Tendentious attacks on Pope Pius XII (Eugenio Pacelli) are nothing new. Indeed, they have become commonplace. Yet Daniel Goldhagen’s recent 27,000-word essay for the New Republic, “What Would Jesus Have Done? Pope Pius XII, the Catholic Church, and the Holocaust” (January 21, 2002), calls for special attention. Based upon his forthcoming book, A Moral Reckoning (Knopf), Goldhagen’s essay is noteworthy both for the breathtaking scope of its claims and the air of righteous indignation that infuses it. Not content to argue that Pope Pius did less to save the Jews than he should have, as many other scholars have done, Goldhagen goes much further—to attack Pacelli as an anti–Semite and the Church as a whole as an institution thoroughly, and perhaps inextricably, permeated by anti–Semitism. In fact, he even argues that “the main responsibility for producing this all–time leading Western hatred lies with Christianity. More specifically, with the Catholic Church.” Such charges demand a thorough response.

In his most recent book, Hitler’s Willing Executioners, Goldhagen asserted that blame for the Holocaust should be placed on ordinary Germans and their unique brand of anti–Semitism. When contemporary historians from both sides of the Atlantic challenged him on this point, he eventually conceded that he had underestimated how factors other than anti–Semitism helped lead to the Third Reich’s crimes. “I skirted over some of this history a little too quickly,” he said. He has skirted again.

Goldhagen’s article is based on no original historical research. It is entirely dependent on secondary sources that are written in English. This contributes to what can only be judged an inexcusable number of errors, small and large. Several of the dates he provides relating to the establishment of European ghettos are wrong (one by more than fifty years). He is also wrong (by three decades) about the beginning of the process for Pius XII’s beatification, and he is wrong about the date that the so–called “Hidden Encyclical” was made public. He is wrong in calling the concordat with the Holy See “Nazi Germany’s first international treaty.” He is wrong to say that the Belgian Catholic Church
was silent; it was one of the first national churches to speak out against Nazi racial theories. He is way off base to suggest that German Cardinals Michael von Faulhaber and Clement August von Galen were insensitive to or silent about Jewish suffering. Goldhagen says that Pius XII “clearly failed to support” the protest of the French bishops, when, in fact, he actually had it rebroadcast on Vatican Radio for six consecutive days. He charges that Pius XII never reproached or punished Franciscan friar Miroslav Filipovic–Majstorovic for his evil actions in Croatia, when, actually, the so–called “Brother Satan” was tried, laicized, and expelled from the Franciscan order before the war even ended (in fact, before most of his serious wrongdoing). Goldhagen also misidentifies the role of Vatican official Peter Gumpel (who is the relator or judge, not the postulator or promoter, of Pius XII’s cause for sainthood), and he is wrong to say that Gumpel was designated by the Vatican to represent it at a meeting with the recently disbanded Catholic–Jewish study group. He seems unaware that Catholic scholars on that committee disassociated themselves from statements issued by their Jewish counterparts following its collapse. He identifies the much–admired king of Denmark during the war as Christian II; it was Christian X. He refers to Pope Pius XI as having been Cardinal Secretary of State; it was actually his successor Pope Pius XII.

A few embarrassments like this might be accounted for by positing carelessness. However, Goldhagen’s graver errors—each and every one of which cuts against Catholics and the Pope—reveal something much more troubling at work in his essay.

The 1942 Christmas Statement

Goldhagen’s efforts to trivialize and diminish Pope Pius XII’s famous 1942 Christmas statement and its clear denunciation of Nazi ideology are representative of the one–sided, biased approach that permeates his work. In the 1942 statement, Pius said that the world was “plunged into the gloom of tragic error” and that “the Church would be untrue to herself, she would have ceased to be a mother, if she were deaf to the cries of suffering children which reach her ears from every class of the human family.” He spoke of the need for mankind to make “a solemn vow never to rest until valiant souls of every people and every nation of the earth arise in their legions, resolved to bring society and to devote themselves to the services of the human person and of a divinely ennobled human society.” He said that mankind owed this vow to all victims of the war, including “the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction” (emphasis added).

In making this statement and others during the war, Pius used the word stirpe, which according to Zanichelli’s Italian and English Dictionary can mean stock, birth, family, race, or descent, but which had been used for centuries as an explicit reference to Jews. British records (British Public Records Office, FO 371/34363 59337 [January 5, 1943]) reflect the opinion that “the Pope’s condemnation of the treatment of the Jews and the Poles is quite unmistakable, and the message is perhaps more forceful in tone than any of his recent statements.” The Dutch bishops issued a pastoral letter in defense of Jewish people on February 21, 1943, making express reference to the Pope’s statement.
Moreover, a well-known Christmas Day editorial in the New York Times praised Pius XII for his moral leadership in opposing the Nazis:

No Christmas sermon reaches a larger congregation than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war–torn world at this season. This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent...

When a leader bound impartially to nations on both sides condemns as heresy the new form of national state which subordinates everything to itself; when he declares that whoever wants peace must protect against “arbitrary attacks” the “juridical safety of individuals”; when he assails violent occupation of territory, the exile and persecution of human beings for no reason other than race or political opinion; when he says that people must fight for a just and decent peace, a “total peace”—the “impartial judgment” is like a verdict in a high court of justice.

A similar editorial from the Times of London said:

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

Obviously, in contrast to what Goldhagen would have us believe, everyone knew to whom the Pope was referring, including the Axis powers.

According to an official Nazi report by Heinrich Himmler’s Superior Security Office (the Reichssicher heits hauptamt) to Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop’s office:

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

An American report noted that the Germans were “conspicuous by their absence” at a Midnight Mass conducted by the Pope for diplomats on Christmas Eve following the papal statement. German Ambassador Diego von Bergen, on the instruction of Ribbentrop, warned the Pope that the Nazis would seek retaliation if the Vatican abandoned its neutral position. When he reported back to his superiors, the German ambassador stated: “Pacelli is no more sensible to threats than we are.”

Vatican Radio
Goldhagen asks rhetorically: “Why, as a moral and practical matter, did [Pius XII] speak out publicly on behalf of the suffering of Poles, but not of Jews? No good answer.” He then quotes a Vatican Radio broadcast of January 1940, trying to make the point that the Vatican was concerned only about Polish Catholics and could not spare a good word for Jews. In doing this, he badly misrepresents the truth.

As an initial matter, the quote cited by Goldhagen does not limit itself to Christian Poles. It merely refers to “Poles.” Of course, writings of that time sometimes distinguished “Poles” and “Jews,” using the former designation to refer to Polish Christians, but this was far from always the case. Moreover, Goldhagen implies that Jews were never mentioned on Vatican Radio. This is simply false.

Goldhagen seems to have taken his Vatican Radio quote from Pierre Blet’s Pius XII and the Second World War. That book presents itself as a synopsis. Had Goldhagen actually researched the Vatican Radio transcripts from January 1940 (the month upon which he focuses) he would have found that Jews were indeed expressly and clearly identified. A key passage states:

A system of interior deportation and zoning is being organized, in the depth of one of Europe’s severest winters, on principles and by methods that can be described only as brutal; and stark hunger stares 70 percent of Poland’s population in the face, as its reserves of foodstuffs and tools are shipped to Germany to replenish the granaries of the metropolis. Jews and Poles are being herded into separate “ghettos,” hermetically sealed and pitifully inadequate for the economic subsistence of the millions destined to live there.

Even Michael Phayer (another critic of the Pope) quotes this explicit defense of Jews in his book The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965 (which is listed as one of the books that Goldhagen reviewed for his essay). On October 15, 1940, Vatican Radio denounced “the immoral principles of Nazism,” and on March 30, 1941 explicitly condemned “the wickedness of Hitler.” These broadcasts were among the first to break the news of the Nazi persecutions, but they were not the only such stories on Vatican Radio. They continued throughout the war.

The Catholic faithful heard these broadcasts and reacted accordingly. French priest–rescuer (and later Cardinal) Henri de Lubac paid tribute to the Pope’s radio station in his book Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism, describing the profound impact it had upon the French resistance. Similarly, Father Michel Riquet, S.J., an ex–inmate of Dachau who was recognized for saving Jewish lives, stated: “Pius XII spoke; Pius XII condemned; Pius XII acted. . . . Throughout those years of horror, when we listened to Radio Vatican and to the Pope’s messages, we felt in communion with the Pope in helping persecuted Jews and in fighting against Nazi violence.”
Early in his essay, Goldhagen discusses the so-called “hidden encyclical.” The story here is that in June 1938, more than a year before the outbreak of World War II, when Eugenio Pacelli was Vatican Secretary of State, Pope Pius XI commissioned a draft papal statement attacking racism and anti-Semitism. Unfortunately he died before it was completed. According to Goldhagen, Pius XI drafted it, Pius XII buried it, and it remained hidden until it was published in France in 1995.

This story, if true, would help to support Goldhagen’s depiction of Pius XII as a villain. But it isn’t true. For starters, there never was an encyclical or even a draft encyclical. Pope Pius XI asked for a paper from Fr. John LaFarge, S.J. The thought was that this might one day be used as the basis for an encyclical. LaFarge was not an expert theologian or historian, so he sought help from two other priests, one from France and the other from Germany. This resulted in three different papers, one written in French, one in English, and one in German.

