*Review Essay**

Eugenio Pacelli—Man and Pope

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At the time of his death in October 1958, Pope Pius XII was remembered as a great and good man who had worked tirelessly for peace throughout his nineteen-year pontificate. World leaders paid him fulsome tributes, and accounts of his life and the details of his funeral were posted on the front pages of many of the world's leading newspapers and seen by hundreds of thousands on newsreels and television. Within the Catholic Church, Pius was the last of the great monarchical popes, a man who had lived his entire life within the framework of Vatican diplomacy, as an ambassador for two popes, secretary of state for one pope, and a detail-observant manager for close to two decades as pope himself. He was praised also for his support of new movements in the life of the church, notably a modern approach to the study of Scripture and the beginnings of significant reforms to the liturgy. There was, too, some relief that the stultification of the last years of the pope's life and fears of a new anti-Modernist campaign were over. The outpouring of grief at his passing was genuine, but there was a palpable sense that something had changed; an era was closing.

Eugenio Maria Pacelli was born in the first years of the newly united Italy. His family had provided two generations of Vatican lawyers who had worked for the Holy See for decades. Born "in the shadow of St Peter's," the young Pacelli absorbed from family and faith a life-long love of the Catholic Church, its tradition and sense of timelessness that placed it in a position which transcended all other institutions on earth. Human history would be governed and ultimately judged not by any king or emperor, president or prime minister, dictator or tyrant, but by the "God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

*Robert Ventresca, *Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

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All the sufferings of the human family, the conflicts and divisions that beset humanity, were to be seen through the lens of eternity. At his coronation in March 1939, the master of ceremonies paused three times and burned flax before the new pontiff saying: Sancte Pater, sic transit gloria mundi ("Holy Father, so passes the glory of the world"). For Papa Pacelli, such a ritual was no meaningless gesture; it expressed the way in which he saw the world in which he lived and to which he was commissioned to proclaim the Christian Gospel within the living tradition of the Catholic Church.

The fifty-five years since the death of Pope Pius XII have been stormy. No other successor to the See of Peter has endured such a post-papal examination nor seen his legacy subjected to such intense scrutiny. The literature is vast, ranging across the whole spectrum from serious to silly. At the heart of most of the historical arguments surrounding Pius have been the war years (1939–1945) with particular attention given to the pope's actions or inactions with regard to the Nazi genocide waged against the Jews of German-occupied Europe. There have been tangential studies made of other genocidal actions, especially in the work of Michael Phayer, but these are exceptions.

At the time of his death, Holocaust historiography was in its infancy, and Pius was largely considered a peripheral figure. Within a few years, a more serious scholarship emerged and historians began asking challenging and difficult questions about Pacelli's wartime papacy. As Holocaust historians and historians of World War II dug deeper into archives, the nature of the questions changed. As more information came to light, historians began asking "why?" and "how?" questions of Pius XII's Vatican, often with little understanding or appreciation as to how the Vatican operated. When Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy* premiered in 1963, the accolades that had surrounded Pius from 1945 until his death became accusations and criticisms. That a piece of drama could assume an almost iconic status as the judge of a pope and could generate an unprecedented cascade of stringent and harsh assessments of the pope was a shock for the Holy See. Pope Paul VI, who had been a close collaborator of Pius XII during the war years, authorized a team of four Jesuit historians to comb through the archives of the Secretariat of State in order to piece together an overview of the wartime activities of the Vatican. The archives in question were, of course, those of the Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV) which hold the personal papers of the popes, papers that are usually under an embargo of seventy-five years from the year of death of the pope. Between 1965 and 1981, eleven volumes containing over five thousand documents were published along with comprehensive introductions and notes. *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (*ADSS*) remains an underused resource in the study of the papacy of Pius XII.[1]

It had become something of an redundancy to use the phrase "debate over Pius XII" in the 1960s through to the early 2000s. Many books were published that

[1] *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (ed. Pierre Blet et al.; 12 vols.; Vatican City: Vatican Publishing House, 1965–1981).

