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W. D. Hall. *Politics, Society, and Christianity in Vichy France.* Oxford and Providence: Berg Publishers, 1995. xi + 419 pp. $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-85973-081-2.

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W.D. Halls has added again to our perceptions of the complex, perplexing, and morally ambiguous Vichy period. Like his earlier study, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford, 1981), this book draws attention to an area of inquiry which previously had received no detailed and comprehensive attention in English. It is an elaborate and well-executed study of the effect of Christianity on French politics and society during World War II. Halls' masterful work broadens and complements the research that Robert Zaretsky has done for the department of the Gard in *Nimes at War: Religion, Politics and Public Opinion in the Gard, 1938-1944* (1995) (H-France Review of Books, August 1997).

Halls takes a thematic approach and generally follows a chronological pattern. With twenty-one chapters divided into six parts, the book begins with an examination of the role of Christians in pre-war politics. Recalling that in 1940 the churches would become the only French institutions which were still functional, though not unscathed, Halls reminds us that understanding the relations among the state, French society, and the churches is central to grasping what would take place during the war. The clash between the Catholic church and the French republican secularists led to much dissension, culminating in working-class abandonment of the church. Here Halls cautions readers about the pitfalls of measuring piety from church records alone. He notes, for example, that the *Marseillais* observed important life passages in church, for 90 percent of their children were baptized and 72 percent of all couples were married in church in 1945. Yet only about one in four French people attended Sunday mass regularly and less than one-third satisfied their Easter duty. Even more problematic is the task of ascertaining the attitudes and actions of the Christian laity vis-a-vis the church and state, because so little documentary evidence is available.

Operating on conservative political premises, the Catholic leadership did little to criticize Hitler even in the pre-war period. Protestants, on the other hand, were often aware of thinkers like Karl Barth, a Swiss theologian and outspoken critic of Nazism, who regarded the war against Hitler as just. Conservative Catholics like Paul Claudel characterized defeat as deliverance from the anticlerical Radical party, while many Protestants remained less inclined to criticize the war or its execution.

In his exploration of the early days of Vichy, Halls focuses on the attitudes and actions of the Catholic episcopacy, which had little choice but to rally to Petain if it hoped to improve the relationship between the church and the government. Many bishops anticipated Vichy support for parochial rather than lay education, and even hoped for the restitution of church property confiscated in connection with the separation of church and state in 1905. Halls finds evidence of Catholic clerics dreaming of a new Concordat for France. In all these aspirations, Catholic leaders would be sorely disappointed in Petain's cautious moves. Perhaps the only real compensation to the church for backing the Vichy regime was escape from the threat of Nazification and purging of religious influence which Alsace-Lorraine experienced at the hands of Hitler's *Gauleiters*. As in most Vichy gambles to "*eviter le pire*," losses far exceeded winnings.

Halls finds little Christian proclivity toward direct and enthusiastic collaboration with the Germans. Yet such a commendation of the churches, the supposed moral arbiters of France, still largely operational under Vichy, is damnation with faint praise. Halls asserts that four years of silence might have served the churches better. Catholic and Protestant leaders alike lent legitimacy to Vichy, especially by aligning themselves with the regime in matters related to family and youth. The Catholic church, in fact, alienated many patriotic youth with this choice. Vichy never created a single youth movement in emulation of the Hitler Youth. Nevertheless, many young people who were committed to the re-Christianization of France in 1940, found themselves driven to Charles de Gaulle and the Resistance, particularly as the regime became implicated in recruitment for

the *Service du travail obligatoire*, the obligatory labor service to Germany. Some information in this section of *Politics, Society and Christianity* is drawn from Halls' earlier study, but here he provides a most helpful consolidation.

Of course, the spotlight shines on the higher clergy in this study. The bishops' actions are the most publicly visible and Halls selects several clerics to evaluate their behavior. This is a particularly disheartening exercise, which only grows worse as the regime became more implicated in the Holocaust and the deportation of slave labor to Germany. Halls finds evidence of Christian objections to the most egregious anti-Semitic legislation and attacks. For example, denunciations of the propaganda film *Jew Suess* resulted in some Catholic reviews being closed down. Rene Gillouin, Petain's Protestant speech writer, who eventually fled to Switzerland in 1943, made private protests on behalf of Jews. One Jesuit priest, Pere Gaston Fessard, was an outspoken critic of the 1940 anti-Jewish laws, but none of the Church leadership spoke out until the 1942 deportations outraged the French population. Moreover, each example given marks an anti- German more than anti-Vichy gesture. Most protests were too little too late. By the time a major shift in public opinion occurred against the regime, all of the groundwork had been laid to identify and incarcerate most of the 42,000 Jews who were deported east in the summer of 1942, a project largely carried out by French police and prefectural officials. When Monsignor Jean Delay, bishop of Marseille, spoke out against these deportations, his words were oddly apologetic, prefaced by a placating admission that there was, after all, a Jewish problem in France.