The source upon which Goldhagen relies, Georges Passelecq and Bernard Suchecky’s *The Hidden Encyclical of Pius XI*, deals with the French and the English papers, but not the German one. That book also makes clear that—contrary to what Goldhagen reports—Pius XI was not the author of any of the documents. In fact, as that book further makes clear, there is no evidence that either he or Pius XII even saw these documents. A copy was sent to Pius XI, but by that time he was already gravely ill. When it was found after his death, there were no notations suggesting that he ever reviewed it. The book also explains that the paper disappeared immediately after Pius XI’s death, and the men who were working on the project believed (indeed were certain) that Pius XII had not seen it. He therefore could not have buried it. Finally, this matter was made public in 1972 by the National Catholic Reporter and again in 1973 by L’Osservatore Romano, not in 1995 when Passelecq and Suchecky’s book came out.

The primary author of the German draft, Professor Gustav Gundlach, S.J., helped Pius XII with his first encyclical, Summi Pontificatus, which was released on October 20, 1939, just after the outbreak of war. Not surprisingly, Summi Pontificatus (which expressly mentions Jews and urges solidarity with all who profess a belief in God) contains language that is similar to the paper on which Gundlach had worked. In fact, Fr. LaFarge wrote in America magazine that it was obvious that Summi Pontificatus applied to the Jews of Europe. He was concerned only that Americans might not realize that it also applied to racial injustice in the United States.

Because Goldhagen limited his research to a single and incomplete source, it is not surprising to find that his comments only magnify the errors about the “hidden encyclical.” (A much better book on the subject, edited by Anton Rauscher, recently appeared in Germany.) What is very surprising is that Goldhagen neglects even to mention Summi Pontificatus.

In January 2002, documents from the personal archive of General William J. (“Wild Bill”) Donovan, who served as special assistant to the U.S. chief of counsel during the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, were made public and posted on the
In a confidential report documenting Nazi persecution of the Church, prepared for the Nuremberg prosecution, the situation surrounding Summi Pontificatus is discussed as providing grounds for a separate count against the Nazis. The report notes that priests who read that document were reported to the authorities and that Nazi officials stopped its reproduction and distribution.

“This Encyclical,” wrote Heinrich Mueller, head of the Gestapo in Berlin, “is directed exclusively against Germany, both in ideology and in regard to the German–Polish dispute; how dangerous it is for our foreign relations as well as our domestic affairs is beyond dispute.”

Reinhard Heydrich, leader of the SS Security Office in Warsaw, wrote, “This declaration of the Pope makes an unequivocal accusation against Germany.” The New York Times headline declared: “Pope Condemns Dictators, Treaty Violators, Racism; Urges Restoring of Poland.” Allied forces later dropped 88,000 copies of it behind enemy lines for propaganda purposes.

The Concordat

In 1933, the Holy See and the German government signed an agreement that assured the Church’s ability to hold services and function in general in the coming years. Goldhagen misleadingly reports that “Pacelli hastened to negotiate for the Church a treaty of cooperation, the concordat, with Hitler’s Germany.” He also incorrectly adds that this was “Nazi Germany’s first international treaty.”

Goldhagen was probably fooled by James Carroll’s *Constantine’s Sword*. Carroll artfully states that the concordat was Nazi Germany’s first bilateral treaty. In fact, the Four Powers Pact between Germany, France, Italy, and England preceded the concordat’s signing. Moreover, Hitler’s representatives were fully accredited and recognized by the League of Nations and took part in the disarmament discussions in Geneva, which also came before the signing of the concordat. The Soviet Union on May 5, 1933 (more than two months before the concordat was signed) renewed a trade and friendship agreement with Germany, and on that same day the British Parliament voted to accept an Anglo–German trade agreement. In other words, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the whole League of Nations accredited the new German government before the concordat was signed. Carroll may have been technically correct, if misleading. Goldhagen is just plain wrong.

Goldhagen is also wrong to assert that a “secret annex” gave the Church’s approval to German rearmament. The concordat merely states that if Germany were to revive its army, Catholic soldiers would have access to chaplains. That is a matter of protecting the sacraments, not approving rearmament. For Goldhagen to transform it into something nefarious is explicable only as part of his determined effort to defame Catholics and the Pope.

The aforementioned recently released confidential report from the Nuremberg
prosecution confirms that the concordat was a “Nazi proposition.” The Nazis accepted terms that the Church had previously proposed to Weimar, but which Weimar had rejected. The Nazis told the Vatican that the choice was to accept those terms (which assured that the Church would be able to function) or face severe persecution. In fact, to prove that they were serious, the Nazis severely persecuted German Catholics in the weeks leading up to the concordat. In a private conversation with the British chargé d’affaires to the Vatican, Pacelli said that the choice was “an agreement on their lines, or the virtual elimination of the Catholic Church in the Reich.”

The concordat, of course, came during the pontificate of Pope Pius XI. Like David Kertzer (The Popes Against the Jews), Goldhagen argues that Pius XI was an anti–Semite. This is a rare allegation. Pius XI is usually presented as the good, outspoken Pope, in contrast to the “silent” Pius XII. Not only did Pius XI condemn racism in major statements issued in 1928, 1930, and 1937, but on September 6, 1938, in a statement which—though barred from the Fascist press—quickly made its way around the world, he said:

Mark well that in the Catholic Mass, Abraham is our Patriarch and forefather. Anti-Semitism is incompatible with the lofty thought which that fact expresses. It is a movement with which we Christians can have nothing to do. No, no, I say to you it is impossible for a Christian to take part in anti-Semitism. It is inadmissible. Through Christ and in Christ we are the spiritual progeny of Abraham. Spiritually, we are all Semites.

In January 1939, the National Jewish Monthly reported that “the only bright spot in Italy has been the Vatican, where fine humanitarian statements by the Pope [Pius XI] have been issuing regularly.” When he died the following month, the Nazi press denigrated him as “Chief Rabbi of the Western World.”

Despite the ludicrous claim that Pius XI was an anti–Semite, Goldhagen twists the facts around so that he can “blame” Pius XII for drafting the concordat (which, of course, ultimately was the responsibility of the sitting Pope, not Secretary of State Pacelli). He also “blames” Pius XII for drafting the 1937 anti–Nazi encyclical Mit brennender Sorge.

Mit brennender Sorge

Of all Goldhagen’s outrages, none is less comprehensible than his depiction of the great encyclical Mit brennender Sorge—the Vatican’s powerful denunciation of German fascism and racism—as an anti–Semitic screed. Mit brennender Sorge, issued by Pope Pius XI when Pacelli was his Secretary of State, is one of the strongest condemnations of any national regime that the Holy See has ever published. It condemned not only the persecution of the Church in Germany, but also the neo–paganism of Nazi racial theories. The encyclical stated in part that:

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—
however necessary and honorable be their function in worldly things—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.

It took direct aim at Hitler and Nazism, saying:

None but superficial minds could stumble into concepts of a national God, of a national religion; or attempt to lock within the frontiers of a single people, within the narrow limits of a single race, God, the Creator of the universe, King and Legislator of all nations before whose immensity they are “as a drop of a bucket” (Isaiah 11:15).

The encyclical also praised leaders in the Church who had stood firm and provided a good example. It concluded that “enemies of the Church, who think that their time has come, will see that their joy was premature.”

Unlike most encyclicals, which are written in Latin, *Mit brennender Sorge* was written in German. It was dated and signed by Pope Pius XI on Passion Sunday, March 14, 1937, but it was smuggled into Germany, distributed to all parishes, and read from the pulpits on Palm Sunday, March 21, 1937.

The only reason *Mit brennender Sorge* was read to anyone was because the Nazis were caught off guard. It was not published in German newspapers. An internal German memorandum dated March 23, 1937 called the encyclical “almost a call to do battle against the Reich government.” The prosecution report for the Nuremberg trials explained the measures that the Nazis took in retaliation: all available copies were confiscated, twelve printing offices were closed, those convicted of distributing the encyclical were arrested, and the Church-affiliated publications that ran the encyclical were banned. Later on, the mere mention of the encyclical was made a crime in Nazi Germany.

The day following the release of *Mit brennender Sorge*, the *Völkischer Beobachter* carried a strong counterattack on the “Jew–God and His deputy in Rome.” *Das Schwarze Korps* called it “the most incredible of Pius XI’s pastoral letters; every sentence in it was an insult to the new Germany.” The German ambassador to the Holy See was instructed not to take part in the solemn Easter ceremonies, and German missions throughout Europe were told that the German government “had to consider the Pope’s encyclical as a call to battle . . . as it calls upon Catholic citizens to rebel against the authority of the Reich.”

The persecution of Jews, unfortunately, did not lessen; it got worse following the release of *Mit brennender Sorge*. This reaction is but one of many examples of Nazi retaliation—against Jews and Christians—that Goldhagen denies ever happened. His attempt to convert this strong papal statement into an anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi screed is simply incredible.
Mystici Corporis Christi

Goldhagen also misrepresents Pope Pius XII’s 1943 encyclical, Mystici Corporis Christi. Since this was primarily a letter on theology, it contained no express references to Hitler or the Nazis. Still, it was an obvious attack on the theoretical basis of National Socialism. As Israeli diplomat Pinchas E. Lapide wrote in *Three Popes and the Jews*: “Pius chose mystical theology as a cloak for a message which no cleric or educated Christian could possibly misunderstand.”

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

Pius appealed to “Catholics the world over” to “look to the Vicar of Jesus Christ as the loving Father of them all, who . . . takes upon himself with all his strength the defense of truth, justice, and charity.” He explained, “Our paternal love embraces all peoples, whatever their nationality or race.” “Christ, by his blood, made the Jews and Gentiles one, ‘breaking down the middle wall of partition . . . in his flesh’ by which the two peoples were divided” (emphasis added). He noted that Jews were among the first people to adore Jesus.

