

British restraint, common sense, and dislike of exhibitionism, by contrast especially with the dignified funeral given Winston Churchill in 1965. One of the most effective parts of the book is the “transplantation” of a mourner from the gates of Kensington Palace in 1997 to the Britain of 1965, where this “time traveller” is confronted not just by lovable, cheeky Cockneys and polite shop assistants, but also by poor-quality food, dowdy clothes, and “rather low” standards of hygiene. Yet there is no doubt which period Hitchens prefers. The book is divided into 15 chapters, plus an introduction and conclusion, dealing respectively with emotionalism, history, class, patriotism, Anglicanism, television, satire, marriage and illegitimacy, the English language, the family, pornography, soap operas, family planning, liberal intellectuals, and the influence of America. Each is rich in elegiac observations, such as Hitchens’ comments on historical awareness:

Thirty or forty years ago, we might all have known the stories of Alfred and the cakes, of Canute and the waves, of Caractacus and Boadicea, Hereward the Wake and Thomas à Becket. The titles of the parables—the Sower, the Prodigal Son, the Talents—would have instantly conjured up a picture in the rich colors of a stained-glass window . . . Now these things are as meaningless to millions as the forgotten myths of Greece. We drive past ancient churches, Victorian town halls, abandoned grammar schools and guano-spattered statues, quite unaware of the forces that brought them into being, the struggles they commemorate or the sort of people who built them.

The list of topics, while demonstrating Hitchens’ ambition with this book, also suggests, perhaps, an undue degree of pessimism. Like many conservative works, *The Abolition of Britain* may even tend to inculcate pessimism, although the author does remark that “it is not certain that the struggle is finished or that the modernizers have already won,” and that the forthcoming referendum on the single currency represents an historical opportunity to reject the “liberal conformist” worldview. He advocates a patriotic alliance with those on the left who are concerned about nationhood and the

decline in morality, although the details are sketchy—and how many on the left really care about the nation-state? Yet the experiment ought to be tried.

Confirmation of Hitchens’ pessimistic conclusions might be found in a comparison of Prime Minister Blair and thrice-Prime Minister Lord Salisbury. The Beatles-and-color TV PM can only be contrasted unfavorably with the man who presided over the British Empire at the moment of its greatest extent, and whose wise stewardship ensured peace in Europe during decades of expansionist restiveness. (To be fair to Blair, most modern Tories also look bathetic when placed alongside this Victorian titan.)

Andrew Roberts, commissioned by the sixth Marquess of Salisbury to write the life of his great-grandfather, took pleasure in the task of rescuing his subject from undeserved obscurity. “I have an unpleasant suspicion,” he says, “that, aged 36, I will never again find so congenial a subject.” Roger Scruton, editor of the *Salisbury Review*, has said that the journal’s title pays honor to an ideal prime minister who “never did anything,” i.e., never passed any legislation. Joking aside, not only did Salisbury for the most part eschew legislative remedies, but his diplomatic labors were carried out exceedingly discreetly. Salisbury despised compliments, which he called “discreditable to the utterer and odious to the receiver,” and discouraged personality cults of the sort which grew up around Disraeli and Gladstone. As the author notes sardonically, “There could never be a People’s Robert . . .” It is probably for these reasons that Salisbury is neglected even by thoughtful Conservatives. Yet he wrote over two million words of trenchant political commentary and book reviews, displaying a profound knowledge of such varied non-political fields as German philosophy, science, and theology. Historian Robert Blake has called him “the most formidable intellectual figure that the Conservative Party has ever produced.” How many could combine the office of prime minister with the presidency of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, or present a highly regarded critique of the theory of evolution to an audience made up of some of the greatest scientists of the time? Obviously, any man who could be described as “too Conservative for modern times . . . a man of a past age, [who] has no sympathy with life, the stir and growth of the present and no belief in the future”

is worthy of study.

Roberts combines scholarship with caustic humor. He takes particular delight in remembering the verses of the jingoist Alfred Austin, including the masterful couplet from a poem attributed to him on the illness of the Prince of Wales: “Across the wires the electric message came: / He is no better, he is much the same.” Also, he enjoys quoting Salisbury’s famous red-inked *bons mots* and marginalia. “If Admiral Hornby is a cool-headed, fearless, sagacious man, he ought to bring an action for libel against his epistolary style,” Salisbury commented on an 1878 letter. Touches like these, as well as the realization that one is sailing in little-known waters, make reading *Salisbury* an unmitigated pleasure. There may never be another PM quite like him, but while there are enough people interested in Lord Salisbury for a major publisher to bring out his biography, surely all cannot be lost.

RECEIVED WISDOM

For Good and Evil: The Impact of Taxes on the Course of Civilization by Charles Adams (Madison Books; \$29.95).

Maverick economic historian Charles Adams has produced a second edition of his acclaimed history of taxation. Tracing the course of this dreaded necessity from ancient Egypt to the present, Adams offers original and sometimes quirky insights into the impact of taxes. The American War Between the States, for example, turns out to have been fought more over tariffs than over slaves: “The tax issue in the Civil War was not a glamorous cause like slavery. It involved no high purpose on either side. The noble issues which both sides held up as the cause for their struggle remind one of the lofty purposes superpowers often profess to cover their imperialism. The point here is that the North did not go to war to free the slaves and the South did not secede because of a trigger-happy anti-slavery crusader in the White House.”

Although he has praise for the intentions of reformers who have proposed a flat tax or a consumption tax, Adams is not sanguine about the immediate prospects for tax reform: “The current effort to reform the income tax by a few band-aid remedies has been tried so often as to be nothing other than a joke.”