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bordered on ahistorical and apologetic hagiography. Most published works barely looked at Pacelli's pre-papal life and those that did usually gave it only a cursory glance. There has been an urgent need for a biography of this pope that moves beyond both apologia and condemnation; a need for a study that covers Pacelli's life in the various contexts in which it was lived; a need to give balance to this man's life without allowing the war years to dominate; a need for an evidence-based history that engages the realities of this man's life from the primary truth that dominated Eugenio Pacelli from the day of his baptism until the day of his death, namely, his utter devotion and commitment to serve Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church. If this last fact is not appreciated, no biography can capture the essence of this complex and enigmatic man.

In 1999, John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* hit the bookstands to considerable positive acclaim.[2] This reviewer was among those who initially considered Cornwell's work a significant interpretation of the life and work of Pius XII. I have long since reconsidered my position on this. However, what Cornwell unintentionally started was a process among historians to revisit the life of the pope, going to many archives and published records that had become available in the postwar years. Cornwell also pointed to the central and guiding fact that the worldview of Eugenio Pacelli was fundamentally religious, Christian, Catholic, Roman, and papal.

Several significant English-language books were published that used the available material from *ADSS* and other accessible sources. The work of Owen Chadwick, John Conway, Jeffrey Lesser, Michael Phayer, Peter Kent, Jose Maria Sanchez, and Susan Zuccotti has helped to add context to the actions of Pius XII during the war years and, in the case of Kent, the Cold War period immediately afterward.[3]

The opening of the ASV files for Pope Pius XI (1922–1939) in 2003 and 2006 meant that for the first time scholars could examine the documents that led to the formation of papal policy during the interwar years in general and to the creation of policy regarding Germany in particular.

Since then, there have been a number of major works that have drawn on the archives, accomplishing two important things. First, the general scope of our understanding of the pope, the Vatican, and the diplomatic resources of the Holy See

[2] John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Viking Press, 1999).

[3] Owen Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1986); John Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* (New York: Basic, 1968); Jeffrey Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 2000); idem, *Pius XII, the Holocaust and the Cold War* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 2008) idem; Peter Kent, *The Lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII: The Roman Catholic Church and the Division of Europe* (Montreal, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Jose Maria Sanchez, *Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002); Susan Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002).

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has been shown to be consistent. In other words, there were no unexpected or dramatic findings in the released material. Second, the files have revealed the layers of complexity within the workings of the pope and his closest collaborators and have shed light on nuance, detail, and proposals for action, some of which were acted upon and some of which were not. One example concerns the composition of the March 1937 encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, which condemns aspects of National Socialist doctrine, especially "statolatry": the exaltation of the state and the infringements of the rights of the church in Germany. The ASV files show the level of Pacelli's involvement in the meetings with the German cardinals, the process of writing and editing, and the various opinions from different interested parties inside the Vatican as to how the document was to be crafted and used.

Among historians whose recent work has relied significantly on the ASV are Gerhard Besier, Thomas Brechenmacher, Frank Coppa, Emma Fattorini, Charles Gallagher, Neal Pease, Giovanni Sale, and Hubert Wolf.[4] The ASV has also continued to publish material. In 2004 it published *Inter arma caritas*, a two-volume selection of documents from the Vatican Information Service established by Pius XII at the beginning of the war.[5] In 2010 the first volume of Cardinal Pacelli's notes from his meetings with Pius XI were published.[6] International conferences and symposia focusing on the life of Pope Pius XII have drawn scholars from a wide range of historical disciplines in an effort to continue to "flesh out" the man and his times.[7] The historians' "problem" is that there is now so much material available that it will take years, if not decades, to work through it.

