

The Holocaust and Its Deniers

By Tarcisio Beal, Ph. D., S. T. L.

It is beyond belief what we have been seeing and hearing ever since Donald Trump won the Presidency in 2016: pro-Nazi demonstrations, the praising of Hitler, and even the denial of the slaughter of more than 6 million Jews in the concentration camps of Germany, Austria, and of Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe. Now, we even have State authorities and parents protesting the teaching of the intensely-documented historical facts of the *Holocaust* and of the racist record that has tainted American history. In fact, anyone who knows what the Nazis did and how they succeeded in obtaining the support and participation of common Germans in the extermination of the Jews will detect some scary and foreboding similarities in today's America, including strong opposition against liberalism and true democracy, both major targets of Nazism and Soviet Communism.

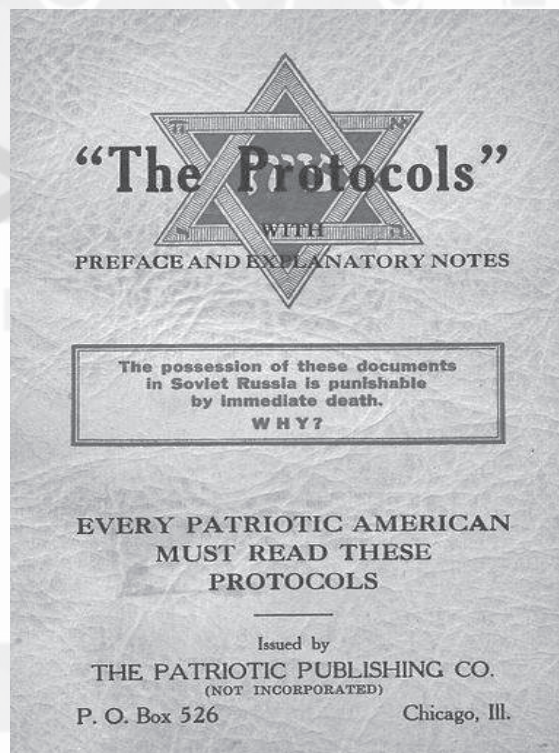
Sadly, the history of Christian Churches shows that they stood idle and seemingly agreed with all kinds of anti-Jewish biases and, mostly failed miserably to defend the life and human rights of the Jews. Although Roman imperial authorities did not distinguish between Christians and Jews until the 5th century, discrimination and hostility towards the Jews began to arise in the 4th century. Until then, Christians routinely frequented the cultic worship of the synagogue and had no problems socializing with the Jews. That irritated the Church Father, St. John Chrysostom, who believed that the only way to keep Christians from the synagogues was to instill hatred of the Jews. His sermons of 386 and 387 were filled with anti-Jewish tirades: *"But the synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it is also a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts... When God forsakes a place, that place becomes the dwelling of demons... This is true not only of the souls of the Jews, as I shall try to prove at the end of my discourse."* Unbelievable! And we call such a character a saint!...

Actually, throughout the Middle Ages and into late 19th century, the Church usually got the support of the State in spreading the anti-Jewish religious biases of the masses. In 1442, Pope Eugene IV decreed that *"from now on, and for all time,*

Christians should not eat or drink with Jews, not admit them to feasts, nor cohabit with them, nor bathe with them. Christians should not allow Jews to hold civil honors over Christians, or to exercise public offices in the state." Interestingly, the Church, especially in medieval France, was often managing its finances with money borrowed from Jewish bankers. Yet, the papacy kept Rome's Jewish ghetto until 1870 when Rome was overtaken by the Italian Unification Movement. Pius IX shut himself inside the Vatican and refused to recognize the new Italian kingdom. When he finally came to terms with an independent Italy through the Lateran Treaty of 1929, the beneficiary was none other than the Fascist State of Benito Mussolini.