Pius then made an appeal for all to “follow our peaceful King who taught us to love not only those who are of a different nation or race, but even our enemies.” Mystici Corporis Christi also strongly condemned the forced conversions (to Catholicism) that were then occurring in Fascist Croatia, which Goldhagen wrongly claims enjoyed Vatican support.

Vatican Radio used the encyclical as the basis for a broadcast that stated: “He who makes a distinction between Jews and other men is unfaithful to God and in conflict with God’s commands.”

The 1919 Letter

At the center of Goldhagen’s anti–Catholic thesis is the piece of evidence that John Cornwell centrally relied upon in his deeply flawed book, *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*. It is a letter, written in 1919 by Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, when he was papal nuncio in Munich. That year, Bolshevik revolutionaries temporarily took power in Bavaria. Many foreign dignitaries left Munich, but Pacelli stayed at his post and became a target of Bolshevik hostility. On one occasion, a car sprayed Pacelli’s residence with machine-gun fire. Another time, a small group of Bolsheviks broke into the nunciature, threatened Pacelli at gunpoint, and tried to rob him. Yet another time, an angry mob descended on Pacelli’s car, screaming insults and threatening to turn the car over.
When the Bolsheviks seized power, there was valid reason for concern. Their leaders occupied the royal palace and began operating what might best be described as a rogue government. Of particular concern to all diplomats in Munich was that the Bolsheviks violated the sovereign immunity of foreign missions and representatives. Two legations were invaded, and a car was requisitioned from another. The Austro–Hungarian Consul General was arrested without cause and held for several hours.

Alarmed by this behavior and concerned for the safety of people under his charge, Nuncio Pacelli sent his assistant, Monsignor Lorenzo Schioppa, to meet with the leaders of the new government. Schioppa, accompanied by a representative from the Prussian legation, met with the head of the Republic of the Councils of Munich, Eugen Leviné. Their purpose was to force Leviné (incorrectly identified as Levien in the later report), “to declare unequivocally if and how the actual Communist Government intends to recognize and oversee the immunities of the Diplomatic Representatives.”

The meeting did not go well. The only “commitment” that the representatives could get from Leviné was that the Republic of Councils would recognize the extraterritoriality of the foreign legations “if, and as long as the representatives of these Powers . . . do nothing against the Republic of the Councils.” Schioppa was warned that if the Nuncio did anything against the new government, he would be “kicked out.” Leviné made it clear that “they had no need of the Nunciature.”

Pacelli wrote a letter back to Rome, reporting on this meeting. John Cornwell translated a few sentences from that letter and set them forth as “proof” that Pacelli was an anti–Semite. The key passage, as translated by Cornwell (and accepted uncritically by Goldhagen), described the palace as follows:

. . . a gang of young women, of dubious appearance, Jews like all the rest of them, hanging around in all the offices with lecherous demeanor and suggestive smiles. The boss of this female rabble was Levien’s mistress, a young Russian woman, a Jew and a divorcée, who was in charge. . . . This Levien is a young man, of about thirty or thirty–five, also Russian and a Jew. Pale, dirty, with drugged eyes, hoarse voice, vulgar, repulsive, with a face that is both intelligent and sly.

To Cornwell and Goldhagen, these words (taken from Schioppa’s report to his superior, Pacelli) prove that Pacelli was an anti–Semite.

In truth, however, this translation is grossly distorted. It uses pejorative words, instead of neutral ones that are more faithful to the original Italian. For instance, the most damning phrase in the translation, “Jews like all the rest of them,” turns out to be a distorted, inaccurate translation of the Italian phrase i primi. The literal translation would be “the first ones” or “the ones just mentioned.” (Therefore Goldhagen’s statement that “the Communist revolutionaries, Pacelli averred, were ‘all’ Jews” is wrong. The word “all” appears only in the Cornwell/Goldhagen mistranslation.)

Similarly, the Italian word schiera is translated by Cornwell as “gang” instead of “group,”
which would be more appropriate. Additionally, the Italian gruppo femminile should be translated as “female group,” not “female rabble.” Finally, the Italian occhi scialbi should be translated as pale (asky, livid) eyes, not “drugged eyes.”

This letter was published in its original Italian in 1992. Church historian John Conway—an Anglican and a distinguished scholar—reviewed the book in which it was included for the Catholic Historical Review. Neither he, nor anyone else at that time, suggested that the letter was anti–Semitic. When the entire letter is read in an accurate translation, it is not anti–Semitic. The tone of anti–Semitism is introduced only by Cornwell’s dubious translation.

Many Bolsheviks were cultural Jews, of course, though alienated from the Jewish faith and very often from their own families. Pacelli (and Schioppa) were perfectly well aware of this. They perceived the threat to the Church as a threat from Bolshevism, not Judaism or Jews as such. It should also be noted that the message was written fourteen years before Hitler came to power and the Jewish persecution began. At this time, the people being described were not victims, but leaders of a revolutionary and oppressive regional government.

Rather than using unfair translations and fabricating an argument, Goldhagen could have looked to direct, relevant evidence from that same period. During World War I, the American Jewish Committee of New York petitioned the Vatican for a statement on the “ill–treatment” suffered by Jewish people in Poland. The response came on February 9, 1916 from the office of the Secretary of State, where Eugenio Pacelli was—by absolutely every account—working hand–in–hand with Cardinal Secretary of State Gasparri. It said:

The Supreme Pontiff . . . as Head of the Catholic Church, which, faithful to its divine doctrine and to its most glorious traditions, considers all men as brothers and teaches them to love one another, he never ceases to inculcate among individuals, as well as among peoples, the observance of the principles of natural law and to condemn everything which violates them. This law must be observed and respected in the case of the children of Israel, as well as of all others, because it would not be conformable to justice or to religion itself to derogate from it solely on account of religious confessions. The Supreme Pontiff at this moment feels in his fatherly heart . . . the necessity for all men of remembering that they are brothers and that their salvation lies in the return to the law of love which is the law of the gospel.

This response was published in the New York Times on April 17, 1916, under the headline: “Papal Bull Urges Equality for Jews.” It also appeared in Civiltà Cattolica on April 28 of that year, and in the London Tablet on April 29. Goldhagen, of course, fails even to mention it.

Papal Efforts in Italy

Among the secondary sources on which Goldhagen relies is Susan Zuccotti’s
controversial book *Under His Very Windows*. Zuccotti found that Catholic clergy and lay persons defied the Nazis and the Fascists by providing food, clothing, and shelter to Jews and other refugees throughout Italy. As a result of these efforts, while approximately 80 percent of European Jews perished during World War II, 85 percent of Italian Jews survived Nazi occupation. Despite this, Zuccotti gives no credit to Pope Pius XII, allegedly because she could not find written evidence of a directive from him to the Catholics in Italy. Goldhagen expands this to say that “there is no evidence of the Pope’s guiding hand.” The identical argument is used by Holocaust deniers to absolve Hitler of responsibility for the death of six million Jews. They too point out that there is no “written evidence” of Hitler’s guiding hand, much less of a direct order.

While Zuccotti is anything but friendly toward Pius XII, and though she overlooks much evidence in his favor, she actually identifies very substantial evidence of the “Pope’s guiding hand.” For instance, she discusses a bishop who made a presentation during the war while he held in his hands a letter from Pius directing Catholics to protect Jews. (Zuccotti discounts this report only because other witnesses did not see the actual text of the letter.) She writes about the nuns who said the Pope ordered their convents opened to Jewish refugees. Zuccotti discusses a letter from A. L. Eastman, of the World Jewish Congress, thanking the Pope for helping free imprisoned Jews. She quotes the papal nuncio in Vichy, praising Pope Pius XII for condemning the persecution of Jews and others. She notes gratitude from Jewish people to the Pope following the war. She mentions thanks given to the Pope from Jewish chaplains. At other points along the way she brings up other evidence, including more letters of thanks from Jewish people and testimony from the future Pope Paul VI regarding his efforts on behalf of Jewish victims as having been made at the direction of Pope Pius XII.

It is true that Zuccotti refuses to believe that there was much papal involvement in rescue efforts, but that is her extremely grudging interpretation of the evidence. Yet she admits that Catholic rescuers “invariably believed that they were acting according to the Pope’s will.” Her principal argument is that there is no written evidence. Certainly there is a wealth of other types of “evidence of the Pope’s guiding hand.” Goldhagen’s claim that Zuccotti has “devastated Pius XII’s reputation” goes far beyond anything that the historical facts justify.

Using Zuccotti’s argument, Goldhagen wildly charges that Pius “did not lift a finger to forfend the deportations of the Jews of Rome.” In addition to voluminous other evidence to the contrary, there is proof showing this to be false in Adolf Eichmann’s memoirs, which were released after the Zuccotti book was written. The memoirs confirm that following the notorious roundup on October 16, 1943, the Vatican “vigorously protested the arrest of Jews, requesting the interruption of such action.”

