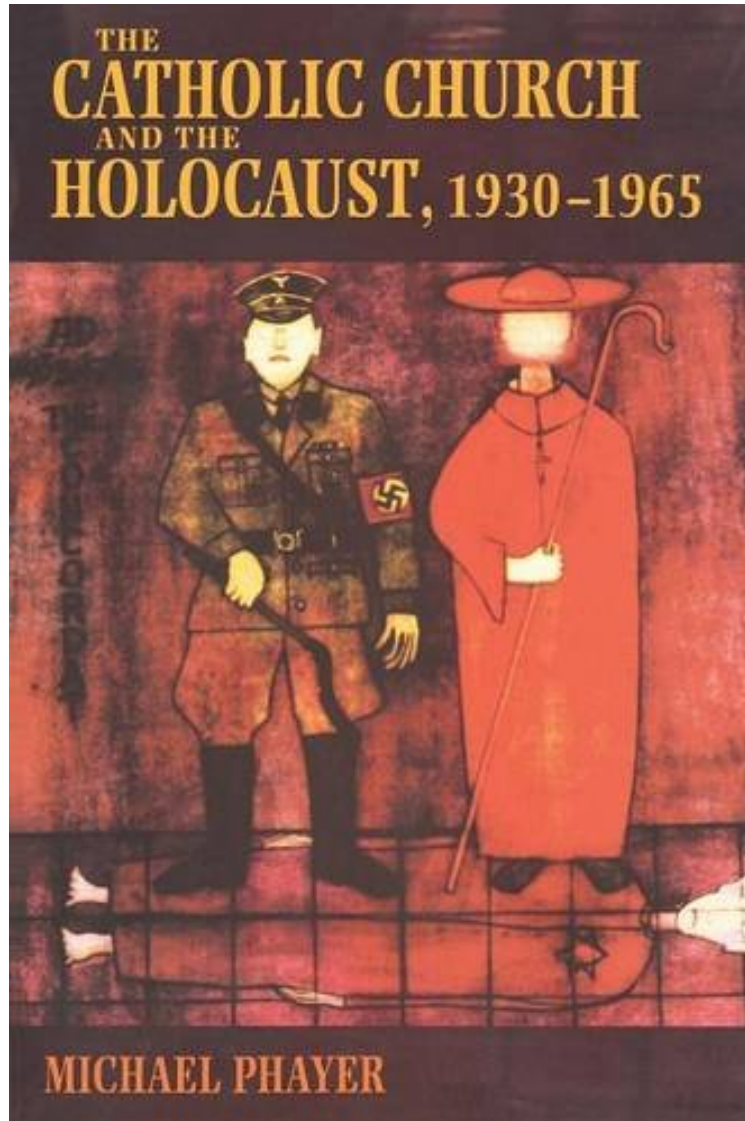


[E-BOOK] The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965:

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Michael Phayer

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good book to read but be prepared to be sad about its content.5 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Get Your Facts Straight FirstBy Arvina L. CopelandBefore I form an opinion or rush to judgement on any subject, I like to get my facts straight first. I will do research to get differing viewpoints. This book is a step in that direction. Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.41 of 61 people found the following review helpful. The truth will set you freeBy Paul O'SheaMichael Phayer has a long and proven academic record in Holocaust studies. This work is no exception, indeed it may well be one of the most significant works on the Holocaust to be written in the last 25 years. Setting parameters for examining the role of the Catholic Church that extends beyond the customary years 1933 to 1945, Phayer creates a context that helps the reader understand the complex issues surrounding the papacies of Pius XI and Pius XII. At the end of the day, Pius XII was faced with a situation that he had seen developing for many years. Intelligent, articulate and devoted to serving the Church, Pacelli was also autocratic and filled with a sense of the importance of his office that failed to recognise the changing political realities of the 1930s through to the 1950s. Bolshevism, rampant nationalism, pseudo-scientific racism and the rule of the Dictators faced the Popes during the inter-war years. Fearing Bolshevism as the greater evil than Fascism, both Pius XI and XII did the proverbial "deal with the devil", unwittingly allied themselves to Fascism, and reaped the whirlwind. Compromise after compromise eroded the Church's ability at the top to act decisively. Quibbles over canon law and mixed Catholic-Jewish marriages as people were arrested and beaten point to a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of Nazism and Fascism in general. When the trains began to roll east, Pius appears to have stuck his head in the sand and wished the whole thing would go away. Phayer demonstrates convincingly Pius's longing to be seen as the great peacemaker in Europe. Nothing could stand in the way of achieving this dream, not even a public condemnation of a killing and bloodletting unparalleled in human history. Papal apologists have spent so much time explaining away the "silence" of Pius XII they have forgotten the essence of the office the all too human Pacelli held: to feed the sheep. Pius XII and the Church structure of the 1930s through to Vatican II proved itself unable and often unwilling to recognise the need for dialogue with the world. It took the peasant simplicity and infectious humanity of Angelo Roncalli to cut through the moribund Vatican systems and the equally moribund and death-giving antisemitic theology of the Church to create an opportunity for confronting the past truthfully. It would not spell the end of the church to admit that Pius XII made some serious errors of judgement during his papacy. To continue to deny the pope's moral culpability is to deny the increasing body of archival material that tells a different story to that posed by Pacelli's defenders. Phayer's book makes a serious judgement about the reigns of Pius XI and Pius XII but does so without malice, and avoids the sweeping generalizations that characterised much of John Cornwell's Hitler's Pope. Phayer's book is a product of meticulous research and patient piecing together of historical evidence from a variety of sources, including the Vatican. It is balanced and fair. It is essential reading for any student of contemporary Catholic history and theology as well as for the student of the Holocaust.

