

John Cornwell: Constantine's Sword

by Robert P. Lockwood

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When John Cornwell's book *Hitler's Pope*[\[1\]](#) was released in the United States in 1999 it generated intense media coverage. Cornwell painted Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) as virtually a silent collaborator in the face of Nazi Germany's "Final Solution." While the alleged "silence" of Pius XII was central to media coverage, Cornwell's thesis went deeper than that. There was a reason for the "papal silence" that had little to do with fear or even anti-Semitism (though he broadly hinted that Eugenio Pacelli was at best unsympathetic to Jews throughout his life).

According to Cornwell, Pope Pius XII willingly sacrificed the lives of Jews on the altar of papal power: "Pacelli's failure to respond to the enormity of the Holocaust was more than a personal failure, it was a failure of the papal office itself and the prevailing culture of Catholicism. That failure was implicit in the rifts Catholicism created and sustained – between the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the secular, the body and the soul, clergy and laity, the exclusive truth of Catholicism over all other confessions and faith. It was an essential feature of Pacelli's ideology of papal power, moreover, that Catholics should abdicate, as Catholics, their social and political responsibility for what happened in the world and turn their gaze upward to the Holy Father and, beyond, to eternity."[\[2\]](#)

Critics generally dismissed Cornwell's book as sensationalism with little serious or original scholarship. Ronald J. Rychlak in *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*[\[3\]](#) effectively rebutted most

of Cornwell's major assertions. Cornwell's aim was to discredit Pius XII, and through him, his successor, Pope John Paul II. Cornwell wrote that Pope John Paul II "has reinstated the ideology of papal power. Pluralism, he believes, can only lead to centrifugal fragmentation; only a strong Pope, ruling from the apex, can save the Church...Pacelli's monolithic pyramidal model of the Church has once again reasserted itself." [\[4\]](#)

It was striking that little attention was given to this important conclusion. Cornwell was using the Holocaust to advocate and argue for a particular position within the Church on the role of papal authority. His book was written as an advocacy paper against the leadership of Pope John Paul II within the Church and in favor of a particular so-called liberal vision of how the Church should function. It was surprising that few were struck, particularly Jewish commentators, by this use and abuse of the Holocaust for internal Church debate. In retrospect, it appears blasphemous to the memory of the millions slaughtered by the Nazis.

Similarly, Garry Wills in his recent book *Papal Sin* uses the Holocaust to score points in an attack on papal authority. [\[5\]](#) Wills' book is a wide-ranging screed in opposition to myriad Catholic beliefs. [\[6\]](#) *Papal Sin* refers to what Wills calls the "structures of deceit" that he contends are inherent to the papacy. Wills charges that the Catholic Church exists in a system of lies, falsifications, and misrepresentations meant to artificially prop up papal authority. The whole structure and belief system of the Church, from sacramental and moral theology, to ecclesiology, Marian beliefs and the essential understanding of Christ's death as atonement for the sins of mankind, are part of a fabricated "structure of deceit" according to Wills. In discussing the Nazis and the Holocaust, he essentially regurgitates Cornwell's thesis. Wills argues that all the actions of Pope Pius XII during the years of Nazi power were

calculated responses meant to defend papal authority. Again, like Cornwell, he uses the Holocaust as a means to put forth a particular anti-papal perspective within the Catholic Church. The horror of the Holocaust is utilized as a tool to make points in an internal Church debate.

The latest author to enter the field of the Church and the Holocaust is James Carroll. A former Paulist priest and award-winning novelist, Carroll's new book is *Constantine's Sword*.[\[7\]](#) Carroll's stated goal is to present a "history" of the Church and the Jews to show the linkage between Catholic belief and the Nazi Holocaust. "Auschwitz, when seen in the links of causality, reveals that hatred of Jews has been no incidental anomaly but a central action of Christian history, reaching to the core of Christian character. Jew hatred's perversion of the Gospel message launched a history, in other words, that achieved its climax in the Holocaust, an epiphany presented so starkly it cannot be denied...Because the hatred of Jews had been made holy, it became lethal. The most sacred 'thinking and acting' of the Church as such must at last be called into question."[\[8\]](#)

Cornwell, Wills and Carroll all state that they are practicing Catholics, and such is no doubt the reason all three books found publishers. It is not likely that mainstream publishers would have handled such works that evidenced what in a non-Catholic's hands would have appeared to be anti-Catholic diatribes. The Catholicity of the authors, to the publishers, gives all three works legitimacy, if you will, that would not exist if the authors were non-Catholics. (And makes the charge of anti-Catholicism, on the surface, easy to refute: how could a book be anti-Catholic if the author is Catholic?). But more to the point, the authors' Catholic identity gives a fundamental agenda to the collective works. In all three works, the essential issues dealt with are used to lay out an internal agenda within Catholicism. While Cornwell and Wills focus primarily on the role of papal authority, Carroll both

includes and expands on that theme to question fundamental Catholic beliefs.

Carroll's thesis is that the anti-Semitism, which resulted in the Holocaust, is central to Catholic theology and derived from the earliest Christian expressions of belief, namely the Gospel accounts themselves. He concludes his book with a call for a third Vatican Council to make a series of changes in basic Catholic belief that he envisions purging the Church of this alleged fundamental anti-Semitism. We will note these later. However, it is important to understand that fundamentally, Carroll's purpose is to put forth a laundry list of liberal bromides for Church reform and uses the context of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust to push this reform agenda, as both Wills and Cornwell. As Carroll himself observes, "Human memory is inevitably imprecise, and it is not uncommon for the past to be retrieved in ways that serve present purposes." [\[9\]](#) That neatly summarizes the whole point of this book. While Carroll may be more astute than Cornwell, and less virulent than Wills, his objectives are the same. Which, again, appears to be bordering on a blasphemous use of the horror of the Holocaust for Church politicking.

Carroll's book is described as a "history" of the Church and the Jews, but it is a great deal more personal rumination than serious historical, or theological, study. Throughout the book, the reader encounters a young Carroll with his mother, Carroll the student, Carroll's trials and tribulations as a priest, Carroll the father, Carroll the husband, along with dying friends, childhood buddies, and various pilgrimages throughout Europe. Half of the action seems to take place as Carroll ruminates at various sidewalk cafes or churches.

Carroll's main sources from a Catholic perspective are disaffected theologians such as Hans Kung and Rosemary Radford Ruether, or Scriptural scholars like John Dominic Crossan from the Jesus Seminar. His primary source on the Church and the

Holocaust, for example, is Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*, which he acknowledges in a footnote to have been "controversial," but that he had reviewed it favorably. His knowledge – or at least his citation – of mainstream Catholic sources is limited to non-existent. He makes a single apparent reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [\[10\]](#) but calls it the "World Catechism." [\[11\]](#) In its very early development stages some referred to the Catechism project as the "Universal Catechism," but it was never called the "World Catechism." And it has been in publication for eight years and a bestseller under the title, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This is not, therefore, a book that pays much attention to mainstream Catholic theological, scriptural or historical scholarship, nor attempts to portray and interpret Catholic beliefs with any degree of balance.

Constantine's Sword, at the risk of understatement, is a lengthy book that actually argues little but avers grandly. Like Garry Wills in *Papal Sin*, Carroll makes assertions, backs them up when possible with assertions of others who share those assertions, then considers the matter settled. He asks is "it possible that the dominant memory of Christianity's foundational events [reviewer's note: the New Testament], a memory that features Jesus' conflict with the Jews and then his followers' conflict with the Jews...has enshrined a falsehood?" He then cites Crossan that, indeed such is the case and refers to various aspects of the New Testament as the "longest lie." [\[12\]](#)

Carroll's goals are worthy: an investigation into the source and history of anti-Jewish acts, atrocities and polemics within the 2000-year history of the Church and within the course of Western civilization. To deny that such a history exists would be to live a lie. Understanding that history, and knowing that it may have been a factor in allowing European Catholics and Protestants to turn a blind-eye toward Nazi atrocities against the Jews is to acknowledge a painful, and

indeed horrifying, reality. This was central to the Vatican's statement on the *Shoah*[\[13\]](#) and to that part of the papal apology of March 2000. But to make the assertion, as Carroll does (despite a few protestations that the Nazis did, in fact, carry out the "Final Solution," not the Catholic Church) that Catholic theology, history and belief were fundamental and direct causes of the Holocaust is scurrilous and betrays another agenda more fully spelled-out in the concluding section of *Constantine's Sword* when Carroll calls for his Third Vatican Council.

In recent years, of course, it has become part of conventional wisdom that Pius XII was silent in the face of the Holocaust and that the Catholic Church, despite saving more Jewish lives than any other entity at the time, was virtually a collaborator in the "Final Solution." Why has this essentially baseless charge become accepted as fact? Robert George in an afterword to Rychlak's *Hitler, the War and the Pope*, charges bluntly that "the myth that Pius XII was 'Hitler's Pope' lives and breathes on anti-Catholic bigotry. It can do so for the simple reason that anti-Catholicism remains 'the anti-semitism of the intellectuals'...The defamatory falsehoods...originate in, and are to a large extent sustained as part of, a larger effort to undermine the credibility and weaken the moral and cultural influence of the Catholic Church. Why? Because the Catholic Church – and, within the Church, the institution of the papacy – is the single most potent force on the side of traditional morality in cultural conflicts with communism, utilitarianism, racial individualism, and other major secular ideologies." [\[14\]](#)

It is also necessary to make the Church the cause of the Holocaust because so much of what passes as contemporary enlightened thought and views have their roots not in Catholicism or Christianity, but in the very secular ideologies that laid the true foundation for the Holocaust. So-called enlightened views on euthanasia or abortion, for example, find their philosophical origins in late 19th century

racial eugenics that propagated Hitler's attack on the Jews. That is a reality the chattering classes want to ignore. To scapegoat the Catholic Church as the cause of the Holocaust makes a secular examination of conscience unnecessary.

The roots of Hitler's anti-Semitic racist frenzy, and that of European society as a whole, are found not in Catholic belief but in the cultural rejection of Catholic belief in the Enlightenment and pseudo-scientism of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Rather than a continuum from a beginning in the New Testament, rabid racial anti-Semitism was born in the stew of competing 19th century liberal ideologies of nationalism, racialism and eugenics, ideologies fought almost solely by the Church and that still have impact in the 21st century. These were the views of the elite and enlightened, who scoffed at the Church and invented a hundred secular legends still with us today to show the Church as the enemy of this new, modern thinking. Carroll, of course, is not ignorant of the impact of these theories or that the Church stood almost alone in opposition to them. To Carroll, however, these theories were merely part of a whole. Though such theories that led to and created the Holocaust were a fundamental rejection of thousands of years of Judaic and Christian thought, Carroll sees them differently. He sees these enlightenment theories as ideas that grew naturally from Christian origins, rather than an outright rejection. One was merely grafted on the other. "If Hitler's paranoia about Jews was fueled by the grafting of the secular and neo-pagan racism of modernity to the stock of ancient and medieval Jew-hatred, why does that remove Christian history from the center of the story? The stock remains the stock. Modern secularists found a new language with which to slander Jews, but their impulse to do so – here is the point – was as rooted in the mystery of religion as any grand inquisitor's." [\[15\]](#) But it is that fundamental premise that is wrong. Hitler's anti-Semitism was not caused by

religious differences between Catholics and Jews, or anti-Jewish outbursts during the First Crusade. His hatred was a fundamental rejection of both Christianity and Judaism. His hatred was of faith in anything but the Aryan race and the German nation-state. His beliefs and his rationalizations derived from the stew of anti-Catholic secularist philosophies, not Catholicism. He did not approach the world with a mode of thinking and belief rooted in the 1,900 years of Western civilization. Rather, he was rooted in the 150 years of elitist and racist thought that had abandoned the Judeo-Christian roots of Western civilization.

Carroll finds the foundation error of Christianity in the construction of the New Testament itself. The Gospels writers, he argues, laid the foundation for anti-Semitism in the very way they wrote the Gospels. They did this, Carroll charges, by de-emphasizing the Roman responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus in order to placate Roman authorities. The evangelists and New Testament writers also reflected in their scripture a division between the Jesus movement, (Carroll's general term for nascent Christianity), and Jews who would not accept Jesus. Finally, in a phrase borrowed from Crossan, a "prophecy historicized," [\[16\]](#) distorted their work. This means that seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies led to outright falsehood about the life, teachings and, in particular, the death and resurrection of Jesus. The charge is that the story of Jesus was re-written and elements "invented" in order to tie Jesus more closely to messianic prophecies from the Old Testament. This is the "longest lie" of the New Testament, according to Carroll.

Of course, this is a far cry from mainstream post-Vatican II biblical scholarship, represented by the late Father Raymond Brown, that generally view the Gospel texts as fairly accurate recollections of the life and teachings of Jesus written by those close to Him in time. Carroll's sources represent an extremist view of biblical scholarship and he bases his

fundamental theory of Scriptural interpretation on the shaky – at best – conclusions of the Jesus Seminar activists. His whole thesis is based on invention and speculation 2,000 years after the fact.

There can be little doubt that a way of reading New Testament scripture could lead to anti-Jewish sentiment or, rather, be an excuse for anti-Jewish sentiment. This certainly happened. However, the roots of Christian-Jewish divisions are more clearly found in both the Christian understanding of who Jesus was – the promised Messiah – and in early Church history where Jews and Christians became deeply divided, than in Scriptural directives. False scriptural interpretation and misunderstanding have often infected Christian life (and was the source of the difficulty in the famous case of Galileo[\[17\]](#)) but that does not mean that Scripture is wrong. It means that the interpretation given by some to Scripture is wrong. As Carroll states at one point, if “Christian Jew-hatred did not originate with the Jew Jesus, no matter how it developed, then it is not essential to Christian faith.”[\[18\]](#) All would agree with that assessment. Unfortunately, Carroll himself does not. He believes that the New Testament is clearly anti-Semitic and, therefore, caused anti-Jewish sentiment which, in turn, eventually evolved into the philosophies that created the Holocaust. Rather than arguing that bad Scriptural interpretation in the past was used by some to declare that all Jews shared the blame in the death of Jesus, Carroll would rather agree that this is the proper meaning of Scripture. He sees anti-Semitism as fundamental to the Christian message as presented in the New Testament.

Carroll centers his discussion of the roots of alleged Catholic anti-Semitism on the Gospel accounts of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. “Scholars agree,” Carroll writes, “that within a relatively short period of time, the followers of Jesus had constructed an account of his last days

that would become the source of each of the four Gospels' Passion narratives...Where scholars differ – and this difference is relative to our attempt to name the ultimate source of anti-Jewish contempt – is on the question of whether the Passion story thus told is essentially a historical or literary composition.” [19] Clearly, we will find that Carroll believes that most of the Passion account reflects a “prophesized history” rather than “history remembered.” [20] The theory goes that the “Jesus movement” of the first century, at war with the Pharisees for control of the “true Israel,” enveloped the Passion narrative in anti-Pharisee myths that would in turn establish an anti-Jewish contempt in Christianity. And so, Carroll dismisses a good part of the historicity of the Gospel accounts and of the whole concept that Jesus died on the cross as a saving act of atonement for mankind. As to the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Carroll is circumspect at best: “Immediately after Jesus’ death, the circle of his friends began to gather. Their love for him, instead of fading in his absence, quickened, opening into a potent love they felt for one another. Their gatherings were like those of a bereft circle, and they were built around lament, the reading of texts, silence, stories, food, drink, songs, more texts, poems – a changed sense of time and a repeated intuition that there was ‘one more member’ than could be counted. That intuition is what we call the Resurrection.” [21] This appears to be an understanding of the Resurrection for the brie and white wine set, rather than a Catholic and Christian understanding.

Constantine’s Sword is a slogging journey through the history of the Church over the two millennia. He touches down here and there when it suits his purpose. For example, while the treatment of the 12th through the 16th centuries is endless, he barely touches on the nearly eight hundred years from Constantine to the calling of the First Crusade – which leaves a rather sizeable gap in the alleged causal linkage of anti-

Semitism in the Church from the Gospels to the Holocaust.

After meandering quickly through the age of the early Church fathers, Carroll arrives at what he sees as a decisive point: Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge in 312 AD. Briefly, Constantine was battling for eventual control of the Roman Empire. At the Milvian Bridge he would secure control of the Western Empire and, in 324, become sole emperor of the Roman Empire. Before the critical battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine claimed to have seen a vision of the Cross, and the Christian symbol was placed on his standards on the day of battle. After his victory, the Edict of Milan was issued ending the persecution of Christians. Ruling until his death in 337 AD, Constantine promoted Christianity as the religion of the Roman state and involved himself closely in internal Church affairs, though he was not actually baptized a Christian until a few days before his death. Though his ending of the Christian persecution was a critical point in Church history, his imperial involvement in Church affairs established a long-standing dispute over the rights of rulers in temporal and ecclesiastical affairs of the Church.

Carroll sees Constantine in a different light. Though his "political impact on Christianity is widely recognized," Carroll writes, "his role as a shaper of its central religious idea is insufficiently appreciated." Carroll claims that the "place of the cross in the Christian imagination changed with Constantine."[\[221\]](#) This would lead, according to Carroll, to a central theological tenet of Catholicism that wrongly focused on the death of Jesus as atonement and reparation for sin. Thus the concept of salvation would come to dominate Christian thinking as the meaning of the life of Jesus, His death on the Cross an act of atonement for sin. This was an intention that Jesus never had, according to Carroll.

At the same time, Constantine's exercise of authority in the Church, particularly in the name of Christian unity, brought a

heretofore unheard of emphasis on defined doctrinal orthodoxy. Church authority (which would evolve into papal absolutism) now entered the Christian scene as well.[\[23\]](#) Constantine, in Carroll's view, was a very busy man. In any case, Carroll contends that the combination of these theological and legalistic forces centered on Constantine boded ill for the Jews who would be seen as the ones who "killed Christ" on a newly-emphasized cross, and whose failure to recognize their own Messiah was the ultimate heresy, the ultimate insult to Christian evangelization, and made them the first "dissenters" from unity of faith.

All this, of course, sounds a bit like a 16th Century anti-Catholic tract during the Reformation, or one of Jack Chick's contemporary pamphlets claiming Catholic descent from a Babylonian mystery religion. The over 275 years after Christ and preceding Constantine showed a steady development of an understanding of a distinct Christian faith as well as the development of a rich community, liturgical and theological life. Concerns over unity of belief are evident in the earliest years of the Church[\[24\]](#) and a bewildering list of various heresies addressed by the Church long pre-date Constantine. The anti-Nicene fathers of the Church, apologists such as St. Justin Martyr, and early theologians such as St. Irenaeus, who described a world wounded by Adam's sin but healed in Jesus, show an early Church developing an ordered set of beliefs rooted in Christ, distinct liturgy, and an insistence on Christ as the means toward salvation and eternal life. The theological concept of Christ's atonement for sins was hardly a late-developing concept ingeniously inserted into Catholic life by a theologically illiterate Roman emperor, but is taught directly in the New Testament and in the writings of the early Church fathers. Constantine certainly had a strong impact on the early Church that would last for centuries. But Carroll attributes to him far too much impact in the areas of theology, ecclesiology, doctrinal theology and the Church's

hierarchical structure. These were areas of the Church developing for two centuries prior to Constantine and did not spring fully born from a Roman emperor with only a minimal understanding of the faith he embraced to under gird his Empire.

Carroll's central thesis is that emphasis on the Cross as both a form of devotion and source for a theological understanding of the Christian message – enhanced by the legend of Constantine's mother Helena finding the True Cross in Jerusalem – had a devastating impact on Christian self-understanding and on the attitude the Church would develop toward the Jews. Seeing the death of Jesus as central to God's redemptive plan, the Cross ushered in a "teaching of contempt" toward Jews, a teaching that will lead over the centuries to the Nazi Final Solution. The actual destruction of the Jews once Christianity is backed by Roman imperial power, Carroll contends, is only prevented by the theological intervention of St. Augustine (354-430). Augustine would argue in *The City of God* that Jews had a specific role in God's saving plan in that "a continuing Judaism would serve as a source of authenticity for the prophecy-based claims of Christianity." [\[25\]](#) At the end of the Sixth Century, Pope Gregory the Great would forbid any violence against Jews. Carroll argues that with the foundational theology of contempt established, however, the seeds of anti-Semitism had been planted by the Church, such official proclamations notwithstanding.

It can be argued, of course, that the opposite holds true. Racial anti-Semitism had existed in the Roman Empire long before Christianity was a majority faith or even a known faith distinct from Judaism. Particularly with the Jewish *Diaspora* from the Holy Land throughout the Empire after their revolution was defeated by Roman soldiers in 70 AD and the temple destroyed, the Jews were viewed as a people apart. By the practices tied to their faith that reinforced their separateness from Roman society, the Jewish people were

considered a distinct and disliked racial minority. Anti-Jewish attitudes were certainly inherited among Christians as the infant Church more aggressively attracted non-Jews to the burgeoning faith. But to claim that the reason for anti-Jewish attitudes in Western culture was a result of Christian Scripture and Christian theology requires that a history of anti-Semitism older than Christianity be ignored.

The pagan faiths disappeared over the centuries from Constantine to Pope Gregory the Great as the Roman world became essentially Christian. Judaism, however, did not disappear. Carroll suggests that the reason for this is an inherent anti-Semitism within Christianity that required the continued existence of the Jews. The logic doesn't hold. He blames the Church for a cultural phenomenon that preceded it, and points to confirmation in the fact that the Church tried to limit both the severity and violence of anti-Jewish acts through the intervention of Augustine and the proclamation of Gregory the Great. The Jews survived the first thousand years of Christianity by the strength of their own faith and because the Church did not attempt to forcefully eradicate their faith. If Carroll's premise was true, or as basic to the Christian faith as he contends, Judaism would have disappeared by Christian force and no "ambivalence" in Christian attitude would have stopped it.

After establishing his central premise – that Christianity is anti-Semitic in its foundational texts and that Constantine by his centralizing notions and "theology of the Cross" formalized anti-Semitism within the Church's structure and devotion – Carroll proceeds to describe what he sees as a linkage through history of the Church to the Final Solution by portraying anti-Jewish actions in European history. Leaping ahead from Augustine to the Crusades 700 years later, where Jews were violently attacked, (attacks consistently condemned by the popes and the hierarchy), Carroll claims a "miscarried cult of the cross is ubiquitous in this story, from Milvian

Bride to Auschwitz. The 'way of the cross,' which is another way of saying 'crusade,' is the definitive epiphany, laying bear the meaning of what went before and what went after, even to our own time." [\[26\]](#)

Though Carroll's book can bend a coffee table at 756 pages, his litany of anti-Jewish incidents in Western history is spotty and lacking historical nuance. He touches on various events within Western history such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Plague, the Council of Trent and its aftermath, the French Revolution, the Dreyfus Affair, the *Kulturkampf* and concludes, actually quite briefly, with the Holocaust. Throughout these diverse and complicated historical trends and events, he sees a theology of the Cross and Church teaching on the atonement as being the dominant factor in generating anti-Jewish violence and anti-Semitic racism. This just doesn't hold to be the causative factor that Carroll alleges in these complicated events.

Serious historians, for example, acknowledge an upswing in anti-Jewish actions in parts of Europe at the time of the calling for the First Crusade in 1096. The reasons given by historians for this development vary. Some point toward resentment that Jews were primarily the moneylenders of an infant capitalist Europe as the Church taught money lending for interest sinful among Christians. Others point to a growing urbanization that was disrupting old forms of civil life. Still others have pointed to a re-born sense of both evangelization and conformity within society. Led by a stronger papacy, the Church saw its mission to sanctifying the world through a combination of the Church's need to reform its institutional life, free itself from control by secular lords, and to build a Christian society. There was also the growing fear that, "Those who dissented from belief or behaved in a manner that was explicitly defined as un-Christian appeared no longer as erring souls in a temptation-filled world, but as subverters of the world's new course..." [\[27\]](#) This certainly

played a role in enhancing a view of the Jews as outsiders in the creation of the Christian world.

Carroll, however, attributes the rise in anti-Jewish outbreaks directly with the Crusades and its emphasis on the Cross. While certainly crusading rhetoric involved at times slander of Jews – and violent anti-Jewish outbursts – the era was far more complicated than Carroll's simplistic notion of cause and effect. Certainly, there was a renewed emphasis on evangelization and religious conformity. But the primary concern of the era for the Church in Europe was internal reform that would lead to spiritual awakening among Christians. Additionally, a stronger papacy would lead to greater protection – rather than a greater threat – for the Jewish population of Europe. The Church and the hierarchy roundly condemned attacks on Jews by the first crusaders. Pope Calixtus III (1119-1124) issued the papal bull *Sicut Iudaesis* that condemned any violence against the Jews, a bull reaffirmed by 20 of his successors. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who preached the Second Crusade, would speak out forcefully against anti-Jewish violence and is generally held responsible for limiting such incidents. Though Carroll tries to link a stronger papacy with increased anti-Jewish acts, [\[28\]](#) the opposite appears true. A stronger Church and papacy that can influence secular authorities in European history rather than be controlled by secular authorities, the less likely were anti-Jewish outbreaks. (This would be clearly seen in the Reformation where anti-Semitism exploded in Protestant Germany where the local church was under the complete control of local authorities.)

Carroll sees the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, under Pope Innocent III, as another part of the linkage between the early Church and the Holocaust. Citing Hans Kung's interpretation, he sees the council as fundamentally changing the situation of the Jews both legally and theologically. [\[29\]](#) The Council was a historic event in Church history, solidifying two centuries of

Church reform. The Council “tackled an enormous range of issues, all of them practical: the establishment of orthodox teaching, especially on the sacraments – this was the Council which defined the doctrine of Transubstantiation – new regulations requiring every Christian to get to confession and communion at least once a year, improvements in record-keeping in Church courts...rules for the better discharge of episcopal duties and especially preaching and catechizing in the language of the people, and reform of the monasteries. Behind much of this the distinctive concerns of the Pope can be detected, and the Council was the high point of the medieval papacy’s involvement with and promotion of the best reforming energies in the Church at large.”[\[30\]](#)

Carroll points out that certain conciliar decrees, however, placed restrictions on Jews and such legislation did isolate the Jewish community more formally. Among the restrictions the Council asked for was a special form of dress so that Jews could be more clearly identified, that Jews should be forbidden to go out during Holy Week and that they be forbidden from holding public office. It is clear that in such anti-Jewish regulations, Church leadership was reflecting some of the worst aspects of contemporary culture. At the same time, it is also clear that any number of such regulations were also intended – from the perspective of the time – to protect Jews from attacks. The Holy Week legislation, for example, was clearly intended for their protection, as Holy Week became in certain areas a time for attacks on Jews.

Carroll was more concerned, however, that this Council clearly showed the “universalist absolutism of Roman Catholic claims” to the teaching of Christ which “is causally related to the unleashing of Catholic anti-Judaism.”[\[31\]](#) In other words, Carroll sees a stronger Church, with a stronger papacy and with certitude of belief as generating anti-Semitism because Jews are “the original dissenters.” Yet, such a causal link is never established. In fact, greater centralization of the

Church would generally result in a lessening of anti-Jewish practices. As will be seen in the discussion of the Spanish Inquisition, severe anti-Jewish activities took place more often where papal authority was co-opted by local authorities, or where Church authority had succumbed to secular authority. For example, anti-Jewish actions increased during the Plague years of the 14th century where Church authority was less effective. "Blood libel" stories had evolved, claiming that Jews would sacrifice Christian children, or that Jews conspired to poison wells. The papacy quickly condemned such stories, but they persisted in different areas by local legend. Carroll's history consistently shows the opposite of what it intends. Anti-Jewish activities persisted in history despite the Church, rather than because of the Church. When Church authority was weakened, the outbreaks tended to increase. When dangerous racial anti-Semitism would grow in the 19th Century, the Church was effectively at its weakest in influencing government or society.

Carroll, of course, does not see the anti-Jewish legislative aspects of the Lateran Council as its most damaging aspects. Papal authority and "Catholic absolutism" are his greater concerns. And most important, he sees the Council as firmly establishing in Catholic thinking the theological concept of Christ's death as atonement for sin. To Carroll's thinking, this central Catholic belief is fundamental to anti-Jewish attitudes as the "longest lie" created by New Testament writers. What Carroll does not concede, however, is that central to the concept of Christ's atonement in Catholic belief is that He died for the sins of all mankind. Proper understanding of that belief means, as has been understood in Catholic doctrine since the days of the early Church fathers, that Christ died because of sin. The concept of "Jewish deicide" – that the Jews "killed" Christ – is contradictory to that essential Catholic belief. Christ died, according to ancient Catholic belief, because of the sins of all, not the

actions of a few.

There can be no doubt that ignorance and false Scriptural interpretation helped to create an atmosphere of anti-Judaism within Western society. There was, as Carroll shows, an “ambivalence” toward Jews within Catholic teaching that contributed to anti-Jewish actions. While Church leadership forthrightly condemned violence against the Jews, it tolerated abusive anti-Jewish homilies and pronouncements. Church leadership too often shared in the sentiments of the culture. However, Carroll’s fundamental flaw is in arguing that anti-Semitism was the conscious creation of the Church, rather than a cultural legacy to which many in the Church too often compromised. His claim that a “theology of atonement” generated anti-Semitism is self-contradicting, as such an understanding removed any concept of alleged Jewish “guilt” in the death of Christ by teaching that all mankind was guilty.

When Carroll moves on to discussion of the Inquisition he falls into the historical trap of seeing the Inquisition both as a consistent papal-dominated institution that existed in a clear line from the 13th century virtually to the mid 20th century, as he considers his one encounter with the Index of Forbidden Books in the seminary as “my inquisition.”[\[32\]](#) Carroll states that the Inquisition was the means that “Catholic medieval absolutism exacerbated anti-Jewish religious hatred, fueled new levels of violence, and sponsored an even more hysterical conversionism, which, when up against continued Jewish resistance, finally led to modern anti-Semitic racism.”[\[33\]](#)

To speak of *the Inquisition* fails to understand that no such individual universal entity existed. The Inquisition as a single unified court system directly responsible to the pope and controlled solely by the papacy is a historical fiction. Even within the Papal States in the 16th century, the papacy had difficulty maintaining effective control over local

inquisitions. The local church in alliance with local secular authority usually controlled inquisitorial courts. Though it began in the 13th century as a papal-designated juridical system to remove “heresy-hunting” from control of the mob or secular authorities, it evolved rather quickly as a device of the local church and secular authorities to address local, and later national or dynastic goals. There were many inquisitions, rather than a singular “Inquisition.”

The many inquisitions that took place existed sporadically in different regions, at different times, and to meet different local needs. The medieval inquisition barely existed, for example, in Spain and Portugal. For hundreds of years, the inquisition in many places existed only sporadically, if at all. In the 16th century, it existed primarily in Spain, Portugal, the Papal States and other Italian cities. It existed sporadically – dominated by the state – in France and, early, in England.

Carroll’s argument is that the Spanish Inquisition created “racial” anti-Semitism and, as such, was generated by the Church and linked directly to Nazism. Spanish anti-Semitism was not a religious prejudice, but a racial one. It derived from the success in Spanish culture of Jewish converts to Catholicism and the goal of a racially unified Iberian peninsula, free of the “foreign” Muslims and Jews. In 1391, anti-Jewish riots swept through Spain. More religious than racial – though this has been disputed – these riots led to major forced conversions of Jews to Christianity. These Jewish converts would be called *conversos* or New Christians, to distinguish them from traditional Christian families. The *converso* identity would remain with such families for generations.

Converso families were welcomed into a full participation in Spanish society not available to Jews and they would soon become leaders in government, science, business and the

Church. Though it was legislated in certain areas that those forced to convert could return to their own religion, many did not. These *converso* families obviously faced the scorn of those who remained Jews. At the same time, however, over the years the Old Christians saw them as social-climbing opportunists. They claimed that they secretly maintained the faith of their forefathers. It would be complaints about these alleged “secret Jews” that would lead to the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition.[\[34\]](#) Curiously, Carroll argues, with no documentation, that most of these converts remained “secret” Jews. It is a curious argument because it accepts as fact the reason given for Spanish persecution of the Jews. In fact, after a generation, most of these converts were as Catholic as the Old Christians. But racial prejudice against their Jewish ethnic roots remained. They were considered racially apart. The children’s children of these converted Jews were not considered “pure” Spaniards and would become the primary target of the Spanish Inquisition.

Carroll points out that in 1449, the city council of Toledo passed an ordinance decreeing that no *converso* of Jewish descent may hold office. Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455) responded furiously, excommunicating the drafters of the regulation. He wrote that “all Catholics are one body in Christ according to the teaching of our faith.” The King of Castile, however, formally approved the regulation.

“If the beginning of what we think of as modern antisemitism can be located anywhere, it is here,” Carroll writes. “The shift from religious definition of Jewishness to a racial one is perhaps the most decisive in this long narrative, and its fault lines, reaching into the consciousness of Western civilization, will define the moral geography of the modern age. The Church’s worry, for example, that its very own *conversos* were corrupting Christians would find a near permanent resonance in the modern European fantasy of Jews as parasites – successful and assimilated, but feeding on the

host society. The ultimate example of this image would emerge in Germany, of course, but the fear that led Nazis to regard Jews as bloodsuckers to be excised was anticipated by the Iberian suspicion that Jews were more to be feared as assimilated insiders than as dissenting outsiders.”[\[35\]](#)

It is true that the racial prejudice against Catholic families of Jewish stock was the primary instigator of the Spanish Inquisition. However, it contradicts, rather than confirms, Carroll’s basic thesis that anti-Semitism that led to the horror of the Holocaust came from essential Christian theology. Spanish anti-Semitism was aimed at Jews racially. Religion was used as a club of enforcement to knock ethnic Jews down from the successful heights they had attained as Catholics. But the faith was the excuse, not the cause, of Spanish racial anti-Semitism. And that is why Pope Nicholas, and successor popes, would deplore the actions of the Spanish Inquisition against the *conversos*. In Rome, it was viewed not as an attempt to root out heresy, but as a means to attack generations of successful converts.

In March 1492, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand ordered the expulsion – or conversion – of all remaining Jews in Spain. Many *conversos* had already fled to Rome and the Papal States where they would be free of persecution. Those who remained Jews fled to Rome as well, known as the most tolerant of European cities toward Jews. The intent of the declaration of expulsion was more religious than racial, as Jewish conversion was certainly the intent, not “the beginning of a strategy of elimination”[\[36\]](#) as Carroll contends. While many Jews fled, a large number converted, thus aggravating the popular picture of secret Judaizers within the Christian community of Spain. Up through 1530, the primary activity of the inquisition in Spain would be aimed at pursuing *conversos*. The same would be true from 1650 to 1720. While its activities declined thereafter, the inquisition continued to exist in Spain until its final abolition in 1824.

The attacks in Spain on the *conversos* were viewed as despicable in Rome and condemned by the popes. Italians “felt that Spanish hypocrisy in religion, together with the existence of the Inquisition, proved that the tribunal was created not for religious purity, but simply to rob the Jews. Similar views were certainly held by the prelates of the Holy See whenever they intervened in favor of the *conversos*. Moreover, the racialism of the Spanish authorities was scorned in Italy, where the Jewish community led a comparatively tranquil existence.”[\[37\]](#)

If there is a connection between the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust generated by the German Nazis it is in the racial hatred that motivated both. It is not, however, to be found in a connection between Catholic Spain and Protestant Germany. And it is certainly not to be found in the faith whose leadership spoke out forcefully against the attacks on the *conversos*, or a theology that argued that conversion knew no racial boundaries.

Carroll leaps from the early Spanish Inquisition to the Council of Trent (1545-1563), called by the Church in response to the Reformation. He points out that the Council had very little to say about the Jews. The Council primarily concerned itself with Church renewal in light of the Reformation and defending clear Catholic teaching in response to Protestant attacks. Among those clear Catholic teachings confirmed, as Carroll points out, was that “responsibility for the death of Jesus belonged to sinners – to all persons, that is, in their having sinned. The old question Who killed Jesus? Was explicitly answered: Human sinners did.”[\[38\]](#) The declaration by Trent was another contradiction of what Carroll asserts throughout his book: that the theology of the atonement created anti-Semitism by blaming Jews for the death of Jesus and led directly to the Holocaust.

But Carroll argues that if “this perception had maintained its

firm hold on the moral imagination of Christians, the history of Jews would be quite different. That something else happened, beginning with the Gospels' own scapegoating of Jews, only proves Trent's point that 'we' are sinners." [39] Perhaps, however, the exact opposite is true. The thesis that the "Jews killed Jesus" was a popular misinterpretation of the New Testament that the Church taught as wrong in its theology of atonement. If anti-Semitism persisted, it was because it was persistent in the popular imagination, not in the teachings of the Church as Carroll claims. Again, anti-Semitism existed despite essential Church teachings, not because of them, as Carroll charges.

The inquisition in Rome was established during the Reformation period and has generally been regarded by historians as one of the more lax courts. The inquisition court in Rome should not be understood as a universal court, but as one of the inquisition courts within the Papal States. As in most regions, the local Roman court focused primarily on clergy wrongs and on issues of lifestyle – adultery, drunkenness and other forms of impropriety as Rome did not have a racial problem with *conversos*, [40] and the Inquisition itself had nothing to do with the Jewish population. Pope Paul III (1534-1549) had authorized the inquisition in Rome as a means of protecting the Church there from the influence of the Reformation in 1542. He was a protector of the Jews who banned various anti-Jewish activities. Pope Paul IV (1555-1559), however, had a short but troubled reign. It was Pope Paul IV who established the separate Jewish ghetto in Rome, enforced segregationist regulations on Jews and, mistakenly, affirmed the "blood purity" statute in Toledo that had rightly been condemned by previous pontiffs. Carroll sees both events as a definitive sign of the Church embracing, despite the reforms of Trent, a definitive anti-Semitic stance, particularly in its seeming endorsement of the Spanish racial policy of *limpieza de sangre* aimed at the *converso* families of Jewish ethnic heritage. Carroll explains that the "culture-wide

trauma of the Reformation was part of what prompted the shift in papal strategy toward the Jews,"[\[41\]](#) a shift that Carroll sees as momentous.

Limpieza de sangre was part of the "blood purity" restrictions on Jews who had converted to Catholicism and limited their ability to hold public office or offices within Spain. This was the ugly racial element that had infected Spanish society. As we have seen, Pope Nicholas V rightly condemned *limpieza* vociferously. Pope Paul IV as a cardinal "had singlemindedly devoted his whole life to reform of the Church...(yet) under Paul IV reform took on a darker more fearful character. Creativity was distrusted as a dangerous innovation, theological energies were diverted into the suppression of error rather than the exploration of truth. Catholicism was identified with reaction...For the rest of the Tridentine era, Catholic Reformation would move between those poles, and it would be the task of the popes to manage the resulting tensions."[\[42\]](#) Depending on the perspective of the individual pontiff, restrictions on Jewish life within the Roman ghetto would wax and wane. His decision on *limpieza*, however, was reversed and generally abandoned from Catholic life outside of Spain. A few orders with strong Spanish roots, such as the Jesuits, maintained a form of *limpieza*. But no serious student of history would make the claim that this unique Spanish cultural prejudice reflected overall Church practice. Carroll himself recognizes that the anti-Jewish racial theories of the 19th Century that created the anti-Semitism of the Nazis had no relationship to Spanish *limpieza*.

Pope Paul IV's pontificate was short. New popes would reverse his policies – his approval of *limpieza* was quickly abandoned – and treatment of the local Jewish community in Rome would vary from pontiff to pontiff. Popes would change and policies would change. These policies were generated as papal governance of the Papal States, however, not pronouncements of the universal Church. And what Carroll sees as a continuous

linkage was shifting sand. There was no uniform anti-Jewish policy aimed at the local Jewish community from papacy to papacy. The policies reflected the emphasis and mind-set of individuals. However, the different perspectives popes adopted show anything but a continuous chain that is the fundamental thesis of Carroll's book; nor were there theologically infallible papal statements of defining Catholic belief. The Jewish ghetto in Rome is a dark spot on Church history. The long-held notion that popes must be rulers of an independent Papal States or the papacy would be dominated by secular rulers, while theoretically understandable and with historical roots from earlier centuries, placed popes in the difficult position of holding secular authority. Not a few of them exercised that secular authority poorly. That ended in 1870 when Italian nationalist troops occupied the city as "liberators." But within a generation after, that nationalist tide would also result in the emergence of Benito Mussolini and the Italian Fascist state.

Carroll marches quickly through the early Enlightenment, represented by Voltaire, touches on Spinoza and the French Revolution, then on to Vatican I (1869-1870) and the declaration of papal infallibility. "Liberalism and modernism," Carroll writes, "were seen as bearing the fruits of the destruction of civilization itself, and the dark side of the new order would make itself all too clear in the twentieth century. There was much in the new age the Church was right to suspect, so the Catholic strategy of arming the leader of the Church with the spiritual mace of infallibility made some sense." [\[43\]](#)

His understanding of the definition of papal infallibility as conferred on the papacy in 1870 is not, of course, the definition given by the Council. Vatican I dealt with the office of the papacy and the nature of papal authority because these issues were at the very center of the life of the Church in the 19th Century. The emergence of the modern liberal states

had reconfirmed to many within the Church the vital importance of the ancient belief of the central authority of the bishop of Rome as the successor of St. Peter. There were divisions over such a definition, however. Some argued that it would be inopportune to make such a definition in the turmoil of the 19th Century, while others wanted papal infallibility applied to virtually everything the pope said or wrote. The accusation is made that a definition of papal infallibility was demanded by Pope Pius IX and forced on an unwilling Council by papal pressure, curial conspiracies, and squelched debate. However, debate went on for months, and the final definition of papal infallibility fell far short of the desires of the “ultramontanes” who wanted an elevated definition of infallibility. The fact was that consensus emerged, except for extremists on each side, which spelled out a definition of papal infallibility clearly in line with Church tradition and the theology of the papacy. The Council proclaimed no new teaching that extended papal authority beyond a point the Church had understood for centuries.

Carroll sees the definition of papal infallibility as a “pivotal event” for his story as “the Church’s relationship to the modern fate of the Jews is intertwined, in a particular way, with efforts to extend the political power of the papacy.” [\[44\]](#) Carroll will therefore lock himself in early to the Cornwell thesis that the sole motivation of Pius XII in World War II was the extension of papal power. At the same time, there is Carroll’s blithe acknowledgement of what was taking place in the 19th Century: “the dark side of the new order would make itself all too clear in the 20th century.” That is Carroll’s primary reference to what in fact was going on in European thought in the 19th Century and what it would lead to in the 20th Century.

The culture of thought in the 19th Century – secularism,

communism, racialism and nationalism – would lead to the First World War, the Communist revolution in Russia, Stalin's pogroms, the rise of Fascism and Nazism, World War II and the Holocaust. That is the dark side to which Carroll refers. It also makes a mockery of his essential argument that the anti-Semitism that played its own role in so much of this horror was the creation of the Church, or sustained by the Church. The stew of secular philosophies that led to these 20th century horrors was a creation of the 19th century, that had limited roots in the so-called Enlightenment of the 18th century. These philosophies were definitive breaks with Christian thinking, not evolutions. As Paul Johnson notes, they involved the "birth of the modern" – an entirely new way of viewing self, one's role in culture, one's entire mode of thinking and acting. These were not subtle changes or a grafting on to Christianity. These were philosophies that the Church fought against because they were a fundamental break, a fundamental confrontation, with an entire Christian philosophy, theology, culture and worldview. Carroll's failure to present that adequately in order not to upset his thesis that the Church was to blame for the Holocaust is the fundamental flaw of his book. The fundamental blasphemy is that he would do so in order to put forth a meager list of liberal bromides for alleged Church reform.

Carroll approaches the age of Pius XII and the Holocaust itself after winding his way through the German *Kulturkampf* and the Dreyfus affair in France. He adds nothing new to his story in either recital. Successful Catholic action in response to the *Kulturkampf* is seen as setting what could have been a standard in reaction to Hitler, forgetting that Bismarck was not Hitler and the Germany of 1870 was not the Nazi Germany of 1933. The Dreyfus affair – where a Jewish officer in the French army was convicted of treason – was a high-profile case of anti-Semitism within the French army. Carroll uses it to excoriate the French Catholic

newspaper "La Croix." The newspaper, operated by a religious order, engaged in hot anti-Jewish rhetoric during the Dreyfus affair. While Carroll points to this as symbolizing the entrenched nature of Catholic anti-Semitism, it far more reflected a turn-of-the-century Europe where anti-Semitism was increasing as the influence of the Church decreased in the modern secular states and "modern" thought predominated.

The Church and Hitlerism is confined in Carroll's book to less than 70 pages, about the same length that he gives to his suggestions for Church reform. He begins by restating his essential charge that "(h)owever modern Nazism was, it planted its roots in the soil of age-old Church attitudes and a nearly unbroken chain of Jew-hatred. However pagan Nazism was, it drew its sustenance from groundwater poisoned by the Church's most solemnly held ideology – its *theology*." [\[45\]](#) This is, of course, a gross mis-reading of history. Hitler and Nazism were created by a rampant social Darwinism, an ubiquitous European belief that it was a virtual biological imperative that the lower classes be dominated by their racial superiors, the ideology of imperialism, the birth of scientism that would dispel the "myths" of religion, the campaign to radically excise the Church from public life, the denial of the sacredness of the individual for the good of the State or, as in communism, the good of the class, the creation of the myth of the Nietzsche-like Superman who could undertake any evil for the good of his race, and the replacement of Christianity with neo-paganism. The soil and poisoned groundwater for these Nazi aberrations were the views of 19th century liberalism that were the conventional wisdom of the times. The Catholic Church – its *theology* – was viewed as the enemy of this modern thought. The Church was not the progenitor of the beliefs that created Nazism. It was one of the last remaining bulwarks in Europe against it. The Nazis killed the Jews. For reasons of an internal agenda against the Church, Carroll would prefer to dismiss that, like a revisionist who would claim the Holocaust never took place, and shift the blame to the Church for his

own agenda.

As noted earlier, Carroll regurgitates the central thesis of Cornwell. Like Cornwell, he sees the revision of Canon Law promulgated in 1917 – in which a young priest Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII was involved – as the motivating factor in the Church's reaction to the rise of the dictators. According to the theory, papal absolutism was the driving force of Vatican foreign policy. The Vatican would surrender anything – and bargain with the devil himself – in order to gain authority over, for example, the appointment of bishops. He sees the Concordat that Cardinal Pacelli negotiated with Hitler as giving a first blessing and recognition to the regime (which forgets that prior to the concordat, Hitler had concluded a peace agreement with the western powers, including France and Great Britain, called the Four-Power Pact. and a similar agreement was concluded between Hitler and the Protestant churches). Though Carroll dismisses such claims, the Vatican had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. Pius XI would explain that it was concluded only to spare persecution that would take place immediately if there was no such agreement. The concordat would also give the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action in the years prior to the war and after hostilities began. It provided a legal basis for arguing that baptized Jews in Germany were Christian and should be exempt from legal disabilities. Though the Concordat was routinely violated before the ink was dry, its existence allowed for Vatican protest, and it did save Jewish lives.

Carroll doesn't really spend much time on the Holocaust itself or a detailed look at the entire World War and how the Church responded. [\[46\]](#) He states that from the onset of Nazism, the "Church, for its part, had come to a decision it would stick with, almost without exception, – that the 'wretched fate' of the Jews was unconnected to its own fate, or that of anyone

else.”[\[47\]](#) Carroll says such things without any necessity for proving that was the Church’s policy. The first formal protest filed by the Vatican under the concordat was against the Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses. In 1937, Pope Pius XI issued “Mit brennender sorge,” which spoke out forcefully against Nazi racist policy. It assumes that a calculated decision by Pius to work behind the scenes through his papal representatives and through the existing vehicles of the Church to save as many lives as possible was a callous decision to leave Jews to their fate. It assumes that hurling thunderbolts from the Vatican – which all who lived through Nazism understand would have had no possible impact on Hitler – would have accomplished something or saved more lives. This is mere conjecture based on hindsight. None of the critics of Pius have yet been able to put forth a concrete alternative that Pius could have developed to save more lives than were saved by the Church in that period. Throughout the war years, the Church would save more Jewish lives than any entity that existed at the time.

Disagreeing, however, with the tactics of Pius is one thing. Stating that the Church abandoned the Jews does not reflect any kind of reality. Which is one of the most frustrating aspects of Carroll’s entire “history” of the Church and the Jews. It is not history at all, but an amateur’s meditation on various historical events skewed to reflect the prejudices of his own thesis. This is not careful scholarship. This is simply a very long anti-Catholic essay.

Carroll concludes his treatment of the Holocaust by the need to go after the death of Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to Catholicism who was murdered in the Holocaust and declared a saint by Pope John Paul II. Echoing Garry Wills, he sees the canonization of Stein as an attempt by the Church to claim victimhood in the Holocaust and to “reaffirm the religious superiority of Christianity over Judaism.”[\[48\]](#) Like Wills, he can cite no source for this conjecture, or documentation that

cites any such reasoning from Church leadership. Or anybody within Catholic circles for that matter. Pope John Paul II stated, which is a fact, that she died at the hands of the Nazis because she was a Jew and a Catholic, in retribution for the Church speaking out against Nazi deportations of the Jews in the Netherlands. The death of Edith Stein – and the death of Maxmillian Kolbe – are the only cases of people slaughtered by the Nazis in the concentration camps that a certain circle within Catholicism feels comfortable publicly degrading.

The last section of Carroll's book begins immediately after the degradation of the canonization of Edith Stein. This is when we find out the true purpose of Carroll's lengthy attack on the New Testament and the Christian belief in Christ's passion and death as atonement for sin. This is why he has attempted to set up the Church as the ultimate cause of the Holocaust, while inventing a simplistic history of the Church as the progenitor of an anti-Semitism that preceded its existence. He sees its essential theology as anti-Semitic, its leadership only interested in power. It allowed the Jews to be slaughtered in the Holocaust because it simply didn't care, and the Church was wrong – fundamentally – in the very Scriptures of the New Testament that is its heart and soul. If anyone else truly believed this, he or she would abandon the Church. Carroll would rather stick around to argue papal infallibility, women's ordination and priestly celibacy.

Carroll describes the Second Vatican Council as the "beginning of the long-overdue demise of Constantinian imperial Catholicism, as it had been shaped by a medieval papalism hardened in the fires of the Counter-Reformation...The Church's failure in relation to Adolf Hitler was only a symptom of the ecclesiastical cancer Pope John was attempting to treat." [\[49\]](#) This is a ludicrous picture of the intent of the Council and of Pope John XXIII's view of the Church. Critical to Pope John XXIII's thinking was that the Church must reach out to the world and not see itself as a faithful remnant that

hides from the world. The purpose in John's mind was to certainly remove liturgical encrustation, defensive theological formulations and aspects of the culture of Catholicism that prevented outreach to the modern world. However, the purpose of such was not to convert the Church to modernism, but for the Church to be better able to evangelize the modern world. This has been the hallmark of the papacy of Pope John Paul II, who as a bishop attending the Council and was a strong supporter of the intent and spirit of Vatican II.

Of course, Carroll – much like Garry Wills – argues that while the Council was a historic beginning, it was undermined by Pope Paul VI, a “devoted factotum to Pius XII.”[\[50\]](#) Of Pope Paul VI: “His was the first effort to turn back the tide of Church reform that the Vatican Council initiated, and that program of medieval restoration has been vigorously continued by Pope John Paul II.” [\[51\]](#) Of course, Carroll argues that hopes were too high for Vatican II. A Church incapable of allowing priests to marry or couples to practice contraception is hardly ready for the reform he demands. He calls for a Third Vatican Council that would address the following agenda:

First, the “offensive character (of the New Testament) is part of what the Church must not only admit but to claim. The anti-Jewish texts of the New Testament show that the Church, even in its first generation, was capable of betraying the message of Jesus, establishing once and for all that ‘the Church as such’ can sin.”[\[52\]](#) The Church must understand the New Testament narratives are invented and that any “Christian proclamation that says that redemption, grace, perfection, whatever you call it, has already come is unbelievable on its face.”[\[53\]](#)

Second, Vatican III will abandon the ethos of Constantinian imperial power and the “primary-enforcing ideas of Roman supremacy and papal infallibility.”[\[54\]](#) The “doctrine of papal infallibility amounts to the low point in the long story of

patriarchy, a legitimation of Church exceptionalism, a reversal of the meaning that Jesus gave to ministry, and, finally, an abuse of power.”[\[55\]](#)

Third, Vatican III should initiate a “new Christology” that abandons concepts such as the immortality of the soul, messiahship of Jesus, Christ’s death as atonement for sin, the belief that Jesus is the only means of salvation, as well as the very concept of salvation. (“The coming of Jesus was for the purpose of revelation, not salvation – revelation, that is, that we are already saved.”[\[56\]](#)) This will allow the Church “to embrace a pluralism of belief and worship, of religion and no religion, that honors God by defining God as beyond every human effort to express God.”[\[57\]](#)

Fourth, the Church in Vatican III will abandon “its internal commitment to methods that undergird totalitarianism”[\[58\]](#) In addition, of course, to abandoning such things as excommunication, bannings, censorship and anathemas, this means the Church must also abandon “the idea that there is one objective and absolute truth, and that its custodian is the Church.”[\[59\]](#) The papal apology, Carroll writes, “did not confront the implications of that still maintained idea of truth” and that universal claims “for Jesus as the one objective and absolute truth” must be abandoned. “Vatican III must retrieve for the Church the deep-seated intuition that mystery is at the core of existence, that truth is elusive, that God is greater than religion.”[\[60\]](#) Bishops should be chosen by the people, the whole clerical caste eradicated, and women ordained (though ordination to exactly what is never clarified).

Fifth, and only after the prior four agenda items are completed, the Church must have a complete act of repentance, a repentance of a “failed and sinful Church.”[\[61\]](#)

Rather clearly, the objective solution Carroll has in mind already exists: Unitarianism.

The five-point agenda for Vatican III is the purpose of Carroll's book. I do not doubt the sincerity of his horror in the Holocaust, or his disgust at the anti-Jewish history that exists within the history of Western civilization and that members of the Church have been a part of it. But his purpose, clearly, is for "the past to be retrieved in ways that serve present purposes." Those purposes are Carroll's five-point agenda for creating a Catholicism that would fit his particular vision. He would do so by undermining the Gospels, dismissing 2000 years of Catholic theology and dismantling the papacy and the priesthood. He would, finally, have a Church that would disconnect from Jesus as the source of truth – that truth can be known, and truth can be evangelized.

Much like Wills found it necessary to re-state that he is Catholic no matter what the positions he holds, Carroll concludes this epic with a personal plea for his Catholicity no matter what he believes. Though confessing his shame about his Catholicity, he confesses as well his own collusion in this historic record of the Church that "sanctified the hatred of the Jews." [\[62\]](#) Despite that, he states that the "most deadly prospect at this point would be to find myself alienated from the community that has been the focus of my 'backward glance.'" [\[63\]](#)

Perhaps acknowledging that his central thesis is flawed can relieve those fears. No one can argue that members of the Church throughout the centuries, going to the highest leadership within the Church, engaged and endorsed at times in anti-Jewish words, sentiments and actions. At the very same time, many within the Church officially condemned such actions and it was the very Church leadership that Carroll hopes to be abandoned that was most vociferous in that condemnation. It was not the belief of the Church, the New Testament, the Church centered in Jesus, the understanding that Christ died for the sins of mankind, or the Church belief in an objective and universal truth that persists in Christ, that created the

horror of the Holocaust. It was the rejection of those, and the attempt to substitute for Judeo-Christian civilization a secularist pseudo scientism of race, class and nationalism that generated Nazism and the Holocaust. Nazism and the Nazis killed the Jews, and the philosophies that created them still bubble just below the surface. But not in the Catholic Church. Rather, they persist in a vicious secularism and pseudo-scientism that divorces faith from modernity, believes that truth cannot be known, and attempts to convince mankind that it is its own god.

SUMMARY POINTS

John Cornwell in *Hitler's Pope*, Garry Wills in *Papal Sin* and now James Carroll in *Constantine's Sword* all identify themselves as Catholic. The authors' Catholic identity gives a fundamental agenda to the collective works. In all three works, the essential issues dealt with are used to lay out an internal agenda within Catholicism. While Cornwell and Wills focus primarily on the role of papal authority, Carroll both includes and expands on that theme to question fundamental Catholic beliefs.

Carroll's thesis is that the anti-Semitism which resulted in the Holocaust is central to Catholic theology and derived from the earliest Christian expressions of belief, namely the Gospel accounts themselves. He concludes his book with a call for a third Vatican Council to make a series of changes in basic Catholic belief that he envisions purging the Church of this alleged fundamental anti-Semitism.

Carroll's main sources from a Catholic perspective are disaffected theologians such as Hans Kung and Rosemary Radford Ruether, or Scriptural scholars like John Dominic Crossan from the Jesus Seminar. His primary source on the Church and the Holocaust, for example, is Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*, which he

acknowledges in a footnote to have been “controversial,” but that he had reviewed it favorably. His knowledge – or at least his citation – of mainstream Catholic sources is limited to non-existent.

It is necessary to make the Church the cause of the Holocaust because so much of what passes as contemporary enlightened thought and views have their roots not in Catholicism or Christianity, but in the very secular ideologies that laid the true foundation for the Holocaust. So-called enlightened views on euthanasia or abortion, for example, find their philosophical origins in late 19th century racial eugenics that propagated Hitler’s attack on the Jews. To scapegoat the Catholic Church as the cause of the Holocaust makes a secular examination of conscience unnecessary.

Though theories that led to and created the Holocaust were a fundamental rejection of thousands of years of Judaic and Christian thought, Carroll sees them differently. He sees these enlightenment theories as ideas that grew naturally from Christian origins, rather than an outright rejection. One was merely grafted on the other.

Hitler did not approach the world with a mode of thinking and belief rooted in the 1,900 years of Western civilization. Rather, he was rooted in the 150 years of elitist racist and nationalist thought that had abandoned the Judeo-Christian roots of Western civilization.

Carroll believes that the New Testament is clearly anti-Semitic and, therefore, caused anti-Jewish sentiment that, in turn, eventually evolved into the philosophies that created the Holocaust. Rather than arguing that bad Scriptural interpretation in the past was used by some to declare that all Jews shared the blame in the death of Jesus, Carroll would rather agree that this is the proper meaning of Scripture. He sees anti-Semitism as fundamental to the Christian message as presented in the New Testament.

Carroll dismisses a good part of the historicity of the Gospel accounts and of the whole concept that Jesus died on the cross as a saving act of atonement for mankind. As to the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Carroll is circumspect at best.

Constantine certainly had a strong impact on the early Church that would last for centuries. But Carroll attributes to him far too much impact in the areas of theology, ecclesiology, doctrinal theology and the Church's hierarchical structure. These were areas of the Church developing for two centuries prior to Constantine and did not spring fully born from a Roman emperor with only a minimal understanding of the faith he embraced to under gird his Empire.

Carroll blames the Church for a cultural phenomenon that preceded it, and points to confirmation in the fact that the Church tried to limit both the severity and violence of anti-Jewish acts through the intervention of Augustine and the proclamation of Gregory the Great. The Jews survived the first thousand years of Christianity by the strength of their own faith and because the Church did not attempt to forcefully eradicate their faith. If Carroll's premise was true, or as basic to the Christian faith as he contends, Judaism would have disappeared by Christian force and no "ambivalence" in Christian attitude would have stopped it.

Pope Calixtus III (1119-1124) issued the papal bull *Sicut Iudaesis* that condemned any violence against the Jews, a bull reaffirmed by 20 of his successors. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who preached the Second Crusade, would speak out forcefully against anti-Jewish violence and is generally held responsible for limiting such incidents. Though Carroll tries to link a stronger papacy with increased anti-Jewish acts, the opposite appears true. A stronger Church and papacy that can influence secular authorities in European history rather than be controlled by secular authorities, the less likely were anti-Jewish outbreaks.

Carroll's history consistently shows the opposite of what it intends. Anti-Jewish activities persisted in history despite the Church, rather than because of the Church. When Church authority was weakened, the outbreaks tended to increase. When dangerous racial anti-Semitism would grow in the 19th Century, the Church was effectively at its weakest in influencing government or society.

There can be no doubt that ignorance and false Scriptural interpretation helped to create an atmosphere of anti-Judaism within Western society. There was, as Carroll shows, an "ambivalence" toward Jews within Catholic teaching that contributed to anti-Jewish actions. While Church leadership forthrightly condemned violence against the Jews, it tolerated abusive anti-Jewish homilies and pronouncements. Church leadership too often shared in the sentiments of the culture. However, Carroll's fundamental flaw is in arguing that anti-Semitism was the conscious creation of the Church, rather than a cultural legacy to which many in the Church too often compromised.

It is true that the racial prejudice against Catholic families of Jewish stock was the primary instigator of the Spanish Inquisition. However, it contradicts, rather than confirms, Carroll's basic thesis that anti-Semitism that led to the horror of the Holocaust came from essential Christian theology. Spanish anti-Semitism was aimed at Jews racially. Religion was used as a club of enforcement to knock ethnic Jews down from the successful heights they had attained as Catholics. But the faith was the excuse, not the cause, of Spanish racial anti-Semitism.

The attacks in Spain on the *conversos* were viewed as despicable in Rome and condemned by the popes. Italians, Henry Kamen has written, "felt that Spanish hypocrisy in religion, together with the existence of the Inquisition, proved that the tribunal was created not for religious purity, but simply

to rob the Jews. Similar views were certainly held by the prelates of the Holy See whenever they intervened in favor of the *conversos*. Moreover, the racialism of the Spanish authorities was scorned in Italy, where the Jewish community led a comparatively tranquil existence."

The thesis that the "Jews killed Jesus" was a popular misinterpretation of the New Testament that the Church taught as wrong in its theology of atonement. If anti-Semitism persisted, it was because it was persistent in the popular imagination, not in the teachings of the Church as Carroll claims. Again, anti-Semitism existed despite essential Church teachings, not because of them, as Carroll charges.

Treatment of the local Jewish community in Rome would vary from pontiff to pontiff. Popes would change and policies would change. These policies were generated as papal governance of the Papal States, however, not pronouncements of the universal Church. And what Carroll sees as a continuous linkage was shifting sand. There was no uniform anti-Jewish policy aimed at the local Jewish community from papacy to papacy. The policies reflected the emphasis and mind-set of individuals. However, the different perspectives popes adopted show anything but a continuous chain that is the fundamental thesis of Carroll's book.

The fact was that at the First Vatican Council consensus emerged, except for extremists on each side, which spelled out a definition of papal infallibility clearly in line with Church tradition and the theology of the papacy. The Council proclaimed no new teaching that extended papal authority beyond a point the Church had understood for centuries.

The stew of secular philosophies that led to these 20th century horrors was a creation of the 19th century, that had limited roots in the so-called Enlightenment of the 18th century. These philosophies were definitive breaks with Christian thinking,

not evolutions. As Paul Johnson notes, they involved the “birth of the modern” – an entirely new way of viewing self, one’s role in culture, one’s entire mode of thinking and acting. These were not subtle changes or a grafting on to Christianity. These were philosophies that the Church fought against because they were a fundamental break, a fundamental confrontation, with an entire Christian philosophy, theology, culture and worldview. Carroll’s failure to present that adequately in order not to upset his thesis that the Church was to blame for the Holocaust is the fundamental flaw of his book.

Carroll regurgitates the central thesis of Cornwell. He sees the revision of Canon Law promulgated in 1917 – in which a young priest Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII was involved – as the motivating factor in the Church’s reaction to the rise of the dictators. According to the theory, papal absolutism was the driving force of Vatican foreign policy. The Vatican would surrender anything – and bargain with the devil himself – in order to gain authority over, for example, the appointment of bishops.

Though Carroll dismisses such claims, the Vatican had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. Pius XI would explain that it was concluded only to spare persecution that would take place immediately if there was no such agreement. The concordat would also give the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action in the years prior to the war and after hostilities began. It provided a legal basis for arguing that baptized Jews in Germany were Christian and should be exempt from legal disabilities. Though the Concordat was routinely violated before the ink was dry, its existence allowed for Vatican protest, and it did save Jewish lives.

Carroll assumes that a calculated decision by Pius to work behind the scenes through his papal representatives and

through the existing vehicles of the Church to save as many lives as possible, was a callous decision to leave Jews to their fate. It assumes that hurling thunderbolts from the Vatican – which all who lived through Nazism understand would have had no possible impact on Hitler – would have accomplished something or saved more lives. This is mere conjecture based on hindsight. None of the critics of Pius have yet been able to put forth a concrete alternative that Pius could have developed to save more lives than were saved by the Church in that period. Throughout the war years, the Church would save more Jewish lives than any entity that existed at the time.

Disagreeing with the tactics of Pius is one thing. Stating that the Church abandoned the Jews does not reflect any kind of reality. Which is one of the most frustrating aspects of Carroll's entire "history" of the Church and the Jews. It is not history at all, but an amateur's meditation on various historical events skewed to reflect the prejudices of his own thesis.

Echoing Garry Wills, Carroll sees the canonization of Stein as an attempt by the Church to claim victimhood in the Holocaust and to reaffirm the religious superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Like Wills, he can cite no source for this conjecture, or documentation that cites any such reasoning from Church leadership. Pope John Paul II stated, which is a fact, that she died at the hands of the Nazis because she was a Jew and a Catholic, in retribution for the Church speaking out against Nazi deportations of the Jews in the Netherlands. The death of Edith Stein – and the death of Maximilian Kolbe – are the only cases of people slaughtered by the Nazis in the concentration camps that a certain circle within Catholicism feels comfortable publicly degrading.

Critical to Pope John XXIII's thinking was that the Church must reach out to the world and not see itself as a faithful remnant that hides from the world. The purpose in John's mind

was to certainly remove liturgical encrustation, defensive theological formulations and aspects of the culture of Catholicism that prevented outreach to the modern world. However, the purpose of such was not to convert the Church to modernism, but for the Church to be better able to evangelize the modern world. This has been the hallmark of the papacy of Pope John Paul II, who as a bishop attending the Council, was a strong supporter of the intent and spirit of Vatican II.

The five-point agenda for Vatican III is the purpose of Carroll's book. One cannot doubt the sincerity of his horror in the Holocaust, or his disgust at the anti-Jewish history that exists within the history of Western civilization and that members of the Church have been a part of it. But his purpose, clearly, is for "the past to be retrieved in ways that serve present purposes." Those purposes are Carroll's five-point agenda for creating a Catholicism that would fit his particular vision. He would do so by undermining the Gospels, dismissing 2000 years of Catholic theology and dismantling the papacy and the priesthood. He would, finally, have a Church that would disconnect from Jesus as the source of truth – that truth can be known, and truth can be evangelized.

It was not the belief of the Church, the New Testament, the Church centered in Jesus, the understanding that Christ died for the sins of mankind, or the Church belief in an objective and universal truth that persists in Christ, that created the horror of the Holocaust. It was the rejection of those, and the attempt to substitute for Judeo-Christian civilization a secularist pseudo scientism of race, class and nationalism that generated Nazism and the Holocaust.

[\[1\]](#) John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope* (Viking Press, 1999).

[2] Ibid, p. 295.

[3] Ronald J. Rychlak, *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000).

[4] Cornwell, pp. 367, 369.

[5] Garry Wills, *Papal Sin, Structures of Deceit* (Doubleday, June 2000).

[6] For my review of *Papal Sin* see the Catholic League's website at www.catholicleague.org

[7] James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword, The Church and the Jews* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001). All further references to Carroll will be by page number alone.

[8] p. 22.

[9] p. 109.

[10] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana). Second edition. Available from Our Sunday Visitor.

[11] p. 305.

[12] p. 70.

[13] *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* (1998).

[14] Rychlak, p. 310.

[15] p. 425.

[16] p. 129.

[17] See Dava Sobel, *Galileo's Daughter*. (Walker & Company, 1999).

[18] p. 92.

[19] p. 126.

[\[20\]](#) p. 129.

[\[21\]](#) p. 124.

[\[22\]](#) pp. 173, 175.

[\[23\]](#) pp. 188-189.

[\[24\]](#) See "First Letter of St. Clement of Rome to the Corinthians," (88 – 97 AD) and the Apostles Creed from the Second Century A.D and the early *Didache*.

[\[25\]](#) p. 218.

[\[26\]](#) p. 250.

[\[27\]](#) Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1989) p. 40.

[\[28\]](#) p. 283.

[\[29\]](#) p. 283.

[\[30\]](#) *Saints and Sinners*, Eamon Duffy (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 112.

[\[31\]](#) p. 283.

[\[32\]](#) p. 319.

[\[33\]](#) p. 318.

[\[34\]](#) See Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (Yale University Press, 1997).

[\[35\]](#) pp. 347-348.

[\[36\]](#) p. 365.

[\[37\]](#) Kamen, p. 309.

[38] p. 372.

[39] p. 372.

[40] Peters, p. 110.

[41] p. 377.

[42] Duffy, pp. 169-170.

[43] p. 453.

[44] p. 440.

[45] p. 476.

[46] The interested reader on this topic should review Ronald Rychlak's *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*. Though dismissed by Carroll, as it does not fit his thesis, it is worth reading for a documented – as opposed to simply the author's own interpretations – history of this era.

[47] p. 510.

[48] p. 539.

[49] pp. 548, 550. Carroll repeats on page 550 the old canard that when Pope John XXIII was dying he was asked what the Church should do against Rolf Hockhuth's play "The Deputy" that began the revisionism concerning the actions of Pius XII in World War II, he responded "Do against it? What can you do against the truth?" Though in a 1997 story in The New Yorker, Carroll conceded that this story was possibly apocryphal, he repeats it here as fact. The story was first raised, it appears, by Hannah Arendt in a 1964 essay and never attributed or documented. Pope John XXIII evidenced throughout his papacy a strong devotion and respect for Pius XII. It was Pope John who issued the order that in response to "The Deputy" that the Vatican record should be published, which led to the 11-volume "Acts and Documents" of the Holy See during World War II.

Regarding his help in saving Jews during the war, Pope John said “in all these painful matters I have referred to the Holy See and simply carried out the Pope’s orders: first and foremost to save Jewish lives.” In his last encyclical just two months before his death, *Pacem in Terris*, there are 32 references to the writings of Pius XII. It seems unlikely that there is any truth to this alleged quote.

[\[50\]](#) p. 551.

[\[51\]](#) p. 552.

[\[52\]](#) p. 566.

[\[53\]](#) p. 567.

[\[54\]](#) p. 575.

[\[55\]](#) p.576.

[\[56\]](#) p. 585.

[\[57\]](#) p. 587.

[\[58\]](#) p. 589.

[\[59\]](#) p. 591.

[\[60\]](#) p. 593.

[\[61\]](#) p.604.

[\[62\]](#) p. 610.

[\[63\]](#) p. 613.

The War on Pius XII Hits a New Low

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 11/2001)

The war on Pius XII hit a new low when *Commentary* magazine published a piece by Kevin Madigan in its October issue. In the article,

“What the Vatican Knew About the Holocaust, and When,” Madigan argues, “The Vicar of Christ knew enough, but did not care enough, to speak more forcefully or to act more courageously than he did.” Madigan teaches the history of Christianity at the Harvard Divinity School.

Did not care enough? When a charge of this magnitude is made, convincing proof is demanded. On this score, Madigan offers not one scintilla of evidence. Indeed, his charge is slanderous.

Madigan is right to say that Pius XII knew during the war what was happening to Jews. Though the pope was not “silent,” I will not contest Madigan’s charge that he did not speak out in a “forceful” manner. What is being contested is Madigan’s ability to read the pope’s mind: Madigan impugns the pope’s character by concluding that the Holy Father just didn’t care.

For the sake of argument, let’s assume that Madigan is right about the pope’s motive. If it is fair to conclude that an uncaring attitude explains why Pius XII didn’t speak out more forcefully, then it should be fair to conclude that this motive applies equally to everyone else who acted in a similar manner. Take, for example, the reaction of American Jews.

When Hitler took over in 1933, he wasted no time showing his

hatred for Jews. American Jewish leaders quickly got together to discuss public demonstrations against Hitler. Plans were made for an anti-Hitler parade in New York on May 10, 1933. But then the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith put out a joint statement condemning "public agitation in form of mass demonstrations." They feared it would only "inflame" matters. So there was silence.

In 1935, the Nuremberg race laws were enacted effectively stripping Jews of all civil rights. And what was the reaction of American Jews? Led by Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress, they worked against legislation that would make it easier for Jews to emigrate to the U.S. from Germany.

November 9-10, 1938, will always be remembered for Kristallnacht, the "Night of Broken Glass." Hitler's Storm Troopers in Berlin went on a rampage killing Jews, entering their homes, destroying their businesses, burning synagogues, etc. American Jewish leaders were shaken by these revelations but they nonetheless eschewed a "forceful" approach.

Indeed, on November 13 and December 13, at a meeting of the General Jewish Council, all the major Jewish organizations assembled to discuss their options. The American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee debated what to do about immigration reforms that would alleviate the plight of German Jews. In the end, they said, "at least for the time being, nothing should be done with regard to this matter." In addition, all of these Jewish organizations went on record saying, "there should be no parades, demonstrations or protests by Jews."

As Madigan correctly points out, it was in August 1942 when Gerhard Riegner of the World Jewish Congress notified his colleagues in London and New York of an "alarming report" depicting plans to exterminate Jews. But there is little evidence that this galvanized the Jewish leaders to act more courageously (the public was of yet unaware of the news).

Indeed, the major Jewish organizations even failed to lobby on behalf of a bill sponsored by Rep. Emanuel Celler that would have made it easier for Jewish refugees to emigrate from France to the U.S. during Nazi persecution. The bill died in committee.

The news that Hitler had gone on a rampage against Jews was released by the State Department in November 1942 via Rabbi Wise; he was the head of the World Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Congress. Jewish-owned newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* treated the news with aplomb. For example, the *Times* reported that 2 million Jews had been killed in the Nazi extermination campaign. It placed the story on p. 10 surrounded by ads for Thanksgiving Day turkeys.

This enfeebled reaction of the *New York Times* was not an anomaly. It not only buried other stories of Nazi terror, the total number of editorials it ran criticizing the Nazis in the years 1941, 1942 and 1943 was nine (three each year). Even worse, when the Nazis arrested a cousin of Arthur Sulzberger, the *Times* chief instructed his Berlin bureau chief to do "nothing." Sulzberger said he didn't want to antagonize the Nazis (sound familiar?). The cousin, Louis Zinn, was so despondent that when he left prison he hanged himself.

I could go on but the point is obvious. Or is it? The point I want to make is that there were plenty of good reasons why Jews *weren't* more vocal. Any change in immigration quotas for one country surely would have raised serious moral questions regarding what to do about other countries where Jews were suffering. Would asking for special treatment anger other Americans at home? Was there not the specter of rising anti-Semitism at home? Wasn't it realistic to think that if protests mounted in the U.S. that the plight of Jews might only get worse in Europe?

In hindsight, perhaps the reasons Jews gave for not speaking

up more forcefully are unpersuasive. But if someone today were to conclude that Jewish inaction was a function of not caring enough, I would conclude that the accuser is anti-Semitic. This is why I believe Madigan's charge that Pius XII didn't care what was happening to the Jews is so scurrilous.

There were plenty of good reasons why the pope did not use the bully pulpit. For one thing, many prominent Jews begged him not to stir the pot. Moreover, the pope knew that the Nazis were monitoring every word he said very closely and that is why he wanted to avoid making a bad situation worse. Here is what he said in June 1943: "Every word from Us in this regard to the competent authorities, every public allusion, should be seriously considered and weighed in the very interest of those who suffer so as not to make their position even more difficult and more intolerable than previously, even though inadvertently and unwillingly." These are not the words one would expect from someone who just didn't care.

Even in 1964, in the wake of Hochhuth's wretchedly anti-Catholic play, "The Deputy," the ADL said, "A formal statement [on the part of the pope] would have provoked the Nazis to brutal retaliation and would have substantially thwarted further Catholic action on behalf of Jews."

Like many other critics of Pius XII these days, Madigan assumes that the pope had some magical powers to deter Hitler. Historian William D. Rubinstein sheds important light on this issue: "In all likelihood—a likelihood probably amounting to a near certainty—Hitler would have paid no heed whatever to any pronouncement on the Jews made by the Vatican (which had denounced Nazi anti-semitism before the war began)." Rubinstein also considers other measures that might have been taken. "Theoretically," he says, "and in hindsight, the Pope might have excommunicated all Catholic members of the SS (or of the Nazi Party) although the only likely effect of such a pronouncement would have been that the Nazis denounced the Pope as an agent of 'Judeo-Bolshevism' and an imposter."

Sir Martin Gilbert, one of the most noted historians in Europe and an expert on World War II, provides a mature understanding of how we can realistically judge the behavior of Pius XII. The test for the pope, he says, "was when the Gestapo came to Rome in 1943 to round up the Jews." Gilbert writes, "And the Catholic Church, on his direct authority, immediately dispersed as many Jews as they could." Which is why only 17 percent of Italy's Jews perished. This figure not only stacks up well against what happened in other European countries, it reflects something else: more Jews were saved proportionately in Catholic countries than Protestant countries. This explains why Hitler biographer John Toland said that as of 1943, "The Church, under the Pope's guidance, had already saved the lives of more Jews than all other churches, religious institutions and rescue organizations combined, and was presently hiding thousands of Jews in monasteries, convents and Vatican City itself."

But Madigan will have none of it. He knows he can't deny that Catholics saved hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives, so the best he can do is say the pope had nothing to do with it. Madigan says the pope "permitted" Catholics to rescue Jews; Pius also "allowed" Catholic properties to shelter Jews.

This is a remarkable conclusion, but it is not unusual among the critics of Pius XII. Susan Zuccotti, in her book, *Under His Very Window*, takes the same position. English historian Owen Chadwick disposes of this view rather handily. Zuccotti, he says, acknowledges the heroic acts of priests, monks and nuns. But as Chadwick observes, "She keeps emphasising that these courageous and life-risking endeavors were carried out without any instruction, order, encouragement, from the Vatican." Chadwick sees the hole in the argument: "But why should they have been? The most bull-on-the-breakfast-table papist does not demand an order from the Pope before a Christian needs to behave like a decent person when faced by murder."

One final comment. Isn't it strange that the same Pius XII who is routinely painted as an autocrat is now described as someone who simply bows to the wishes of the faithful? If he was the authoritarian that his critics say he was, then someone needs to explain his accommodating behavior in these instances. Either that or stop with the propaganda.

The Catholic Church and the Holocaust 1935-1960

by Robert P. Lockwood

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), as Secretary of State to Pius XI and as pope, faced Nazi Germany with a remarkable consistency. The Nazis considered him an implacable foe,(1) and he was hailed both during and after World War II as the strongest voice – often the only voice – speaking out in Europe against the Nazi terror.(2) The Church under his leadership is credited with saving more Jewish lives in the face of the Holocaust than any other agency, government or entity at the time.(3) Pius' combination of diplomatic pressure, careful but sustained criticism while maintaining an essential Vatican neutrality in war-torn Europe, as well as direct action through his nuncios and the local Church where possible, saved what some have estimated as 860,000 Jewish lives.(4) If that estimate is accurate by only half, it remains a historic effort for a Church fighting without weapons against the most horrific campaign of genocide the world had yet seen.

Yet, in the face of this clear historical record, Pope Pius XII has come under attack since his death. Beginning with Rolf

Hocchuth's *The Deputy* in 1963, a revisionism set-in Pius five years after his death and a new picture of Pius was created.(5) Accused of an alleged "silence" in the fact of the Holocaust, critics have gone further, insinuating that he may have been a crypto-Nazi sympathizer. In John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*(6) he is portrayed as an anti-Semitic, silent bystander to the Holocaust.

In an afterword to Ronald J. Rychlak's masterful defense of Pius XII, *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (7), Robert P. George examines this defamation of Pius XII. George sees two sources for this new myth: "anti-Catholic bigots and anti-papal Catholics have a large stake in preserving the myth that Eugenio Pacelli was 'Hitler's Pope.' The myth is of enormous utility in their continuing efforts to undermine the credibility of the Catholic Church and the teaching authority (magisterium) exercised by the Pope and the bishops in communion with him...(The myths) originate in, and are to a large extent sustained as part of a larger effort to undermine the credibility and weaken the moral and cultural influence of the Catholic Church. Why? Because the Catholic Church – and, within the Church, the institution of the papacy – is the single most potent force of traditional morality in cultural conflicts with communism, utilitarianism, radical individualism, and other major secular ideologies."

George hints at an often understated but important aspect to the revisionism concerning Pius XII: his anti-communism and his image as a Cold War pontiff. John Cornwell's book on Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust, *Hitler's Pope* was an amateur's hatchet job that exploited the Holocaust to attack the papacy of Pope John Paul II. Cornwell is a self-described Catholic who sees a strong papacy as standing in the way of his own vision of proper Church reform. The Holocaust is simply a weapon to be used by Cornwell in this inter-Church debate.(8) Editorials in the *New York Times* tend toward the more surreal, anti-Catholic position, lumping in the alleged silence of Pope

Pius XII with a laundry list of complaints about Catholicism: the Church's refusal to ordain women, its opposition to abortion, and its teaching on homosexuality.(9)

An additional, critical source of the myth of Pius as Holocaust collaborator comes from certain students of history who loathed Pius for his anti-communism. This was an important aspect that served Hocchuth's interpretation. Popular in the late 1950s through the 1970s, this school of revisionist historians saw anti-communism as a dangerous threat, and all tainted by it deserving nothing but approbation. Pius certainly fit such a category.

Michael Phayer, professor of history at Marquette University, has authored a new book on the Catholic response to the Holocaust. Phayer seems particularly affected by that "anti-anti-communism" school of thought on Pope Pius XII. He assumes "papal silence," and attributes it primarily to a fear of communism. In *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (10) Phayer states that his purpose is to go beyond the issue of the silence of Pope Pius XII to explore how the Church in various countries, and through various individual Catholics, responded to the Holocaust, and how that response eventually led to the Church's official rejection of anti-Semitism during the Second Vatican Council. Yet throughout the book, he paints Pope Pius XII as a meek pontiff unwilling to engage the Nazis. He states that Pius was motivated by the hope that he could secure a negotiated peace that would leave a powerful Germany as a European defense against an aggressive communist Soviet Union.

Yet, Phayer does not examine the allegation of silence on the part of Pope Pius XII, but merely accepts it as a given, bowing to contemporary conventional wisdom rather than the historical record of what was accomplished for Jews by Pius and the Church during the horror of the *Shoah*. In doing so, Phayer does not present a prosecutor's case for Pius' alleged silence, nor for his motives in being silent. Instead, he

assumes that silence and postulates motives to fit that alleged reality, without proving that such motives existed.

Though Phayer's book shows serious professional historical study and background on the events of World War II, it has similarities to Cornwell's screed. Phayer's prejudices against Pius determine the scholarship he brings to bear on the issue. Phayer's book requires a more serious response than one would give to Cornwell's ravings. Yet, it is a deeply flawed work that will play its own role in the ongoing slander of Pope Pius XII.

Phayer does not portray Pius XII as a Nazi sympathizer, or as a closeted anti-Semite. But for a book that he claims is meant to go beyond the debate over the alleged papal silence, his indictment of Pius is draconian. He claims that Pius "did little for Jews in their hour of greatest need." (11) While acknowledging that working through his papal nuncios he was able to save Jewish lives, his "greatest failure...lay in his attempt to use a diplomatic remedy for a moral outrage." (12) At the same time, he charges that the "image that emerges of Pope Pius is that of a pontiff whose deep concern about communism and the intact physical survival of the city of Rome kept him from exploring options on behalf of the Jewish people." (13) He charges that in the immediate post-war period the Vatican under Pius XII consciously assisted Nazi war criminals to escape and "worked against U.S. policies that sought to make German society responsible for the murder of the Jews." (14) Why? To maintain a strong Germany in response to the communist threat, and to keep unsullied the enhanced image of the Church in Europe as a result of its actions during the War. While Phayer spends a small portion of his book presenting heroic stories of individual Catholics who engaged in rescue work, he returns consistently to the theme of a silent, almost cowardly Pope Pius XII, whose only desire was to limit communist expansion, even if it meant ignoring the plight of the Jews. Yet while Phayer states this case, he

never makes it. He over relies on Nazi interpretation of Vatican action, as well as the editorial opinion of secondary sources rather than documentation.

Phayer argues that if Pius XI had lived five more years, Church reaction would have been different to the Holocaust and to Nazi Germany.(15) While that is unknowable, of course, and Pius XI was certainly a different personality than Pius XII, Phayer ignores or downplays the important role played by Cardinal Pacelli in determining Vatican reaction to the Nazis in the 1930s. Phayer cites a series of events under Pius XI that he interprets as signaling a new direction that would be reversed under Pius XII. He notes, for example, the 1937 encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Mit brennender sorge*, which condemned racism and idolatry of the State. He makes no mention that it was the future Pius XII, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who drafted the encyclical.(16) In 1938, Phayer describes how Cardinal Theodore Innitzer of Vienna was called to Rome for a dressing-down after he publicly welcomed the Nazi *Anschluss* of Austria, a rebuke distributed throughout Vatican diplomatic channels. He does not mention that it was Cardinal Pacelli who summoned Cardinal Innitzer to Rome and told him he must retract his statement.(17) Finally, he notes that when Hitler visited Rome on an official visit to Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy, "the pope snubbed the dictators by leaving the city."(18) He fails to mention that Cardinal Pacelli departed with the pontiff.

Clearly, the future Pope Pius XII had a strong hand in the development of the Holy See's attitude toward both the Nazi movement and its anti-Semitic policies during the pontificate of Pius XI. There was no difference in substance between the two pontificates in addressing Nazism and anti-Semitism. The differences in approach between the two pontificates, such as they were, centered on the fact that within six months of the election of Pope Pius XII, Germany invaded Poland and Europe was at war.

Throughout Phayer's book, he suggests that Cardinal Pacelli's work on the 1933 Concordat between Hitler and the Holy See "linked the Vatican with the new Nazi regime" and its maintenance became an obsession with Pius XII, thus limiting his ability – or desire – to protest the treatment of the Jews.(19) The concordat was concluded at a time when the Vatican was forced to deal with the reality of Hitler's rise to power. In June 1933 Hitler had signed a peace agreement with the western powers, including France and Great Britain, called the Four-Power Pact. At the same time Hitler expressed a willingness to negotiate a statewide concordat with Rome. The concordat was concluded a month later, preceded by both the Four-Power Pact and a similar agreement concluded between Hitler and the Protestant churches. The Church had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. Pope Pius XI explained that it was concluded only to spare persecution that would take place immediately if there was no such agreement. The concordat would also give the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action. For example, it provided a legal basis for arguing that baptized Jews in Germany were Christian and should be exempt from legal disabilities. Though the Nazis routinely violated the Concordat before the ink was dry, its existence allowed for Vatican protest, and it did save Jewish lives. The first protest filed with the Nazi government under the terms of the concordat concerned the Nazi government-sponsored boycott of Jewish businesses.(20)

Phayer cites as another example of the laxity of Pius XII the case of Bishop Alois Hudal – the "Brown Bishop" – an Austrian Nazi sympathizer. Phayer states that even with his well-known anti-Semitism and pro-Nazi sympathies, Hudal "won an appointment as the rector of the Collegia del Anima in Rome, the school of theology for Austrian seminarians. There he remained throughout the Nazi era acting on occasion as an intermediary between Pius XII and Nazi occupational forces,

and, after the war, helping Holocaust perpetrators to escape justice.”(21) Rather than winning his appointment, Hudal was in Rome to be kept on ice. Though he claimed influence in Vatican circles, both the curia and the pope ignored him. Even the Nazis dismissed Hudal as having no influence. (He could not even influence his seminarians that embarrassed Hudal by making themselves absent during Hitler’s state visit to Italy in 1938.) Pius XII did use him once, to serve as an intermediary with the Germans to halt the arrest of Jews during the Nazi occupation of Rome.(22) Though Hudal may have personally assisted Nazis to escape after the war, there is no connection between him and the Holy See, or that Pius XII had any knowledge of such actions. Phayer cites no documentation or source other than anti-papal conjecture.(23)

He charges that Pope Pius XII contributed by his silence in the Nazi slaughter of Catholics in occupied Poland, particularly from 1939 to 1941. Yet, Phayer himself acknowledges that Vatican Radio was the first to inform the world of the depths of the Nazi atrocities in Poland just months after its occupation through broadcasts in January, 1940, broadcasts given at the direction of Pope Pius XII.(24) Phayer alleges that the broadcasts were suspended in the face of German threats on the Vatican. The Nazis did protest and make veiled threats, but they were hinting at retaliation on the helpless Poles, not the Vatican itself. For a short time, Vatican Radio ceased comment on the Polish situation, though this was done over concern with how the British were altering and re-broadcasting Vatican reports as propaganda.(25) By the following January, Vatican Radio was continuing its vociferous critique of German atrocities in Poland.

Pius XII had raised the issue of Poland in Easter and Christmas messages, in articles in the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, as well as in the first encyclical of his pontificate, *Summi Pontificatus*. The Vatican also refused to cooperate with the German demand to control

the appointment of bishops in occupied Poland. In a March 1940 confrontation with Joachim von Ribbontrop, Hitler's foreign minister, Pius XII read to him in German a detailed report on Nazi atrocities in Poland aimed at both the Church and the Jews. That meeting received in depth coverage in the *New York Times*. The nuncio to Germany was also instructed by Pius repeatedly, as Phayer himself notes, "to plead for better treatment of Polish priests and lay people." (26) Yet, Phayer proclaims papal silence and complains that Pius XII chose a diplomatic rather than a moral approach, without citing what that moral approach would have been, or how it could have been feasible or successful in the face of Nazi aggression.

Phayer raises the complaint that Pius would not join in a public statement from the allies in 1942 condemning Nazi atrocities in Poland. He states that Pius XII would not join in the statement, quoting a British diplomat at the time, because he was determined to act as a mediator between Germany and the Allies to end the war. The real reason was that this would be an official statement of the Allied governments and it was impossible for Pius XII, representing a neutral state, to join the effort. However, in his annual Christmas message of 1942, Pius XII condemned totalitarian regimes and mourned the victims of the war, "the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction." He called on Catholics to shelter any and all refugees. The statement was loudly praised in the Allied world. In Germany, it was seen as the final repudiation by Pius XII of the Nazis: "(H)e is virtually accusing the German people of injustice toward the Jews, and makes himself the mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminal." Oddly, Phayer claims that this Christmas message was not understood and that "no one, certainly not the Germans, took it as a protest against the slaughter of the Jews." (27) He states this despite the negative German reaction and Allied praise for the statement. A prominent Christmas Day 1942 editorial in the *New York*

Times stated: "No Christmas sermon reaches a larger audience than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world at this season...When a leader bound impartially to nations on both sides condemns as heresy the new form of national state which subordinates everything to itself...when he assails violent occupation of territory, the exile and persecution of human beings for no other reason than race or political opinion...the 'impartial judgment' is like a verdict in a high court of justice."(28)

Phayer makes a number of broad statements that are at best open to contrary interpretation, and at worst seem to misstate the facts. He claims that a private audience between Croatian Fascist leader Ante Pavelic and Pius XII, and the appointment of a nuncio, was a victory for Fascist Croatia.(29) However, Pius XII refused to greet Pavelic as a head of state and formal recognition was never extended. Pavelic left Rome in an insulted rage, rather than "satisfied" as Phayer contends.(30) The Vatican refused to recognize an independent state of Croatia and did not receive a Croatian representative. The pope's representative in Croatia, Archbishop Marcone, would work tirelessly in defense of the Croatian Jews.

Phayer states that the Vatican "refrained from promoting a separate Italian peace with the Allies because it would necessarily weaken Germany."(31) Pius had, in fact, pressed Mussolini to negotiate a separate peace and advised the Badoglio regime that succeeded him to do so as well.(32) Phayer cites an underling's memo to von Ribbentrop that the only obstacle to a "loyal relationship between the church and National Socialism is the latter's euthanasia and sterilization policies. The murder of Jews was left out of the equation."(33) He seems to take at face value Nazi interpretations of the position of the Vatican as, in fact, the Vatican's position.

He states that while Archbishop Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, engaged in the rescue of many Jews, he quotes another

historian who states that may have done so without Vatican orders and “possibly even against them.” (34) This would make Archbishop Roncalli a liar as he clearly stated that as nuncio he acted solely at the direction of Pope Pius XII.

Phayer charges that the Vatican had prior knowledge of the German roundup of 1,200 Jews in Rome on October 16, 1943 and did nothing to forewarn them.(35) He relies for this charge on self-serving German diplomatic explanations, and then makes the preposterous case that it was the German diplomatic corps that “saved” Roman Jews. Throughout Italy, Jews were hidden by the Church. When it seemed certain that German troops would soon occupy the city, Pius helped Jews to evacuate and to hide. Many of those not evacuated, about 5,000, were in hiding in Church buildings when 60,000 Nazi troops occupied Rome. On October 16, the Nazis initiated a roundup of the Jews not in hiding. There is no evidence that Pius had specific prior knowledge, or concealed such knowledge. Reason dictated, of course, that such a raid could happen at any moment. There was little ignorance of what the Nazis were capable of doing to the Jewish community. The Germans had invaded the main Roman synagogue a month earlier and secured a list of Jewish families.

Immediately upon being notified of the German seizure, Pius demanded that the arrests be halted. He even used Bishop Hudal as a go-between to bring an end to the arrests. The Nazis stopped large-scale roundups and the Jews in hiding in Rome were protected.

The central thesis in Phayer’s book is that Pius refused to speak out against the Holocaust and sought a negotiated peace because he wanted a strong Germany to face down the threat of Soviet communism. Yet, nowhere in the book does Phayer cite documented statements of Pope Pius XII to support that assertion. Though he charges (36) that Pius wanted the Soviet Union abandoned by the Allies in order to free up Germany to destroy the Soviet Union, the source for such a conclusion

seems to be Nazi wishful-thinking than documented Vatican positions. "Pius XII did not change his position when Germany began its war with Russia, and he never spoke, even by means of allusion, about a 'crusade' against Bolshevism or a 'holy war.'" (37)

Which is not to argue that Pope Pius XII was unrealistic concerning Stalin's Russia. He was certainly more realistic about Stalin's intentions than were the U.S. and Great Britain during the war. During Stalin's rule from 1928 to 1953, historians estimate that he was responsible for at least 20 million deaths. His all-out war against religion, and the Catholic Church in particular, was well known to Pius XII. Yet there is no case for arguing that Pius modified positions against Germany, or refused to speak out on the Holocaust, to somehow prop up Germany and divide the Allies. While anti-papal historians consistently assign that motive to Pius, there is no documented evidence of such a policy. But much is known to the contrary. It is known, for example, that Pius intervened to assure American supplies to the Soviet Union. When some American Catholics raised the issue that giving such supplies was aiding communism, the Holy See assured them that assistance to the Russian people unjustly attacked by Nazi Germany was appropriate. Pius also acceded to an American request not to publicly raise Stalin's past persecution of the Church after he joined the Allied cause. As cited in *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (38) Pius wrote to Myron C. Taylor, Roosevelt's personal representative to the pope: "(A)t the request of President Roosevelt, the Vatican has ceased all mention of the Communist regime.. But this silence that weighs heavily on our conscience, is misunderstood by the Soviet leaders who continue the persecution against churches and the faithful. God grant that the free world will one day not regret my silence." As Rychlak noted, ironically, "he would later come to be attacked for a different silence."

Historians such as Phayer assume this anti-Soviet strategy

because of Pius' concern over the Allied demand for complete and total German surrender. Pius did make clear his belief that failing to attempt to negotiate a peace and demanding complete and total German surrender would only prolong the war and the killing. But that was his reason for the position, a position one would expect from the Vicar of Christ in any war. Certainly, it was not a position without merit. It can be argued – and has been argued – that peace could have been obtained earlier with many lives saved if the Allies had not demanded an unconditional surrender, but rather the removal of Hitler and his Nazi cronies. Many share the view that this did, indeed, both prolong the war and help keep Hitler in power to the very end. Others argue, of course, that the hope for a negotiated peace was simply impossible as Hitler remained in absolute control until his death in a Berlin bunker. In any case, the papal position was viable. And there was nothing in such a papal position that implied anything more than the desire to save lives. To see the papal call for a negotiated peace as either a grandiose ploy on the part of the pontiff to set himself up as the great peacemaker of Europe, as Phayer contends, or to maintain a strong Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, as Phayer also contends, is to invent motives that are historically undocumented.

There are elements in Phayer's book that are interesting and worthy. He outlines well what the Church – and individual Catholics – were able to accomplish in rescuing Jews. He makes clear that the Church did not sit by idly as the Jews were taken to slaughter. Of particular interest is his overview of what the Church did and did not do within Nazi Germany itself. He points out that there were those within the Church who were able to accomplish more than many assume within Nazi Germany in defense of the Jews, though he cannot help but add that they went "further than Pius XII."

Rather than "go beyond" the issue of Pius XII as he claims to be the intent of his book, Phayer returns to Pius repeatedly.

“To the extent that Pope Pius chose to intervene at all, he did so through intermediaries, the nuncios, rather than by responding to the Holocaust publicly from Rome. In other words, when the pope chose to deal with the murder of Jews, he did so through diplomatic channels rather than through a moral pronouncement such as an encyclical.” (39) But that is precisely the point. First, there was no absolute “papal silence” on the Holocaust. Pius XII spoke carefully, certainly, but the Holy See and its representatives condemned Nazism and its atrocities long before any governments raised the issue. Yet Pius XII was primarily concerned with saving lives rather than high-minded pronouncements that would have accomplished little.

As outlined in the Catholic League’s research paper on Pius XII and as exhaustively detailed in Rychlak’s definitive work, *Hitler, the War and the Pope* and Pierre Blet’s *Pius XII and the Second World War*, work behind the scenes and at the scenes through the papal nuncios was more effective than issuing public statements from the safety of the Vatican. As Phayer himself acknowledges, there was little the Holy See could do to force the Nazis to end their campaign for a “Final Solution.” But Pius could save lives. Dramatic anti-Nazi gestures could have severely limited, if not ended altogether, the Church’s capability to save lives, particularly in Germany and the Axis satellite states. The Jewish lives saved by actions of the Church under the direction of Pius XII accomplished what no other agency, government or entity at the time was able to accomplish. Phayer claims that if Pius XII had issued a formal bombshell, more lives would have been saved. He does not, however, explain how that could have been accomplished and it appears to be wishful conjecture.

Phayer concludes that immediately after the war, the Holy See under Pius XII attempted to undercut Allied efforts to prosecute German war criminals and to provide the means for Nazis to escape Europe. As the Soviet threat grew more

ominous, Pius was perceived to be “uncannily wise to western statesman. Only he had followed a pro-German course consistently.” (40) Finally, Phayer states that because of Pius, the Church would not address the issue of anti-Semitism for years after the war had ended. It would only be after his death at the Vatican Council that the Church would squarely address the issue.

That Pius followed a consistently pro-German course during the war is simply wrong. From the outset of the War, Pius was on shaky ground maintaining the semblance of Vatican neutrality as he clearly and consistently led the Church in a position that supported the defeat of Hitler. Nazi authorities over and over again described Pope Pius XII as the enemy of the Reich, and Hitler went so far as to plot his kidnapping.(41) There is no evidence, of course, that the Holy See aided in an organized way the escape of Nazis. While individual Catholics supplied help, and certain Nazis hid their identities and used Holy See-sponsored refugee services to escape, charges that there was any kind of general policy of Vatican assistance to German war criminals have been completely debunked. Phayer believes that Pius consistently encouraged clemency for Nazi war criminals as part of his strategy for maintaining a strong Germany. Some German bishops intervened for specific acts of clemency. German bishops would complain about the defamation of all the German people over the actions of the Nazis, yet the Holy See was relatively mute on the issue, though it did oppose in certain cases direct executions. Pope Pius’ personal representative to postwar Germany and liaison to the Allied military authorities, Bishop Aloysius Muench of the United States, advised the Vatican not to intervene and, for the most part, this was the policy that was followed.

Concerning the issue of anti-Semitism, the Church had never endorsed the racial anti-Semitism of the Nazis. As early as 1928, when the Nazi part was still in its infancy, the Church had condemned anti-Semitism. The Church, certainly spurred by

the horror of the Holocaust, moved to eliminate religious anti-Jewish sentiments that existed within Catholic theology and devotional life. When the Second Vatican Council issued *Nostra Aetate*, its powerful declaration against anti-Semitism, it is impossible to argue that this somehow contradicted the papacy of Pope Pius XII. Theological and Scriptural studies encouraged by Pius, as well as the very atmosphere of his pontificate and that of Pius XI, were the foundations for *Nostra Aetate*. The bishops who supported the statement, including a young Polish prelate, Karol Wojtyła, were for the most part those raised to the episcopacy during his pontificate.

Pius was praised throughout the war and throughout his pontificate for the actions he took in defense of Jews during the war. The actions of the Church in the face of Nazism greatly enhanced its image in the post-war world. Phayer's primary contentions in this book – that Pius XII was pro-German, placed an anti-Communist agenda ahead of both concern for the Jews and the defeat of Nazi Germany – are not supported by any documented evidence. Most important, no case is built for an alternative strategy by Pope Pius XII that could have saved more Jewish lives. The Church under Pius saved more Jews from the Holocaust than any other entity in that terrible time. That is the undeniable fact that critics of Pius, whatever their motivation, must answer. Phayer does not.

For a complete understanding of the role of Pope Pius XII in World War II, we strongly recommend Ronald Rychlak's *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (Our Sunday Visitor Press, \$19.95 plus shipping and handling. Call 1-800-348-2440). While there are a few good sections in Michael Phayer's book, his overall treatment of Pius XII is prejudiced and unconvincing.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Pius XII's combination of diplomatic pressure, careful but

sustained criticism while maintaining an essential Vatican neutrality in war-torn Europe, as well as direct action through his nuncios and the local Church where possible, saved what some have estimated as 860,000 Jewish lives. If that estimate is accurate by only half, it remains a historic effort for a Church fighting without weapons against the most horrific killing machine the world had yet seen. Yet in the years after his death, a myth of Pius as a “silent collaborator” in the Holocaust has grown.

- A critical source of the myth of Pius XII as Holocaust collaborator comes from certain students of history who loathed Pius for his anti-communism. Popular in the late 1950s through the 1970s, this school of revisionist historians saw anti-communism as a dangerous threat, and all tainted by it deserving nothing but approbation. Pius certainly fit such a category.

- In *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Indiana University Press 2000) Michael Phayer states that his purpose is to go beyond the issue of the silence of Pope Pius XII to explore how the Church in various countries, and through various individual Catholics, responded to the Holocaust, and how that response eventually led to the Church’s official rejection of anti-Semitism during the Second Vatican Council. Yet throughout the book, he paints Pope Pius XII as a meek pontiff unwilling to engage the Nazis. He states that Pius was motivated by the hope that he could secure a negotiated peace that would leave a powerful Germany as a European defense against an aggressive communist Soviet Union.

- Phayer does not present a case for Pius’ alleged silence, nor for his motives in being silent. Instead, he assumes that silence and postulates motives to fit that alleged reality, without proving that such motives existed.

- Phayer claims that Pius “did little for Jews in their hour of greatest need.” While acknowledging that working through

his papal nuncios he was able to save Jewish lives, his "greatest failure...lay in his attempt to use a diplomatic remedy for a moral outrage."

- Phayer argues that if Pius XI had lived five more years, Church reaction would have been different to the Holocaust and to Nazi Germany. While that is unknowable, of course, and Pius XI was certainly a different personality than Pius XII, Phayer ignores or downplays the important role played by Cardinal Pacelli in determining Vatican reaction to the Nazis in the 1930s.

- The future Pope Pius XII had a strong hand in the development of the Holy See's attitude toward both the Nazi movement and its anti-Semitic policies during the pontificate of Pius XI. There was no difference in substance between the two pontificates in addressing Nazism and anti-Semitism. The differences in approach between the two pontificates, such as they were, centered on the fact that within six months of the election of Pope Pius XII, Germany invaded Poland and Europe was at war.

- Phayer suggests that Cardinal Pacelli's work on the 1933 Concordat between Hitler and the Holy See "linked the Vatican with the new Nazi regime" and its maintenance became an obsession with Pius XII, thus limiting his ability – or desire – to protest the treatment of the Jews. The concordat was concluded at a time when the Vatican was forced to deal with the reality of Hitler's rise to power. The Church had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. The concordat also gave the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action. Its existence allowed for Vatican protest and it did save Jewish lives. The first protest filed with the Nazi government under the terms of the concordat concerned the Nazi government-sponsored boycott of Jewish businesses.

- Phayer states that Bishop Alois Hudal, an Austrian Nazi

sympathizer, "won an appointment" as rector of the Collegia del Anima in Rome, the school of theology for Austrian seminarians. There he remained throughout the Nazi era acting on occasion as an intermediary between Pius XII and Nazi occupational forces, and, after the war, helping Holocaust perpetrators to escape justice." Rather than winning his appointment, Hudal was in Rome to be kept on ice. Though he claimed influence in Vatican circles, both the curia and the pope ignored him. Even the Nazis dismissed Hudal as having no influence. Though Hudal may have personally assisted Nazis to escape after the war, there is no connection between him and the Holy See, or that Pius XII had any knowledge of such actions. Phayer cites no documentation or source other than anti-papal conjecture.

- He charges that Pope Pius XII contributed by his silence in the Nazi slaughter of Catholics in occupied Poland, particularly from 1939 to 1941. Yet, Phayer himself acknowledges that Vatican Radio was the first to inform the world of the depths of the Nazi atrocities in Poland just months after its occupation through broadcasts in January, 1940, broadcasts given at the direction of Pope Pius XII.

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- Though he charges that Pius wanted the Soviet Union abandoned by the Allies in order to free up Germany to destroy the Soviet Union, the source for such a conclusion seems to be Nazi wishful-thinking than documented Vatican positions. Pius XII did not change his position when Germany began its war with Russia, and he never spoke, even by means of allusion, about a "crusade" against Bolshevism or a "holy war."

- There was nothing in the papal position for a negotiated peace that implied anything more than the desire to save lives. To see the papal call for a negotiated peace as either a grandiose ploy on the part of the pontiff to set himself up as the great peacemaker of Europe, as Phayer contends, or to maintain a strong Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, as Phayer also contends, is to invent motives that are

historically undocumented.

- There are elements in Phayer's book that are interesting and worthy. He outlines well what the Church – and individual Catholics – were able to accomplish in rescuing Jews. He makes clear that the local Church did not sit by idly as the Jews were taken to slaughter. Of particular interest is his overview of what the Church did and did not do within Nazi Germany itself. He points out that the Church was able to accomplish more than many assume within Nazi Germany in defense of the Jews.

- Phayer states: "To the extent that Pope Pius chose to intervene at all, he did so through intermediaries, the nuncios, rather than by responding to the Holocaust publicly from Rome. In other words, when the pope chose to deal with the murder of Jews, he did so through diplomatic channels rather than through a moral pronouncement such as an encyclical." But that is precisely the point. First, there was no absolute "papal silence" on the Holocaust. Pius XII spoke carefully, certainly, but the Holy See and its representatives condemned Nazism and its atrocities long before any governments raised the issue.

- Pius XII was primarily concerned with saving lives rather than high-minded pronouncements that would have accomplished little. Working behind the scenes and at the scenes through the papal nuncios was more effective than issuing public statements from the safety of the Vatican. As Phayer himself acknowledges, there was little the Holy See could do to force the Nazis to end their campaign for a "Final Solution." But Pius could save lives. Dramatic anti-Nazi gestures could have severely limited, if not ended altogether, the Church's capability to save lives, particularly in Germany and the Axis satellite states.

- The Jewish lives saved by actions of the Church under the direction of Pius XII accomplished what no other agency,

government or entity at the time was able to accomplish. Phayer claims that if Pius XII had issued a formal bombshell, more lives would have been saved. He does not, however, explain how that could have been accomplished and it appears to be wishful conjecture.

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- There is no evidence that the Holy See aided in an intentional and organized fashion the escape of Nazis. While individual Catholics supplied help, and certain Nazis hid their identities and used Holy See-sponsored refugee services to escape, charges that there was any kind of general policy of Vatican assistance to German war criminals have been completely debunked.

- When the Second Vatican Council issued *Nostra Aetate*, its powerful declaration against anti-Semitism, it is impossible to argue that this somehow contradicted the papacy of Pope Pius XII. Theological and Scriptural studies encouraged by Pius, as well as the very atmosphere of his pontificate and that of Pius XI, were the foundations for *Nostra Aetate*. The bishops who supported the statement, including a young Polish prelate, Karol Wojtyla, were for the most part those raised to the episcopacy during his pontificate.

- Pius was praised throughout the war and throughout his pontificate for the actions he took in defense of Jews during the war. Phayer's basic contentions in this book – that Pius XII was pro-German, placed an anti-Communist agenda ahead of both concern for the Jews and the defeat of Nazi Germany – are not supported by any documented evidence. No case is built for

an alternative strategy by Pope Pius XII that could have saved more Jewish lives. The Church under Pius saved more Jews from the Holocaust than any other entity in that terrible time. That is the undeniable fact that critics of Pius, whatever their motivation, must answer. Phayer does not.

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FOOTNOTES

1) *Hitler, the War and the Pope*, by Ronald J. Rychlak (Our Sunday Visitor 2000) p. 95 for Nazi reaction to Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli as Secretary of State. The German ambassador to the Holy See, Diego von Bergen, spoke to the College of Cardinals on February 16, 1939 after the death of Pius XI and issued a "veiled warning against the election of Cardinal Pacelli." P. 107.

2) *New York Times*, December 25, 1942

3) *Adolf Hitler*, John Toland (Ballantine Books, 1984) p. 549

4) Estimating the exact number of Jews assisted by the Church during the Holocaust virtually impossible. By its very nature, this kind of work did not involve the keeping of records. In *Three Popes and the Jews* (Hawthorn Books 1967), Pinchas E. Lapide estimated 860,000 Jewish lives were saved by Church action.

5) *The Deputy*, by Rolf Hochhuth (The John Hopkins University Press, 1997)

6) *Hitler's Pope*, by John Cornwell (Viking Press, 1999)

7) Rychlak, p. 310

8) Cornwell, pp. 360-371

9) *New York Times*, March 14, 2000 editorial

10) *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965*, by Michael Phayer (Indiana University Press 2000)

- 11) Phayer, p. xi
- 12) Ibid, p. xii
- 13) Ibid, p. xv
- 14) Ibid, p. xvi
- 15) Ibid, p. xv
- 16) Curiously, Phayer somewhat dismisses *Mit brennender sorge* as failing directly to condemn Hitler or National Socialism. But considering that the encyclical was written in German, rather than Latin, smuggled into Germany for printing and distribution on Palm Sunday, referred to by the Nazis as "almost a call to do battle against the Reich government," that printers who had made copies and those caught distributing it were arrested, it would seem that it was rather clear who and what the encyclical targeted.
- 17) Rychlak, p. 101-102
- 18) Phayer, p. 2
- 19) Ibid., p. 4
- 20) See Rychlak, pp. 57-64
- 21) Phayer, p. 12
- 22) *Nothing Sacred: Nazi Espionage Against the Vatican, 1939-1945*, by David Alvarez and Robert A. Graham, SJ (Frank Cass Publishers 1997) pp. 98-100
- 23) Phayer, p. 166
- 24) Ibid., p. 25
- 25) Rychlak, p. 156
- 26) Phayer, p. 27
- 27) Ibid., p. 49
- 28) *New York Times*, December 25, 1942
- 29) Phayer, p. 44
- 30) Rychlak, p. 304.
- 31) Phayer, p. 59
- 32) Rychlak, p. 198-199
- 33) Phayer, p. 59
- 34) Ibid., p. 86
- 35) Ibid., pp. 98-100
- 36) Ibid., p. 59
- 37) *Pius XII and the Second World War*, by Pierre Blet (Paulist

- Press 1999) p. 63
38) Rychlak, p. 164
39) Phayer, p. 82
40) Ibid., p. 161
41) Rychlak, pp. 265-266
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The Pope Pius XII Study Group: Read the Documents!

by Ronald Rychlak

(Catalyst 12/2000)

The role of Pope Pius XII during the 1930s and World War II has become a matter of international intrigue. Like most governments, the Vatican, keeps its records closed until after the death of all involved. The files are now open up through 1922. However, due to interest in this era, Pope Paul VI commissioned four Jesuit priests to collect, edit, and publish official documents of the Holy See relating to World War II.

The documents were assembled from 1965 through 1981 and published in 11 volumes (in 12 books) under the title: *Actes et Documents du Saint Siege Relatifs a la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. These documents reveal that the Vatican, under Pius XII's direction, did a great deal to assist Jews attempting to flee Nazi persecution. Unfortunately, these volumes have been all but ignored by most historians.

Last year, Edward Cardinal Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, and Seymour Reich, of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation, put together an international

six-member (three Catholics and three Jews) study group to study the documents.

Unfortunately, several of the members of this group had already publicly expressed negative opinions about Pope Pius XII. Just after the committee was named, one of the members (Robert Wistrich of Hebrew University) said: "Pius XII did not perform in a way that reflects any credit on the Vatican or on the Catholic church.... He wound up in a position where he was complicit in German policy."

Perhaps more troubling is that from the very beginning, the study group rejected its charge to read the documents. They demanded access to the entire Vatican archives and made it quite clear that they did not want to be limited to the published volumes. Professor Wistrich, for instance, told the press that to read the volumes without having access to the archives would be "a farce." Leon Feldman, Emeritus Professor of History at Rutgers University and "Jewish coordinator" for the study group said he thought there was a "smoking gun" in the archives and that was the reason the Vatican kept the archives closed.

This attitude, in addition to being a direct rejection of the committee's charge, was a slap at the Holy See and the four Jesuits who compiled the documents over the period of 16 years. It also reveals a total lack of understanding about how the Vatican operated during the war.

During the war, when the Nazis occupied Rome, paperwork was dangerous to create and far too dangerous not to destroy. Thus, records did not survive. Fr. Gerald Fogarty of the University of Virginia and a member of the study group gave an example: "In the spring of 1940 there was an attempt to oust Hitler by a group of generals who later tried to surrender to the English. The negotiations took place with the Vatican's mediation and the knowledge of Pius XII. However, there are no documents on this case in the Vatican." Documents confirming

this event appear only in British archives.

By the same token, if there were evidence to be had showing bad faith on the part of Pius XII, it would show up in archives from other nations. Nevertheless, the study group's conviction that hidden documents are in the archives has clearly shaped its work.

The group traveled to Rome on October 23-26, to meet with Vatican officials and answer some questions. At least two weeks before the trip they sent 47 questions ahead so that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and other officials at the Vatican could prepare answers.

Fr. Peter Gumpel, SJ, relator of the cause of Pius XII, worked for two weeks preparing answers to those questions. He declined offers of assistance from myself and others because he thought the questions were to be kept confidential. He prepared 47 separate dossiers, with extensive documentation.

Gumpel expected to have about three days to go over these questions with the group. Instead he met with them for only a few hours. He presented evidence relating to 10 of the questions, but when they left he had 37 unopened files.

While the meetings in Rome were still taking place, the study group's "interim report" was published in its entirety on the International B'nai B'rith Association's website. It was later reported that group member Bernard Suchecky, of the Free University of Brussels, had leaked the report to the French newspaper *Le Monde*.

The Associated Press called the interim report "explosive." The *New York Times* said the 47 questions expressed the dissatisfaction of the six panel members with Vatican records. *Le Monde* of Paris said they pointed to failures of the Pope and Church.

Fr. Gumpel was justifiably outraged. Not only had the group

denied him the opportunity to present all of the evidence that he had worked so hard to prepare, but the report as published was identical to the 47 questions that had been sent to him two weeks earlier. In other words, the study group had not used any of his detailed information to modify the report or their questions.

"I find the conduct of the international, historical Judeo-Catholic commission disloyal to the Holy See, academically unacceptable and incorrect," Father Gumpel said. "If they wished to have a wide discussion, and give us the possibility to provide exhaustive answers to each question, the time fixed by them was insufficient." He speculated as to the group's purpose: "Did they wish to influence public opinion against Pius XII and the Church? This has happened precisely when we Catholics are making all kinds of efforts to improve relations with the Jewish world... I find this conduct disloyal and dishonest," he concluded.

Why was Fr. Gumpel so upset? A review of the interim report provides the answer. The primary thrust of the report was a demand for full access to the Vatican archives. However, while they were demanding more documents, members of the study group had not even each read all of the volumes from the Acts and Documents collection. They had assigned themselves only two volumes each to study (although Prof. Wistrich did ask for a third). Moreover, none of the Jewish can members read Italian, which is the most common language in the collection. As such, they had to rely on translators.

One would have assumed that these scholars were selected because they were relatively familiar with these documents. Apparently that was not the case. It seems that no one owned a copy of the volumes. For a while, the group could not locate any copy of volume 6. Moreover, they were surprised by what they found in the documents. Member Eva Fleischner of Montclair University said: "I was staggered when I read the documents. It is obvious that the Holy See was informed of the

Holocaust very early.”

Prof. Fleischner should not have been “staggered.” Anyone familiar with the documents knows that the Vatican was well informed. The real question is how the early reports were received. Many Allies discounted these reports. For our purposes, however, the interesting fact is that Prof. Fleischner apparently had never previously read the documents.

Having only two or three volumes each, being unfamiliar with them, and having difficulty reading those that they did have led to serious confusion for the study group. In fact, the questions contained in the interim report suggest that the study group did not do its homework.

A typical example is question number 44, which asks about a report commissioned by the Vatican to explain its policy regarding Poland. In an accusatory tone, the group asked whether such a report was ever prepared and whether the Holy See could produce a copy of it.

I own a copy of this document (as I own a full set of the Acts and Documents collection). Another copy may be found in the New York Public Library. It is entitled “Pope Pius and Poland,” and it was published by The America Press in 1942. Carrying the Imprimatur of Cardinal Francis J. Spellman, it is a documentary outline of papal pronouncements and relief efforts on behalf of Poland since March 1939. It originally sold for a dime. It should not have been hard for the study group to find a copy.

The group also asked about the Vatican’s reaction to *Kristallnacht* (“The Night of the Broken Glass”) in November 1938. That night, the Nazis destroyed 1,400 synagogues and stores belonging to Jewish citizens in Germany and Austria. This question (like the one about papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*) is not really about WWII or Pope Pius XII’s pontificate. This took place under Pope Pius XI. Nevertheless,

the atrocity was duly reported as such in the Vatican's newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*. One would have expected the scholars in this study group to have at least have been aware of this fact.

The real outrage of the interim report is that the questions are worded more like accusations, with charges that are impossible to answer. The Holy See is asked to disprove negative charges. They ask whether the Pope gave thanks for things before they took place, and whether the testimony of numerous witnesses, all of who support one another, can be confirmed in some other manner. They expect to find documents that do not exist. They raise questions about the veracity of four Jesuit priests who compiled 11 volumes of documents, without themselves even having each read the 11 volumes.

The point of this study group was to raise the level of the discussion. By engaging in speculation, they have accomplished the opposite. They have increased the heat, not the light, and they did this precisely because they failed to carry out a simple mandate: read the documents.

A Response to The Vatican and the Holocaust: A Preliminary Report by the International Catholic-Jewish Historical

Commission

by Ronald Rychlak

(11/2000)

A Response to:

The Vatican and the Holocaust: A Preliminary Report by the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission

By Professor Ronald J. Rychlak, author of *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000)

In October 2000, the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission released to great publicity a "preliminary report" of its investigation into the actions of Pope Pius XII and the role of the Vatican in responding to the horror of the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. The committee's report was presented to the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations. Below, Professor Ronald J. Rychlak responds to the committee's questions based on his research for Hitler, the War and the Pope (Our Sunday Visitor 2000).

For the most part, the Committee asked in their questions for additional documentation, assuming that the documentation on these matters as supplied in the 11-volume set of documents assembled from 1965 through 1981 (Actes et Documents du Saint Siege relatifs a la seconde guerre mondiale – ADSS) are lacking, or that more documentation exists. The Committee also asked in many cases for "confirmation" to questions where numerous witnesses have already supplied testimony. The questions concerning additional documentation when documentation already exists are not dealt with below, as well as questions asking for documents that may not exist within the Vatican archives. Additionally, Professor Rychlak

has combined redundant or similar questions to answer together.

*The questions from the committee are repeated in **bold face** followed by Professor Rychlak's response. Editing for clarification is included in certain of the questions and is printed in lightface. Professor Rychlak begins with an overall response, then deals with questions singularly or combined:*

I have set forth many of the 47 questions drafted by the committee and a number of points in response. In some cases, my responses are not full answers because there can be no answer to many of these questions. In too many of the questions, the Holy See is asked to disprove negative charges. They ask, for example, whether Pope Pius XII gave thanks for matters before they took place or whether the testimony of numerous witnesses, all of who support one another, can be confirmed. Under those conditions, what further confirmation would be acceptable? The committee also seems to expect to find documents that do not exist. Additionally, they raise questions about the veracity of four Jesuit priests who compiled the 11 volumes of documents, without themselves having each read the 11 volumes.

The point of this committee according to Dr. Eugene Fisher, who was one of the coordinators of the project representing the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States, was to raise the level of the discussion. I think the committee has accomplished the opposite. The study group has – from the very beginning – rejected its charge. This interim report is a polemic aimed at the Holy See and Pope Pius XII. It has raised the heat of the debate, not the level of it.

Questions and Responses:

#2. In 1938, after the Kristallnacht pogrom, only one prominent German prelate, Bernhard Lichtenberg, rector of

Saint Hedwig's cathedral in Berlin, had the courage to condemn the outrages publicly. (Cardinal Eugenio) Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII) was given a detailed report by the papal nuncio in Berlin but there appears to have been no official reaction by the Vatican. This issue is especially important because Archbishop Amleto Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States certainly informed the Vatican of the public broadcast of the American bishops' condemnation of Kristallnacht. Do the archives reveal internal discussions among Vatican officials, including Pacelli, about the appropriate reaction to this pogrom?

Point:

Pope Pius XI had issued a strong condemnation of Hitler only a few days before the infamous Kristallnacht of November 1938. On October 21, in one of his last public appearances, Pius XI personally attacked Hitler, likening him to Julian the Apostate (Roman Emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus), who attempted to "saddle the Christians with responsibility for the persecution he had unleashed against them."

Following Kristallnacht, for three days the Vatican's official newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, ran a series of articles reporting on the anti-Semitic atrocities. For instance, such an article ran on November 13, under the headline "Dopo le manifestazioni antisemite in Germania" (After the manifestation of anti-Semitism in Germany).

The same month that Kristallnacht took place in Germany, racial laws in Italy were tightened with passage of the "law for the defense of the Italian race." That law prohibited interracial marriages involving Italian Aryans, and declared that such marriages would not be recognized. Civil recognition of Church marriages had been one of the most important aspects of the Lateran Treaty, and this seemed a clear breach, despite Benito Mussolini's attempts to argue otherwise. Pope Pius XI was the first official to file a

protest, but he had no influence with the Fascists or the Nazis. His protests, however, may have been part of the reason why Italians were never very willing to enforce racial laws. In addition, Vatican leaders set the example of helping Jews. Pursuant to the orders of Cardinal Pacelli, and with the agreement of Jewish leaders, the Torah and other Jewish ritual objects were removed from synagogues and transported for safe-keeping by Church officials.

4. A substantial part of Volume 6 (of the ADSS) is devoted to the aborted efforts to obtain Brazilian visas for Catholics of Jewish origin. Numerous questions have been raised concerning the failure of this project. In addition, it is known that a part of the money destined for the refugees came from funds raised by the United Jewish Appeal in the United States. Is there further documentation as to why this money was allocated to the attempted rescue of converted Jews rather than to Jews?

Point:

The Vatican provided papers indicating Latin American citizenship to many Jews in occupied France. When the papers were discovered to be illegal, the Latin American countries withdrew recognition of them. This made the Jews subject to deportation to the concentration camps. Pursuant to a request from the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, and working in conjunction with the International Red Cross, the Vatican contacted the countries involved and urged them to recognize the documents, "no matter how illegally obtained."

#5. From the outbreak of the war, appeals rained down upon the Vatican for help on behalf of the population of Poland, brutally victimized in a cruel and bloodthirsty occupation. And from the earliest days of the fighting, observers, ranging from the exiled Polish government to the British and French ambassadors to the Vatican, recounted the opinion of many

Catholic Poles, both inside and outside Poland, that the Church had betrayed them and that Rome was silent in the face of their national ordeal. Is there any further documentation beyond what is already in the volumes concerning deliberations within the Vatican with regard to these insistent appeals on behalf of the Poles?

Point:

On January 19, 1940 Pope Pius told Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, that Vatican Radio must broadcast a report on the conditions of the Catholic Church in German-occupied Poland. The first report, broadcast in German, took place on January 21. Two days later, in England, the Manchester Guardian reported: "Tortured Poland has found a powerful advocate in Rome... [Vatican Radio has warned] all who care for civilization that Europe is in mortal danger." On January 26, Vatican Radio broadcast in English that "Jews and Poles are being herded into separate ghettos, hermetically sealed and pitifully inadequate." The story was reported in the January 23 edition of the *New York Times* under the headline: "Vatican Denounces Atrocities in Poland; Germans Called Even Worse than Russians." (A separate story in that same edition of the *Times* reported that a Soviet newspaper had labeled Pius the "tool of Great Britain and France.") The Vatican report confirmed that "the horror and inexcusable excesses committed on a helpless and a homeless people have been established by the unimpeachable testimony of eyewitnesses." This same month, Pope Pius XII ordered the publication of a large volume (565 pages) of eyewitness accounts of the German efforts to crush the Church.

These broadcasts created a great deal of controversy. In the West, newspapers editorialized that Vatican Radio had set forth "a warning to all who value our civilization that Europe is under a mortal danger." The Germans, on the other hand, sent a representative to the Holy See to file a protest and warn that such broadcasts could lead to "disagreeable

repercussions.” According to John Cornwell, Vatican Radio “attracted a flow of protest implying that the Holy See was continuously breaking the terms of the Reich Concordat” by its reporting on events in Poland. In fact, the Germans ultimately decided that due to the hostile and anti-German attitude of the Vatican’s press and radio, Catholic priests and members of religious orders in occupied Poland would be prohibited from leaving that country.

Pius had condemned German abuses in his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, and he was behind the radio broadcasts of Vatican radio. While he wanted to be more outspoken, he decided to personally maintain a lower profile because he thought that was his duty. On February 20, 1940, Pius wrote: “When the Pope would like to shout out loud and clear, holding back and silence are unhappily what are often imposed on him; where he would like to act and help, it is patience and waiting (that are imposed on him).” Nevertheless, it was clear by now that the Church was strongly opposed to Hitler’s National Socialism. On January 26, an American Jewish newspaper reported: “The Vatican radio this week broadcast an outspoken denunciation of German atrocities in Nazi [occupied] Poland, declaring they affronted the moral conscience of mankind.” This same month, the United Jewish Appeal for Refugees and Overseas Needs donated \$125,000 to help with the Vatican’s efforts on behalf of victims of racial persecution. This was reported in the Jewish Ledger (Hartford, Conn), on Jan. 19, 1940, which called it an “eloquent gesture” which “should prove an important step in the direction of cementing bonds of sympathy and understanding” between Jews and Catholics.

#6. On November 23, 1940, Mario Besson, Bishop of Lausanne, Fribourg, and Geneva, sent a letter to Pope Pius XII expressing deep concern at the grave conditions of thousands of prisoners, including Jews, in concentration camps in southwest France. In his report he pressed for a public

appeal by the Pope against the persecutions and a more active Catholic defense of the rights of all the victims. We know that it must have been taken seriously by the Vatican, especially since its observations were confirmed by the papal nuncio to Switzerland, Archbishop Filippo Bernardini, who forwarded Besson's message to the Pope. The subsequent responses by Luigi Maglione, Secretary of State, also indicate that he considered it worthy of attention, and he certainly would have discussed it with the Holy Father. Is there any evidence that Pius XII, Maglione or any other high Vatican official considered, then or subsequently, responding in the manner requested by Besson?

20 In August and September 1942, there were vigorous protests against the deportations of Jews from France by Archbishop Saliège of Toulouse, Bishop Théas of Montauban, and Cardinal Gerlier of Lyons. According to The New York Times, in an article published 10 September 1942, the Pope "sent to Marshal Pétain(Henri Philippi Petain of the Nazi puppet Vichy government in "unoccupied" France) a personal message in which he intimated his approval of the initiative of the French Cardinals and Bishops on behalf of the Jews and foreigners being handed over to the Germans. It is understood the Pope asked the French Chief of State to intervene." Is there confirmation in the Vatican archives of this news account?

Point:

From the very first day the opposition between the orientation of the Vichy government and the thought of Pius XII was evident. Shortly after the Germans took over, Pius XII sent a secret letter to Catholic bishops of Europe entitled *Opere et Caritate* ("By Work and By Love"). In it, he instructed the bishops to help all who were suffering racial discrimination at the hands of the Nazis. They were instructed to read the letter in their Churches in order to remind the faithful that racism is "incompatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church."

From the summer of 1941 on, foreign Jews were rounded up and deported from Vichy with the full cooperation of Vichy officials. Eventually, some 40,000 citizens were murdered and 60,000 more deported to concentration camps for "Gaullism, Marxism or hostility to the regime." One hundred thousand others were deported on racial grounds.

The highest dignitaries of the Church immediately denounced the deportations and the treatment of Jews. As reported by The Tablet (London), on July 10 Pope Pius XII "spoke with exceptional decisiveness against the over-valuation of blood and race." Nuncio Valeri contacted Pétain, demanding that the deportations end. Pétain reportedly said: "I hope that the Pope understands my attitude in these difficult circumstances." The nuncio replied: "It is precisely that which the Pope cannot understand." Vatican Radio condemned "this scandal... the treatment of the Jews."

The Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Maglione, told the French Ambassador to the Vatican "that the conduct of the Vichy Government toward Jews and foreign refugees was a gross infraction" of the Vichy Government's own principles, and was "irreconcilable with the religious feelings which Marshal Pétain had so often invoked in his speeches." A French Jesuit priest, Fr. Michel Riquet, who was imprisoned for his work in support of Jews later said: "Throughout those years of horror when we listened to Vatican Radio and the Pope's messages, we felt in communion with the Pope, in helping persecuted Jews and in fighting Nazi violence."

On July 16, 1942, at 3:00 in the morning, French police officers spread out through Paris, rounded up 13,000 Jews, and locked them in a sports facility known as the *Vélodrome d'Hiver*. The French bishops issued a joint protest that stated:

"The mass arrest of the Jews last week and the ill-treatment to which they were subjected, particularly in the

Paris *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, has deeply shocked us. There were scenes of unspeakable horror when the deported parents were separated from their children. Our Christian conscience cries out in horror. In the name of humanity and Christian principles we demand the inalienable rights of all individuals. From the depths of our hearts we pray Catholics to express their sympathy for the immense injury to so many Jewish mothers."

