Aurem Cordis™

Has the Church Sinned?:
The Holy Catholic Church and the Issue of the Jewish Holocaust

Corvallis Pillar of Truth
Corvallis Public Library

By
Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, M.T.S.

Corvallis, Oregon
October 30, 2005
1. Why is Pope Pius XII so Vehemently Attacked Today? The defamatory allegations against the Church and Pope Pius XII can be traced back to left-wing German writer Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 play, *The Deputy*. In this play, Hochhuth—a former member of the Hitler Youth movement—criticized the Pope for being silent and portrayed his silence as cold indifference. *The Deputy* "was highly polemical, claiming that Pius XII's concern for Vatican finances left him indifferent to the destruction of European Jewry."1 Even though the play was fiction, many took it as fact.

Ever since the play’s debut, it has been an unshakable axiom of popular myth that Pope Pius XII was a pseudo-Nazi, at the very least guilty of criminal cowardice and insensitivity in the face of the Holocaust. It is accepted as a truism that the Pope’s supposed failure to act and timidity in speaking out against the atrocities of the Nazis made him a silent partner in the massacre of millions. In the hands of some writers, this alleged collaboration of the Pope is adduced as evidence of the anti-Semitic and pro-fascist nature of the Catholic Church as a whole. *The Deputy* was more than a play. It was a sustained exercise in character assassination that was resoundingly echoed in the popular press.

During the past ten years, these attacks have been intensified by journalists and "scholars" who are more interested in sensationalism and promoting heterodox ideology than presenting sound, unbiased scholarship. The most popular criticisms have been generated by Peter Cornwell's book *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*, which has received much attention in the media and has sustained interest in the role of the Church and the actions of Pope Pius XII during the Jewish persecution. The unsubstantiated accusations, insinuations, and outright lies contained in this book

---

continue to slander the Church as they seep their way into popular consciousness, and shape public opinion and attitudes.

"Ronald Rychlak, a non-Catholic professor at the University of Mississippi Law School, has published *Hitler: the War and the Pope*, in which he examines and dismisses the one-sided case that has become the liberal populist myth about Pius XII. His most pointed reappraisal is of Cornwell's statement that, after examining the thousand-page depositions of several people who knew or worked with Pius XII, he 'left in a state of shock,' implying that what he had read proved beyond a doubt the pope's anti-Semitism.

"Rychlak, however, visited the same archive and checked Cornwell's supposed citations from these sworn statements. 'There was not a single point,' Rychlak says, 'that referred to anti-Semitism. There was not a single bad statement about the pope.'"

Rabbi David G. Dalin, author of *Pius XII and the Jews*, who states in his book that Pope Pius XII was in fact a great friend of the Jews, adds: "Very few of the many recent books about Pius XII and the Holocaust are actually about Pius XII and the Holocaust. The liberal best-selling attacks on the pope and the Catholic Church are really an intra-Catholic argument about the direction of the Church today. The Holocaust is simply the biggest club available for liberal Catholics to use against traditional Catholics in their attempt to bash the papacy and thereby to smash traditional Catholic teaching" .... Dalin concludes: "The anti-papal polemics of ex-seminarians like Garry Wills and John Cornwell, of ex-priests like James Carroll, and or other lapsed or angry liberal Catholics exploit the tragedy of the Jewish people during the Holocaust to foster their own political agenda of forcing changes on the Catholic Church today."

---


As we shall see, the facts prove beyond a reasonable doubt that in its diplomacy and in its direct humanitarian works, the Holy See was a champion of peace, of compassion, and of human dignity.

2. Did the Pope Support the Nazi Party? The January 26, 1998 issue of *Time* magazine\(^4\) claims that the Catholic Church apologized for "collaborating with the Nazis during World War II." The Holocaust Museum in Manhattan unjustly criticizes Pope Pius XII for being silent. Specialists in Holocaust studies characterize the Pope as a symbol of moral irresponsibility. The Bronx Museum of Art displays a painting called *Nazi Butchers*, featuring Pius XII in full papal regalia. These accusations beg the question: what was the true relationship between the Catholic Church and the Nazi Party?

It is true that on July 20, 1933, the Vatican signed a Concordat with the Reich, not as a sign of support for the new regime, but in an attempt to protect the Church's rights in Germany. The Church did not trust the Nazis from the start and this mistrust was well warranted: the Nazi Party violated the articles of the agreement almost immediately after it was ratified. In Lent 1937, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* ("With Burning Sorrow"). It was smuggled into Germany and read in all German churches at the same hour on Palm Sunday 1937. The encyclical firmly condemned the Nazi doctrines. The main point of *Mit brennender sorge* was to urge the Catholics of Germany to resist all appeals to abandon their Catholic faith for the quasi-paganism of Hitler's German National Church. Yet Cardinal Pacelli and Pius XI did not neglect to attack the racism that was a fundamental part of National Socialism: "Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State . . . or any other fundamental value of the worldly community . . . above their standard value and divinizes them to an

\(^4\)Page 20.
idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God." On September 20, 1938, Pius XI told German pilgrims that no Christian can take part in anti-Semitism, since spiritually all Christians are Semites.

In July 1933, only a few months after Hitler's rise to power, he began not only persecuting Jews but also Christians. He infiltrated the German Evangelical Federation (the Lutheran Church), removing leaders who were opposed to his agenda. Many of these ministers died in concentration camps or prisons, including the famous Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The persecution was even more intense for the Catholic Church. Gestapo agents attended Mass and listened to every homily preached, prepared to arrest any priest attacking or criticizing the regime. Chanceries were searched for "incriminating" documents. Communication with Rome was limited. Nazi propaganda represented the Church as unpatriotic and hoarding wealth, with clerics portrayed as idle and avaricious. By 1940, all Catholic schools had been closed, and religious instruction confined to the church itself or at home. Meanwhile, anti-Christian teaching was imparted in the public schools.

The December 23, 1940 issue of Time magazine contains an article about Christians living in Germany, both Catholic and Protestant, who opposed and suffered under the Nazis. It reports on the Archbishop of Munich, Michael Cardinal von Faulhaber, who led the Catholic opposition in Germany against the Nazis and claims that by late 1940, over 200,000 Christians were prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, with some estimates as high as 800,000.

The first concentration camp was established in 1933 at Dachau, outside of Munich. This camp was not so much an "extermination camp" as it was a camp for political prisoners, including priests. At Dachau alone, 2,700 priests were imprisoned (of which 1,000 died), and they were subject to gruesome tortures, including the medical experiments of Dr. Rascher.
The Church in Poland also suffered severely. During the first four months of the occupation following the September 1939 invasion, 700 priests were shot and 3,000 were sent to concentration camps, where 2,600 died. By the end of the war, three million Polish Catholics had been killed in concentration camps. It is uncertain how many more priests, religious, and laity in other countries died for the faith during the Nazi era.

"Of the forty-four speeches Pacelli gave in Germany as papal nuncio between 1917 and 1929, forty denounced some aspect of the emerging Nazi ideology. In March 1935, he wrote an open letter to the bishop of Cologne calling the Nazis 'false prophets with the pride of Lucifer'.”

It was while Pacelli was his predecessor's chief adviser that Pius XI made the famous statement to a group of Belgian pilgrims in 1938 that "anti-Semitism is inadmissible; spiritually we are all Semites." And it was Pacelli who drafted Pius XI's encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, a condemnation of Germany among the harshest ever issued by the Holy See. Indeed, throughout the 1930s, Pacelli was widely lampooned in the Nazi press as Pius XI's "Jew-loving" cardinal, because of the more than fifty-five protests he sent the Germans as the Vatican secretary of state.

After the invasion of Poland in 1939, Pius XII denounced the aggression of the Nazis and was in contact with the German generals who sought to overthrow Hitler. He proposed a peace conference involving Italy, France, England, Germany, and Poland in a last-minute effort to avert bloodshed. In 1940, the Pontiff pleaded for the rights of small nations and national minorities, and condemned total warfare and religious persecution.

How did the Nazis respond? They never forgave the Church for their condemnation of National Socialism. In 1940, Hitler made plans to depose Pius XII,

---

5Rabbi David G. Dalin, *Pius XII and the Jews.*
appoint his own "puppet" Pope, and move the Vatican administration to Germany. "Fascist documents published in 1998 speak of [another] German plan, dubbed "Rabat-Fohn," to be executed in January 1944. The plan called for the eighth division of the SS cavalry, disguised as Italians, to seize St. Peter's and 'massacre Pius XII with the entire Vatican' — and specifically names 'the papal protest in favor of the Jews' as the cause. When Pius XII was dead, the Nazi organ, Das Reich, smeared the Pope and Cardinal Pacelli with the terms they considered most vile: "Pius XI was a half-Jew, for his mother was a Dutch Jewess; but Cardinal Pacelli is a full Jew."

