

# Hitler's Pope

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The Secret History of Pius XII



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PENGUIN BOOKS

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# Prologue



During the “Holy Year” of 1950, a year in which many millions of pilgrims descended on Rome to show their allegiance to the papacy, Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII, was seventy-four years of age and still vigorous. Six feet tall, stick-thin at 125 pounds,<sup>1</sup> light on his feet, regular in his habits, he had hardly altered physically from the day of his coronation eleven years earlier. It was his extreme pallor that first struck those who met him. “The skin, tightly drawn over the strong features, almost ash-grey, unhealthy, looked like old parchment,” wrote one observer, “but at the same time it had a surprisingly transparent effect, as if reflecting from the inside a cold, white flame.”<sup>2</sup> The effect he had on otherwise unsentimental men of the world was often stunning. “His presence radiated a benignity, calm and sanctity that I have certainly never before sensed in any human being,” wrote James Lees-Milne. “All the while he smiled in the sweetest, kindest way so that I immediately fell head over heels in love with him. I was so affected I could scarcely speak without tears and was conscious that my legs were trembling.”<sup>3</sup>

The Holy Year saw a host of papal initiatives—canonizations, encyclicals (public letters to the Catholic faithful of the world), even the declaration of an infallible dogma (the Assumption of the Virgin Mary)—and Pius XII seemed deeply settled in his pontificate, as if he had always been Pope and always would be. For the half-billion Catholic faithful in the world, he embodied the papal ideal: holiness, dedication,

divinely ordained supreme authority, and, in certain circumstances, infallibility in his statements about faith and morals. To this day, elderly Italians refer to him as "*l'ultimo papa*," the last Pope.

A man of monklike inclinations of solitude and prayer, he nevertheless met in audience a prodigious number of politicians, writers, scientists, soldiers, actors, sports personalities, leaders of nations, and royalty. Few failed to be charmed and impressed by him. He had beautiful tapering hands, which he used to great effect in his constant blessings. His eyes were large and dark, almost feverish behind gold-rimmed spectacles. His voice was high-pitched, a trifle querulous, with a tendency to overmeticulous enunciation. When he performed church services, his face was impassive, his gestures and movements controlled and elegant. Toward his visitors he was strikingly affable, putting them at ease, all assentation and eagerness, with not the slightest impression of pomposity or affectation. He had a ready and simple humor and would give a big silent laugh, mouth agape. His teeth, one observer noted, were like "old ivory."

Some spoke of a "feline" sensibility, others of an occasional tendency to "feminine" vanity. Before a camera there was a hint of narcissism. And yet he impressed most who met him with a sense of chaste, youthful innocence, like an eternal seminarian or monastic novice. He was at home with children, and they felt drawn to him. He was never known to gossip or speak ill of others. His eyes froze, harelike, when he felt assailed by overfamiliarity or a coarse phrase. He was alone—in a quite extraordinary and exalted sense.

How can one capture a sense of that unique solitude, that papal egotistical sublime, in which modern popes have chosen to live and have their being?

Overwhelmed by the solitude of his pontifical role, Paul VI, Pope in the 1960s and 1970s, confided a private note to himself that might just as well have been penned by Pacelli, whom Paul VI had served (as Giovanni Battista Montini) for fifteen years:

I was solitary before, but now my solitariness becomes complete and awesome. Hence the dizziness, the vertigo. Like a statue on a plinth—that is how I live now. Jesus was also alone on the cross. I should not seek outside help to absolve

me from my duty; my duty is too plain: decide, assume every responsibility for guiding others, even when it seems illogical and perhaps absurd. And to suffer alone. . . . Me and God. The colloquy must be full and endless.<sup>4</sup>

This vertiginous papal consciousness surely alters the man who shoulders the papal burden. It is a solitude attended by certain dangers—not least the perils of increasing egotism and despotism. The longer the papacy, the more entrenched the papal consciousness. The theologian John Henry Newman, Britain’s most famous convert to Catholicism in the nineteenth century, delivered a devastating verdict during a previous drawn-out pontificate: “It is not good for a Pope to live twenty years. It is anomaly and bears no good fruit; he becomes a god, has no one to contradict him, does not know facts, and does cruel things without meaning it.”<sup>5</sup> Within ten years of becoming Pope, Pacelli had elevated the papacy to heights of unprecedented exaltation; there was certainly no one to contradict him, and he adopted the manner of one destined for canonization.

There is a striking picture of Pacelli at the zenith of his power, published in 1950. Photographed from above and behind his head and shoulders, high over St. Peter’s Square, he greets the seething multitudes below like a colossus holding the entire human race in his embrace. The picture is entirely apt for a bold initial assertion: *The ideology of papal primacy, as we have known it within living memory, is an invention of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.* In other words, there was a time, before modern means of communication, when the pyramidal model of Catholic authority—whereby a single man in a white robe rules the Church in a vastly unequal power relationship—did not exist. There was a time when the Catholic Church’s authority was widely distributed through the great historic councils and countless webs of local discretion. As in a medieval cathedral, there were many thrusting spires of authority. Certainly the tallest of these was the papacy, but Roman primacy for much of two millennia was more a final court of appeal than a uniquely initiating autocracy.

That characteristic image of Pius XII—the supreme, albeit loving, authoritarian floating above St. Peter’s Square—suggests several contrasts that distinguish the modern popes from their predecessors. The more

elevated the Pontiff, the smaller and less significant the faithful. The more responsible and authoritative the Pontiff, the less enfranchised the people of God, including bishops, the successors to the apostles. The more holy and removed the Pontiff, the more profane and secular the entire world.

This book tells the story of the career of Eugenio Pacelli, the man who was Pius XII, the world's most influential churchman from the early 1930s to the late 1950s. Pacelli, more than almost any other Vatican official of his day, helped to enhance the ideology of papal power—the power that he himself assumed in 1939 on the eve of the Second World War and held until his death in October 1958. But the story begins three decades before he became Pope. Among the many initiatives in his long diplomatic career, Pacelli was responsible for a treaty with Serbia which contributed to the tensions that led to the First World War. Twenty years later he struck an accord with Hitler which helped sweep the Führer to legal dictatorship while neutralizing the potential of Germany's 23 million Catholics (34 million after the Anschluss) to protest and resist.

Pacelli's goals and his influence as diplomat and Pope cannot be separated from the auspices and pressures of the office that gave impetus to his remarkable ambition. That ambition was no simple lust for power for its own sake; the popes of the twentieth century have not been self-seeking men of worldly pride, hubris, and greed. They have been, without exception, men of prayer and meticulous conscience, burdened by the checkered history of the ancient institution they embodied. Pacelli was no exception. That he nevertheless exerted a fatal and culpable influence on the history of this century is the theme of this book.

