

# Introduction

## Conservative Continuities and Roads to Reform in a Global Catholic Church

---

*Simon Unger-Alvi and Nina Valbousquet*

In 2020, the Vatican opened its archives for the pontificate of Pius XII (1939–1958), which was accompanied by strong media coverage. Long-awaited within the scholarly community, these new sources allow historians to address a whole range of topics that extend beyond Eugenio Pacelli’s individual biography and relate to greater questions of global politics as well as twentieth-century social and economic history. In particular, scholars in both Europe and America have scrutinized the actions of the Catholic Church during World War II and the Holocaust. In addition, historians have also begun to focus on the postwar period and to address new questions about the Vatican’s role in the phase of reconstruction after 1945, the emerging conflicts between the capitalist West and the communist East, and the processes of decolonization in the Global South.

The two-decade-long pontificate of Pius XII stands amidst an “Age of Extremes,” which forced Catholics to situate themselves in relation to conflicting ideologies, totalitarianism, democracy, and modernity. Although a period of accelerating secularization, the pontificate also witnessed the re-emergence of the Catholic Church as an influential global force. In these conflict-laden but also dynamic years, the Vatican occupied a central role in international politics. With about eighty apostolic nunciatures, the Holy See could demonstrate a global presence and presented itself as an actor that stood above national party interests. Yet, the Vatican simultaneously took strong positions in ideological conflicts and thus actively shaped the international political landscape.

Historians and archivists now face a multitude of questions: What were the major institutional, social, and religious changes in the global

Catholic community under Pius XII's papacy? What was the Vatican's attitude toward democracy and human rights as well as totalitarian and authoritarian regimes? How did Pius XII and the Curia cope with the legacies of fascism, collaboration, and the Holocaust within the Catholic Church? In what ways did they influence the formation of the Western alliance and the beginning of the Cold War with its nuclear arms race? How did the Holy See react to the foundation of Israel and to movements of decolonization in Africa and Asia? How did the Vatican intervene in Latin American politics, and to what extent did it support authoritarian regimes in order to prevent the spread of communism? In addition to these political questions, future scholarship will examine how Pius XII reacted as a theologian to challenges of secularization, technological progress, and rapidly changing gender relations. These issues, of course, gained a particular importance in the Second Vatican Council that was started only four years after Pacelli's death.

Methodologically, this book aims to transcend classical thematic labels such as "Church history" or "religious history." Instead, it engages with newer approaches of global, transnational, and postcolonial history. Thereby, our volume reintroduces questions about religion into the modern postwar historiography. Ultimately, the book demonstrates that an adequate understanding of the Vatican's political and cultural role is crucial to explain the great transformative processes of the twentieth century.

## World War II and the Holocaust

Since the Vatican's archival opening for the pontificate of Pius XI (1922–39) in 2003–6, historians have been eagerly awaiting the opening of the archives of his successor, Eugenio Pacelli (who was Pius XI's secretary of state from 1930 to 1939) in order to understand over a longer period of time the attitude of the Holy See in the face of fascism, Nazism, communism, humanitarian crises, and the mass violence of World War II.<sup>1</sup> As historian Daniele Menozzi pointed out, the archival opening of March 2020 instantly revived "old polemics" in the Italian press about Pius XII's attitude toward the Jews, especially during the roundup of 16 October 1943 in Rome, "under the windows" of the pope.<sup>2</sup> More broadly the pope's positions vis-à-vis Nazi Germany and the Holocaust remain a divisive issue in the public and media debate. Between condemnation and apology, these memory controversies stem largely from the context of the first half of the 1960s, which was marked by both the Second Vatican Council and the Eichmann Trial. Accusing Pius XII of silent complicity in face of

the genocide of the Jews, *The Deputy* (1963), by German playwright Rolf Hochhuth, triggered a vivid and long-lasting scandal. Loosely adapted from Kurt Gerstein's story, the play crystallized the debates around the pope's silences. The French premiere, on 13 December 1963 at the Athénée theater in Paris, generated riots among the audience. The film adaptation *Amen* by Costa-Gavras reopened the controversy in 2002, while on the other side apologists pressed for the canonization of Pius XII.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1960s, the Vatican attempted to reply to growing accusations of silence and passivity in the face of the Holocaust on two different levels. On the one hand, Pope Paul VI (Giovanni Battista Montini, who had been *Sostituto* of the secretary of state during World War II) opened the cause for Pius XII's beatification on 8 November 1965. On the other hand, four Jesuit historians were entrusted with a selection of archival diplomatic materials resulting then in the publication, between 1965 and 1981, of the eleven volumes of the *Actes et Documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (ADSS, Acts and Documents of the Holy See relating to World War II).<sup>4</sup> Yet, in the absence of direct access to the archives, this precious collection of sources did not comprehensively answer the many questions of the scholarly community. The ADSS volumes were of course not exhaustive; the editors omitted some information that did not appear relevant to them at that time, which can now be checked again and revised by historians.<sup>5</sup> Above all, the recent opening offers a much larger and diverse body of evidence.

The richness of the Vatican archives lies in the great variety of documents they contain: not only the diplomatic correspondence as published in the ADSS, but also a large number of reports, pleas, testimonies, letters from organizations and individuals sent to the Holy See from all over the world, from Brazil to Shanghai, as shown for instance by the ongoing project of the University of Münster led by Hubert Wolf ("Asking the Pope for Help," University of Münster). They bear witness to the wartime and postwar role of the Vatican as a global repository of such correspondence, at the center of humanitarian networks.

Furthermore, the Vatican files often provide different versions and drafts of an official document, thus allowing historians to better document and analyze the internal debates, the decision-making process, and the power struggles within the Curia. For instance, in the case of Pius XII's radio address of Christmas 1942, even the slightest changes between an earlier draft and the broadcast speech could offer evidence of the hesitations and choices made by the pope and his entourage, as shown recently by Vatican archivist and historian Giovanni Coco.<sup>6</sup>

In 2000, the Trieste historian Giovanni Miccoli published a significant and thorough work on "The Dilemmas and Silences of Pius XII," which

offered a multifactorial approach on the question.<sup>7</sup> Most historians now agree on a general interpretation of Pius XII's positions on the Holocaust, which combined public silence with private encouragement of charitable aid.<sup>8</sup> But the newly available Vatican materials provide scholars with more evidence to better chronicle the Holy See's internal discussions and the rationales behind its decisions. For instance, more than what the pope knew about the "Final Solution"—as a sensationalist-mediatic approach asked recurrently—the relevant question currently examined by historians is that of the Vatican's reception and interpretation of this information and its impact on decision making in the face of genocide. In sum, the untapped Pius XII documents allow scholars to work on a more nuanced and fine-grained picture of the Vatican's dilemmas between politics and charity, diplomacy and humanitarianism.

Furthermore, the wide-range diversity of help shifts the focus away from the "Pius Wars" by drawing more attention to the diversity of actors within the Curia and in the Vatican's global diplomacy, but also in specific national and local contexts and among competing theological and political trends. As argued by Italian historian Renato Moro, the scholarship has tended to focus on the pope's own thoughts and actions. According to Moro, such a top-down approach carries the risk of inductive generalization (from the pope to the whole Church) and of an "excessive reduction of the frame," whereas it is crucial on the contrary not to "lose sight of the sociological complexity of the church."<sup>9</sup> The question of silences and dilemmas unfolds on several levels, beyond the figure of Pius XII and his biography. It is precisely this more subtle and complex interplay of scales and actors that the new Vatican sources allow us to reconstruct.

Finally, as Giovanni Miccoli foretold, the Pius XII archives make it possible to situate the issue of the Vatican and the Holocaust in a broader frame that encompasses other themes such as: humanitarian aid and human rights; the refugee crisis before, during, and after the war;<sup>10</sup> the Holy See's positions toward fascism, communism, and democracy; and theological continuities and changes. The aim is thus to overcome the memorial pitfalls of the "Pius Wars" by providing a more nuanced and detailed picture of World War II, the aftermath of the Holocaust, and the postwar reconstruction.

## Historical Memory

After 1945, the Catholic Church progressively opened up toward the Third World. Central figures such as Jules Isaac and Jacques Maritain

paved the way for new theological and epistemological understandings of diversity, which had long-lasting repercussions throughout the world. Isaac is well known for his tireless work after the war in the field of Jewish–Christian relations that would culminate in his decisive role for the groundbreaking Second Vatican Council’s declaration *Nostra Aetate* of 1965, which redefined the relation of the Church toward non-Christian religions. In particular, his highly influential work *Jésus et Israël* established that anti-Jewish theological traditions were fundamentally out of tune with the Gospels themselves.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain embodied a change of dominant political positions within Catholicism. His influence on human rights discourses can be seen in the United Nations declaration of 1948 and in a number of national declarations, such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Preamble to the Constitution of the Fourth French Republic (which was probably a reflection of Maritain’s lengthy correspondence with Charles de Gaulle).