In addition, there are now several major online archival sources that can be used by students and scholars around the globe. Thomas Brechenmacher's project with the ASV to digitalize the correspondence from Pacelli's successor in Berlin,

[4] Gerhard Besier, *The Holy See and Hitler's Germany* (trans. W. R. Ward; New York: Palgrave, 2007); Thomas Brechenmacher, "Pope Pius XI, Eugenio Pacelli and the Persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany 1933–1939: New Sources from the Vatican Archives," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 27 (2005) 17–44; Frank Coppa, *The Life and Pontificate of Pope Pius XII: Between History and Controversy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2013); Emma Fattorini, *Hitler, Mussolini and the Vatican: Pope Pius XI and the Speech That Was Never Made* (trans. Carl Ipsen; Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2011); Charles Gallagher, *Vatican Secret Diplomacy: Joseph P. Hurley and Pope Pius XII* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008); Neal Pease, *Rome's Most Faithful Daughter: The Catholic Church and Independent Poland, 1914–1939* (Athens, Ohio: University of Ohio Press, 2009); Giovanni Sale, *Hitler, la Santa Sede e gli Ebrei. Con i documenti dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano* (Milan: Jaca Books and La Civiltà Cattolica, 2004); Hubert Wolf, *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich* (trans. Kenneth Kronenberg; Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

[5] *Inter arma caritas. L'Ufficio Informazioni Vaticano per i priginionieri di guerra istituito da Pio XII (1939–1947)* (2 vols.; Vatican City: Vatican Secret Archives, 2004).

[6] Sergio Pagano, Marcel Chappin, and Giovanni Coco, *I "fogli di udienza" del Cardinale Eugenio Pacelli, Segretatio di Stato, I (1930)* (Vatican City: Vatican Secret Archives, 2010).

[7] Three examples of significant conferences include those held at Yad Vashem, Israel in March 2009, in Milan in June 2009, and at Brown University, Rhode Island in October 2010. The papers of these conferences have been published.

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Nuncio Cesare Orsenigo, has opened a new avenue for research, as has Hubert Wolf's project to present all the documentation of Pacelli's nunciature (1917–1929) online.[8] By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the sheer volume of material on Eugenio Pacelli was staggering. In the books and monographs that were published in this period it was found that the archives added nuance and detail but did not change the general perception of his action or inaction during the war.

For many historians, the examination of Pius XII stopped at 1945, although Pius was pope for another thirteen years. Most of the writing about Eugenio Pacelli has focused, for various reasons, on the period from 1917, when he was sent to Bavaria as Apostolic Nuncio, through to the end of the Second World War. Very few historians have attempted a full biography of Pacelli. In February 2013, Catholic University of America Press published *The Life and Pontificate of Pope Pius XII,* by Frank Coppa, an English-language biography of the pope written after the opening of the ASV material for the papacy of Pius XI (1922–1939). Coppa's volume does much to shed light on the whole of Pacelli's life while recognizing that all the material necessary to write a complete biography is not yet available. Coppa's strength lies in his presentation of the information on Pacelli in a manner accessible to the general reader. It is a valuable work and complements the subject of this review.

Shortly after Coppa's biography of Pius XII was published, Robert A. Ventresca's long-awaited *Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII* was published. Thus, in the space of a few months, two serious English-language studies of Eugenio Pacelli became available. Both are rigorous works and both add to the scholarly debate and study of this enigmatic man. Ventresca is associate professor of history at King's University College, a Catholic tertiary institution affiliated with the University of Western Ontario, Canada. He has written and lectured on Pius XII for some time now and is highly regarded as a balanced and historically accurate commentator on the pope and his times.

Perhaps the first critical question to ask of Ventresca is "why now?" The ASV files for the papacy of Pius XII are due to be opened within the next two years. Why write a biography of this pope when additional material will be available in the relatively short term? It is a serious question. I believe the answer to the question is one that is increasingly common among historians of the twentieth-century papacy: the material needed to make an accurate assessment is already available. The archives will provide nuance, will shed light on processes, and perhaps will provide some of the details that still elude historians delving into specific aspects of Pacelli's papacy; however, it is the widespread consensus among mainstream historians that the "big picture" is more or less in place. This has been confirmed

[8] "Die Berichte des apostolischen Nuntius Cesare Orsenigo aus Deutschland, 1930 bis 1939," ed. by Thomas Brechenmacher, accessed April 15, 2013, http://www.dhi-roma.it/orsenigo.html; "Eugenio Pacelli. Kritische Online-Edition der Nuntiaturberichte von 1917–1929," ed. Hubert Wolf, accessed April 15, 2013, http://www.pacelli-edition.de.

