

THE PAPAL ATTEMPTS TO RECOVER THE WORLD SUPREMACY In the light of his secret politics in the first half of the 20th Century

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Four years ago while driving along a Chattanooga freeway, I heard an interesting radio interview with David I. Kertzer regarding his 500-page book, *The Pope and Mussolini. The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe* (2014). Having never done an in-depth study on the papacy's role during that important historical period, I bought the book from the internet and read it in a week. Historical specialists commented that this work is destined to change forever what we had previously come to believe on these issues. We offer here a summary review of this Kertzer's, with additional comments and testimonies from prophecy and history. We highly recommend this book because it contains an impressive amount of documentation never before gathered on this important aspect of 20th Century history.

I

Prophetic Context of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Biblical apocalyptic prophecies related to the papacy reached a climactic fulfillment in 1798, when secular powers stripped the papacy of the political hegemony it had held for more than a millennium. Christians in the first four centuries understood that they were living under the pagan Roman Empire predicted by the prophet Daniel, after which would come the antichrist. Protestants in the second millennium understood that the antichrist anticipated by those early Christians had arrived and seated himself upon the throne left vacant by the Caesars, in the midst of the Christian church (Dan 7; Rev 13; 2 Thess 2).

Long before the Protestant Reformation, since at least the 10th century, voices within Roman Catholicism itself had denounced the papal system as fulfilling the predictions of the coming antichrist. But the prophetic dates for political papal supremacy reached an end in 1798 [I deal carefully with all the prophetic dates of the Bible in my book, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary. Biblical, historical, and astronomical confirmation* (2015)]. Recent additional documentation is offered by David I. Kertzer in a new book entitled, *The Pope Who would be King* (2018). I have reviewed that book in another document from the prophetic and historical perspective. See: [<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/articles.html>].

What was predicted to happen from that time until the coming of the Lord? The papacy received a "deadly wound" in 1798 from the European secular governments that appeared after the French Revolution. After that, certain political and religious events were predicted to occur regarding the struggle of the papacy to regain its lost power and the related final crisis of the world (Rev 13). That struggle caused the first and second world wars. I was unaware of the role of the papacy in those wars and its attempt to recover lost political ground until I read three key books that I will discuss briefly below. I will then summarize and comment at length on Kertzer's book, regarding the activities of popes Pius XI and Pius XII early in the 20th century.

The struggle between clericalism and secularism comes clearly to light in these books, a struggle that began with the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, and continues today. That struggle caused the greatest genocides of the 20th Century (including the first and second world wars). Tens of

millions died as this struggle spread throughout the world. See on my web page, in Spanish, *El Vaticano y los Grandes Genocidios del S. XX* (2004)

[<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/Spanish/articulos.html>]

Where is that end-time confrontation prophesied in the Bible, which has already tarried for more than two centuries? It is found in Dan 11:40-45, represented by the struggle between the king of the North (Babylon) and the king of the South (Egypt). The prophet clearly projected that struggle to the end of time (Dan 11:40). And the book of Revelation referred to those two end-time powers as being symbolic (in Rev 11 atheism or secularism in reference to Egypt [see Exod 5:2]; in Rev 17 and 18 apostate religious powers in reference to Babylon). This is important because many today are trying to target Muslims as the fulfillment of these prophecies, simply because some radical Muslims are causing trouble, infuriated (they claim) by the current secular predominance. But, is the number of deaths caused by some fanatical Muslims (that are resisted even in Muslim countries) comparable to the appalling genocides caused by the confrontation between secularism and Christian clericalism?

The current radical Islamic reaction is a continuation of the struggle between secular and religious powers which touches not only Christian religions, but all the religions of the world, including Islam. Radical Islam is reacting against both secularism and Christian religions which require the separation of church and state. This principle was introduced by the French Revolution from a secular perspective, and the American Revolution from a Protestant context.

Works written at the end of the 20th Century speak of the secret history of the papacy, not because they are given to “conspiracy theories”, but because they are based on the secret archives that were opened toward the end of that century and the beginning of this century regarding several nations including the Vatican. Thanks to these secret archives, a history that had been concealed has appeared, showing the political intrigues of the Vatican, propelling and supporting the spectrum of fascist governments. The Roman Catholic See tried to use those regimes to break the atheistic communist expansion. It was easier for the Holy See to deal with dictators than with the presumable chaotic democracies that were appearing. The Vatican expected to once again impose its will over the governments of the world through those dictators, pushing them to execute its designs.

In the midst of this secular-papal struggle there arose a predominantly Protestant country (the USA) which would play an important role in hindering the ambitions of dangerous dictatorial fascist regimes from crushing all democratic systems of government. The popes supported those autocratic rulers up to and including Pius XII. The Protestant country is the only world superpower remaining, and its appearance was prophesied in the second half of Rev 13. The apostle John introduced this powerful government in the context of the freedom of the gospel represented by the symbol of a lamb (John 1:29; 8:36; Rev 1:5; 13:11). No wonder, then, that since John XXIII (the successor of Pius XII), the Vatican has been courting the Protestant world and the government of the United States of America. It is the indispensable springboard from which popes can once again dream of world dominion (as expressed by a Jesuit writer, Malachi Martin, in his book *The Keys of this Blood. The Struggle for World Dominion between Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev & and the Capitalist West* [1990]).

According to the prophecy, all secular and religious authorities that are today at odds with one another, will at the end unite on common goals, pressing the government represented by a lamb to speak like a dragon. This means that the government of the USA will work under the same spirit that inspired the Roman papacy in the Middle Ages, when the dragon gave the papacy its throne (Rome), and great authority (Rev 13:2ff). However, in the time of the end, the dragon will speak through the lamb that represents the American Protestant government, by restoring the political authority of the papacy that was lost at the hands of the secular powers (Rev 13:11ff).

There are some who believe that this restoration began in the first half of the 20th Century with the concordat signed between Pius XI and Mussolini. In that concordat, Mussolini gave the papacy sovereign control of Vatican City and monetary compensation for the loss of the Papal States. Notwithstanding, the true restoration of the papacy will come when the USA will impose some distinctive decrees of Rome upon all the inhabitants of the earth. This will cause the final crisis, which can already be seen to be in progress.

Popes continued to condemn democracy up to the middle of the 20th Century. Therefore they joyfully greeted the arrival of fascist governments in the early part of that century. They thought they could recover world dominion through these fascist regimes. But they failed in large part because they wanted a union with the Catholic rulers at the expense of Jews, Protestants, Orthodox churches, and all other non-Catholic religions. Since John XXIII (who opened the doors to ecumenism) and Paul VI (who ended up acknowledging the existence of secular and communist governments), the popes had to adopt a new inclusive policy which attempts to form a confederation of religions and nations. Pope Francis today has greatly advanced the success of that agenda. Starting with John Paul II, the popes began to style themselves as instructors in democracy, despite the fact that they inherited a medieval monarchical and dictatorial system of government.

Let us turn our attention to the momentous triumph obtained by Pius XI and Pius XII before and during the 2nd World War, as well as its later failure. But before dealing with that story, let us analyze some key works that have been written since 1999 on the role of the papacy in the first half of the 20th Century.

II

Basic Bibliography on the Secret History of Popes Pius XI and XII

The three books (and now a fourth), among others, that helped me the most to understand the tremendous struggle from the French Revolution until now, and which will last until the Roman papacy recovers its power by confederating with the religions and governments of this world, are the following:

1) John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (1999). Being a Catholic, he realized the real role of the pope in the war, a pope which the Roman Catholic Church canonized as a saint. His book became polemic because many who idolized Pius XII were not prepared to accept what that book said about him. That pope cooperated with the Jewish genocide from the Italian perspective, but in the end granted asylum to a number of Jews. The polemic therefore is between the critics like Cornwell who condemn him as "coward and traitor," and those who defend him as having been "the best friend of the Jews" (this is the analysis of the work of Cornwell by Kertzer, on p. 403 of his book. Kertzer believes that even his own book (p. 405), in spite of the extensive documentation and thousands of archives which he opens for inspection, will be resisted by some for the same reason.

2) Mark Aarons – John Loftus, *Unholy Trinity. The Vatican, the Nazi, and the Swiss Banks* (New York, 1998), written by two Jewish authors who also wrote *The Secret War Against the Jews*. The documentation provided by them on the secret exchange between Pius XII and Hitler during the war is also impressive. Their principal effort was aimed at discovering the means employed by the Vatican to permit the escape of Nazis from the hands of the international tribunals who wanted to judge them for their genocidal crimes. The pathways that led Nazis to their safe arrival and protection at the Vatican were labeled "Ratlines." There those catholic criminals would receive fake passports to escape to Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, and other countries. Aarons and Loftus based their history on the archives opened by countries which were involved in the war such as the USA and England.

The interest of the Jews in discovering the flight and final whereabouts of the worst Nazi perpetrators of the Jewish genocide is understandable. After the war, the Jews formed an organization to seek, arrest, and extradite for trial in Israel those criminals who were able to escape the international judgment which took place in Germany. That organization is called Simon Wiesenthal, and has its offices in Israel. The Jewish authors who wrote the book regretted that Carlos Menem had opposed their petition to open the documentation pertaining to the time of Peron in Argentina. Menem, himself a Peronist, feared what today is being confirmed, the role played by Peron in the protection of Nazis who fled to Argentina after the war. Those archives were opened under Cristina Kirchner and, no doubt, more information will appear confirming what the world already knows. The Nazis tried to save the gold that they had sent to Argentina. Through a fraudulent maneuver involving the Swiss banks, they were able to save that capital.

3) John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania. The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church* (USA, 1999). This work analyses from an American Protestant capitalist perspective, the encyclicals of the popes during the two centuries which we call the “time of the end”, in reference to the prophecies of Daniel. His work illustrates the contrast between the world economic perspective of American capitalism, and that of the Roman papacy, rooted in the Middle Ages. American capitalism is interpreted as a symbol of liberty.

4) David E. Kertzer, *The Pope and Mussolini. The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe* (2014). This is the work that was long anticipated to reveal the role of pope Pius XI and the Vatican in the appearance and support of the fascism regimes that were born in Italy under the auspices and stimulus of the papacy, which in turn were expanded to all of Europe under different terms; Nazism in Germany, Falangism in Spain, and clerical-fascism in other countries (for dealing with Catholic priests who ended up ruling some nations under a fascist regime). In Latin America, even after the war, the Roman Catholic Church resorted to military governments under a dictator, always under the specter of an atheist communist threat. The policies of those governments propelled and supported by the Church in the second half of the 20th Century, was a later but impressive copy of those European fascist governments which preceded them in the first half of the century.

Kertzer’s book clearly shows how pope Pius XI and his collaborators in the Vatican, along with the Catholic press in Italy, promoted conspiratorial theories against the Jews, pretending that they wanted to rule the world through atheistic communism. They also placed Protestants in the same bag in order to stop their work. The popes had continued condemning democracy, and saw in the dictatorial governments an adequate replacement of the monarchy with which the popes could work more easily. They only had to influence one man, not necessarily a representative body. The conviction of Pius XI was that the people were to be governed, otherwise they would fall under secular anarchy.

Over a seven year period Kertzer compiled digitalized copies of 25,000 pages of documents from the archives of the Vatican, the police of Italy, the fascist regime of Mussolini, different newspapers of Italy and of several other countries and archives of embassies located in Italy, especially those of the USA, England and France. He also had access to the personal diaries recorded by several relevant persons (Mussolini, his daughter and his son-in-law, two of his lovers, and others). So, when he tried to obtain sensitive information which the Vatican did not want to share from its archives, he was able to locate those documents in the secret messages that the Vatican sent to Mussolini, and contemporary fascist current authorities.

Kertzer utilized two academic Sabbatical years for this research and the help of students and doctors in history. He also gives thanks to others who assisted him in the compilation and selection of documents which enabled him to fix dates into a coherent history. This is what makes his work really prodigious. We can see, reading that book, the purposes and intentions of the pope, his secretary and other collaborators, Mussolini and the ambassadors, as if he were observing those persons as an insider.