At the direction of Pope Pius XII, the protests from French bishops were broadcast and discussed for several days on Vatican Radio. Never, however, did mere words deter the Nazis from their goals. In fact, the statements of protest from Catholic leaders in France angered Pierre Laval of the Vichy leadership, and he reaffirmed his decision to cooperate in the deportation of all non-French Jews to Germany.

On August 6, 1942, a *New York Times* headline proclaimed: "Pope is Said to Plead for Jews Listed for Removal from France." Some writers have questioned this protest, but it is confirmed in a telegram sent from the German ambassador to France. *Ambassador Abetz in Paris to the Office of Foreign Affairs*, dated August 28, 1942, *Akten Zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, 1918-1945, Series E, Band III, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in Göttingen (1974) no. 242 (discussing a protest from the Nuncio regarding the treatment of the Jews, instructions from the Archbishop of Toulouse telling priests "to protest most vehemently from the pulpit against the deportation of the Jews," and Laval's protest to the Vatican). Three weeks later, a headline in the *New York Times* told the story: "Vichy Seizes Jews; Pope Pius Ignored."

The Pope issued a formal protest to Pétain, instructed the nuncio to issue another protest, and recommended that religious communities provide refuge to Jewish people. In fact, the American press reported that the Pope protested to the Vichy government three times during August 1942, but Vichy officials tried to keep this from the public. This same

month, Archbishop Jules Gérard Saliège, from Toulouse, sent a pastoral letter to be read in all churches in his diocese. It said: "There is a Christian morality that confers rights and imposes duties.... The Jews are our brothers. They belong to mankind. No Christian can dare forget that!" *L'Osservatore Romano* praised Saliège as a hero of Christian courage, and as soon as the war was over, Pope Pius XII named him a cardinal.

According to the *Geneva Tribune* of September 8, 1942, Vichy ordered the French press to ignore the Pope's protest concerning the deportation of Jews. Despite this order, word spread rapidly due to the courageous attitude of members of the French resistance, who knew that they had the blessing of Rome.

The Canadian Jewish Chronicle, referring to Vichy leader Pierre Laval, ran the following headline on September 4, 1942: "Laval Spurns Pope: 25,000 Jews in France Arrested for Deportation." In an editorial dated August 28, 1942, *The California Jewish Voice* called Pius "a spiritual ally" because he "linked his name with the multitude that are horrified by the Axis inhumanity." In a lead editorial, *The Jewish Chronicle* (London) said that the Vatican was due a "word of sincere and earnest appreciation" from Jews for its intervention in Berlin and Vichy. The editorial went on to say that the rebuke that Pius received from "Laval and his Nazi master" was "an implied tribute to the moral steadfastness of a great spiritual power, bravely doing its manifest spiritual duty." *The Tablet* (London), quoting an article from *The Jewish Chronicle*, reported that "Catholic priests have taken a leading part in hiding hunted Jews, and sheltering the children of those who are under arrest or have been deported to Germany."

Late in June, 1943, the Vatican Radio warned the French people that "he who makes a distinction between Jews and other men is unfaithful to God and is in conflict with God's commands." The impact of any statement, however, was limited. A

censorship order to the press said, "No mention is to be made of the Vatican protest to Marshal Pétain in favor of the Jews."

As it did in other nations, the Church in France helped produce thousands of false documents that were used to deceive the Germans, and special efforts were made to protect Jewish children. Working with Jewish groups, French Christian organizations saved an estimated 7,000 Jewish children in France. At one point, a force of Protestant and Catholic social workers broke into a prison in Lyon and "kidnapped" ninety children who were being held with their parents for deportation. The parents were deported the next day. The children were sheltered in religious institutions under the protection of Cardinal Pierre Gerlier with the assistance of Father Pierre Chaillet, a member of the cardinal's staff. When Cardinal Gerlier refused an order to surrender the children, Vichy leaders had Father Chaillet arrested. He served three months in a "mental hospital" before being released. On April 16, 1943, the *Australian Jewish News* ran an article quoting Cardinal Gerlier to the effect that he was simply obeying Pius XII's instruction to oppose anti-Semitism.

#7. In August 1941 the French head of state, Marshal Philippe Pétain, asked the French ambassador to the Holy See, Léon Bérard, to ascertain the views of the Vatican on the collaborationist Vichy government's efforts to restrict the Jews through anti-Jewish legislation. The response came, reportedly from Giovanni Montini, substitute Secretary of State, and Domenico Tardini, Secretary of the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, who stated that there was no objection to these restrictions so long as they were administered with justice and charity and did not restrict the prerogatives of the Church. Was the Pope consulted on this matter? Are there any additional materials in the archives regarding this issue that are not contained in the ADSS?

Point:

In the July-August 1999 issue of *Commentary*, Robert S. Wistrich (a member of the committee) made reference to a memorandum sent from the French ambassador to the Vatican back to the Vichy leaders, the so-called "Bérard Report." Wistrich used that memorandum to argue that the Vatican originally supported Vichy's anti-Semitic legislation, and when the "Vatican's posture shifted" and it started opposing anti-Semitic legislation, it was disregarded by Vichy leaders because of this earlier report. I later wrote him with the details set forth below.

De Lubac has two chapters about the Bérard Report in his book, Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism: Memories from 1940-1944. De Lubac explains that Pétain was being pressured by the Catholic hierarchy in France to abandon the anti-Semitic laws, and Bérard wanted a statement from the Vatican that he could use to silence French Catholics. Thus, in a letter dated August 7, 1941, he asked for a report on the Holy See's attitude towards the new legislation.

The response came in a long memorandum, dated on September 2, from Léon Bérard, French ambassador to the Holy See. The key phrase is as follows: "As someone in authority said to me at the Vatican, he will start no quarrel with us over the statute for the Jews." The ambassador was assured that "the Holy See had no hostile intention." He was persuaded that it did not wish to "seek a quarrel."

Rather than providing the official position of the Holy See, Bérard cited the above-mentioned "someone in authority," and also gave a long justification for that position, based on Church history, including the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. It seems highly suspect for a diplomatic report to go into historic Church teaching rather than relying on diplomatic sources. Moreover, the historic discussion omitted many more recent authoritative statements on anti-Semitism. Authoritative statements, however, would not have served Pétain's purposes.

It is certainly reasonable to conclude that Bérard drafted this memorandum to meet Pétain's needs, not to reflect the Church's actual position. As De Lubac says, "[i]f the ambassador had been able to obtain from any personage at all in Rome a reply that was even slightly clear and favorable, he would not have taken so much trouble to 'bring together the elements of a well-founded and complete report' obviously fabricated by himself or by one of his friends."

Bérard's report was dated Sept. 2, 1941. On September 13, at a reception at the Parc Hotel in Vichy, the apostolic nuncio, Bishop Valerio Valeri, criticized the anti-Semitic legislation. Pétain, citing the Bérard Report, replied that the Holy See found certain aspects of the laws a bit harsh, but it had not on the whole found fault with the laws. Valeri replied that the Holy See had made clear its opposition to racism, which was at the basis of this legislation. Pétain then suggested that the nuncio might not be in agreement with his superiors.

Bishop Valeri immediately wrote the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Maglione, and asked for more information. Then, around September 26, Valeri called upon Pétain and was shown Bérard's report. The nuncio judged it to be "more nuanced" than Pétain had led him to believe, and he gave Pétain a note concerning the "grave harms that, from a religious perspective, can result from the legislation now in force." Pétain replied that he too disagreed with some of the anti-Jewish laws, but that they had been imposed under pressure from the Germans.

On September 30, Valeri wrote to Maglione, enclosing a copy of the Bérard Report. He explained the conversation at the Parc Hotel as follows: "I reacted quite vigorously, especially because of those who were present [ambassadors from Spain and Brazil]. I stated that the Holy See had already expressed itself regarding racism, which is at the bottom of every measure taken against the Jews...."

The Secretary of State wrote back on October 31 explaining that Bérard had made exaggerations and deductions about Vatican policy that were not correct. He fully approved of the note that Valeri had given to Pétain and encouraged him to continue efforts designed to at least tone down the rigid application of the anti-Semitic laws. *Actes et Documents*, vol. 8, no. 189. Valeri then drafted a note of protest that he sent to Pétain.

As such, it is clear that if Pétain ever thought that Bérard's accounting of the situation was legitimate, the "shift" in the Vatican's position was *immediately* brought to his attention. As De Lubac concludes, "from the very first day... the opposition between the orientation of the Vichy government and the thought of Pius XII was patent."

#8. In Romania, where Catholics were a small but significant minority, both the local Catholic authorities and the Vatican clung to the concordat of 1929 as defining the relationship between the Church and the dictatorial regime of Marshal Ion Antonescu. During 1940 and 1941, as persecution of the Jews intensified, the Vatican received a stream of communications from the nuncio, Archbishop Andrea Cassulo, relaying the strain that the anti-Jewish laws put upon what the Church saw as its prerogatives among others, the protection of the civil and religious rights of Catholics who had converted from Judaism. Cassulo repeatedly reported on his efforts to secure the "freedom of the Church" by insisting upon the need to exempt converts from anti-Jewish laws, their rights to attend schools and vocational institutions. Did Cassulo or his interlocutors in the Vatican view these interventions as the only practical means by which a blanket of protection, or at least some protection, might be extended to Jews who were not converts? Are there any further documents to elucidate this issue?

#31. During the war the Vatican followed its traditional policy that Jews who had converted to Catholicism were full

members of the Church, and therefore entitled to its protection. This protection was sometimes guaranteed by concordats, thereby according to the Church the means by which to intervene in specific and general cases. Was the recourse to such interventions derived purely from considerations of efficacy or were there moral or other considerations that were discussed among Vatican officials? Was there a broad strategy, policy guidelines, or theological discussions among Vatican officials to determine what principles should be applied to such interventions on behalf of converted Jews?

#32. In the repeated interventions against the application of racial laws and appeals on behalf of some of the deportees that appear in these volumes, the emphasis upon "non-Aryan Catholics" or converted Jews is striking to the contemporary reader. This is all the more so because of the lasting resentment, among Jews, of the Church's promotion and encouragement of such conversions. From the standpoint of the Vatican, of course, the purported reasons for this emphasis are threefold: first, what the Church understood as its responsibility to look after its own; second, that the Vatican did not believe that Jewish organizations took care of Jewish converts to Catholicism; and third, the claim that it was only in the cases of this particular class of "Jews" that the Vatican had *locus standi* with aggressive and dictatorial regimes and hence some prospect of success. To what degree was the latter a rationale for inattention to Jews qua Jews? And how accurate was it to refer, as many regularly do, to interventions on behalf of "Jews" when that term frequently connoted baptized Jews? Are there any documents that would clarify this ambiguous use of terminology?

#46. In countries in which Vatican representatives clashed with the local authorities over the application of racial laws, there are repeated references to conversions. Governments, occupation authorities, nuncios, the Secretariat, and local Churches all raised questions about the sincerity of

these conversions. Were such conversions a means to avoid the disabilities of discriminatory laws, regulations, and even worse, deportation and murder? To anyone familiar with the wartime persecution of the Jews, and this must include Vatican officials whose voices are represented here, such questions may appear cruel, or at best naïve. In light of certain Church officials issuing false identity papers to unconverted Jews, were such Vatican expressions of concern that conversions be “sincere” intended to hold persecuting and even murderous officials at bay? Or were these rather a genuine reflection of the priorities of the Church jealously guarding the integrity of its sacramental life, especially baptism, and unhesitatingly promoting, even in the midst of the Holocaust, what it felt to be its apostolic mission for the souls put in its care? Are there any documents that could shed light on this issue?

Point:

Many Jews were quickly converted for the purpose of avoiding Nazi persecution. Undoubtedly Church leaders would have been glad to welcome converts to Christianity. However, in a great many more cases, false baptismal documents were provided so that Jewish people could avoid persecution, even though they had not actually converted. This indicates compassion for the human suffering, regardless of religion.

Sometimes Church officials were embarrassed about how quickly they would convert Jews to Catholicism for the purpose of avoiding persecution. One small church in Budapest averaged about four or five conversions a year before the occupation. In 1944, those numbers shot up dramatically. Six were converted in January, 23 in May, 101 in June, over 700 in September, and over 1,000 in October. Three thousand Jews became Catholics at this one small church in 1944. The Nazi occupying forces soon recognized that these conversions were being done only to avoid deportation, so they started persecuting the “converts.” Since it no longer assured

protection, the flood of conversions dried up.

The Catholic Church was so open to Jewish converts that some have argued that during the war this was the Church's primary interest. In a Papal Allocution of October 6, 1946, Pope Pius addressed the charge that the Church had engaged in "forced conversions." He found the best evidence to be a memorandum, dated January 25, 1942, from the Vatican Secretariat of State to the Legation of Yugoslavia to the Holy See. The Pope read from that document:

"According to the principles of Catholic doctrine, conversion must be the result, not of external constraint, but of an interior adherence of the soul to the truths taught by the Catholic Church.

"It is for this reason that the Catholic Church does not admit to her communion adults who request either to be received or to be readmitted, except on condition that they be fully aware of the meaning and consequences of the step that they wish to take."

A slant on this claim relates to children, particularly those under the age of six. The surest way to protect such young children from the Nazis was by actually baptizing and indoctrinating them, in case they were ever challenged. This practice could create resentment among some surviving Jews, especially when Christian clergy encouraged the children to adopt this outward behavior. This probably varied from location to location, but the evidence suggests that most clergy did not undertake these conversions lightly.

In fact, classes were established to let the children study their own religion. (In parts of France and Belgium, Church officials forbade the actual baptism of Jewish children. Outward appearances were thought sufficient to deceive the Nazis. Even when parents requested the baptism, it was recognized that this was simply a matter of duress.)

During the winter of 1943-44, the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, under the patronage of the High Commander for Palestine, sponsored a memorial evening to recognize and honor the Pontiff's efforts on behalf of Jewish children. Dignitaries from throughout the city, including the apostolic delegation, were in attendance.

The Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress reported on a meeting with Pius XII after the war to thank him for helping hide Jewish children. Pius promised to cooperate with returning the children to their communities. Chief Rabbi Herzog of Palestine also announced that he had the Vatican's promise of help in bringing "converted" Jewish children back into the Jewish fold. In 1964, Dr. Leon Kubovitzky, who directed this project, reported that there were almost no cases of Catholic institutions resisting the return of Jewish children.

#11. The Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow, Adam Sapieha, in a letter of February 1942 to the Pope, vividly described the horrors of the Nazi occupation, including the concentration camps that destroyed thousands of Poles. However, neither in this nor in any other communication to Rome, of which we are aware, did Sapieha make any specific reference to the Jews. Nor, to the best of our knowledge, did the Vatican ever request any information on the subject from him. Yet Sapieha undoubtedly knew what was happening in Auschwitz, which was within his archdiocese. Was there any unpublished communication of Sapieha to Rome in which he alluded to the fate of the Jews? Can the archives tell us more regarding the interaction on this and related matters between the Vatican and Polish church leaders?

Point:

Early in the war, Sapieha had asked the Pope for a forceful statement, but he later changed his mind and recalled his letter. Sapieha worked to help Jews escape Nazi persecution.

After the war, Pius made Sapieha a cardinal.

In 1943, a bishop wrote a memo from London urging the Pope to intervene in the matter, but it was then retracted by Adam Sapieha, the Archbishop of Krakow, who was still in Poland.

Certain Polish bishops, exiled in London, called for stronger statements by the Pontiff. Those who remained in Poland like Archbishop Sapieha, however, urged him not to speak.

On June 2, 1943 (the feast day of St. Eugenio), in an address to the cardinals which was broadcast on Vatican Radio and clandestinely distributed in printed form within Poland, the Pope, at the request of Polish Archbishop Sapieha, expressed in new and clear terms his compassion and affection for the Polish people and predicted the rebirth of Poland.

"No one familiar with the history of Christian Europe can ignore or forget the saints and heroes of Poland... nor how the faithful people of that land have contributed throughout history to the development and conservation of Christian Europe. For this people so harshly tried, and others, who together have been forced to drink the bitter chalice of war today, may a new future dawn worthy of their legitimate aspirations in the depths of their sufferings, in a Europe based anew on Christian foundations."

Archbishop Sapieha wrote from Kracow that: "the Polish people will never forget these noble and holy words, which will call forth a new and ever more loyal love for the Holy Father... and at the same time provide a most potent antidote to the poisonous influences of enemy propaganda." He also said that he would try to publicize the speech as much as possible by having copies printed, if the authorities would permit it.

Bishop Stefan Sapieha of Kracow wrote a letter to Pius, dated October 28, 1942, in which he said: "It displeases us greatly that we cannot communicate Your Holiness' letters to our faithful, but it would furnish a pretext for further

persecution and we have already had victims suspected of communicating with the Holy See.” Pius would later cite this experience in a letter to Bishop Preysing of Berlin:

“We leave it to the [local] bishops to weigh the circumstances in deciding whether or not to exercise restraint, *ad maiora mala vitanda* [to avoid greater evil]. This would be advisable if the danger of retaliatory and coercive measures would be imminent in cases of public statements by the bishop. Here lies one of the reasons We Ourselves restrict Our public statements. The experience We had in 1942 with documents which We released for distribution to the faithful gives justification, as far as We can see, for Our attitude.”

#12.On 18 May 1941, Pope Pius XII received the head of the Croatia fascist state, Ante Pavelic. While the Vatican had received Pavelic as an individual Catholic, not as head of state, there were political implications as a result of this reception. Before his reception, the Yugoslav minister to the Holy See brought to the Vatican’s attention Pavelic’s involvement in committing atrocities against the Serbs and protested the reception of Pavelic in any capacity because he was the head of an “illegitimate” puppet state. Subsequently, Pavelic’s regime was responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, gypsies, and partisans. It is not known how the Pope reacted to these atrocities. Are there any archival materials that can illuminate this issue?

#13.Many unanswered questions also surround the Archbishop of Zagreb, Aloysius Stepinac, beatified in 1999. While in 1941 he initially welcomed the creation of a Croatian state, he subsequently condemned atrocities against Serbs and Jews and established an organization to rescue Jews. Are there any archival documents or materials from the beatification process that can illuminate this matter?

Point:

Croatia came into being during the war. On March 25, 1941, Italy, Germany, and Yugoslavia signed an agreement bringing Yugoslavia into the Axis. Two days later, a group of Serbian nationalists seized control of Belgrade and announced that they were siding with the Allies. As a result, Hitler invaded Yugoslavia. Croat Fascists then declared an independent Croatia. The new Croat government was led by Ante Pavelic and his supporters, the Ustashe.

There had been a long history of hatred in this part of the world between Croats (predominantly Catholic) and Serbs (mainly Orthodox). The Ustashi government exacted revenge against the Serbs for years of perceived discrimination. According to some accounts, as many as 700,000 Serbs were slaughtered. Among the charges against the Catholic Church in Croatia are that it engaged in forcible conversions, that Church officials hid Croat Nazis after the war, that Nazi gold made its way from Croatia to the Vatican, and that Catholic leaders in Croatia supported the governments brutality toward the Serbs.

While some of these charges are recent in origin (and from suspect sources), there is no credible evidence that the Pope or the Vatican behaved inappropriately. For instance, the Vatican expressly repudiated forcible conversions in a memorandum, dated January 25, 1942, from the Vatican Secretariat of State to the Legation of Yugoslavia to the Holy See (addressing conversions in Croatia). In August of that year, the Grand Rabbi of Zagreb, Dr. Miroslav Freiburger, wrote to Pius XII expressing his "most profound gratitude" for the "limitless goodness that the representatives of the Holy See and the leaders of the Church showed to our poor brothers." [*Actes et Documents*, vol. VIII, no. 441. See also *id.* vol. VIII, no. 537 (report on Vatican efforts to alleviate the sad conditions of the Croatian Jews); *id.* vol. VIII, no. 473 (efforts to find sanctuary for Croatian Jews in Italy); *id.* vol. VIII, no. 557 (insistence on "a benevolent treatment

toward the Jews").] In October, a message went out from the Vatican to its representatives in Zagreb regarding the "painful situation that spills out against the Jews in Croatia" and instructing them to petition the government for "a more benevolent treatment of those unfortunates." In December 1942, Dr. Freiburger wrote again, expressing his confidence "in the support of the Holy See."

The Cardinal Secretary of State's notes reflect that Vatican petitions were successful in getting a suspension of "dispatches of Jews from Croatia" by January 1943, but Germany was applying pressure for "an attitude more firm against the Jews." Maglione went on to outline various steps that could be taken by the Holy See to help the Jews. Another instruction from the Holy See to its unofficial representatives (since there were no diplomatic relations) in Zagreb directing them to work on behalf of the Jews went out on March 6, 1943. On September 24, 1943, Alex Easterman, the British representative of the World Jewish Congress, contacted Msgr. William Godfrey, the apostolic delegate in London and informed him that about 4,000 Jewish refugees from Croatia were safely evacuated to an island in the Adriatic Sea. "I feel sure that efforts of your Grace and of the Holy See have brought about this fortunate result," wrote Easterman.

Croatian Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac originally welcomed the Ustashi government, but after he learned of the extent of the brutality, and after having received direction from Rome, he condemned its actions. [The British Minister to the Holy See during the war years, Sir Francis D'Arcy Osborne, wrote that Stepinac always acted according to the "well-intended dictates of his conscience."] A speech he gave on October 24, 1942, is typical of many that he made refuting Nazi theory:

"All men and all races are children of God; all without distinction. Those who are Gypsies, Black, European, or Aryan all have the same rights... for this reason, the Catholic Church had always condemned, and continues to condemn, all

injustice and all violence committed in the name of theories of class, race, or nationality. It is not permissible to persecute Gypsies or Jews because they are thought to be an inferior race.”

The Associated Press reported that “by 1942 Stepinac had become a harsh critic” of that Nazi puppet regime, condemning its “genocidal policies, which killed tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and Croats.” He thereby earned the enmity of the Croatian dictator, Ante Pavelic.

Although Cornwell argues that the Holy See granted *de facto* recognition to the Ustashi government, in actuality the Vatican rebuked Pavelic and refused to recognize the Independent State of Croatia or receive a Croatian representative. [*Actes et Documents*, vol. IV, no. 400 (“Pavelic is furious... because... he is treated worse by the Holy See than the Slovaks”).] When Pavelic traveled to the Vatican, he was greatly angered because he was permitted only a private audience rather than the diplomatic audience he had wanted. He might not even have been granted that privilege, but for the fact that the extent of the atrocities that had already begun were not yet known.

#14. On several occasions Konrad von Preysing, Bishop of Berlin, had vainly appealed to the Pope to protest specific Nazi actions, including those directed at the Jews. On 17 January 1941 he wrote to Pius XII, noting that “Your Holiness is certainly informed about the situation of the Jews in Germany and the neighboring countries. I wish to mention that I have been asked both from the Catholic and Protestant side if the Holy See could not do something on this subject, issue an appeal in favor of these unfortunates.” This was a direct appeal to the Pope, which bypassed the nuncio. What impression did von Preysing’s words make on Pius XII; what discussions if any, took place about making such a public appeal as the German bishop requested, and was any further information about Nazi anti-Jewish policy sought?

Point:

Pius always was close to Preysing, but beginning in 1942, he really began to follow Preysing's lead. Preysing, of course, was a recognized opponent of Nazism. Not only did the Pope send a message congratulating Preysing for his defense of the rights of all people, he also took Preysing's advice when selecting episcopal candidates, avoiding those whom Preysing felt were sympathetic toward the Nazis.

In April 1943, Pius wrote encouraging Preysing to continue his work on behalf of the Jews: "For the non-Aryan Catholics as well as for Jews, the Holy See has done whatever was in its power, with charitable, financial and moral assistance... Let us not speak of the substantial sums which we spent in American money for the fares of emigrants... We have gladly given these sums, for these people were in distress... Jewish organizations have warmly thanked the Holy See for these rescue operations... As for what is being done against non-Aryans in the German territories, we have said a word in our Christmas radio message. The mention was short, but it was understood."

#15. On 6 March 1943, von Preysing asked Pius XII to try and save the Jews still in the Reich capital, who were facing imminent deportation which, as he indicated, would lead to certain death: "The new wave of deportations of the Jews, which began just before 1 March, affects us particularly here in Berlin even more bitterly. Several thousands are involved: Your Holiness has alluded to their probable fate in your Christmas Radio Broadcast. Among the deportees are also many Catholics. Is it not possible for Your Holiness again to intervene for the many unfortunate innocents? It is the last hope for many and the profound wish of all right-thinking people." On 30 April 1943, the Pope indicated to von Preysing that local bishops had the discretion to determine when to be silent and when to speak out in the face of the danger of reprisals and pressures. Although he felt that he had to

exercise great prudence in his actions as Pope, he made it clear that he felt comforted that Catholics, particularly in Berlin, had helped the "so-called non-Aryans" (sogenannten Nichtarier). He particularly singled out for "fatherly recognition" Father Lichtenberg, who had been imprisoned by the Nazis and who would die shortly afterwards. Are there earlier examples in the archives of the Pope's solicitude for Father Lichtenberg or any reference to the bishops' stand against the persecution of the Jews going back to 1938? Is there any evidence of discussion in the Vatican regarding the deportations from Berlin?

Point:

Shortly after Austria was annexed, the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Theodor Innitzer, met with Hitler and, based on outward appearances and a German radio broadcast, he welcomed the *Anschluss*. [The report, translated into English, was sent to Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy by Cardinal Pacelli, who strongly disassociated it from the Vatican's position.] Austrian bishops also issued a public statement praising the achievements of Nazism. This was in accord with much of the feeling throughout Austria, where the German troops had been greeted as heroes rather than conquerors. Vatican Radio, however, immediately broadcast a vehement denunciation of these actions, and Pacelli ordered the Archbishop to report to Rome. [Internal German records reflect that Nazi leadership wanted to "encourage Cardinal Innitzer and the Austrian bishops in their patriotic attitude."]

Before meeting with the Pope, Innitzer met with Pacelli, who had been outraged by the German cardinal. This has been called one of the "most tempestuous" meetings of the whole pontificate. Pacelli made it clear that Innitzer had to retract his statements. He was made to sign a new statement, issued on behalf of all of the Austrian bishops, which provided: "The solemn declaration of the Austrian bishops on 18 March of this year was clearly not intended to be an

approval of something that was not and is not compatible with God=s law.” The Vatican newspaper also reported that the bishops’ earlier statement had been issued without approval from Rome.

A German official in Rome, who saw Innitzer shortly after his meetings, reported: “I have the impression that the Cardinal, who seemed very exhausted from the conversations in the Vatican, had had a hard struggle there.” The same official reported later the same day that the retraction of the earlier statements “was wrested from Cardinal Innitzer with pressure that can only be termed extortion.” Before long, however, Innitzer was recognized as a true enemy of the Nazis.

#17.The Pope’s reply to von Preysing did not give a specific commitment to make any public appeal for the Jews. But on 2 June 1943, just over a month later, the Pope in a speech to the Sacred College of Cardinals did elusively refer to those “destined sometimes, even without guilt on their part, to exterminatory measures.” This was the second and last occasion on which Pope Pius XII would make any (indirect) reference to the Holocaust during the war years. Its proximity in time to his reply on 30 April 1943 to von Preysing suggests that there may have been a connection, though once again only a closer investigation of the Vatican archives could reveal whether this was the case. What unpublished documents regarding the Pope’s speech and his reply to von Preysing do the archives contain?

Point:

The question refers to the Pope’s speech to the College of Cardinals as his “second and last” reference to the Holocaust. There are so many statements that he made. Let us start with an encyclical from that same month (June 1943), *Mystici Corporis Christi* (“On the Mystical Body”). It was an obvious attack on the theoretical basis of National Socialism.

In *Mystici Corporis Christi*, Pius wrote: "the Church of God... is despised and hated maliciously by those who shut their eyes to the light of Christian wisdom and miserably return to the teachings, customs and practices of ancient paganism." He wrote of the "passing things of earth," and the "massive ruins" of war, including the persecution of priests and nuns. He offered prayers that world leaders be granted the love of wisdom and expressed no doubt that "a most severe judgment" would await those leaders who did not follow God's will.

Pius appealed to "Catholics the world over" to "look to the Vicar of Jesus Christ as the loving Father of them all, who... takes upon himself with all his strength the defense of truth, justice and charity." He explained, "Our paternal love embraces all peoples, whatever their nationality or race." Christ, by his blood, made the Jews and Gentiles one "breaking down the middle wall of partition... in his flesh by which the two peoples were divided." He noted that Jews were among the first people to adore Jesus. Pius then made an appeal for all to "follow our peaceful King who taught us to love not only those who are of a different nation or race, but even our enemies." As Pinchas E. Lapide, the Israeli consul in Italy, wrote: "Pius chose mystical theology as a cloak for a message which no cleric or educated Christian could possibly misunderstand."

In June, Vatican Radio followed up with a broadcast that expressly stated: "He who makes a distinction between Jews and other men is unfaithful to God and in conflict with God's commands." On July 28, 1943, a Vatican Radio broadcast further reported on the Pope's denunciation of totalitarian forms of government and support for democratic ideals. It said:

"The life and activities of all must be protected against arbitrary human action. This means that no man has any right on the life and freedom of other men. Authority... cannot be at the service of any arbitrary power. Herein lies the essential

differences between tyranny and true usefulness.... The Pope condemns those who dare to place the fortunes of whole nations in the hands of one man alone, a man who as such, is the prey of passions, error and dreams."

Adolf Hitler's name was not used, but there was no doubt to whom the Pope was referring.

Jewish organizations had taken note of Pius XII's efforts, and they turned to him in times of need. In June, Grand Rabbi Herzog wrote to Cardinal Maglione on behalf of Egyptian Jews expressing thanks for the Holy See's charitable work in Europe and asking for assistance for Jews being held prisoner in Italy. The Rabbi, in asking for assistance, noted that Jews of the world consider the Holy See their "historic protector in oppression." The following month he wrote back thanking Pius for his efforts on behalf of the refugees that "had awoken a feeling of gratitude in the hearts of millions of people." On August 2, 1943, the World Jewish Congress sent the following message to Pope Pius:

"World Jewish Congress respectfully expresses gratitude to Your Holiness for your gracious concern for innocent peoples afflicted by the calamities of war and appeals to Your Holiness to use your high authority by suggesting Italian authorities may remove as speedily as possible to Southern Italy or other safer areas twenty thousand Jewish refugees and Italian nationals now concentrated in internment camps... and so prevent their deportation and similar tragic fate which has befallen Jews in Eastern Europe. Our terror-stricken brethren look to Your Holiness as the only hope for saving them from persecution and death."

Later that same month, Time magazine reported: "...no matter what critics might say, it is scarcely deniable that the Church Apostolic, through the encyclicals and other Papal pronouncements, has been fighting totalitarianism more knowingly, devoutly, and authoritatively, and for a longer

time, than any other organized power.”

In September, a representative from the World Jewish Congress reported to the Pope that approximately 4,000 Jews and Yugoslav nationals who had been in internment camps were removed to an area that was under the control of Yugoslav partisans. As such, they were out of immediate danger. The report went on to say:

“I feel sure that the efforts of your Grace and the Holy See have brought about this fortunate result, and I should like to express to the Holy See and yourself the warmest thanks of the World Jewish Congress. The Jews concerned will probably not yet know by what agency their removal from danger has been secured, but when they do they will be indeed grateful.”

In November, Rabbi Herzog again wrote to Pius expressing his “sincere gratitude and deep appreciation for so kind an attitude toward Israel and for such valuable assistance given by the Catholic Church to the endangered Jewish people.” Jewish communities in Chile, Uruguay, and Bolivia also sent similar offers of thanks to the Pope.

August 1944 was the month when a group of Roman Jews came to thank Pius for having helped them during the period of Nazi occupation. In response, the Pontiff reaffirmed his position: “For centuries, Jews have been unjustly treated and despised. It is time they were treated with justice and humanity. God wills it and the Church wills it. St. Paul tells us that the Jews are our brothers. They should also be welcomed as friends.”

Similar acts and statements continued throughout the war. Details can be found in my book.

#21. Casimir Papée, the Polish ambassador to the Holy See, on 28 April 1943, sent Maglione an extract from a Zurich newspaper, describing the martyrdom of many Polish priests interned at Dachau. He reminded the Cardinal of the sentiments

awakened among all civilized and Christian nations by German cruelty in the occupied territories adding: "My colleagues and I never failed to draw Your Eminence's attention to these painful facts." In concluding his letter, Papée asked what the Holy See had been able to do "to save lives precious to the Church," and which measures it proposed to take "in the face of so much injustice." There is no evidence of a reply in the ADSS, though the grievances of the Poles were noted on several occasions. Appeals such as these had been coming to the Vatican since 1939. Are there any materials in the archives regarding internal discussions as to how the Vatican was to respond?

Point:

In 1940, the Germans decided to put all priests from the concentration camps into one location where they could be tightly controlled. They were kept together in Dachau Barracks 26, 28, and 30 (later they were squeezed into barracks 26 and 28 which had room and beds for 360, even though there were rarely fewer than 1,500 priests interred there). These barracks were ringed with a barbed-wire fence, which restricted the ability of priests to minister to other prisoners during their few free hours.

