savagery on the ground that popes were determined at any cost to have an earthly kingdom and its revenues. In pursuance of that purpose, the papal office has demonstrated a record of centuries of unparalleled corruption and criminality, and to hide this fact the Church provided itself with concocted books about its popes that are "wise and salutary

fictions" ("Contradictions in the Catholic Encyclopedias: A Record of Conflicts in Accredited Church Expositions", Major Joseph Wheless [Judge Advocate, USA], *American Bar Association Journal*, 1930 [vol. no. unknown]).

Few readers know how freely it is acknowledged that the popular Catholic versions of the history of the popes are composed of forgeries and are used today with great profit in Christian circles. The Vatican flooded the world with false information about its popes, the most blatant examples being the famous, or infamous, *Book of the Popes (Liber Pontificalis)* and the *Liberian Catalogue*, both notorious for their fictitious accounts of early and mythical "successors of St Peter" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, ix, pp. 224-225; also Pecci ed., ii, p. 371). These books provide a collection of glowing diatribes describing the pontificates of docile and devout popes, many of whom never existed, and has about it the spurious air of ingenuousness that so often amuses the reader.

*Book of the Popes* is an official papal work, written and kept in the Vatican, and its introduction claims to "preserve for posterity the holy lives and wonderful doings of the heads of the Church Universal" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, ix, p. 224). However, if patient readers care to glance at the synopsis of each pope as given, they will see that the Church knows nothing whatever about the pontiffs of the first six or seven centuries, and not one of them is a clearly defined figure of history. The summations of popes are decorated with the official halo of sanctity, but the Bollandist priest, Father Delehaye, a leading Catholic investigator of this kind of literature, said "there is no evidence whatever that the papal genealogies are based upon earlier sources" (*The Legends of the Saints*, Father Delehaye, 1907 English ed., quoted and expanded upon in *The Popes and Their Church*, Dr Joseph McCabe, C. A. Watts & Co., London, 2nd ed. revised, 1924, p. 13).

Simply put, there were no Christian popes for many centuries; they were the Mithraic fathers of Rome, and "the chief of the [Mithraic] fathers, a sort of pope, who always lived at Rome, was called Pater Patrum" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, x, pp. 402-404). Some even called themselves after the Zoroastrian god, an excellent example being Pope Hormisdas (514-523), whose name is Persian for Ahura Mazda. Of him, the Church said "his name presents an interesting problem" and added this curious comment: "St Hormisdas owes his canonisation to an unofficial tradition" (*The Popes: A Concise Biographical History*, Burns & Oates, Publishers to the Holy See, London, 1964, p. 81). His "considerable numbers of recalcitrant bishops" were devotees of Ahura Mazda, supporting Mithraic doctrine (ibid.).

We need to understand that many ancient popes, who in modern times have been presented as dignified gentlemen isolated from every taint of mundane interest, never existed. The Church has admitted that its papal biographies (*Book of the Popes* and the *Liberian Catalogue*) are not candid digests of pious men of considerable erudition but are untruthful fabrications: "Historical criticism has for a long time dealt with this ancient text in an exhaustive way ... especially in recent decades" (i.e., late 1800s-early 1900s) (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, v, pp. 773-780; also ix, pp. 224-225, passim) and established it "historically untenable" (ibid., passim).

The Church confessed that the *Book of the Popes* is a phony record, retrospectively compiled in the deceptive manner of most

clerical writings. This admission is found in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*:

"In most of its manuscript copies there is found at the beginning a spurious correspondence between Pope Damasus I [366-383] and St Jerome [c. 347-420]. These letters were considered genuine in the Middle Ages. Duchesne [papal historian, 1584-1640] has proved exhaustively and convincingly that the first series of biographies, from St Peter to Felix III [IV, d. 530], was compiled at the latest under Felix's successor Boniface II [530-532]. The compilers of the *Liber Pontificalis* utilized also some historical writings, a number of apocryphal fragments [e.g., the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions], the *Constitutum Sylvestri*, the spurious Acts of the alleged 'Synod of the 275 bishops under Sylvester', etc., and the fifth-century *Roman Acts of Martyrs*. Finally, the compilers distributed arbitrarily along their list of popes a number of papal decrees taken from unauthentic sources; they likewise attributed to earlier popes liturgical and disciplinary regulations of the sixth century. The authors were Roman ecclesiastics, and some were attached to the Roman Court ... in the *Liber Pontificalis* it is recorded that popes issued decrees that were lost, or mislaid, or perhaps never existed at all. Later popes seized

the opportunity to supply a false pontifical letter suitable for the occasion, attributing it to the pope whose name was mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis*."

(*Catholic Encyclopedia*, v, pp. 773-780, and ix, pp. 224-225, passim; also regarding the fraudulent *Book of the Popes*, see *Annales Ecclesiastici*, op. cit., folio xi, and *De Antiqua Ecclesiae Disciplina*, op. cit.)