One of the most valuable contributions of this study is its presentation of detailed information about the activities of the Catholic bishops in a single volume, including an excellent appendix that identifies them by province and diocese. Here Halls brings nuance to his assessment of the attitudes and acts of individuals, instead of tarring all the Catholic hierarchy with a single brush. He recognizes that Pierre Cardinal Gerlier of Lyon remained staunchly Petainist, yet cites the lawyer and hunter of war criminals Serge Klarsfeld's contention that Gerlier also aided in curbing cooperation between the French police and the SS. The bishop of Beauvais, Monsignor Roeder, made a dramatic gesture when he appeared in full pontificals, preceded by an acolyte bearing a crucifix, to register for the German-mandated Jewish census, because one of his ancestors was Jewish. Monsignor Paul Remond, bishop of Nice, forbade the French anti-Jewish police to verify baptismal certificates from his diocese. Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard of Paris supported the German war effort to the very end, in large part because of his hatred for the Soviet Union. Still, Suhard frequently intervened to alleviate some of the worst German abuses. Halls' assessment of Monsignors Pierre-Marie Theas of Montauban and Jules-Gerard Saliege of Toulouse enhances their standing among a handful of the higher clergy who followed their consciences and stood up to the occupiers and their own government. If Halls accuses only two Catholic bishops of outright collaboration with the Nazis–the rector of the Paris *Institut catholique*, and the bishop of Arras–only a few members of the episcopacy had much reason to be proud.

Halls' portrait of Cardinal Lienart, drawn for the first time from diocesan archives in Lille and the departmental archives of the Nord, is unusually intricate. Lienart, no lover of Germans, and much suspected by them, tried to help the prefect Fernand Carles walk a tightrope with the occupation army, *Oberfeldkommandantur* (OFK) 670, headed by the very strict and sometimes ferocious General Niehoff. Lienart's efforts to protect his clergy and lay members were no doubt the result of an anomaly in the OFK itself. German forces were exacting in their dealings with the *departements* of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais, detached from France and joined to Belgium, to speed up extraction of coal and production of textiles needed for the war. Yet it was a German officer, Carlo Schmid at the OFK, who cooperated to save Jews, protect resistant clergy, and negotiate with the Resistance to protect the Nord from some acts of destruction as the German army retreated. Half French himself, no Nazi, and in fact a prewar member of the German Socialist Party (SPD), Schmid interceded in ways which allowed Lienart and Carles to succeed. Despite Schmid's efforts to thwart his superiors, Lienart failed to speak out forcefully against the occupation, a fact Halls finds perplexing.

The strength of this work, a detailed group portrait of the Catholic hierarchy and their interaction with Vichy, is also its weakness. The emphasis remains on the leaders of the churches and there is no distinct sense of the effect of their actions on lay opinion. To be sure, gauging public response is one of the more difficult tasks of the historian, because sources are limited and not always reliable where censorship is the rule. Still, there is a nagging sense that this is a critical area for further examination. Similarly, we still do not know much about how the Vatican influenced the behavior of the French episcopacy, or, for that matter, Vichy and the Nazi occupiers. Whatever Gallican notions of detachment from the Pope and the Holy See may have lingered, it is unwise to minimize the influence of Rome. Hopefully, the kind

of examination of diocesan records Hall undertook for Lille will continue elsewhere. Until Vatican records open completely, these questions will persist. Halls also gives much less attention to his portrayal of the Protestant leadership. The familiar names of Pastors Marc Boegner and Andre Trocme of Chambon-sur-Lignon, and of CIMADE (*Comite d'inter-mouvement aupres des evacues*), the Protestant relief agency active in the Vichy internment camps, appear, but do not undergo the scrutiny which the Catholic hierarchy receives. Robert Zaretsky's complex analysis of Protestant interactions is more satisfying.

This book does not really address another important issue. The absence of women is noticeable and troubling, even in a history of largely male controlled institutions. Madeleine Barot and Jeanne Merle d'Aubigne appear in connection with the underground work of CIMADE. The Germans arrested the Superior General of the *Filles de la Charite de Saint-Vincent de Paul*, the provincial Superior for the Unoccupied Zone, and the head of the order in Montpellier, allegedly for harboring spies and fugitives. Surely Catholic nuns and Protestant women relief workers deserve more attention in such a comprehensive volume. With prisoners of war numbering 1.5 million, women probably played a disproportionate role in the relationship between clergy and laity than before the war. Gender must be incorporated in a book about society and Christianity and not confined to those studies with "women" in the title.

By no means, however, should these observations be seen as a reproach of Halls' fine achievement. No other work so fully deals with the Christian, particularly Catholic dimension of Vichy history. Surely no study incorporates so well the present state of French and English language scholarship on the subject. The select bibliography is excellent. By synthesizing the secondary literature, while using extensive documentation from the National Archives in Paris, the Public Records Office in London and the minutes of the meetings of the French Cardinals and Archbishops, Halls raises new questions for scholarly research. To be sure, some conclusions will be revised as new evidence appears, for our understanding of Vichy remains fluid. Still, this book is likely to be considered Halls' finest achievement and the benchmark study of religious leadership during Vichy. Finally, this is a beautifully written work which is compulsory reading for students of Vichy, of religion in France, and of the Holocaust.

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