Despite these developments, the Church had to face a long-lasting historical legacy that was marked by traditional conservative perspectives and prejudices, from which it would prove difficult to detach. Increasingly, the Vatican was forced to confront the policies it had taken toward Judaism during the Shoah. Although Pius XI had condemned Nazi ideology in the 1937 encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, the Vatican had remained deafeningly silent about Nazi atrocities during the war in general, and about the persecution, deportation, and extermination of Jews, in particular. Even during the German occupation of Rome, when thousands of Jews had sought shelter in monasteries and Church institutions, Pius XII had proffered no clear policy in this regard and did not publicly condemn the deportation of the Roman Jews in October 1943.<sup>12</sup> This silence gained public attention in the postwar period with the polemical works of André Schwarz-Bart in *The Last of the Just* (1959) and the already mentioned Hochhuth’s play *The Deputy* (1963). In addition, historical research has since then uncovered the activities of Catholic circles around Bishop Alois Hudal, the head of the Austrian-German congregation in Rome, who aided German and Italian war criminals to escape to countries like Spain, Argentina, Syria, and Egypt.<sup>13</sup>

Against this background, this volume analyzes questions of historical memory and continuities of Eurocentric, apologetical, and right-wing ideas in papal policies after 1945. On the surface, it could be argued that the position of the Church during the war had been the same as in most other conflicts: neutrality, diplomacy, humanitarian action. A major difference, however, had been the Vatican’s close contacts to the fascist state apparatus in Italy, the Nazi dictatorship in Germany, Francoism in Spain, and

the Vichy regime in France. More importantly, the Vatican would seek to maintain the validity of the 1929 Lateran Treaty with fascist Italy and the 1933 concordat with Germany after the end of the war. Although many of these diplomatic provisions were concerned with religious schooling, ecclesiastical privileges, and Catholic holidays, they should also be seen in the context of powerful conservative networks within the Church.

Another major challenge for research is to analyze the Holy See's reaction to the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, which would not be formally recognized by the Vatican until 1993. As the memory of the Holocaust clearly loomed large over Catholic–Jewish relations in the 1950s, this volume engages with questions of continuity and discontinuity in antisemitism and racism in the postwar period, but also analyzes their effect on Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the region. It is important to retrace also Jewish and Arab perspectives, as they are so often missing in the current historiographical discourse.

Archival research can uncover discrepancies between the Vatican's self-perception as a force of freedom and the way it was understood outside of Italy. For instance, the theological issue of missionary activities toward Judaism continued to impede efforts at reconciliation after 1945. Although Catholic–Jewish relations were marked by a lack of official diplomatic communication, there clearly existed unofficial contacts between Israel and the Catholic Church in order to negotiate the status of the Holy Places, the Arab Christian minority, and interfaith relations between Muslims, Jews, and Christians. One important example of such interfaith collaboration, in this context, is *Neve Shalom / Wahat as-Salam*—a cooperative village for Jews and Arabs founded by Father Bruno Hussar, who had been born in Egypt to parents of Jewish descent.<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, Catholic diplomatic history must also be viewed through the prism of a political-theological discourse on the meaning of Christianity after World War II. Although this discourse was still shaped by conservative patterns, it slowly began to move toward reform and toward the Second Vatican Council and *Nostra Aetate*, the declaration on the relation of the Church with non-Christian religions. In this context, the contributions in this volume not only attempt to uncover new facts and networks, but also pay close attention to public discussions in media, and hidden conflicts via diplomatic channels.

## The Cold War

In the classical historiography of the postwar period, the Catholic Church largely appears as an actor of only secondary importance. While

a plethora of studies exists on Pius XII and his role during World War II, those historians who did focus on the Cold War are mainly concerned with the 1970s and 80s, and with John Paul II in particular.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, the opening of the Vatican archives now allows for a systematic analysis of the relations between the Vatican and communist regimes in the 1940s and 50s.

On the one hand, the Vatican engaged in diplomatic relations as a sovereign state; on the other, however, the Church may also be considered as a “nongovernmental actor.” Across the world, ecclesiastical structures offered localized modes of action and influence that reached down to the level of individual parishes. Through a network of educational institutions and welfare organizations the Church could maintain its role as a transnational power that transcended the borders between the great political blocs. At the same time, of course, the Vatican was anything but neutral, and it actively sought to contain and to fight communism across the globe. Therefore, this book will explore the strategies and doctrines that were developed under Pius XII against the global communist advance and evaluate how they were employed at local levels.