Pacelli was born in Rome in 1876 into a family of Church lawyers in the service of a papacy disgruntled by the sequestration of the papal states by the new nation-state of Italy. That loss of sovereignty had left the papacy in crisis. How could the popes regard themselves as independent of the political status quo of Italy, now that they were mere citizens of this upstart kingdom? How could they continue to lead and protect a Church in conflict with the modern world?

Ever since the Reformation, the papacy had been reluctantly readjust-

ing to the realities of a fragmented Christendom amid the challenge of Enlightenment ideas and new ways of looking at the world. In response to the political and social changes that gathered pace in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the papacy had struggled to survive and exert an influence in a climate of liberalism, secularism, science, industrialization, and the evolving nation-state. The popes had been obliged to fight on two fronts—as primates of an embattled Church and as monarchs of a tottering papal kingdom. Caught in a bewildering series of confrontations with the new masters of Europe, the papacy had been attempting to protect the Church universal while defending the integrity of its collapsing temporal power.

Most of the modernizing states of Europe were inclined to separate Church from State (or, in the more complex reality of oppositions, throne from altar, papacy from empire, clergy from laity, sacred from secular). The Catholic Church became an object of oppression in Europe through much of the nineteenth century: its property and wealth systematically plundered; religious orders and clergy deprived of their scope for action; schools taken over by the state or shut down. The papacy itself was repeatedly humiliated (Pius VII and Pius VIII were held prisoner by Napoleon), and the papal territories had been in constant danger of dismemberment and annexation as the forces for Italian unity and modernization gathered strength.

Through the vicissitudes of this era, the Church had been riven internally by an issue fraught with consequences for the modern papacy. Broadly, the struggle was between those who urged an absolutist papal primacy from the Roman center and those who argued for a greater distribution of authority among the bishops (indeed, those who even argued for the formation of national churches independent of Rome). Both these tendencies found expression in France from the seventeenth century onward, although the antecedents of papal autocracy had an ancient lineage dating back to the eleventh century and the foundations of papal monarchism. Papal autocracy undoubtedly had been a principal cause of the Reformation itself.

The triumph of the modern centrists, or “ultramontanists” (a phrase coined in France indicating papal power from “beyond the mountains,” or the Alps), was sealed at the First Vatican Council of 1870 against the background of the Pope’s loss of his dominions. At that Council, the



Pope was declared infallible in matters of faith and morals as well as undisputed *primate*—supreme spiritual and administrative head of the Church. In some respects, this definition satisfied even those who had felt it inopportune: it was, after all, as much a statement of the limits as of the scope of infallibility and primacy.

In the first three decades after the Vatican Council, during the reign of Leo XIII, the ultramontanist Church waxed and grew strong. There was an impression of restoration; ecclesiastical Rome flourished with new academic and administrative institutions; Catholic missions penetrated to the farthest corners of the earth. There was a bracing sense of loyalty, obedience, fervor. The revival of the Christian philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, or at least a version of it, provided the perception of a bastion against modern ideas and a defense of papal authority. By the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the concept of the *limits* of papal inerrancy and primacy was becoming blurred. A legal and bureaucratic instrument had transformed the dogma into an ideology of papal power unprecedented in the long history of the Church of Rome.

At the turn of the century, Pacelli, then a brilliant young Vatican lawyer, collaborated in redrafting the Church's laws in such a way as to grant future popes unchallenged domination from the Roman center. These laws, separated from their ancient historical and social background, were packaged in a manual known as the Code of Canon Law, published and brought into force in 1917. The code, distributed to Catholic clergy throughout the world, created the means of establishing, imposing, and sustaining a remarkable new "top-down" power relationship.

As papal nuncio in Munich and Berlin during the 1920s, Pacelli sought to impose the new code, state by state, on Germany—one of the largest, best-educated, and richest Catholic populations in the world. At the same time, he was pursuing a Reich Concordat, a Church-State treaty between the papacy and Germany as a whole. Pacelli's aspirations for that accord with the Reich were frequently resisted, not only by indignant Protestant leaders but also by Catholics who believed that his vision for the German Church was unacceptably authoritarian.

In 1933 Pacelli found a successful negotiating partner for his Reich Concordat in the person of Adolf Hitler. Their treaty authorized the papacy to impose the new Church law on German Catholics and granted

generous privileges to Catholic schools and the clergy. In exchange, the Catholic Church in Germany, its parliamentary political party, and its many hundreds of associations and newspapers “voluntarily” withdrew, following Pacelli’s initiative, from social and political action. The abdication of German political Catholicism in 1933, negotiated and imposed from the Vatican by Pacelli with the agreement of Pope Pius XI, ensured that Nazism could rise unopposed by the most powerful Catholic community in the world—a reverse of the situation sixty years earlier, when German Catholics combated and defeated Bismarck’s Kulturkampf persecutions from the grass roots. As Hitler himself boasted in a cabinet meeting on July 14, 1933, Pacelli’s guarantee of nonintervention left the regime free to resolve the Jewish question. According to the cabinet minutes, “[Hitler] expressed the opinion that one should only consider it as a great achievement. The concordat gave Germany an opportunity and created an area of trust that was particularly significant in the developing struggle against international Jewry.”<sup>6</sup> The perception of papal endorsement of Nazism, in Germany and abroad, helped seal the fate of Europe.

The story told in this book, then, spans Pacelli’s youth, the years of his education, and his formidable early career before he became Pope. The narrative, moreover, finds a new center of gravity in Pacelli’s fateful negotiations with Hitler in the early 1930s. Those negotiations, in turn, cannot be seen in isolation from the development of the ideology of papal power through the century, nor from his wartime conduct and his attitude toward the Jews. The postwar period of Pacelli’s pontificate, through the 1950s, was the apotheosis of that power, as Pacelli presided over a monolithic, triumphalist Catholic Church in antagonistic confrontation with Communism both in Italy and beyond the Iron Curtain.

But it could not hold. The internal structures and morale of the Catholic Church began to show signs of fragmentation and decay in the final years of Pius XII, leading to a yearning for reassessment and renewal. The Second Vatican Council was called in 1962 by John XXIII, who succeeded Pacelli in 1958, precisely to reject the monolithic, centralized Church model of his predecessors, in preference for a collegial, decentralized, human community on the move. In two key documents, *The Church (Lumen gentium)* and *The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et*

*spes*), there was a new emphasis on history, accessible liturgy, community, the Holy Spirit, and love. The guiding metaphor of the Church of the future was of a “pilgrim people of God.” Expectations ran high, and there was no lack of contention and anxiety—old habits and disciplines died hard. There were indications from the very outset that papal and Vatican centrism would not acquiesce easily.

At the outset of Christianity's third millennium it is clear that the Church of Pius XII is reasserting itself in countless ways, some of them obvious, some clandestine, but above all in confirmation of a pyramidal Church model—faith in the primacy of the man in the white robe dictating in solitude from the pinnacle. In the twilight years of John Paul II's long reign, the Catholic Church gives a pervasive impression of dysfunction despite John Paul II's historic influence in the collapse of Communist tyranny in Poland and the Vatican's enthusiasm for entering the third millennium with a cleansed conscience.

In the latter half of John Paul II's reign, the policies of Pius XII have reemerged to challenge the resolutions of Vatican II and to create tensions within the Catholic Church that are likely to culminate in a future titanic struggle. As the British theologian Adrian Hastings comments: “The great tide powered by Vatican II has, at least institutionally, spent its force. The old landscape has once more emerged and Vatican II is now being read in Rome far more in the spirit of Vatican I and within the context of Pius XII's model of Catholicism.”

Pacelli, whose canonization process is now well advanced, has become the icon, forty years after his death, of those who read and revise the provisions of the Second Vatican Council from the viewpoint of an ideology of papal power that has already proved disastrous in the century's history.

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# The Pacellis



Eugenio Pacelli was described routinely, during his pontificate and after his death, as a member of the Black Nobility. The Black Nobles were a small group of aristocratic families of Rome who had stood by the popes following the seizure of their dominions in the bitter struggle for the creation of the nation-state of Italy. The Pacellis, intensely loyal as they were to the papacy, were hardly aristocrats. Eugenio Pacelli's family background was respectable but modest, rooted on his father's side in a rural backwater close to Viterbo, a sizable town fifty miles north of Rome. At the time of Pacelli's birth in 1876, a relative, Pietro Caterini (referred to as "the Count" by members of Eugenio's own generation), still owned a farmhouse and a little land in the village of Onano. But Pacelli's father and grandfather before him, as well as his elder brother, Francesco, owed their distinction not to noble links or wealth but to membership of the caste of lay Vatican lawyers in the service of the papacy.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, from the 1930s onward, Pacelli's brother and three nephews were ennobled in recompense for legal and business services to Italy and the Holy See.

Pacelli's immediate family association with the Holy See dates from 1819, when his grandfather, Marcantonio Pacelli, arrived in the Eternal City to study canon, or Church, law as a protégé of a clerical uncle, Monsignor Prospero Caterini. By 1834 Marcantonio had become an advocate in the Tribunal of the Sacred Rota, an ecclesiastical court

involved in such activities as marriage annulments. While raising ten children (his second child being Eugenio's father, Filippo, born in 1837), Marcantonio became a key official in the service of Pius IX, popularly known as Pio Nono.

The quick-tempered, charismatic, and epileptic Pio Nono (Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti), crowned in 1846, was convinced, as had been his predecessors from time immemorial, that the papal territories forming the midriff of the Italian peninsula ensured the independence of the successors to St. Peter. If the Supreme Pontiff were a mere inhabitant of a "foreign" country, how could he claim to be free of local influence? Three years after his coronation, it looked as if Pio Nono had ignominiously lost his sovereignty over the Eternal City to a republican mob. On November 15, 1849, Count Pelligrino Rossi, a lay government minister of the papal states, famous for his biting sarcasm, approached the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome and greeted a sullen waiting crowd with a contemptuous smile. As he was about to enter the building, a man leapt forward and stabbed him fatally in the neck. The next day, the Pope's Quirinal summer palace above the city was sacked, and Pio Nono, disguised in a priest's simple cassock and a pair of large spectacles, fled to the seaside fortress of Gaeta within the safety of the neighboring kingdom of Naples. He took with him Marcantonio Pacelli as his legal and political adviser. From this fastness, Pio Nono hurled denunciations against the "outrageous treason of democracy" and threatened prospective voters with excommunication. Only with the help of French bayonets, and a loan from Rothschild's, did Pio Nono contrive to return to the Vatican a year later to resume a despised reign over the city of Rome and what was left of the papal territories.

Given the reactionary tendencies of Pio Nono, at least from this period onward, we can assume that Marcantonio Pacelli shared his Pontiff's repudiation of liberalism and democracy. After the return to Rome, Marcantonio was appointed a member of the "Council of Censorship," a body charged with investigating those implicated in the republican "plot." In 1852 he was appointed secretary of the interior. The papal regime during this final phase of its existence was not beneficent. Writing to William Gladstone that same year, an English traveler characterized Rome as a prison house: "There is not a breath of liberty, not a hope of tranquil life; two foreign armies; a permanent state of siege,

atrocious acts of revenge, factions raging, universal discontent; such is the papal government of the present day.”<sup>2</sup>

The Jews were made a target of post-republican reprisal. At the beginning of his reign, Pio Nono had begun to promote tolerance, abolishing the ancient Jewish ghetto, the practice of conversionist sermons for Roman Jews, and the enforced catechizing of Jews baptized “by chance.” But although Pio Nono’s return had been paid for by a Jewish loan, the Roman Jews were now forced back into the ghetto and made to pay, literally, for having supported the revolution. Then Pio Nono became involved in a scandal that shocked the world. In 1858, a six-year-old Jewish child, Edgardo Mortara, was kidnapped by papal police in Bologna on the pretext that he had been baptized in extremis by a servant girl six years earlier.<sup>3</sup> Placed in the reopened House of Catechumens, the child was forcibly instructed in the Catholic faith. Despite the pleas of Edgardo’s parents, Pio Nono adopted the child and liked to play with him, hiding him under his soutane and calling out, “Where’s the boy?” The world was outraged; no less than twenty editorials on the subject were published in *The New York Times*, and both Emperor Franz Josef of Austria and Napoleon III of France begged the Pope to return the child to his rightful parents, all in vain. Pio Nono kept Edgardo cloistered in a monastery, where he was eventually ordained as a priest.

The juggernaut of Italian nationalism, however, was unstoppable; and Marcantonio Pacelli, close to his Pope, was present at events of great consequence for the modern papacy. By 1860 the new Italian state under the leadership of the Piedmontese king, Vittorio Emanuele II, had seized nearly all the papal dominions. In his notorious *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), Pio Nono denounced eighty “modern” propositions, including socialism, freemasonry, and rationalism. In the eightieth proposition, a cover-all denunciation, he declared it a grave error to assert that the “Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile himself with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization.”

Pio Nono had erected about himself the protective battlements of God’s citadel; within, he raised the standard of the Catholic faith, based on the word of God as endorsed by himself, the Supreme Pontiff, Christ’s Vicar upon earth. Outside were the standards of the Antichrist, man-centered ideologies that had been sowing error ever since the French Revolution. And the poisonous fruit, he declared, had even affected the

Church itself: movements seeking to reduce the power of the popes by urging national Churches independent of Rome. Yet just as influential was a long-established tendency from the opposite extreme: ultramontanism, a call for unchallenged papal power that would shine out across the world, transcending all national and geographical boundaries. Pio Nono now began to prepare for the dogmatic declaration of just such an awe-inspiring primacy. The world would know how supreme he was by a dogma, a fiat, to be held by all under pain of excommunication. The setting for the deliberations that preceded the proclamation was a great council of the Church, a meeting of all the bishops under the presidency of the Pope. The First Vatican Council was convened by Pio Nono late in 1869 and lasted until October 20 of the following year.

At the outset, only half of the bishops attending the Council were disposed to support a dogma of papal infallibility. But Pius IX and his close supporters went to work on them. When Cardinal Guido of Bologna protested that only the assembled bishops of the Church could claim to be witnesses to the tradition of doctrine, Pio Nono replied: "Witnesses of tradition? *I am the tradition.*"<sup>4</sup>

The historic decree of papal infallibility passed on July 18, 1870, by 433 bishops, with only two against, reads as follows:

The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when, exercising the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, he defines . . . a doctrine concerning faith and morals to be held by the whole Church, through the divine assistance promised to him in St. Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer wished His Church to be endowed . . . and therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church.<sup>5</sup>

An additional decree proclaimed that the Pope had supreme jurisdiction over his bishops, individually and collectively. The Pope, in effect, was ultimately and unprecedentedly in charge. During the hour of these great decisions, a storm broke over St. Peter's dome and a thunderclap, amplified within the basilica's cavernous interior, shattered a pane of glass in the tall windows. According to *The Times* (London), the anti-

infallibilists saw in the event a portent of divine disapproval. Cardinal Henry Manning, the archbishop of Westminster and an enthusiastic lobbyist for Pio Nono, responded disdainfully: "They forgot Sinai and the Ten Commandments."<sup>6</sup>

Before the Council could turn to other matters, the last French troops pulled out of the Eternal City to defend Paris in the Franco-Prussian War. In came the soldiers of the Italian state, and Rome was lost to the papacy, this time forever. All that remained to Pio Nono and his Curia, the cardinals who ran the erstwhile papal states, were the 108.7 acres of the present-day Vatican City, and that on the sufferance of the new Italian nation-state. Shutting himself inside the apostolic palace overlooking St. Peter's, Pio refused to come to an accord with the new state of Italy. He had already, in 1868, forbidden Italian Catholics to take part in democratic politics.

Marcantonio Pacelli might have been out of a job had he not helped found a new Vatican daily newspaper in 1861. *L'Osservatore Romano* became the "moral and political" voice of the Vatican, and the paper, now published in seven languages, thrives to this day. Meanwhile, following in Marcantonio's footsteps, Eugenio's father, Filippo, had also trained as a canon lawyer and was similarly appointed to the Tribunal of the Sacred Rota, eventually becoming dean of the consistorial advocates, lawyers to the Holy See.

Pacelli's parents were married in 1871. His mother, Virginia Graziosi, was a Roman and, as the phrase went, a pious daughter of the Church. She was one of thirteen brothers and sisters. Two of her brothers became priests and two sisters took the veil. Filippo Pacelli performed pastoral work in the parishes of Rome, distributing spiritual reading matter to the poor. He is chiefly remembered for his attachment to a book entitled *Massime eterne (Eternal Principles)*, a meditation on death by Alfonso Liguori, the eighteenth-century Catholic moralist and saint. Filippo handed out many hundreds of copies throughout Rome, and each year led a procession to a Roman cemetery, where the pilgrims under his guidance pondered their inevitable destiny.

The remuneration of Vatican lay lawyers was meager, and the Pacellis were not prosperous. After 1870, there is an impression of family hardship. In later years Pacelli recollected that there was no heating in the family apartment, even in the depths of winter, save for a small brazier



around which the family members warmed their hands.<sup>7</sup> Whereas after 1870 many of their lay contemporaries entered the well-paid bureaucracies of the new Italy, the Pacellis remained faithful to their indignant rejection of Vittorio Emanuele's usurpation. It was the practice of the loyal papal bourgeoisie to wear one glove, to place a chair facing the wall in the principal room, to keep the shutters permanently closed, and to maintain the palazzo door half shut, in token of the Pope's confiscated patrimony. The Pacellis, although lacking an entire palazzo of their own, were of this staunch constituency. Eugenio Pacelli was thus raised in an ambiance of intense Catholic piety, penurious respectability, and an enduring sense of injured papal merit. Above all, the family was steeped in a wide scope of legal knowledge and efficacy—civil, international, and ecclesiastical. As the Pacellis saw it, their papacy and their Church, threatened on all sides by the destructive forces of the modern world, would survive and in time overcome through shrewd and universal application of the law.

### The Church Oppressed

In the years following the First Vatican Council, Pio Nono surveyed a dismal scene of oppression from the upper stories of the apostolic palace, with its global perspective on the Catholic Church in the world. In Italy, processions and outdoor services were banned, communities of religious dispersed, Church property confiscated, priests conscripted into the army. A catalogue of measures, understandably deemed anti-Catholic by the Holy See, streamed from the new capital: divorce legislation, secularization of the schools, the dissolution of numerous holy days.

In Germany, partly in response to the "divisive" dogma of infallibility, Bismarck began his Kulturkampf ("culture struggle"), a policy of persecution against Catholicism. Religious instruction came under state control and religious orders were forbidden to teach; the Jesuits were banished; seminaries were subjected to state interference; Church property came under the control of lay committees; civil marriage was introduced in Prussia. Bishops and clergy resisting Kulturkampf legislation were fined, imprisoned, exiled. In many parts of Europe, it was the same:

in Belgium, Catholics were ousted from the teaching profession; in Switzerland, religious orders were banned; in Austria, traditionally a Catholic country, the state took over schools and passed legislation to secularize marriage; in France, there was a new wave of anticlericalism. The conviction had been widely and confidently expressed by writers, thinkers, and politicians across Europe—Bovio in Italy, Balzac in France, Bismarck in Germany, Gladstone in England—that the papacy, and Catholicism with it, had had its day.

Even Pio Nono's firmest supporters were beginning to suspect that the great longevity of this papacy lay at the root of all the problems. Reflecting on the matter in 1876, Westminster's Archbishop Manning dwelt gloomily on the Holy See's "darkness, confusion, depression . . . inactivity and illness." Yet were things quite so universally and irredeemably bad? Had the obscurantism of the aging Pio Nono, in conflict with the unstoppable sweep of modernity, rendered the papacy, the longest surviving human institution on earth, moribund? Perhaps, on the contrary, the final passing of the Pontiff's temporal possessions, combined with the benefits of modern communications, had laid the ground for new power prospects as yet undreamt of. If such an idea occurred to him, Pio Nono betrayed no clear declaration of intent, save for his dying admission: "Everything has changed; my system and my policies have had their day, but I am too old to change my course; that will be the task of my successor."<sup>8</sup> After the death of Pio Nono on February 7, 1878, his corpse was eventually taken from its provisional resting place in St. Peter's to a permanent tomb at San Lorenzo. When the cortege approached the Tiber, a gang of anticlerical Romans threatened to throw the coffin into the river. Only the arrival of a contingent of militia saved Pio Nono's body from final insult.<sup>9</sup>

Thus ended the longest and one of the most turbulent pontificates in the history of the papacy.

### Childhood and Youth in the "New" Rome

Against the background of the troubled end to Pio Nono's embattled papacy, Eugenio Pacelli was born in Rome on March 2, 1876, in an apartment shared by his parents and his grandfather Marcantonio on the

third floor of Via Monte Giordano 3 (now known as Via degli Orsini). The building was a few steps from the Chiesa Nuova, with its ornate and gilded baroque interior; approaching the west end of Corso Vittorio Emanuele, one sees the portico set back a little from the street. From the door of the apartment building, it took just five minutes on foot to reach the Tiber at the Sant'Angelo bridge; fifteen minutes to arrive at St. Peter's Square. Eugenio was one of four children: his elder sister, Giuseppina, was four years old at his birth; his elder brother, Francesco, was two. A second sister, Elisabetta, was born four years later.

The Rome in which Pacelli was born and baptized had scarcely altered physically in two hundred years. More than half the area bounded by the Aurelian walls was resplendent with churches, oratories, and convents. Christian Rome stood alongside the ruins of classical antiquity and moldering villas shaded by evergreen oaks, orange trees, and splendid umbrella pines. Much of the city gave the impression of an ancient market town. Herds of goats and sheep assembled by the fountains and shared the streets and piazzas with pedestrians and carriages. All this was to change during Pacelli's childhood, as the city in the 1880s became the administrative capital of a new nation, and a modern world of technology, communications, and transport transformed its ancient languor.

The men from the north had arrived and they were building the new nation's capital in a hurry, cheaply and with scant regard for style or planning. Some of the new architectural and artistic innovations were designed to send hostile signals in the direction of the Vatican. The braggadocio "wedding cake" Emanuele monument was started in 1885 to glorify the unification of the country under its first king. A martial statue of Garibaldi seated upon his horse was raised on the highest point of the Janiculum hill, as if to dominate both the new capital and the Vatican City.

Aged five, Pacelli was enrolled in a kindergarten run by two nuns in what is now known as Via Zanardelli. By then the family had moved to a larger apartment in the Via della Vetrina, not far from where he was born. He graduated to a private Catholic elementary school in two rooms of a building in the Piazza Santa Lucia dei Ginnasi, close to the Piazza Venezia. This establishment was subject to the whims of its founder and headmaster, Signore Giuseppe Marchi, who was in the habit of making speeches from his high desk about the "hard-heartedness of

the Jews.”<sup>10</sup> One of Pacelli’s contemporary biographers comments on this without irony: “There was a good deal to be said in favor of Signore Marchi; he knew that the impressions gained by small children are never lost.”<sup>11</sup>

By the age of ten Pacelli was a pupil at the Liceo Quirino Visconti, a state school with a generally anti-Catholic and anticlerical bias. It was situated in the Collegio Romano, the former site of the renowned Jesuit university in Rome. Eugenio’s brother, Francesco, was already two years ahead of him at the school. Filippo Pacelli evidently believed that his sons would benefit from gaining firsthand acquaintance with their secularist “enemies” while receiving the best classical education available in Rome.

Eugenio, according to the siblings who survived him, was headstrong. Spindly, constitutionally delicate, he showed impressive intelligence and powers of memory from an early age. He was capable of remembering at will whole pages of material and could recall entire lessons word for word after leaving the classroom. He had a flair for the classics and modern languages. His handwriting, in youth as in adulthood, was a painstaking, elegant italic script. He played the violin and the piano, and often accompanied his sisters, who sang and played the mandolin. He liked swimming, and during vacations rode at his cousin’s farm at Onano.

Little has survived, anecdotally or in available literary remains, to give a sense of the personalities of Eugenio Pacelli’s parents, except a testament to their “great rectitude” according to the younger daughter, Elisabetta. “Anything less than delicate expressions,” she claimed, “never passed their lips.” Virginia Pacelli led her children several times a day to pray before a shrine to the Virgin in their apartment, and the whole family said the Rosary each evening before supper. There is no evidence of childhood trauma or deprivation; with only three siblings, Eugenio clearly had much parental attention.

The beatification testimonies naturally focus on evidence of Eugenio’s early piety. On his way home from school he regularly visited the picture of the Virgin, known as Madonna della Strada, close to the tomb of Ignatius Loyola in the Gesù Church. Here, sometimes twice daily, he poured out his heart to the Madonna, “telling her everything”. Even as a child, he was said to have displayed an unusual sense of modesty. His younger sister remembered that he never entered a room unless

fully dressed. He was independent and solitary; invariably appearing at meals with a book, he would solicit the permission of his parents and siblings and then lose himself in his reading. In adolescence he went eagerly to concerts and plays, keeping a notebook at the ready so as to write up critiques of the performances during the intermissions. Elisabetta recollected that he would compose spiritual bouquets (prayers decoratively recorded on a card), for the missions or the souls in purgatory. She also remembered that he imposed upon her his own self-denials (for example, forgoing treats such as fruit juices). While yet a child, he undertook to catechize the five-year-old son of the palazzo's janitor.

He was an altar boy at the Chiesa Nuova, assisting at the Mass of a priest cousin, and, like many boys destined for the priesthood, his preferred play was to dress up and act out the celebration of the Mass in his bedroom. His mother encouraged him in this, giving him a piece of damask which he could imagine a Church robe; she helped him set up an altar complete with candles set in tinfoil. One year he played out the entire Holy Week ceremonies. When a sick aunt could not go to Mass, the young Eugenio provided a substitute celebration, including a homily.

An important figure in Eugenio's life from the age of eight was an Oratorian priest, Father Giuseppe Lais. According to Elisabetta, their father asked Father Lais to care for Eugenio's spiritual welfare. Lais became a frequent visitor in the Pacelli household, where he made regular reports to the parents on Eugenio's religious progress. There are indications in this relationship of the sort of special friendship that frequently existed between a priestly role model and a pious youth who is considering a religious vocation.

Eugenio carried the influence of his parents and Father Lais with him into his secularized *liceo*. For an essay assignment on a "favorite" historical figure, Pacelli is said to have chosen Augustine of Hippo, prompting sneers from his classmates. When he attempted to expand a little on the history of Christian civilization, a theme absent in the curriculum, his teacher chided him, informing him that he was not employed to take the lesson.