At Eichmann’s 1961 trial, Israeli Attorney General Gideon Hausner said in his opening statement that “the Pope himself intervened personally in support of the Jews of Rome.” Documents introduced in that trial also confirm Vatican efforts to halt the arrests. In rejecting Eichmann’s appeals, the Israeli Supreme Court expressly noted the Pope’s protest regarding the deportation of Hungarian Jews.
Tagliacozzo (himself a survivor of the Roman raid) explained:

The documents clearly prove that, in the early hours of the morning, Pius XII was informed of what was happening and he immediately had German Ambassador von Weizsäcker called and ordered State Secretary Luigi Maglione to energetically protest the Jews’ arrest, asking that similar actions be stopped. . . . In addition, by his initiative he had a letter of protest sent through Bishop Alois Hudal [delivered by Fr. Pfeiffer] to the military commander in Rome, General Rainer Stahel, requesting that the persecution of Jews cease immediately. As a result of these protests, the operation providing for two days of arrests and deportations was interrupted at 2 p.m. the same day.

Instead of the 8,000 Jews Hitler requested, only 1,259 were arrested. After examination of identity documents (the type routinely provided to Jews by Church officials), over 200 of them were released. From then on, the Germans did not conduct another major roundup in Rome. Such evidence overwhelms Goldhagen’s argument regarding an alleged lack of papal involvement.

The Soviet–German War

Like many other papal critics, Goldhagen claims that the Pope favored the Germans in their war against the Soviet Union. The historical record does not support this charge. It is true that in the early and mid–1930s, Hitler and Mussolini were seen by many world leaders (including some officials of the Holy See) as the best defense against the spread of communism. This was, after all, the time of Stalin’s show trials and other measures of mass terror. And it was long before the worst Nazi atrocities. Moreover, it is now clear that Church leaders were right to fear communism. After the Allied victory, the Soviets expanded their sphere of influence (and their persecution of the Church) throughout most of Eastern Europe, including half of Germany. They murdered millions of people.

Despite his concern over the spread of communism, however, Pius was neither blind to other threats nor unable to recognize virtue in the Soviet people. As early as 1926, at the direction of Pope Pius XI, then–Nuncio Eugenio Pacelli attempted to secure a concordat with the Soviet Union. In 1942, Pius told Fr. Paolo Dezza. S.J. (made a cardinal in 1991): “The Communist danger does exist, but at this time the Nazi danger is more serious. They want to destroy the Church and crush it like a toad.” When the Axis sought to have him bless the German “crusade” into the godless Soviet Union, he refused. In April 1943, Hungarian Prime Minister Nicholas de Kallay met with Pius XII. He recorded:

His Holiness brought up the matter of conditions in Germany. He depicted the conditions prevailing in Germany, which fill him with great sadness, in dramatic words. He finds incomprehensible all that which Germany does with regard to the Church, the Jews, and the people in occupied territories. . . .

He is quite aware of the terrible dangers of Bolshevism, but he feels that, in spite of the Soviet regime, the soul of the large masses of the Russian people has remained more
Christian than the soul of the German people.

In fact, by cooperating with Franklin Roosevelt’s request to support extension of the lend–lease program to the USSR, Pius actually gave economic and military aid to the Soviets. (Later, his repeated appeals on behalf of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg again revealed his ability to look beyond the “Communist” issue.)

The recently disbanded Catholic–Jewish study group found that the evidence does not support the conclusion that Pius favored the Germans over the Soviets. It is no longer surprising that Goldhagen fails to mention this. However, it does seem shocking that Goldhagen quotes the notorious pro–Nazi Bishop Franz–Justus Rarkowski without mentioning that: 1) he was virtually forced upon the Church by the Nazis (under the threat of having no military ordinary or military chaplains); 2) the Church banned Rarkowski from participation in the German episcopacy; 3) Vatican Radio under Pius XII explicitly denounced Rarkowski; and 4) Vatican Radio declared that: “Hitler’s war is not a just war and God’s blessing cannot be upon it.”

The German Catholic Clergy

Goldhagen is particularly critical of the Catholic clergy in Germany. He makes the sweeping and indefensible claim that “the great majority” of Catholic military chaplains “weighed in on the side of the perpetrators, condoning and blessing their crimes. . . . This virtually unknown and unmentioned chapter of the Catholic clergy’s role in the Holocaust has barely been investigated.” In fact, this subject has been extensively analyzed and interpreted by contemporary German historians, but their findings do not support Goldhagen’s conclusion.

Catholic clergy were among the first people in Germany to recognize the threat posed by the Nazis. In 1930, the bishops of Berlin and Westphalia condemned the Nazis in pastoral letters. In the spring of 1931, the Bavarian bishops also condemned National Socialism and described it as heretical and incompatible with Catholic teaching. Similar statements were made by bishops in Cologne, Paderborn, and the upper Rhine.

The report from the Nuremberg prosecutor’s office outlines dozens of cases where Catholic priests were persecuted due to their opposition to the Nazis. It also shows that the Nazis took steps to silence the Church:

On 28 October 1935 the Propaganda Ministry imposed censorship before publication on all Church periodicals, and on 30 November 1935 this was extended to all writings and picture material multigraphed for distribution. After 1937, the German Catholic bishops gave up all attempts to print their pastoral, and had them merely read from the pulpit. Of course, sometimes it was impossible even to read statements from the pulpit. The Bavarian bishops’ pastoral letter of September 4, 1938 was confiscated and forbidden, as was the pastoral letter of the Bishops Conference of Fulda, dated August 19, 1938.

Goldhagen charges the German clergy with collaboration in turning over genealogical
records to the Nazis. What he does not mention is that much of this information was already available to the Nazis by virtue of the German census. To the extent that information was uniquely in the hands of the clergy, and was demanded by the Nazis (under severe threats, one might add), the collaboration of the German Catholic clergy was far from wholesale. As early as 1946, Monsignor J. Neuhäusler, who himself was imprisoned in Dachau, published a massive series of primary documents demonstrating extensive Church resistance to Nazi anti-Semitism, including refusal to hand over genealogical records. The pastoral letters of the German bishops (which were misrepresented in Guenter Lewy’s The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, on which Goldhagen seems to rely) have now been published in full. They vindicate Albert Einstein’s famous statement in 1940 that the only organization in Nazi Germany that spoke out against evil was the Church.

Goldhagen’s campaign of character assassination against Catholic people goes well beyond Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, but his targets among the German clergy are very poorly chosen. Declassified documents from the OSS show that American intelligence during the war knew well that two of the German Catholic leaders Goldhagen focuses upon (Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich and Bishop von Galen of Münster) were particularly strong in their opposition to the Nazis. (The formerly secret documents are collected in American Intelligence and the German Resistance to Hitler, edited by Jürgen Heideking and Christof Mauch.)

In the 1930s, Cardinal Faulhaber wrote Secretary of State Pacelli, describing the persecution of the Jews as “unjust and painful.” In 1935, at an open meeting, Nazis called for him to be killed. In February 1936, the police confiscated and destroyed one of his sermons (this happened twice again the following year). On October 25, 1936, members of the Hitler Youth hurled insults at him as he was entering his car. In August 1938, the Nazis searched his office. In late November 1938, after he had given a speech, a uniformed detachment arrived in front of his residence and threw stones at the windows. They shouted “Take the traitor to Dachau” and shattered window frames and shutters. In May 1939, demonstrations against Faulhaber took place throughout Bavaria, and posters were hung saying: “Away with Faulhaber, the friend of the Jews and the agent of Moscow.” After the war began, Faulhaber cited Pius XII’s encyclical Summi Pontificatus in an address condemning Nazis, resulting in a headline reading “Cardinal Faulhaber Indicts Hitlerism” in the London Tablet.

After the war, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, one of the leading American voices for the Jewish cause, called Faulhaber “a true Christian prelate” who “had lifted his fearless voice” in defense of the Jews. In fact, Wise felt that Faulhaber had been a much better friend to the Jews of Europe than had Pastor Martin Niemoeller.

Bishop Galen also took a leading role in opposing Nazi racial laws. On February 9, 1936, he made a public anti-Nazi speech at Xanten Cathedral. In response, the Nazis charged that Galen was trying to shelter “the corrupters of our race.” Galen also helped Pius XI draft the anti-Nazi encyclical Mit brennender Sorge. Later, Pius XII sent Galen a letter praising his “open and courageous pronouncements” and telling him that letters he had
mailed to the Holy See laid the groundwork for the 1942 Christmas message. Upon his death, the regional association of the Jewish communities wrote to the Capitular Vicar in Münster, saying: “Cardinal von Galen was one of the few upright and conscientious men who fought against racialism in a most difficult time. We shall always honor the memory of the deceased Bishop.”

Goldhagen notes Galen’s protests against the euthanasia program, but he argues that the Nazis did not retaliate against him and asks why the German bishops and the Vatican did not “rally behind Bishop Galen.” In fact, on December 2, 1940—well before Galen’s famous sermons against euthanasia—Pius XII published an official Vatican statement in the Catholic press that unequivocally condemned the killing of “life unworthy of life.” This decree went into every diocese in Germany, and was favorably and publicly commented on by the German bishops. On March 9, 1941, in a public sermon, Cardinal Konrad von Preysing (whom Goldhagen wrongly portrays as a critic of Pius XII) made reference to Pius XII, “whom we all know—I should say from personal experience—as a man of global horizons and broadmindedness [who] has reaffirmed the doctrine of the Church, according to which there is no justification and no excuse for the killing of the sick or of the abnormal on any economic or eugenic grounds.” Other German bishops followed suit, culminating in (not beginning with) Galen’s famous sermons of July and August of 1941.