One final note on the Church's relationship with the Nazis. After the Concordat was violated and Hitler revealed his true intentions, the Catholic Church opposed him. Even the famous German physicist Albert Einstein testified to that. In the December 23, 1940 issue of Time magazine, Einstein said: "Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly."

3. Did Pius XII Remain Silent? Pope Pius XII was a diplomat and not a radical preacher. He knew that he first needed to preserve Vatican neutrality so that Vatican City could be a refuge for war victims. He also knew how powerless he was against Hitler and that the Nazis did not tolerate any protest, and responded severely when it occurred. For example, the Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht, in a pastoral letter published on April 19, 1942, protested against "the unmerciful and unjust treatment

---

6Rabbi David G. Dalin, Pius XII and the Jews.

7Page 38.
The letter was read in every Catholic church in the country in opposition to the Jewish persecution in Holland. Immediately the Nazis rounded-up as many Jews and Catholic non-Aryans as possible (about 300 in all) and deported them to Auschwitz, where they were immediately sent to the gas chambers. Among them was Saint Edith Stein, a Carmelite nun, philosopher and mystic. The Holy Father knew that every time he spoke out against Hitler, the Nazis could retaliate against the prisoners. His best attack against the Nazis was quiet diplomacy and behind-the-scenes action.

Pope Pius XII was not completely silent, however. His 1941 and 1942 Christmas messages were both translated and published in *The New York Times*. To prevent retaliation, he did not refer to Nazism by name, but people of that era still understood him, including the Nazis. According to the *New York Times* editorial on December 25, 1941: "The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas . . . he is about 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." Also, the *New York Times* editorial on December 25, 1942 says: "This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent. . . . Pope Pius expresses as passionately as any leader . . . 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." Both editorials recognize and highly praise Pius' words against Hitler and totalitarianism.

---

8December 25, 1941, pg.20 and December 25, 1942, pg.10.

9Late Day edition, pg.24.

10Late Day edition, pg.16.
"Any fair and thorough reading of the evidence demonstrates that Pius XII was a persistent critic of Nazism. His first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, rushed out in 1939 to beg for peace, was in part a declaration that the proper role of the papacy was to plead to both warring sides rather than to blame one. But it very pointedly quoted St. Paul — "there is neither Gentile nor Jew" — using the word "Jew" specifically in the context of rejecting racial ideology. The *New York Times* greeted the encyclical with a front-page headline on October 28, 1939: 'Pope Condemns Dictators, Treaty Violators, Racism.' Allied airplanes dropped thousands of copies on Germany in an effort to raise anti-Nazi sentiment.

"In March 1940, Pius granted an audience to Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister and the only high-ranking Nazi to bother visiting the Vatican. The Germans' understanding of Pius's position, at least, was clear: Ribbentrop chastised the pope for siding with the Allies. Whereupon Pius began reading from a long list of German atrocities. 'In the burning words he spoke to Herr Ribbentrop,'" the *New York Times* reported on March 14, Pius 'came to the defense of Jews in Germany and Poland'."

In the summer of 1944, after the liberation of Rome but before the war's end, Pius told a group of Roman Jews who had come to thank him for his protection: "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."

4. Why Didn't Pius XII Speak Out More Forcefully Against Hitler? Attempts to speak out against the Nazis was countered with swift and severe punishment inflicted on the prisoners. Monsignor Jean Bernard, a former inmate at Dachau and later

---

Bishop of Luxembourg, said "the detained priests trembled every time news reached us of some protest by a religious authority, but particularly by the Vatican. We all had the impression that our warders 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 naïve 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.'" Robert Kempner, an American who served as deputy chief of the Nuremberg war-crimes tribunal, wrote: "All the arguments and writings eventually used by the Catholic Church against Hitler only provoked suicide; the execution of the Jews was followed by that of Catholic priests."

It is often said that actions speak louder than words. According to the archives and testimony of the post-war government of the State of Israel, papal relief programs saved at least 860,000 Jews during the war, more than any other agency or organization. It should be noted that the United States only accepted a total of 10,000-15,000 Jewish refugees throughout the entire war.

