

8-1-1982

## [Book Review of] *A Crisis of Truth*, by Ralph Martin

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### Recommended Citation

Grisez, Germain (1982) "[Book Review of] *A Crisis of Truth*, by Ralph Martin," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 49: No. 3, Article 17.  
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol49/iss3/17>

succinct and quotable summary of Burtchaell's position, his last chapter consists of his article written as an anti-abortion contribution to the *Ann Lander's Encyclopedia* in 1978. Here is a lucid and hard-hitting essay which is more personal than professional, and highly effective.

In general, the chief merit of the book is in its compilation of argumentation from many sources. There is nothing here that has not been heard before from one or more of the myriad authors whom he gives credit in his long index. It is nonetheless an important and valuable book.

Old sergeants of the pro-life movement will be most excited, however, to recognize the telltale signs of an incurable fervor in the author's writing. James Tunstead Burtchaell has taken up the battle for the duration. Unborn children will be grateful for such a formidable champion.

— Eugene F. Diamond, M.D.  
Professor of Pediatrics  
Loyola University, Stritch School of Medicine

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## *A Crisis of Truth*

Ralph Martin

*Servant Books, Box 8617, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48107, 1982, 245 pp., \$10.95.*

Every Catholic who shares pastoral responsibility — from the pope to the parents of families — knows that the Church today is undergoing a crisis of faith and of fidelity to God's word. Like a person afflicted with a suspicious tumor, we are tempted to ignore our experience and hope it will heal by itself. In *A Crisis of Truth: The Attack on Faith, Morality, and Mission in the Catholic Church*, Ralph Martin draws on scripture, the documents of Vatican II, and the teachings of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II to diagnose this crisis and outline a prescription for the cooperation all of us owe to the Spirit's healing work.

Martin is a Catholic layman who has served on the staff of the national secretariat of the Cursillo movement, been a leader in Catholic charismatic renewal, founded *New Covenant* magazine, and directed the International Communications Office for the charismatic renewal in Brussels from 1976-1980. He has published several other books and lectured throughout the United States on the situation he addresses in the present work.

Martin begins by focusing on facts which are not news, but which are being widely ignored. There is a crisis of truth in the Catholic Church. The authority, clarity, and accessibility of God's word are called into question. Sometimes Catholic truth is flatly denied. More often it is rendered ambiguous, presented selectively with some essentials omitted, subjected to distorted "reinterpretations," or crowded out by theological speculation and unauthentic "development." Many Catholic scholars deny the inerrancy of scripture and set aside the Catholic standard for its interpretation under the guidance of the Church's teaching authority.

Jesus' unique claims are widely questioned and Christianity is put on the same level as other world religions. Such christology is leading to syncretism and a decline of missionary effort. The "spirit" of Vatican II is invoked for this development, although the Council's own documents give no support to any theory which would detract from the uniqueness of Jesus as the sole mediator between God and man, the second Adam who restores fallen humankind, and the heavenly king through whom all things are to be restored to the Father.

Martin admits that the Church often has been too tied to the status quo. Marxists are taking advantage of this fact to infiltrate and subvert the Church in Latin America and elsewhere. In America and western Europe, the Church's assimilation to the culture has paved the way for a counterfeit "Christian" humanism, which in reality comprises essentials of Christian faith and life. Martin tellingly describes the consequent decline in Catholic moral teaching and practice, especially in the field of sexual morality.

After diagnosing the crisis of truth in the Catholic Church, Martin turns to a plan of treatment. False optimism and theories which attempt to justify what has happened must be set aside. The Satanic, anti-Christian element in cultural movements must be recognized and identified clearly. All false teaching occurs under some pastoral authority. The bishops must pull themselves together, set aside excuses for inaction and compromise, and begin to exercise more vigorously their collegial responsibility in communion with the pope to carry out Vatican II's true program of renewal. Infidelity and negligence of responsibility have dire consequences and call for God's judgment.

Thus, Martin clearly points to the need for both individual and communal repentance in the Catholic Church. We must examine ourselves by the standard of God's word, commit ourselves to greater fidelity, seek forgiveness and the help — human and divine — necessary to do better. The fundamental and indispensable act of ours must be prayer for an increased gift of the Holy Spirit and humble reliance on His light and power. False irenicism, which accepts infidelity to avoid new divisions, must be set aside. This necessary step will be painful, but faithfulness to God is more important than a false appearance of Christian and ecclesial unity.

Martin is not a pessimist, although he firmly sets aside the false optimism and accommodation with masquerade as Christian joy and pastoral charity. Confident that Christ remains with the Church, Martin challenges every Catholic to follow Him more faithfully and enjoy the unfailing help of the Holy Spirit in doing so. I hope this book will be read and discussed and acted on by seminarians, teachers, religious, Catholic physicians, priests, bishops — indeed, by every mature Catholic.

— Germain Grisez

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## *Psychiatric Ethics*

Sidney Bloch and Paul Chodoff, Editors

*Oxford University Press, New York/Melbourne, 1981, 365 pp., \$29.50.*

The temptation to play God confronts every professional who must deal with human beings. Invested with specialized knowledge, powers, and authority, the professional is faced with the opportunity to intervene in the lives of others in a manner which has profound ramifications. It is only with difficulty that the professional is able to accept the fact that his endowments are limited, often obscure, and not always infallible in their execution. In short, the professional must come to realize that his professional position does not exempt him from the status of all humans as they struggle to form themselves and their conduct in a manner most conducive to the well-being of all.