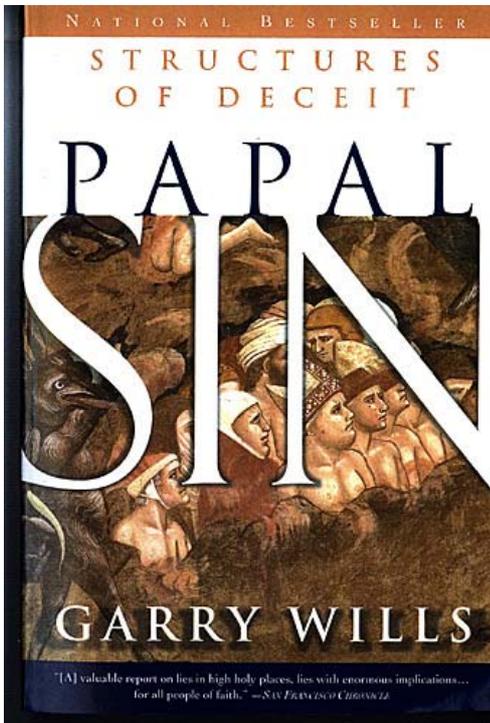


Book of The Century



Gary Wills (2000). **Papal Sin: Structure of Deceit.** Image Books. Doubleday. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland. 312 pp.

"My own heroes, it will become clear, are the many truth tellers in Catholic ranks, preeminently Saint Augustine, Cardinal Newman, Lord Acton, and Pope John XIII. The truth, we are told, will make us free. It is time to free Catholics, lay as well as clerical, from the pressures of deceit that are our quiet modern order form of papal sin. Paler, subtler, less dramatic than the sins castigated by Orcagna or Dante, these are the quieter corruptions of intellectual betrayal" (p.9)... "...as when the gender of the apostles is adduced to support a male monopoly on the priesthood, after the ancient and real reason for that monopoly, a belief in female inferiority, has become unusable (see Chapter 7) (p.7).

Additional Commentary

"This church would not restrict the priesthood to men. In fact, it would not restrict the priesthood to priests--to magicians of the Eucharistic transformation. It would not deprive whole communities of their own priests rather than relax a code of celibacy never imposed on the apostles.

It would not bring in substitutes for the Holy Spirit, making the Pope the monarch of the church. It would not make Mary an empress--drawing on the imagery of the world's violent system. It would not silence the free voice of the Spirit in believers' hearts.

If one wants to know what such a church would *not* be, all one has to do is look at the first Vatican Council, where schemes were hatched to foster a doctrine on the faithful by surprise, where the Pope pursued a stealth strategy, deceiving his own followers by pretending that the Council was not called to do his will. It would not suppress freedom of speech, hiding its proceedings behind a veil of silence, quashing the voice of conscience in the attending bishops, changing its decrees in secret before the final vote. It was not only the faithful, the critical, the questioning, who were excluded from that Council. The Spirit was excluded. None of the Council's distinguishing characteristics--secrecy, coercion, deception--is a characteristic of the Spirit. The old system of sacrifice was brought back, the one canceled by Christ on the cross--only here the believers were sacrificed to an idol, to the papacy. Pius IX stood not for all-speak (*parrhesia*), but for no-speak (*ou-rhesia*), for blind subjection, not liberation in the Light, the Light who enlightens everyone who comes into the world (Jn 1:9)". (p.310)...

"But where can this church of the Spirit be found? Not in some imagined purity of the past. There were no good old days of the faith apart from what faces us today. There was betrayal and bitterness in the clash of Paul with Peter, Peter with Paul, as in the betrayal of both men to Nero. Then where is the church of Pentecost, that original feast of multilingual multiculturalism? It is anywhere the Spirit breathes freedom into a Christian community--where peacemakers are at work, where Sister Prejean is telling people that capital punishment is revenge and not a Christian action, where Daniel Berrigan is caring for those stricken with AIDS, where people unite to help the helpless, where Philip Berrigan is telling us that no one has the right to build weapons that can destroy the world" (p.311).

"I do not think that my church has a monopoly on the Spirit, which breathes where She will, in every Christian sect and denomination. In fact, She breathes through all religious life, wherever the divine call is heeded, among Jew and Buddhists and Muslims and others. But we Christians believe She has a special role to complete Christ's mission in us. Unworthy as we are, She calls us. She even calls the Vatican. All, Christians need to respond to that soliciting. Including Popes" (p.311).