Among Pacelli's scarce literary remains are a score or so of his school essays. A trifle priggish, they are nevertheless well structured and fluent. One entitled "The sign that what is imprinted in the heart appears in the face" dwells on the "evil of cowardly silence," relating the story of a

venerable old man who, unlike other courtiers, refuses to flatter a tyrannical king.<sup>12</sup>

In another essay, entitled "My Portrait," the thirteen-year-old Pacelli writes a self-appraisal that manages to be both earnest and self-mocking. "I am of average height," he begins. "My figure is slender, my face rather pale, my hair chestnut and soft, my eyes black, my nose rather aquiline. I will not say much of my chest, which, to be honest, is not robust. Finally, I have a pair of legs that are long and thin, with feet that are hardly small." From this, he tells the reader, it is easy to grasp that "physically I am a fairly mediocre youth." Focusing on his moral nature, he concedes that his "character is rather impatient and violent." He hopes that "with education" he will "attain the wherewithal to control it." He ends by acknowledging his "instinctive generosity of spirit," and consoles himself with the reflection that "whereas I do not suffer contradiction, I easily forgive those who offend me."<sup>13</sup> A close schoolfriend of Pacelli's, later to become a cardinal, said that the boy Pacelli had "a sense of control over himself that was truly rare in the young."<sup>14</sup>

Among his youthful essays, only one, written when he was fifteen, reveals that Eugenio Pacelli might have experienced an adolescent setback. Written in the third person, it describes one who is "blind with vain and erroneous ideas and doubts." Who, he asks himself, "will give him wings" so that he can "rise from this miserable earth to the highest sphere and tear apart this evil veil that surrounds him always and everywhere?" In the conclusion, he talks of this person "tearing at his hair" and wishing that he had "never been born." He ends with a prayer: "My Lord, enlighten him!"<sup>15</sup> Was this evidence of an emotional crisis prompted by an excess of study and youthful asceticism? The dark episode passed, never, as far as we know, to return.

He developed a love of music, especially Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, and Mendelssohn, and he was interested in the history of music. Even as a boy he read the classics for pleasure and started his own classical library, which he kept all his life. He read Augustine, Dante, and Manzoni, and liked Cicero best of all.<sup>16</sup> His favorite spiritual reading was the *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, the fifteenth-century monk. The *Imitation*, which was to enjoy widespread popularity among religious and even devout diocesan priests until the 1960s, was suited to the ascetic aspirations of enclosed monasticism: it encouraged an interiority that was

funneled directly to God without social mediation, seeing human ties as imperfections and distractions. It nevertheless counseled cheerfulness, humility, and charity toward all—with special regard for those we like least. In time Pacelli knew the entire book by heart. Among other favorite religious authors was Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, the seventeenth-century French bishop whose lofty and compelling eloquence Pacelli strived to emulate in years to come. Bossuet sat on his bedside table all the years of his life.

After Pacelli's death, his personal assistant of forty years, Father Robert Leiber, S.J., wrote that the Pope's spirituality remained essentially youthful. "In his own religious life he remained the pious boy of those days. . . . [He] had a genuine respect for any unpretentious, humble piety. He preserved a child-like love for the Mother of God from his youth."<sup>17</sup>

In the summer of 1894, having completed his education at the *liceo* at the age of eighteen with a diploma or *licenza* "*ad honorem*," Pacelli went into retreat for ten days at the church of St. Agnes in Via Nomentana. For the first time (but not the last) he was guided through the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola, a manual of spiritual meditation. The Ignatian exercises see life as a battle between Satan and Christ. Retreatants are called to make clear choices about their future: to follow the standard of Christ or the standard of the Prince of Darkness. Returning home, Pacelli informed his parents that he wanted to become a priest. According to Elisabetta, "The decision did not come as a surprise. As far as we were concerned, he had been born a priest."

### Seminarian

The Almo Collegio Capranica, known simply as the Capranica, is a forbidding building situated in a quiet square in the heart of old Rome close to the Pantheon and no more than twenty minutes' walk from where the Pacellis lived. The Capranica, founded in 1457, was and still is famous as a nursery for Vatican highflyers. Eugenio Pacelli was installed there in November of 1894 and registered to take a philosophy course at Rome's nearby Jesuit university, the Gregorian.

Pacelli commenced his studies for the priesthood during the height of the papacy of Leo XIII, Pio Nono's successor, elected in 1878. Leo XIII was a conservative (he had collaborated in the writing of Pio Nono's *Syl-*

*labus of Errors*) and he was already sixty-eight years old when he was elected, but he nevertheless made strenuous efforts to come to terms with the modern world. The early years of his reign had been marked by a series of remarkable academic initiatives: the founding in Rome of a new institute for philosophy and theology, of scriptural study centers, and of a center for astronomy. The Vatican archives were opened to Catholic and non-Catholic scholars alike. Under Leo XIII, historical perspectives almost entirely neglected by Catholic scholarship in the past were actively encouraged.

As a nuncio Leo had traveled throughout Europe and witnessed the working and living conditions in the expanding industrial centers. In the 1880s Catholic labor groups, looking for guidance from the Church, descended on Rome in ever greater numbers. In 1891 Leo published the encyclical *Rerum novarum* (*Of New Things*), the papacy's response, half a century on, to *The Communist Manifesto* and Marx's *Das Kapital*. While deploring the oppression and virtual slavery of the teeming poor by the instruments of "usury" in the hands of a "small number of very rich men," and while advocating just wages and the right to organize unions (preferably Catholic) and in certain circumstances to strike, the encyclical rejected socialism and was lukewarm on democracy. Class and inequality, Leo proclaimed, are unalterable features of the human condition, as are the rights of property ownership and especially those rights that foster and protect family life. Socialism he condemned as illusory and synonymous with class hatred and atheism. The authority of society, he taught, comes not from man but from God.

In 1880 he had written to the archbishop of Cologne that "the pest of socialism . . . which so deeply perverts the sense of our populations, derives all its power from the darkness it causes in the intellect by hiding the light of eternal truths and corrupting the rule of life laid down by Christian morality."<sup>18</sup> Leo believed that the answer to socialism, this great evil of the modern world, was a Christian intellectual renaissance based on faith and reason. That renaissance, he declared, was to be rooted in the thought of the medieval philosopher and theologian St. Thomas Aquinas.