What did Pope Pius XII do? From the very beginning Pius XII tried to persuade the allied governments to support German opposition to Hitler, but his pleading fell on deaf ears. The Pope decided that the best way to help the Jewish people was from the "inside" and papal policy in Nazi Europe was directed at local conditions and coordinated with local hierarchies. Pius XII wrote a secret letter to the Catholic bishops of Europe (Opere et caritate, i.e. By Work and By Charity ) and in it he called on the bishops to do everything they could to save the Jews and other victims of Nazi persecution.

The Pope continued an emigration program established by his predecessor, Pius XI, which helped Jews gain admittance to Brazil. Between 1939 and 1941, 3,000 Jews reached safety in South America through the direct action of Pius XII. During the same
period, the Pontiff supplied passports, money, tickets, and letters of recommendation to foreign governments so Jewish refugees could receive visas. Through these efforts, another 4,000-6,000 Jews reached safety.

The Pope lifted the rule of enclosure so cloistered convents and monasteries could hide Jews within sacred precincts where even the families of the monks and nuns could not set foot. The Pope initiated general relief efforts and coordinated the distribution of food and clothing. "Sixty Jews lived for nine months at the Gregorian University, and many were sheltered in the cellar of the pontifical biblical institute. Hundreds found sanctuary within the Vatican itself."12

Under the direction and Inspiration of the Pope, the Church in Italy and around the world--both religious and lay--responded with overwhelming courage. In Budapest, some 2,000 Jews were housed in convents and monasteries. In Italy, the Bishop of Assisi hid 300 Jews for over two years, and even set up a synagogue in the monastery of St. Francis where the refugees worshipped. The bishop of Campagna, along with Dr. Giovanni Palatucci and his extended family, saved 961 Jews in Fiume. Tragically, Dr. Palatucci's efforts were discovered and he was deported to Dacchau, where he was killed.

In 1942, the Pope's Palatine Guard numbered 300 men. By December 1943, there were 4,000 names on the rolls, all of them carrying a papal passport. At least 400 of these "guards" were Jews, of whom approximately 240 were sheltered inside Vatican City. More than half of the Jews in Rome were sheltered in ecclesiastical buildings opened on the express instructions of Pius XII himself, with an estimated 3,000 Jews living outside the city at the papal summer residence, Castel Gandolfo. Rabbi Dalin points out that "at no other site in Nazi-occupied Europe were as many Jews saved and sheltered for as long a period as at Castel Gandolfo during the Nazi occupation of

12Ibid.
Kosher food was served to the Jews sheltered there. Jewish children were even born in the Pope’s private apartments.

The Vatican Secretariat of State saved more Jews by faking their baptisms and sending lists of "baptized" Jews to the German Ambassador so that they could be evacuated. In Hungary, 80,000 baptismal certificates were issued by Church authorities to Jews. Many more were saved by the massive over-issuing of Vatican passports. In addition, the Pope appointed Fr. Pancrace Pfeiffer, a German, to intercede on behalf of prisoners, hostages, and condemned men. He is credited with personally winning the release of 400 Jews, including eight men who were released while on their way to a firing squad. In France, the rescue and sheltering efforts of Archbishop Saliege of Toulouse, together with Archbishop Gerlier of Lyons and Bishop Thias of Mantauban, saved 200,000 lives.

"In August 1943, Pius XII received a plea from the World Jewish Congress to try to persuade the Italian authorities to remove 20,000 Jewish refugees from internment camps in Northern Italy. 'Our terror-stricken brethren look to Your Holiness as the only hope for saving them from persecution and death.' In September 1943, A.L. Easterman, on behalf of the World Jewish Congress, reported to the Apostolic Delegate in London that the efforts of the Holy See on behalf of the Jews had been successful and wrote: 'I feel sure that the efforts of your Grace, and of 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'."14

Around the same time, the German Chief of Police in Rome threatened to send some 200 Jews to the Russian front unless they produced, within 36 hours, 50kg of gold

13Thomas E. Woods, Jr., The Myth of Hitler’s Pope.


Has the Church Sinned?: The Holy Catholic Church and the Issue of the Jewish Holocaust © Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, M.T.S. ©2005 Aurem Cordis. All Rights Reserved.
or its equivalent in currency. The Chief Rabbi approached the Holy See, which immediately placed 15kg at his disposal and lent the remainder of the money free of charge\textsuperscript{15} (Note: this is equivalent to one million dollars in today's market). In all, some 40,000 Jews throughout Italy were saved from the Nazis.