To compound his errors, Goldhagen charges that Galen’s protests were successful in ending the euthanasia program and that the Nazis did not retaliate. In fact, the euthanasia campaign was not ended, but continued under greater secrecy until the end of the war. Moreover, as one of Galen’s successors, Richard Lettmann, the Bishop of Münster, explained: “After having preached these sermons the Bishop was prepared to be arrested by the Gestapo. . . . The Bishop was deeply dejected when in his place twenty-four secular priests and thirteen members of the regular clergy were deported into concentration camps, of whom ten lost their lives.” The Nuremberg prosecution report also shows that Galen was at times forbidden to speak to the public or to give blessings. In fact, as a result of his outspokenness, Galen’s diocese suffered a far higher death rate than most others. None of these crucial facts are mentioned by Goldhagen.

Cardinal Adolph Bertram of Breslau, also singled out by Goldhagen, first expressed his opposition to National Socialism in 1930, when he refused a religious funeral for a well-known Nazi official. In a widely publicized statement, he criticized as a grave error the one-sided glorification of the Nordic race and the contempt for divine revelation that was increasingly taught throughout Germany. He warned against the ambiguity of the concept of “positive Christianity,” a highly nationalistic religion that the Nazis were encouraging. Such a religion, he said, “for us Catholics cannot have a satisfactory meaning since everyone interprets it in the way he pleases.” In response to Bertram, the Nazi press cited some of Pope Leo XIII’s pronouncements about the relations of practicing Catholics to political parties to bolster the argument that Catholics could be National Socialists. Secretary of State Pacelli then ordered a lengthy article to be published in the Vatican newspaper correcting the Nazis’ distortions of Leo’s pronouncements, and saying that a Christian should not belong to any political party which works against Christian ideals.
Goldhagen also makes the allegation that Bertram scheduled a Requiem Mass upon Hitler’s death. In point of fact, this is what we know: Bertram was elderly and ill when the war ended. When he died (just weeks later), his papers included a handwritten order scheduling a Requiem Mass for all Germans who died in the war, including Hitler (who was originally reported to have died while fighting), and for the protection of the Catholic Church in Germany. This order was never sent, and the Mass was never held. Bertam’s personal secretary later reported being unaware of this paper or any such proposed order. In fact, the order itself was crossed through with two broad strokes. In other words, the evidence suggests that someone (perhaps Bertram, but perhaps not) considered scheduling a Requiem Mass but that Bertram canceled it. Goldhagen here seems to have been misled by Klaus Scholder’s *A Requiem for Hitler: And Other New Perspectives on the German Church Struggle*. The cover of that book shows part of the order, but omits the portion showing that it was crossed through. Once again, Goldhagen’s sloppy reliance on secondary sources has led him to make a serious mistake.

On a related note, Goldhagen asserts that the Polish ambassador pleaded with Pius in vain for the Jews, and that by 1944 Pius XII was so “sick” of hearing about the Jews that he got angry with the ambassador. Goldhagen gives no documentation for this charge. This is hardly surprising, since it is untrue. Pius XII was upset about reports the ambassador was receiving from people outside of occupied Poland who, relying on erroneous information, complained that the Pope was doing too much for Jews, but not enough for Poles. The Polish ambassador to the Holy See during the War was Kazimierz Papée, whose 1954 *Pius XII i Polska* (*Pius XII and Poland*) discussed Pius XII’s wartime policies and said that he agreed with them. That record is comprehensively analyzed—and supported—in Papée’s book, of which Goldhagen makes no mention.

The French Bishops

Goldhagen says that Pius XII “clearly failed to support” the protest of the French bishops. This is yet another falsehood. At the direction of the Pope, the protests were broadcast and discussed for several days on Vatican Radio. Statements such as “he who makes a distinction between Jews and other men is unfaithful to God and is in conflict with God’s commands” were broadcast into France, in French, on Vatican Radio. Pierre Cardinal Gerlier, a French Catholic bishop who condemned Nazi atrocities and deportation of the Jews, explicitly stated that he was obeying Pius XII’s instructions when he made these statements (Australian Jewish News, April 16, 1943).

When the deportations began from France, Pius issued a formal protest to Head of State Marshal Henri Pétain, instructed his nuncio to issue another protest, and recommended that religious communities provide refuge to Jewish people. In fact, the American press reported that the Pope protested to the Vichy government three times during August 1942.

The result of the protests, unfortunately, was that they angered Vichy leader Pierre Laval, and he reaffirmed his decision to cooperate in the deportation of all non–French Jews to
Germany. (This is yet another example of the retaliation that Goldhagen says did not take place.) On August 6, 1942, a New York Times headline proclaimed: “Pope Is Said to Plead for Jews Listed for Removal from France.” Three weeks later, a headline in the same paper told the story: “Vichy Seizes Jews; Pope Pius Ignored.”

The Canadian Jewish Chronicle ran the following headline on September 4, 1942: “Laval Spurns Pope—25,000 Jews in France Arrested for Deportation.” In an editorial dated August 28, 1942, the California Jewish Voice called Pius “a spiritual ally” because he “linked his name with the multitude who are horrified by the Axis inhumanity.” In a lead editorial, the London Jewish Chronicle said that the Vatican was due a “word of sincere and earnest appreciation” from Jews for its intervention in Berlin and Vichy. Stephen S. Wise wrote in 1942:

It appears to be more than rumor that his Holiness Pope Pius XII urgently appealed through the papal nuncio to the Vichy government to put an end to deportations from France, and the appeal of the Pope is said to have been reinforced by petition and protest from the Cardinal Archbishops of Paris and Lyons. . . . If such papal intervention be factual, then Pius XII follows the high example set by his saintly predecessor, whose word in reprobation of anti-Semitism, “spiritually we are all Semites,” will never fade out of the memory of the people which does not forget but forgives.

In August 1942, Archbishop Jules Gérard Saliège, from Toulouse, sent a pastoral letter to be read in all churches in his diocese. It said: “There is a Christian morality that confers rights and imposes duties. . . . The Jews are our brothers. They belong to mankind. No Christian can dare forget that!” The Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano praised Saliège as a hero of Christian courage, and when the war ended Pope Pius XII named him a cardinal.

Goldhagen quotes the recent statement of some French bishops (not the French bishops as he mistakenly reports) in which they confessed to the failings of French Catholics during the war. But that statement was critical only of those areas and dioceses in France that fell prey to anti-Semitism. As with the 1995 statement from German bishops, there was no criticism of Pope Pius XII or the Holy See.

Papal Efforts in Hungary

Even Goldhagen has to admit that Pius XII intervened in Hungary, but he attempts to diminish the importance of the Pope’s actions by suggesting that his famous open telegram protesting Jewish deportations was isolated and late. Again, the facts are against Goldhagen—or, more to the point, he has set himself against the facts. Jenő Levai, the great authority on Hungarian Jewry, who had direct access to primary archival evidence, documented the Church’s rescue efforts in his appropriately titled Hungarian Jewry and the Papacy: Pius XII Was Not Silent.

Almost from the first day following the March 1944 invasion of Hungary, Papal Nuncio Angelo Rotta worked to help improve the treatment of the Jews. He issued baptismal
certificates and passports that enabled thousands of Jews and converted Jews to leave Hungary. The Holy See also informed other nations about the conditions in Hungary, and this brought international pressure on the Hungarian government. Rotta made several oral protests regarding anti-Jewish decrees, and on behalf of Pope Pius XII he was the first foreign envoy to submit a formal written protest. Shortly thereafter, Rotta received a letter of encouragement from Pius in which the Pope termed the treatment of Jews as “unworthy of Hungary, the country of the Holy Virgin and of St. Stephen.” From then on, Rotta regularly protested against the treatment of the Jews and the inhuman character of the anti-Jewish legislation.

On June 25, Pius himself sent the well-known open telegram to the Regent of Hungary, Admiral Miklas Horthy. Goldhagen acknowledges this telegram, but it is worth quoting:

Supplications have been addressed to us from different sources that we should exert all our influence to shorten and mitigate the sufferings that have for so long been peacefully endured on account of their national or racial origin by a great number of unfortunate people belonging to this noble and chivalrous nation. In accordance with our service of love, which embraces every human being, our fatherly heart could not remain insensible to these urgent demands. For this reason we apply to your Serene Highness appealing to your noble feelings in the full trust that your Serene Highness will do everything in your power to save many unfortunate people from further pain and suffering.

Pius XII also sent a telegram to Hungarian Cardinal Justinian Serédi asking for support from the Hungarian bishops. Serédi responded by issuing a statement of his own. It said:

We would forfeit our moral leadership and fail in our duty if we did not demand that our compatriots should not be handled unjustly on account of their origin or religion. We, therefore, beseech the authorities that they, in full knowledge of their responsibility before God and history, will revoke these harmful measures.

This strong statement, issued pursuant to a request from the Pope, was read publicly in the Catholic churches until Nazi authorities confiscated all copies.