That means of depicting the preponderant personages in the history of fascism and of the Roman Catholic Church reminded me of the way E. G. White depicted the heavenly archives (figuratively speaking in my comparison), which an angel shared with her. Uriah Smith noted with amazement that at a certain moment in his reading of the book *The Desire of Ages*, the history of Christ and of the apostles was being seen for the first time from an insider's perspective. But in the case of Kertzer, the documentation is strictly of earthly origin, meticulous, faithfully portrayed, integrated into a well organized puzzle, and in an extraordinary manner. This makes me think of the millennial judgment, which will review the history of this world, and where no sensitive archives will be concealed. The final sentence will be exact, without possible appeal, because those files are today in angelic hands concerning us. We may rejoice however, knowing that our personal file, so often defiled by a life of sin, can be definitively erased in the investigative judgment, and not reviewed again at the judgment of the wicked.

III

Reactions of Newspapers and Scholars to the Work of Kertzer

Some 20 endorsements of Kertzer's work by specialists of that historical period appear in his book. Here are some examples:

"Excellent..." It "reveals a window on this sordid history—a window that for a long time was shuttered, but will not be obscured anymore" (*The New Republic*).

"Stunning... remarkable... Kertzer authoritatively banishes decades of denial and uncertainty about the Vatican's relationship with Italy's fascist state" (*The Christian Science Monitor*).

"A capstone on... Kertzer's already crucial work... carefully and eloquently advances the painful but necessary truth of Vatican failure to meet its greatest moral test. This is history for the sake of justice" (James Carroll, *National Book Award-winning author of Constantine's Sword*).

"Kertzer is unflinching and relentless in his exposure of the Vatican's shocking actions... "There are| deeply troubling revelations around Vatican collaboration with evil" (*Kirkus Reviews*).

"His thorough research goes a long way in overturning conventional notions about Catholic Church resistance to Mussolini" (*USA Today*).

"Makes a compelling case that the Catholic Church should pay greater penance for its support of Mussolini and the rise of fascism—and what they got in return... Kertzer has advanced John Paul's call for 'purification of the historical memory' in a manner that the pope could probably have not imagined" (*The Daily Beast*).

"Kertzer... gives us a ghastly history of the poisonous alliance between a weakened Vatican and an ambitious Mussolini. The Pope's blessing gave Il Duce the needed credibility to take Italy and the Italian people where he wanted them to go. In exchange for that approval, the Fascist provided the Church with its only perceived bulwark against the forces of Communism and the modern age... Kertzer has written a harrowing portrait of a ghastly union whose only by-product was the nightmare of World War II" (John Guare, award-winning playwright and author of *Six Degrees of Separation*).

"Pius and Mussolini undermined and ultimately squandered the happiness of the millions who trusted them. Kertzer has written the definitive book on this tragic history" (Richard S. Levy, profesor de historia, Universidad de Illinois en Chicago, y co-editor de *Antisemitismo: Una Historia*).

“A study of selfishness and opportunism, mapping a parallel rise and fall as Fascism and Catholicism banded together” (San Francisco Book Review).

The author himself makes a summary statement in the prologue of his book, regarding the historical agreement between pope Pius XI and Mussolini, known as Lateran Accords. He characterizes them as “ending decades of hostility between Italy and the Roman Catholic Church. With that agreement, the separation of church and state that had marked modern Italy, from its founding sixty-eight years earlier came to an end. A new era began, the Church a willing partner of Mussolini’s Fascist government.” (p. XXX).

Both leaders came to prominence in the same year, 1922. “Achille Ratti... took the name Pius XI. Later that same year, amid widespread violence, Benito Mussolini, the thirty-nine-year-old Fascist leader, became Italy’s prime minister. Since then the two men had come to depend on each other. The dictator relied on the pope to ensure Catholic support for his regime, providing much-needed moral legitimacy. The pope counted on Mussolini to help him restore the Church’s power in Italy” (*ibid*)

Let’s begin the history of that political-religious, clerical-fascist romance, first highlighting the psychological profile of those two leaders who so influenced the political life of the world in the 20th Century.

IV

The Personality of Pope Pius XI

Achille Ratti was born north of Milan in 1857, when that area belonged to the Austro-Hungarian empire. In 1875 he entered the seminary of that city to prepare to be a priest, although he ended up discovering that he was more comfortable with books than with people. However, he enjoyed mountaineering, which he did from 1885 to 1911.

In 1907 he was appointed prefect of the Ambrosian Library, the second largest in Italy. Four years later he took over the country’s first library, the Vatican library. But in 1918, Pope Benedict XV sent him to Warsaw as his personal emissary to prepare a report on the Polish situation. That was going to open the doors for him so he could one day be a pope. The Great War (the first world war) had left Poland in a very unstable condition. Having been under Russian rule for centuries, and before that under German or Austrian control, Poland fought for its independence, and the borders of the new country were not well defined. So Ratti’s mission was a delicate one.

In Poland Ratti was able to grasp the clergy’s hatred of the Jews. In Italy the Jews were very few (1 in 1000). In Poland a tenth of the population was Jewish. Ratti knew that this anti-Jewish hatred was also prominent in the Vatican, and would share that feeling himself once he was elected pope with the title of Pius XI. For the rest of his life Ratti would regard Jews and communism as the worst threats he faced in the West. He went so far as to say—while in Poland—that “one of the most evil and strongest influences that is felt here, perhaps the strongest and the most evil, is that of the Jews” (13,14). As we will see later, it was he who sought to arouse Mussolini and Hitler to become suspicious of them and take action against them, based on conspiratorial theories and their eagerness to get rid of them altogether. These views would also maintain his aversion to the democratic systems that he had inherited from his papal predecessors dating back to the French Revolution.

Once appointed pope, Ratti remarkably changed his stance. Aware of his new sacred and dignified office he liked to wear the tiara (triple crown) that the popes used during most of the Middle Ages. This triple-

crowned tiara indicated, according to many, lordship over the three kingdoms: King of Heaven, King of Earth and King of Hell. One of the Vatican priests joked that Pius XI “ wears his tiara even when he goes to bed” (39). When he later proclaimed the holy year and hundreds of thousands of people from all over came to Rome, he liked to wear it before the people and bless them. After Paul VI, Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have preferred to leave that tiara in the closet to this day. With the triumph of democracy and human rights, the first pope to end up recognizing secular governments [Paul VI], preferred, in the second part of his term of office, not to wear that triple crown any more.



As soon as he assumed his pontificate Pius XI distanced himself from his family. They had to ask for permission to see him and he only agreed to receive them very occasionally. The reason he gave his relatives was that he was now the father of many people. His brother and sister were required to bow before him when he gave them an audience, and to address him, saying, “Holy Father” or “Your Holiness” (40).

Pius XI sat on a golden throne in a large hall with only six chairs in front of him, reserved for certain ambassadors who were permitted at times to interview him. But he did not allow any prelate or cardinal or priest to sit in his presence. Everyone should approach reverently and stand by or in front of him. They could speak to him only when he allowed them to speak. He never ate with anyone. They had to serve him his food and then leave. He demanded that all who approached him bow and kneel three times before speaking to him, and another three times as they left. Even the Swiss guards had to prostrate in front of him as he approached, with one hand on their beret, and the other holding the point of their pike (the medieval axe they carried). The British ambassador to the Vatican described him as a pedantic professor. “He seemed to view all laymen as children who needed to be taught rather than as people from whom he might learn something” (40,41).

On one occasion, while strolling through the Vatican gardens, one of the older gardeners fainted. One of the pope’s companions rushed to help him, as did other gardeners. The other guard told the pope that this gardener had had a heart attack. But Pius XI didn’t even flinch and kept walking. His pontificate was way above those common activities and people’s gossip. His authoritarian character, like Mussolini’s, was to place him at the pinnacle of power, having no friends, because that would have implied someone else being on his level.

“Of an irascible and explosive character, the closest among the cardinals and secretaries trembled whenever they were to appear before him. I think it was perhaps, in part because of that, that they didn’t worry about finding him any miracles to beatify or canonize him. Aware of taking God’s place on earth, of being his Vicar, and once he reached the top of power, he did not need to receive suggestions. He knew

what to do, and rarely consulted others. He was in such a high position to give orders that others had no right to disobey. He used to say that his orders should be obeyed “not immediately, but sooner than immediately” (39).

One of the cardinals closest to the Pontifical Throne went so far as to say that in order to get something from him, it was appropriate to suggest the contrary, certain he would do the opposite to prove he could not be influenced. Even when the king of Spain, Alfonso XIII, visited him in the Vatican, he made the mistake of recommending the appointment of a cardinal from South America, since he had only one for the whole continent. That led Pius XI to cancel his plan to elevate his butler from Colombia to the cardinal office. He would not yield before the king (66). And in Mussolini, the deified fascist leader, the pope would find the man made to his measure. Together they were to share the power to dominate the people and protect themselves. They would keep the population in order, amid frictions and fury between them, but locked in a consortium impossible to abandon without weakening each other.

V

The Personality of Benito Mussolini

Mussolini was born in 1883, at the epicenter of Italian anarchy and socialist movements. His father, an ardent promoter of socialism, named him Benito, inspired by Benito Juarez who became president in Mexico (whip of European colonial powers, and enemy of the Church). His mother was a devout Catholic. The marriage was turbulent with a father who drank heavily. Benito attended a Salesian school where he was expelled for stabbing a boy in his hand. He was later fired from his first job as a substitute teacher, when his relationship with a married woman came to light.

Unable to get a job he went to Switzerland, where he joined with socialists and anarchists. In 1904, Mussolini had a debate in Lausanne with a local Protestant pastor about the existence of God. After quoting Galileo and Robespierre, he jumped to a table, pulled out his pocket watch, and bellowed saying that if there was a God, he would kill him within five minutes. His first publication in the same year was titled: “God Does Not Exist.” He maintained his attacks on the Church, cataloguing priests as “black microbes, as disastrous for humanity as tuberculosis microbes” (20). His passion for politics and controversy led him in 1910 to write a novel entitled: *The Cardinal's Mistress*. At the time he was editor of the local socialist weekly and secretary of the socialist party of the city.

He always knew how to be the center of attention. In 1912 he was appointed editor of the newspaper of the national socialist party, *Avanti*, based in Milan. As an editor, he insisted that only revolutionary action, not parliamentary policies, would succeed in imposing a new order. When in 1913 the police killed seven farmers who had risen in a protest, Benito claimed revenge: “Death to those who massacre the people! Long live the Revolution!” In his diary he wrote: “Ours is a war cry. Those who massacre know that they can be, in their turn, massacred” (21).

When the war broke out in Europe in 1914, the Socialists denounced it as the work of the warlike imperialists and capitalists happy to use the proletariat as fodder for their cannons. The workers of the world have to unite, not to kill each other in the name of God or the country. But to the surprise of his comrades, when World War I began two months later, Mussolini published an article calling into question the wisdom of Italian neutrality. Pacifism was not in his character. The following month he was expelled from the newspaper and the Socialist party. Having once been a socialist leader he became the worst enemy of the Socialists.

In 1910 Benito had a daughter (Edda) with his lover Rachele Guidi. Rachele would later become his wife, in a civil marriage, to prevent one of his lovers who adored him, from claiming that she was his real

wife. He had a number of lovers, several of them Jewish, with whom he even had children. The most important was Margarita Sarfatti, a Jew from a wealthy family, with whom he began relations in 1913. For years that capable woman was his mentor, until she perceived that the idolatry Mussolini cultivated about his person was going to lead him to ruin. Soon after, she escaped to South America and did not return until the end of World War II.

He found another lover at the age of 53, who accompanied him for the rest of his days. It was Clara Petacci, a 24-year-old girl, the daughter of a physician at the Vatican, whose marriage had lasted only two years, and who was 29 years younger than *Il Duce*. The personal diaries that Clara left are today a source of great value for information about Mussolini's intimate life. In the apotheosis of his power, feeling alone in the height of his glory, he once began to tell her, bitterly, that he did not love her, and that he had never loved anyone, that he was a being incapable of loving another person. She had *Il Duce*'s head on her chest as he told this to her, and she tried to comfort him by having sex with him. There were times when she was jealous because he stopped seeing her to go with his other lovers. And Mussolini would take the time to calm her down and visit her regularly every day. When Pius XI died years later, he went to celebrate with her and twice had sex on that same occasion. Mussolini had reached a point amid his frictions with Pius XI where he decided to make the pope feel that he himself was the strong man, and that he could turn the Catholic masses (who worshipped him) against the pope.

Mussolini always sought to maintain his slender silhouette. When his wife began to get fat and the rest of his family too, as well as some of his lovers, he became a vegetarian with few exceptions. He didn't drink wine or coffee, but only fruit juice (60,141). He wanted to project the image of an emperor, since his dream was to restore the imperial power of the ancient Caesars of Rome. He liked to play the violin and drive at high speeds. His lover Margarita not only arranged special encounters with herself, but also with other women. But let's go back to the process that led to his meteoric to power.

