

Religion-state relationships in history.

[People](#), [Adolf Hitler](#)



Question: Can the Catholic Church be blamed for not helping the Jews during the Holocaust? Hypothesis: The Catholic Church did as much as it could at the time to prevent as much “ suffering” as possible for the Jews in the Holocaust. This Report explores the conflict that can arise between the Catholic Church and State Governments, particularly the conflict seen during the time of the Holocaust. The Catholic Church cannot and should not be blamed for not stopping the Holocaust and for not doing enough to help the Jewish population. This report will explore the Catholic Church’s role during this time in history, including the role of Pope Pius XII and reasoning behind the perceived lack of action by Church members. It is estimated that about 6 million Jews died at the hands of the Nazis as well as around 800, 000 Gypsies and almost 4 million Soviet prisoners of war or victims of the occupation. The relationship between Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust has long been disputed, with some scholars arguing that he kept silent during the Holocaust, while others have argued that he saved thousands if not tens or hundreds of thousands of Jews. Pope Pius XII's actions throughout the Holocaust remained controversial. For much of the Shoah (Holocaust), he maintained a public front of indifference and remained silent while German killings were committed. He refused Jewish pleas for help on the grounds of neutralization, while making statements condemning injustices in general. In addition, privately, he sheltered a small number of Jews and spoke to a few select officials, encouraging them to help the Jews. Pope Pius XII helped these Jews behind the views of Hitler because he knew that if Hitler found out he was helping Jews then Pope Pius XII would have been killed either by Hitler himself or one of his men. The Pope finally gave a reason for his

consistent refusals to make a public statement against the Nazi atrocities in December 1942. The Allied Governments had issued a declaration, " German Policy of Extermination of the Jewish Race," which stated that there would be retribution for the perpetrators of Jewish murders. When Pope Pius' assistant Harold Tittman asked the Vatican Secretary of State, Luigi Maglione if the Pope could issue a similar proclamation, Maglione said the papacy was " unable to denounce murdering publicly." One reason for this position was that the staunchly anti-communist Pope felt he could not denounce the Nazis without including the Communists; therefore, Pius XII would only condemn general killings. The Catholic Church, however, did act in many ways to reduce the Jewish suffering at this time. Catholics are constantly confronted with the claims that Pope Pius XII was complacent during the Holocaust; that vast numbers of Catholics collaborated with Hitler's diabolical regime; and that Catholic priest, nuns, and bishops were ardent members of the Nazi Party and supporters of its policies. Maybe it is true that many Catholics turned a blind eye to the Holocaust, it is also true however that others undoubtedly remained silent out of fear for their lives and the safety of their families. There were certainly many ex-Catholic members within the ruling Nazi circles, just as there were Catholics in some numbers who supported the Nazis out of a twisted sense of nationalism, anti-Semitic beliefs, or for pure personal advancement in a corrupt and evil State. What many people may not know is the Church itself was a target of the Nazis. On June 6, 1941, Martin Bormann, head of the Nazi Party Chancellery, private secretary to Adolf Hitler, and one of the most powerful figures in the Third Reich, issued a secret decree for all Gauleiters of the Reich regarding the true intentions of

the Nazi regime toward the Christian churches. " More and more the people must be separated from the churches and their pastors . . . Just as the deleterious influences of astrologers, seers and other fakers are eliminated and suppressed by the State, so must the possibility of church influence also be totally removed . . . Not until this has happened, does the state leadership have influence on the individual citizens. Not until then are the people and Reich secure in their existence for all time" (Quote: Relationship of National Socialism and Christianity). A Gauleiter was the party leader of a regional branch of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), more commonly known as the Nazi Party. The truth is many thousands of Catholic men, women, and children died in concentration camps, Schutzstaffel (SS) and Gestapo torture chambers, or in fields and villages across Europe for the " crime" of proclaiming the truth to one of the most evil regimes in human history. The historical reality of this oppression does not in any way reduce the culpability of some Catholics in the Holocaust, nor does it suggest that the unprecedented genocide of the Jewish people should be forgotten or considered reduced in significance. Whilst the Holocaust is undoubtedly one of the most horrifying events in our history, the Catholic Church cannot be held responsible for the devastating happenings during this time. Firstly, the secrecy of the Nazi regime meant that no single entity or organization in Germany knew what was exactly going on. The Catholic Church has not and does not deny it was privy to sensitive information shared by the regime during this time, particularly information shared with Pope Pius XII. It does not, however, deem the Church to be responsible for the heinous actions ordered by the regime's leaders under the direction of Hitler. Additionally,

fear of even greater atrocities as well as retribution against members of the Church and their families who dared to speak out publicly against the regime would have caused many Church members to remain silent. Whilst these members were not speaking out publicly against the regime's actions, they were doing everything possible ' behind the scenes', under a cloak of secrecy, to protect as many of the Jewish population as possible. Undeniably, the genocide of the Jews during the regime's rule is abhorrent and certainly a dark stain on our world's history. Whilst the Catholic Church was privy to much detail, this report shows that the Catholic Church did as much as it could at the time to prevent as much " suffering" as possible for the Jews in the Holocaust. Bibliography. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2011). " German Churches and the Nazi State", Retrieved from <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005206> on February 29, 2012. (2012). Religion in Nazi Germany, Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Nazi_Germany (2012). Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_and_Nazi_Germany Goldberg P., Investigating Religion, 2009, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, pages 4, 13-19. Trueman C. The Church in Nazi Germany, retrieved 29th February 2012, <http://www.historylearningplace.co.uk/churchinnazigermany.com> The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust, Retrieved 9th March from <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/pius.html> (2012). Pope Pius xii and the Jews, Retrieved 25th February from <http://popepiusxiiandthejews.blogspot.com.au/> Catholic Resources Network. Pope Pius XII, Retieved 10th March from <http://www.https://assignbuster.com/religion-state-relationships-in-history/>

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