A crucial battlefield, in this context, would be Latin America. Already in the 1930s, organizations of the radical Left had emerged throughout the continent and would continue their often clandestine activities in the 1940s and 50s, leading to events such as the Cuban Revolution (1953–59). In order to counter such developments, the Church supported and thus helped stabilize conservative and authoritarian regimes that had been inspired by the ideology of Francoism in Spain or Salazar’s *Estado Novo* in Portugal. In Argentina, likewise, Juan Perón reintroduced religious education in schools, called clerics into the government, and promoted the ‘national saint’ Nuestra Señora de Luján to the honorary rank of a general in the Argentinian army. While the Holy See turned a blind eye to matters of human rights, Perón was awarded the highest Apostolic honors, such as the Grand Cross of the Pius-Order. This “sacred union” between the State and the Church seemed to establish a continuity to the historical memory of the Spanish Empire. In the 1950s, however, it was the Vatican that would orchestrate the fall of Peronism.<sup>16</sup> When Perón began to enact policies of secularization, raised church taxes, and flirted with socialist ideas, Pius XII excommunicated him. On the very same day, 16 June 1955, a coup d’état by naval officers began that ultimately led to a regime change in September. In the next years, Catholic dignitaries such as Cardinal Santiago Luis Copello, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, would shift their sympathies toward Christian-social and Christian-democratic parties that increasingly gained strength in Argentina and its neighbor Chile. From the 1960s onward, such movements would be crucial for the

development of the new Liberation Theology—a set of reformatory ideas that were initially rejected by Rome, but would eventually become highly influential.

Although the Cold War was a conflict of global proportions, its mechanisms can only be understood through in-depth studies of individual cases that were often more ambivalent and complicated than the traditional picture of a simple East–West divide. In Central and Eastern Europe, for instance, the Church had few options to actively promote anticommunist policies, but rather was in a defensive position to maintain its presence in the countries of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>17</sup> In particular, current research must analyze the reports of nuncios and other Catholic dignitaries: How did the Vatican react to the curtailment of clerical privileges, to the forceful secularization of monasteries and schools, and to the incarcerations of priests and bishops in the Soviet sphere of influence? How did it respond to communist propaganda material? In this context, we must distinguish of course between various states of the Eastern hemisphere. Poland and Czechoslovakia, for example, were formally independent, but closely aligned to the Soviet Union, whilst Yugoslavia declared itself to be “bloc-free” and developed a very distinct form of state socialism. In addition, Austria forms a special case as the country remained occupied by Soviet troops until 1955 and declared its permanent neutrality thereafter.

A major challenge, ultimately, is to reconstruct the mechanisms by which Catholicism became a medium of resistance within the Eastern bloc. In the public memory, a crucial turning point seems to have been the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which was accompanied by global media campaigns of the Vatican. Yet, the relations between the Catholic Church and anticommunist opposition movements were also more ambivalent than previously recognized. In Poland, for example, the Vatican hoped to maintain formerly Prussian and Silesian dioceses, which alienated the general public. More importantly, Pius XII was forced in many cases to cooperate with communist and socialist regimes in order to avoid a complete loss of influence on local church structures. In the first years after 1945, in particular, the Church hoped to avoid sanctions and reprisals by actively promoting a political dialogue with communist governments. In this context, it would also be relevant to compare the Vatican’s strategies to those of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Eastern Catholic Church in the Soviet Union.

From 1950 onward, the Holy See began to follow a more aggressive course in Central and Eastern Europe in order to support Catholic underground organizations. An important example, in this context, is the papal decree *Schismatica Actio Catholica in Cecoslovachia damnatur*, which excommunicated the so-called “patriotic priests” who had collaborated

with socialist authorities. By contrast, conservative priests and bishops following the Vatican would now be ordained without governmental approval in Czechoslovakia. Such public calls for resistance allowed the pope to position the Church in front of a global audience as a vanguard against communism.

Ultimately, our aim is to retrace and to stress this transnational dimension of papal policies, which placed the Vatican in a global concert of powers. In this context, the Cold War against communism also corresponded to a reinvention of the Church, which now began to endorse the strategic values of the Western alliance.<sup>18</sup> While Pius XI and Pius XII had agitated against capitalism, liberalism, and democracy in the prewar period, the Church now clearly embraced Truman's and Eisenhower's vision of "the West."

## Decolonization

In parallel to the East–West conflict, the period after 1945 was marked by the rapid and unforeseen crumbling of European colonial empires, the rise of the Third World, and a reconfiguration of North–South relations. The Catholic Church played a critical role in these processes, but was itself deeply affected by these changes.