After being expelled from the *Avanti* newspaper, Mussolini began his own newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, which would be his newspaper for about three decades. At that time he organized the *Fasci d'azione rivoluzionaria*, revolutionary cells or, as he described them, "a free association of subversives," which supported Italy's entry into the war and called for an end to the secular monarchy that had been established in Italy in 1870. In March 1919 he held the first meeting of his fascist movement and pointed his finger against the Church. He called for seizing the properties of religious congregations and ending state subsidies given to the Church. In November, in an article of his *Popolo d'Italia*, he urged the pope to leave Rome, and a month later expressed hatred of all forms of Christianity.

The following year Mussolini realized that he could take advantage of the country's chaos by proclaiming himself the champion of law, order and national pride (26). As the Socialists had organized a strike, he put together fascist gangs that ransacked offices and other leftist centers. He continued doing this work and spreading it throughout Italy, causing hundreds of deaths in the attacks they carried out. He camouflaged himself by having others act in that alleged street justice. Despite these attacks, the Socialists won the election. But the conservatives collaborated with the fascists and together they obtained the majority.

In his first speech in parliament Mussolini surprised the people by saying that hundreds of millions of Catholics around the world looked at Rome as their spiritual home. That he said was a source of strength that Italy could not ignore. Fascism would help restore Christian society, building a Catholic state according to the Catholic nation. That was the carrot he put in front of the Vatican to get his support. But the Catholic Church had two parties, the Italian People's Party (PPI) founded in 1919 with the approval of Benedict XV, and the Catholic Action, created in 1905 by Pius X to Christianize Italy. The latter had the full support of Pius XI, to such an extent that he was known as the pope of Catholic Action.

Mussolini therefore felt that he should get rid of those two parties. By then, Pius XI had been crowned and became angry when he learned that fascist thugs were attacking the headquarters of Catholic Action, as well as priests who were also involved in the PPI. But Mussolini maintained a calculated public distance from these fascist raids, proclaiming himself the only one who could keep anti-clerical violence at bay.

For their part, the Socialists decided to act. They proclaimed a strike that would not be called off until the violence stopped. But the fascists became more violent against them, with Mussolini proclaiming that only he could prevent Italy from following Russia's path. Police sided with Mussolini in an attempt to stop the chaos generated by a country that appeared to go bankrupt because of the strikes. And Pius XI himself, who never sympathized too much with the PPI because they acted independently, ended up believing that it was better to abandon that liberal Catholic party, and to support Mussolini and his fascist party. Neither of them sympathized with the parliamentary system of government, so Pius XI ended up preferring a strong man like Mussolini, rather than the wrangling of multi-party politics. In addition, there was a risk that the fascist party would take over against the Catholic Church. There was reason therefore to begin to broker power with the providential man, the only one who could bring order to a country that was about to fall apart.

VI

Negotiating Honors and Power

In November 1922, the time came to organize a march to Rome with the aim of seizing the ministries of the central government. Mussolini was to be hidden in a safe place until the government fell, and then make his dramatic entrance into the city. On the night of October 27 he attended the Milan Opera with his wife to mislead government authorities. Meanwhile, their squadrons were attacking several key posts in different cities of the country, and some 26,000 arrived at the gates of Rome. Parliament took an emergency measure requiring military intervention, but the king did not sign it. The president of the parliament resigned, and the king had no choice but to ask Mussolini to organize a new government, as many sympathized with the new leader who wanted to bring order.

To achieve Catholic support, Mussolini began to exercise religiosity. In one of his first acts as prime minister, he sent his cabinet to prostrate themselves at a mass at the altar of the Unknown Soldier. He also began to develop a cult of his own personality. Over the years he became a kind of god or demigod to his followers. And as the Catholic Church supported it, the way to address him by thousands of Catholics in schools or wherever it may be did not practically differ from prayer to God. He was intermingled in prayers as their Savior, Savior of Italy, the man of Providence confirmed by the constant sayings of the pope which Catholic newspapers echoed. And the Jesuits also became fanatics for him.

What united Pius XI with Mussolini? Neither of them sympathized with parliamentary democracy. They didn't believe in freedom of expression or of association either. They both saw communism as a serious threat. Both believed that Italy was stuck in a crisis and that there was no salvation within the current political system (48). So they had a lot of common interests to protect.

The Vatican would not implicate Mussolini even by mention of his name when his fascist attacks on Catholic organizations would be denounced. These would be considered isolated episodes. The newspaper *La Civiltà Cattolica*, which before being published was reviewed by the Vatican and expressed the voice of the pope, would legitimize fascism in the eyes of every good Catholic, inside and outside Italy. Clearly, Pius XI intended to impose the kingdom of Christ on earth as in the finest times of the Middle Ages.

For his part, Mussolini had 300,000 armed young people who responded to his orders to punish those who defamed and tried to smear the name of Fascism. While the army was loyal to the king, these young militias were loyal to Mussolini. Upon learning of the pope's decision to support him, he rushed to make concessions to the Catholic Church. He would return the old privileges to the Church, he ordered crucifixes to be put on the walls of every school, in every courthouse, and in hospitals. Insulting a priest or speaking ill of the Catholic Church became a crime. He reinstated military chaplains, paid pensions to priests and bishops, and made the teaching of the Catholic religion obligatory in primary schools. He subsidized Catholic schools and gave them millions of lire to restore their churches damaged by World War I.

To show his Catholic credentials (still hating the clergy as he had always hated it), he set out to be the hero of the Catholic Church. He baptized his children, and announced that he would also be married by Church. But it would be quite a number of years before he married, until the Vatican pressured him to do so. Then he went to a priest and surprised his wife Rachele, who did not live with him in Rome. He knew how anti-clerical she was, the hatred she had for the pomp and wealth of the Vatican, and how reluctantly she had attended the baptism of her children. So when she answered now that she was not going out to receive the priest, he brought her to the hall by force, where the priest consummated her religious marriage.

Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, Vatican secretary of state, organized a secret interview with Mussolini in January 1923 to establish the modus operandum of the Church-State relationship. The meeting lasted one hour. Gasparri said later Mussolini was a man of the first order. But Mussolini said nothing except in the car to the head of his cabinet. He whispered, "We have to be extremely careful because these eminent men are very skilled." They agreed to put a man who was trusted by both the pope and Mussolini, who would be an intermediary in all the messages that they would exchange. This man was the priest Tacchi Venturi, who for years would go unnoticed by the majority, running back and forth to mediate between political and religious power.

On what basis would this secret pact work? By an undeclared but clearly recognized system of pressure and award. Both Pius XI and Mussolini would work on these premises, intertwining their political-religious empire in such a way that no matter how much scuffle and threats might occur at any given time, they would never give up that union that would hold them absolutely in power. To Mussolini's first favors to the Church, in compensation for the "moral" support he received from her, he added a recognition of the Catholic University of Milan, opposed divorce and saved the Bank of Rome (closely linked to that of the Vatican) when it was on the verge of bankruptcy. He added holy days to the civil calendar. He required the Vatican to review the religious textbooks for schools. He decreed a new law that allowed the police to dismiss any editor whose newspaper belittled the pope or the Catholic Church. He continued to fill the church's coffers with state funds.

In 1923, the Vatican organized a "Catholic Collaboration Program with the Government of Mussolini." In the document he stated that no government of the land did so much in a single year in favor of the Catholic Religion. By then Adolf Hitler was emerging in Germany, and tried to follow Mussolini's example by adopting the Roman fascist salute. Hitler organized a movement similar to that of the march towards Rome, to seize the Bavarian Ministry of War, but he failed and was imprisoned. There, in prison, he would write his *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle").

In 1924 Mussolini sought to please the pope, denying the permission that the Methodists needed to build a large church in Rome. And three weeks before the new elections, the government's salary to bishops and priests increased considerably, much to their great delight. The newspaper *La Civiltà Cattolica* called for Mussolini to support these elections, arguing that he had been working tirelessly to improve relations

between government and the Church. At each polling place the fascist gang grabbed the first one who voted and beat him telling him that he had voted for the Socialist, forcing him to vote for fascism.

This reminded me of John Paul II's secret pact with Ronald Reagan to support the "Solidarity" movement in Poland and, in essence, overthrow communism. The papal emissaries entered the White House from behind, as revealed later by *Time* magazine, as Venturi did with Mussolini. They said to Reagan, "Have confidence in the Holy Father. We have 2000 years of experience." It has not yet been revealed how Pope Francis operated recently, to secretly alter the diplomatic relationship between Barack Obama and Raul Castro. It is obvious that, although diplomacy has varied somewhat, papal politics have not changed. And how many other renowned politicians and religious leaders are doing the same. The papal aspirations to dominate the world remain the same, and the methods resemble those they have used in all ages.

But all, at last, will be unmasked: "The sins of Babylon will be laid open [Rev 18:1-5]... The stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked..." (*GC* 606). The prophet Daniel already stated that he (antichrist) would be "a master of intrigue." "He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior" (Dan 8:23,25). "He will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price" (Dan 11:39). But He who said, "I receive no honor from men," criticized the leaders of the Jewish nation by saying, "How can you believe since you receive honor from one another but do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (John 5:41,44).

VII

The Pope's Saving Support for Mussolini

Within eight years of being expelled from the socialist party, Mussolini became Italy's strongest man. All those who opposed him in Parliament began to be assaulted, beaten by thugs, and killed. He couldn't tolerate any dissident voice. But when Giacomo Matteotti, one of the most recognized figures of socialism disappeared, having been openly opposed to Mussolini in Parliament, the image of the fascist leader collapsed because everyone saw that it was he who made him disappear. The maneuver took place in daylight and in the middle of the city. Many saw it. As the Socialist leader struggled and screamed for help, the driver honked so the people could not understand what he was saying. They beat him to death and buried him in a forest without anyone knowing where.

Mussolini was lost. He realized it and communicated it to his lover Margaret, who could not encourage him. She even cried because all her dreams seemed lost. He was supposed to appear before parliament and he knew he wouldn't be able to convince anyone. The pope and the whole Vatican trembled, because although they knew what Mussolini had done, they also understood how much worse their collapse was going to be. Socialism would gain strength and the Church would be emasculated of its power to confront communism. Fascist leaders came from all over Italy to try to cheer him up, and were surprised to see him with tearful eyes.

In the Parliament Mussolini said he was as eager as all of them to get to the bottom of what had happened and arrest the alleged killers. But few were those who were willing to believe him. At that moment Father Tachi Venturi (the mediator between him and the pope) appeared expressing in a written letter, how impressed he was with his speech. He praised him by speaking effusively for all the good deeds he had done, and asked God to affirm his future success.

The pope also saw that Matteotti's death was a real disaster, because everyone knew Mussolini was involved in it, and decided to do everything he could do to save him. Through Catholic newspapers, beginning with *L'Observatore Romano*, and following with *La Civiltà Cattolica*, he admonished

Catholics to respect and obey civic authorities. He also warned that any attempt to undermine the authority of the ordinary regime would lead to anarchy. Every Catholic understood that no effort to bring down fascism would be welcomed by the Vatican.

Pius XI instructed Tacchi Venturi, the secret mediator, to let Mussolini (still terribly depressed) know that he was still supported. He prepared an article in which he praised Mussolini for all he had done for the church, and implied there that Mussolini had nothing to do with Matteotti's murder. He also warned that no violent action against the government would ever be justified. Even the use of legitimate means to bring down the government, such as new elections, should be avoided because it would bring serious disgrace. Nor could the Catholic PPI justify the fact of joining the Socialists.

The pope was involved in an embarrassing situation because of giving support to a criminal. The wife and the mother of the murdered high socialist leader, Matteotti, repeatedly began asking him to have an interview. The pope refused and instead instructed Gasparri, his secretary of state, to receive them and give them a special rosary that he had blessed for each of them. On the other hand, in France the details of the murder were published involving Mussolini, and the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* suggested that Mussolini should resign. But encouraged by the papal backing, the new dictator addressed Parliament on January 3, 1925, seven months after the assassination, with the following words.

"I declare here, in front of the Assembly and all the Italian people, that I and I alone assume full political, moral, and historical responsibility for everything that has happened."

- "We are all with you!", shouted the Fascist deputies.

- "If Fascism has been a criminal organization, I am the head of this criminal association!"

- "We are all with you!" The applause kept building.