The falsity of the *Book of the Popes* is thereby shown and the intentional presentation of its fabricated contents is revealed.

English theologian and deist Anthony Collins (1676-1729), in his celebrated *Discourse of Free-thinking* (1713), discussed at length the extent of the superficial literature that circulates in Christianity. He said (p. 96): "In short, these frauds are very common in all books which are published by priests or priestly men. For it is certain they plead the authority of earlier writings that were themselves fake, forged, mangled or corrupted, with more reasons than any to support their articles of faith with sinister ingenuity."

The fervour with which the modern-day work of suppression, misrepresentation, falsification and concealment of the real disposition of the popes, whose character no non-Church historian respects, makes the guilt of the successors of the Church as great as that of those who established the system.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Vatican added to its cover-up and employed unnamed Mannerist artists to create pious portraits of popes extending back centuries. After the ruling on the need for standardised biblical images by the Council of Trent, Charles Cardinal Borromeo, at one time the manservant to Pope Sixtus V (1585-90), moved a motion during the First Provincial Council (1565) forbidding the painting of Christian personages without official approval from the Church. The motion was carried, and from that time on artists needed written approval from the Artist Censor to the Holy Office on matters pertaining to the creation of Christian iconography. Bishops were appointed to instruct artists on the standardised presentation of particularly Gospel subjects and they were not to proceed without Church

Simply put, there were no Christian popes for many centuries; they were the Mithraic fathers of Rome ...

permission. Thus, by necessity, painters of popes purposely and incessantly applied placid characteristics to the physical appearance of popes who were, in reality, "men of dubious dispositions" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Pecci ed., i, p. 326). Those paintings appear in modern books and are only creations from the artists' minds, for previous to the 16th century "no authentic portraits of the popes exist" (*The Popes: A Concise Biographical History*, op. cit., p. 16).

## Conclusion

Thus, in our search for Christianity's "sweetness and light", we have, as it were, scratched only the surface of the history of the papacy as recorded by the Church itself. This article is but a thumbnail sketch of a few popes from a total of 264 listed in *The Popes: A Concise Biographical History* (op. cit.), a sanitised presentation of their lives which subtly excludes detailed discussion on centuries of double, triple and quadruple popes. Documenting lurid features emanating from a long line of popes, carrying names like Adrian, Leo, Clement, Benedict, Boniface, Gregory, Innocent, Celestine, Pius (pious!), Alexander, Eugenius (you genius!), Urban and John, falls outside the limited scope of this critique.

It is not possible here to elaborate on the interminable political wars and throat-cuttings joyously mooted by centuries of papal instructions, nor on the infinite blood-lust and greed of the execrated Holy Inquisition and of the never-ending successions of murderous popes, armed Curias and blood-sodden prelates. Nor is it possible to expand upon the story of the pope who called himself Lucifer, and another who used funds from the Vatican's treasure chamber to develop the finest horse stud in Europe.

Then there is the little-known story of Alberic III, Count of Tusculum, who purchased the papacy for his 12-year-old son Theophylactus (Benedict IX; see part one) and the insolence of the modern Church in describing him as:

"...one of the more youthful popes, unanimously elected by a special commission to the cheers of the delighted cardinals, who were all legitimately appointed and formal cognizance was taken. The cardinal-camerlengo made the announcement of a pope-elect about eight o'clock on the morning of the first day, and then the cardinals advanced and paid him his first obedience or homage (*adoratio*). After the Conclave, certain honorary distinctions and pecuniary emoluments were awarded to the conclaveists."

(*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Pecci ed., iii, p. 255)

We also leave for another time the account of the Conclave which made a pope of a cardinal who had earlier horrified Europe by ordering the massacre of every man, woman and child in the Italian city of Cesena in 1379. The savage thoughts behind this

dreadful incident reveal the true nature and motives of the men in charge of Christianity, and this story is a cold challenge to Church ethics and pretensions. From those and similar actions, it is apparent that the papacy viewed the faith of its followers only as a novel kind of folly.

The Church claims that the choice of every pope was guided by the Holy Spirit, aided indirectly but effectively by bribery, armies, warships and weaponry. The power of the papacy rested upon the "right of the sword" (Bull *Unam Sanctam*, Boniface VIII, 18 November 1302; overview in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, xv, p. 126), which the Roman Catholic Church emphatically claims today in its esoteric Code of Canon Law. It is revealing to read New Testament narratives in which Jesus Christ defined his mission: "I have come not to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34) and instructed his followers to arm themselves with weapons (Luke 22:36). The history of the papacy reveals that the popes took Jesus' advice, for they imputed to Christ the horrid justification of the sword and the infernal principles of more than a thousand years of unrestrained criminal activity. The popes, executors of "a depraved and excessive superstition" (*Meditations*, Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, c. 180) and whom the modern Church presents as the centre of love and peace, were in reality, more often than not, debauched military strategists indifferent to a Christian moral code.