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with the opening of the archives up to 1939. I believe historians will find a similar confirmation when the archives for the period 1939–1958 are finally opened.

So what does Ventresca add to our knowledge and understanding of Pius XII? At the beginning of the book he helps us answer this question:

> In death, much more so than in life, Pius XII has become an intensely polarizing figure—to some, he is a venerable saint, and to others he is a damnable silent witness to unimaginable atrocities in the heart of Europe. The incessant partisanship of the so-called Pius War has consistently sacrificed historical interpretation for polemical and political purposes. . . . And so it has been, back and forth, for decades now. . . . The tendency to see Pius XII as less a man than an institution has resulted in an abundant manipulation of facts . . . arranged selectively to fit preconceived notions of what this pope did or did not do (4–5).

The only way forward, Ventresca argues, is to look at the whole life of the man and so "it is to history, after all, that we must turn to find Eugenio Pacelli, the man, priest, diplomat, and pope" (6).

Ventresca's methodology employs a well-worked and skillful neutrality manifested through an almost clinical determination to allow the archival material to speak without bias—positive or negative—and thereby to leave it to the reader to make a judgment. Meticulous attention to detail examined with an almost scientific detachment encourages the reader to engage the subject matter as it is, recreating the history as it was, within the contexts in which it occurred and, hopefully, avoiding the dangers of extremes that have so often marred and distorted serious study of Pius XII. Nonetheless this biography is not exhaustive and makes no claim to be so. Pacelli was a complex man. The different "ages" of the man have been studied and written about in many different works, with the greatest focus given to the war years. The author has made choices regarding episodes in Pacelli's life, preferring to focus on the "big picture" issues with relevant information and detail drawn from the "little picture" when necessary. Ventresca attempts to provide a satisfying portrait of the pope, one that invites the reader to delve deeper in particular areas.

Pius was a polymath with interests wide and varied. He was an ordered man with an ordered life (27). His passions ranged across disciplines, from archaeology to zoology; his duties included preparing speeches addressed to midwives and Boy Scouts in addition to his public teaching office as Bishop of Rome and Universal Pastor of the Catholic Church. His keenness to understand the world in which he lived and his determination to remain an effective and engaged student of as many aspects of human life as possible means that a full-scale biography cannot be achieved in one volume. What can be done, and I believe Ventresca has done it well, is to give a sufficient account of the man that outlines, with relevant details, how this life was shaped and lived. Some readers may find Ventresca's attempt to come to a unitary conclusion somewhat daunting, but to many it will be a refreshing change from several decades of "conclusive studies" that have relied

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on a priori arguments and agendas that have little to do with the study of history and more with the politics of the contemporary Catholic Church.

There is no question that Ventresca is in command of the extensive literature on Pacelli and the Catholic Church in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. He demonstrates a familiarity with archival sources, published records, and secondary histories along with a sound grasp of late-Tridentine Catholic theology and ecclesiology—an often overlooked, yet critically important, element in any attempt to understand Pacelli and his world. The interested reader can delve into the seventy-four pages of notes for direction into other aspects of the pope's life.

Soldier of Christ is neatly divided into seven chapters that cover the span of Pius's life, with a deliberate attempt to give appropriate space to each stage of his life. The first half of the book covers the pre-papal years, with the war years and post-war eras treated in the second half. It is in the reader's interest to follow the book chronologically and to resist the temptation to "dive in" to the chapters on the war and the Holocaust. Ventresca's study of Pacelli's pre-papal life is integral to his understanding of the wartime pontiff and the Cold War warrior pope.

There are some gentle surprises throughout the book. Pacelli was, in many ways, a modern man. He was at home in the world of ideas as well as in the application of those ideas to contemporary life. Telephone, radio, film, the automobile, airplanes: all were technologies that he used as tools to assist him to proclaim the Gospel. Recognizing a changing world through the lens of a tradition that preached an unchanging reality, Pacelli was adept at adapting the tools of modernity to meet the demands of the early twentieth century. His apprenticeship in the Vatican's Secretariat of State, where he learned and honed his skills as a diplomat, taught him to incline "toward pragmatism, moderation, and accommodation" (37). This in no way suggests a similar inclination when it comes to the eternal truths of the Christian faith, however.