- "If all the violence was the result of a particular historical, political, and moral climate," said Mussolini, "then I take responsibility for it, because I created this historical, political, and moral climate."

"Sirs! You have deluded yourselves! You believed that Fascism was finished... but you will see. Italy, sirs, wants peace, wants tranquility, wants calm. We will give it this tranquility, this calm through love if possible, and with force, if it becomes necessary" (77).

Kertzer comments: "With these words, the Fascist assault on the last vestiges of democracy in Italy began. He proclaimed himself Dux, or Duce, which means "leader." The figure of Christ was mixed throughout Italy with his own picture, in a fusion of fascism with Catholic images. In schools, students were taught to recite a prayer that read, "I believe in the high Duce... and in Jesus Christ, his only protector. Our Savior was conceived by a good teacher and an industrious blacksmith... He came down to Rome..." Il Duce basked in the adulation. Attempts to kill him failed (80,81).

Relieved, the pope let Mussolini know the immense joy he had of knowing that he was safe and strong because of the special protection of Jesus Christ. For the pope, Mussolini was the man of divine Providence. But Mussolini didn't trust all those papal displays of approval and admiration. Police kept valuable records showing the secret reports coming from the Vatican, thanks to the way he managed to put spies inside the Vatican.

Happy, the pope also proclaimed a holy year that would draw thousands from all over the world to Rome. He positioned himself in front of the people with his tiara (triple crown) and blessed the people with enthusiasm. At the close of the year he issued an encyclical, *Quas Premiums*. In it he said that humanity could be saved only if it adopted the true Roman Catholic religion. Like the popes that preceded it, he denounced the French Revolution as the source of much evil, spreading harmful notions such as human rights. He regarded the expansion of secularism as the great plague of modern times. In the United States, Protestants denounced this encyclical as being sectarian in the worst sense, and called for a boycott of the pope's new holy day.

VIII

Pederasty and Homosexuality of the Highest Prelates of the Vatican

Tacchi Venturi, the confidant and secret emissary of both the pope and the Duce, escaped death narrowly. A young man came into his office and wielded a knife that almost hit the jugular of Venturi. But thanks to his reflexes, the knife sank into the back of the Jesuit's neck. *The Washington Post* wrote that there was a plot to assassinate Mussolini, and that the list of suspects prominently featured the name Tacchi Venturi. Venturi then offered the police information on this anti-fascist plot, arguing that he had a confidential report coming from a prominent anti-fascist who had presumably been banished to Paris. Venturi wanted to push Mussolini to act against that international plot which tried to take his life.

But the police didn't believe Venturi for a number of reasons. Among them, they saw that no Jesuit wanted to collaborate in the information. After an investigation, the police concluded that it was Venturi himself who was desperately trying to avoid an investigation of this issue and, for this reason, he was creating that smokescreen to conceal the truth from the authorities. Everyone in the Vatican knew who the young man was that supposedly tried to murder Venturi. That young man was a sexual partner to the priest who struggled with him during an encounter. Taking a heavy letter opener of distinctive design from his seducer's desk (the alleged knife), he scratched him on the back of the neck from where he drew blood. According to police reporters at the Vatican, the pope knew Venturi was trying to throw police off the investigation. But that did not stop both he and Mussolini from continuing to consider Venturi of great value for the exchange of information. In a letter he sent to the Duce, the pope confirmed him by saying that Venturi was "a good Jesuit, and a good fascist" (90-94).

The flow of information received by the police at that time from the Vatican, gives an account of several accusations of pedophilia that the pope had to face, which pointed to the clerics closest to him. The papal master of ceremonies, Monsignor Caccia Dominioni, known to the pope since his youth, had sex with boys and young men. The pope ordered an internal and secret investigation that brought him the report of a young man they interviewed, and he confessed that Caccia had seduced him to go to his room at the Vatican to have sex. When the story began to run the pope gave the order that no one should talk any more about it. In 1933 Dominioni was found again getting drunk with two young men he seduced with money to have sex in his room in the Vatican. The pope consecrated him anyway as a cardinal. He was "the most popular member of the Sacred College" (233).

Monsignor Ricardo Sanz de Samper, the butler and prefect of the pope's house, was also accused of having sex with young boys. Both pedophiles were at the pope's side at their public hearings. But the latter, South American, had no affectionate ties to the pope, so he did not survive the scandal. By the end of 1928 he became irrelevant.

Such secrets of the Roman dome would never have been known if it had not been for the network of spies that Mussolini had there. "Even today," says Kertzer, "when the Holy See makes its historical archives available to scholars who visit the Vatican's Secret Archives, they remove documents that touch on "personal" matters. That Mussolini espionage network was remarkable and well represented.

The police chief had a tall and attractive lover who provided him with an apartment that served not only as a love nest but also for encounters with some of his senior informants. Some were high prelates of the Vatican. Through them he learned of two of the boys who had "illicit relations" with Caccia. The police arrested them and, when questioned, they confirmed the fact, describing in detail the bedroom in which

the encounters occurred. Mussolini received every day the information that Bocchini, the chief of police, provided him, and read avidly all these moral rants of the Top Dignitaries of the Vatican.

In 1928, an informant also reported to Mussolini that, at the request of the Vatican, the chief of police was working with the officers of the Holy See to conceal the pedophile charges against Caccia (98-99). So when the pope later kept insisting that Mussolini take action against the display of women's bodies on Italian beaches, he told the pope that his request was counterproductive because the Vatican also required the government to remain silent on the widespread cases of priestly immorality. If the pope went too far with his request, the result could end up very unhappily for him. (169).

How stunned the police would be some time later, seeing Caccia putting the tiara (triple crown) on the next Pope Pacelli, Pius XII. That was going to be more striking, because the police would have finished investigating a new and recent case of pederasty regarding that priest, which we will bring up later in this document.

Hitler also sought the pope's support when he came to power in Germany, and he got it by the fact that, as specified by Pius XI, Hitler was a Catholic, and it was also "the first time that such a government voice has been raised to denounce Bolshevism in such categorical terms, joining the voice of the people" (200). His attack on communism and Judaism was also welcomed by the Holy Father. But when in 1933 the Third Reich began to judge the immorality of the Catholic clergy, cardinals from all over the world united against the Nazis (215).

The immorality of the clergy in Germany also did not go unnoticed by Hitler. The Nazis began judging hundreds of German monks and nuns for sexual perversion. The following year great publicity was made, treating them as "Corrupters of Youth Clad in Cassocks," "Bottomless Depravity in the Monastery." They accused priests of seducing vulnerable young men and women. They also renewed their attack on the Jesuits whom they accused of exporting illegal funds (244).

Finally the pope wrote an encyclical in 1937, *Mit Brennender Sorge* ("With Deep Anxiety"), which he sent to the priests of Germany, and in which he began by saying: "It is with deep anxiety and growing surprise that we have long been following the painful trials of the [German] Church and the increasing vexations which afflict those who have remained loyal in heart and action." He then condemned the exaltation of a race [German] without mentioning Nazism by name, but did not condemn the anti-Semitism of the Nazis. He simply was careful about the tone because Hitler had threatened to break the treaty he had signed with the Vatican to protect and sustain the Catholic Church.

We must ask if in the face of these facts, this encyclical appeared (as was its purpose) to be a courageous defense against the crimes being committed against the Jews. No way! It only was a papal reaction to all the Nazi trials that were taking place against the immorality of the clergy, which were an integral part of Hitler's determined efforts to make homosexuals disappear. In this context, the pope did not agree to mix the universal Catholic faith with the exaltation of the German race.

Upon learning of the distribution of this encyclical in the German Catholic parishes, without receiving a copy, Hitler became enraged. Knowing the sexual abuses of the clergy (in fact, he had studied theology in a Catholic seminary), he said: "I will heap disgrace and shame on the Catholic Church, opening unknown monastic archives and having the filth contained in them published!" And he rushed to collect that information. But when the raids planned by the police were discovered in advance, the Bishop of Berlin and the Archbishop of Breslau ordered all complaint files against priests to be burned. The pope urged all bishops in Germany to do the same (260).

The trials against Catholic clergy continued for two years. “Hundreds of priests and monks had been jailed, many charged with committing sex crimes against young boys.” In a radio address to the German nation, Goebbels, one of Hitler’s closest associates and Nazi propaganda minister, talked openly against the Roman Catholic clergy, saying that the “sacristy has become a bordello, while the monasteries are breeding places of vile homosexuality.” Mussolini was credited with the success of getting Hitler, in 1938, to stop these trials, and the pope congratulated him (275).

We are engrossed in seeing how all the immorality of the Roman clergy, even in recent times, is coming to light. Thousands of priests around the world are brought to justice, and the moral corruption that appears in monasteries of both priests and nuns is denounced. Is the proclamation of the fall of Babylon not already being fulfilled with religious Rome becoming “a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal”? (Rev 18:2-4). We were told beforehand that “The sins of Babylon will be laid open... all will be unmasked” (GC 606). Do we need more data?

Frankly, I feel sorry for so many thousands of sincere Catholics who put their trust in a deceptive system that seeks to always cover up immorality under a pompous cloak of scarlet, purple and gold. These sincere children of God now have to endure such an embarrassment of immorality at the top of their clergy. But there’s hope for them. The divine call is clear: “‘Come out of her, my people,’ so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes” (Rev 18:4-5). God considers them his people because they have served them according to the light they received. But the time has come for Roman Catholic trial, and whoever wants to get away must get out of there. Babylon is more than the Roman Catholic Church. It includes Protestant churches (the daughters of Babylon) which follow her footsteps (Rev 17:5).

One more reflection on this point. If, despite so many revelations of evil and corruption in the clergy, so many people want to continue to cling to that system, what can be done? The Apostle Paul warned that most would prefer lies and deception, even as the multitude chose Barabbas over Christ. The world will end up believing “the lie” because the multitudes will not have “love for the truth” (2 Thess 2:10-12). Finally the day will come when it will be said, “we would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her... for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the heavens” (Jer 51:9).

IX

The Recovery of the Vatican

For more than a millennium the popes had ruled most of Italy. But since Pius VI was dismissed in 1798 and died in exile, the successors of Pius have one after another been humiliated. After the monarchy was established in Italy, Pius IX excommunicated the king in 1860. But in 1870 the loss of the “Papal States” left the pope landless. Not being able to understand or wanting to recognize the new reality, the popes locked themselves in and did not recognize the civilian government. The situation was complicated internationally because the leaders of Catholic countries did not want to come to Italy to visit their capital. On the other hand, the pope did not allow himself to be seen if they met with the leaders of the Italian government. And returning to his country without having seen the pope could bring unpleasant political consequences for the rulers of many countries.

In 1924, in the midst of the crisis that occurred with Matteotti’s murder, Mussolini appointed a special commission to review laws affecting the church. The pope opposed an agreement voted by parliament between the papacy and the government because he repudiated the principle of separation of church and state. He would only accept direct negotiations with the government. Mussolini joyfully accepted the

offer of the pope, because it gave him the possibility of a historic agreement that would solidify support for his regime like nothing else could.

An agreement was finally reached in 1929, which became known as the *Lateran Treaty*. The first article specified that the Catholic religion was “the only religion of the state.” That first article consisted of three parts:

- a) It determined the Vatican City (110 acres or 44 hectares) to be the sovereign territory of the papacy under papal rule. The Italian government had no right to interfere. An offense to the pope would be considered an offense to the king. All the cardinals of Rome would be considered citizens of the new state. In addition, the Holy See was granted special rights over the basilicas of Rome, as well as the papal summer palace in Castel Gandolfo.
- b) The Italian government would not allow anything to take place in Rome that interfered with the Vatican as a sacred center of the Catholic world. Catholic religious instruction was to be compulsory in all primary and secondary schools. He also accepted the right of Catholic Action to operate freely in its goal of Christianizing the people.
- c) Italy would pay more than one billion dollars to the Holy See as compensation for the lost Papal States.

The pope referred to Mussolini as the man of Providence, which would be repeated thousands of times in the following years by bishops and lay people in general. Newspapers across the country, including the newspaper of the Vatican, insisted that such an event could never have been fulfilled under a democratic government. Only Mussolini and Fascism had made it possible. But while there were those who rejoiced at the agreement, some warning voices appeared. One came from a general, a World War I hero: “These men who came to power through a coup need to legitimize each other through the Vatican,” he wrote in his journal. But he asked what can happen twenty years later when the people resent that the dictatorship stole their freedom? “How will they judge the Vatican, which had granted the regime its moral support?”