On June 28, Archbishop Francis Spellman of New York broadcast a strong appeal to Hungarian Catholics deploring the anti-Jewish measures, which, he said, “shocked all men and women who cherish a sense of justice and human sympathy.” These measures were, he said, “in direct contradiction of the doctrines of the Catholic faith professed by the vast majority of the Hungarian people.” He called it incredible “that a nation which has been so consistently true to the impulses of human kindness and the teachings of the Catholic Church should now yield to a false, pagan code of tyranny.” Time magazine reported: “This week listeners at Europe’s thirty-six million radio sets might have heard New York’s Archbishop Francis Joseph Spellman preaching civil disobedience. The Archbishop’s . . . broadcast . . . eloquently urged Hungary’s nine million Catholics to disobey their government’s new anti-Semitic decrees.” The Allies dropped printed copies of it over Hungary. Spellman later confirmed that he had made the statement at the express request of Pope Pius XII.
Admiral Horthy complained to the Germans that he was being bombarded with telegrams from the Vatican and others and that the nuncio was calling on him several times each day. In the face of these protests, Horthy withdrew Hungarian support from the deportation process, making it impossible for the Germans to continue. Horthy’s reply cable to the Pope said: “It is with comprehension and profound gratitude that I receive your cable and request you to be convinced that I shall do all within my power to make prevail the demands of Christian humanitarian principles.” Horthy agreed to work against the deportations, and he even signed a peace agreement with the Allies. For once it appeared that Pius XII’s pleas on behalf of the victims might actually have had a positive effect. The Germans, however, would not be dissuaded by mere words.

The Germans arrested Horthy in October, put Hungary under the control of Hungarian Nazis, and the deportations resumed. The Pope and his representatives then made many more protests to German authorities, issued a report documenting the Vatican’s work with the Jews of Hungary, and encouraged Catholics to help the victims. In October, Pius joined in an effort to raise money to support Hungarian refugees, urging the faithful to redouble their efforts on behalf of all victims of the war, regardless of their race. Almost every Catholic church in Hungary provided refuge to persecuted Jews during the autumn and winter of 1944.

On November 10, 1944, Nuncio Rotta protested to the German foreign ministry, saying that “from a humanitarian perspective but also to protect Christian morality, the Holy See protests the inhumane attitude adopted toward the Jews.” When Nazi officials suggested that Jews were merely being sent to Germany to work, not for any evil purpose, Rotta sarcastically responded:

When old men of over seventy and even over eighty, old women, children, and sick persons are taken away, one wonders for what work these human beings can be used? . . . When we think that Hungarian workers, who go to Germany for reasons of work, are forbidden to take their families, we are really surprised to see that this great favor is granted only to Jews.

The nunciature in Budapest had been bombed and half destroyed, communications with the Vatican were extremely difficult, and the lives of those Catholic officials still in the city were in constant danger. Nuncio Rotta sent a message to Rome asking what to do. The reply from Pope Pius was: “If it is still possible to do some charity, remain!”

The Germans were finally forced out of Budapest two days before Christmas, 1944. Despite the terrible losses that had taken place during their occupation, most of the Jews in Budapest were saved from the gas chamber.

The World Jewish Congress, at its December 1944 war emergency conference in Atlantic City, sent a telegram of thanks to the Holy See for the protection it gave “under difficult conditions to the persecuted Jews in German–dominated Hungary.” Similarly, the American Jewish Committee sent an expression of deep thanks to Pius and Cardinal
Luigi Maglione for having helped stop the deportations from Hungary. On May 25, 1945, Nuncio Andreas Cassulo informed the Vatican:

[Chief] Rabbi Safran has expressed to me several times . . . his gratitude for what has been done for him and for the Jewish community. Now he has begged me to convey to the Holy Father his feelings of thankfulness for the generous aid granted to prisoners in concentration camps on the occasion of the Christmas festivities. At the same time, he told me he had written to Jerusalem, to the Chief Rabbi [Herzog], and also elsewhere, in America, to point out what the nunciature has done for them in the time of the present difficulties.

Chief Rabbi Safran also told other Jewish leaders about the Catholic Church’s efforts to protect Jewish people. Apparently, however, no one told Goldhagen.

Slovakia and Croatia

In attempting to implicate Pius XII in the atrocities carried out in the Nazi satellite states of Slovakia and Croatia, Goldhagen again makes many inexcusable errors. He mentions the work of Livia Rothkirchen, a respected authority on the annihilation of Slovak Jewry, but he fails to mention that in documenting and appropriately condemning the savageries committed by anti-Semitic Slavs, Rothkirchen emphasizes that they were done in spite of, not because of, Pope Pius XII. In fact, she concludes her major work on the subject with the statement that the several letters of protest delivered by the Vatican during the years 1941–1944 “prove sufficiently that the Vatican objected to the deportation of Jews from Slovakia.”

Goldhagen suggests that Vatican action in Slovakia came only after it was clear that the Allies would win the war. In fact, the Nuremberg race laws were introduced in that country on September 9, 1941. Two days later the Vatican’s chargé d’affaires in Bratislava (the capital of Slovakia), went to see President Jozef Tiso to stress “the injustice of these ordinances which also violate the rights of the Church.” Shortly thereafter, Slovakia’s representative to the Vatican received a written protest from the Holy See that these laws were “in open contrast to Catholic principles.”

When Jews were deported from Slovakia in 1942, the Vatican Secretary of State immediately filed a protest. On March 21, 1942, a pastoral letter was read by episcopal order in all Slovak churches. The letter spoke of the “lamentable fate of thousands of innocent fellow citizens, due to no guilt of their own, as a result of their descent or nationality.” Under direct orders from Pius XII, the Slovak Minister to the Holy See was summoned and requested to take immediate action with his government. The Vatican also instructed the chargé d’affaires in Bratislava once again to contact President Tiso and seek relief.

Between 1941 and 1944, the Vatican sent four official letters and made numerous oral pleas and protests regarding the deportation of Jews from Slovakia. A letter sent from Pius himself, dated April 7, 1943, could not have been more clear:
The Holy See has always entertained the firm hope that the Slovak government, interpreting also the sentiments of its own people, Catholics almost entirely, would never proceed with the forcible removal of persons belonging to the Jewish race. It is therefore with great pain that the Holy See has learned of the continued transfers of such a nature from the territory of the Republic. This pain is aggravated further now that it appears from various reports that the Slovak government intends to proceed with the total removal of the Jewish residents of Slovakia, not even sparing women and children. The Holy See would fail in its Divine Mandate if it did not deplore these measures, which gravely damage man in his natural right, merely for the reason that these people belong to a certain race.

The following day, a message went out from the Holy See instructing its representative in Bulgaria to take steps in support of Jewish residents who were facing deportation. Shortly thereafter, the secretary of the Jewish Agency for Palestine met with Archbishop Angelo Roncalli (later Pope John XXIII) “to thank the Holy See for the happy outcome of the steps taken on behalf of the Israelites in Slovakia.” Goldhagen’s suggestion that this was some sort of self-serving effort to protect the image of the Church is unworthy of a writer who claims scholarly credentials.

Goldhagen’s treatment of Croatia is similarly egregious. The slaughters committed against Serbs and Jews are well documented, and the collaboration of some members of the Catholic clergy is rightly condemned. But postwar Communist propaganda, now acknowledged by all reputable scholars to have been fabricated, is the original source of the allegations against Pope Pius XII and most of the higher-ranking Catholic clergy in Croatia. The Holy See actually filed several protests and papal interventions.

In October 1942, a message went out from the Vatican to its representatives in Zagreb regarding the “painful situation that spills out against the Jews in Croatia” and instructing them to petition the government for “a more benevolent treatment of those unfortunates.” The Cardinal Secretary of State’s notes reflect that Vatican petitions were successful in getting a suspension of “dispatches of Jews from Croatia” by January 1943, but Germany was applying pressure for “an attitude more firm against the Jews.” Another instruction from the Holy See to its representatives in Zagreb directing them to work on behalf of the Jews went out on March 6, 1943.

Croatian Archbishop Alojzij Stepinac, after having received direction from Rome, condemned the brutal actions of the government. A speech he gave on October 24, 1942 is typical of many that he made refuting Nazi theory:

All men and all races are children of God; all without distinction. Those who are Gypsies, black, European, or Aryan all have the same rights. . . . For this reason, the Catholic Church had always condemned, and continues to condemn, all injustice and all violence committed in the name of theories of class, race, or nationality. It is not permissible to persecute Gypsies or Jews because they are thought to be an inferior race.
The Associated Press reported that “by 1942 Stepinac had become a harsh critic” of the Nazi puppet regime, condemning its “genocidal policies, which killed tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, and Croats.” He thereby earned the enmity of the Croatian dictator, Ante Pavelic. (When Pavelic traveled to Rome, he was greatly angered because he was denied the diplomatic audience he had wanted.)

On October 13, 1946, when the postwar Communist authorities tried to concoct a case against Archbishop Stepinac, American Jewish leader Louis Braier stated:

This great man of the Church has been accused of being a Nazi collaborator. We, the Jews, deny it. He is one of the few men who rose in Europe against the Nazi tyranny precisely at the moment when it was most dangerous. He spoke openly and fearlessly against the racial laws. After His Holiness, Pius XII, he was the greatest defender of the persecuted Jews in Europe.

Despite the defense, as well as protests from Pope Pius XII, Stepinac was convicted and sentenced to sixteen years of hard labor. Due to protests and indignation throughout the democratic world, and Jewish testimony as to the good work he had done, he was moved to house arrest in 1951. Almost immediately, Pope Pius XII raised him to the cardinalate.

One of the first acts of parliament in the newly independent state of Croatia in 1992 was to issue a declaration condemning “the political trial and sentence passed on Cardinal Alojzij Stepinac in 1946.” Stepinac was condemned, declared the parliament, “because he had acted against the violence and crimes of the Communist authorities, just as he had acted during the whirlwind of atrocities committed in World War II, to protect the persecuted, regardless of . . . national origin or religious denomination.”

Ignoring all the facts, Goldhagen ends his grossly inaccurate portrait of Croatia by making another outrageous error: “Forty thousand . . . perished under the unusually cruel reign of ‘Brother Satan,’ the Franciscan friar Miroslav Filopovic–Majstorovic. Pius XII neither reproached nor punished him . . . during or after the war.”