5. Did the Church Commit Sins Against the Jews During the Holocaust? Yes, there were traitors in the Church who were Nazis or helped Hitler. There were also Catholics who committed sins of prejudice and bigotry, or who—out of fear or indifference—sinned through silence. These transgressions are acknowledged in the Vatican Document, \textit{We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah}. John Paul II recognized "alongside such courageous men and women . . . who did help to save Jewish lives . . . even to the point of placing their own lives in danger . . . the spiritual resistance and concrete action of other Christians was not that which might have been expected from Christ's followers. 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 . . . The Catholic Church repudiates every persecution against a people or human group anywhere, at any time. She absolutely condemns all forms of genocide, as well as the racist ideologies that give rise to them."

"This is not to say that Pope Pius XII was as much a friend to the Jews as John Paul II had been. Nor is it to say that Pius was ultimately successful as a defender of Jews. Despite his desperate efforts to maintain peace, the war came, and, despite his protests against German atrocities, the slaughter of the Holocaust occurred. Even without benefit of hindsight, a careful study reveals that the Catholic Church missed opportunities to influence events, failed to credit fully the Nazis' intentions, and was

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{15}James Bogle, \textit{The Real Story of Pius XII and the Jews}.}
infected in some of its members with a casual anti-Semitism that would countenance — and, in a few instances, affirm — the Nazi ideology.

"In assessing what actions Pius XII might have taken, many wish that explicit excommunications had been announced. The Catholic-born Nazis had already incurred automatic excommunication"\(^16\) (*latae sententiae* or "by the very commission of the offense"), and even though a formal papal decree of excommunication wouldn't have meant anything to the Nazis, this public gesture would have been a strong sign of solidarity and support.

I suspect the Holy Father feared that provocating the Nazis in this way would further intensify and exacerbate the unrelenting retribution against the Jewish people and their supporters, and undermine his clandestine efforts to save as many lives as possible.\(^17\) For example, "Bishop Jean Bernard of Luxembourg, an inmate of Dachau from 1941 to 1942, notified the Vatican that 'whenever protests were made, treatment of prisoners worsened immediately.' Late in 1942, Archbishop Sapieha of Cracow and two other Polish bishops, having experienced the Nazis' savage reprisals, begged Pius not to publish his letters about conditions in Poland."\(^18\)

There's no denying, however, that his efforts were successful. "Jan Hermann and Dr. Max Pereles, from the Ferramonti-Tarsia concentration camp, went to the Vatican on October 29, 1944, to thank Pope Pius XII. They gave him a letter which

\(^16\)Rabbi David G. Dalin, *Pius XII and the Jews*.

\(^17\)Rabbi Dalin notes: "There is reason to believe provocation would, as Margherita Marchione puts it, 'have resulted in violent retaliation, the loss of many more Jewish lives, especially those then under the protection of the Church, and an intensification of the persecution of Catholics.' Holocaust survivors such as Marcus Melchior, the chief rabbi of Denmark, argued that 'If the pope had spoken out, Hitler would probably have massacred more than six million Jews and perhaps ten times ten million Catholics, if he had the power to do so.' Robert M.W. Kempner called upon his experience at the Nuremberg trials to say (in a letter to the editor after *Commentary* published an excerpt from Guenter Lewy in 1964), "Every propaganda move of the Catholic Church against Hitler's Reich would have been not only 'provoking suicide,' . . . but would have hastened the execution of still more Jews and priests.'" Rabbi David G. Dalin, *Pius XII and the Jews*.

\(^18\)Ibid.
read in part: 'While our brothers were hunted, imprisoned and threatened with death in almost every country in Europe, because they belonged to the Jewish people, Your Holiness …fearlessly raised his universally respected voice, in the face of our powerful enemies, in order to defend openly our rights to the dignity of man. ….When we were threatened with deportation to Poland, in 1942, Your Holiness extended a fatherly hand to protect us, and stopped the transfer of Jews interned in Italy, thereby saving us from almost certain death'."19

6. How Did the Jewish People React to Pius XII? The Jewish Community publicly acknowledged the wisdom of Pope Pius XII's diplomacy. Dr. Joseph Nathan (who represented the Hebrew Commission) stated: "Above all, we acknowledge the Supreme Pontiff and the religious men and women who, executing the directives of the Holy Father, recognized the persecuted as their brothers and, with great abnegation, hastened to help them, disregarding the terrible dangers to which they were exposed."