For the Jews, the Lateran agreement was a cause for fear. The loss of the Papal States half a century earlier had liberated them from the papal ghettos. They had seen the unification of Italy under the principle of separation of church and state as their salvation. Now they were afraid of what might happen.

With the *Lateran Treaty*, Catholicism and fascism were identified, and seen by all as two sides of the same coin. Since there was now virtually only one party, the new parliament had to be elected. And the Holy See turned completely in favor of Mussolini’s plebiscite. The Catholic press and priests urged the “yes” to the new list proposed by Mussolini.

But the pope was not going to pass up the opportunity to again put pressure on Mussolini. He argued that with the signing of the agreement, Italy was now “a confessional state” and therefore members of parliament should reflect this new reality. Tacchi Venturi then brought Mussolini a list of people whom the pope considered “worthy representatives of a confessional state.” Jews and Freemasons were to be purged from the list of candidates and, instead, fascists tested by their Catholic faith should be added. Only then was the Vatican going to organize a mass mobilization of the Church to vote for the “yes.” Mussolini agreed, and got 98.3% of the vote.

Has the papacy changed in recent times? Perhaps in the method employed, since it no longer has fascist governments that support the popes and must depend on pluralist democracies. But John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, have been strongly advocating again for “a Confessional Europe,” to impose Sunday and the holy days of the Catholic Church as a mark of Christian identity (say Roman). They haven’t accomplished it yet. Can we not ask ourselves what measures the pope will require to be taken after

succeeding in this mission, backed by the masses and the Protestant churches that are joining him in his agenda? Is it unthinkable that they would embark on a new phase of purging opponents?

In 1937, Mussolini decided to organize an immense gathering of bishops and priests at the Palace of Venice. These priests and bishops would offer the most solemn honor to the Duce, “Founder of the Empire”, thus increasing its Christian meaning.” Pacelli (the future Pius XII) stated that he saw no objection to that clerical event intended to honor Mussolini. On 9 January 1938, 2,000 priests and 60 bishops marched in solemn procession through the streets of Rome, preceded by carabinieri and a military band. Laurels were deposited on the tombs of the heroes of the Fascist Revolution. Archbishop Nogara rose to ask for God’s blessing for the man who had done so much for Christianity. A priest came to the front to recite what the 2,000 priests had unanimously approved:

“The priests of Italy invoke and continue to invoke the Lord’s blessing on Your person, on Your work of restorer of Italy and founder of the Empire, on the Fascist Government.” He ended, “Viva Il Duce!” The newspapers wrote, joyfully, that “the enemies of Fascism are also the Church’s enemies. The ideals for which Fascism fights are the ideals that Catholic civilization has exalted for centuries” (273-4).

Tensions. Let’s go back to what happened immediately after the *Lateran Treaty* was signed. In the two weeks following the treaty, the two heads that now ruled Italy began to butt heads, because they were unable to decide which was the main head of that political-religious marriage. Many dissatisfied with the union of Church and State began to regard Mussolini as the pope’s easy prey. That struck him as a thorn in the flesh against his dreams of glory, so he gave a speech saying that “Italy is Catholic, but also fascist, and indeed, before anything else, exclusively and essentially fascist.” The pope was enraged by that speech and threatened to bring down the Lateran agreements. Mussolini admonished him to calm down, that he would give a speech in the Senate clarifying the misunderstandings. But the speech he gave was the same as before.

“Things can’t go on this way,” said the pope to Cesare de Vecchi, the Italian ambassador in the Vatican. “Your behavior,” said the pope, referring to the government’s publication of the speeches of Mussolini, “offends the Church and its head. I went out to meet Italy with an open heart and in payment for our loyalty Signor Mussolini has shot us in the back with a machine gun.” When de Vecchi tried to justify the government, the pope replied: “I don’t want to hear this!”. Finally, Pius XI must have calmed down and said: “Tell Signor Mussolini, in my name, not to confuse his friends with his enemies and vice versa, for confusion of that kind would limit the place that he will have in history” (125).

But when dreams of supremacy exist, sooner or later frictions appear again. The pope incited a few by a speech complaining of the “martyrdom” of the Catholic Action at the hands of the fascist government. Now it was Mussolini who became enraged, and sent his ambassador to tell the pope to shut up. Hearing that, Pius XI struck the desk furiously, gesticulating dramatically as he said: “I am offended, mortally offended,” and he kept repeating it. “Open your mouth, and your breath offends the Pope; you move, and you humiliate me; you... insult the Church... Enough! Enough!”

- “Rome is mine,” said the Pope.

- “Rome is the capital of Italy, home of His Majesty the king and the government,” sputtered the Italian ambassador.

- “Rome is my diocese,” replied the pontiff.

- “Certainly,” agreed the ambassador, “in matters of religion.”

- “Yes!, the pope interrupted, “all the rest is just a matter of keeping the streets clean” (127).

X

The Concordat with Hitler

Later Pius XI also arranged to sign a similar concordat with Hitler, realizing that the führer (“leader”) was eager to receive the same moral support Mussolini had received. The pope also signed a concordat with Austria, but it did not last long because Hitler soon took over that country. The pope did the same thing in Germany that he did in Italy. He dismissed the existing Catholic Central Party as largely independent, and supported Hitler’s party by saying, “this is the first time that such a government voice has been raised to denounce bolshevism in such categorical terms, joining with the voice of the pope.” Hitler returned the kindness of the pope by declaring that Christian churches were “the most important factors in the maintenance of our national identity” (200). He pledged to protect “our national identity.” He also pledged to protect “the influence to which the Christian confessions are entitled in school and education.”

The bishops who were confused by the pope’s sudden turn ended up admitting towards the end of the month that they would no longer oppose the Nazi leader. Shortly thereafter the Catholic Central Party was dissolved, as the Catholic party had been in Italy. Pius XI wanted a heavy hand to impose order, the Catholic faith, and to defend himself from communism.

The concordat signed between the Vatican and Hitler, although in a mostly vague language, guaranteed the German Church the right to handle its own affairs, and offered protection to priests, religious orders, and Church properties. But Pius XI soon realized that Hitler wanted a Church controlled by the Nazis. Popular songs deified Hitler as “redeemer” (something like Mussolini’s deification in Italy).

The Nazis also wanted a German national church with Catholics and Protestants united, something that a still-medieval-minded pope could not accept at all. And many of the Catholic priests now seemed to believe more in Hitler than in Christ. While Pius XI agreed on the condemnation of the Jews, he could not accept the exaltation of the German race proclaimed by Nazism.

It was then that Pius XI began to negotiate the threads of power using Mussolini, whose fascist system of government resembled Hitler’s Nazi system. Delighted with the proposal, Mussolini tried to convince Hitler that it was appropriate to stay tied to the Catholic Church to ensure the stability of the government. Both political leaders hated the papal system. But they saw it as a necessary means of asserting themselves in power. Pius XI was hoping to achieve the same thing with them, even knowing that he could not convert them entirely to the Catholic faith. But Mussolini was able to do little in his mediation, which frustrated the pope. Il Duce decided not to tell Pius XI that Hitler had told him that he regarded Jesus as a Jew who had upset the entire Western world, and that at that time he could not see what Catholicism might do in Germany (206-7).

More documentation on Hitler’s Concordat and the era of Pius XII can be found in Cornwell’s book quoted above, which I summarized and commented on in Spanish in my study *The Vatican and the Genocides of the 20th century*, on my web page: www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com Here I want simply to include a quotation of E. White, describing the Catholic Church’s behavior in history, something that we will confirm on the next point.

“History testifies of her artful and persistent efforts to insinuate herself into the affairs of nations; and having gained a foothold, to further her own aims, even at the ruin of princes and people” (GC 580).

XI

Papal Instigation against Jews, Protestants and Communists

The pope's emissary had insisted for years before Mussolini on the need to take action against the Jews, with conspiracy theories that Catholic newspapers never tired of leveling against them, and their supposed union with communism. Pius XI also believed that the Jewish community was a threat to European society, but it was not so vehement in Italy because the smallness of the Jewish community there did not involve too much risk. However, Venturi constantly insisted to Mussolini that action had to be taken against them. He gave him a pamphlet entitled *Zionism and Catholicism* that read: "No one can doubt the Jewish sect's formidable, diabolical, fatal activity throughout the world." According to the pamphlet, the Jews sought "to destroy current society and dominate the world by themselves, as their *Talmud* prescribes" (89).

The frictions between Pius XI and Mussolini never ceased. There were times when the pope became angry and fist-bumped his desk saying "enough!," and there were other times when Mussolini became angry and said "enough!" "I no sooner conceded one thing when you demanded another!", said Mussolini (143). Sometimes the pope would yield; other times El Duce. In one of these power games, the pope succeeded in causing Mussolini to ban books and banish Protestant proselytism.

Despite the agreements of Pius XI and El Duce, the fascist ruler had never set foot in the Vatican. He didn't feel comfortable in that clerical environment. But at the pope's insistence he agreed to go, the only time in his life, on the condition that he would not need to kneel before the Holy Father or kiss his ring, something that was always required of every head of Catholic state. At the meeting, the pope rewarded the dictator with the "Collar of the Golden Militia" containing a golden cross, thus now becoming a knight of the papal court. What did the pope have up his sleeve? For as the saying goes, "when alms is great, even the holiest distrusts." He surprised Benito with the requirement to stop the Protestants, something that was not on the meeting's top agenda.

According to the pope, Protestant proselytism was progressing in almost every diocese of Italy, as proven by a study done by the bishops. Protesters were getting bolder, and they talked about "missions" they wanted to organize in Italy. They were profiting from the unfortunate language of the concordat referring to non-Catholic religions as "admitted" cults. The pope wanted the word "tolerated" to be put in its stead.

Has the pope referred more directly to the Adventist Church, which had "missions" and "conferences"? Years later, in Argentina, a Catholic military government banned the term "missions," because Argentina, it was argued, was a Christian country and did not have to be evangelized. Hence all the missions of the unions became "associations" for official jargon before the Argentine government.

Mussolini replied that there were only 135,000 Protestants in Italy, 37,000 foreigners, a mere particle in the midst of 42 million Catholics. But the pope argued that this was no reason to deny that the threat was great, and gave him an extensive report on the subject. In the following years the pope was to bombard the dictator with insistent demands to keep the Protestants in check. Similar papal attempts have been seen in recent times in southern Mexico and other South American countries, which I will not go into detail about here.

Pius XI continued to press Mussolini in that interview, on the grounds that he understood the principle of "totalitarian fascism," but in his view, this could be only a reference to a materialistic sphere. There were also spiritual needs, and so there was a need for "Catholic totalitarianism" (185-6). He had previously

made it known to the Duce, through his secret emissary, that a “confessional state” could only count on parliamentarians worthy of such a state (118). Now, with this new argument of a totalitarian State and Church, he wanted to eradicate non-Catholics. Just as the fascist state did not tolerate any other party, neither could the Holy See tolerate any other religion in a government such as that of Italy, where the Church was now attached to the fascist state. Mussolini found the logic correct.

But then Pius XI expressed his anguish over what was happening in Russia, where the Bolsheviks were trying to take down Christians. “Beneath this,” he continued, “there is also the anti-Christian loathing of Judaism.” Being in Poland years before, the pope said, “I saw that in all the Bolshevik regiments the civilian commissars were Jews” (186). Based on this conviction, he reaffirmed his earlier requirement to purge the government of Jews and Freemasons (118).

Years later Pius XI argued again saying that, according to some, everything should belong to the state, making it totalitarian. But such a cry was absurd. “If there is a totalitarian regime,” the pope said, “totalitarian by fact and by right—it is the regime of the Church, because man belongs totally to the Church” (328).

As Mussolini left the Vatican after his only visit to that city, the pope awarded him with three new medals, and declared, “the Lord helped me with this.” During the following month he covered the Duce with an orgy of honors. Mussolini and the king returned those gestures with honors as well.

Is it not appropriate here to quote again the prophet Daniel, and the words of Jesus in relation to the rulers of the world? Referring to the institution of the papacy in symbolic form, God declared through the prophet: “he will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price” (Dan 11:39). But he who said, “I do not receive glory from people,” later criticized the leaders of the Jewish nation, saying, “How can you believe since you receive glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (John 5:41,44).