Thomism, or neo-Thomism as it came to be called following Leo's 1879 encyclical on the revival of Aquinas studies,<sup>19</sup> is an all-encompassing intellectual synthesis, bringing together the truths of Revelation and the realms of the supernatural, the physical universe,



nature, society, family, and the individual. After a period of more than a century in which secular schools of philosophy throughout Europe and the United States had become ever more subjective or materialist, Leo's decision to rediscover the secure and abiding absolutes of Thomistic philosophy—rising, as the Pontiff thought, above the fogs of modern skepticism like a shining medieval cathedral—seemed inspired. Yet, much as Leo had energized Catholic academia after generations of intellectual aridity, the neo-Thomist revival, at the level of the average candidate for the priesthood, signaled an ominous swing toward conformity and a narrowing of the clerical mind. Neo-Thomism, at least as it came to be taught in seminaries in the 1890s, rejected much that was good and true in modern ideas. In 1892, two years before Pacelli arrived at the Gregorian University, Leo had decreed that St. Thomas's system was to be regarded as “definitive” in all seminaries and Catholic universities. And where Thomas had neglected to expound on a topic, teachers were urged to reach conclusions that were reconcilable with his thinking. Under the next papacy, of Pius X, neo-Thomism would acquire an orthodoxy tantamount to dogma.

### Formed in Isolation

As Pacelli began his studies in the confident intellectual climate in ecclesiastical Rome, the arrangements for his priestly education took a strange turn in the summer of 1895. At the end of his first academic year, he dropped out of both the Capranica and the Gregorian University. According to Elisabetta, the food at the Capranica was to blame; his “fastidious” stomach would plague him for the rest of his life, suggesting a nervous, high-strung constitution. The whole family, she told the canonization tribunal, would troop along to the college every Sunday bearing special provisions to sustain him.<sup>20</sup> She goes on to state briefly that their father eventually managed to get Eugenio permission to live at home while continuing his academic studies. The effect of the new arrangement was that Pacelli returned to motherly protection, escaping the peer-group rough-and-tumble, the rigorous disciplines of seminary training as well as the fellowship of community life. An inability to cope with the hardship of the seminary would have spelled an abrupt end to

the clerical ambitions of most candidates for the priesthood. The Pacellis, however, had powerful friends at court.

With the exception of a friendship with a younger cousin, as will be seen, his mother remained at the center of his emotional life. The mutual devotion between mother and son is everywhere apparent in the beatification testimonies. When he became Pope, he was to decorate his pectoral cross with her simple jewels.

In the autumn of 1895 he was registered for the new academic year to study theology and Scripture at the St. Apollinaris Institute, not far from his home, and simultaneously for languages at the secular university, the Sapienza, also close by. His association with these institutions, however, was merely academic. At home, Elisabetta said, he wore his soutane and Roman collar throughout the day and continued to “benefit from the influence of Father Lais,” the figure who had hovered over his childhood spiritual progress. In the summer of 1896, at the age of twenty, he traveled to Paris with Lais to attend a “Congress of Astronomy.”

There are no telling anecdotes to describe the course of his priestly education through the next four years. All that is known for certain is that he passed the necessary exams that qualified him to proceed to Holy Orders. On April 2, 1899, at the age of just twenty-three, he was ordained alone in the private chapel of an auxiliary bishop of Rome, rather than with the rest of the candidates of the Rome diocese in St. John Lateran. Once again he had eschewed his contemporaries. The following day he said his first Mass at the altar of the Virgin in the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, assisted by Father Lais.

Pacelli had completed his education in “Sacred Theology” with a doctoral degree (by today’s standards, the degree was more accurately a licentiate) awarded on the basis of a short dissertation, now lost to posterity, and an oral examination in Latin. In the autumn he registered again at the St. Apollinaris Institute to study canon law. This marked the beginning of serious postgraduate research, during which he probably came under the influence of the Jesuit canonist Franz Xavier Wernz, an expert on questions of ecclesiastical authority in canon law.

But the influence of Rome’s Jesuits, whom Pacelli regarded as his special mentors while he was a seminarian and throughout his life, is notable for other reasons. In 1898, as Pacelli was completing his studies

for the priesthood, *Civiltà Cattolica*, the Rome-based Jesuit journal, was arguing the guilt of Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish army officer accused of treason in France. The journal continued to proclaim his guilt the following year, even after he had been pardoned. The editor, Father Raffaele Ballerini, charged that the Jews “had bought all the newspapers and consciences in Europe” in order to acquit Dreyfus. In a chilling conclusion, he asserted that “wherever Jews had been granted citizenship” the outcome had been the “ruination” of Christians or the massacre of the “alien race.”<sup>21</sup>

How Pacelli was affected by these opinions, published in a highly influential periodical in Rome, we do not know. But Catholic ordinands at the end of the nineteenth century were bound to be influenced by the long history of Christian attitudes toward Judaism.

### Catholicism and Anti-Semitism

There were significant differences between nineteenth-century racism, inspired by perverted social Darwinism, and traditional Christian anti-Judaism that had persisted from early Christianity. Racist anti-Semitism, of the kind that was to give rise to the Nazi Final Solution, was based on the idea that Jewish genetic stock was biologically inferior in nature; hence the evil logic that their extermination would yield advantages on the path to national greatness. In the late Middle Ages, Spanish Jews were excluded from the “pure” community of Christian blood, and questions were raised during the period of European discovery of the Americas about the status of the indigenous “natural slaves” in the New World; but racist notions had never formed part of orthodox Christianity. Christians, on the whole, ignored racial and national origin in the pursuit of converts.

Christian antipathy toward the Jews was born out of the belief, dating from the early Christian Church, that the Jews had murdered Christ—indeed, that they had murdered God. The Early Fathers of the Church, the great Christian writers of the first six centuries of Christianity, showed striking evidence of anti-Judaism. “The blood of Jesus,” wrote Origen, “falls not only on the Jews of that time, but on all generations of Jews up to the end of the world.” St. John Chrysostom wrote, “The Syna-

gogue is a brothel, a hiding place for unclean beasts. . . . Never has any Jew prayed to God. . . . They are possessed by demons.”

At the First Council of Nicaea in 325, the Emperor Constantine ordained that Easter should not compete with the Jewish Passover: “It is unbecoming,” he declared, “that on the holiest of festivals we should follow the customs of the Jews; henceforth let us have nothing in common with this odious people.” An accumulation of imperial measures against Jews ensued: special taxes, a ban on new synagogues, the outlawing of intermarriage between Jews and Christians. Persecution flourished in successive imperial reigns. By the fifth century, Jews were routinely attacked during Holy Week and were excluded from public office, and synagogues were burned.

It may well be asked why the Christians did not exterminate all Jews in this early period of Christian empire. According to Christian belief, the Jews were to survive and continue their wandering Diaspora as a sign of the curse they had brought upon their own people. From time to time, popes of the first millennium called for restraint, but never for an end to persecution or to a change of heart. Pope Innocent III in the early thirteenth century epitomized the papal view of the first millennium: “Their words—‘May his blood be on us and our children’—have brought inherited guilt upon the entire nation, which follows them as a curse where they live and work, when they are born and when they die.” The Fourth Lateran Council, convened under Innocent III in 1215, laid down the requirement that Jews should wear distinguishing headgear.