Groomed for major responsibilities in the diplomatic service of the pope, the young Pacelli avoided the fallout from the Modernist crisis, a point of discussion in the biography where Ventresca's even-handedness is clear (43–44). The future pontiff retained the favor of Pius X and was subsequently chosen as nuncio to Bavaria by Benedict XV in early 1917. Pacelli's ability to work well and fruitfully under two significantly different papacies speaks to the high regard in which he was held.

Ventresca's account of Pacelli's years in Germany is succinct, corroborated with significant archival references, and balanced, giving space to the young nuncio's successes, and, more importantly, to a number of occasions where events were not as positive as may have been hoped. Characterizing Pacelli's mission to present Benedict XV's peace plan to the Kaiser and to the German government as indicative of a "naïve optimism" (47), and frankly acknowledging the pressures placed upon him in Munich between 1918 and 1920, Ventresca refreshingly presents a man feeling his way and learning on the job. Too often this chapter of Pacelli's life has been depicted as one moment of bravery and courage after another. The man was no coward, but there were other moments as well. Ventresca's Pacelli

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comes through to the reader as flesh and blood. He made mistakes. And, at times, he probably was frightened. Kurt Eisner's announcement that it was time to be rid of priests was perceived as no idle threat, and the nuncio, acting on the advice of trusted friends, left Munich for the safety of Switzerland (53–54).

The reader is also introduced in the first part of the book to a series of people who became lifelong friends and collaborators with Pacelli. Again, Ventresca presents evidence without adornment. Sister Pascalina Lehnert enters on page 50. Her role as Pacelli's housekeeper is neither exaggerated nor diminished. Ventresca's account is realistic and provides an antidote to speculation indulged in by some writers as to the extent of her influence (290–92). Of greater significance was Pacelli's friendship with Michael Faulhaber, the archbishop of Munich (51). Faulhaber was to be an important link for Pacelli after he left Germany in 1929, especially with the rise of National Socialism (71). Close ties with the German bishops formed during Pacelli's nunciature gave him a network of vital contacts and links that would feed him information throughout the years of the Third Reich. Nonetheless, Pacelli remained essentially a solitary figure given to introspection and almost pedantic thoroughness on all issues that crossed his desk. What emerges is a papal diplomat who relied on the advice of a close network of colleagues and friends, but who, when decisions had to be made, did so on his own. This did not change when he became pope (237).

Pacelli's lifelong loathing of Bolshevism runs like a refrain throughout much of the book. Ventresca demonstrates a consistent approach in Pacelli's attitude toward all politics of the left, including the overtures made by the Catholic Center Party in Germany to form an alliance with the Social Democratic Party in the last years of the Weimar Republic. The answer would always be negative. He simply had no evidence to suggest that socialism or communism would bring anything but ruin to the church and to civilization. Revolutions in Russia, in Spain, and in Mexico seemed to bear this out. Even his revulsion at National Socialism, based on a very clear understanding of the *Weltanschauung* of Adolf Hitler (94–95), did not lead him to agree to a coalition between the left and the center. At best, the anti-Nazi parties of Germany could hope for Pacelli's support for an alliance between the Center Party and the Nazis (70–77).

Ventresca's study of Pacelli as secretary of state to Pius XI (1930–1939) gives insight as to the man's understanding of realpolitik. Pacelli showed a considerable degree of pragmatism with regard to Germany, overseeing a concordat that he believed would be "the only way to avert state-sponsored anti-Catholicism that would be even worse than the *Kulturkampf* of Bismarck's time" (83). It would take several years of Nazi duplicity and lying before Pacelli conceded that it was almost impossible to conduct business with the Third Reich.