Given the current state of affairs in America, including the swelling numbers of "white supremacists" and their antisemitism and Nazi tendencies (remember the Nazi/Fascist rally of Charlottesville!), and even their denial of the *Holocaust*, we should look into some well-documented historical facts about the Holocaust corroborated by many serious and respected authors. Some elderly Jews freed from the Nazi concentration camps by the Allies at the end of World War II have also testified about the horrors of the concentration camps. Not surprisingly, antisemitism in Central Europe had been growing steadily since the late 19th century, fueled especially by intellectuals such as Guido von List, Rudolf Johannes Gorsleben, and Lanz von Liebenfels (a former Cistercian monk). Von List's antisemitic writings became the blueprint for Hitler's infamous *Nuremberg Laws* of 1935. A great deal of anti-Jewish propaganda was also fed by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a blatant

forgery connected with the trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew falsely accused of selling French military secrets to the Germans. In fact, the author of the *Protocols* was a Russian secret agent stationed in Paris and his concoction was published in Russia (1903), in Germany (1914), in Great Britain and in the USA (1920), and in France (1934).



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Holocaust

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The saddest part of the ugly story of the *Holocaust* points to the failure of the Catholic and Protestant authorities, and even of the Papacy, to stand up firmly for the Jews and to denounce the horrors that the Nazis never tried to hide. Oddly enough, one of the early propagators of the *Protocols* was the French Monsignor Ernest Jouin, who was elevated to the rank of a bishop by Pope Benedict XIV. Pope Pius IX, in a private audience to Jouin, stated that *"the Jews are our worst enemies."* To argue that the Christian Churches could have done nothing against the Nazi power is to deny the evidence, to cover up the facts, and to ignore that Hitler greatly feared the concerted opposition of the Christian Churches. When Clemens von Gallen, Cardinal-Archbishop of Muenster, vehemently denounced Hitler's euthanasia laws and killings, thus provoking a public outcry, the euthanasia laws affecting Christians and Christian Jews were promptly withdrawn. Unfortunately, the German Lutheran authorities of the States of Mecklenburg, Thuringen, Saxony, Nassau-Hesse, Schleswig-Holstein, Anhalt, and Luebeck, following the anti-Jewish biases of Martin Luther, went as far as advising the expulsion of all converted Jews and the adoption of the *"most severe measures against the Jews and their banishment from German lands."*

However, the Lutheran Church split over the support of Hitler, giving birth to the Oyenhausen Church that opposed Nazi antisemitism. But the German Catholic bishops, with a few exceptions, placed their "Germanism" above their Christian duty and supported Hitler's policy of imperial aggression and war. The Vatican, presided by Pius XI and his Secretary of State Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (later Pio XII), accommodated Hitler by signing the *Reichskonkordat* of July, 1933. The Concordat prohibited Catholic clergymen from expressing opinions on political matters, lifted the episcopal prohibition of Catholics to join the Nazi Party, consented to the "Aryan Clause" that disallowed Jews from entering the Catholic priesthood, and eliminated Catholic associations and labor unions. In 1937, Cardinal Konrad Groeber, of Freiburg a. Breisgau, President of the German Bishops Conference, published a booklet stating that the Concordat was *"a proof that the two powers, totalitarian in their character, can find an agreement if their domains are separate and if overlaps in jurisdiction become parallel or, in a friendly manner, lead to make common cause."* Groeber also began promoting the Nazi Police Force (SS) already in 1933, while speaking of the right of the German people to do whatever necessary to maintain unpolluted their racial origin. The German bishops also condemned armed rebellion and the plot to eliminate Hitler while hundreds of Catholic priests were being killed in the concentration camps. In the Dachau, for instance, the American soldiers freed no less than 300 Catholic priests. Actually, Hitler himself commented that, in excluding the Jews from German society, he was simply repeating what the Christian Church had done for centuries. In fact, the Jewish ghetto in Rome was dismantled only in 1870, not by the Pope, but by the leaders of the Italian unification that ended the Papal State and made Rome their capital.

The Nazi sterilization program and eugenic policies were already spelled out on July 14, 1933, during the same Cabinet meeting that approved the *Reichskonkordat*. The German bishops went along with those Nazi policies as long as Catholic parents, physicians, judges, nurses, and other employees would not be subjected to conflicts of conscience. When Cardinal Von Gallen alone protested, Cardinal Michael Faulhaber of Munich, speaking for the German episcopate, called Von Gallen's remarks unwarranted and disrupting. Faulhaber viewed Hitler's authority as *"willed by God."* In fact, exemptions from the Nuremberg Laws for Catholic doctors and nurses employed by the State were denied and some German intellectuals, including two Prussian theologians and the Benedictine monks of Beuron, could not detect any problems of conscience. Even the Vatican relented in 1941. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Jews living in some German towns were forced to carry posters on their backs with the words *"I am a Jewish pig! You may spit on me!"*