Stylish Mendacity

by Paul Gottfried

Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII

by John Cornwell
New York: Viking;
430 pp., \$29.95



Awash in reviews of Cornwell's portrait of Pius XII, I felt surfeited by the book even before it arrived in the mail. To call this biography unflattering is meiosis. John Lukacs is right to say that, while Cornwell's production is being featured by the History Book of the Month Club, history itself is what Cornwell mercilessly clubs in his assault on Eugenio Pacelli, the papal nuncio to Germany who became Pope Pius XII.

Cornwell's intemperate attacks do not seem justified by the evidence cited. If Pius, as a well-wisher of Nazi tyranny and an antisemite who typified the Church's "habitual fear and distrust of Jews," really was "Hitler's Pope," Cornwell does not make these charges stick. It is one thing to claim that Pius did not go far enough in criticizing Nazism, when in his Christmas 1942 address he referred to the "hundreds of thousands [not identified specifically as Jews] who without any fault of their own, sometimes only by reason of their nationality or race, are marked down for death or gradual extinction." But these diplomatic tropes do not establish Pius's enthusiasm for the holocaust, any more than his failure to take strong action when the Nazis entered Rome in October 1943 and imprisoned its Jews. What exactly *should* Pius have done at that time? Denunciations of Nazi antisemitism by Catholic bishops in Holland three years earlier had resulted in the extermination of Dutch Christians of Jewish descent, including a future saint, Edith Stein. What leverage (or military divisions) did the Pope have to induce the Nazis to become gentle and caring people?

It may be appropriate to ask, as one reviewer in *Osservatore Romano* has, how Pius—who had been viewed by Jewish leaders after the war as an heroic protec-

tor of Jewish refugees and who was the object of testimonials by Golda Meir, the chief rabbi of Rome, and the World Jewish Congress—could have so fooled the very people he had hoped to hurt? Why had no one after the war come up with the evidence which supposedly confirms Pius's Nazi and antisemitic convictions? The reason may be that Cornwell's accusations are mostly concocted. Until the victimological hysteria of the present age, moreover, no one would have taken such a work seriously. At least ten magazines, including *Atlantic Monthly* (which gave the biography high marks), feature a photo of Pius approaching the offices of the German head of state, the entrance flanked by grim-looking soldiers: an obvious attempt to create the impression of an obsequious visit to the German Führer by the papal nuncio. The visit actually took place in 1926, when Pius paid a courtesy call on the democratically elected president of the Weimar Republic.

The real sins of Pius XII, which Cornwell and his adulators find inexcusable, are two. The first charge, having been an "authoritarian" ecclesiastical head, is entirely ludicrous. Any pope, in particular a conservative one, becomes for Cornwell a usable stand-in for Pius IX, who was responsible for the proclamation of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council in 1870. Unfortunately, Pius XII, a painfully cautious and forever agonized pontiff, was a poor candidate to be Cornwell's ideal villain: far better for the author to have focused on the autocratic Pius XI, who in fact blasted the Nazis in his 1937 encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, partly prepared by Pius XII. Though Pius XI loathed the communists (and backed the Nationalists in Spain), it would be hard to depict him as a friend of Hitler. The other polluting sin attributed to Pius was to have been hostile to communism and the political left—which allegedly drove him into the arms of the Axis.

If one is a white Westerner, the best way to protect oneself against the pro-Nazi smear is to have had communist or pro-communist associations. For example, both Bella Abzug and the French Communist Party supported the Nazi-Soviet Pact and spent almost two years portraying the Third Reich as no threat to the international working class. Neither

has suffered much for this stand (which only isolated historians know about and even fewer dwell on). In comparison to Jewish liberal activist Abzug, Pius XII was an engaged anti-Nazi; unfortunately for his reputation, he also feared the left and enjoyed German culture. Pius XII has suffered a posthumous hatchet job not for being Hitler's Pope but because he was politically incorrect, undeserving of the proceedings that might have led to his beatification (which, in fact, were halted last October).

In a certain sense, this is fitting. Why should beatification be exempt from the leftist victimology to which every other political—or politicized—event is now subject? Last month, an American television program on the life of John Paul II scolded the Pope (or found someone who did so at length) for canonizing Polish priest and Nazi victim Maximilian Kolbe. Although Kolbe gave his life to save an intended Nazi victim, allowing himself to be executed in the place of a concentration camp inmate with a wife and children, this martyr did not quite measure up to media standards, having made unkind remarks in a Catholic monthly about Polish Jewish commercial practices. These angelic standards would not have been applied so rigorously had Kolbe been a Communist Party member or generic leftist. After all, liberal idol Bobby Kennedy frequently made scurrilous references to Jews and blacks without journalists bothering to mention this habit for 30 years after his death, and even then without hurt to his reputation (cf. *The Dark Side of Camelot* by Seymour Hersch). Pius XII, Cornwell reasons, must have been a Nazi because he held "undemocratic" views about Church polity and the threat communism poses to Christian societies. The Pope also fell short of the special standards applied to non-leftists in determining who is, and is not, an antisemite. Pius's unkind ethnic reference, during the short-lived Bavarian Soviet regime of 1919, to a Russian Jewish Marxist—a mildly insensitive comment probably easily surpassed every day of their lives by Harry Truman and members of the Kennedy clan—is brought forward to show that the future Pope had genocide on his mind.

Right now I have a hard time deciding which is the more reprehensible and