The pope was always outraged by those who wanted to equalize Catholic and Protestant worship. Through his nuncio he told the Duce that Protestants are “parasites” who live “damaging the true religion.” That for him was “not only entirely unjust but offensive to us” (191). In 1931 and beyond, he continued to require the government to be more aggressive against them. Protestantism, according to the pope, “was anti-Italian, a foreign force that posed as much of a danger to Mussolini as it did to the Church,” because loyalty to the Catholic Church and the fascist regime was the same. He required the Duce to forbid “in any form” Protestant propaganda (191).

The pope returned to ask several times in 1932, to confiscate Protestant literature. He told him that in Italy, Protestants were “the greatest cross” he had to bear. But Mussolini insisted that there were few Protestants in Italy. He was being strongly criticized by the foreign press and he didn’t want to increase that criticism by touching Protestants. For years the pope would continue to insinuate the Protestants into the alleged and evil Jewish conspiracy that targeted both the fascist dictator and the Catholic Church (192).

Catholic newspapers constantly overwhelmed the people with conspiracy theories about evil world forces that were active to destroy “Christian civilization” and European civilization. Similar terms were employed for years by the clergy in Argentina, during what is now known as the “dirty war.” They urged the military to intervene to defend “Christian civilization,” with the same terms employed by the Vatican in the time of Mussolini and Hitler. The Vatican now argued that the leaders of the Bolshevik reign of terror were not “indigenous Russians,” but rather “Jewish intruders.” From a list of the 545 highest Bolshevik officers, a newspaper overseen by the Vatican declared, no more than 30 were Russians. Those who came from the Jewish race comprised all the remaining 447. Although Jews accounted for only

5%—the Vatican leaders insisted—they had “invaded all the avenues of power and imposed their dictatorship on the nation” (193).

These arguments were to be used by the Nazis to justify their anti-Semitic campaign, and would unleash across Europe the worst known persecution against them in history. The *Civiltà Cattolica* published that Vienna was to be transformed into nothing less than a Jewish city, the houses and belongings were to belong to them alone. The Jews would be the chiefs and lords, and the Christians their servants. Austria—according to the same newspaper—“will be absolutely the subject, tributary and slave of the Jews, this in short is the guiding idea of our socialist Jewish-Masonic leaders.” Embracing the medieval charge of ritual murder, they said that the Jews were “insatiable suckers of Christian blood” (194).

For decades the Vatican demonized liberals, Freemasons, Jews and Protestants, as beneficiaries of Enlightenment, who all did the work of the devil, seeking to undermine the people’s faith in the only true religion. Pius XI shared such beliefs, as seen in his 1928 encyclical, *Mortalium Animos*, where he forbade Catholics from participating in groups promoting interfaith dialogue. In 1928, The Holy Office of the Inquisition, headed by the pope, ordered the dissolution of the international Catholic organization called Friends of Israel, which sought to convert Jews by treating them with respect. Members of that organization criticized the traditional church for the accusation she had made over the centuries of being the “murderers of Christ” and presumably sacrificing Christian children in Easter rites. This explains why the former Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Marry del Val, now secretary of the Holy Office, led the Vatican to attack the Friends of Israel. The Vatican considered the organization’s request to remove the phrase “perfidious Jews” from the good Friday prayers to be outrageous.

Pius XI also believed that the Friends of Israel received their inspiration from the Jews themselves. He believed in all these conspiracy theories, but clarified that the Church opposed anti-Semitism (by that expression meaning anti-Semitic excesses). Even so, he considered it legitimate to seek protection against the Jewish danger from governments that had to deal with this scourge. Rosa, the pope’s spokesman for Jewish affairs, argued that the Jewish claim to have equal rights in the 19th Century was something the Church always opposed. In his mind the Jews were behind the French and Russian revolutions. And he accused European governments of being inexplicably lax regarding the current threat (196).

In the face of relentless papal pressure, the fascist government eventually banned Protestants from having public gatherings. They could only meet at home. Not satisfied with that, the pope insisted that they only be allowed to meet at home if their meetings had no intention to proselyte. The government ended up agreeing, but unfortunately for the pope, the judges withstood the order, relying on the language of the concordat of “admitted cults.” The pope sent his nuncio to complain to the minister of justice, but he stood firm.

The pope again pressed Mussolini through Pacelli, his secretary of state and future Pope Pius XII, to stop the government’s plan of allowing secondary schools with a Jewish or Protestant majority to teach religion according to the majority faith. “Your Excellency will not fail to see,” claimed Pacelli, “should this precedent be allowed, there is the danger of an identical request on the part of the Protestants.” Mussolini agreed, and the pope expressed his “great pleasure” for the news (198). In 1939, the pope was to claim Mussolini should not give privileges to Protestants in East Africa (which had been recently conquered) because according to him, that was bad for Catholicism as much as for Italy. He claimed that the Protestants were British agents in Africa (298).

When Pacelli, the secretary of state, visited the United States, he was obsessed with the idea that communism would take over the United States. In an interview with US President Franklin Roosevelt, the cardinal repeated several times: “The great danger in America is that it will go communist.” Roosevelt retorted that the real danger for the United States was to become fascist. “Mr. President,” Pacelli insisted,

“you simply do not understand the terrible importance of the communist movement.” But the president replied, “You just don’t understand the American people” (250).

Today, already in the second decade of the 21st Century, Democrats and Republicans accuse each other in a similar way. The struggle between secularism and the Catholic Church to rule the world continues.

XII

Papal Conflict over Converted Jews

In March of 1933 the pope received frequent reports detailing the Nazi campaign against the Jews. Before the elections in Germany, Hitler promised bishops that he would protect the rights of the Church, her schools, and her organizations. Seeking church support as Mussolini did, Hitler told them that they were all allies in the same struggle, the battle against the Jews. “I have been attacked for my way of dealing with the Jewish question,” he continued. But “for 1,500 years the church has considered the Jews to be harmful, exiling them to the ghetto... I am furnishing Christianity with the greatest service” (208).

In April the pope received a letter from Edith Stein, a 49-year-old German philosopher in Munich, who had converted from Judaism to Catholicism eleven years earlier. Stein asked the pope to make his voice heard against the Nazi campaign against the Jews. “All of us who are truthful children of the Church and who are observing conditions in Germany closely fear the worst for the reputation of the Church if the silence goes on any longer” (208). Pacelli (future Pius XII), responded as secretary of state of the Vatican, not to Stein, but to the arch-abbot who had sent the letter to the pope. He asked him to tell Stein that he had shown his letter to the pope, and he added a prayer so that God could protect his church in these difficult times. That was all. In 1942 the Nazis seized her and her sister Rosa, and sent them to Auschwitz, where her last breath inhaled fumes from the gas chambers.

When at that time the Nazi government officially proclaimed its anti-Semitic policy, with all sorts of measures against the Jews, the pope remained silent. But surprisingly, it was Mussolini who asked Hitler to stop the persecution of the Jews (209). He warned Hitler that every regime has the right to remove unreliable people from posts of influence, but doing so on the basis of race would attract many enemies (even Christian) who would rise up against him. A month later the pope wrote his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, condemning communism, but without making any mention of the Jews. The *Cattolica Civiltá*, however, considered three possibilities to address the Jewish problem: converting them to Christianity (impossible), relocating them to Palestine (impossible to carry 16 million there), and resorting to what the church did for centuries, stripping them of their citizens’ rights.

The claim of Hitler and the Jesuit newspaper that 98% of the highest positions in Russia were “in the hands of Jews” was false. From 417 members of the Soviet Union’s highest leadership in the 1920s, only 6 had a Jewish origin, and in the 1930s that number came down due to Stalin’s anti-Semitic purge. In 1938 when Hitler and the Jesuit newspaper *La Civiltá Cattolica* affirmed that the Russian leaders were almost all Jews, from the 9 members of the politburo only one had a Jewish origin; and from the 37 members of the Soviet presidio, only one was of Jewish descent.

Dragged by Hitler, Mussolini later began to persecute the Jews as well. To justify this, he relied on the church’s and the pope’s own warnings that they had given him for years against the Jews. He sought to gain popular support for his anti-Semitic campaign. When the pope learned that a new biography of Cesare Borgia was being published, he objected, causing Mussolini’s new man-in-house Ciano to destroy all copies. Borgia had been made a cardinal at the age of 18 in the 15th century, and his father had been Pope Alexander VI. In his 20s, Borgia gave up the cardinal hat, and became a military leader who had two children of his wife, and many more of other women. Pacelli was thankful for the destruction of that

book. Not only were Protestant and communist books forbidden, but also those that uncovered the immorality of the Church.

In a widely distributed speech, Pius XI warned against “exaggerated nationalism.” Cornered to explain what he meant, he clarified that he was not against the anti-Semitic campaign, because it was legitimate to defend Italy from the danger posed by the Jews. He opposed Germany’s anti-Semitic campaign for mixing it with concepts of racial superiority. On the other hand, the fascists argued that in this anti-Semitic campaign, they were merely following the teachings of the church.

The pope thought to settle the problem by sending a message to Mussolini exhorting him not to go to excess in his justified measures against the Jews. He asked him to exempt the converted Jews and those who, with the permission of the church, married Catholics, since the concordat determined that only *Canon Law* could determine whether such marriages were valid. He also claimed that the Church and the popes took precautionary and protective measures for Christians, but never mistreated the Jews.

But Mussolini retorted that his anti-Jewish measures were not going to be more stringent than the popes themselves imposed on the Jews for centuries. And the newspapers, still Catholic, began publishing the horrendous scenes that the popes had produced during the Middle Ages, to justify what the government was doing. *How the Popes Treated the Jews*, was the title of one of these newspapers, describing how hundreds of Jews committed suicide because the popes took their property, excluded their children from school, expelled them from their jobs, etc. *The Church and the Jews*, was another title, where they showed that the actions of the popes were more terrible than those of the fascist government, and gave a list of twelve canons of the Church warning against the Jewish threat. They even refreshed the pope’s memory by telling him that he himself had suppressed the *Friends of Israel* organization (309-311).

Kertzer brings exhaustive documentation of the Vatican’s involvement in Mussolini’s ruthless persecution of Jews (chapters 24 and 25), which we do not have time to consider in detail here. Let us remember that while all Protestant churches, including the Adventist church, asked forgiveness for not acting in Christian form for the Jews during the Nazi era, the only church that has not asked for forgiveness and wants to present herself as a hero in defense of the Jews at that time, is the Roman Catholic Church. It is true that there were some isolated Catholics who saved Jews, as did Adventists and Protestants in general. But nothing compensates for crimes committed by others of the same faith.

Mussolini traded the promise of not touching *The Catholic Action* so beloved by the pope for Vatican silence on his Jewish policy. Thus, in the rare cases that a priest criticized the anti-Semitic laws, it was sufficient for Mussolini to warn Cardinal Pacelli, secretary of the Vatican State and the next Pope Pius XII, so that priest would be disciplined by the top Roman Catholic clergy. Many desperate Jews began to be baptized into the Catholic church. However, the protection requested by the pope for those “converted” Jews would in fact be ignored.

Catholic leaders from the U.S. and other countries wanted to silence Protestants critical of the Catholic Church, who were expressing condemnation of the pope. And this the pope did in part through a radio speech in Belgium, which alarmed Pacelli and the other cardinals. They took steps to get Catholic newspapers in Italy, and the Vatican’s own newspaper, to remove that part of the speech. The Vatican silence regarding the Jewish genocide passed into history. The Jews asked the bishops for help, who replied that if they expected to receive that help, they were mistaken. They were counseled to remain calm and urged to have faith in the government. There were Jews who asked the Vatican for guidance without receiving a definite answer.

What the pope claimed was that just as Mussolini agreed to forgive the Jews who participated in the war on behalf of Italy, so he should also forgive the Jews who had converted to Catholicism and married

Catholics. That was his real concern, not the cause of the Jews. And he manifested it to both Hitler and Mussolini. Kertzer warns, “most of the pages from Pacelli’s log of his meetings with the pope in these months are curiously missing from those open to researchers at the *Vatican Secret Archives*” (320).

XIII

The Sum of Glory (213ff)

To be seen as the man who restored Rome to its former greatness, Mussolini needed an empire. This he sought to obtain in Africa. With the exception of Liberia, Ethiopia was the only part of Africa that was not under European control. Italy had two colonies bordering Ethiopia: Somalia and Eritrea. Il Duce found an excuse to invade Ethiopia when Ethiopian forces opened fire on a group of Italian soldiers. Like the Muslim jihads, Mussolini started a vindictive and conquering war based on the honor of his nation. The pope was alarmed because he feared that an Italian invasion of Ethiopia could affect Catholic missionaries throughout Africa. But the Catholic press that supported Mussolini in that military adventure, argued that the Ethiopians were barbarian pagans (something that was not true because they had been Christians for more than a millennium).

The League of Nations, which had been founded in Paris to end World War I and prevent future wars, decided to boycott the Italian government. Fearful of seeing Italy isolated, the pope twice advocated before King George V of England, arguing that he could not see how the conflict with Ethiopia could be avoided. Pius XI explained to the king that Mussolini’s requirements were reasonable. But the king refused to meet the pope, and returned the letter unopened.

The massacres perpetrated by Italian planes and troops in Ethiopia were horrific, with hundreds of thousands dead, hospitals burned to ashes. When the Italians felt threatened, they employed chemical weapons that killed thousands at a time. But in Italy everyone cheered Mussolini, even the Catholic Church who supported him unconditionally, thanking God for the victories he had obtained. When the international press was reporting proof of the use of poison gases, Italy’s newspapers pretended that the deformation of the corpses were caused by leprosy.

At one point Mussolini became frightened upon learning that the United States planned to participate in the boycott along with the *League of Nations*, and turned to the Church for help. If that happened, the Italian government was lost. Cardinal Pacelli then advised him to communicate with the Italian representation of the United States, especially those who handled the media, to support his campaign. Coordinated political action by the Vatican and the Italian government in the United States proved successful. Overwhelmed by so many Italian letters and delegations justifying Mussolini, the US Congress ended up not participating in the European boycott.

Then the Catholic Church began to attack the *League of Nations*, accusing it of being under “occult forces,” by Freemasonry, Bolsheviks, Anglicans, and Jews, who could not tolerate the fascist regime living “in perfect collaboration with the Catholic Church.” The soldiers were harangued with the following words: “Go where the Fatherland sends you and God calls you. Trust, even if God asks you to sacrifice your life... Soldier of Italy, your sacrifice, united with the sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ, God among men, will achieve the salvation and greatness of the Fatherland” (224).

The bishops of Italy required Catholics to donate their gold rings, and they would bless the steel rings they gave in return. The Catholics of the world denounced the Vatican for supporting the massacre in Ethiopia. But in Italy they donated even the gold crosses they wore on their chests. Never since the days when the popes ruled over the Papal States was the Catholic Church so identified with the government.

Not from the time of the Crusades when the popes urged Catholics to conquer other countries. Read Kertzer's overwhelming documentation of the Vatican war support.

"Italy finally has her empire," the Duce said. The king of Italy was given the title, *Emperor of Ethiopia*. "Raise on high your emblems, your arms and your hearts," the Duce called out, "to salute, after fifteen centuries, the reappearance of the Empire on the fateful hills of Rome" (238). Millions of Italians celebrated masses to thank God. At Mussolini's request, the Vatican called on the League of Nations to lift economic sanctions, bearing in mind that the war was over.

Never before had the glory and acclamation to Mussolini been so great. But far from being impressed, his Jewish lover, Margarita Saffarti, was to whisper from a balcony, that this was the beginning of the end. The Duce was to end all that popularity by joining Hitler in the Jewish genocide and World War II. As we have already seen, Margaret escaped to South America, and did not return until after World War II.

XIV

Military and Spiritual Support for Franco in Spain

Against his will at first, Mussolini was being increasingly compromised with Hitler. The struggle between secularism and the Catholic religion was spreading furiously in Spain. The Popular Front had won the election by a large margin, which especially alarmed the Church. In 1933, the pope had already enacted an encyclical criticizing the government's efforts to curb the influence of the Church, whose hierarchy in Spain did not want any kind of compromise with the Socialists. But the overwhelming electoral triumph of the left in 1936 unchained a military rebellion supported by the clergy, which became the target of the popular wrath.

The civil war broke out in July. 700 priests, monks and nuns were killed. The monasteries were transformed into socialist barracks, religious services were eradicated, and almost all of the churches in Barcelona were burned down. Pacelli protested at the Spanish embassy. But what would the socialist government do with an army that supported the Church, if it had no weapons? Airplanes, tanks, and other instruments of war began arriving from Russia in October. The Catholic press urged Mussolini to send troops to help the military rebellion. Towards the end of the year the dictator was sending thousands of soldiers and the fascist militia to help Francisco Franco. But the pope feared that this would push Mussolini into Hitler's arms (242-244).

By August of the following year, Italian submarines began to sink the Spanish ships that were under the control of the government, and Hitler joined later supporting Franco's military revolution (263). Hundreds of thousands died, as the fierce struggle between secularism and religion continued to expand into new horizons. Later on Oliveira Salazar in Portugal and Philippe Petain in France, would become the leaders of fascism in their countries, who would rule the western section of Europe. Then in the Balkans, Ante Pavelic would engineer horrific genocides in Croatia against Orthodox Christians and Jews such as were never seen before, much to the Vatican's delight because it involved the triumph of Catholicism in that region. More and more countries were joining the Fascist-Nazi Axis. Even Japan would take the German model and implement it in Asia, adopting that dictatorial style of government which produced the Second World War in the Pacific. This method or system of government would be exported, even after the war, to the military governments of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, etc.

While atheistic communism triumphed in most of Eastern Europe, Catholic fascism failed in the West by the intervention of two Protestant countries, the United States and England. Because of that, dictatorial

governments were replaced by multiparty democratic regimes, with a balance between religious and secular forces as the outcome of separation of Church and State.

What is fascism? (57ff). A revolutionary protest against communism and an attempt to restore order, discipline, and hierarchy, backed by social and military force. That is why Pius XII and with him, the Catholic Church throughout Italy, adopted fascism and made it part of his politics. From Pius VI who was taken prisoner by Napoleon in 1798, to Pius XI and then Pius XII, all the popes had been humiliated by secular forces. Thousands of Catholic schools and orders were closed and banished throughout Europe. In some countries, clergy were required to do military service. Almost every pope assumed the name of Pius in an effort to vindicate the Pius (VI) that the anti-clerical forces had previously humiliated. But it was all in vain, and even in Italy every tract of land was taken from the papacy.

The pope lived cloistered in the Vatican. As Cardinal Ratzinger confirmed before becoming Benedict XVI in the 21st Century, the Catholic Church had been confined to a ghetto since the French Revolution. And although the popes sought to break that presumable secular ghetto by turning to Catholic dictators in the first half of the 20th Century, they had finally been compelled to recognize democratic civil governments and seek other avenues to regain their lost political-religious ground.

XV

The Failed Encyclical

Pope Pius XI was approaching the end of his life. His image before the world had tied him to the fascist regime in Italy and, somewhat less, to the Nazi government in Germany. In an effort to improve his image, he convened a council where he would enact an encyclical warning against racism. At that time, the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano* stated that all of Italy's bishops were in agreement on the treatment of the Jews, and their views were in perfect harmony with the pope's. What the church condemned was "Germanic exaggerated racism," because it had to do with a racial "doctrine contrary to revealed truth" [belief in a higher race]. But the fact that the Nazis had launched their anti-Jewish campaign for the wrong reason did not mean that Italy's racial laws were unjustified (359).

The paper continued: "The Church has always judged living together with the Jews—as long as they remain Jews—to be dangerous to the faith and to the tranquility of Christian peoples. It is for this reason that you find an ancient and long tradition of ecclesiastical legislation and discipline, directed at limiting or stopping altogether the action and influence of the Jews in the midst of the Christians and the contacts of Christians with them, isolating the Jews and not permitting them to exercise those offices and those professions by which they could dominate or influence the spirit, the education, the custom of Christians" (360). One week later, the same journal of the Vatican wrote that what had been published was "an authorized and solemn illustration of this Catholic doctrine that is professed and taught by all in the Church hierarchy from top to bottom and by the sovereign pontiff in the infallibility of his magisterium" (161). Pius XI didn't deny the newspaper.

Kertzer concludes that "what was at issue was not laws aimed against the Jews, for these the Vatican embraced, but Mussolini's flirtation with Nazi racial ideology, which conflicted with the Church's doctrine and its universal ambitions" (161).

The pope called for a council of bishops, and required the preparation of a draft for the encyclical that he intended to issue in that council. But the closest collaborators, including Pacelli himself, wanted to retouch it first and delayed its deliverance, for fear of what Pius XI could say. Finally, the pope demanded that he be given that draft, but he was never able to deliver the speech because his physical condition deteriorated quickly and he died when the bishops were arriving at that council. Pacelli was elected pope

instead, and adopted the name of Pius XII, not before seizing all the material that was on the pope's desk related to the discourse Pius XI expected to give. Pius XII commanded the destruction of the encyclical *Humani Generis Unitas* that pope Pius XI had succeeded in sending to the press.

The first encyclical of Pius XI never came to light during the time when Pius XII was pope. Only 20 years later, four months after Pacelli died, would Pope John XXIII release some excerpts from the speech. But he removed the most critical passages regarding the fascist regime, presumably to protect Pacelli, who would have buried that speech to avoid offending Mussolini or Hitler. Not before the Vatican opened the archives on Pius XI's papacy in 2006 would the world be able to see the full text.

The failed encyclical did not denounce the fascist regime as Mussolini had feared. Even so, its distribution among the bishops would have irritated the Duce. The encyclical briefly lamented the persecution of the Church in Germany, and criticized those who denied it. Pius XI looked forward to the day when "all peoples, all the nations, all the races, all joined together and all of the same blood in the common link of the great human family", would unite in the one "True Faith" (174).

With the pope already dead, Pacelli took the text and the notes the pope had prepared for his Sunday address to the bishops. Those notes have not been found, but Tardini saw the materials and left behind a description which would have not pleased the Duce if this text would have come to light. Catholic Action, the religious situation in Germany, and the wound inflicted on the concordat by prohibiting marriages between Aryans and non-Aryans (according to Hitler, the ideal of the Aryan race was to be blond, tall and blue-eyed) (174).

Hitler rejoiced over Pacelli's appointment to occupy the papal chair, and the now Pius XII rushed to assure the Nazi government that he was seeking a new era of understanding (181). Mussolini ordered the press to praise the new pope. The German press also rang the bells, praising the new pope for warmly congratulating Franco and his compatriots on their conquest of Spain. These newspapers also highlighted the statements of Pius XII equating communism with democracy (186). As far as the Germans were concerned, that pope had arrived in a timely manner. While the world condemned the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Reich needed, "perhaps for the first time, to have the Church with it and not against it" (187). Pius XII continued the practice of his predecessor of always eating alone.

To the surprise of the Police in Rome, the man who was going to place the papal crown on Pacelli's head was none other than Cardinal Caccia Dominioni, of which both the Vatican and the Police of Rome, in common agreement, had concealed his pederasty sometime before. But the cover-up was more serious, because the last police record regarding Cardinal Caccia's pedophilia was recent. A policeman on a bus saw a box of foreign cigarettes that a young courier was carrying. He found that it was missing the Italian tax stamp. When the policeman questioned the young man how he had smuggled it, the boy told him that someone high in the Vatican had given it to him. Pressed again, that boy identified cardinal Caccia. The police called the cardinal who confirmed the story and asked the police to leave the boy alone. "As Caccia Dominioni enjoyed the reputation of pederasty, the police informant concluded, "they are saying that the reason for the offer of these cigarettes was easily explained" (382-3).

XVI

The Collapse of Mussolini and Fascism

The horrors of war were present. The Allies were advancing, and accountability was approaching for the Italian-German Axis. Poorly equipped, poorly led, and poorly trained, Italian soldiers had proven incompetent. On their excursions to Albania, Greece, and North Africa, the Germans had to hurry to their aid. 200,000 Italians fought alongside the Germans in the disastrous battle of Stalingrad. About half died

or were taken captive. Thousands were dying in Rome, even civilians, under the weight of American airstrikes.

On July 24, 1943, the Great Fascist Council met for the last time. Mussolini blamed recent military disasters on the incompetence of the generals. He particularly unloaded against the Sicilians for welcoming American troops as liberators. Then Dino Grandi, one of the luminaries of the regime who was near the Duce, rose and gave a speech that Mussolini had never heard before.