Golda Meir, Israel's representative to the United Nations, was the first of the delegates to react to the news of Pope Pius XII's death: "We share in the grief of humanity at the passing away of His Holiness, Pope Pius XII. In a generation afflicted by wars and discords, he upheld the highest ideals of peace and compassion. When fearful martyrdom came to our people in the decade of Nazi terror, the voice of the Pope was raised for its victims. The life of our times was enriched by a voice speaking out about great moral truths above the tumult of daily conflict. We mourn a great servant of peace."20


Leonard Bernstein, on learning of Pope Pius XII's death while conducting his orchestra in New York's Carnegie Hall, tapped his baton for a moment of silence to pay tribute to the Pope who had saved the lives of so many people without distinction of race, nationality, or religion.²¹

The foremost Jewish Scholar of the Holocaust at its height in Hungary, Jeno Levai, insisted some years ago that it was a "particularly regrettable irony that the one person in all of occupied Europe who did more than anyone else to halt the dreadful crime and alleviate its consequences is today made the scapegoat for the failures of others."²²

On January 2, 1940, the United Jewish Appeal for Refugees and Overseas Needs in Chicago sent the Pope a contribution of $125,000 toward the Vatican's efforts to save "all those persecuted because of religion or race." At the end of the war, the World Jewish Congress (mentioned earlier) expressed its gratitude to the Pope and gave 20 million lire (about $100,000 in today's dollars) to Vatican charities.

The Chief Rabbi of Rome during the Jewish occupation, Israel Zolli, stated that "volumes could be written on the multiform works of Pius XII, and the countless priests, religious, and laity who stood with him throughout the world during the war. No hero in all of history was more militant, more fought against, none more heroic, than Pius XII in pursuing the works of true charity . . . on behalf of all the suffering children of God." It is widely held that Rabbi Zolli was so impressed with Pius XII that in 1944 he was open to the grace of God, which led him into the Catholic faith. It is true that on February 13, 1945, in Rome's Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli, Israel Zolli and his wife Emma Majonica were baptized into the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Pius himself. At the font, Zolli took the name "Eugenio Maria," the Christian name of Pius XII. Zolli's

²¹Ibid.
²²Ibid.
conversion to Catholicism, while absolutely remarkable, was not so much a direct result of the actions of Pius XII, as it was the culmination of a spiritual journey that began not long after his arrival in Rome to begin his new assignment as Chief Rabbi of Rome in 1939.\(^{23}\)

7. **Conclusion.** The charge that Pius XII was indifferent to the fate of Jews is pure myth and fantasy, and detractors will always insist that he should have openly condemned Hitler and excommunicated the Nazis. When a legend is created from unrelated elements and with the aid of imagination, the only thing one can do is counter with historical reality proved by incontestable documentation. The historical record proves beyond any doubt that the Pope was not simply active but even heroic in his effort to save Jewish lives. Pius XII was not a German collaborator nor was he pro-Nazi. He saved more Jews than any other person, including Raoul Wallenberg and Oscar Schindler.

"The technique for recent attacks on Pius XII is simple. It requires only that favorable evidence be read in the worst light and treated to the strictest test, while unfavorable evidence is read in the best light and treated to no test."\(^{24}\) After a careful study of available documents, whoever is interested in the truth will no longer condemn the actions of Pius XII words and the Catholic Church during this tragic period. The Israel diplomat and scholar Pinchas Lapide concluded his critical and meticulous review of Pius XII's wartime activities with the following words: "The Catholic Church under the pontificate of Pius XII was instrumental in saving at least 700,000 lives, but probably as many as 860,000 Jews from certain death at Nazi hands. This figure far exceeds those saved by all other Churches and rescue organizations combined. No Pope in history


\(^{24}\)Rabbi David G. Dalin, *Pius XII and the Jews.*
has been thanked more heartily by Jews . . . several suggested in open letters that a Pope Pius XII forest of 860,000 trees be planted on the hills of Judea in order to fittingly honor the memory of the late Pontiff."²⁵ And indeed, Israel did indeed recognize and commemorate Pope Pius XII's contribution by planting an entire forest of trees in his honor in Negeb, southeast of Jerusalem, which was shown to Pope Paul VI on his first state visit to Israel. †