Actually, the so–called “Brother Satan” was tried, defrocked, and expelled from the Franciscan order before the war ended. In fact, his expulsion occurred in April 1943, before he ran the extermination camp (April–October 1943). For Pius XII to have punished him “after the war” would have been difficult indeed. Goldhagen must be unaware that this renegade priest was executed by the Communists in 1945. Many other Croatian priest–collaborators were also punished by the Church (though Goldhagen overstates the number of such priests). All of this is well documented in the archives of the Franciscans, the Croatian archives, and depositions regarding Stepinac’s beatification.

Once again, Goldhagen has attempted to indict Pius by telling the reader the very reverse of the truth. This is explicable only as a premeditated defamation of the wartime Pope and of Catholic people in general.

Holland
Like most papal critics, Goldhagen fails to give important details about the deportation of Jews from Holland. Dutch bishops had warned their followers about the dangers of Nazism as early as 1934, and in 1936 they ordered Catholics not to support Fascist organizations or they would risk excommunication. They forbade Catholic policemen from hunting down Jews, even if it meant losing their jobs. In the summer of 1942, as Jews were being deported from Holland, the Nazis warned Christian leaders not to interfere.

Despite the warning, on July 26, 1942 the Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht had a letter read in all of the Catholic churches, condemning the treatment of the Jews:

Ours is a time of great tribulations of which two are foremost: the sad destiny of the Jews and the plight of those departed for forced labor. . . . All of us must be aware of the terrible sufferings which both of them have to undergo, due to no guilt of their own. . . . We have learned with deep pain of the new dispositions which impose upon innocent Jewish men, women, and children the deportation into foreign lands. . . . The incredible suffering which these measures cause to more than ten thousand people is in absolute opposition to the Divine Precepts of Justice and Charity. . . . Let us pray to God and for the intercession of Mary . . . that He may lend His strength to the people of Israel, so sorely tried in anguish and persecution.

The result of this statement was tragic. It led directly to the deportation and death of many people, including Edith Stein (canonized as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross). On July 30, 1942, a memorandum from the SS declared: “Since the Catholic bishops—without being involved—have interfered in these affairs, the entire population of Catholic Jews will now be sent off this week yet. No intervention will be considered.” Up until this time, a Dutch Jew holding a Catholic baptismal certificate was exempt from deportation. As part of the Church’s rescue efforts, such certificates were distributed freely during the war.

The official announcement from the General–Kommissar stated: “If the Catholic clergy can thus ignore negotiations, then we in turn are forced to consider the Catholic full-blooded Jews as our worst opponents and to take measures to ship them off to the East as quickly as possible.” Since Protestant leaders had refrained from making statements that outraged the Germans, Jews holding Protestant baptismal certificates were not deported at that time. Jewish converts to Catholicism (including Edith Stein) and Jews with false baptismal certificates, however, were deported.

The language from the Nazi officials makes clear that the deportations were made in direct response to the Bishop’s letter. Even if Jews with Protestant baptismal certificates were later deported, this situation provides yet another clear example of the type of retaliation that Goldhagen claims did not happen. Many similar situations that would have influenced Pius XII’s thinking along these lines are set forth in my book, Hitler, the War, and the Pope, and, contrary to Goldhagen’s assertion, there is nothing disingenuous” about the arguments contained therein. The simple fact is that no one
spoke out more explicitly than the Dutch bishops, and no country had a higher percentage of Jews killed.

The Example of Denmark and Other Evidence

Goldhagen writes: “Rychlak and the Pope’s other defenders fail to discuss the famous and most relevant case for assessing the efficacy of acting on behalf of Jews: the case of Denmark.” In fact, I explicitly discussed the case on page 137 of my book:

On April 9, 1940, German troops swept across the Danish border. Danes, including King Christian X, Catholic bishops, priests, and students, demonstrated solidarity with the Jews by wearing the yellow star in public. Privately, the Danes hid and eventually smuggled almost the entire Jewish population of eight thousand to safety. The Catholic Church played an important role in this rescue, and Pius XII was noted for his contribution to the effort.

Footnotes direct the reader to three different references for this information. It turns out that King Christian may not have ever actually worn the yellow star. Some writers also say that he never even threatened to do so. Legend has it that he did, however, and I certainly did not conceal this information.

As Goldhagen himself concedes, eventually the Germans deported about five hundred Jews from Denmark. Fortunately, many others had escaped by that time. Those who were deported were for the most part sent to a “show” camp at Theresienstadt, where about 90 percent of them survived. Of course, those Jews displaced others who had been living at Theresienstadt. They were sent on to death camps, so the net effect was not what Goldhagen would lead his readers to believe. The main thing for Goldhagen, however, seems to be that he thinks Pius should have set aside all of his other information and relied solely on the approach taken by the churches (including the Catholic ones) in Denmark. That, of course, would have been foolish.

The Pope knew of the retaliation following Mit brennender Sorge. He had the example from Holland. He had sent an express condemnation into Poland to be read, but the Archbishop of Krakow, Adam Sapieha, burned it, saying that it would bring too many reprisals. In fact, the Nuremberg report documents case after case of retaliation against clergy (Catholic and Protestant) following statements or other agitation against the Nazi regime.

Rather than endangering others with grand public gestures, Pius ran a rescue operation. Churches, convents, monasteries, seminaries, and the Vatican itself offered shelter, without any distinction based on race, religion, or nationality. A wartime U.S. intelligence document reported that the bombardment of the papal summer retreat Castel Gandolfo “resulted in the injury of about one thousand people and the death of about three hundred more. The highness of the figures is due to the fact that the area was crammed with refugees.” No one but Pope Pius XII had authority to open these buildings.
to outsiders, and the intelligence reports indicate that he personally protested the bombing.

In 1988, a beautifully decorated, enormous wooden cross was on display there. It had been given to Pius XII at the end of the war by the Jews who lived there during those terrifying days.

Rescuer John Patrick Carroll–Abbing reported giving assistance to Jews pursuant to the Pope’s order that “no one was to be refused” shelter. In fact, in an interview given shortly before his death, Carroll–Abbing said: “I can personally testify to you that the Pope gave me direct face–to–face verbal orders to rescue Jews.” Asked about the charge that rescuers acted without papal involvement, he denied it and added:

But it wasn’t just me. It was also the people I worked with: Fr. Pfeiffer and Fr. Benoît and my assistant, Msgr. Vitucci and Cardinals Dezza and Palazzini, and of course Cardinals Maglione and Montini and Tardini. We didn’t simply assume things; we acted on the direct orders of the Holy Father.

Goldhagen concedes that Fr. Benoît “shepherded hundreds of Jews to safety,” but he suggests that this was done with virtually no support from Rome. In fact, Benoît spoke movingly of Pius XII and his undertakings on behalf of Jews. Fernande Leboucher, who worked with Benoît as perhaps his closest collaborator, estimated that some $4 million was channeled from the Vatican to Benoît and his operation. Even Zuccotti reported that the Vatican provided some money to help Benoît’s operation.

The last thing a rescue operation wants is attention, particularly when it is likely to bring about reprisals. Goldhagen focuses only on potential reprisals against Jewish people. Such reprisals occurred; but the Pope was also concerned about Catholics. For one thing, Catholic rescue efforts could be harmed, causing further suffering for Jews. More importantly, as Pius said, martyrdom cannot be imposed on someone, but must be voluntarily accepted. Catholic doctrine would not permit the Pope to sacrifice some lives to save others, even if a utilitarian equation might suggest that would be appropriate. (The Church did not, however, vary its approach based upon the identity of the victim. Goldhagen’s speculations notwithstanding, the Vatican under Pope Pius XII acted in the same way whether the victims were Catholic priests or Jewish peasants.)

Marcus Melchior, the Chief Rabbi of Denmark during the war, well understood this situation. He explained that Pius had no chance of influencing Hitler, and added that if he had been more confrontational, “Hitler would have probably massacred more than six million Jews and perhaps ten times ten million Catholics, if he had the power to do so.”

Sir Francis D’Arcy Osborne, British Minister to the Holy See from 1936 to 1947, said:

Pius XII was the most warmly humane, kindly, generous, sympathetic (and, incidentally, saintly) character that it has been my privilege to meet in the course of a long life. I know his sensitive nature was acutely and incessantly alive to the tragic volume of human suffering caused by the war and, without the slightest doubt, he would have been
Goldhagen naively suggests a cookie–cutter approach to resisting the Nazis. The historical facts show that sometimes a confrontational approach worked with the Nazis, but other times it did not. Robert M. W. Kempner, the Deputy Chief U.S. Prosecutor at the Nuremberg war trials, explained that a public protest against persecution of the Jews could only lead to “partial success when it was made at a politically and militarily opportune moment.” He added that Pius made such protests through nuncios when and where possible. Confrontation would not, however, have been advisable with Hitler. “Every propaganda move of the Catholic Church against Hitler’s Reich,” he wrote, “would have been not only ‘provoking suicide’ . . . but would have hastened the execution of still more Jews and priests.”

Catholics Who Converted from Judaism

Goldhagen often refers to the Holy See’s efforts as being directed towards Catholics who converted from Judaism, as opposed to Jews who were not Catholics. As his wording implies, to the Catholic Church, and in contrast with Nazi philosophy, Jewishness is a matter of religion, not race. Again, however, Goldhagen’s allegations run wildly afoul of the facts.