Phayer offers exactly what was needed.... A fair and even-tempered account of a volatile subject." Kirkus ReviewsAn important addition to the literature of the Holocaust." Publishers WeeklyVery valuable... a fine and judicious book." Istvn Dek, The New York Review of BooksPhayer has written a singularly important book on the role of the Catholic Church in both the Holocaust and its aftermath, up to and including Vatican II. Diligently researched and documented, judicious in its conclusions, comprehensive in its scope, compassionate and humane in its outlook, this book is an indispensable resource." Richard L. RubensteinPhayer's study of [the Catholic Church] as an actor in the tumultuous history of the [20th century] will serve as a model for other historians." Donald J. Dietrich, Boston CollegePhayer's book, particularly strong on German source material, is at pains to list Pius's strong points his piety, his loathing of Hitler, the instances of personal warmth, the occasions when he criticized Nazism. Phayer examines not only Pius's actions but those of other leading Catholics, and his study extends beyond the end of World War II to follow the evolution of official Catholic thinking during the rebuilding of Germany, the cold war, and the gradual theological reforms that led to Vatican II. This enables Phayer to show how the church completely reversed its position relative to the Jews, but it also gives him a more thorough reading of Pius XII's overall record. It is a damning and convincing verdict that emerges." Commonweal

From Publishers WeeklyPhayer makes an important addition to the literature of Holocaust studies: he provides evidence that Pope Pius XII (who reigned over the Catholic Church from 1939 to 1958) knew in early 1942 what was happening to Europe's Jews (and to non-Jews in Croatia and Poland) yet he remained silent. The pope, he argues, was a Germanophile who had been schooled as a diplomat: treaties (particularly one he'd drafted between Germany and Rome in 1933) and the Communist threat were his main priorities. Protection of Vatican City from Allied or Axis bombs was another. Phayer contends that, had the pope resisted the Nazis and informed his flock either overtly or through existing secret channels about what was happening, there would have been many more Catholic rescuers and fewer collaborators than there were. Phayer also details the Church's postwar policies; it played its part in helping Nazis escape justice, he contends, rather than support efforts to force Germany to pay reparations to survivors. Phayer, however, doesn't only describe the years of Pius XII; he contrasts him with Pope Pius XI and Pope John XXIII (who

respectively preceded and followed him), and in doing so he makes a forceful point about the difference strong leadership can make. Both Pius XI and John XXIII used their positions of infallibility to openly and publicly encourage cordiality and acceptance of Jews, culminating in the Church's 1965 declaration that the Jews were not responsible for crucifying Jesus. Pius XII, says Phayer, was in contrast a weak leader and a cowardly one. And the author argues that, given the conditions under which he served, his lack of courage proved devastating. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Marquette University historian Phayer has written about the role of Christian women in challenging Nazi Germany's "final solution." Here, he addresses the current debate over Pope Pius XII's role, partly by insisting the appropriate question is not "What did the pope do?" but "What did the church do?" Phayer broadens the discussion, devoting seven chapters to the Holocaust years and five to the postwar era. The first section considers prewar Catholic attitudes toward Jews; the Vatican's failure to respond to early genocide in Poland and Croatia; priorities that conditioned Pius XII's reaction to the Holocaust; and the responses of European bishops and of Catholics engaged in organized resistance. The second section addresses Vatican resistance to U.S. denazification efforts; priorities that conditioned Pius' postwar actions; interaction between Catholics and Jews after the war; and the rethinking that culminated in the rejection of anti-Semitism at the Second Vatican Council. Phayer's broader focus is valuable but will not likely overcome interest in "What did the pope do?" so long as many within the church are urging rapid canonization of Pius XII. Mary Carroll Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Phayer insists that the failures and deficiencies of Pius XII's leadership ought not lead to a simplistic condemnation. He looks carefully at the record of the pope as well as those of bishops, the church, and individual Catholics, and concludes that the record is mixed and complex. This reviewer recommends Phayer's text as the appropriate choice for all libraries having an interest in issues relating to the Holocaust. May 2001 (Choice)