Ventresca's observation is an apt summary:

> On balance, the Vatican's response to Hitler's rise to power in 1933, like that of the German church generally, produced mixed results, reflecting the

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> contradictory interests at play at a critical moment of the interwar period (86). "On the one hand, as secretary of state and the Vatican expert on German affairs, Pacelli was one of the leading exponents of an approach that hastened the evacuation of political Catholicism from German life—precisely at a time when Hitler and the NSDAP were working to exploit legal, parliamentary instruments to pave the way for a one-party state and dictatorship. Pacelli's approach reflected a sincere desire to defend the ability of the German church, and the Holy See behind it, to preserve the autonomy and doctrinal integrity of German Catholicism in the face of various modern heresies—godless communism, pagan nationalism, and secularism. On the other hand, if the Vatican's apparent acquiescence to the political ambitions of Hitler so soon into his tenure as chancellor meant the silencing of political Catholicism and the stifling of potential Catholic opposition to Nazi designs for total control of the state apparatus, the *Reichskonkordat* constituted a potentially important instrument to contest successive Nazi attempts to control or suffocate altogether the life of the German church (86).

And so it remained until 1945.

Throughout the 1930s, Pacelli's voice was heard across the Catholic world speaking in the name of Pius XI. In the aptly titled chapter "Conflict and Compromise," Ventresca details the methods employed by Pius XI through Cardinal Pacelli to promote the evolving Catholic teaching on totalitarianism, racism, and social injustice. "It demanded a constant balancing act that took into account the needs and interests of the national churches while also reflecting the Holy See's standing as an actor in international affairs. Predictably, then, papal diplomacy of the 1930s produced mixed and often disappointing results from the perspective of the Vatican's own stated objectives" (98).

There are several issues that could have been mentioned, if not explored, in this part of the book. The complicity of large parts of the German Catholic Church in at least tacit support for the Nazi regime, especially as anti-Jewish persecution grew, is one that comes immediately to mind. Recognizing the limits on papal intervention is important, but so, too, is the need to acknowledge Pacelli's awareness of these limits when it came to watching the increasing dithering of many of the German bishops. It is also important to note the distinction between the actions of men such as Clemens von Galen—the forthright bishop of Münster, whose wartime anti-euthanasia sermons were praised by Pacelli—and the general lack of action in word and deed by the German bishops when confronted with the realities of the Final Solution. The patterns of inaction were largely in place from 1933. As pope, Pacelli encouraged the German bishops to take appropriate action on the local level, since they would not receive any more than generalizations from Rome. Papal advice along these lines indicated an acute awareness of both the realities of dealing with the Nazis, who had shown themselves purely opportunistic in ecclesiastical matters, and the impotence of the pope to change or influence them.

What most readers will want to know is how Ventresca deals with the pope and the Holocaust. Chapter 5, "War and Holocaust," runs from page 169 to 218 out of

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a total 312 text pages. Proportionally, this chapter covers less than twenty percent of the text, but, within the context of the life of Pius XII, it is an appropriate amount in order to keep the rest of the biography balanced. Ventresca does not, because he cannot, cover every aspect of the papal responses to the ever-increasing news of atrocities by Nazis, Soviets, and others. In attempting to examine the war years and the unparalleled blood-letting that accompanied them, Ventresca takes his theme from the fate of Poland and the impression "that the pope . . . was indifferent to their plight" (169). What follows is a division of the war years into smaller units tied together with the documentation taken from the available evidence that "Pius XII kept the public waiting for an explicit public condemnation that never came" (169). This is followed by the important distinction between no "explicit public condemnation" and "silence."

No serious historian accepts that Pius XII was silent during the war. He was not. The evidence is very clear. Ventresca continues: "nor was he oblivious to the complaints that the Holy See was not doing enough or, rather, not saying enough to condemn Nazi actions. . . . As he explained to Bishop von Preysing of Berlin, the aim was to avoid a greater evil. . . . This single phrase expresses the reasoning behind Pius XII's refusal to speak out forcefully to condemn directly Nazism and its manifest crimes throughout Europe. . . . Was this enough?" (170).

