

The Coming of the Third Reich by Richard J Evans. Allen Lane 2003.

The Devil's Disciples – The Lives and Times of Hitler's Inner Circle
by Anthony Read. Jonathan Cape 2003.

Hitler's Scientists – Science, War and the Devil's Pact
by John Cornwell. Viking 2003.

To the ever-burgeoning canon of books about the Third Reich is added this weighty – in every sense of the word – trio. Richard Evans, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge and acclaimed author of, among others, Telling Lies about Hitler, has produced a superb and highly readable book setting out the events leading up to the ascent to dictatorship by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party which he lead. It is a tale full of 'what ifs' and 'if onlys', and even though much of the detail is well known already when presented so cogently and coherently is still able to leave the reader amazed and disbelieving.

The Devil's Disciples, written by the award-winning writer Anthony Read, analyses in detail the bizarre, horrible and often ludicrous lives and loves of the men who worshipped closest at the cult of the Fuhrer. In particular, Read considers Goering, Goebbels and Himmler, in many ways the major Nazis after Hitler, though he also includes only slightly lesser figures such as Bormann and Albert Speer, who in some ways were closer to Hitler. This is an extraordinary story, and one that begs the \$64,000 question – How could these buffoons and misfits ever have fooled so many for so long?

Hitler's Scientists, by the author of the excellent biography of Pius XII, Hitler's Pope, analyses in chilling detail the Faustian pact between many branches of science and the Nazis. John Cornwell demonstrates how brilliant minds were able to shut down their moral selves and put the fruits of their intellect at the service of ideals and ideologues that would, one imagines, have been abhorrent to them. Cornwell reminds his readers not only how close Hitler came to breakthroughs that might have won the war, but also how a very few courageous individuals, most notably the nuclear physicist Werner Heisenberg, showed qualms of conscience which frustrated the achievement of Nazi goals. Though a history of but an aspect of the Second World War, Hitler's Scientists is a book with a significant message for the 21st century.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh