

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS: DECEMBER 2013

December 1, 2013 · by [Kyle Jantzen](#) · in [Letters from the Editors, Volume 19 Number 4 \(December 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

Contemporary Church History Quarterly

Volume 19, Number 4 (December 2013)

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By Kyle Jantzen, Ambrose University College

Dear friends,



Munich's Frauenkirche, seat of the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, dates back to the 13th century. Photo (cc) via Flickr user shunkoh.

It is with pleasure that we release our latest issue of *Contemporary Church History Quarterly*. In it are seven fulsome reviews of recent literature on twentieth-century German and European church history. Not for the first time does the history of the papacy during the Second World War take centre stage. It is astounding how vigorous the debates around the diplomacy of Pius XI and especially Pius XII continue to be. We are pleased to offer reviews of Robert Ventresca's recent biography of Pius XII, which Kevin Spicer judges to be, "the best possible insight into Pope Pius XII's life that we have in English today." Alongside this, Jacques Kornberg of the University of Toronto provides a guest review of *Pius XII and the Holocaust: Current State of Research*, a volume of contributions from Catholic and Jewish scholars based on a 2009 Yad Vashem workshop. Rounding out this theme of Roman Catholicism and the Holocaust are reviews of books on Pius XI and on Catholic teaching on Jews during and after the Nazi era, both reviewed by journal founder John S. Conway.

We are also excited to publish an analysis of Steven Schroeder's book, *To Forget It All and Begin Anew: Reconciliation in Occupied Germany, 1944-1954*. Schroeder, a member of the *CCHQ* editorial team, has produced a thoroughly-researched and innovative account of reconciliation efforts made by grassroots organizations in the post-war era. Finally, editors Manfred Gailus and Heath A. Spencer have reviewed intriguing new publications on secularization in German culture and religious instruction during the Nazi era.

Once again, we hope you enjoy this edition of *Contemporary Church History Quarterly*, and wish you a relaxing and meaningful Christmas holiday season.

On behalf of the editorial team,

Kyle Jantzen, Ambrose University College

REVIEW OF ROBERT A. VENTRESCA, SOLDIER OF CHRIST: THE LIFE OF POPE PIUS XII

December 1, 2013 · by [Kevin Spicer](#) · in [Reviews, Volume 19 Number 4 \(December 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

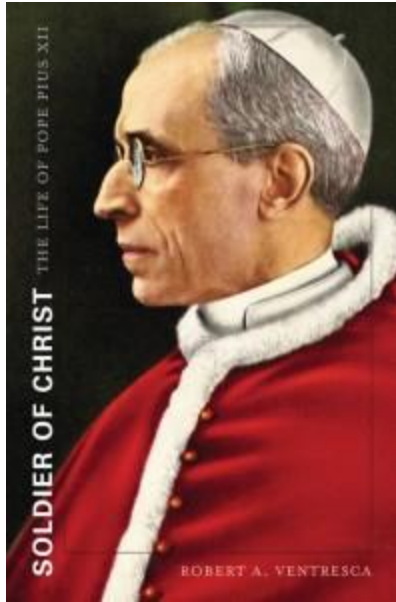
Contemporary Church History Quarterly

Volume 19, Number 4 (December 2013)

Review of Robert A. Ventresca, *Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 405 pp.
ISBN: 978-0-674-04961-1.

By Kevin P. Spicer, C.S.C., Stonehill College

In *Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII*, Robert Ventresca, associate professor of history at King's University College at the University of Western Ontario, offers us an immensely readable and authoritative biography of the elusive Eugenio Pacelli. In many ways, it surpasses all previous biographies in its comprehensive and convincing analysis of its central subject, Pope Pius XII. Ventresca adeptly bores through the polemical and problematic arguments that encompass the decades long "Pius Wars" and offers us a balanced portrait of Pacelli, who is neither a condemned reprobate nor an exalted saint. Rather, Ventresca shows that Pacelli was a man of his time, burdened with nearly insurmountable challenges, who nevertheless consistently preferred to address them through a diplomatic path of prudence and caution that always placed the needs of the institutional Church before all other concerns.



Born into the “black nobility” of Roman society, Pacelli lived a privileged life that even included a rare dispensation that enabled him to avoid the rigors of seminary life for the flexibility of home with his family. Pacelli was also not ordained with his classmates, but during a separate Mass in a private chapel. Despite such an uncommon priestly formation, Ventresca concludes that amid the changes “brought about by the fall of papal Rome in 1870, it is difficult to say whether there was anything typical about Pacelli’s clerical training in the closing decades of the nineteenth century” (p. 36). Yet, Ventresca reveals that Pacelli was exceptional. Even prior to earning a doctorate in canon law in 1904, Pacelli caught the attention of Pietro Gasparri, the secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, who soon became a patron and ensured a smooth transition for the young priest into Vatican bureaucracy. By 1914, the talented Pacelli had replaced Gasparri when the latter rose to become secretary of state. Three years later, Pacelli himself rose in the ranks to become papal nuncio to Bavaria. Prior to his departure for Germany, Pacelli was consecrated archbishop of Sardis by Pope Benedict XV himself.

For Ventresca, Pacelli’s time in Munich significantly shaped the future pontiff. It was here that Pacelli developed friendships with influential individuals, including the German Jesuit Robert Leiber, a trusted confidant, Monsignor Ludwig Kaas, the Center Party politician and future chairman, and Michael von Faulhaber (Cardinal in 1921), the archbishop of Munich and Freising. As nuncio, Pacelli was uncommonly popular in Germany, even among non-Catholics, a point noted by the German Jesuit and future Nazi resister, Father Friedrich Muckermann. Yet, this popularity had a shadow side for it enabled Pacelli to be ingratiated into Munich’s conservative circles whose “cultural biases” betrayed an antisemitic outlook that resulted, for example, in lumping together Bolsheviks and Jews. Still Ventresca minimizes the long-standing effects of such influences and does not view them as pivotal forces guiding Pacelli’s choices or actions. However, he does find Pacelli’s time in Germany to be determinate and influential to his world view. As Aloysius Muench, the bishop of Fargo, North Dakota, and post-war apostolic nuncio to Germany, noted in a comment that he had heard, Pope Pius XII “thinks that he is still nuncio in Germany” (p. 241).

Ventresca's writing, at times, might seem to be placating the various combatants of the Pius War. For example, he emphasizes Pacelli's positive experiences of Jews, such as his friendship with Guido Mendes, whom he later aided to leave Italy for Switzerland – a point often emphasized by those authors who advocate Pacelli's canonization. Similarly, Ventresca relates how Pacelli refused to offer a public rebuke to Cardinal George Mundelein, archbishop of Chicago, for calling Hitler "an alien, an Austrian paper-hanger, and a poor one at that" (p. 122). Yet, Ventresca also addresses the antisemitic culture of Munich (without labeling it such) and its influence on Pacelli during his time there as apostolic nuncio. He points out, for example, how Pacelli had on a few occasions spoken positively about Mussolini and his government and even gave permission for a blessing of a Fascist banner. For Ventresca, all of these factors helped shape and influence Pacelli, but none proved the single determinant for the choices he later made as pontiff. Ultimately, Ventresca negotiates the Pius War terrain without falling into the gullies of either side.

Ventresca convincingly shows that Pacelli was never Hitler's Pope. He credits Pacelli, as Vatican secretary of state, for including in the 1937 *Mit Brennender Sorge* encyclical the essentially critical statement: "Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community ... whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds" (pp. 114-115). Despite standing behind such a declaration, Pacelli never specifically mentioned "Jews" in any of his statements nor did he specifically address their plight under National Socialism. For example, after receiving a report on *Kristallnacht* from apostolic nuncio Cesare Orsenigo, neither Pius XI nor Pacelli as secretary of state issued a response, even when pressed to do so by Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, the archbishop of Westminster. The only comment was indirect and followed a few weeks later during a speech to commemorate the two-hundred anniversary of the canonization of Saint Vincent de Paul. Ventresca writes: "Pacelli evoked the imagery of the children of Israel forced into exile, and likened the spiritual travails of the great Catholic saint to the 'anguished lamentations' of the Jewish people in exile in Babylon. It was a moving tribute, no doubt, to the great saint and to biblical Israel. As a spiritual exercise, it had much to recommend it. But it was a decidedly tepid political response to the escalating excesses of the Hitler state" (p. 128).

Despite such a "tepid" response, Pacelli was not the desired choice of the German government to succeed Pius XI upon the latter's death in February 1939. Nor was Pacelli the choice of Vatican insiders. Ventresca shows that there were differing views of Pacelli among Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Upon assuming the chair of Peter, Pacelli made his view of the papacy quite clear in his first formal address to the Sacred College of Cardinals on June 2, 1939: to work for peace and to use all of the Church's resources for this effort. To this end, Pacelli worked tirelessly behind the scenes for peace. However, Ventresca reveals that Pacelli was cautiously reluctant to show the same zeal in his public pronouncements as in his private so as not to appear to be taking a particular side. He showed the same restraint whether entreated to discuss the persecution and murder of Jews or to address the subjugation of Poland and its largely Catholic population. Ventresca believes that Pope Pius XII had the courageous

wherewithal to speak when warranted. As evidence, he offers the statement from the encyclical *Summi Pontificatus* of October 20, 1939: “The blood of countless human beings, even non-combatants 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 world, while it awaits ... the hour of resurrection in harmony with the principles of justice and true peace” (pp. 154-155). Yet, as Ventresca shows, there were few situations where Pius XII would speak so clearly. Instead, as in the case of the German invasion of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Holland, he never issued an explicit condemnation, but only a statement of “paternal affection” (p. 160). When writing to Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich, Pius XII explained his stance: “For Us impartiality means judging things according to truth and justice ... But when it comes to Our public statements, We have closely considered the situation of the church in the various countries to spare the Catholics living there from unnecessary difficulties” (p. 165). Perhaps such a statement offers an insight into why Pius XII did not say more.

Ventresca clearly reveals how well informed Pius XII was about the persecution and murder of Jews throughout Europe. By mid-1942, the Holy See had received numerous reports from reliable sources about the systematic nature of the murder of Jews. Yet, Ventresca believes Pius XII to be a “man of his time, which is to say a man of limited vision with a correspondingly limited ability to perceive the precise nature of the Nazi war against the Jews” (p. 176). He also does not discount the role that antisemitism played in helping foster such a disengagement from pursuing a fuller understanding of the Jewish plight. However, Ventresca does not dwell on this point. Instead, Ventresca holds that, “the pope was not silent during the war. Nor was he oblivious to the complaints that the Holy See was not doing enough or, rather, not saying enough to condemn Nazi actions” (p. 170). Still Ventresca recognizes that the accusation of silence continues to exist and haunt the reputation of Pius XII. What is interesting is that Ventresca shows that this accusation did not begin with the Soviet Union’s campaign to dishonor Pius XII’s reputation or with the publication of Rolf Hochhuth’s play *The Deputy*, but that it actually goes back to beginning of Pius XII’s pontificate through the criticisms of numerous diplomats and political leaders. For Pius XII, this was not an unheard criticism. Nevertheless, the pope primarily left it to his bishops and priests locally to decide if a protest was prudent and in the best interests of everyone involved. Ventresca also alludes to the fact that Pius XII was often too reliant on the advice of individual German bishops such as Cardinal Faulhaber, who, in turn, were too immersed in the war to offer advice overly critical of Germany. Ventresca might have placed greater emphasis on the interplay between Pope Pius XII and Conrad von Preysing, the bishop of Berlin, who advocated a more adversarial path for both the Holy See and his fellow German bishops.

Ultimately, it seems that Pope Pius XII never grasped “the true nature and scale of the Nazi war against the Jews and its consequences” (p. 219). Even when he did and became involved behind the scenes, such as in Slovakia and Hungary, the results showed that the Holy See’s influence could only go so far. Yet, even after the war, Pius still made no specific mention of the murder of Jews in his public comments. Ventresca reveals that Vatican officials even questioned the figures that Jewish leaders made known to them of the number of Jewish children who had perished in the Holocaust.

Ventresca's last two chapters that cover the post-war years are his least compelling, though they still contain a great deal of information and analysis. Perhaps my comment concerning "least compelling" is dictated by my own area of research, but perhaps also equally by the dearth of available archival sources of that period. If Pius XII's voice was seldom heard during the war years, it certainly was uttered in the post-war years. The pope issued statements on a plethora of issues pertaining to theology, politics, and morality. As Ventresca states, "Pius XII wanted not so much to come to terms with the modern world as to transform it, to sanctify and ready it for its redemption" (p. 305). Pius XII attempted to live his life as an example of such public redemption. Pope Benedict XV recognized this fact and declared him to be a servant of God whose life exhibited heroic virtues. Robert Ventresca adds "Benedict's point, simply, is to say that Eugenio Pacelli lived as a virtuous man striving in extraordinary ways to be like God. The extent to which he succeeded awaits final judgment" (p. 312). In an extremely balanced way, Ventresca's biography reveals the virtuous life of Pius XII, but also exposes the reader to view the choices Pius did not take during his pontificate. The complete story will only be known when the Vatican archival records for 1939-1958 (Pius XII's pontificate) are available to researchers. Until then, Ventresca offers us the best possible insight into Pope Pius XII's life that we have in English today.

REVIEW OF DAVID BANKIER, DAN MICHMAN, IAEL NIDAM-ORVIETO, PIUS XII AND THE HOLOCAUST: CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

December 1, 2013 · by [John S. Conway](#) · in [Reviews](#), [Volume 19 Number 4 \(December 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

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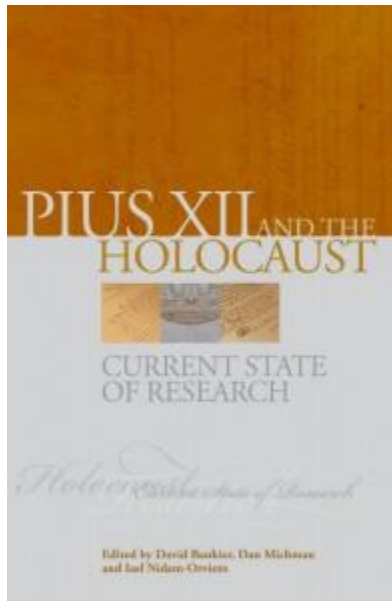
Volume 19, Number 4 (December 2013)

Review of David Bankier, Dan Michman, Iael Nidam-Orvieto, *Pius XII and the Holocaust: Current State of Research* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2012).

By Jacques Kornberg, University of Toronto

This book, on an enduring controversy, offers something new. Based on a workshop in 2009, which was jointly organized by the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem and Reverend Roberto Spataro of the Salesian Theological Institute of Saints Peter and Paul in Jerusalem, the book aims for dialogue rather deepening controversy. There is a story behind this unusual aim. Relations with the Vatican had deteriorated over statements in the Yad Vashem museum that Pope Pius XII did nothing about the genocide of European Jewry during World War II. This charge led the Apostolic Nuncio to Israel, Archbishop Antonio Franco, to threaten to boycott the 2007

annual memorial ceremony on the Holocaust held at Yad Vashem. Negotiations led Franco to withdraw his threat. In return, Yad Vashem somewhat softened its statement on the pope, mentioning another point of view, that papal neutrality might have helped the Church rescue Jews, and that final judgment awaits opening the wartime archives. Still it stuck to its view that the pope's record was one of "moral failure."



The workshop was a further attempt to mend frayed relations. Yad Vashem and the Reverend Roberto Spataro (acting "on behalf of the Nuncio") each chose five scholars for the workshop. The latter: Andrea Tornielli, Matteo Napolitano, Grazia Loporco, Jean-Dominique Durand, and Thomas Brechenmacher; the former: Paul O'Shea, Michael Phayer, Susan Zuccotti, Sergio Minerbi, and Dina Porat. Summing up at the end, the Reverend Spataro commented: "we met in an atmosphere of confidence, trust and mutual respect."

The book is organized around key issues: Pacelli's personality and the Jews, which also covers his policies as Secretary of State and later as Pope; Pius XII and rescue in Italy, which dealt with Vatican policies during the German occupation of Rome; post-war assistance to fleeing Nazis and policies on hidden Jewish children, which covers the infamous "rat-line" and Vatican policies on returning hidden Jewish children to families or to Jewish institutions. All of these subjects have long been examined by scholars, but always bear re-assessment especially when new evidence emerges.

Though originating in political stroking and mutual deference, the book has a good deal of scholarly value. For one, it avoids the hyperboles of overheated debate. Discussion is focussed on key documents, thus firmly grounded, foregoing sweeping generalizations. Of course a document's meaning is not self-evident but subject to varying interpretations. This is what makes the book valuable.

Some participants introduce new archival documents; some reread old and well-known ones. Andrea Tornielli argues that Pacelli acted to alleviate the Jewish plight. He points to a Pacelli letter of 16 November 1917 to the Foreign Minister of Bavaria. Pacelli, Nuncio to Bavaria, urged the Foreign Minister to safeguard the Jews of Jerusalem, endangered by Ahmed Gamal Pasha, the Turkish military governor of Syria (including Palestine), who threatened to expel them. Ahmed Gamal saw Zionism as an enemy of Turkish rule and took steps to remove Jewish settlements, as part of an overall policy of repression of Arabs and Armenians in Syria during World War I

Next, Tornielli notes a Pacelli letter of 1938 as Vatican Secretary of State, opposing a law forbidding Jewish ritual slaughter (*shechita*) in Poland. Tornielli translates Pacelli's words: the law "would constitute a real persecution against the Jews." The letter about *shechita* is published in the appendix to the book. Another report notes that Pope Pius XI brought up the matter in talks with Polish bishops.

These documents challenge long-held views, based on multiple documents, of Pacelli's public silence over crimes against Jews, including the German pogrom of November 1938. These long-held views are articulated by others in this book.

Jean-Dominique Durand also argues the case for Pacelli. He points to a document, this time a well-known report of 19 August 1933 by Ivone Kirkpatrick, British chargé d'affaires to the Vatican, to R. Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the British Foreign Office, recounting a conversation he had with the Cardinal Secretary of State Pacelli. Durand quotes Kirkpatrick: "Cardinal Pacelli criticized the German government's internal policy, the persecution of the Jews, their actions against their political opponents, and the regime of terror to which the whole nation was submitted." What Durand left out is crucial and weakens his argument. Kirkpatrick wrote that Pacelli's views were "for private consumption only. I do not think there is any question of any public expression by the Vatican of disapproval of the German government."

It is gratifying to note that after over fifty years of scholarship on the role of the Vatican in the 1930s and 1940s, wide consensus has been achieved on some issues. Most scholars now agree on Pacelli's early assessment of Nazism as an enemy of civilization and of the Church. Few see the concordat signed with Nazi Germany in July 1933, as anything else than a harsh necessity. The concordat did not carry any endorsement of Nazi rule. Indeed, the Vatican sought a concordat with Bolshevik Russia as well, but failed to reach an agreement. In addition, as Tornielli points out, the first international agreement signed with Nazi Germany was not the concordat, but the Four Power Pact signed by Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany in mid-June 1933, requiring mutual consultations on all foreign policy issues in the spirit of the League of Nations, the Locarno Pact and the Briand-Kellogg Pact.

Other issues would be better illuminated by the opening of the Vatican archives for the pontificate of Pope Pius XII. One controversy is about whether Pius XII acted out of any concern for the fate of Jewish-Italians, more particularly Jewish-Romans, during the German occupation of Italy. We know that he was advised not to issue any protests against Germany during the occupation, because Hitler's volatile rages may well have led to a German

occupation of the Vatican. Documents also show that Pius sought to dampen polarization between Italians and German occupying forces, because he feared a communist uprising in Rome. But was rescuing Jews part of his strategy?

Consensus does exist on how to interpret the absence of a written papal directive to Catholic institutions to rescue Jews. The pope would not have undertaken such a recklessly, transparent measure in view of the German occupation. Further, it was not papal policy to direct Catholics to risk their lives by helping Jews evade deportation. In summary: the pope wanted to distance the Vatican from anything provocative. However, Grazia Loparco points to Vatican undersecretary Giovanni Montini's (later Pope Paul VI), response to a Jesuit request for guidance on whether to help rescue Jews, that it was their own responsibility. She goes on to point out that we do not know whether or how much face-to-face personal encouragement or approval Vatican officials provided on the issue of rescue. Pius XII implicitly encouraged rescue in a statement to the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano* of 25/26 October 1943, where he spoke of the "universally paternal charity of the Supreme Pontiff [which] ...does not pause before boundaries of nationality, religion or descent." But he did not go any further than this. He did not protest the round-up of Jewish-Romans on 16 October 1943, though his defenders argue that the round-ups in Rome ceased simply because he threatened protest through German diplomatic channels. But the evidence for this, based on timing, is weak. Indeed, after an interval, deportations of Jewish-Romans continued, though many by now had moved from their homes and were in hiding. My own view is that rescuing Jews was far less important to him than having a non-confrontational German occupation.

A final controversy deals with the aid Vatican officials provided to Nazi war criminals seeking to flee to South America. Michael Phayer poses the question: "Did the Pope know what was happening?" He makes a strong case for "yes." The reason: the pope hoped to supply South America with fervent anticommunists.

The lessons of this book are that documents are often slippery; they too often can support conflicting interpretations; that what is omitted in reading documents is as important as what is left in; and that further documentation through the opening of the wartime Vatican documents is essential.

REVIEW OF PETER EISNER, THE POPE'S LAST CRUSADE. HOW AN AMERICAN JESUIT HELPED POPE PIUS XI'S CAMPAIGN TO STOP HITLER

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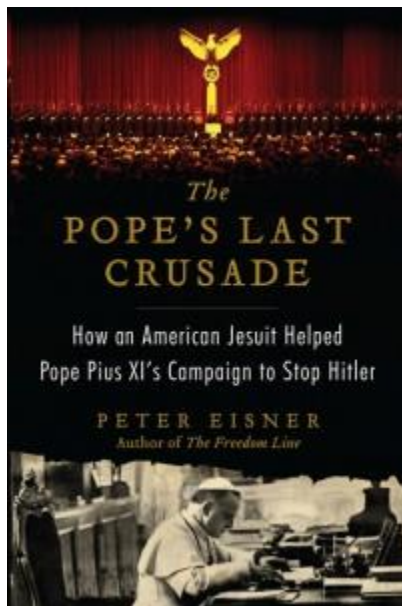
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Review of Peter Eisner, *The Pope's Last Crusade. How an American Jesuit helped Pope Pius XI's campaign to stop Hitler* (New York: Harper Collins 2013), 292 Pp. ISBN 978-6-06-204914-8.

By John S. Conway, University of British Columbia

Peter Eisner, who is an accomplished journalist and contributor to the Washington Post, was intrigued by the remarkable episode in 1938-39 of Pope Pius XI's "hidden" encyclical, which was never proclaimed and was later suppressed. So he resolved to write this sprightly account, largely using the testimony of Fr. John LaFarge, the American Jesuit who played a major part in the document's composition.



Briefly the story is as follows. Pope Pius XI (Achille Ratti) who reigned from 1922 to 1939 was increasingly alarmed and dismayed by the rise of Nazism and its flagrant and sustained attacks against both the Catholic Church and the Jews. Already in 1937, Pope Pius, after consulting the German bishops, had issued a vigorous protest in the Encyclical "*Mit Brennender Sorge*". But the results were disappointing. Hitler merely stepped up his persecution of the church, and encouraged his associates to be even more virulent in their campaigning against the Jews. But by 1938 the Pope had determined to protest again, specifically against the violent extremism in the Nazis' racial and anti-Semitic ideology. By chance the Pope had come across a book written by LaFarge entitled *Interracial Justice*, which described the plight of blacks in the United States, and pleaded for the church to take a lead in combatting racism in that country. The parallels between racism in America and the dangers of anti-Semitism in Europe were easy to see.

Unbeknown to the Pope, it just so happened that LaFarge was taking a sabbatical trip to Europe in early 1938, and in due course visited the Jesuit headquarters in Rome. When Pius XI heard about this, he summoned LaFarge for a

private audience, and on the spot commissioned him to prepare an encyclical which would tackle the fateful subject of racial prejudice and the need for the church to speak out against it. As Eisner points out, Pope Pius envisaged a gesture which would go beyond daily condemnations of each atrocity uttered by the Nazis. He wanted a verbal offensive with a major statement which would have a world-wide impact in denouncing the Nazis' fanatical anti-Semitic ideology. So LaFarge's appearance seemed to be both timely and fitting. Indeed, as LaFarge later recalled, the Pope had said he was "heaven-sent". This commission was to be kept secret. Apparently not even the Secretary of State, Cardinal Pacelli, nor the Jesuit Superior General Ledochowski was consulted.

For the subsequent events, Eisner relies on LaFarge's reminiscences as related to his Jesuit fraternity in New York twenty-five years later, shortly before his death in November 1963, on the same day as President Kennedy was assassinated. Not surprisingly Eisner adopts LaFarge's interpretations, as well as sharing his expectations and disappointments. Since LaFarge had felt he needed help in undertaking this assignment, the Jesuit General Ledochowski called on two other Jesuits, one French and one German, who had already worked on earlier encyclicals and knew the appropriate style and language to be adopted. LaFarge, however, was later to remark that his German colleague, Gustav Grundlach, had only made the document more long-winded. In any case, they decided to retreat to Paris for two months to compose the text and make suitable translations into Latin, French, German and English. Unfortunately Eisner does not reprint the entire text but only gives us certain excerpts in an appendix. These focus almost entirely on a theoretical discussion of the ideas of race and racism, following the document's title *The Unity of the Human Race*. Eisner gives us only one short paragraph dealing with the actual persecution of the Jews. This deplored the flagrant denial of their human rights which had affected many thousands of helpless persons, "wandering from frontier to frontier, they are a burden to humanity and to themselves".

Having completed his assignment, LaFarge took the resulting texts personally to Rome, and loyally presented them to Ledochowski, confident that they would be forwarded speedily to the Pope. But he himself did not meet with the pontiff and instead sailed home to America where his brother was dying. He eagerly looked for news from Rome about the Pope's reactions, but none was ever received. On the other hand it is clear that the intended secrecy had been breached. By the end of 1938, rumours were circulating in Paris that the Pope was about to issue a new encyclical outlining the church's opposition to Nazi fanaticism. In January 1939 it was announced that the Pope would make an important announcement when he addressed the Italian bishops in early February. LaFarge naturally expected that that this would be the occasion when "his" encyclical would be promulgated and his views given official endorsement. But in fact Pius died early on 10 February just two days before his speech was due to be made.

Eisner is very skillful in depicting the atmosphere in the papal court and the diplomatic and political repercussions which ensued. He conjures up the death bed scene in the Vatican, and describes the reactions of the major ecclesiastic and political participants. According to a venerable Vatican tradition, the dead pope's offices and files were immediately sealed. Four weeks later, the Conclave to elect a new Pope was held, when Cardinal Pacelli was chosen and took the name Pope Pius XII. One of his first actions was to order that all copies of the proposed encyclical should be destroyed, while he embarked on a very different and much more accommodating tactic in

dealing with Hitler. In April LaFarge was informed that his proposed encyclical had been rejected by the new Pope. Both he and Grundlach were understandably disappointed. But LaFarge continued to believe that a bold public outcry from the Vatican would have mobilized opinion against the Nazis, and might even have saved hundreds or thousands, even millions of lives — a sentiment which Eisner appears to share.

In 1972 the *National Catholic Register* published an extensive report about LaFarge and the encyclical, contending that “had it been published it would have broken the much criticized Vatican silence on the persecution of the Jews”. Naturally Eisner agrees. But a decade later, two French authors came across a French version of the encyclical which they quoted at length in their book, and which gives a much less favourable view. According to Passelecq and Suchecky, LaFarge, while condemning racialist anti-Semitism, had fallen back into the traditional Catholic anti-Judaic stance. The fact is, LaFarge had claimed, that the Jews were a chosen people who had refused their calling, “blinded by a vision of material domination and power”. The Jews, he said, “are an unhappy people whose misguided leaders have called down upon their heads a divine malediction, doomed to perpetually wander over the face of the earth”. The answer, LaFarge asserted, is to accept the church’s offer to convert to Christianity, “either as individuals or peoples. But until that happens, Christians had to be warned of the spiritual dangers to which contact with Jews can expose souls”. Eisner, presumably deliberately, does not choose to use this quotation, or to take issue with the wider question of the virulence of Catholic traditional prejudices against Judaism.

As for Pius XI, the verdict is equally ambivalent. To be sure, he spoke out against Nazi totalitarianism and attacked the mistreatment of Jews in Nazi Germany. But, on the occasion of the notorious Crystal Night pogrom of November 1938, Pope Pius XI, along with all the German bishops, was silent. Whether or not the proposed encyclical, with its traditional rendering of anti-Judaic rhetoric, would have led to any mobilization of sympathy for the persecuted Jews remains doubtful. Eisner’s confidence that Pope Pius XI’s last crusade would have had the desired results seems therefore misplaced. Another twenty-five years were to pass before the remarkable changes of the Second Vatican Council brought about a striking abandonment of Catholic anti-Judaism, and issued in a wholly new relationship between Christians and Jews, of which Eisner undoubtedly and wholeheartedly approves.

REVIEW OF JOHN CONNELLY, FROM ENEMY TO BROTHER. THE REVOLUTION IN CATHOLIC TEACHING ON THE JEWS 1933-1965

December 1, 2013 · by John S. Conway · in [Reviews, Volume 19 Number 4 \(December 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

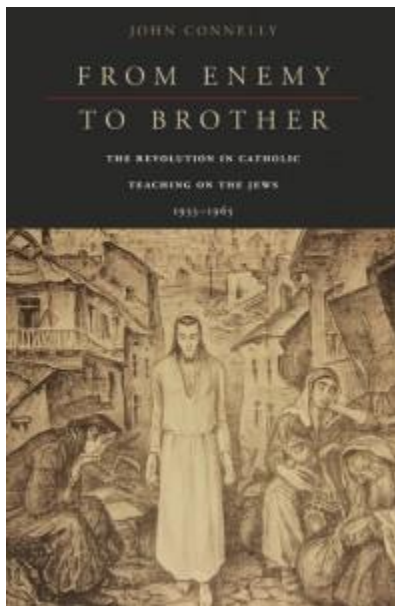
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Review of John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother. The revolution in Catholic teaching on the Jews 1933-1965* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), Pp 376. ISBN 978-0-674-05782-1.

By John S. Conway, University of British Columbia

The most significant theological development of the twentieth century was the abandonment of the centuries-old Christian hostility towards the Jews and Judaism. There were two principal causes: the catastrophic annihilation of so many Jews during the Nazi-sponsored Holocaust, and the establishment of the independent State of Israel in 1948. The combination of these two political events, occurring within a few years of each other, profoundly, and it may be hoped permanently, changed the relationship between the Christian churches and the Jewish people. Theologians and scholars were obliged to reassess traditional attitudes that had held sway for many centuries. This revision included the abandonment of the age-long assertion that the Church had replaced the Jews as the Chosen People. Furthermore, the emergence of the State of Israel, where the Jews were again restored to their own homeland, sent a theological shock throughout Christendom, since it questioned the traditional Christian myth about the place of Jews in history.



The subsequent alteration of the Catholic Church's teachings about Jews and Judaism was particularly notable, culminating in the famous declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, made in the context of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. How this was achieved is the main subject of John Connelly's excellent account. He gives principal credit to the small group of theologians, most of whom were from Germany or Austria, and all of them converts. By one means or another, they escaped the Nazis' persecution and were then resolved to challenge the long-standing prejudices about Jews in the Catholic Church, which they were all too well aware had played a significant role in fomenting the Nazi-led Holocaust. Indeed, Connelly is right to stress the fact that the deeply-entrenched anti-Judaic sentiments in the Christian churches only reinforced the wider and more virulent anti-Semitism and racism which had prevailed for many years. As he shows in his opening chapters, there were many

prominent Catholics, especially in Germany, in the 1930s who embraced racialist ideas. They assumed that Jews were racially inferior, as well as theologically damned for their putting Christ to death. One noted Catholic professor of Tübingen, Karl Adam, for example, held the view that baptism was powerless to cure Jews of their racial taints. Bishop Alois Hudal was not alone in believing that, on racial-biological grounds, Jews could not have the same values and rights as the German people. Nazi Germany was effecting the will of the Almighty through its racial laws. In fact, apart from the handful of emigres, no one rose to challenge such Catholic racial views, neither in the Catholic press, nor among the Catholic bishops. A further difficulty was that, even if the opponents of Nazism so desired, they lacked the language and concepts with which to attack the popular prejudices. Technically, Jews were supposed to convert for the sake of salvation. But in fact many Christians were suspicious, on racial grounds, of the few who tried to take this course. One of the most difficult experiences for Jewish Christians was their rejection by other Christians because of their Jewish origins. Even after Nazism was overthrown, the vast majority of Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, felt no guilt for what had happened to the Jews.

This inauspicious climate was to continue in the immediate post-1945 years due to the singular lack of reflection amongst Catholics on the significance of the Holocaust. During all of the 1950s, indeed, the Catholic press, from the Vatican to the local diocesan papers, ignored this issue. Only when Israeli historians published irrefutable evidence of the Jewish sufferings, and the trial of Adolf Eichmann gained world-wide attention, did the situation begin to change. It was left to the small band of intrepid advocates for a different and much improved relationship between Catholics and Jews to take up the challenge of the legacy of Auschwitz. Connelly pays particular tribute to several of the leaders of this cause, all of whom were in some sense “outsiders” but ready to tackle the entrenched prejudices of the Catholic hierarchy and indeed laity also. All of them were converts either from Judaism or Protestantism, and all had experienced at first hand persecution from the Nazis.

Johannes (later John) Oesterreicher was a young Jewish student in Vienna who had been converted in 1922, was later ordained and served in various parishes in the Vienna region until forced to flee when the Nazis seized power in 1938. Thereafter he launched a vigorous campaign to combat Catholic anti-Semitism, broadcasting from Paris with a combination of apocalyptic vision and intense political engagement. But when the German army invaded France, he had to make his escape across the Pyrenees and eventually resettled in New Jersey. There he learnt that both his parents had died at the hands of the Nazis. Oesterreicher was greatly assisted by Karl Thieme, an academic and former Protestant, who also had to take refuge in Switzerland, but who returned to Germany after 1945 and provided much of the academic theory for the struggle to improve Catholic relations with Jews. In the south German diocese of Freiburg he linked up with the redoubtable figure of Gertrud Luckner, who served as a courier for the bishop during the war, warning those in danger to move into hiding, and supporting those in need. She was eventually arrested by the Gestapo, and spent eighteen months in the women’s concentration camp of Ravensbrück. After she was liberated, she resumed her work on behalf of the victims of persecution. Indeed she was to continue to do so for the next forty years. But perhaps more significant was her work in publishing, with the editorial assistance of Karl Thieme, the *Freiburger Rundbriefe* which from 1948 were compilations of sermons, statements, conference reports and other materials relating to Christian-Jewish relations in both the theological and political aspects.

These *Rundbriefe* were an important source of information, and soon achieved an international audience, helping to overcome the embedded silence of many in the Catholic hierarchy. A further ally in this cause was another “outsider”, the Church of England vicar, James Parkes, whose early study *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* was the first comprehensive analysis of the Christian origins of anti-Semitism. But he was widely shunned by his fellow Anglicans because of his extreme liberal views.

It is to the credit of this group of pioneers that they faced up to the legacy of anti-Judaic hostility in the churches’ record, as well as the Catholics’ continuing indifference to this issue. Talking to Jewish scholars and rabbis made them all well aware that the teaching of contempt had contributed to making Auschwitz possible. They were all the more zealous to change this pattern of Christian witness. For this purpose they organized a series of international meetings. These were small but crucial gatherings, especially one held in Seelisberg, Switzerland in 1946. The ten landmark theses of this conference are now recognized as the first important fruit of this dialogue between Christians and Jews.

But the impact of such statements was very limited for over a decade. Not until Pope Pius XII died and was replaced by John XXIII did a new climate emerge. It was helpful that Pope John had been Nuncio in Turkey during the war, and had assisted many Jews to flee from Nazi persecution. It was also helpful that he was willing to receive a leading French Jewish scholar, Jules Isaac, who urged the adoption of the Seelisberg programme for better relations with Jews, and the overcoming of the teaching of contempt. It was also helpful that by this time Catholics, especially in Germany, were more fully aware of the Catholic Church’s complicity by its silence during the Holocaust. In the shadow of Auschwitz, all ideas of Jewish deficiency or guilt sounded obscene. As a result, Thieme and his colleagues led the way in recognizing that combatting Christian anti-Semitism was not enough. They needed to go further to tackle the equally entrenched anti-Judaism. It was also helpful to this cause that the theological reverberations of the creation of the State of Israel meant that the age-long calumnies about the Jews being condemned to wander the earth could no longer be maintained. Some went so far as to advocate the abandonment of Christian missionary efforts to Jews. Thieme and his friends began to argue that Jews should no longer be regarded as enemies but rather as the Christians’ elder brothers in faith.

Furthermore, just as they had, as Germans, protested against accusations that all Germans were to be branded as guilty of the Nazis’ crimes, so now the argument could be used against the collective guilt of the Jews for Christ’s crucifixion or the Jewish refusal to be converted to Christianity. It was also helpful that Pope John promoted the German Jesuit, Augustin Bea to be a Cardinal, and made him president of the newly-formed Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. In 1961 the Pope charged Bea with the task of formulating a new statement on the Church’s relations to the Jews. As Connelly rightly notes, for this new teaching, Cardinal Bea was the engineer, but Thieme and his friends in Freiburg were the real architects.

Connelly skillfully describes the process by which this declaration came through the preparatory stages and then the actual debates of the Second Vatican Council. To achieve this, Cardinal Bea had recalled Oesterreicher from the

United States, who brought with him a talented young priest from Canada, Gregory Baum. Baum had been born in Berlin in a family of Jewish origin, had been evacuated as a teenager to Wales in 1939 on one of the *Kindertransporte*, but a year later had been interned by the British authorities as a suspect enemy alien and exiled to Canada. After his internment there, he converted to Catholicism and joined an Augustinian monastery in Nova Scotia.

Oesterreicher's team and Bea's Secretariat labored intensively to draw up a document which would embody the ideas percolating over the previous decade. But they encountered two major obstacles. They were opposed first by the Catholic conservatives, both in the Vatican bureaucracy and amongst the newly-arrived bishops at the Council, who were reluctant to abandon the language and stereotypes about Jews with which they had been brought up. They therefore made frequent efforts to suppress or water down parts of the document of which they disapproved. This defensive reaction was only intensified by the outrage aroused by the publication in 1963 of the play *The Deputy* by the young Swiss playwright Rolf Hochhuth. This drama was a vitriolic attack on Pope Pius XII for his alleged silence during the Holocaust, and by inference was a striking accusation of the Catholic Church's intolerance and insensitivity towards the suffering of the Jews. But Oesterreicher came to believe that, after such an onslaught, the need for a strong pro-Jewish statement was all the more urgent. The bishops could have no illusions about the response of world opinion if the Council was silent on the Jews.

The second wave of opposition came from the bishops of the eastern Catholic Churches in Arab states, who were concerned about the future of their flocks, especially Palestinians, if any statement appeared to favour the Jews. They even enlisted the political support of their governments. The government of Syria, for example, protested plans to free Jews from the charge of deicide, and the Premier of Jordan threatened sanctions against any bishop who voted to absolve Jews from guilt for Christ's crucifixion. But in fact such tactics caused a backlash among the more broad-minded bishops. Luckily in the great debates held over this document in 1964, a consensus rapidly formed that Jews were not to be held collectively responsible for the death of Christ. At the same time, Bea was at pains to make it clear that the document was solely religious in tone and had no political implications at all. The terms Israel and Israeli were avoided wherever possible. Instead Jews were referred to as "the stock of Abraham". On the other hand, it is clear that great pains were taken to assuage the sensitivities of the numerous Jewish observers, both in Rome and elsewhere.

When the bishops finally and overwhelmingly approved *Nostra Aetate* in October 1965, Oesterreicher regarded it as a "miracle". Calling the Jews 'beloved by God' put an end to centuries-old harmful teachings of the Church. God's promises to the Jews were declared irrevocable. The inevitable corollary was to abandon efforts to convert Jews to Christianity but rather to embrace them in an ecumenical fellowship as no longer enemies but elder brothers.

In his concluding chapter Connelly again pays tribute to the handful of outsider pioneers who successfully broke the traditional pattern of Catholic prejudices about the Jews and Judaism. He attributes this success to their personal histories as they mobilized opposition first to Catholic anti-Semitism and then to Christian anti-Judaism. In the end

they recognized that it was more opportune to convert Catholics than Jews but to seek to bind both in a more ecumenical relationship which would acknowledge both as God's chosen people.

REVIEW OF STEVEN M. SCHROEDER, *TO FORGET IT ALL AND BEGIN ANEW: RECONCILIATION IN OCCUPIED GERMANY, 1944-1954*

December 1, 2013 · by [Matthew D. Hockenos](#) · in [Reviews, Volume 19 Number 4 \(December 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

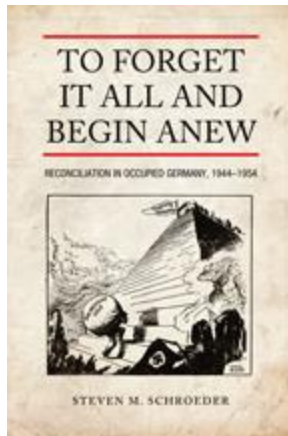
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Review of Steven M. Schroeder, *To Forget It All and Begin Anew: Reconciliation in Occupied Germany, 1944-1954* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 237 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4426-1399-7.

By Matthew D. Hockenos, Skidmore College

In *To Forget It All and Begin Anew: Reconciliation in Occupied Germany, 1944-1954*, Steven Schroeder provides a lucid account of the grassroots efforts of Germans from 1944 to 1954 to foster reconciliation with the former victims and enemies of Nazi Germany. Although the reconciliatory activities of these rather marginal grassroots figures in the churches, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other groups were not broadly endorsed by Germans and had little direct impact on the major geopolitical questions of the day, Schroeder maintains that they were surprisingly successful in overcoming the seemingly insurmountable barriers to reconciliation. More often than not the success was due to the willingness of the victims of Nazi aggression to take the first step in the reconciliation process by extending an invitation to Germans to begin a dialogue. It also helped to have the support of one or more of the Allies.



Unlike most of the studies of postwar Germany that focus on the origins of the Cold War and high stakes political maneuvering of the Allies, Schroeder takes a bottom-up approach that illuminates the less conspicuous reconciliation work of German groups such as the Association of the Victim of Nazism (VVN) and religiously-affiliated international groups such as International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), Moral Re-Armament (MRA), Pax Christi, the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ), and the World Council of Churches (WCC). His study compares and contrasts reconciliation, defined as “the establishment of peaceful – or at least non-hostile – relations between former enemies” in the four zones of occupation in the immediate postwar years and in East and West Germany after 1949.

The book’s title as well as the epigraph by Victor Gollancz, “For what matters is not a man’s motive but any practical result that may follow from his work,” makes clear that Schroeder does not believe that the success of German efforts at reconciliation were primarily the result of German altruism or good will. In most cases, reconciliatory work by Germans was calculated to placate the Allies by demonstrating that Germans had learned their lesson, wanted to contribute to postwar stability, and were ready to govern themselves. Schroeder refers to this as “pragmatic reconciliation” because the motive was not altruism but rather self-interest, particularly the desire to move on from the Nazi past.

During the first stage of reconciliation from 1944 to 1947 pragmatic reconciliation dominated. The Allied policies of non-fraternization, expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe, and de-Nazification treated Germans like pariahs, focusing on punishment and forced democratization. Allied policies did little to engender genuine feelings of contrition among a mostly unrepentant population. Reparation policies imposed by the Allies were another sore spot for many Germans, who were focused on their own needs.

Hans Asmussen, a Lutheran churchman and head of Protestant Church Chancellery, serves as Schroeder’s prototype of this type of pragmatic reconciliation. A central player in the Confessing Church’s struggle against the Nazis and their supporters in the churches from 1933 to 1945, Asmussen resented deeply the severity of Allied postwar policies, especially the Allies’ persistent efforts to compel Germans to atone for their Nazi past. Like so many of his countrymen, Asmussen believed that most Germans were not only innocent of Nazi crimes but were, in fact, victims of the Nazis and thus did not deserve to be bullied by the occupation authorities. In a January 1946 letter to the

Allied Control Council he bemoaned that the world would not allow Germans “to forget it all and begin anew.” Instead the Allies insisted that Germans acknowledge their responsibility, accept their punishment, and engage in reconciliatory activities. Asmussen regretted this state of affairs but conceded that Germans had no choice but to appease the Allies.

The priority of the German churches in the immediate postwar years was to provide material and spiritual relief for their worshippers. To this end, the Protestant and Catholic churches created relief agencies in 1945 that offered food, shelter, and clothing to gentile Germans suffering from deprivations caused by the loss of the war and Allied postwar policies. Leaders of these agencies were willing to extend their aid to Christians of Jewish descent but not to Jews. Schroeder believes that these agencies and others like them contributed to interpretations of the Nazi past that ignored German responsibility for the plight of Jews in the postwar years.

Christian-Jewish reconciliation was rare indeed but not entirely absent. Pastors for the most part ignored Jewish suffering or if they had contact with Jews at all it was in an effort to convert them. There were exceptions such as Gertrud Luckner and Karl Thieme in the Catholic Church and Ernst Lichtenstein and Otto von Harling in the Protestant Church, who made significant strides in building bridges to the Jewish community and in bringing to light Christian anti-Judaism and its ties to modern anti-Semitism. The Western Allies played an important role in encouraging German participation in Christian-Jewish cooperation. Between 1948 and 1953 the American Religious Affairs Branch helped to establish thirteen Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation. The response by German Jews was understandably suspicious at first but they warmed up to the idea when they realized that their Christian counterparts were not interested in proselytizing but rather were serious about eradicating anti-Semitism in the churches and society at large. Prominent German Jews such as Benno Ostertag, Alfred Mayer, Hans-Joachim Schoeps, and Norbert Wollheim participated actively. Schroeder argues that the societies successfully launched Christian-Jewish reconciliatory work into the public sphere in West Germany, where it became part of the official agenda in 1949 when president Theodore Heuss called on Germans to take responsibility for Germany’s crimes against the Jewish people.

In Stalinist East Germany reconciliation efforts had little chance of getting off the ground if they didn’t coincide with the political interests of the Soviet Union. The Association of the Victims of Nazism (VVN), the most active group in the East, advocated for reparations, including lump sums of money, food, clothing, and shelter, for Nazi victims. But in keeping with Communist ideology, VVN was concerned primarily with compensating those who had politically resisted the Nazis. Marginalized in the group’s discussions as “second-class victims,” Jews were forced to seek assistance from international Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Schroeder believes that although VVN and other groups operating in the Soviet zone were mostly fronts for Communist power, they did serve the reconciliation process in their own small way by bringing attention to Nazi crimes.

When the initiative for reconciliation came from non-Germans, often former enemies or victims, or from international organizations with religious affiliations, German participation tended to be more genuine and less forced. But as Schroeder points out “the effectiveness of all the organizations depended on their ideological alignment with the guiding politics in their sphere of operation” (98). The pacifist organization International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), founded by the British Quaker Henry Hodgkin and German Protestant Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze in 1914, opened three chapters in Germany in 1948. Although the German chapters had several dedicated members committed to a religiously based reconciliation, their influence was not terribly significant. The World Council of Churches (WCC) also reached out to German Protestants after the war and sought to incorporate Germans into the growing ecumenical movement. German Protestants reacted warmly to this initiative with their famous Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt in 1945 and participated in all of the postwar meetings of the WCC. Christian ecumenism was certainly a significant tool for breaking down old animosities but alone was only a partial answer. The Catholic movement Pax Christi had more success in West Germany than either IFOR or the WCC because its political affiliation was more in line with the western Allies. Although Pax Christi was a pacifist organization it was also decidedly anti-Communist and it focused on a central goal of the Allies, Franco-German reconciliation. German Catholics found Pax Christi attractive because its leader, the French Bishop Théas, did not focus on the Nazi past and encouraged French and German Catholics to focus on deepening personal piety and fostering international solidarity.

The most successful of the Christian-based international organizations was Moral Re-Armament (MRA). MRA strove for the moral rehabilitation of all Europeans, the advancement of Christian Democracy, and countering the spread of Communism. Schroeder believes that the Allie’s encouragement of MRA work was crucial to its success and coincided with the shift in U.S. foreign policy towards aggressively confronting the Soviet Union and containing Communism. MRA was particularly active in pursuing Franco-German reconciliation and even helped to arrange some of the early meetings between the German chancellor and French foreign minister that eventually led to the Schuman Plan of September 1950. Both Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman credited MRA with having done the groundwork that led to peaceful relations between the two countries.

With the exception of the Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, none of the above-mentioned groups focused on reconciliation with Jews. German politicians and church leaders showed very little leadership when it came to Jewish reconciliation work. It was left to Jewish groups in Germany and abroad as well as the state of Israel to pressure the German government to recognize Germany’s responsibility to compensate Jewish victims of Nazism. Political pragmatism, Schroeder believes, more than anything else led to the West German government’s 1952 reparations agreement with Israel, in which the Federal Republic agreed to pay Israel for the persecution of Jews by the Nazi regime and to compensate for Jewish property that was stolen. Politics also explains why the East Germans refused to pay reparations to Jewish victims.

By examining the grassroots reconciliatory efforts of Germans during the decade following the end of the Second World War, Schroeder’s book offers a fresh approach to studying the period. His extensive archival digging has also

yielded valuable new information about a number of the groups and individuals engaged in forging better relationships between German and her former enemies. The central thesis of the book, that reconciliation work pursued out of self-interest or compulsion could be as successful as altruistic acts of reconciliation, is counter-intuitive but Schroeder argues it persuasively and defends it with ample evidence.

REVIEW OF THOMAS GROSSBÖLTING, *DER VERLORENE HIMMEL. GLAUBE IN DEUTSCHLAND SEIT 1945*

December 1, 2013 · by [Manfred Gailus](#) · in [Reviews, Uncategorized](#), [Volume 19 Number 4 \(December 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

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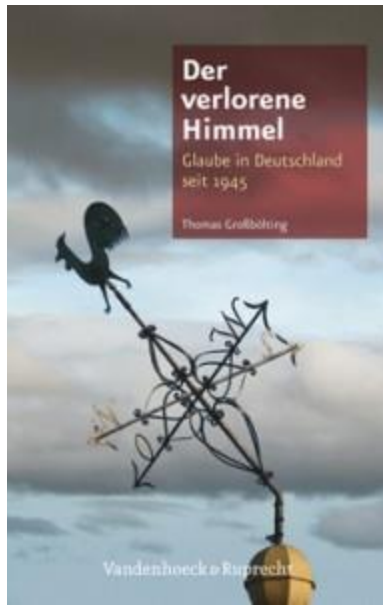
Volume 19, Number 4 (December 2013)

Review of Thomas Grossbölting, *Der verlorene Himmel. Glaube in Deutschland seit 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), Pp. 320.

By Manfred Gailus, Technische Universität Berlin

This review appeared originally (in German) in *Der Tagesspiegel* (1 July 2013). Our thanks to John S. Conway for his translation. The original can be found here: <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/land-ohne-himmel/8426976.html>

What do Germans today still believe in and how? Can we still talk of this being a “Christian country”?



Thomas Großbölting, who teaches at the University of Münster, poses these questions and puts them in the context of faith, church and religion after the catastrophe of National Socialism in Germany. This well researched study can be seen as the first up-to-date history of religion in the Federal Republic of Germany. His basic thesis is clear and hardly surprising. Anyone examining how and what Germans have believed in the past fifty years has to take note of a striking decline in the significance of religious consciousness. Although, in recent years, some observers have claimed that there has been a so-called religious revival, in fact anyone taking a longer view over the past five or six decades must conclude that a far-reaching secularization has taken place. The very idea of Heaven has been lost. As the author crucially points out in his introduction: “A Christian Germany no longer exists”. On the other hand, the elements of faith, church and religion have not disappeared from daily life in Germany. Rather they have been thinned out, pushed to the edge of society, and in many people’s lives they are completely or largely absent.

Grossbölting describes this transformation in religious life as taking place in three stages, to each of which he devotes an appropriate chapter. Firstly, there were the immediate post-war years, the so-called Adenauer era, when the old established Christian world still seemed to be at least partially in order, but which now looks really archaic. There followed the Swinging Sixties when the younger generation with their Beatles, their mini-skirts, their love of Karl Marx, and their rebellious behaviour in 1968, constituted a revolutionary change in life-styles. This was a turbulent period which saw a striking abandonment of religious customs and traditions. Finally, in the most recent decades, we have seen a further lessening of the ecclesiastical structures in both the major churches which used to possess a religious monopoly. Today the country is increasingly taking on the character of a multi-religious society. Amongst the most notable features in the religious statistics of this latest phase are the unstoppable growth of “non-confessionalists”, as well as the increase in the portion of the population which adheres to Islam, and the numerous colourful but often short-lived new religious movements. “From Church to Choice” may be an appropriate slogan for these dramatic changes, whereby individuals move from inherited church-going patterns to personal choices of faith and denomination.

The reader will surely be able to evaluate the main lines of this well-researched and convincingly argued study. But the author's Catholic perspective should not be forgotten, which leads him to overlook certain scandalous aspects in the Catholic milieu. It is hardly justifiable that such a notable critic as Rolf Hochhuth, whose drama "The Deputy" aroused such a stir in the 1960s, should be ignored. And in fact this study concentrates primarily on West Germany, so that the religious developments in East Germany are cursorily treated at the end of the volume. Furthermore, the author's treatment of the long shadow of National Socialism and the churches' problematic responses during the Nazi era from 1933 to 1945 is too abridged. This experience was a fateful epoch whose repercussions in the post-war world were, and to some extent still are, a dire legacy. But, at the same time, this attempt to give us a religious history of Germany since 1945 can be seen as a successful and well-informed survey.

REVIEW OF MICHAEL WERMKE, ED., TRANSFORMATION UND RELIGIÖSE ERZIEHUNG: KONTINUITÄTEN UND BRÜCHE DER RELIGIONSPÄDAGOGIK 1933 UND 1945

December 1, 2013 · by [Heath A. Spencer](#) · in [Reviews](#), Volume 19 Number 4 (December 2013) · [Edit](#)

Contemporary Church History Quarterly

Volume 19, Number 4 (December 2013)

Review of Michael Wermke, ed., *Transformation und religiöse Erziehung: Kontinuitäten und Brüche der Religionspädagogik 1933 und 1945* (Jena: IKS Garamond, 2011), 390 pp. ISBN 978-3941854376.

Heath A. Spencer, Seattle University

Standard works on German church history during the Nazi era often focus on the extent to which theologians, clergy, church administrations and church-run institutions supported, complied with, or resisted the aims of the Nazi state. Also of interest is the degree to which Nazi ideology permeated, shaped or undermined religious life among ordinary Protestants and Catholics. *Transformation und religiöse Erziehung*, edited by Michael Wermke, makes a valuable contribution on both levels through its investigation of the theory and practice of religious education before and during the Third Reich. The research included in this volume was originally presented at the annual conference of the *Arbeitskreis für Historische Religionspädagogik* in 2010. Although a few of the chapters are aimed solely at specialists in the history of religious education, most will be of wider interest to contemporary church historians as well.



Two of the chapters are biographical studies of individual religious educators or professors at teacher training institutions. Thomas Martin Schneider's "Die Umbrüche 1933 und 1945 und die Religionspädagogik" takes up the story of Georg Maus, a religion teacher at an Oberschule in Idar-Oberstein. Maus, who was associated with the Confessing Church, was accused of undermining the war effort because he failed to properly manage a class discussion of Jesus' command to love one's enemies. He received a two-year sentence and died while being transported to Dachau. Schneider contrasts Maus' story with that of Reinhold Krause, also an educator, but most famous for his address to members of the German Christian Movement at the Berlin Sport Palace Rally in 1933. Schneider finds that Krause both appropriated and violated aspects of liberal Protestant thought. The cases of Maus and Krause, Schneider argues, call into question both the "conservative decadence model" that blames liberal Protestant theology for Nazi conceptions of Christianity and the "progress- optimistic model" that exonerates it of all charges. Theological orientations, including diverse political theologies in the twentieth century, cannot be judged apart from their historical contexts. Likewise, one should not reduce contemporary religious education to the narrow range of options that were present in the Third Reich, nor should one assume that those options will have the same value in all historical settings.

The second biographical study is Folkert Rickers' "'Vom Individuum zum Volksgenossen': Helmuth Kittel und die Jugendbewegung." In this work, Rickers explores the ideological orientation of Kittel, a youth movement leader, theologian, and professor of pedagogy. Kittel's postwar autobiography minimizes his association with Nazism, but his writings from the 1920s and 1930s (more than 90 titles) indicate enthusiasm for *völkisch* ideology well before Hitler came to power. Contrary to his postwar claims, he seems to have experienced the Third Reich as the fulfillment of the goals of the German youth movement in which he played such a prominent role.

Jonas Flöter's "Von der Landeschule zur Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalt" examines the transition of the *Landesschule Pforta*, established in 1543, from an elite secondary school with a religious orientation to a de-Christianized training ground for political soldiers. The *Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung, und Volksbildung* exploited internal conflicts and scandals at the school in order to replace most teachers and

administrators, and in 1935, SS member Dr. Adolf Schieffer was entrusted with the transformation of the school into an NPEA. However, religious services and religious instruction, including lessons in Hebrew and the Old Testament, were not abolished until 1937, and up to that point approximately two thirds of the students continued to participate in religion classes. In order to carry out the transformation of the school, the *Reichserziehungsministerium* had to work around school personnel, parents, students, and alumni who were not always fully compliant.

Five of the chapters in the collection focus on trends in Protestant and Catholic religious education at the regional and national levels. Werner Simon's "Nationalpolitische Erziehung im katholischen Unterricht?" examines the writings of prominent Catholic theorists and contributors to *Katechetische Blätter*, a Catholic journal devoted to religious education. Simon finds considerable interest in 1933 and 1934 for "national-political education in Catholic religious instruction" (77), but there was little emphasis on such themes before or after that two-year period. In fact, articles published after 1934 were more likely to express opposition to what was seen as a Germanic narrowing of the faith or conflict between demands of the state and universal Christian ethics.

Joachim Maier's "Traditionsbruch und Wandel religiöser Erziehung: Schule und katholischer Religionsunterricht in Baden 1933-1945" also suggests a blend of opposition and complicity on the part of German Catholics. After the Nazis came to power, church holidays and school prayers were replaced with National Socialist holidays and slogans. The new *Hochschule für Lehrerbildung* in Karlsruhe offered only minimal training in methods of religious education, and most teachers refused to teach religion in any case, especially if the Old Testament was part of the curriculum. As a result, many pious Catholics who initially had expressed enthusiasm for Hitler's regime now viewed it with suspicion. Catholic leaders in Baden responded by publishing *Katechismuswahrheiten* (1936), a document that challenged Nazi racial ideology and stressed the importance of both the Old and New Testaments. Unfortunately, it also reinforced a number of anti-Jewish stereotypes and declared that German Catholics should give special consideration to their own *Volk*. Archbishop Conrad Gröber (Freiburg) sent mixed messages to the faithful by stressing obedience to the state and warning that "from the depravity and loss of faith among the youth it is only a very small step to the world view of our bitterest enemies in the east" (115). Nevertheless, Catholic authorities in Baden put up a more spirited defense of traditional religious instruction than Protestant leaders in the same region.

Desmond Bell's "Ein Fehler im System? Das Alte Testament im preussischen Religionsunterricht nach 1933" illustrates the extent to which Prussian school curricula were stripped of religious content, especially that which was seen to be the result of Jewish influences. The National Socialist Teachers' Association opposed religious instruction in general and the Old Testament in particular, whereas guidelines from the Protestant Reich Church administration called for removal of the Old Testament from religious instruction except those cases where it could be used to "demonstrate" that Jesus came to do battle with Judaism. Bell finds evidence that, in spite of these pressures, Old Testament material was still included in some religion texts as late as 1942. However, the content

was reduced dramatically over time, and what was left was severed from Judaism and reframed in such a way as to promote an antisemitic and National Socialist worldview.

Johannes Wischmeyer's "Transformationen des Bildungsraums im bayrischen 'Schulkampf' 1933-1938" focuses less on the religious curriculum within schools and more on the abolition of Protestant denominational school in Bavaria. In addition to curtailing religious instruction and removing clergy from teaching positions, both the state and the National Socialist Teachers' Association put tremendous pressure on parents to send their children to *Gemeinschaftschulen* rather than denominational schools. This pressure included multiple home visits by teachers who denounced confessional schools as "residual schools" or "peasant schools" (128). The regional Bavarian Protestant Church responded with its own campaign to shore up support for denominational schools, but by 1936 only 2000 Protestant students remained enrolled, and the last denominational school was forced to close in 1937.

One of the most interesting contributions to the volume is David Käbisch's, "Eine Typologie des Versagens? Das Personal und Lehrprofil für das Fach Religion an den nationalsozialistischen Hochschulen für Lehrerbildung." In this article, Käbisch surveys the available data on 818 religion courses offered at teacher training institutes throughout Germany, comparing what was taught before and after 1933. In addition to recommending approaches for further research, Käbisch identifies patterns that are already apparent. For example, after 1933 it was more common to see topics such as "The Protestant Faith as a Particular Expression of the German Character, Demonstrated by Great Men of German History (Luther, Bach, Arndt, Lagarde, Bismarck, Hindenburg, etc.)" (175). Of the courses offered between 1939 and 1945, 8 addressed explicitly Christological themes, 26 focused on Martin Luther, and 43 dealt with "contemporary problems." It is also possible to track changes in the priorities of individual professors. For example, Fritz Hoffmann of the *Pädagogische Akademie* in Elbing taught courses on "The Kingdom of God in the Sermons of Jesus" and similar topics before 1933, but after 1933 he was teaching subjects like "German Christianity: State, Church and School" and "The German Concept of Honor and Christian Morality" (169, 185-189). Following Käbisch's analysis, Appendix II (pages 174-214) includes a complete list of the individual courses, identifying the instructors, denominations, institutions, and dates.

One other chapter of interest to church historians is Hein Retter's "Protestantische Milieus vor und nach 1933. Der Christlich-Soziale Volksdienst und der Reichsverband deutscher evangelischer Schulgemeinden e.V." Both the political party and the school association in this study emerged out of free-church, Biblicist, and Pietistic circles in Württemberg, Westphalia, Hanover, and the Rhineland. Their supporters opposed rationalism, liberalism, and Marxism, yet they were also loyal to the Weimar Republic and willing to advance their culturally conservative agendas through a democratic process. Although many in the *Schulgemeindeverband* initially expressed enthusiasm for the Nazi state, seeing it as a solution to moral decline, it was not long before they moved toward a more oppositional stance. Retter applauds their publication of an agenda for religious instruction that was inspired by the Barmen Declaration, affirmed the importance of both the Old and New Testaments, and refused to make National Socialism the standard for religious education.

Altogether, the contributors to this volume present a fascinating account of both continuity and change in religious education following the Nazi revolution in 1933. A few chapters address the postwar era as well, but overall this period receives less attention and the results are less striking. Several contributors mention the challenges posed by incomplete records and the limited range of the sources. For example, it is easier to identify the content of text books and course plans than to know what actually happened in the classroom and how it was experienced by children and youth. In spite of such limitations, this collective effort by the *Arbeitskreis für Historische Religionspädagogik* provides important insights into how the policies of state and church played out at the local level among ordinary people. They take us beyond institutional histories and church politics and into the world of students, teachers, professors, and parents, all of whom had their own role to play alongside religious and political leaders.

CALL FOR PAPERS: 2014 ANNUAL KARL BARTH CONFERENCE

December 1, 2013 · by [Victoria J. Barnett](#) · in [News and Notes, Volume 19 Number 4 \(December 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

Contemporary Church History Quarterly

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Call for Papers: 2014 Annual Karl Barth Conference

The 2014 Annual Karl Barth Conference will be held on June 15th-18th, 2014 at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, NJ. The theme of the conference is “Barth, Jews, and Judaism” and the plenary speakers include Victoria Barnett (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), Eberhard Busch (Georg-August-Universität-Göttingen), Ellen Charry (Princeton Theological Seminary), George Hunsinger (Princeton Theological Seminary), Mark Lindsay (MCD University of Divinity), David Novak (University of Toronto), and Peter Ochs (University of Virginia).

Those currently enrolled in a doctoral program or with completed doctorates are invited to submit paper proposals on this year’s theme. The focus of this year’s conference is the relationship between Judaism and Karl Barth’s theology both historically and constructively.

Abstracts not exceeding 250 words should be sent to Barth.center@ptsem.edu no later than March 1st, 2014. Papers should be no more than 3,500 words in order to be delivered in 30 minutes and allow 15-20 minutes for Q&A. Please include your current academic standing with submissions.

SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT: MORAL DILEMMAS AND MORAL CHOICE IN THE HOLOCAUST

December 1, 2013 · by [Victoria J. Barnett](#) · in [News and Notes, Volume 19 Number 4 \(December 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

Contemporary Church History Quarterly

Volume 19, Number 4 (December 2013)

Seminar Announcement: Moral Dilemmas and Moral Choice in the Holocaust

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies

Program on Ethics, Religion, and the Holocaust

2013 Annual Seminar for Seminary and Religious Studies Faculty

Moral Dilemmas and Moral Choice in the Holocaust: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Pius XII as Case Studies in Religious Leadership

June 23-27, 2014

The Program on Ethics, Religions, and the Holocaust of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is pleased to announce its annual seminar for faculty from all disciplines but particularly for professors of theology, ethics, and religion at theological schools and other institutions of advanced education. The seminar is scheduled for June 23-27, 2014.

Holocaust history provides complex, often troubling examples of the responses of religious groups, theologians, and leaders from across Europe. As two of the most studied religious figures of this era, German Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Catholic pontiff Pope Pius XII offer significant insights into the larger theological, ecclesial, and political issues that shaped Christian reactions to National Socialism and the Holocaust. Bonhoeffer, a young Confessing Church pastor and theologian, eventually became involved in the conspiracy to overthrow the Nazi regime and was executed by the Nazis in 1945. Eugenio Pacelli was the Vatican's secretary of state until he became Pope Pius XII in 1939. Both men have their defenders and critics, particularly with respect to their

responses to the persecution of the Jews. This seminar will explore the historical and theological complexities of their respective roles, as well as their legacies in shaping Christian understandings of the Holocaust after 1945.

The seminar will be co-taught by Victoria Barnett and Robert Ventresca. Robert Ventresca is associate professor of history at King's University College at Western University in London, Ontario (Canada), and the author of *Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII* (2013). He is also the author of *From Fascism to Democracy: Culture and Politics in the Italian Election of 1948* (2004) which received an honorable mention for the Canadian Historical Association's Wallace K. Ferguson Prize. Professor Ventresca was a founding member and inaugural Co-Chair of the former Center for Catholic-Jewish Learning at King's University College at Western University. Victoria Barnett directs the Museum's Programs on Ethics, Religion, and the Holocaust. She is also one of the general editors of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition*, the translation of the complete 16-volume writings of Bonhoeffer being published by Fortress Press. She is also the author of *Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity during the Holocaust* (1999) and *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest against Hitler* (1992).

Participants will also have the opportunity to learn more about Museum resources for their teaching and to consult and interact with Museum staff and visiting scholars. More information about the Museum's programs on the history of the churches during the Holocaust can be found at www.ushmm.org/research/center/church/.

Candidates must be faculty members at accredited, degree-awarding institutions in North America. Applications must include: (1) a curriculum vitae; (2) a statement of the candidate's specific interest and purpose for attending the seminar; and (3) a supporting letter from a departmental chair or dean addressing the candidate's qualifications and the institution's potential interest in having Holocaust-related courses taught.

Admission will be decided without regard to age, gender, race, creed, or national origin. A maximum of twenty applicants will be accepted. For non-local participants, the Center will (1) reimburse the cost of direct travel to and from the participant's home institution and Washington, DC, up to but not exceeding the amount of \$500; and (2) defray the cost of lodging for the duration of the course. Incidental, meal, and book expenses must be defrayed by the candidates or their respective institutions. All participants must attend the entire seminar.

Applications must be postmarked, emailed, or faxed no later than Monday, February 24, 2014, and sent to: Victoria Barnett, University Programs, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2150 (Email: vbarnett@ushmm.org; Fax: 202-479-9726). For questions, contact Victoria Barnett at 202-488-0469 or vbarnett@ushmm.org. All applicants will be notified of the results of the selection process by Monday, March 24, 2014.

This seminar is made possible by the Hoffberger Family Fund and by Joseph A. and Janeal Cannon and Family.