While some members of the clergy favored change and anticolonial ideas, others clung to traditional colonial models. Hence, we are not only dealing with a conflict between colonial powers and decolonization movements, but also with a divide within the Church that accompanied the recoupling of global geopolitics. In addition, Vatican policies stood in close connection to the creation of alternative North–South movements through nongovernmental organizations that went beyond traditional forms of Catholic mission. In the rearrangement of alliances along the North–South and East–West axes, Catholicism gave rise to new political actors, such as humanitarian organizations and Christian-social movements, which projected visions of an alternative "global civil society."<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, an analysis of such NGOs could show that the process of decolonization was not only driven by the pressures of the Cold War and the spread of communism, but also by Catholic policies and influences.

Via nongovernmental actors, papal diplomacy took part in the renegotiation between colonial powers and the emerging postcolonial societies. While reassessing its complicity with the European imperial powers, such as France and Belgium, during the 1950s, the Vatican created new alliances with the formerly colonized societies by erasing previous forms of imperialism from its memory and public representation (saints, liturgies,

languages, spatial ordering, new dioceses, indigenous clergy).<sup>20</sup> The coalition with colonialism was thus increasingly replaced by an outspoken affirmation of anticolonialism. In his mission encyclicals (*Evangelii praecones*), for instance, Pius XII urged missionaries to overcome colonialism. At the same time, however, this new strategy was never explicitly announced within Europe, where the Church would continue to present itself as the standard bearer of occidental identity and thus perpetuate its alignment with old colonial powers such as de Gaulle's France, Franco's Spain, and Salazar's Portugal.

While the Catholic Church regained after 1945 some of the political influence that it had lost in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, it was also confronted with rapid demographical transformations and with an opening to the non-European world. The Vatican was forced to react to the rapid population increase in Catholic countries of the Third World, such as Brazil or Angola (which remained under Portuguese administration until 1975). This is evident not least in the fact that the number of Latin American and Asian cardinals rose sharply under Pius XII (Africa gained its first native cardinal as late as 1960). At the same time, however, it must be asked how these changes affected the traditional balance of power within a Vatican that had been dominated for generations by Italian clerics. Did the cultural opening of the Church fostered by Pius XII encounter internal resistance in Rome? Or was he himself driven by political pressure abroad? We are dealing, in other words, with competing tendencies of Occidentalism and "Third-Worldism," imperialism and decolonization.<sup>21</sup> Conservatives such as Marcel Lefebvre, for example, the papal legate to French Africa, vehemently opposed the rapprochement with the colonies and would later lead the conservative schism of the Priestly Fraternity of St Pius X. Accordingly, it may even be asked whether the divide over matters of decolonization must be understood as a precursor of the Church schism that would follow after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

Against the background of the Vatican's entanglement in the history of colonialism, our research will have to analyze how the Church could become a supporter of decolonization movements across the globe in a matter of just a few years. In order to explain this contradiction, historians may obviously point to modes of a very strategic political opportunism. The key to understand this development, however, is also to acknowledge the ideological and cultural antagonisms and the plurality within the Catholic Church. In this context, various spaces of activism have to be addressed: missionary movements, Christians NGOs (e.g., Catholic Action), transnational networks established around newly founded Christian Democratic parties, Catholic trade unions, and missionary

movements. All these stakeholders witnessed a vast expansion of their activities after 1945, and redefined their relation with colonialisms. More importantly, however, they also diversified the Vatican's diplomacy in the Global South, in which it could now appear as an actor, negotiator, broker, and interlocutor.

Understandably, the traditional accounts of postwar Catholicism have focused on the Vatican's perspective of anticommunism and on the coalition of the Church with the West. This narrative has many drawbacks, however. It tends to neglect the conflicts within Catholicism, the agency of the Third World, and the exchanges between different regions. A closer look at the Global South offers a more complex picture. The Church embraced and rejected different aspects of Cold War modernities in both the West and the East. The Vatican was a major actor in Africa as well as in Latin America. It was decidedly anticommunist but struggled with its relation to the United States and capitalism. This tension also led to new Catholic visions for the future of the Third World. The Dominican Louis-Joseph Lebret, for example, developed theories for a new "human economy" that should transcend the classical divisions of the Cold War. Such calls for global solidarity clearly shaped the Catholic Church's new ideological and political concerns that competed with older and more conservative ideas about the primacy of the Occident. Ultimately, however, new and explicitly democratic visions of theologians such as Lebret would find entry into the Second Vatican Council and in new encyclicals such as *Populorum progressio* that sought to redesign the relation between the Vatican and the Global South.

## Democratization

The late 1950s were clearly marked by processes of democratization in Western Europe and beyond. Nonetheless, historians need to acknowledge and explain the Vatican's political failure to overcome its close association with antidemocratic and dictatorial regimes. In this context, our volume examines the Church's often ambivalent relation to right-wing dictatorships against the wider intellectual background of European conservatism beyond the narrow context of Church structures.