Vatican officials had legal standing to object to persecution of Catholics. Unfortunately, they did not have similar standing when it came to non–Catholics—be they Protestants, Jews, or unbelievers. As it turns out, the Nazis rarely responded positively when protests were made on behalf of Catholics. (At Nuremberg, German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop stated that there was a whole desk full of protests from the Vatican. Most went unanswered; many were not even read.) A regime that would not heed Church protests on behalf of its own members would certainly never have listened to Vatican protests on behalf of non–Catholics. The best the Church could do was to try to pass off non–Catholic victims as Catholics and try to intervene to save them on that basis. That is what the Church did by, for example, distributing tens of thousands of false baptismal certificates. (Obviously, these were unnecessary for actual Jewish converts to Catholicism who possessed authentic ones.)

Goldhagen also asserts that Pius did not privately instruct cardinals, bishops, priests, and nuns to save Jews. How does he know this? Catholic rescuers—including people such as Cardinal Pietro Palazzini and Tibor Baranski who were later recognized by Israel as Righteous Gentiles—testified that they received precisely such orders from the Pope. Several other witnesses also testified that such instructions were sent out in the form of letters. Still others, including Fr. Marie–Benoît, Carroll–Abbing, Pope John XXIII, and Pope Paul VI, all testified that they received such instructions from Pope Pius XII in face–to–face meetings, or through other direct channels.
Goldhagen even tries to link the Vatican and Pacelli with the notorious anti–Semite Julius Streicher. Streicher’s venomous writings tell a different story. He railed against the Pope’s support for Jewish people:

The Jews have now found protection in the Catholic Church, which is trying to convince non–Jewish humanity that distinct races do not exist. The Pope has made his own the false conception of racial equality—and the Jews, with the help of Marxists and Freemasons, are doing their best to promote it. But the Pope’s attitude will surprise no one who is familiar with the shrewd schemes of Vatican politics.

Pacelli’s opposition to Streicher’s worldview was well–known. In Three Popes and the Jews, Pinchas Lapide cites a public address by Pacelli in Rome which repeated Pope Pius XI’s eloquent statement that “spiritually we are all Semites.”

Postwar Statements

Following the arguments of Phayer and Zuccotti, Goldhagen asserts that even after the liberation of Rome, Pius remained “silent” about Jews and anti–Semitism. This is nonsense. Pius made one of his most fervent pleas for tolerance in August 1944, after the liberation of Rome. As reported by Dr. Joseph Lichten, the late director of the International Affairs Department for the Anti–Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, Pius said: “For centuries, they [Jews] have been most unjustly treated and despised. It is time they were treated with justice and humanity. God wills it and the Church wills it. St. Paul tells us that the Jews are our brothers. Instead of being treated as strangers they should be welcomed as friends.”

In a major address to the College of Cardinals on June 2, 1945, after the surrender of Germany, Pius XII spoke of the background and impact of the anti–Nazi encyclical Mit brennender Sorge:

In these critical years, joining the alert vigilance of a pastor with the long–suffering patience of a father, our great predecessor, Pius XI, fulfilled his mission as Supreme Pontiff with intrepid courage. But when, after he had tried all means of persuasion in vain . . . he proclaimed to the world on Passion Sunday 1937, in his encyclical Mit brennender Sorge, what National Socialism really was: the arrogant apostasy from Jesus Christ, the denial of his doctrine and of his work of redemption, the cult of violence, the idolatry of race and blood, the overthrow of human liberty and dignity.

On August 3, 1946, in a statement that Goldhagen mentions only to belittle (he also ignores or dismisses papal condemnations of anti–Semitism in 1916, 1928, 1930, 1942, and 1943), Pius declared: “There can be no doubt that peace can come about only in truth and justice. This presupposes respect for the rights of others and for certain vested positions and traditions, especially in the religious sphere, as well as the scrupulous fulfillment of the duties and obligations to which all inhabitants are subject.” He continued:
That is why, having received again during these last days numerous appeals and claims from various parts of the world and from various motives, it is unnecessary to tell you that we condemn all recourse to force and to violence, from wherever it may come, as also we have condemned on several occasions in the past the persecutions which a fanatical anti-Semitism unleashed against the Jewish people.

Pius condemned racism until the end of his life. In 1957, he received a delegation from the American Jewish Committee. The Committee’s representatives described the Pope as a “great friend” in the battle against racism and anti-Semitism in the United States. The Pope, in turn, praised the Committee’s work, and issued a statement condemning anti-Semitism. There is simply no legitimate excuse for Goldhagen to have ignored all of these statements.

Fr. Peter Gumpel

Goldhagen’s lowest blow is saved for the end of his article and directed at Fr. Peter Gumpel, S.J. An official of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Gumpel is the relator or independent, investigating judge for the cause of Pius XII’s sainthood. In what is arguably the most shameful sentence in his entire polemic, Goldhagen writes: “Perhaps the Church protects Fr. Gumpel in his post because only an anti–Semit and a historical falsifier can be counted on to present Pius XII in the glowing manner required for canonization.”

Gumpel is a warm man, though he can seem rather formal to those who do not know him. He is a German Jesuit, in his late 70s, with English as his fifth or sixth language. (He is fluent in English, German, Dutch, French, Italian, and nearly fluent in Spanish. He also reads Danish, Portuguese, Latin, classical Greek, and Hebrew.) He was born in 1923 to a distinguished German family.

He was still a boy when Hitler came to power. His family stood in opposition to the Nazis, and this led to the Nazis killing his grandfather as well as other relatives. Gumpel himself was twice sent into exile. The first time he went to France. Later he went to Holland. There, he became active in the underground, putting his life at risk to help escort Jews across the Belgian border.

One night, a teenaged Gumpel received a phone call saying that the Nazis had captured his mother and that she would be killed. Fortunately, a German officer who had been a friend of Gumpel’s grandfather intervened and saved his mother’s life. The horror of that night has, however, never left him, nor has his abhorrence of Nazism and anti-Semitism. One can sense it in the scorn with which he pronounces the word “Nazi.”

Gumpel’s experiences during World War II led directly to his decision to enter the priesthood. He joined the Jesuits in 1944. He studied in England for four years and earned several degrees, including a doctorate in the history of Church doctrine. He began teaching at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and in 1972 he was assigned to
the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. He also served on the faculty at the Gregorian and at the Pontifical Oriental Institute.

That Goldhagen would call this good man an anti–Semit is depressingly unsurprising. Goldhagen’s analysis of matters like this is shockingly biased. (Witness the way Pacelli’s 1933 promise not to interfere “in Germany’s internal political affairs” is converted into “the Church’s intention to let the Germans have a free hand with the Jews.”) His evidence in this case comes from truncated quotations that have been taken out of context. In fact, Gumpel has repeatedly condemned anti–Semitism and affirmed his allegiance to the teachings of Vatican II.

The charge that Gumpel is a “historical falsifier” is perhaps even more outrageous, if that is possible. Goldhagen provides no evidence to support it. Indeed, he leaves the reader entirely in the dark about what it is that Gumpel is alleged to have falsified. This practice of blackening someone’s reputation by publicly making unspecified and unsubstantiated charges in a situation where the person has little chance of offering a defense is nothing short of slander.

The New Republic’s Obligation

Pope John Paul II has made it a priority to undertake the very serious work of bringing Catholics and Jews closer together. The Church, most prominently through the Holy Father, has frequently apologized for sins of the past. Sincere efforts have also been made to rid the Church of hostility toward people of other faiths, most obviously at Vatican II.

Goldhagen mocks these efforts. He is particularly harsh on the 1998 Vatican document, We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah. That statement explained the difference between anti–Judaism, of which the Vatican admitted “Christians have also been guilty,” and the racial anti–Semitism embraced by the Nazis. This latter evil contradicts core Catholic beliefs, and the Church has always condemned it. Goldhagen, however, rejects the distinction.

Goldhagen seems to want nothing less than a renunciation of Christianity. He accuses Pope Pius XII of collaborating with the Nazis and treats the Cross as a symbol of oppression. He lectures about how portions of the New Testament were fabricated and asserts that the very term “New Testament” is offensive. His agenda–driven approach, coupled with sloppy fact–checking and poor analysis, results in one of the most unjust broadside attacks launched against Catholics in a mainstream publication in several generations.

The New Republic owed its readers, and more importantly the Catholic people against whom Goldhagen made his reckless charges, the duty of investigating his claims at least minimally before publishing them. While some difference in analysis is certainly to be expected on this topic, Goldhagen’s factual errors and his evident malice go beyond all bounds of reason. Eugene Fisher of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, a leader in the promotion of good will between Jews and Christians, called this article “a travesty.
And a hate crime.” He was right.

At one point in the article, Goldhagen presents a series of questions, rhetorically asking whether Pope Pius XII’s supporters can answer them. His response to each of his own questions is, “No good answer.” In fact, for each question (with the sole exception of the one about Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, which is a non sequitur) there are perfectly good answers, and they are easily accessible. Goldhagen simply ignores them.

Why did the New Republic choose to pass off to its readers this fabrication as scholarly history? The only apparent answer is that the editors were so anxious to vilify Catholics, their Church, and Pope Pius XII—so willing to join in Goldhagen’s vicious attacks—that they did not want to learn the truth: Goldhagen’s thesis is based upon selective sources, doctored quotations, sloppy inaccuracies, half-truths, and outright falsehoods. People of good will, regardless of their faith, are right to reject it.

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