As the war dragged on Pius's reserve in the face of the German-led slaughter of European Jewry, perceived by many as indifference or worse, and his public silence over the murder of nearly three million Polish Catholics and over the complicity of some Croatian Catholics in the murder of Orthodox Serbs drew criticism not only from Allied diplomats and leaders but also from some bishops. Statements from the exiled August Hlond, archbishop of Poznan; Adam Sapieha, archbishop of Krakow; and Karol Radonski, bishop of Wloclawek are found in *ADSS*. The bishops complain, as summarized by Ventresca, that the "pope's refusal to condemn explicitly Nazi aggression . . . began to feel like a failure of moral leadership, a betrayal of the pastoral function of the papal office" (175–76). These are harsh words indeed, but they are harsh words from the mouths of bishops, not of anti-Catholics.

The same pattern of behavior is found, Ventresca argues, in Pius XII's approach to the persecution of the Jews. Jewish persecution was fundamentally a civil policy issue that fell outside the religious purview of the church, at least in the period up to 1941 (177–78). In this regard, Pius "proved to be more of a follower than a leader, deferring to the conventional thinking of his generation and to the judgment of the German bishops whom he trusted most" (178).

Balance on this topic is difficult to achieve. Ventresca's valid criticism of papal silence in the public forum is somewhat countered by papal activity behind the scenes. From the evidence available it appears that, where he could, Pius XII discreetly supported rescue, ransom, and relief efforts. The Christmas Address of 1942 was as close as the pope ever came to naming the reality of the Nazi genocide of the Jews, which in the light of other material from published government

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archives in Britain and the United States was very far from the graphic descriptions that were reaching Rome from the East. For many, the lack of a clear word was a source of great frustration (184–85).

Much of chapter 5 is devoted to Pius's determination to save Rome from aerial bombardment and to have it declared an "open city." Contemporary reports show a disturbing dichotomy. Papal public silence over the fate of Europe's Jews and others condemned to slavery under the German "New Order" drew criticism, but the alacrity of papal demands to save Rome from bombing drew gasps of disbelief. Where were the papal protests when Warsaw, Rotterdam, London, and Coventry were bombed? When Rome was eventually bombed in July 1943 the pope expressed his disappointment clearly and without any doubt (191–92). It raises the terrible question as to what appeared to matter more—buildings or human beings?

Ventresca's narration of the German action against the Jews of Rome reveals something of the many layers operative within the Vatican in late 1943. "The official response from the Vatican was the same as always: the pope was doing everything in his power to help" (202). Behind the walls of the Apostolic Palace things were different. "The pope's reaction was swift and decisive" (202). Acknowledging the negative assessments of the pope's response to the Roman *razzia*, Ventresca proposes that Pius's actions—quiet, diplomatically based—were "the quintessential features of Pacellian diplomacy at work: acting pragmatically and concretely [and] seeking tangible assistance for those facing imminent deportation. . . . Saving lives was of paramount importance, and if the indirect, private means of doing so worked best, then a formal public papal condemnation might yet again be held at bay" (203). It may have been successful in Rome, since all German anti-Jewish actions halted shortly after, or it could have been that the Germans believed that Pius might actually speak out, and Berlin judged it wiser to stop the arrests (205). What the episode demonstrates is the very real limitation of papal power in the mid-twentieth century, a theme explored in the history of the Vatican and the Nazi puppet state of Slovakia with its priest-president, Josef Tiso (207–11) and in the discussion of the heroic efforts of Angelo Rotta, nuncio to Hungary (212–17).

The postwar years are not often considered in studies of Pius XII. This alone makes Ventresca's penultimate chapter important. How did the pope respond to the full disclosure of the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel, the reality of communist-dominated governments in Eastern Europe and their allies in the Far East, the nuclear age, and the reality of popular democracy in the West? My reading of Ventresca suggests that all these issues were seen through the lens of Pacelli's now firmly entrenched anticommunism and his abiding fear that the interests of the Catholic Church lay in some form of alliance with the western democracies. Much of the remainder of his pontificate was absorbed with strategies to limit the spread of Communism in Western Europe in general and Italy in particular. Battling Soviet Communism in Eastern Europe was waged through a policy of noncooperation with the new governments but always with an offer

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of coexistence if Communist governments respected "rights and freedoms for individuals, especially religious freedom" (253). The "Soldier of Christ" found a public voice and did not hesitate to use it.