Specifically, some historians now begin to focus on the relations between Christian Democrats and former supporters of dictatorial regimes in Italy, Germany, and France. Thereby, they question narratives of postwar historiography that mainly revolved around contradictory categories of "fascist continuities" and "democratic rebeginnings." Instead, we need to understand how former supporters of fascist regimes

cooperated with former critics in order to find common answers to shared questions of modernity, secularism, and an alleged cultural “decline” in Europe.<sup>22</sup>

Based on newspaper articles, party publications, and the sources from the Vatican archives, it is possible to identify patterns of religious-conservative thought that aimed at democratic reform and European integration, but simultaneously perpetuated classical reactionary themes.<sup>23</sup> Catholic authors of the 1950s, for example, often propagated the ideal of a “third way” in order to save European culture from both the communism of the Eastern bloc and the “materialism” of the Anglo-American sphere.<sup>24</sup> Politically, this went alongside new concepts such as the “social market economy” in Germany, Gaullism in France, and ideas of “Catholic Corporatism” in Italy.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, both the Church and conservative parties recurred to the notion of a West European “Occident,” whose continuity to premodernity and the Christian Middle Ages should be re-established.

By retracing these intellectual themes, we can explain how ideas that had already defined fascism and national socialism could be integrated and democratically reinterpreted within Christian-conservative worldviews. For the “salvation of the Occident,” various branches of the European Right could be mobilized. On the one hand, a new Christian identity simplified the integration of Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany into the Western alliance. On the other hand, however, the intermediation of the Catholic Church also created close ties between democratic states and clerically backed dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, and Latin America. Hence, we address the question to what extent postwar Catholicism allowed for an intellectual convergence of the European Right, which had formerly been divided into supporters and opponents of fascist regimes. In this context, the challenge is to reconstruct mentalities for which the question of fascism was not of primary political concern. Ultimately, the volume thus also contributes to a new understanding of postwar democratization processes, and aims to reveal the ambiguities between democratic ideals and a deeply rooted religious conservatism.

## Methodological Questions

Until today, the historiographies of postwar Catholicism have typically been highly politicized and divided between modes of Christian apologeticism and patterns of moral accusation. By contrast, this book seeks to retrace the political and cultural ambiguities that marked the policies of

the Vatican in a wider global context. The difficulty here is to understand how conservative and reform-oriented elements could coexist within the Church, and how they could equally shape its development in the twentieth century. Accordingly, the complexity and the ambivalences inherent to the Catholic Church need to be acknowledged. Our volume thus revolves around a series of contradictions between authoritarianism and goals of reform, Occidentalism and Third World-ism, restoration and democracy, racism and reconciliation.

By following these themes, this book will not only lead to a nuanced picture of Church history in this period, but also aims to change how historians think about wider developments of globalization, decolonization, and democratization. Ultimately, these processes were not driven by a one-sided confrontation between progressive and reactionary forces. Instead, they must be understood as multilayered patterns of societal transformation in which the fronts were not always as clear as is commonly thought. The Catholic Church, for that matter, was both a driver and a preventer of change; it clearly promoted globalization, peace, and the integration of the “Third World,” but it also stood in continuity to ideologies that had brought about the great calamities of the twentieth century.

The book aims to address these different topics throughout the pontificate of Pius XII by following four parts, which are broadly: The Pope; War and Genocide; Postwar Reconstruction and Politics; and Globalization. In sum, while there has been a lot of media attention to finding a “smoking gun” in the newly opened archives, we believe that these new materials will help scholars to go beyond the “Pius Wars” and memorial controversies. The richness and diversity of the Vatican collections will allow historians to address a whole range of topics that extend beyond Eugenio Pacelli’s biography and relate to greater questions of global politics as well as twentieth-century social, cultural, and economic history. Finally, we hope that this volume might pave the way for new research avenues, and encourage scholars to engage collectively with the Vatican archives.

**Simon Unger-Alvi’s** research is concerned with German nationalism and religious history. He gained his doctorate in modern European history at the University of Oxford in 2018, and his German habilitation from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, in 2023. He currently leads an international research group on postwar Catholicism and Pope Pius XII at the German Historical Institute in Rome. Simon Unger-Alvi was a visiting professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and now teaches as an associate professor (*Privatdozent*) in Fribourg.