These Dachau priests worked in the enormous S.S. industrial complex immediately to the west of the camp, but the Nazis had other uses for them as well. Some were injected with pus so that the Nazi doctors could study gangrene; others had their body temperature lowered to study resuscitation of German fliers downed in the North Atlantic; one German priest was crowned with barbed wire and a group of Jewish prisoners was forced to spit on him. Fr. Stanislaus Bednarski, a Pole, was hanged on a cross. In November 1944, three priests were executed "not because they were criminals," as one judge stated, "but because it was their tragedy that they were Catholic priests."

As the tide of the war began to turn, and the Germans needed to get all the labor possible out of the prisoners, the S.S. decided to use these generally well-educated prisoner/priests as secretaries and managers. With priests in the offices where they could manipulate labor schedules, they were able to engage in forms of sabotage. Thus, a planned gas oven at Dachau never became functional due, at least in part, to the efforts of these imprisoned Catholic priests.

In an allocution to the Sacred College on June 2, 1945, which was also broadcast on Vatican Radio, Pius noted the death of about 2,000 Catholic priests at Dachau and described National Socialism as "the arrogant apostasy from Jesus Christ, the denial of His doctrine and of His work of redemption, the cult of violence, the idolatry of race and blood, the overthrow of human liberty and dignity." With "the satanic apparition of National Socialism" out of the way, Pius expressed his confidence that Germany would "rise to a new dignity and a new life" He went on to point out that Nazi persecution of the Catholic Church both in Germany and occupied nations had been continuous, and that he had been aware of Nazism's ultimate goal: "its adherents boasted that once they had gained the military victory, they would put an end to the Church forever. Authorities and incontrovertible witnesses kept Us informed of this intention"

The Vatican's efforts to win freedom for its bishops and priests imprisoned in Dachau were all frustrated, but no one really doubts the Holy See's desire to win their freedom. Pius, by the way, used no different technique in this effort than he did when trying to help Jews. As one bishop who was imprisoned at Dachau reported:

"The detained priests trembled every time news reached us of some protest by religious authority, but particularly by the Vatican. We all had the impression that our wardens made us atone heavily for the fury these protests evoked... whenever the way we were treated became more brutal, the Protestant pastors

among the prisoners used to vent their indignation on the Catholic priests: 'Again your big naive Pope and those simpletons, your bishops, are shooting their mouths off... why don't they get the idea once and for all, and shut up. They play the heroes and we have to pay the bill.'"

With concerns like this, Pope Pius XII had to weigh carefully the force of his words.

#24. In February 1944, the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State (Pontificio Commissione per lo Stato della Città del Vaticano), the administrative agency of Vatican City, recorded the presence of Jews and others who were given refuge within the Vatican. Are Pontifical Commission records and communiqués available with respect to the housing of refugees? Are there records of other people finding refuge in pontifical institutions, for example, the papal villa at Castelgondolfo?

I can send slide photographs of people sleeping and eating in the Vatican at this time.

#26. Rotta was the only nuncio to cooperate with the diplomatic representatives of neutral states, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. On three occasions in late 1944, he and his diplomatic colleagues submitted protests to the Hungarian government in defense of Jews and took active measures to save them. The Vatican expressed its approval of Rotta's actions at this juncture. Is there evidence of earlier Vatican approval or encouragement of Rotta's activities?

Point:

In March 1944, Germany invaded Hungary on the pretext of safeguarding communications, and the last great nightmare of the war began. Hungary had been a haven for refugee Jews. The Nazis immediately issued anti-Jewish decrees. After several oral protests, the papal nuncio, Monsignor Angelo Rotta, was the first foreign envoy to submit a formal note

expressing Pope Pius XII's protest. Shortly thereafter, Rotta received a letter of encouragement from Pius XII in which the Pope termed the treatment of Jews as "unworthy of Hungary, the country of the Holy Virgin and of St. Stephen" From then on, acting always in accordance with instructions from the Holy See and in the name of Pope Pius XII, Rotta continually intervened against the treatment of the Jews and the inhuman character of the anti-Jewish legislation.

Of course there was no encouragement prior to this 1944 action. The Nazis were not yet there.

The question states that, "Rotta was the only nuncio to cooperate with the diplomatic representatives of neutral states, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland." I want to see their evidence of this allegation.

#27. In 1933, Edith Stein wrote to Pius XI asking him to issue an encyclical condemning anti-Semitism. This may have been the first of many appeals made to the Vatican for intervention on behalf of the Jews. Though the date falls beyond the parameters of our mandate, the document is relevant because of its content. How was this letter received? Is the letter itself in the archives, and if so may we see it?

Point:

Her letter resulted eventually in *Mit brennender Sorge*. *Mit brennender Sorge* was one of the strongest condemnations of any national regime that the Holy See ever published. It condemned not only the persecution of the Church in Germany, but also the Neo-paganism of Nazi theories. "Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State... above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God," wrote the Pope. There was even a brazen swipe at Hitler:

"None but superficial minds could stumble into concepts of a national God, of a national religion; or attempt to lock within the frontiers of a single people, within the narrow limits of a single race, God, the Creator of the universe, King and Legislator of all nations before whose immensity they are 'as a drop of a bucket' (Isaiah XI, 15)."

The encyclical concluded that "enemies of the Church, who think that their time has come, will see that their joy was premature."

Unlike most encyclicals, which are written in Latin, *Mit brennender Sorge* was written in German for wider dissemination in that country. It was smuggled out of Italy, copied and distributed to parish priests to be read from all of the pulpits on Palm Sunday, March 14, 1937. No one who heard the Pontifical document read in church had any illusion about the gravity of these statements or their significance. Certainly the Nazis understood their importance.

An internal German memorandum dated March 23, 1937, called *Mit brennender Sorge* "almost a call to do battle against the Reich government." All available copies were confiscated. German printers who had made copies were arrested and the presses were seized. Those convicted of distributing the encyclical were arrested, the Church-affiliated publications which ran the encyclical were banned, and payments due to the Church from the Government were reduced.

The day following the release of *Mit brennender Sorge*, a Nazi newspaper, the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, carried a strong counterattack on the "Jew-God and His deputy in Rome." *Das Schwarze Korps*, official paper of the SS, called it "the most incredible of Pius XI's pastoral letters; every sentence in it was an insult to the new Germany." The German ambassador to the Holy See was instructed not to take part in the solemn Easter ceremonies, and German missions throughout Europe were informed by the Nazi Foreign Office of the "Reich's profound

indignation” They were also told that the German government “had to consider the Pope’s encyclical as a call to battle... as it calls upon Catholic citizens to rebel against the authority of the Reich.”

Hitler verbally attacked the German bishops at a mass rally in Berlin, and he dictated a letter of protest to the Pope, complaining that the Vatican had gone to the people instead of coming to him. Vatican Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII), rebuffed German protests, noting that the German government had not been cooperative in the past when the Vatican complained about the various matters (including the Nazis treatment of Jews). In May, Hitler was quoted in a Swiss newspaper saying, “the Third Reich does not desire a *modus vivendi* with the Catholic Church, but rather its destruction with lies and dishonor, in order to make room for a German Church in which the German race will be glorified.”

#30. Finances are occasionally mentioned in the context of the relief of civilian suffering. For example, an accounting of the disbursement of funds is given in cases where Jewish organizations donated funds to the Vatican for relief and rescue. However, the volumes contain no documents regarding the Vatican’s own financial transactions relating to such efforts. Is there any archival evidence to indicate how the Vatican collected and disbursed its own or other funds in carrying out such activities, such as the annual Peter’s Pence collection?

Pius spent his entire private fortune on their behalf. Pius spent what he inherited himself, as a Pacelli, from his family. This was apparently not an insubstantial amount. According to John Cornwell, the future Pope inherited \$100,000 in the mid-1930s.

#34. On March 18, 1942, Gerhart Riegner of the World Jewish Congress and Richard Lichtheim, representing the Jewish Agency

for Palestine, sent a remarkably comprehensive memorandum on the fate of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe to Archbishop Filippo Bernardini, the nuncio in Switzerland, and a day later Bernardini forwarded the document to Maglione himself. While the report gave no clear sense of a European-wide “final solution,” it left little to the imagination in its description of horrors organized on a continental scale. Is there any indication in the archives about what response, if any, was made to this report? For example, did the Holy See notify hierarchies or its diplomatic representatives regarding the contents of the report?

Point:

Gerhard Riegner’s memorandum to the Holy See was dated March 18, 1942. It described Nazi persecution of Jewish people, and it was not published by the Vatican in its collection of wartime documents (*Actes et Documents*). By the same token, the letter of thanks that Riegner sent to Nuncio M. Philippe Bernadinion April 8, 1942 was also not published. In that letter, Riegner stated:

“We also note with great satisfaction the steps undertaken by His Excellence the Cardinal Maglione, with authorities of Slovakia on behalf of the Jews of that country, and we ask you kindly to transmit to the Secretariat of State of the Holy See the expression of our profound gratitude.

“We are convinced that this intervention greatly impressed the governmental circles of Slovakia, which conviction seems to be confirmed by the information we have just received from that country....

It appears... that the Slovak Government finds it necessary to justify the measures in question. One might therefore conclude that it might be induced – in the application of these measures – to conform more closely to the wishes expressed by the Holy See which desired to revoke the recent

measures against the Jews.

"In renewing the expressions of our profound gratitude, for whatever the Holy See, thanks to your gracious intermediation, was good enough to undertake on behalf of our persecuted brothers, we ask Your Excellency to accept the assurance of our deepest respect."

The reason that neither the memo nor the letter of thanks were printed in the *Actes et Documents* collection is that they were classified as "unofficial." Moreover, the memo was rather long and did not report a definite source of information, but reported on persecutions that were "more or less known to the public at large." (Judging Pius XII, Inside the Vatican, February 2000, at 61, 66, quoting Father Blet, who noted that the memorandum had been published in a well-known book prior to the Vatican's collection being published). Riegner's memo is, however, mentioned in the *Actes et Documents* collection. Le nonce à Berne Bernardini au Cardinal Maglione, March 19, 1942, *Actes et Documents*, vol. VIII, no. 314, p. 466. In fact, a footnote was added just to draw attention to receipt of the memo. It was certainly never hidden, concealed, or missing.

#35. There is evidence that the Holy See was well-informed by mid-1942 of the accelerating mass murder of Jews. Questions continue to be asked about the reception of this news, and what attention was given to it. How thoroughly informed was the Vatican regarding details of Nazi persecution and extermination? What was the Holy See's reaction, and what discussions followed the reports that flowed in describing evidence of the "Final Solution"? What, more specifically, were the steps leading up to the Pope's Christmas message of 1942? Are there drafts of this message?

#36. In light of the above, in September 1942 there were requests for a papal statement from the British, Belgian, Polish, Brazilian and American diplomatic representatives to

the Holy See. In Volume 5 of the ADSS, only the response to Myron Taylor, the American representative to the Pope, is published. Might the responses to the other representatives be made available?

Point:

In September 1942, President Roosevelt sent a message to the Pope detailing reports from the Warsaw ghetto and asking whether the Vatican had any information that would tend to confirm or deny the reports of Nazi crimes. In mid-October, the Holy See replied, stating that it, too, had reports of "severe measures" taken against the Jews, but that it had been impossible to verify the accuracy of the reports. The statement went on, however, to note that "the Holy See is taking advantage of every opportunity offered in order to mitigate the suffering of non-Aryans."

At their annual meeting in November 1942, in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Bishops released a statement:

"Since the murderous assault on Poland, utterly devoid of every semblance of humanity, there has been a premeditated and systematic extermination of the people of this nation. The same satanic technique is being applied to many other peoples. We feel a deep sense of revulsion against the cruel indignities heaped upon Jews in conquered countries and upon defenseless peoples not of our faith... Deeply moved by the arrest and maltreatment of the Jews, we cannot stifle the cry of conscience. In the name of humanity and Christian principles, our voice is raised."

For his part, in late 1942, Pius sent three letters of support to bishops in Poland. The letters were intended to be read and distributed by the bishops to the faithful. The bishops all thanked the Pontiff, but responded that they could not publish his words or read them aloud, because that would lead to more persecution of Jews and of Catholics.

With the Vatican having recognized Nazi atrocities earlier than many other nations and having assisted western powers early during the hostilities, Allied leaders sought to have the Pope join in a formal declaration concerning the atrocities taking place in Germany and in German-occupied areas. In a message dated September 14, the Brazilian ambassador, Ildebrando Accioly, wrote: "It is necessary that the authorized and respected voice of the Vicar of Christ be heard against these atrocities." On that same day, British Minister D'Arcy Osborne and American representative Harold H. Tittmann requested a "public and specific denunciation of Nazi treatment of the populations of the counties under German occupation." Interestingly, neither Tittmann nor Accioly mentioned the treatment of Jews by the Nazis. Osborne, who did mention the treatment of Jewish people in his request to the Pope, reported back to London that the coordinated requests to the Pontiff looked like an effort to involve the Pope in political and partisan action.

Pius was non-committal in response to these requests, and a few weeks later President Roosevelt's representative, Myron Taylor, renewed the request on behalf of the Allies. American representatives ultimately reported back that the Holy See was convinced that an open condemnation would "result in the violent deaths of many more people." A secret British telegram from this same time period reported on an audience with the Pope:

"His Holiness undertook to do whatever was possible on behalf of the Jews, but His Majesty's Minister doubted whether there would be any public statement."

The Pope did not join in this condemnation, perhaps because as a *New York Times* editorial concluded, the joint statement was "an official indictment." Pius did not want to breach the Church's official neutrality by joining in a declaration made by either side, and he was concerned that the Allies' statement would be used as part of the war effort (as happened

with some of his earlier radio broadcasts). He did, however, make his own statement.

In his 1942 Christmas statement, broadcast over Vatican Radio, Pope Pius XII said that the world was “plunged into the gloom of tragic error,” and that “the Church would be untrue to herself, she would have ceased to be a mother, if she were deaf to the cries of suffering children which reach her ears from every class of the human family.” He spoke of the need for mankind to make “a solemn vow never to rest until valiant souls of every people and every nation of the earth arise in their legions, resolved to bring society and to devote themselves to the services of the human person and of a divinely ennobled human society.” He said that mankind owed this vow to all victims of the war, including “the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and *solely because of their nation or race*, have been *condemned to death or progressive extinction*.” In making this statement and others during the war, Pius used the Latin word “*stirps*,” which means race, but which had been used throughout Europe for centuries as an explicit reference to Jews.

Pius also condemned totalitarian regimes and acknowledged some culpability on the part of the Church: “A great part of the human race, and not a few – We do not hesitate to say it – not a few even of those who call themselves Christians, bear some share in the collective responsibility for the aberrations, the disasters, and the low moral state of modern society.” He urged all Catholics to give shelter wherever they could.

The Polish ambassador thanked the Pontiff, who “in his last Christmas address implicitly condemned all the injustices and cruelties suffered by the Polish people at the hands of the Germans. Poland acclaims this condemnation; it thanks the Holy Father for his words....” British records reflect the opinion that “the Pope’s condemnation of the treatment of the Jews & the Poles is quite unmistakable, and the message is perhaps more forceful in tone than any of his recent

statements.” The Pope informed the United States Minister to the Vatican that he considered his recent broadcast to be clear and comprehensive in its condemnation of the heartrending treatment of Poles, Jews, hostages, etc. And to have satisfied all recent demands that he should speak out.

A Christmas Day editorial in the *New York Times* praised Pius XII for his moral leadership:

“No Christmas sermon reaches a larger congregation than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world at this season. *This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent.* The Pulpit whence he speaks is more than ever like the Rock on which the Church was founded, a tiny island lashed and surrounded by a sea of war. In these circumstances, in any circumstances, indeed, *no one would expect the Pope to speak as a political leader, or a war leader, or in any other role than that of a preacher ordained to stand above the battle, tied impartially, as he says, to all people and willing to collaborate in any new order which will bring a just peace.*

But just because the Pope speaks to and in some sense for all the peoples at war, *the clear stand he takes on the fundamental issues of the conflict* has greater weight and authority. When a leader bound impartially to nations on both sides condemns as heresy the new form of national state which subordinates everything to itself: when he declares that whoever wants peace must protect against ‘arbitrary attacks’ the ‘juridical safety of individuals:’ when he assails violent occupation of territory, the exile and persecution of human beings for no reason other than race or political opinion: when he says that people must fight for a just and decent peace, a ‘total peace’ – the ‘impartial judgment’ is like a verdict in a high court of justice.

Pope Pius expresses as passionately as any leader on our side the war aims of the struggle for freedom when he says that

those who aim at building a new world must fight for free choice of government and religious order. They must refuse that the state should make of individuals a herd of whom the state disposes as if they were a lifeless thing."

The *London Times* also ran an editorial expressing similar sentiments about the Pope's statements since his coronation:

"A study of the words which Pope Pius XII has addressed since his accession in encyclicals and allocutions to the Catholics of various nations leaves no room for doubt. He condemns the worship of force and its concrete manifestation in the suppression of national liberties and in the persecution of the Jewish race."

To the Axis leaders the Pope's Christmas message was not hard to decipher. Mussolini was greatly angered by the speech. The German ambassador to the Vatican complained that Pius had abandoned any pretense at neutrality and was "clearly speaking on behalf of the Jews." An American report noted that the Germans were "conspicuous by their absence" at a Midnight Mass conducted by the Pope for diplomats on Christmas Eve. One German report stated:

"In a manner never known before, the Pope has repudiated the National Socialist New European Order... It is true, the Pope does not refer to the National Socialist in Germany by name, but his speech is one long attack on everything we stand for... God, he says, regards all people and races as worthy of the same consideration. Here he is clearly speaking on behalf of the Jews... he is virtually accusing the German people of injustice toward the Jews, and makes himself the mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals."

German Ambassador Bergen, on the instruction of Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, immediately warned the Pope that the Nazis would seek retaliation if the Vatican abandoned its neutral position. When he reported back to his superiors, the

German ambassador stated: "Pacelli is no more sensible to threats than we are."

#37. Questions have been raised regarding the attitude of the Vatican toward a Jewish national home in Palestine during the Holocaust period. Maglione generally responded to requests for assistance in sending Jews to Palestine by reminding appellants of all that the Holy See had done to help the Jews, and of its readiness to continue to do so. But in internal notes published in the volumes, meant only for Vatican representatives, the Secretary of State and his aides explicitly reaffirmed the Vatican's opposition to significant Jewish immigration to Palestine, stating that "the Holy See has never approved of the project of making Palestine a Jewish home. Palestine is by now holier for Catholics than for Jews." The documents also reveal that Angelo Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII), apostolic delegate to Istanbul, aided Jews to reach Palestine notwithstanding his uneasiness concerning Jewish political aspirations there. Is there documentation regarding guidelines for rescue efforts and their implications concerning the Vatican policy with regard to Palestine?

Point:

Angelo Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII), war time apostolic delegate in Istanbul, was thanked for his work on behalf of Jewish refugees. He replied: "In all these painful matters I have referred to the Holy See and simply carried out the Pope's orders: first and foremost to save Jewish lives."

In 1955, when Italy celebrated the tenth anniversary of its liberation, Italian Jewry proclaimed April 17 as "The Day of Gratitude." That year, thousands of Jewish people made a pilgrimage to the Vatican to express appreciation for the Pope's wartime solitudes. The Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra even gave a special performance of Beethoven's ninth symphony in the Papal Consistory Hall as an expression of

gratitude for the Catholic Church's assistance in defying the Nazis. (According to the *Jerusalem Post* of May 29, 1955, "Conductor Paul Klecki had requested that the Orchestra on its first visit to Italy play for the Pope as a gesture of gratitude for the help his church had given to all those persecuted by Nazi Fascism.") Before the celebration, a delegation approached Msgr. Montini, the director of Vatican rescue services who later became Pope Paul VI, to determine whether he would accept an award for his work on behalf of Jews during the war. He was extremely gratified and visibly touched by their words, but he declined the honor: "All I did was my duty," he said. "And besides I only acted upon orders from the Holy Father. Nobody deserves a medal for that"

#38. On March 12, 1943, a consortium of rabbis in North America sent a passionate appeal to Maglione, describing the horrors in Poland and the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, and asking for help from Rome. It is curious that there are no references in the volumes to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Are there any documents relating to this event in the archives?

Point:

On April 19, 1943, Jewish residents of Warsaw staged a desperate uprising in the ghetto. The Nazis countered with a block-to-block search, but they found it difficult to kill or capture the small battle groups of Jews, who would fight, then retreat through cellars, sewers, and other hidden passageways. On the fifth day of the fighting, Himmler ordered the S.S. to comb out the ghetto with the greatest severity and relentless tenacity. S.S. General Juergen Stroop decided to burn down the entire ghetto, block by block. Many victims burned or jumped to their death, rather than permit themselves to be caught by the Nazis.

The Jews in Warsaw resisted for a total of 28 days. On May 16, General Stroop reported that "the former Jewish quarter of Warsaw is no longer in existence. The large-scale action was

terminated at 2015 hours by blowing up the Warsaw synagogue.... Total number of Jews dealt with 56,065, including both Jews caught and Jews whose extermination can be proved." (About 20,000 Jews were killed in the streets of Warsaw and another 36,000 in the gas chambers.) Polish sources estimated that 300 Germans were killed and about 1000 were wounded.

Not only in Warsaw, but throughout Poland, Jewish people were in hiding. About 200 convents hid more than 1,500 Jewish children, mainly in Warsaw and the surrounding area. This was especially difficult, because Polish nuns in German-occupied areas were often persecuted and forced into hiding themselves. (In a small town near Mir, Poland, the Nazis executed 12 nuns in one day for suspicion of harboring Jews.) Nuns who lived in Soviet-occupied areas did not have it much better. They were sent to work for the Soviets, in areas as far away as Siberia. As such, the courage of the priests and nuns who provided shelter to Jewish people was truly admirable.

Why did people take these risks? Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII) and Montini (the future Pope Paul VI) both gave all credit to Pope Pius XII. The end of the war saw Pius hailed as "the inspired moral prophet of victory," and he "enjoyed near-universal acclaim for aiding European Jews through diplomatic initiatives, thinly veiled public pronouncements, and, very concretely, an unprecedented continent-wide network of sanctuary." He made hiding Jews on the run the thing to do.

#41. The Vatican radio from time to time addressed issues relating to Nazi persecution, and extracts from these broadcasts appeared in the London Tablet. It is said that Pius XII may have written or edited the texts for some of these broadcasts. Is there any documentary evidence regarding Pius XII's role and are the original broadcast transcripts available?

Point:

During the war it was not known how involved the Pope was with Vatican Radio. These broadcasts were so strongly worded and partisan that they regularly prompted vigorous protests from Mussolini and the German Ambassador to the Holy See. (Later, the Polish bishops would complain that papal statements created problems for them by infuriating the Nazis.) Vatican officials responded that Vatican Radio was run by the Jesuits as an independent concern. Recently, however, researchers discovered that Pius XII personally authored many of the intensely anti-German statements beamed around the world. In other cases, directives were found from the Pope regarding the content of the broadcasts. The late Father Robert A. Graham, one of the people assigned to go through the Vatican's wartime records, told *The Washington Post*: "I was stupefied at what I was reading. How could one explain actions so contrary to the principle of neutrality?"

#42. The case has repeatedly been made that the Vatican's fear of communism prompted it to mute and limit its criticism of Nazi atrocities and occupation policies. We are struck by the paucity of evidence to this effect and to the subject of communism in general. Indeed, our reading of the volumes presents a different picture, especially with regard to the Vatican promotion of the American bishops' support for the alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union in order to oppose Nazism. Is there further evidence on this question?

Point:

Despite his concern over the spread of Communism, Pius recognized that Nazism presented a similar threat. He continued to condemn Communism, but as an observer of that time noted, "(w)ith it he bracketed Nazism in the same breath, for it strikes, no less ruthlessly, at the individuality of the home, the very heart of religion. Both are tyrannically

pagan." In 1942, Pius told a Jesuit visitor, "the Communist danger does exist, but at this time the Nazi danger is more serious. They want to destroy the Church and crush it like a toad." When the Allies sought to have him speak out against Nazi Germany, he said he was unwilling to do so without also condemning the atheistic government of the Soviet Union, but he also refused Axis requests to bless their attack on the Soviet Union. In fact, by cooperating with Roosevelt's request that he encourage American Catholics to support extending the lend-lease program to the Soviets, Pius actually gave economic and military aid to the Soviets.

In the British Public Records Office, there is a short message dated May 10, 1943, from the British Embassy in Madrid. It reports on a message that had been forwarded by a member of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to this report, "In a recent dispatch the Spanish Ambassador reported that in conversation with the Pope[,] the latter informed him that he now regarded Nazism and Fascism, and not Communism, as he used to, as the greatest menace to civilization and the Roman Catholic Church." Others were also aware of the Pope's view. According to a post-war interrogation of Nazi official Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler thought that the Catholic Church sometimes worked with the Communists. As such, the record simply does not support the conclusion that hatred of Communism blinded Pius XII to the evils of Nazism.

#43. In several of the volumes, the editors cite hundreds of documents which are not themselves published. For example, in Volume 10 alone the editors list 700 such documents. In some cases, the documents are briefly summarized or quoted. It would be helpful if these documents could be made available.

It would be helpful if scholars would read the documents that have been made available. Each member of the study group was assigned only two books out of the 11-volume set. One member reportedly read a third volume. Apparently none of them were very familiar with these documents prior to this project. At

least they seem not to have had access to any other set. (The commission had one set to share. For a while, no one had volume 6.) I, at least, own a complete set.

#44.The Poles were major victims of the Nazis. Members of the Polish Government in Exile in London and some Polish bishops were often very vocal in their criticism of Pius XII's role. It has been reported that the Vatican commissioned the Jesuits to prepare a defense of its Polish policy. Is this correct and, if so, may we see the report? More generally, the subject of Vatican-Polish relations is an essential element for understanding the role of the Holy See during the Holocaust period and deserves further investigation in the Vatican archives. Is there other pertinent information on this subject in the archives that is not in the volumes, and may we see it?

I have a copy of the report from the Jesuits. America Press published it in English in 1942. A copy can be found in the New York City public library.

#45.The volumes contain urgent appeals to the Vatican for assistance, articulated by desperate Jewish petitioners. These petitions frequently are couched in language of effusive praise as well as gratitude for actions already undertaken. Yet the volumes contain few examples of the assistance already given that gave rise to such expressions of praise and gratitude. What information can be obtained from either the archives or other sources concerning the concrete assistance already given which gave rise to these expressions of gratitude?

The best evidence, of course, is the testimony of these people who were there – which is what the study group seeks here to confirm. There are also 98 deposition transcripts from witnesses who saw things first-hand and testified under oath. This question, like many others, takes on the feel of the famous: “When did you stop beating your wife?”

#47. Did Pope Pius XII have serious doubts about the wisdom or correctness of his policy of "impartiality," whether it related to Jews, Poles or any other victims of the Nazis? The published documents unfortunately provide little evidence, although Volume 2 gives us a valuable insight into his thinking during the wartime period, especially about the German Church, to which he felt particularly close. In his diary, Roncalli reports of an audience on 11 October 1941 with the Pope who asked whether his "silence" concerning Nazism would be badly judged. Are there any personal papers of Pius XII or records of his discussions with leading advisers, diplomats or important foreign visitors that would illuminate this issue, and, if so, could we see them?

There are occasional reports of expressions of concern over the course he chose. However in his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus* ("Darkness over the Earth"), released in 1939, Pope Pius XII set forth his position on Hitler, the war, and the role that he would play. He stayed true to that position throughout the war.

This encyclical made reference to "the ever-increasing host of Christ's enemies" (paragraph 7), and noted that these enemies of Christ "deny or in practice neglect the vivifying truths and the values inherent in belief in God and in Christ" and want to "break the Tables of God's Commandments to substitute other tables and other standards stripped of the ethical content of (Christianity)." In the next paragraph, Pius charged that Christians who fell in with the enemies of Christ suffered from cowardice, weakness, or uncertainty.

In paragraph 13, Pius wrote of the outbreak of war: "Our paternal heart is torn by anguish as We look ahead to all that will yet come forth from the baneful seed of violence and of hatred for which the sword today ploughs the blood drenched furrow." In the next paragraph, he wrote of the enemies of Christ (an obvious reference to Hitler's National Socialists) becoming bolder.

Paragraphs 24 through 31 laid out the Pope's belief that prayer (not public condemnation) was the only appropriate response for the Bishop of Rome. Obviously, Pius viewed this as an important act of faith. Moreover, it was the lack of Christianity that he identified as the cause of the "crop of such poignant disasters." Faith and prayer were the things he could contribute to the world at that time, not political or military strength.

Pius also expressed his belief in redemption. Thus, even though the enemies of Christ were committing horrible atrocities, it was still possible for even these very evil people to be redeemed. It was fundamental to the Pope's faith that anyone could ask and be forgiven.

Paragraphs 45 to 50 of the encyclical deal with racial matters and expressed the Pope's belief that the Church could not discriminate against any given race of people. This would have to be seen as a slap at the racial policies in both Germany and Italy. Pius expressly stated that all races and nationalities were welcome in the Church and had equal rights as children in the house of the Lord. In paragraph 48, he put meaning to those anti-racist statements by naming new bishops of different races and nationalities. Moreover, he expressly said that the Church must always be open to all:

"The spirit, the teaching and the work of the Church can never be other than that which the Apostle of the Gentiles preached: A putting on the new (man) him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of him that created him. Where there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. But Christ is all and in all" (Colossians iii. 10, 11).

The equating of Gentiles and Jews would have to be seen as a clear rejection of Hitler's fundamental ideology.

Paragraphs 51 to 66 seem to be Pius XII's view of a just

society. Here he asserts that the first reason for the outbreak of war is that people have forgotten the law of universal charity. The second reason is the failure to put God above civil authority. He argues that when civil authority is placed above the Lord, the government fills that void, and problems develop. This is exactly what Hitler had done. (This analysis would likely also apply to Pius XII's view of the Soviet Union, which at that time had an agreement with Hitler.)

Pius said that nations must have a religious basis. He wrote that the goal of society must be development of the individual, not the power of the state. Again, this was a slap at Hitler's dismantling of religious institutions and development of the state in Germany. In fact, paragraph 60 was a direct answer to Hitler's view of the state as set forth in *Mein Kampf*:

"To consider the State as something ultimate to which everything else should be subordinated and directed, cannot fail to harm the true and lasting prosperity of nations. This can happen either when unrestricted dominion comes to be conferred on the State as having a mandate from the nation, people, or even a social order, or when the State arrogates such dominion to itself as absolute master, despotically, without any mandate whatsoever."

Similarly, Pius presented an answer to Hitler's views of the family and of education in this section of the encyclical.

Pius made note of how "powers of disorder and destruction" stand ready to take advantage of sorrow, bitterness, and suffering in order to make use of them "for their dark designs." This would seem to be a description of how Fascists in Italy and Nazis in Germany took advantage of the chaos following the First World War to rise to power. Pius also responded to the demands of Hitler and Mussolini (and, for that matter, Stalin) for stronger central governments. While

acknowledging that there may be difficulties that would justify greater powers being concentrated in the State, the Pope also said that the moral law requires that the need for this be scrutinized with greatest rigor. The State can demand goods and blood, but not the immortal soul.

Paragraphs 73 to 77, dealt with the Pope's ideas relating to international relations. Here, he wrote:

"Absolute autonomy for the State stands in open opposition to this natural way that is inherent in man... and therefore leaves the stability of international relations at the mercy of the will of rulers, while it destroys the possibility of true union and fruitful collaboration directed to the general good."

Pius stressed the importance of treaties and wrote of an international natural law which requires that all treaties be honored. With Hitler having recently breached several treaties and the concordat, this must be seen as another swipe at the Nazi leader.

Interestingly, in paragraph 85, Pius accurately described the challenges he would face, and he set forth the code of conduct that he followed throughout the rest of the war:

"And if belonging to (the Kingdom of God), living according to its spirit, laboring for its increase and placing its benefits at the disposition of that portion of mankind also which as yet has no part in them, means in our days having to face obstacles and oppositions as vast and deep and minutely organized as never before, that does not dispense a man from the frank, bold profession of our Faith. Rather, it spurs one to stand fast in the conflict even at the price of the greatest sacrifices. Whoever lives by the spirit of Christ refuses to let himself be beaten down by the difficulties which oppose him, but on the contrary feels himself impelled

to work with all his strength and with the fullest confidence in God.

In paragraphs 93 to 95, Pius expressed the importance that he attached to the spirit as opposed to the physical world. Here he made clear that the most important thing would be to open people to Christ. He said that the Church must be protected so that it can fulfill its role as an educator by teaching the truth, by inculcating justice, and by inflaming hearts with the divine love of Christ. Indeed, throughout the war, he would protect the Church so that it could carry out its life and soul-saving functions.