Toward the end of his life, Pius showed a growing theological conservatism expressed in the 1950 encyclical *Humani generis*, where he "condemned what he saw as the 'false theories' of modern philosophies that were affecting the work of Catholic thinkers" (272). At the same time he showed himself aware and interested in new trends in Catholic theology that would give encouragement to explore all aspects of science and avoid the ossification of Catholic tradition into some form of "reactionary orthodoxy" (278). "In this respect, Pius XII hoped to serve as a bridge between two worlds—faith and reason" (279).

When Eugenio Pacelli was ordained a priest in 1899, the Catholic world was Eurocentric, still struggling to find its way in the post-1789 landscape, and internally cohesive in its self-understanding and the expression of its theology, mission, and identity. A half-century later the world had changed beyond recognition. Throughout his long career in Vatican service, as nuncio, secretary of state, and then as pope, Pacelli cautiously moved to a greater level of awareness of the contemporary world, all the while exercising an equally high degree of prudence to ensure the Catholic faith and the mission of the Holy See were never in danger of compromise. I believe that Pius XII genuinely tried to understand the world in which he lived and to use the tools at his disposal in order to find appropriate ways forward, especially when confronted with situations that had not arisen before in the long history of the Roman Church. For the first time the church was confronted with forces that not only regarded institutional religion with contempt but actively sought to destroy it. The most destructive explosion of this form of hatred occurred under the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Pacelli was forced to confront both and to devise ways to help Catholics under both systems. Running parallel was the *tremendum* of the Holocaust, which defied every paradigm and demanded a response that would leave no doubt that what was happening to the Jews of Europe was completely and totally wrong—a response that was not forthcoming.

It is the Holocaust that commands the most attention about Pius XII. It will most likely remain the focal point for study of Pacelli. In his conclusion, Ventresca writes quite powerfully, giving his own assessment of the pope:

> Perhaps no failure—personal or pastoral—was greater than Pius XII's inability or unwillingness to lend his singularly authoritative voice to arouse the individual and collective conscience in a humanitarian defense of European Jews before and during the war. After the war, when the self-imposed restraints of neutrality had been removed, Pius XII either failed to perceive or refused to accept the obvious spiritual need for a public accounting of what had transpired in the heart of Christian Europe. This is not to say that he was anti-Semitic or hard-hearted in the face of the catastrophe that befell Jews and others during World War II. We know that he was neither of these things. It

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> was simply that he failed to appreciate how a word from the foremost spiritual leader of the Christian world could serve as a powerful symbol and practical impetus for action during the war, and for atonement and reconciliation after (310).

It is left up to the readers to make their own judgments.

While he was a modern man in some ways, Pacelli was still a man of the past. His life spanned the most rapid changes in human history up to then. In his understanding and relationship with Jews and Judaism, he remained a compassionate and active representative of the church with individuals, but with the religious tradition he was convinced of the truth of supersessionism and of the theology of contempt. In some ways, he coped well with modernity; in other ways, he remained firmly fixed in the sense of timelessness that characterized Catholic theology and practice until the pontificate of John XXIII and Vatican II.

Ventresca's biography attempts to place Pius XII into his varied contexts and, through examination of the available historical record, to present a balanced account of the man's life. It is the role of historians to make judgments on the material they examine. In the case of Pacelli, the author comes across as deeply sympathetic, but not sentimental, toward the man. Pope Pius XII made mistakes, and some of those mistakes were grievous. Yet, the matter of final judgment rests perhaps not with those studying the files contained in the ASV or in other depositories, but with the one to whom he dedicated his life from his earliest years.

Soldier of Christ is a welcome addition to the growing number of scholarly books written about Pope Pius XII. It is, naturally enough, accessible to the professional historian, but far more importantly, it is a work that the general reader will be able to take up and study. Robert Ventresca does not give us the final word—no historian ever does—but in this book we have a forceful reminder of the necessity of going back to the sources, of reading widely, of consulting in fields beyond the immediate, and of keeping an open mind in order to make evidence-based, reasonable conclusions that will add to the discussion and help create a fuller picture of the 262nd Vicar of Christ.

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