**Nina Valbousquet** is a historian and author of two monographs: *Catholique et antisémite: Le réseau de Mgr Benigni* (CNRS, 2020) and *Les âmes tièdes: Le Vatican face à la Shoah* (La Découverte, 2024). She is the editor of the special issue of the *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* on the Pius XII archives and the Holocaust (2023), and the scientific curator of the exhibition on “The Churches and the Holocaust” at the Shoah Memorial in Paris (2022–23). She is co-organizer of the Ecole Française de Rome 5-year research program and seminar on the Pius XII archives (2022–26).

## Notes

The notes in this introduction are highly selective and can only provide a rough overview of the current research.

1. Fouilloux, “Église catholique”; Wolf, *Pope and Devil*; Fattorini, *Diplomazia senza eserciti*; Pettinaroli, *Le gouvernement pontifical*; Ceci, *L'Interesse superiore*.
2. Menozzi, “Gli archivi di Pio XII”. See Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows*.
3. Guittat-Naudin, *Pie XII après Pie XII*.
4. See the synthesis by Blet, *Pie XII et la Seconde Guerre mondiale*. The volumes are available online: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/actes/index\\_fr.htm](https://www.vatican.va/archive/actes/index_fr.htm) (last accessed on 14 March 2024).
5. Valbousquet, “L’ouverture des archives.”
6. Coco, “Gli scritti di Pio XII.”
7. Miccoli, *I dilemmi e i silenzi di Pio XII*; Kornberg, *The Pope’s Dilemma*.
8. See for instance: Ventresca, “The Vatican was for us like a mountain”; Perin, *La radio del papa*; Kertzer, *The Pope at War*.
9. Moro, *La Chiesa e lo sterminio degli ebrei*, p. 28.
10. Valbousquet, “Expériences migratoires.”
11. Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*. On Jules Issac, see: Tobias, *Jewish Conscience*; Valbousquet, “Conscience historique”; Valbousquet, “1965: Nostra Ætate.”
12. Antonucci et al., *Roma, 16 ottobre 1943*; Baumeister, Guerrazzi, and Procaccia, *16 ottobre 1943*.
13. Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*.
14. Hussar, *When the Cloud Lifted*.
15. See for example: Hummel, *Vatikanische Ostpolitik*; Samerski, *Johannes Paul II*. There are of course notable exceptions: Chenaux, *Une Europe vaticane?*; and from the same author, *L’Église catholique*; Beljakova et al., “*Es gibt keinen Gott!*”.
16. On Peronism, see for example: López, *El primer Perón*.
17. On Poland and Czechoslovakia, see for example: Zurek, “Zum Scheitern”; Hanus, “Die römisch-katholische Kirche.”
18. See Regoli and Sanfilippo, *La Santa Sede*.
19. Moyn, *Christian Human Rights*.
20. See for example: Foster, *African Catholic*.
21. Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade*.

22. On this problem, see for example: Johannes Großmann, *Die Internationale der Konservativen*.
23. This tension also marked Catholic identity in other parts of the world. See, for example: Sprows Cummings, *New Women of the Old Faith*.
24. Chenaux, *De la chrétienté à l'Europe*.
25. Betts, *Ruins and Renewal*; Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age*.

## Bibliography

- Antonucci, Silvia Haia, Claudio Procaccia, Gabriele Rigano, and Giancarlo Spizzichino (eds), *Roma, 16 ottobre 1943. Anatomia di una deportazione*. Milan: Guerini e Associati, 2006.
- Baumeister, Martin, Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, and Claudio Procaccia (eds), *16 ottobre 1943. La deportazione degli ebrei romani tra storia e memoria*. Rome: Viella, 2016.
- Beljakova, Nadežda Alekseevna, et al. *“Es gibt keinen Gott!”: Kirchen und Kommunismus. Eine Konfliktgeschichte*. Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2016.
- Betts, Paul. *Ruins and Renewal: Civilizing Europe after World War II*. London: Profile Books, 2020.
- Blet, Pierre. *Pie XII et la Seconde Guerre mondiale d'après les archives du Vatican*. Paris: Perrin, 1999.
- Ceci, Lucia. *L'Interesse superiore, Il Vaticano e l'Italia di Mussolini*. Rome: Laterza, 2013.
- Chamedes, Giuliana. *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
- Chenaux, Philippe. *De la chrétienté à l'Europe: les catholiques et l'idée européenne au XXe siècle*. Tours: Éditeur CLD, 2007.
- . *L'Église catholique et le communisme en Europe, 1917–1989*. Paris: Cerf, 2009.
- . *Une Europe vaticane? Entre le Plan Marshall et les Traités de Rome*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Éditions Ciaco, 1990.
- Coco, Giovanni. “Gli scritti di Pio XII e il radiomessaggio del Natale 1942.” *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia*, no. 1 (2020): 217–41.
- Conway, Martin. *Western Europe's Democratic Age: 1945–1968*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020.
- Fattorini, Emma (ed.). *Diplomazia senza eserciti. Le relazioni internazionali della Chiesa di Pio XI*. Rome: Carocci, 2013.
- Foster, Elizabeth. *African Catholic: Decolonization and the Transformation of the Church*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
- Fouilloux, Etienne. “Église catholique et Seconde Guerre mondiale.” *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 73 (2002): 111–24.
- Großmann, Johannes. *Die Internationale der Konservativen. Transnationale Elitenzirkel und private Außenpolitik in Westeuropa seit 1945*. Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014.
- Guittat-Naudin, Muriel. *Pie XII après Pie XII. Histoire d'une controverse*. Paris: Éditions EHESS, 2015.