Paragraphs 101 to 106 drew distinctions between the Vatican and other secular nations and explained the Church's special role in the world. The Church "does not claim to take the place of other legitimate authorities in their proper spheres." Instead, Pius wrote, the Church should be a good example and do good works. The Church:

"spreads its maternal arms towards this world not to dominate but to serve. She does not claim to take the place of other legitimate authorities in their proper spheres, but offers them her help after the example and in the spirit of her Divine Founder Who "went about doing good" (Acts x. 38).

This same thought was expanded upon when Pius wrote "render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." In other words, the Church plays an important, but limited role in resolving disputes in the secular world. His obligation was to pray for peace and offer comfort to the afflicted.

Pius expressed his confidence that the Church would always prevail in the long run. Any structure that is not founded on the teaching of Christ, he wrote, is destined to perish. Read in context, this was a promise of the ultimate failure of Nazism. In fact, he expressly foresaw that Poland would be resurrected:

"This... is in many respects a real 'Hour of Darkness,'... in which the spirit of violence and of discord brings indescribable suffering on mankind... The nations swept into the tragic whirlpool of war are perhaps as yet only at the 'beginnings of sorrows,'... but even now there reigns in thousands of families death and desolation, lamentation and misery. The blood of countless human beings, even noncombatants, raises a piteous dirge over a nation such as Our dear Poland, which, for its fidelity to the Church, for its services in the defense of Christian civilization... has a right to the generous and brotherly sympathy of the whole world, while it awaits, relying on the powerful intercession of Mary, Help of Christians, the hour of a resurrection in harmony with the principles of justice and true peace."

The reference to Poland resolved any doubts about to whom Pius was referring.

In paragraphs 107 to 112, Pius wrote that it was his duty to try for peace, and that duty had to be fulfilled even if it meant that the Church was misunderstood in the effort:

"While still some hope was left, We left nothing undone in the form suggested to us by Our Apostolic office and by the means at Our disposal, to prevent recourse to arms and to keep open the way to an understanding honorable to both parties. Convinced that the use of force on one side would be answered by recourse to arms on the other, We considered it a duty inseparable from Our Apostolic office and of Christian Charity to try every means to spare mankind and Christianity the horrors of a world conflagration, even at the risk of having Our intentions and Our aims misunderstood." He encouraged people to keep faith that good will prevail, and he once again expressed his faith in the ultimate triumph of God's will.

This encyclical shows that Pius did not waver in his approach to Hitler and the Nazis. In 1939 he laid out his vision, which he followed for the rest of the war. Thus, it was not a matter

of fear, nor did Pius change after he learned of the Nazi abuses. All along he thought that the best way to assure peace was through prayer. All along he thought that the best way to assure peace was through prayer. He charted his course and stayed with it.

The Judeo-Catholic Commission

By Sr. Margherita Marchione, M.P.F.

(11/2000)

author of [Yours is a Precious Witness: Memoirs of Jews and Catholics in Wartime Italy](#), (1997) and Pope Pius XII: Architect for Peace, (Paulist Press, 2000).

In the last 30 years, above all with the pontificate of John Paul II, giant steps have been made toward progress in dialogue between Jews and Catholics. To prepare a serious scholarly analysis on Pius XII, several scholars were called to participate in a Commission in order to examine the Vatican documents of the Holy See during the Second World War. This group's assignment as scholars was to analyze documents already published. The group consisted of three Catholics: Eva Fleischner, Gerald Fogarty, and John Morley; and three Jews: Michael Marrus, Bernard Suchcky, and Robert Wistrich.

Marrus was interviewed by Paolo Mastrolilli, an Italian journalist. "We must not fall into the error of evaluating facts that occurred more than 50 years ago with today's sensitivity," Marrus stated. ..."Vatican Council II has

enormously changed relations between Jews and Catholics, and therefore now certain attitudes may seem strange. During the period of Pius XII, the reality of the times was different."

According to Fogarty, "Pius XII believed more in diplomacy than in public declarations and he behaved himself accordingly. His priority was to stop Nazism and for this reason he also accepted in silence the alliance with Russia, reserving for himself the fight against Communism at a latter date. The American Secret Services have documents that judge in a very positive way the actions of the Vatican during the war, but until now they have remained secret. The Holy See was careful to preserve its neutrality, but there exists proofs of the help offered to several German generals, who in the Spring of 1940 had planned a plot to free themselves of Hitler: therefore, what counts more, the public words of the Pope, or the acts accomplished to stop Nazism?"

Fogarty also said that "the panel has still not succeeded in overcoming the widespread myth in Anglo-Saxon culture which believes that there are important unpublished documents in the Vatican Archives. If such files existed, other proofs of those documents would have been found in the studies I have carried out in archives all over Europe." In order to help his colleagues understand that the opening of the Vatican Archives does not answer these questions definitively, he gave this example: "In the spring of 1940 there was an attempt to oust Hitler by a group of generals who later tried to surrender to the English. The negotiations took place with the Vatican's mediation and the knowledge of Pius XII. However, there are no documents on this case in the Vatican."

There was no guarantee that the Nazis would have respected the Vatican. One can readily understand that, when the Nazis occupied Rome and the SS and the Gestapo were searching for Jews throughout the Rome area, it was necessary to destroy whatever documentation might have affected Vatican

neutrality.

Apparently, the Commission members did not research the existing material that would have answered, at least in part, some of the 47 questions. Some of this information may be found in other archives. A typical example is Number 44. It reads: "The Poles were major victims of the Nazis. Members of the Polish Government in Exile in London and some Polish bishops were often very vocal in their criticism of Pius XII's role. It has been reported that the Vatican commissioned the Jesuits to prepare a defense of its Polish policy. Is this correct and, if so, may we see the report? More generally, the subject of Vatican-Polish relations is an essential element for understanding the role of the Holy See during the Holocaust period and deserves further investigation in the Vatican archives. Is there other pertinent information on this subject in the archives that is not in the volumes, and may we see it?"

Obviously the members of the Commission did not complete their homework. The documentation they requested may be found in the New York Public Library. Indeed, millions of Jews and non-Jews were brutally victimized and exterminated by the Nazis. The document, "Pope Pius and Poland," published by The American Press should have enlightened the Commission members. Copies have been available. With the imprimatur of Cardinal Francis J. Spellman, Archbishop of New York, this documentary outline of papal pronouncements and relief efforts in behalf of Poland since 1939, was published in 1942, and made available at 10 cents per copy.

In the Foreword, Francis X. Talbot, S.J., editor-in-chief, states: "To those who love and seek the truth, here is the truth. History will record the truth that Pope Pius XII stands united with Poland, as Poland and the Polish people everywhere are united with the Pope." This pamphlet is a schematic outline of the evidence available that shows the fatherly affection and deep understanding which His Holiness

revealed toward the Polish people. It is based on what has been published in newspapers and other periodicals or announced on the radio. (See *The New York Times*, *Vatican Radio* and *L'Osservatore Romano*.)

The day after his election, March 3, 1939, Pius XII pleaded for peace and diplomatic efforts to prevent the outbreak of hostilities. (See *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XXXI (1939), pp. 86, 87.) Other statements followed on Easter Sunday (*Ibid.*, p. 145ff.) and June 2, 1939, to the Sacred College of Cardinals [See *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 3, 1939.]

On August 29, 1939, in his radio appeal Pius XII pleaded: "...Humanity craves justice, bread and liberty, not the sword that kills and destroys. Christ is with us; for brotherly love was made by Him a solemn and fundamental commandment..." (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XXXI, 1939, pp. 333, 335)

On August 31, 1939, the Pope called the ambassadors of Germany, France, Italy and Poland to his study and the Cardinal Secretary of State distributed to each a copy of his pontifical message: "The Holy Father is unwilling to abandon the hope that the present negotiations may issue in a just and peaceful solution such as the whole world continues to implore. In the name of God, therefore, His Holiness exhorts the Governments of Germany and Poland to do everything possible to avoid incidents of every kind and to forego every measure that might aggravate the present tension. He begs the Governments of England, France and Italy to second this request. (*Ibid.*, pp. 335-336)

Already on September 3, 1939, many Polish cities were burning and the country was bathed in blood and tears. The Pope received a group of Polish refugees at Castelgandolfo and tried to comfort them, pointing out that the Fatherly Providence of God was the fundamental guarantee of the indestructibility of the nation and of its rebirth after the

passing calamities of the moment. Christ... "one day will reward the tears you shed over your beloved dead, and over a Poland that shall never perish." (Ibid., pp. 393-396)

The Commission questions Pius XII's reaction to *Kristallnacht* ("The Night of the Broken Glass"). Did the members read the articles in the Vatican newspapers, *L'Osservatore Romano*, reporting on the anti-Jewish atrocities committed on *Kristallnacht*? This newspaper, describing the crimes of November, 1938, with headlines such as, "Dopo le manifestazion antisemite in Germania," and "La ripercussione delle manifestazion antisemite in Germania," was the voice of Pope Pius XII.

As Andrea Tornielli, in *Il Giornale*, November 13, 1998, points out: "It is ironic that Meir Lau, Israel's Chief Rabbi, denounced the silence of Pope Pius XII after *Kristallnacht* on November 9, 1938." The Rabbi questioned: "Where was Pius XII in November of 1938." "Why didn't he denounce the violence of that night?" Torniello writes: "Eugenio Pacelli was not yet Pope. He was in Rome, Secretary of State to Pius XI who did not hesitate to condemn racial hatred during an audience, stating: Spiritually we are all Semites." [The Rabbi seems to have forgotten that Eugenio Pacelli had not yet been elected to the Chair of Peter which took place on March 2, 1939.]

What was Pacelli doing in the Vatican? Even before *Kristallnacht* he was assisting the Pontiff in writing the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (March 14, 1937), with which the Catholic Church condemned Nazism. This was a denunciation that provoked Hitler's anger. It was written in German because the Vatican wanted it read in all the churches in Germany on Palm Sunday, March 21, 1937. In fact, the following day, the National Socialist Party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* published a poisonous counterattack to the "Jewish God and his vicar in Rome."

Tornielli belongs to a group of Jewish and Christian writers who want to spread the truth. However, the difficulty lies with the fact that prejudice regarding the "silence" of the Pontiff is a very popular theme. Apparently, the media refuses to acknowledge the truth.

The facts cannot be denied. Sixty years ago on *Kristallnacht*, the Nazis destroyed 1,400 synagogues and stores belonging to Jewish citizens in Germany and Austria. The following days German newspapers published statements by Lutheran theologians who, far from condemning the violence, were pleased that the persecution began on Martin Luther's birthday.

According to Andrea Tornielli's article, Hitler's followers executed the program found in Luther's book *Von den Juden und ihren Lugen*(1543), translated from German into Latin by Justus Jonas. In 1936 it was circulated in a version edited by the evangelical theologian Dr. Linden. An Italian edition with commentary by Attilio Agnoletto, was published in 1997.

In this book, Luther advises that "under pain of death the Rabbis should not be allowed to teach and Jews should be denied the public trust and safe-conduct." He also states that "work should be imposed on all young and robust Jews, men and women, so that they will earn their bread with the sweat of their brow."

It is not difficult to imagine that the Nazis would find these words the legitimization of the concentration camps. But it is strange that during the commemoration of *Kristallnacht*, the one to be accused has been Pope Pius XII. Instead, not a word about the theologians who applauded and reprinted the ferocious anti-Jewish libel.

Deconstructing The Deputy

by Robert P. Lockwood

(Catalyst 6/2000)

For nearly 20 years after World War II, Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) was honored by the world for his actions in saving countless Jewish lives in the face of the Nazi Holocaust. His death on October 9, 1958 brought a moment of silence from Leonard Bernstein while he conducted at New York's Carnegie Hall. Golda Meir, future Israeli Prime Minister and then Israeli representative to the United Nations, spoke on the floor of the General Assembly: "During the ten years of Nazi terror, when our people went through the horrors of martyrdom, the Pope raised his voice to condemn the persecutors and commiserate with the victims."

Among the Jewish organizations in the United States alone that praised Pope Pius XII at the time of his death for saving Jewish lives during the horror of the Nazi Holocaust were the World Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the Synagogue Council of America, the Rabbinical Council of America, the American Jewish Congress, the New York Board of Rabbis, the American Jewish Committee, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the American Jewish Committee, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the National Council of Jewish Women.

Yet, four decades after the death of Pius XII he is condemned for his "shameful silence" in the face of the Holocaust. He is commonly accused not only of silence, but even complicity in the Holocaust. He is called "Hitler's Pope." When critics are reminded of the universal praise he received from Jewish

organizations in life and death, such praise is dismissed as merely “political” statements, as if those Jews who had lived through the Holocaust would insult the memory of the millions killed for some ephemeral political gain.

When Pope John Paul II issued his historic apology for mistakes and errors in Christian history, he was savaged by pundits and news reports for his “silence” in regard to the alleged “silence” of Pope Pius XII. Lance Morrow in *Time* magazine, referred to the Church’s “terrible inaction and silence in the face of the Holocaust” and described any defense of Pius or the Church as “moral pettifogging.” He made such statements without bothering to substantiate them because the charges are simply accepted as “fact” and any disagreement becomes on a par with those who deny the reality of the Holocaust itself.

The historical reality of the pontificate of Pius XII has nearly been lost in the face of the strident campaign against him. Anti-Catholicism thrives on invented history that becomes part of the accepted cultural corpus. Conventional historical wisdom is more often the creation of propaganda than fact. Contemporary Catholics are witnessing the creation of a myth in regard to Pius XII, a propaganda campaign as relentless as any created by 19th century anti-Catholic apologists.

The view of Pius XII as Nazi collaborator did not begin as a case study of historical revisionism. It did not even begin within historical studies themselves or from available historical documentation, including transcripts of the Nuremberg trials, or government records made public. The myth of Pius XII began in earnest in 1963 in a drama created for the stage by Rolf Hochhuth, an otherwise obscure German playwright born in 1931.

Hochhuth was part of a post-World War II trend in theatre called “Documentary Theatre” or “Theatre of Fact.” The trend grew out of an American form of theatre popularized during the

Depression. The point was to adapt social issues to theatrical presentation by utilizing documentation. The documentation was more important than artistic presentation and provided the script for the play. It was seen in more recent times with Vietnam War morality plays that excerpted from the Pentagon Papers, or presentations where the dialogue was directly culled from the White House tapes of Richard Nixon.

Hochhuth, however, created a more traditional theatrical presentation without any documentary basis when it came to Pius XII. Though claiming to be part of the "Theatre of Fact," his presentation against Pius did not have the documentary sources for this style of drama. Turgid in length, in 1963's *Der Stellvertreter* (*The Representative* or *The Deputy*) Hochhuth charged that Pius XII maintained an icy, cynical and uncaring silence during the Holocaust. More interested in Vatican investments than human lives, Pius was presented as a cigarette-smoking dandy with Nazi leanings. (Hochhuth also authored a play charging Winston Churchill with complicity in a murder. No one paid much attention to that effort.)

The Deputy, even to Pius' most strenuous detractors, is readily dismissed. Even as vicious a critic of Pius XII as John Cornwell in *Hitler's Pope* describes *Der Stellvertreter* as "historical fiction based on scant documentation...(T)he characterization of Pacelli (Pius XII) as a money-grubbing hypocrite is so wide of the mark as to be ludicrous. Importantly, however, Hocchuth's play offends the most basic criteria of documentary: that such stories and portrayals are valid only if they are demonstrably true."

Yet *The Deputy*, despite its evident flaws, prejudices and lack of historicity, laid the foundation for the charges against Pius XII, five years after his death. There was fertile ground. Pius XII was hated by certain schools of post World War II historians for the anti-Stalinist, anti-Communist agenda of both his pontificate, and the Catholic Church in general. In the heady atmosphere of leftist academic circles,

particularly in Italy in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the charge against Pius was that while he was not necessarily pro-Nazi during the war, but that he feared Communism more than Hitler. For the most part, this was based on the pope's opposition to the Allied demand for unconditional German surrender. He believed such a demand would only continue the horror of the war and increase the killing. That stand was later interpreted as a desire on the pontiff's part to maintain a strong Germany as a bulwark against communism. Hochhuth's charge of papal "silence" fit that revisionist theory.

The theory, of course, was as much fiction as Hochhuth's play. There was no documentary evidence to even suggest such a papal strategy. But it became popular, particularly among historians with Marxist sympathies in the 1960s. Even this theory, however, did not extend to an accusation that the Pope "collaborated" in the Holocaust, nor to any charge that the Church did anything other than save hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives. However, it did provide a mercenary rationale of "politics over people" in response to the Holocaust and applied such barbarous reasoning to the pope.

The Deputy, therefore, took on far greater importance than it deserved. Instead of Pius being seen as a careful and concerned pontiff working with every means available to rescue European Jews, an image was created of a political schemer who would sacrifice lives to stop the spread of Communism. *The Deputy* was merely the mouthpiece for an ideological interpretation of history that helped create the myth of a "silent" Pius XII doing nothing in the face of Nazi slaughter.

There was also strong resonance within the Jewish community at the time *The Deputy* appeared. The Jewish world had experienced a virtual re-living of the Holocaust in the trial of Adolf Eichmann. A key figure in the Nazi Final Solution, Eichmann had been captured in Argentina in 1960, tried in Israel in 1961 and executed in 1962. For many young Jews, Eichmann's

trial was the first definitive exposure to the horror that the Nazis had implemented. At the same time, Israel was threatened on all sides by the unified Arab states. War would erupt in a very short time. *The Deputy* resonated with an Israel that was surrounded by enemies and would be fighting for its ultimate survival.

Despite the fact, therefore, of a two-decades-old acknowledgment of papal support and assistance to the Jews during the War, Hochhuth's unfounded charges took on all the aspects of revelation. In a column after Pope John Paul II's apology, Uri Dormi of Jerusalem described the impact: "*The Deputy* appeared in Hebrew and broke the news about another silence, that of Pope Pius XII about the Holocaust. The wartime Pope, who on Christmas Eve 1941 was praised in a *New York Times* editorial as 'the only ruler left on the continent of Europe who dares to raise his voice at all,' was exposed by the young, daring dramatist."

It seems ludicrous that a pope praised for his actions throughout the war – and by all leading Jewish organizations throughout his life – could be discredited based on nothing more than a theatrical invention. Yet, that is what took place and has taken place since. A combination of political and social events early in the 1960s, biased historical revisionism, and an exercise in theatrical rhetoric, created the myth of the uncaring pontiff in contradiction to the clear historical record. The myth thrives because people want to believe it rather than because it is believable.

Great strides had been made in Catholic-Jewish relations during the papacy of John Paul II. Yet the myth of the silence of Pius XII has helped to entrench anti-Catholicism within elements of the Jewish community, while creating in certain Catholic circles resentment that can only be harmful. Leaving this myth unanswered can only do great damage to what should be a deep relationship between Catholics and Jews, generated in part by the heroism of Pope Pius XII in saving

Jewish lives during the Holocaust.

“60 Minutes” on Pope Pius XII

by Ronald Rychlak

(Catalyst 5/2000)

The March 19 broadcast of CBS Television’s “60 Minutes” profiled *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*, by John Cornwell (Viking Press, 1999). As the title suggests, that book presents a very cynical portrait of Pope Pius XII.

Like many print reviews, “60 Minutes” started by discussing Cornwell’s claim that he was convinced of Pius XII’s evident spirituality and thought that the full story would vindicate him. So, assuring Church officials that he was on the Pope’s side, Cornwell claims to have obtained special permission to look at the Vatican’s archives.

By the middle of 1997, after having worked on the project for five years and having studied the Vatican files, Cornwall claims to have found himself in a “state of moral shock.” He was now convinced that Pius XII had a soaring ambition for power and control that had led the Catholic Church “into complicity with the darkest forces of the era.” He concluded that Pacelli was “an ideal Pope for the Nazis’ Final Solution.”

Crucial to his self-promotion is Cornwell’s claim to have been a good, practicing Catholic who set out to defend his Church. His earlier books, however, were marketed as having been written by someone who had left the Church. According to a 1989 report in the *Washington Post*, Cornwell “was once a

seminarian at the English College in Rome and knows the Vatican terrain, [but] he has long since left the seminary and the Catholic faith, and thus writes with that astringent, cool, jaundiced view of the Vatican that only ex-Catholics familiar with Rome seem to have mastered." At that time Cornwell described himself as a "lapsed Catholic for more than 20 years."

In *The Hiding Places of God* (1991) he declared that human beings are "morally, psychologically and materially better off without a belief in God." He also said that he had lost his "belief in the mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist." Reviews of that book called Cornwell an agnostic and former Catholic. As late as 1996, when he was supposedly trying to vindicate Pius XII, Cornwell called himself a "Catholic agnostic," who did not believe in the soul as an immaterial substance.

Perhaps more revealing are Cornwell's prior comments about Pope Pius XII. In his 1989 book, *A Thief in the Night*, Cornwell mentions the "alleged anti-Semitism" of Pius without offering any explanatory comment. Then, on page 162, he mocks Pius, saying that he was "totally remote from experience, and yet all-powerful-a Roman emperor." He goes on to call Pius an "emaciated, large-eyed demigod." In 1995 in London's *Sunday Times*, Cornwell described Pius as a diplomat, a hypochondriac and a ditherer. The next year, when he was supposedly working on his defense of Pius XII, Cornwell wrote in the *New York Times* of Pius XII's silence on Nazi atrocities" as an example of a failing by the Catholic Church. In light of this evidence, his claim to have had nothing but the slightest regard for Pius XII up until 1997 is simply not believable.

As to his claim to have received special assistance from the Vatican due to earlier writings which were favorable to the Church, a simple call to the Vatican would have revealed that he received no special treatment. Any competent scholar can obtain access to the archives that he saw without promising to

be “favorable” to the Church. Moreover, a quick consultation of Cornwell’s earlier books (or easily-available reviews thereof) reveals that he has never been friendly to the Holy See.

In *A Thief in the Night*, Cornwell rejected rumors of a Vatican conspiracy to poison Pope John Paul I, but his conclusion that a cold-hearted bureaucracy let the Pope die was almost as bad. Cornwell, voicing sentiments that sound exactly like what he now says about his new book, wrote: “The Vatican expected me to prove that John Paul I had not been poisoned by one of their own, but the evidence led me to a conclusion that seems to me more shameful even, and more tragic, than any of the conspiracy theories.”

Cornwell’s 1993 novel, *Strange Gods*, is about a Jesuit priest who keeps a mistress on whom he lavishes caviar and champagne, goes on golfing holidays in Barbados, and takes lithium for manic-depressive swings. He supports his lifestyle by absolving a wealthy Catholic benefactor from his own sins of the flesh. *The Independent* (London) called the priest “a cut-out model of a sexually tortured Catholic.” Driven by fear and desperation, the priest deserts his pregnant mistress in favor of a dangerous, immoral venture in an obscure part of Latin America. When he returns to England, his faith is transformed into what one reviewer called “a soggy Christian humanism.”

In *The Hiding Places of God* (1991) Cornwell wrote of his days in the seminary: “I took delight in attempting to undermine the beliefs of my fellow seminarians with what I regarded as clever arguments; I quarreled with the lecturers in class and flagrantly ignored the rules of the house.”

“60 Minutes” skipped over these matters even though they were contained in the April issue of *Brill’s Content* magazine, which was on newsstands at the time of the broadcast. Instead they interviewed Gerhard Riegner, who complained about Pope Pius XII’s “silence.”

Riegner wrote a memorandum to the Holy See, dated March 18, 1942, describing Nazi persecution. Cornwell describes this memo in his book and leaves the impression that the Vatican failed to take any action in response to it. Cornwell fails, however, to note the letter of thanks that Riegner himself sent on April 8, 1942. In that letter, Riegner, on behalf of the World Jewish Congress, states:

We also note with great satisfaction the steps undertaken by His Excellence the Cardinal Maglione, with authorities of Slovakia on behalf of the Jews of that country, and we ask you kindly to transmit to the Secretariat of State of the Holy See the expression of our profound gratitude.

We are convinced that this intervention greatly impressed the governmental circles of Slovakia, which conviction seems to be confirmed by the information we have just received from that country...

In renewing the expressions of our profound gratitude, for whatever the Holy See, thanks to your gracious intermediation, was good enough to undertake on behalf of our persecuted brothers, we ask Your Excellency to accept the assurance of our deepest respect.

Ed Bradley asked about the numerous letters sent from various Jewish groups following the war, but there was no mention of Riegner's own letter of thanks.

In fact, the recently-released memoirs of Adolf Eichmann, chief of the Gestapo's Jewish Department, reveal the Nazis' knowledge that Pius was deeply offended by these arrests and that he worked hard to prevent the deportations. (Ironically, given complaints about secrecy within the Vatican, this important piece of evidence was suppressed by the Israeli government from 1961 until March 2000.)

On a different matter, Bradley said that Pius objected to having black soldiers garrison the Vatican following Rome's

liberation because the Pope had heard reports of rape being committed by African-American troops. This clearly offended Bradley, and he used it to raise questions about the canonization effort.

Actually, confusion about this situation stems from a report the Pope received about French Algerian troops. The report said that these troops had raped and pillaged in other areas where they were stationed, and the Pope did not want these specific soldiers stationed in Rome. Pius expressed his concerns about these specific men to British Ambassador Osborne who broadened the statement in his cable back to London, saying that the Pope did not want "colored troops" stationed at the Vatican. Bradley said that Pius was talking about African-American troops, which is clearly not correct.

Cornwell expressed the opinion in the "60 Minutes" segment that things could not possibly have been worse for the Jews than they were. To say this is to ignore the hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of Jewish men, women, and children who were saved by Pius XII and those who were working at his direction. Those Jewish victims, however, were very thankful during and after the war.

Gerhard Riegner said that the numerous offers of thanks and praise at the end of the war were merely political maneuvers, designed to restore good relations between Jewish and Catholic people. However, 13 years later, at the time of his death, Pius XII efforts to save Jews from the Nazis was still the primary focus of attention. The Anti-Defamation League, the Synagogue Council of America, the Rabbinical Council of America, the American Jewish Congress, the New York Board of Rabbis, the American Jewish Committee, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the National Council of Jewish Women all expressed sorrow at his passing and thanks for his good works. *The Jewish Post* (Winnipeg) explained in its November 6, 1958 edition:

It is understandable why the death of Pius XII should have called forth expressions of sincere grief from practically all sections of American Jewry. For there probably was not a single ruler of our generation who did more to help the Jews in their hour of greatest tragedy, during the Nazi occupation of Europe, than the late Pope.

Then Israeli representative to the United Nations and future Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, said: "During the ten years of Nazi terror, when our people went through the horrors of martyrdom, the Pope raised his voice to condemn the persecutors and to commiserate with their victims." Nahum Goldmann, President of the World Jewish Congress, said: "With special gratitude we remember all he has done for the persecuted Jews during one of the darkest periods of their entire history."

Unfortunately, these voices were not heard on "60 Minutes," nor are they to be found in Cornwell's book.

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Frequently Asked Questions about Pope Pius XII and the

Holocaust

by Robert P. Lockwood

(4/2000)

The general charge against Pope Pius XII is that he maintained a “continued attitude of silence” in the face of Nazism and the horror of the Holocaust. Was the Pope silent?

Pope Pius XII was not silent in the face of Nazism, either before he was elected pope in 1939 or during the war years. As Golda Meir, future Israeli Prime Minister and then Israeli representative to the United Nations, said on the floor of the General Assembly at the Pope's death in 1958: “During the ten years of Nazi terror, when our people went through the horrors of martyrdom, the Pope raised his voice to condemn the persecutors and commiserate with the victims.” Some of the Jewish organizations that praised Pope Pius XII at the time of his death for saving Jewish lives during the horror of the Nazi Holocaust were: the World Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the Synagogue Council of America, the Rabbinical Council of America, the American Jewish Congress, the New York Board of Rabbis, the American Jewish Committee, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the American Jewish Committee, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the National Council of Jewish Women. Were all these simply lying or playing politics? Would these organizations insult the memory of the millions killed for some ephemeral political gain?

While stationed in Germany in the 1920s, Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, was deeply concerned about the nascent Nazi party in Germany. As early as 1925, Pacelli expressed fears about the Nazi threat. He reported to Rome that Hitler was a violent man who “will walk over corpses” to achieve his goals. In 1928, with Pacelli's assistance, the Holy office

issued a strong condemnation of the anti-Semitism foundational to the Nazis: "(T)he Holy See is obligated to protect the Jewish people against unjust vexations and...particularly condemns unreservedly hatred against the people once chosen by God; the hatred that commonly goes by the name anti-Semitism."

As the Holy See's Secretary of State in the 1930s, Pacelli lodged nearly 60 formal protests with the Nazis over their treatment of the Jews. He wrote most of the 1937 encyclical of Pope Pius XI *Mit Brennender Sorge* that was a strong denunciation of Nazism. The encyclical, written in German, was published and distributed throughout Germany at the risk of life. In 1938, Pacelli had spoken at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris against the Nazi "pagan cult of race," as well as the "vile criminal actions" and "iniquitous violence" of the Nazi leadership. In 1939, immediately after the death of Pius IX, the German government issued a veiled warning to the College of Cardinals not to elect Pacelli as he was known to be an enemy of Nazism. In the very first encyclical of his papacy, issued on October 20, 1939 (*Summi Pontificatus*), Pius XII warned of the dictators of Europe – "an ever-increasing host of Christ's enemies" – and called for St. Paul's vision of world that was neither Gentile or Jew. The Gestapo labeled the encyclical a direct attack, while the French had copies printed and dropped by air over Germany. The New York Times summarized the encyclical as an uncompromising attack on racism and dictators.

During the war, the New York Times called Pius XII "the only ruler left on the Continent of Europe who dares to raise his voice at all...the Pope put himself squarely against Hitlerism...he left no doubt that the Nazi aims are also irreconcilable with his own conception of a Christmas peace." In major Christmas messages in 1941 and 1942 Pope Pius XII condemned the racial hatred of the Nazis. Vatican Radio and the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, both under the direction of Pope Pius XII, issued numerous statements against

the Nazi actions. In written letters to world leaders – even to those leaders in Nazi satellite countries – Pius XII expressed his horror of the persecution of the Jews. He reminded Catholics of Europe that it was their duty to protect victims of Nazism. He begged allied countries to accept Jewish refugees and would fight through his nuncios to prevent forced Jewish deportations to work camps.

The record goes on and on. Pius XII and the Church were neither silent nor complacent in the face of the Nazi horror.

At what point do you think the Pope should have stepped up and said: "Nazism is morally sinful and to be a subscriber to the theories of Hitler is to be anti-Catholic"? What prevented the Vatican from de-legitimizing the Catholicism of practicing Nazis, refusing them communion, and excommunicating them?

First, remember that Pius XII and his predecessor Pius XI, to whom he served as Secretary of State, made it fundamentally clear that cooperation with the Nazi racial agenda and Jewish persecution could not be allowed. One cannot suggest that Catholics did not understand that as papal teaching at the time. Far too many Catholics, however, out of either ideological agreement or pure fear, chose instead to follow the nationalistic goals of their homeland than listen to the entreaties of the Popes.

Second, while formal proclamations of excommunication and interdict would provide stirring reading today, what could they have possibly accomplished at the time? It could hardly be argued that it would have caused Hitler and his Nazi goons to suddenly come to a conversion of heart and to re-think the "Jewish question" or their war aims. It would be even more foolish to think that any kind of "Catholic uprising" in Nazi Germany would have ensued. Catholics who cooperated with the dictatorships had already chosen to ignore papal statements.

Once the war began and, in 1942, the "Final Solution" began in

earnest, the primary goal of Pius XII was to save lives. That could best be accomplished, he believed, through the effective work of the papal nuncios on the scene, public statements challenging Nazi beliefs, quiet negotiations for immigration, and stealth tactics of hiding Jewish refugees, baptizing when necessary, and issuing false papers. This was, after all, occupied Europe with the Vatican existing on a few acres within an Axis state. Preserving Vatican neutrality, and the capability of the Church to continue to function where possible in occupied Europe and Nazi-allied states, was a far better strategy to save lives than Church sanctions on a regime that would have merely laughed at them.

When 60,000 German soldiers and the Gestapo occupied Rome, thousands of Jews were hiding in churches, convents, rectories, the Vatican and the papal summer residence.

Would excommunications and lightening bolts from the Chair of St. Peter have been more effective in saving their lives?

Issuing such thunderbolts would have done nothing to end the "Final Solution" and would have severely limited, if not ended altogether, the Church's capacity to save Jewish lives.

Pinchas Lipade, Israeli consul in Italy after the war, estimated that the tactics adopted by Pius XII in the face of the Nazis saved over 800,000 Jewish lives during World War II. If that were an exaggeration by half, it would still record more Jewish lives saved by any other entity at the time. It is hard to argue against the effectiveness of the Pope's strategy.

Why did Pacelli as Secretary of State under Pius XI, sign an agreement – a "concordat" – with the Nazis in 1933? Didn't this just serve to give legitimacy to the Nazi government?