Whatever one may think of the determination of popes to hold or expand their temporal power, one cannot entertain any defence of their nepotism or the corrupt nature of the office itself. Roberto Francesco Romulus Cardinal Bellarmino (1542–1621) conceded these truths by admitting that "the papacy almost eliminated Christianity" and, later, learned French encyclopaedist Denis Diderot (1713–83) added in his *Encyclopédie*:

"From its inception in a mean and squalid settlement outside the walls of Rome, between the ragged buildings that fringed the farther bank of the Tiber and extended to the edges of the marshy Ager Vaticanus [Vatican Field], the Church of

the popes was cradled ... it developed into a *chronique scandaleuse* [a chronicle of scandals] and its survival leaves one to pass an opinion on the peculiar mind of human nature that allows a system injurious to good morals to exist. Such an association could at most be considered as cause for disbelief. To the students of genuine history, the facts are so notorious that the alliance of the papal hierarchy with brutality and treachery, and the wilful neglect of reform, is confronted by the serious prospect of the spiritual ruin of the Catholic faith."

In our current lenient age, some Church writers have attempted



This is a detail from a gate leading to the Corsini Chapel in the Lateran Basilica in Rome. Pope Clement XII (1730–40) ordered the construction of the chapel and named it after his family (he was Lorenzo Corsini, b. 1652). In his brief, *Verbo Dei*, he praised the pontificate of the 12-year-old son of the Count of Tusculum and honoured the youthful pope, Benedict IX, on the gate (*The Popes and Their Church*, Joseph McCabe, Waits & Co., London, 1933). (© Film Library of Roman Antiquities, Milan, Italy)

Continued on page 79



to purify the character of bygone popes but Dr Ludwig Pastor (1854–1928), German Catholic historian of the papacy, frankly admitted the extent of their irreverence, noting that "the evidence against our Holy Fathers is so strong as to render it impossible to restore their reputation" (*History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, Ludwig Pastor Freiherr von Campersfelden; quoted in *A History of the Popes*, Dr Joseph McCabe, op. cit., vol. 2).

The mighty spiritual power which popes possess, which is said to be so valuable to Christians, led to the most licentious, cruel and dishonourable organisation known in the history of civilisation. The apologist who tells his readers that the popes were a fine constructive force is flagrantly opposing historical facts.

*The Cambridge Modern History*, a most judicious authority, says that "the world has rarely seen a more debased standard of morality than that which prevailed under the popes in the closing years of the Middle Ages" (vol. 1, p. 673). To this could be added the opinion of this author, based on many years of research, that the true extent of the disgrace of the papal office was continuous from before the time of the Holy

Roman Emperor Charlemagne (d. 814) until well after the Council of Trent (1545–63) and was eradicated only under the pressure of Protestantism.

Most Catholics don't know about the real story of the history of the Church, nor about the harsh and impious nature of their popes. But as they begin to peer over the barriers the Catholic hierarchy has raised, they see that the illustrious and authoritative passivity recorded of the popes has been won by false pretence.

The modern-day claim that popes promoted the mental awakening of Europe is a particularly bold misrepresentation of the facts. The world is learning that the papacy, instead of having guided Europe along a path towards civilisation, has even in its best representatives inaugurated centuries of conflict and degradation.

The papal office is unique in the history of religion, not only for the high proportion of disreputable men who have sat in the pontifical chair but for the blood it has shed in defence of its power, the dishonesty of its credentials and the record of treason to its own ideals.

### **About the Author:**

Tony Bushby, an Australian, became a businessman and entrepreneur very early in his life. He established a magazine-publishing business and spent 20 years researching, writing and publishing his own magazines, primarily for the Australian and New Zealand markets. With his strong interest in metaphysical subjects, he has developed longstanding relationships with many associations and societies throughout the world that have assisted his research by making their archives available.

Tony is the author of *The Bible Fraud* (2001; reviewed in NEXUS 8/06 with extracts in NEXUS 9/01–03), *The Secret in the Bible* (2003; reviewed 11/02, extract "Ancient Cities under the Sands of Giza" in 11/03) and *The Crucifixion of Truth* (2005; 12/02). His new book *The Twin Deception* was released in January 2007 (see review this issue). These books are available from NEXUS offices and from Joshua Books, <http://www.joshuabooks.com>.

As Tony Bushby vigorously protects his privacy, any correspondence should be sent to him c/- NEXUS Magazine, PO Box 30, Mapleton Qld 4560, Australia, fax +61 (0)7 5442 9381.