Denied social equality, banned from owning land, excluded from public office and most forms of trade, the Jews had few alternatives to moneylending, which was forbidden to Christians under Church law. Licensed to lend at strictly defined interest rates, the Jews became cursed as “bloodsuckers” and “usurers” living off the debts of Christians.

The Middle Ages was an era of unprecedented persecution of the Jews, punctuated by occasional calls for restraint on the part of enlightened popes. The Crusaders made it part of their mission to torment and kill Jews on their way to and from the Holy Land; the practice of enforced conversions and baptisms, especially of Jewish boys, became widespread. One of the chief objectives of the new orders of preaching friars was to convert the Jews. A dispute flared between the Franciscans and the Dominicans over the right of princes to forcibly baptize Jewish

children as an extension of their lordship over slaves within their domains. According to the Franciscans following the theologian Duns Scotus, Jews were slaves by divine decree; Thomas Aquinas the Dominican argued that, by the natural law pertaining to parenthood, the Jews had a right to educate their children in the faith they chose for them.<sup>22</sup>

But the Middle Ages were also marked by the insidious development that was later to be known as the “blood libel.” Starting in England in the twelfth century, the belief spread rapidly that Jews tortured and sacrificed Christian children. There was an associated myth that Jews stole consecrated Hosts, the Communion bread that had become the “body and blood” of Christ in the Mass, in order to perform abominable rites. At the same time, allegations of ritual murder, human sacrifice, and Host desecration gave impetus to a belief that Judaism involved the performance of magic aimed at undermining and ultimately destroying Christendom.<sup>23</sup> Executions of Jews accused of ritual murder were accompanied by the destruction of entire Jewish communities accused of employing magic arts to cause the Black Death and other calamities great and small.

The advent of the Reformation saw a reduction in such ritual-magic trials, as Jewish blood-libel myths gave way to the conviction that child murder victims had been practiced upon by witches. But just as soon, a Pope of the sixteenth century, Paul IV, instituted the ghetto and the wearing of the yellow badge.

Through the eighteenth century, Jews gradually acquired freedom in regions farthest from the Roman center of Catholicism—Holland, England, the Protestant enclaves of North America—but the papal states persisted in repressive measures against Jews well into the nineteenth century. In the brief flush of liberalism on his election, Pio Nono, as we have seen, disestablished the ghetto, but he soon reestablished it after his return from exile in Gaeta. It took the formation of the nation-state of Italy to bring Rome's ghetto to an end, although the “ghetto area” survived as a residential district for the poorer Jews of the city until the Second World War. Meanwhile, anti-Judaism smoldered and occasionally flared in Rome long into the reign of Leo XIII, when Pacelli was a schoolboy. The most enduring form of antipathy focused on the “obstinacy” of the Jews, the theme of Pacelli's ranting schoolmaster, Signore Marchi.

There was, in fact, a curious coincidence between Pacelli's birthplace and this myth of hard-heartedness, showing the importance of custom in the persistence of prejudice. On Via Monte Giordano, the street in which Pacelli was born, it had been the custom over many centuries for new popes to perform an anti-Jewish ceremony on their way to the basilica of St. John Lateran. Here the Pontiff would halt his procession to receive a copy of the Pentateuch from the hand of Rome's rabbi, with his people in attendance. The Pope then returned the text upside down with twenty pieces of gold, proclaiming that, while he respected the Law of Moses, he disapproved of the hard hearts of the Jewish race. For it was an ancient and firmly held view of Catholic theologians that if the Jews would only listen with open hearts to the arguments for the Christian faith, they would instantly see the error of their ways and convert.

The notion of Jewish obstinacy was a crucial element in the case of Edgardo Mortara. When the parents of the kidnapped Edgardo pleaded in person with the Pope for the return of their son, Pio Nono told them that they could have their son back at once if only they converted to Catholicism—which, of course, they would do instantly if they opened their hearts to Christian Revelation. But they would not, and did not. The Mortaras, in the view of Pio Nono, had brought all their sufferings upon their own heads as a result of their obduracy.

Jewish "hard-heartedness" was parallel and at points overlapped with the notion of Jewish "blindness," exemplified in the Good Friday liturgy of the Roman Missal, when the celebrant prayed for the "perfidious Jews" and asked that "our God and Lord would withdraw the veil from their hearts: that they also may acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>24</sup> This prayer, at which the celebrant and people disdained to kneel, continued until it was abolished by Pope John XXIII.

Raised in a family of canon lawyers (Marcantonio Pacelli was probably consulted on the Mortara case), Pacelli in all likelihood knew the Mortara story and the arguments defending the Pontiff's actions, just as he was surely influenced in the classroom by Signore Marchi's remarks about Jewish obstinacy. The importance of the allegation of Jewish blind obstinacy was its potential to reinforce the conviction, widely held by Catholics otherwise innocent of anti-Judaism, let alone anti-Semitism, that the Jews were responsible for their own misfortunes—

a view that was to encourage Catholic Church officials in the 1930s to look the other way as Nazi anti-Semitism raged in Germany.

And yet more extreme forms of anti-Judaism also erupted among Catholic intellectual clerics in Rome during the reign of Leo XIII, no doubt with an influence on ordinands in the pontifical universities. Allegations of blood libel were raised once more in a series of articles published between February 1881 and December 1882 in *Civiltà Cattolica*. Written by Giuseppe Oreglia de San Stefano, S.J., the articles claimed that the killing of children for the Paschal Feast was "all too common" in the East, and that making use of the blood of a Christian child was a general law "binding on the conscience of all Hebrews." Every year the Jews "crucify a child," and in order that the blood be effective, "the child must die in torment."<sup>25</sup> In 1890 *Civiltà Cattolica* again turned its attention to the Jews in a series of articles republished in pamphlet form as *Della questione ebraica in Europa* (Rome, 1891), aimed at exposing the activity of the Jews in the formation of the modern liberal nation-state. The author charged that "by their cunning," the Jews instigated the French Revolution in order to gain civic equality, and thence they insinuated themselves into key positions in most state economies with the aim of controlling them and establishing their "virulent campaigns against Christianity." The Jews were "the race that nauseates"; they were "an idle people who neither work nor produce anything; who live on the sweat of others." The pamphlet concluded by calling for the abolition of "civic equality" and for the segregation of Jews from the rest of the population.

While there is an arguable distinction between racist anti-Semitism and religious anti-Judaism, this material, published in Rome during Pacelli's school days, exemplifies a groundswell of vicious antipathy. That views such as these were promoted by the leading Jesuit journal, enjoying papal auspices, indicates their potential outreach and semblance of authority. Such prejudices were hardly inimical to the racist theories that would culminate in the Nazis' furious assault upon European Jewry in the Second World War. It is plausible indeed that these Catholic prejudices actually bolstered aspects of Nazi anti-Semitism.