Despite vocal opposition from the Catholic Church in Germany where National Socialism's racist views were routinely condemned as contrary to Catholic principles and Catholics

were ordered not to support the party, by 1933 Hitler had become German chancellor. Pacelli was dismayed with the Nazi assumption of power and by August of 1933 he expressed to the British representative to the Holy See his disgust with "their persecution of the Jews, their proceedings against political opponents, the reign of terror to which the whole nation was subjected." When it was stated that Germany now had a strong leader to deal with the communists, Archbishop Pacelli responded that the Nazis were infinitely worse.

At the same time, however, the Vatican was forced to deal with the reality of Hitler's rise to power. In June 1933 Hitler had signed a peace agreement with the western powers, including France and Great Britain, called the Four-Power Pact. At the same time Hitler expressed a willingness to negotiate a statewide concordat with Rome. The concordat was concluded a month later. In a country where Protestantism dominated, the Catholic Church was finally placed on a legal equal footing with the Protestant churches.

Did the concordat negotiated by Pacelli give legitimacy to the Nazi regime?

No. Forgotten is the fact that it was preceded both by the Four-Power Pact and a similar agreement concluded between Hitler and the Protestant churches. The Church had no choice but to conclude such a concordat, or face draconian restrictions on the lives of the faithful in Germany. Pacelli denied that the concordat meant Church recognition of the regime. Concordats were made with countries, not particular regimes, he stated. Pope Pius XI would explain that it was concluded only to spare persecution that would take place immediately if there was no such agreement. The concordat also gave the Holy See the opportunity to formally protest Nazi action in the years prior to the war and after hostilities began. It provided a legal basis for arguing that baptized Jews in Germany were Christian and should be exempt from legal disabilities. Though the

Concordat was routinely violated before the ink was dry, it did save Jewish lives.

The Vatican began to formally protest Nazi action almost immediately after the concordat was signed. The first formal Catholic protests under the concordat concerned the Nazi government's call for a boycott of Jewish businesses. Numerous protests would follow over treatment of both the Jews and the direct persecution of the Church in Nazi Germany. The German foreign minister would report that his desk was stuffed with protests from Rome, protests rarely passed on to Nazi leadership.

Were there Catholics – including priests and bishops – who cooperated with the Nazis?

Certainly, individual Catholics – including some in leadership positions – cooperated with Nazism and even turned a blind eye toward the Final Solution. The Church has always included sinners whose wrongs create scandal. Yet, they did so not with the support of either Pope Pius XI or Pope Pius XII. For example, on March 12, 1938, Hitler's troops moved into Austria to force the "Anschluss" – "union" – of Austria with Germany. The archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Theodor Innitzer, issued a statement welcoming the Anschluss that was generally popular in Austria at the time. The Austrian bishops also issued a statement in praise of the German government.

The Holy See had strongly opposed the German annexation and was horrified at the local Church's statements of support. Vatican Radio immediately broadcast a strong denunciation of the statement and Pacelli, as Secretary of State, summoned the archbishop of Vienna to Rome. Pacelli met with Cardinal Innitzer and told him that the statement of support had to be withdrawn publicly. A new statement was issued, in the name of the Austrian bishops: "The solemn declaration of the Austrian bishops on 18 March of this year was clearly not intended to be an approval of something that was not and is not compatible

with God's law."

Often times, it should be understood, accusations of cooperation by certain Church leaders are a misreading of the historical record. In the recent Vatican document on the Holocaust, a number of prominent Church leaders are singled out for their brave work at the time. One name mentioned is Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich for his early pastoral statements in 1931 condemning Nazism; and his series of Advent sermons in 1933 that were a theological defense of the Jews and the Old Testament.

Some have taken issue with praise for Cardinal Faulhaber, accusing him of advocating that the German bishops ignore the atrocities of the Nazi leadership. That accusation is based on a quote from the minutes of a meeting between the cardinals of Germany and Pope Pius XII just after his election as pope in March 1939 and before the onslaught of World War II. The meetings specifically concerned the status of the Catholic Church in Germany, where a virtual state of "war" existed between the Church and the Nazis. Pius XII had called the meetings to discuss with the prelates if a new papacy could possibly lead to better relations. Most of the German prelates had been in the middle of these battles with the Nazis, and Cardinal Faulhaber agreed that it might be best if the new Pope take the lead in discussions.

The full quote of Cardinal Faulhaber from the minutes of this first meeting is: "There are times when we doubt that the upper echelons of the party in general desire peace. The (leaders) want to be combatants to such an extent that they would love nothing more than to be given a reason for fighting, especially when it concerns the church. But I likewise believe that *we, the bishops, should act as if we see nothing* (emphasis added). This is why we are respectfully grateful to your Holiness for the steps which will be taken on behalf of peace."

Clearly, the “peace” that Cardinal Faulhaber refers to concerns the ongoing battles of the Nazi leadership with the Church in Germany, obviously not to war itself which would not begin until August of that year. And just as clearly, when he is stating that the “bishops should act as if we see nothing,” he is referring to the strategy that the Pope has suggested in dealing with the Nazis over persecution of the Church in Germany. The statement had nothing to do with general policy toward Nazi atrocities past, present or future, but rather a tactic on how to deal with specific Church-related issues at that moment.

Again, individual Catholics did cooperate with the Nazi regime. In the document on the Holocaust cited below, the Church has condemned any such cooperation by its “sons and daughters.” But it is neither logical nor historically accurate to therefore extend a charge of cooperation with Nazism to the Church in general or Pius XII specifically. Rather, certain Catholics acted in such a fashion despite the Church and despite the clearly stated teaching of the Pope.

Would traditional Christian anti-Semitism account for the fact that some Catholics cooperated with the Nazis?

After acknowledging the sad legacy of anti-Jewish bigotry in Christian Western Europe, and the rise in anti-Jewish racial theories that would find its ultimate horror in pagan Nazism, the Vatican statement on the Holocaust addresses this issue:

But it may be asked whether the Nazi persecution of the Jews was not made easier by the anti-Jewish prejudices imbedded in some Christian minds and hearts. Did anti-Jewish sentiment among Christians make them less sensitive, or even indifferent, to the persecutions launched against the Jews by National Socialism when it reached power?

Any response to this question must take into account that we

are dealing with the history of people's attitudes and ways of thinking, subject to multiple influences. Moreover, many people were altogether unaware of the "final solution" that was being put into effect against a whole people; others were afraid for themselves and those near to them; and still others were moved by envy. A response would need to be given case by case. To do this, however, it is necessary to know what precisely motivated people in a particular situation.

At first, the leaders of the Third Reich sought to expel the Jews. Unfortunately, the governments of some Western countries of Christian tradition, including some in North and South America, were more than hesitant to open their borders to persecuted Jews. Although they could not foresee how far the Nazi hierarchs would go in their criminal intentions, the leaders of these nations were aware of the hardships and dangers to which Jews living in the territories of the Third Reich were exposed. The closing of borders to Jewish emigration in those circumstances, whether due to anti-Jewish hostility or suspicion, political cowardice or shortsightedness, lays a heavy burden of conscience on the authorities in question.

In the lands where the Nazis undertook mass deportations, the brutality which surrounded these forced movements of helpless people should have led to suspect the worst. Did Christians give every possible assistance to those being persecuted, and in particular to the persecuted Jews?

Many did, but others did not. Those who did help to save Jewish lives as much as was in their power, even to the point of placing their own lives in danger, must not be forgotten...Nevertheless, as Pope John Paul II has recognized, alongside such courageous men and women, the spiritual resistance and concrete action of other Christians was not that which might have been expected from Christ's followers. We cannot know how many Christians in countries occupied or ruled by the Nazi powers or their allies were horrified at

the disappearance of their Jewish neighbors and yet were not strong enough to raise their voices in protest. For Christians, this heavy burden of conscience of their brothers and sisters during the Second World War must be a call to penitence.

We deeply regret the errors and failures of those sons and daughters of the church...(we) appeal to our Catholic brothers and sisters to renew the awareness of the Hebrew roots of their faith. We ask them to keep in mind that Jesus was a descendant of David; that the Virgin Mary and the Apostles belonged to the Jewish people; that the Church draws sustenance from the root of that good olive tree on to which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the gentiles (cf. Rom 11: 17-24); that the Jews are our dearly beloved brothers, indeed in a certain sense they are "our elder brothers..."

The Church canonized Edith Stein, a Jewish convert who became a nun and was killed in the Holocaust. Stein actually was killed because she was Jewish. Isn't this just a means for the Church to try to claim "victimhood" in the Holocaust?

When Pope John Paul II canonized Edith Stein – with the very real intent of seeing her as a unifying individual among Catholics and Jews – he was vilified. Her canonization was subject to strong attack, something that should never be done to the memory of any victim of the Holocaust.

In Holland in 1942, the Catholic archbishop of Utrecht released a forceful letter to all the Catholic churches protesting the deportations of the Jews to "work camps." The Gestapo responded by revoking the exception that had been given to Jews who had been baptized and a round up was ordered. Caught in the web was Edith Stein, a Jewish convert who had become a nun. As a Christian of Jewish descent in a convent in Holland, Stein had first avoided arrest at the

hands of the Nazis. She, her sister, and 600 Catholic Jews were transported to Auschwitz, where she died.

Some have claimed that she did not die a martyr. Stein died, they say, because she was a Jew. Her Catholicity had nothing to do with it. Her canonization was an attempt to claim victimhood for the Church in the Holocaust. But this simply does not square with the facts. Stein died because she was a Jew and a Catholic, the very specific reasons for her arrest. Her arrest was retaliation against Christians of Jewish ancestry because of the outspoken criticisms of the Nazis by the Catholicarchbishop of Utrecht.

Second, the reason for the canonization is not some attempt to claim an equivalent victimhood for the Church in the Holocaust. Pope John Paul II has worked tirelessly for improved Christian-Jewish relations. The canonization of Stein recognized both her heroic Catholic witness, and her Jewish heritage.

Numerous Catholics were killed in the Holocaust. The Church in Poland suffered tremendously and many priests, religious and laity died in the death camps along with their Jewish brothers and sisters. Certainly, the Nazi "reasons" for slaughtering Catholics may have been different, and not purely genocidal as in the case of the Jews. Priests in Poland, for example, were killed because of their positions of leadership and because of Church opposition to the Nazis they were viewed as "enemies of the Reich." To acknowledge this historical reality is not to claim "victimhood" or an equivalency to what the Jews suffered in the Holocaust. Rather, the intent is to remind Catholics of this brave witness and the constant need to resistance to evil. It also serves to promote Catholic-Jewish solidarity, as no one can ever say again that it could be legitimate to be Catholic and anti-Semitic.

Didn't the Holy See – and Pius XII – believe that a strong Germany under the Nazis could serve as a bulwark for

preventing the spread of communism from the Soviet Union?

While there may have been Catholics who held such a belief, particularly in the years prior to the War, there is no evidence that this was ever a policy of Pope Pius XII. All his actions were to the contrary. As noted in an earlier question, when it was suggested to Archbishop Pacelli in August, 1933 that Germany now had a strong leader to deal with the communists, Archbishop Pacelli responded that the Nazis were far worse.

Pius XII was unpopular with certain schools of post World War II historians for the anti-Stalinist, anti-Communist agenda of his later pontificate. That was the primary source for this charge. Particularly in Italy in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the general charge against Pius was that while he was not pro-Nazi during the war, he hated Bolshevism more than he hated Hitler. For the most part, this charge was based solely on the Pope's opposition to the Allied demand for unconditional German surrender. He believed such a condition would only continue the horror of the war and increase the killing. That stand was later interpreted as a desire on the pontiff's part to maintain a strong Germany as a bulwark against communism. The theory was fiction. There was no documentary evidence to even suggest such a papal strategy. But it became popular, particularly among historians with Marxist sympathies in the 1960s. Even this theory, however, did not extend to an accusation that the Pope "collaborated" in the Holocaust, nor to any charge that the Church did anything other than save hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives. The evidence was simply too clear on that saving work for refutation. However, it did provide a mercenary rationale of "politics over people" in response to the Holocaust and applied such barbarous reasoning to the pope.

There are simply no strategies that the Pope undertook that would support such a charge. For example, after Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union in June, the question quickly

arose over aiding communists in the war against the Nazis. A 1937 encyclical of Pius XI appeared to ban any such cooperation. The issue became particularly important in the United States where aid was routinely supplied to the Allies and was to be extended to the Soviet Union. A number of bishops raised the issue and, very quickly, Pius XII settled the affair noting that aid to the “people” of the Soviet Union was not aid to communism. Despite later propaganda, it was clear that even an anti-religious Stalinist Soviet Union was viewed by the pontiff as far less an immediate enemy than the German Third Reich.

Why didn't Pope Pius XII join in Allied statements condemning the Axis nations?

In September 1942, Pius XII was approached by the Allies to join in a statement condemning the Nazi atrocities. This was to be an official statement of the Allied governments and, as such, it was impossible for Pius XII to join the effort. However, in his annual Christmas message of 1942, Pius XII would speak out once again forcefully. Pius condemned totalitarian regimes and mourned the victims of the war: “the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction.” He called on Catholics to shelter any and all refugees. The statement was loudly praised in the Allied world. In Germany, it was seen as the final repudiation by Pius XII of the “new order” imposed by the Nazis. The Gestapo reported that Pope Pius XII “is virtually accusing the German people of injustice toward the Jews, and makes himself the mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminal.”

Pope Pius XII did not join in with official Allied government statements attacking the Axis nations for obvious reasons. To maintain Vatican neutrality – an absolute necessity if the Holy See was to have any capability to save lives and protest Nazi action – it could not be viewed as a signature to Allied propaganda statements. As Pulitzer-prize winning historian

John Toland, no friend of Pius or the Church, noted: "The Church, under the Pope's guidance...saved the lives of more Jews than all other churches, religious institutions and rescue organizations combined...the British and Americans, despite lofty pronouncements, had not only avoided taking any meaningful action but gave sanctuary to few persecuted Jews."

If Jews could be disguised as Catholics, they were more capable of escaping Nazi persecution. Did the Church do enough in this regard? Could the Church have distributed more widely false baptismal certificates and thus save more Jews?

The Holy See never attempted to limit in any way Jewish baptisms or to forbid supplying false papers of Christian identity to Jews wherever possible. Untold numbers of lives were saved in this fashion. In Italy there were Religious orders that worked around the clock providing false documents. Numerous clergy gave brief catechism lessons so that Jews could pass as Catholics. Some were even taught the rudiments of Gregorian Chant. However, it must be remembered that often this simply did not work. In case after case, Nazi authorities – and the Gestapo in occupied countries – paid no attention to such paperwork or any such claims as their antipathy to Jews was racial and their religious "conversion" deemed unimportant.

In addition, Nazi-allied governments were wary of such conversions and, at times, the Church had to be careful in these matters. This became a serious issue, for example, in Romania. Romania was an Axis ally that had introduced anti-Semitic legislation prior to the war. Though Romania was primarily Orthodox in faith, the Vatican had a concordat with the government which allowed the Holy See a formal avenue of protest over treatment of Jews in general, as well as Jewish converts. In March 1941, the Romanian government was planning to forbid Jews to change their religion. Following instructions from Cardinal Maglione, Secretary of State under Pius XII, Archbishop Cassulo, papal nuncio in Romania, told

the government's foreign ministry that the Vatican would protest any attempt to tie the Church's hand in this regard. In a May 12 follow-up to the telegram, Archbishop Cassulo told Cardinal Maglione that he had written assurances from the government that freedom of worship would be guaranteed. On May 16, the secretary of the Holy Office sketched out for the nuncio norms to be followed in this regard to avoid a government crack down. He advised that no one sincerely seeking baptism be refused because of Romanian racial laws. Under the circumstances, however, precautions were necessary since there could be those who would be baptized, then simply withdraw from any practice of the faith. This would provide further ammunition to the government. Where reasonable doubt existed, baptism should be delayed.

This was certainly not an effort to limit Jewish baptisms, or a statement of general Church policy in occupied or Axis-allied Europe, or even in Romania itself. Specific to Romania and as noted in Father Pierre Blet's documentation from the Vatican archives in the book "Pius XII and the Second World War" (Paulist Press): "(B)aptizing Jews caused problems. The number of Jews requesting baptism had increased considerably, and it was rumored that the Holy See, 'confronted with the danger in which the Jews were placed, ordered that they were to be baptized en masse after receiving a short preparation, with further instruction being delayed until a later time.' On 18 April 1942 the Romanian minister to the Holy See told Cardinal Maglione that the number of conversions was high, too high and thus was suspect. Consequently the government was suggesting that the pope suspend admission into the Catholic Church for the duration of the war, a proposal that was, of course, rejected."

Didn't Pope Pius XII, shortly after his election, refuse to release an encyclical drafted under Pius XI that would have forthrightly condemned anti-Semitism? What is the story behind

this “hidden encyclical”?

An encyclical was drafted toward the end of the reign of Pope Pius XI that was to have condemned anti-Semitism in general. It is argued that Pope Pius XII killed the encyclical because of that condemnation. However, it is clear that Pius killed the encyclical because it was a weak effort with a variety of bad sections that could only have encouraged, rather than discouraged anti-Semitism. It was this weakness of the encyclical draft that was the real reason it was never published not some lurking anti-Semitism. Pius XII, an outspoken critic of anti-Semitism along with his predecessor Pius IX, would never have allowed such a poorly drafted encyclical to be released. If Pius XI had been healthy, he would never have allowed the draft of such a weak encyclical to be issued as well.

To argue that the Holy See was unwilling to condemn anti-Semitism is to fly in the face of an encyclical that already condemned Nazis and their treatment of the Jews (*Mit Brennender Sorge*, 1937). There are also all the additional written and public statements that would be issued by Pius XII and the Vatican throughout the war years, including his very first encyclical in 1939, *Summi Pontificatus*, on the unity of human society. That encyclical can rightly be seen as the papal “testament” against anti-Semitism, rather than the flawed “hidden encyclical.”

Do Catholics go too far in the defense of a beloved spiritual leader in Pius XII? Isn't further research necessary in this area, particularly in secret Vatican archives?

The assumption is that Catholics defend Pope Pius XII because he was a “beloved spiritual leader.” Catholics defend Pope Pius XII because he is unjustly attacked as a “silent collaborator” in the Holocaust. This charge is false and flies in the face of the clear historical record. That said, no one would oppose honest research and investigation of the papacy of Pope Pius XII. Such is now necessary in light of the campaign

of vilification aimed at him. In reporting and editorials on the Holocaust, it is routinely presented as historical fact that Pius XII and the Church were, at best, stonily silent, or, at worst, aided and abetted the Nazi killing machine. Many simply accept these false charges without any real knowledge of the past. The historical reality of the pontificate of Pius XII has nearly been lost in the face of the strident campaign against him. Contemporary Catholics are witnessing the creation of a myth in regard to Pius XII. This campaign, triggered by Rolf Hochhuth's libelous 1963 play *The Deputy*, thrives on false history. Competent, objective historical scholarship will do nothing but lead to a renewed appreciation of his pontificate and what he accomplished in saving lives during the Holocaust.

The question is raised concerning "secret documents" in the Vatican. Under the direction of Pope Paul VI after the controversy caused by Rolf Hochhuth's play, 11 volumes of the documents were sorted and released from the Vatican archives. There is no foundation to any charge that there are "secret" documents that the Vatican is hiding in regard to the Holocaust and the Church's relations with Nazi Germany.

Could Jewish opposition to the beatification of Pope Pius XII lead to an increase in anti-Semitism among Catholics?

There is no way that Jewish opposition to the beatification of Pope Pius XII could lead to any "increase in anti-Semitism" among Catholics. As stated in the document on the Holocaust: "To remember this terrible experience is to become fully conscious of the salutary warning it entails: the spoiled seeds of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism must never again be allowed to take root in any heart." One cannot be properly Catholic and be anti-Semitic at the same time. As Pius XI boldly proclaimed: "We are all spiritual Semites."

However, this ongoing campaign against Pius XII – and the heated rhetoric it has engendered against the Church – could have a negative impact on Catholic-Jewish relations. Beginning with the papacies of Pius XI and Pius XII, proceeding through the Vatican Council and Paul VI, great strides had been made

in Catholic-Jewish relations. The papacy of John Paul II has seen one historic event after another, celebrating the Church's understanding that all Christians are "spiritual Semites." Yet the myth of the silence of Pius XII has overshadowed these historic developments. It has helped to entrench a persistent anti-Catholicism within elements of the Jewish community, while creating in certain Catholic circles a deep resentment that can only be harmful for all. While nothing can fully destroy the enormous strides taken by Pope John Paul II, leaving this myth unanswered and accepted can only do great damage to what should be a deep and close relationship between Catholics and Jews, generated in part by the heroism of Pope Pius XII in saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust.

What is the source for the attacks on Pope Pius XII? If he were not guilty of silence, what would be the reason for making such a claim?

The myth of Pius XII began in earnest in 1963 in a drama created for the stage by Rolf Hochhuth, an otherwise obscure German playwright born in 1931. Turgid in length, in 1963's *Der Stellvertreter* (*The Representative* or *The Deputy*) Hochhuth charged through an allegedly "documentary" presentation that Pius XII maintained an icy, cynical and uncaring silence during the Holocaust. More interested in Vatican investments than human lives, Pius was presented as a cigarette-smoking dandy with Nazi leanings.

The Deputy, even to Pius' most strenuous detractors, is readily dismissed. John Cornwell in *Hitler's Pope* describes *Der Stellvertreter* as "historical fiction based on scant documentation...(T)he characterization of Pacelli (Pius XII) as a money-grubbing hypocrite is so wide of the mark as to be ludicrous. Importantly, however, Hochhuth's play offends the most basic criteria of documentary: that such stories and portrayals are valid only if they are demonstrably true."

Yet *The Deputy*, despite its evident flaws, prejudices and lack of historicity, laid the foundation for the charges against Pius XII, five years after his death. As noted earlier, Pope Pius XII was unpopular with certain Marxist-leaning schools of post World War II historians for the anti-Stalinist, anti-Communist agenda of his later pontificate. Hochhuth's charge of papal "silence" fit perfectly with the campaign to destroy the reputation of Pope Pius XII. *The Deputy*, therefore, took on far greater importance than it deserved. Leftists used it as a means to discredit an anti-Communist papacy. Instead of Pius being seen as a careful and concerned pontiff working with every means available to rescue European Jews in the face of complete Nazi entrapment, an image was created of a political schemer who would sacrifice lives to stop the spread of Communism. *The Deputy* was merely the mouthpiece for an ideological interpretation of history that helped create the myth of a "silent" Pius XII doing nothing in the face of Nazi slaughter.

There was also strong resonance within the Jewish community at the time *The Deputy* appeared. The Jewish world had experienced a virtual re-living of the Holocaust in the trial of Adolf Eichmann. A key figure in the Nazi Final Solution, Eichmann had been captured in Argentina in 1960, tried in Israel in 1961 and executed in 1962. For many young Jews, Eichmann's trial was the first definitive exposure to the horror that the Nazis had implemented. At the same time, Israel was threatened on all sides by the unified Arab states. War would erupt in a very short time. *The Deputy* resonated with an Israel that was surrounded by enemies and would be fighting for its ultimate survival.

It seems ludicrous that a pope praised for his actions by all leading Jewish organizations throughout his life could be discredited based on nothing more than a theatrical invention. Yet, that is what took place and has taken place since. A combination of political and social events early in the 1960s,

biased historical revisionism, and an exercise in theatrical rhetoric, created the myth of the uncaring pontiff in contradiction to the clear historical record.

Today, that myth serves its own ideological purposes as certainly, the campaign against Pope Pius XII is used for anti-Catholic purposes. Like many of the anti-Catholic canards rooted in the culture, the myth of Pius XII is raised to attack a host of Catholic positions on issues and the Church itself. It feeds anti-Catholic rhetoric.

In light of Pope John Paul II's visit to Israel and his statements at Yad Vashem and at the Western Wall, what is foreseen as the future of Catholic-Jewish relations?

The papacy of Pope John Paul II, building on the foundation of his 20th century predecessors and the Second Vatican Council, has taken enormous strides in the development of Catholic-Jewish relations. This is much more than simply dialogue, symbolic acts, or ecumenical gestures. It has promoted a deep Catholic sense and appreciation of our “elder brothers” in faith, as well as – it is hoped – a Jewish understanding of Catholics as people of the Book. The Pope has also called Catholics to a penitential understanding of the sins of the past in regard to the Jews, and the incompatibility of Catholicism with anti-Semitism.

At the same time, the pope's actions have allowed Jews to see not only the terrible sin of certain so-called Christians who cooperated with the Holocaust, but those Christians who heroically saved lives, and lost their own. By the canonization of Edith Stein, he has raised up the example of a Christian and a Jew who died as both in the horror of the Holocaust. She is a living sign – a martyr if you will – for the betterment of Catholic-Jewish relations.

Eventually, this propaganda campaign against Pius XII will collapse. Without any basis in fact, this will vanish from the

scene. And as that happens, one can foresee only a deeper growth in understanding between Catholics and Jews.

John Cornwell: Hitler's Pope

by Ronald Rychlak

(*Catalyst* 12/1999)

John Cornwell's new book, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*, turns out to be a deeply flawed attack on Pope John Paul II. That's right, the final chapter is actually an attack on the current plaintiff. Cornwell is disturbed by John Paul's "conservative" positions on celibate clergy, women priests, artificial contraception, and abortion. He is especially concerned about the Pope's opposition to direct political activity by the clergy.

Cornwell apparently decided that the easiest way to attack the Pope of today was to go after Pius XII. If he can prove that Pius was flawed, then he establishes that popes can be wrong. If that is the case, then he can argue that John Paul II is wrong about the whole catalogue of teachings that tend to upset many modern Catholics.

Cornwell's thesis is that Eugenio Pacelli—Pope Pius XII—was driven by the desire to concentrate the authority of the Church under a strong, central papacy. Cornwell argues that as Pacelli worked toward that end, he created a situation that was easy for Hitler to exploit. Cornwell denies that Pacelli was a "monster." In fact, he recognizes that Pacelli "hated" Hitler. His theory, deeply flawed though it may be, is that

Hitler exploited Pacelli's efforts to expand Roman influence. Unfortunately, many reviews, like those in the *New York Post* and the *London Sunday Times*, missed that point. They simply reported that "Pius XII helped Adolf Hitler gain power," as if the two worked together. That is certainly not Cornwell's point.

Some of the mistakes reported in the press are obvious to anyone who read Cornwell's book. For instance, *The Indianapolis News* reported that Pius knew of Hitler's plan for the Final Solution "in 1939 when he first became involved with the German leader." First of all, the Nazis did not decide on the course of extermination until 1942. Perhaps more telling, this statement is at odds with two things in the book: 1) Cornwell argues that Hitler and the future Pope Pius XII first "became involved" in the early 1930s, and 2) Cornwell expressly notes that Pius XII's first reliable information concerning extermination of the Jews came in the spring of 1942, not 1939.

Similarly, the *New York Post* reported in a couple of different editions that "Pacelli... met with Hitler several times." This is not true. The two men never met, and Cornwell does not claim that they did. The most common error by made reviewers was that of accepting Cornwell's assertions without checking out the facts. On some of these points, the reviewer's oversight might be forgiven. For instance, Viking Press has marketed this book as having been written by a practicing Catholic who started out to defend Pius XII. One is always reluctant to say what another person's beliefs are, so reviewers could be forgiven had they simply remained silent about that issue. Instead, the vast majority took delight in calling Cornwell a good, practicing Catholic.

Having decided to report on Cornwell's religious beliefs, the reviewers might have noted that his earlier books were marketed as having been written by a "lapsed Catholic for more than 20 years" and that reviewers said he wrote "with that

astriquent, cool, jaundiced view of the Vatican that only ex-Catholics familiar with Rome seem to have mastered." They might also have reported that during the time he was researching this book he described himself as an "agnostic Catholic." Finally, it might have been worth noting that in a 1993 book he declared that human beings are "morally, psychologically and materially better off without a belief in God." Instead, they presented only that side of the story that Cornwell and his publisher wanted the public to hear.

The Vatican had not yet spoken, so a reviewer might be excused for not knowing that Cornwell lied about being the first person to see certain "secret" files and about the number of hours that he spent researching at the Vatican. When, however, he claimed that a certain letter was a "time bomb" lying in the Vatican archives since 1919, a careful reviewer might have mentioned that it had been fully reprinted and discussed in *Germany and the Holy See: Pacelli's Nunciature between the Great War and the Weimar Republic*, by Emma Fattorini (1992).

That letter at issue reports on the occupation of the royal palace in Munich by a group of Bolshevik revolutionaries. Pacelli was the nuncio in Munich and a noted opponent of the Bolsheviks. The revolutionaries sprayed his house with gunfire, assaulted him in his car, and invaded his home. The description of the scene in the palace (which was actually written by one of Pacelli's assistants, not him) included derogatory comments about the Bolsheviks and noted that many of them were Jewish. Cornwell couples the anti-revolutionary statements with the references to Jews and concludes that it reflects "stereotypical anti-Semitic contempt." That is a logical jump unwarranted by the facts. Even worse, however, is the report in *USA Today* that Pacelli described Jews (not a specific group of revolutionaries) "as physically and morally repulsive, worthy of suspicion and contempt." Again, it is a case of the press being particularly anxious to report the worst about the Catholic Church.

Cornwell claims that he received special assistance from the Vatican due to earlier writings which were favorable to the Vatican. Many reviewers gleefully reported this and his asserted "moral shock" at what he found in the archives. A simple call to the Vatican would have revealed that he received no special treatment. If the reviewer were suspicious about taking the word of Vatican officials, a quick consultation of Cornwell's earlier works (or easily-available reviews thereof) would have revealed that he has never been friendly to the Holy See.

Cornwell stretched the facts to such a point that any impartial reader should be put on notice. For instance, Cornwell suggests that Pacelli dominated Vatican foreign policy from the time that he was a young prelate. One chapter describes the young Pacelli's hand in the negotiation of a June 1914 concordat with Serbia (he took the minutes), and leaves the impression that he was responsible for the outbreak of World War I.

Certainly Cornwell, who describes Pope Pius XI as "bossy" and "authoritarian," knows that Pacelli was unable to dominate Vatican policy as Secretary of State, much less as nuncio. Any fair reviewer should have at least questioned this point.

Another point that would be a tip-off to any critical reviewer is Cornwell's handling of the so-called "secret encyclical." The traditional story (and the evidence suggests that it is little more than that) is that Pius XI was prepared to make a strong anti-Nazi statement, and he commissioned an encyclical to that effect. A draft was prepared, but Pius XI died before he was able to release it. His successor, Pius XII, then buried the draft.

One of the problems that most critics of Pius XII have with this theory is that the original draft contained anti-Semitic statements. These critics are reluctant to attribute such sentiments to Pius XI. Cornwell resolved this problem by

accusing Pacelli of having written the original draft (or of having overseen the writing) when he was Secretary of State, then burying it when he was Pope. It is really such a stretch that any good reviewer should have questioned it. Instead, most merely took Cornwell at his word and reported that an anti-Semitic paper was written by Pacelli or under his authority. (In actuality, there is no evidence that either Pope ever saw the draft.)

Perhaps more startling than anything else is the way reviewers avoided any mention of the last chapter of Cornwell's book, entitled "*Pius XII Redivivus*." In this chapter, it becomes clear that the book is a condemnation of Pope John Paul II's pontificate, not just that of Pius XII. This chapter also reveals a serious flaw in Cornwell's understanding of Catholicism, politics, and the papacy of John Paul II.

Cornwell argues that John Paul II represents a return to a more "highly centralized, autocratic papacy," as opposed to a "more diversified Church." The over-arching theory of the book, remember, is that the centralization of power in Rome took away the political power from local priests and bishops who might have stopped Hitler. Accordingly, Cornwell thinks that John Paul is leading the Church in a very dangerous direction, particularly by preventing clergy from becoming directly involved in political movements, including everything from liberation theology to condom distribution.

Cornwell, of course, has to deal with the fact that John Paul II has played a central part in world events, including a pivotal role in the downfall of the Soviet Union. Cornwell's answer is that John Paul was more "sympathetic to pluralism" early in his pontificate, but that he has retreated into "an intransigently absolutist cast of mind" and has hurt the Church in the process.

Cornwell misses the important point that is so well explained in George Weigel's new biography of John Paul II, *Witness to*

Hope. John Paul's political impact came about precisely because he did not primarily seek to be political, or to think or speak politically. The pontiff's contribution to the downfall of Soviet Communism was that he launched an authentic and deep challenge to the lies that made Communistic rule possible. He fought Communism in the same way that Pius XII fought Nazism: not by name-calling but by challenging the intellectual foundation on which it was based.

John Paul has recognized the parallels between his efforts and those of Pius XII, perhaps better than anyone else. He, of course, did not have a horrible war to contend with, nor was he threatened with the possibility of Vatican City being invaded, but given those differences, the approach each Pope took was similar. As John Paul has explained: "Anyone who does not limit himself to cheap polemics knows very well what Pius XII thought of the Nazi regime and how much he did to help countless people persecuted by the regime." The most disappointing thing is that the modern press seems unable to recognize cheap polemics, at least when it comes to the Catholic Church.

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