- Hanus, Jiří. "Die römisch-katholische Kirche." In *Handbuch der Religions- und Kirchengeschichte der böhmischen Länder und Tschechiens im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Martin Schulze Wessel, 617–40. Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009.
- Hummel, Karl-Joseph (ed.). *Vatikanische Ostpolitik unter Johannes XXIII und Paul VI, 1958–1978*. Munich: Brill Schöningh, 1999.
- Hussar, Bruno. *When the Cloud Lifted: Testimony of an Israeli Priest*. Dublin: Veritas, 1989.
- Isaac, Jules. *The Teaching of Contempt: The Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964.
- Kertzer, David. *The Pope at War: The Secret History of Pius XII, Mussolini, and Hitler*. New York: Random House, 2022.
- Kornberg, Jacques. *The Pope's Dilemma: Pius XII Faces Atrocities and Genocide in the Second World War*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.
- López, Ernesto. *El primer Perón: El militar antes que el político*. Buenos Aires: Capital intelectual, 2009.
- Menozzi, Daniele. "Gli archivi di Pio XII: nuova apertura e vecchie polemiche." *Settimana News*, online, 6 March 2020.
- Miccoli, Giovanni. *I dilemmi e i silenzi di Pio XII*. Milan: Rizzoli, 2000.
- Moro, Renato. *La Chiesa e lo sterminio degli ebrei*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002.
- Moyn, Samuel. *Christian Human Rights*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- Perin, Raffaella. *La radio del papa: Propaganda e diplomazia nella seconda guerra mondiale*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017.
- Pettinaroli, Laura (ed.). *Le gouvernement pontifical sous Pie XI: Pratiques romaines et gestion de l'universel*. Rome: École française de Rome, 2013.
- Regoli, Roberto, and Matteo Sanfilippo (eds). *La Santa Sede, gli Stati Uniti e le relazioni internazionali durante il pontificato di Pio XII*. Rome: Edizioni Studium, 2022.
- Samerski, Stefan. *Johannes Paul II*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2008.
- Sprows Cummings, Kathleen. *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholic Identity in the Progressive Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Steinacher, Gerald. *Nazis on the Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Tobias, Norman. *Jewish Conscience of the Church: Jules Isaac and the Second Vatican Council*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Valbousquet, Nina. "1965: Nostra Ætate : la fin de l'enseignement du mépris?" In *Histoire des Juifs, Un voyage en 80 dates, de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, edited by Pierre Savy, 477–82. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2020.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Conscience historique et mémorielle du génocide: Jules Isaac et Jésus et Israël, rescapés de la Shoah (1940–1948)." *Archives Juives* 51, no. 2 (2018): 78–98.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Expériences migratoires et trajectoires familiales des réfugiés catholiques d'origine juive: un périple transatlantique entre Allemagne, Vatican et Brésil (1939–1942)." *Diasporas* 39 (2022): 63–78.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "L'ouverture des archives du Vatican pour le pontificat de Pie XII (1939–1958) : controverses mémorielles, apports historiographiques et usages de l'archive". *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 69, no. 1 (2022): 56–70.

- Ventresca, Robert A. "The Vatican was for us like a mountain': Reassessing the Vatican's Role in Jewish Relief and Rescue during the Holocaust. Settled Questions and New Directions in Research." *Studies in Christian–Jewish Relations* 9 (2014): 1–41.
- Wolf, Hubert. *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Zuccotti, Susan. *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Zurek, Robert. "Zum Scheitern der kommunistischen Kirchenpolitik in Polen, 1944–1956." In *Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte in Nordost- und Ostmitteleuropa: Initiativen, Methoden, Theorien*, edited by Rainer Bendel, 153–72. Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2006.