Actually, the Soviets set the pattern for the Nazi persecution of Jews, and Christian authorities again failed to stand up and denounce it. Bishop Achile Ratti (later Pius XI) displayed his anti-Semitism already as Nunzio to Poland (1918-1921), denying the ugly reality of the Soviet pogroms against the Jews and calling the Jews a threat to the Polish nation. In 1932, as Pope, he told Mussolini that the Church's problems in Central

Europe were partly caused by the *"antipathy of Judaism towards Christianity."* Neither did he ever censure *La Civiltà Catòlica* and *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's newspapers that kept alerting Christians to the *"Jewish danger."* His encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge (With burning Preoccupation)* condemned the Nazi myths of race and blood, but never mentions the Third Reich directly. In June 1938, he commissioned the American Jesuit John LaFarge to prepare an encyclical denouncing racism and anti-Semitism. LaFarge entitled his work *Unitas Generis Humani (The Unity of the Human Kind)*, condemning totalitarian state systems,

forced collectivism, and the subordination of religion to racial programs, with indirect references to the persecution of Jews in the Third Reich and a condemnation of anti-semitism. It seems, however, that Pius XI never saw the proposed encyclical because it fell into the hands of Vladimir Lechodowski, Head of the Society of Jesus. However, in a meeting with a group of Belgian pilgrims in the late 1930s, Pius XI said that *"antisemitism is a hateful movement, a movement that we cannot, as Christians, take any part in. It is inadmissible, for we are all spiritual Semites."*

However, when, in 1942, the Allies spoke vigorously against the extermination of the Jews, the Vatican's Secretary of State was asked to have the Church join the protest. His answer was *"no"* because *"the Church can only condemn immoral actions in general."* Well, if the Nazis' deportation of 7,000 Roman Jews right under the nose of Pope Pius XII did not result in a strong protest against the Nazis, what else would?!? It is quite clear that a prophetic stance by the Christian Churches would have saved the lives of million of Jews. In fact, when Cardinal Von Gallen, in October of 1942, publicly protested the scheduled deportation of 52,000 Slovakian Jews to concentration camps, Adolph Ei-



The star the Nazis required Jews to wear

Source: Historical Museum in Wroclaw

Notas Y Más

February 2022

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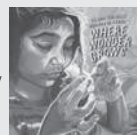
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chmann immediately cancelled the order so as to avoid “political complications.”

But we should also note that the French, Belgian, and Dutch bishops became very vocal critics of the Nazi atrocities. On a letter sent from the Roman Curia to Paris’ Cardinal Suhard, on June 11, 1940, French Cardinal Eugene Tisserant, who had pleaded with Pius XII to issue an encyclical advising Catholics to follow their conscience, said the following: “*I fear that history will reproach the Holy See with having practiced a policy of selfish convenience and not much else. This is extremely sad, especially for those of us who have lived under Pius XI. Here everyone is confident that, after Rome has been declared an open city, members of the Curia will not suffer any harm. This is a disgrace!*” As we can see, Tisserant had witnessed major changes in the last years of Pius XI’s pontificate, especially what the Pope said to the Belgian pilgrims and his commissioning of the Jesuit LaFarge to prepare the encyclical *The Unity of the Human Kind*.

Now, after the Second Council of the Vatican (1961-62), Catholic theologians and historians have been able to expose many of the failures of the highest Church authorities and of popes who betrayed the Gospels and “divinized” their power.

Some are still doing today when they insist that “salvation is found only in the Catholic Church” or stick to the nonsense uttered in 1302 by the bull *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII: “*We declare, state, define, and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.*” Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI spoke strongly against anti-Semitism, but still did not call on all Catholics to engage themselves in the defense and protection of Jews everywhere. Rightfully says the Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel: “*The fate of the Jewish people and the fate of the Bible are intertwined... Any conversation between Christian and Jew in which the abandonment of the other partner’s faith is a silent hope must be regarded as offensive to one’s religious and human dignity.*”

The present political conditions of the U.S. call now, more than ever, for all Christians to stand up and live the essential of their faith, which calls for the love of neighbor, no matter what his/her ethnicity, skin color, or place of birth.

BIO: Tarcisio Beal is professor Emeritus of History at the University of the Incarnate Word. [Note: Sources used for this article can be obtained from lavoz@esperanzacenter.org]