“The Italian people were betrayed by Mussolini the day that Italy began to be Germanized,” engulfing us “in a war that is against honor, and against the interests and the sentiments of the Italian people” (191). Dumbfounded, his confidence shaken, Mussolini’s attempts to interrupt became progressively weaker. Turning his face to confront Mussolini, Grandi continued: “You believe you still have the devotion of the Italian people? You lost it the day that you consigned Italy to Germany. You think you are a soldier: Italy was ruined the day you put on your commander’s stripes. There are hundreds of thousands of mothers who cry out: Mussolini killed my son!” Grandi called for deposing him and bringing back parliamentary democracy. Some shouted at Grandi calling him a traitor. The fierce discussion lasted until after midnight, when they took the vote. 19 of 27, still afraid of not leaving alive that night, voted for the Duce’s resignation. But no fascist militia stopped them on the way out (191).

Mussolini returned angry to his house, but confident that the king would back him up. His wife Rachel tried to stop him, telling him that he should not trust the king. But the dictator informed the king of what had happened because he had no alternative left, and having been a Mussolini puppet for so many years, the king now dared to give the order for his capture. The Vatican, even Pius XII himself tried to communicate with the new government, and requested the same thing they had been asking for before, that they respect the converted Jews and recognize the mixed marriages approved by the church. Kertzer concludes by saying that it is astonishing that the Roman Catholic leadership had not grasped that the anti-Semitic laws they had supported for so long could no longer be sustained. In July 1943, thousands took to the streets to celebrate, jubilantly, that Mussolini was imprisoned, throwing down monuments to the Duce and destroying images of the dictator.

Hitler then invaded Italy and plucked Mussolini from his captivity, establishing him as the puppet head of the Italian Social Republic in the north of the peninsula. A bloody civil war began as the Allies advanced northward. On September 10, Nazi troops took Rome. Among the highest priorities, Hitler ordered the Jews to be hunted down and taken to the north, to the death camps. At the end of the month, on a British ship near Malta, General Eisenhower signed with the Italian representative a pact linking Italy to the Allied cause. Among the provisions of the pact, Eisenhower required that the Jews be immediately released, nullifying all racial laws.

In October 16, the Nazis surrounded the ancient ghetto of Rome and went house to house hunting Jews. Most of the remaining 7,000 managed to flee, some hiding in convents and monasteries in the city. 1,015 were trapped and imprisoned in a building near the Vatican. Then they were sent to Auschwitz. Only 16 survived. Over the next two months, 7,000 more Jews were imprisoned in Italy. Only a few survived in Auschwitz. Since 1938, when the law against them was first enacted, some 6,000 Jews had converted to Catholicism in Italy, hoping to obtain protection within the Church (393-5).

With the arrival of the Allies, the population began to shoot the fascist leaders. Mussolini was besieged by resistance leaders, and for an hour he was requested to surrender. But instead of turning himself in, he decided to escape to Switzerland. He had previously written to his legitimate wife, Rachele, telling her, “Dear Rachele. Here I am, having arrived at the last phase of my life, the last page of my book. Perhaps we two will never see each other again... I ask your forgiveness for all the bad things that, without meaning to, I did to you. But you know that you were for me the only woman whom I truly loved” (398).

During his escape Mussolini saw a 200-man German regiment passing by and decided to join them, putting on a German uniform. But he was arrested before he could cross the border. Despite the German uniform and dark glasses, he was recognized and imprisoned. Clara Petacci, his younger lover, had caught up with him in his escape, and the Duce asked to be allowed to say goodbye. Until then she had not been recognized. Clara asked to be allowed to be by his side and share his fate. They were allowed to spend the night together in a nearby country house. The next day they were placed in front of a wall to be shot. Clara shouted to him, “Are you happy that I have followed you to the end?” Mussolini did not respond, but passively awaited his fate.

Once dead, people walked by, kicking and spitting on the corpses. The next day the partisans placed their bodies in a truck and took them to Milan. They were hung by their feet in Loreto Square, along with 15 other fascist leaders. 23 years of fascist rule had come to an end. The Italian monarchy also came to its end. Mussolini’s wife Rachel was taken by the Allies and was spared the vengeance that burned against all of his followers.

XVII

Subsequent Contrasting Methods for Achieving Supremacy

A “mortal wound” was received by the papacy in 1798, when a general of Napoleon’s army took from Pius VI his supposed ring of St. Peter and banished him to die less than a year later in captivity. It left the popes adrift throughout the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th century. A wealth of documentation regarding these papal humiliations as a result of the French Revolution appears in John Cornwell’s book *Hitler’s Pope*, already discussed above, and another more recent book written by David Kertzer, *The Pope who would be King* (2018). [I highly recommend to buy the two books of Kertzer, because it contains a trove of documentation that cannot be found elsewhere]. Most of the succeeding popes were called Pius again in an attempt to vindicate the papacy from the previous denigration. And they all spoke out against democracy as the worst of all evils.

The book of Revelation foretold the terrible political earthquake that was to take place at the end of 1260 years of papal oppression (Rev 11:13), whose epicenter took place in France (one of the 10 tribes of the Holy Roman Empire). Those political tremors would then spread across Europe. The Apostle describes this struggle in connection with the war against the Bible (the two witnesses). In Dan 11:40, as we saw at the beginning, you can see the worldwide projection of that struggle that took place between the rich and the poor; between the people and the royal and papal tycoons as the end time begins. E. G. White also anticipated it in the 19th century, and predicted its global outreach.

“The war against the Bible [in the French Revolution] inaugurated an era which stands in the world’s history as the Reign of Terror” (*GC* 282). “Terrible were the scenes enacted in France when atheism became the controlling power. It was then demonstrated to the world that to throw off the restraints which God has imposed is to accept the rule of the cruelest of tyrants. When the standard of righteousness is set aside, the way is open for the prince of evil to establish his power in the earth” (*GC* 584).

“Anarchy is seeking to sweep away all law, not only divine, but human. The centralizing of wealth and power; the vast combinations for the enriching of the few at the expense of the many; the combinations of the poorer classes for the defense of their interests and claims; the spirit of unrest, of riot and bloodshed; the world-wide dissemination of the same teachings that led to the French Revolution—all are tending to involve the whole world in a struggle similar to that which convulsed France” (*Ed* 228).

This political earthquake has continued to produce tremors within virtually every government on earth, because it is still difficult for many politicians and religious leaders in the world, to demarcate (much less negotiate) the line between church and state. Following the American Revolution, secularism found expression in the separation of church and state. So also in the French Revolution, but without the tempering force of Christian principles, it soon degenerated into a ghastly and bloody confusion. It eventually ended up merely exchanging one form of tyrannical rule, papal-monarchical, for another, the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte. Still, that secular triumph over clericalism permitted the countries of Latin America to achieve their independence from the Spanish monarchy, and at the same time, to break in some way, the clerical intervention in the political arena.

The paradox is that, while at first, the American Protestant Revolution and the secular French Revolution supported at certain moments each other to protect themselves and defeat a common enemy that was the papacy and monarchy combined; today the Protestants are turning back and stepping with the Roman papacy to defeat their former partner in defending the rights of man. The reason they give is that God's rights are being trampled on. While two centuries ago two anti-Catholic liberation movements were raised as were Protestant and secular; today we talk about the anti-secular liberation movement formed by the papacy and the Protestants united.

The traditional method employed by popes to expand their influence was to form alliances with kings, converting them through a uniquely papal recipe of adulation, pressure, and reward (see Luke 22:25; John 5:44). Once having gained the trust and allegiance of a king, the population could be more easily swayed toward the new faith of that king. But after the French Revolution, the royal dynasties were being significantly weakened in many countries of Europe, if not totally extirpated. So the popes took advantage of every opportunity they could find to stimulate and support those dictatorial governments with which they could more easily promote their political-religious agenda. But their attempt to return to the medieval system of a church and state union proved to be terribly disastrous.

If you look at the political maps of the 20th Century, you can see that the cults of the dictators found it easier to establish themselves in Catholic countries. Even in Germany, Protestantism was dragged along by a Catholic born dictator, Hitler, who found in the Catholic church the support he needed. It was easier for people in all these countries to elevate demagogue dictators onto an almost divine pedestal, because they were accustomed to prostrating themselves before the pope, the saints, and the Virgin. But with the triumph of Protestant democracy in the form of the United States, and with the secular regimes creating a balance in church and state relations, dictatorial governments lost strength and ended up failing (mostly after the Second World War). Fascism, Nazism, Falangism, and clergy-fascism were wiped off the map, although in Spain and Latin America they managed to hold on a little longer, and regain a foothold on the perch of power at various intervals.

Most recently the popes have felt they needed to hide the tiara (triple crown) that for centuries had been worn in the Vatican. After John XXIII, who wore it only in the early part of his pontificate, they did not put it any more. They simply perceived that the world could no longer be conquered by that type of traditional show of authority. And Pope Francis went further, choosing a marble throne over the most sublime gold on which the previous popes had seated themselves. Still, are they implying with those bursts of humility that they are abandoning the arrogance and pride that have always characterized them? Whatever it is made of, they always sit on a throne, and wear some kind of crown that marks their dignity. But Christ did not place any of his disciples upon a throne, nor did he put crowns upon their heads, nor promise them an earthly throne of any kind. Their reward awaits them in heaven (Matt 19:28; 2 Tim 4:8).

The last open enemy of ecumenism and democracy among the popes was Pius XII, who died in 1958. His successor, John XXIII, surprised the world by convening the second Vatican Council, which dramatically changed the direction of the Roman church. Neither the Jews nor the Protestants would any longer be

demonized. The Protestants were now to be regarded as “separated brethren”, and interreligious dialogue was welcomed. Neither would religious freedom and expression be attacked.

Then Paul VI came and changed the Vatican’s policy toward atheistic communist countries, engaging with them in diplomatic relations. But John Paul II came from the communist world in Poland, and plotted with the president of the United States to obtain the demise of communism. Once the Soviet Union fell, John Paul II sought to occupy the vacancy left by communism with a political war on behalf of the poor, initiating international solidarity movements of the masses in protest against the rich countries. He required the wealthiest governments to forgive the debts of the poorest countries.

During the Middle Ages, the papacy sought the company of rich people, especially the kings of the earth, in order to encourage them to acknowledge him. That’s why the French Revolution attacked both kings and popes. When the popes finally adapted themselves to the democratic regimes, they realized that it was a better strategy to regain civil power through the people themselves. John Paul II portrayed himself in opposition to wealthy peoples and nations, as did Judas when he required the consideration of the poor (John 12:5,6). In this way he obtained relevance and prestige on the international stage, like the rulers in the days of Jesus when He said: “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you shall not be like them” (Luke 22:25-26).

But John Paul II’s dreams would not to be fully consummated without signed agreements with the other religions, not only Christians, but also Muslims and even pagan religions. He understood that this was the only way to regain the political supremacy that the papacy enjoyed at the peak of its power throughout the Middle Ages. Should he succeed as leader and spokesman for all religions, agreeing with them on common beliefs, secular powers would be forced to yield, since it is votes that count in democratic regimes. Thus he would not need the former papal playbook, working through established or dictatorial regimes. He realized that this new strategy was equally useful in recovering world predominance.

Several papal calls to all major world religions took over as the Vatican began prowling the 21st Century. John Paul’s call to religions was: “Bring all the best you have to rebuild the morale of the world.” But we don’t find any prophets in the Bible calling the leaders of all pagan religions to come to Jerusalem to rebuild the morals of the world with “the best” those religions presumable had. That modern papal call is the best way to build Babylon, not Jerusalem. The genuine divine call, however, is not to unite the religions of the world, but to withdraw from the confusion of that apostate union (Rev 18:1-5). The divine call to the nations was always to repent and return to the law of God (Jon 1:2), and that law was in Jerusalem (Isa 2:3: “The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”; see Deut 24:8; Ps 147:20). The Law of God was revealed in the temple of old Jerusalem. It is from there that we received the Word of God (Rom 3:2; 9:4).

John Paul II’s dream was to give Jesus a good gift on his 2,000th birthday (although he recognized that the date of the first year of Jesus Christ was not accurate). This gift was to offer him a united world, to begin a millennium of peace to which the Lord could come. He did not achieve his dream, but he moved the world far enough in that direction. More than signing treaties or agreements with nations like Pius XI, he was signing agreements with Protestants and other religious groups. But that ecumenical progress was somewhat hampered when Benedict XVI decided to accentuate the Catholic dogmas that came into conflict with Protestant beliefs.

With Pope Francis, John Paul II’s initial dreams seem to be advancing further. And the resistance that John XXIII encountered when he opened the doors of the Catholic Church to ecumenism, is the same that Francis is confronting due to his remarkable understanding for all kinds of sexual degeneration. At the same time, this pope seeks to ingratiate himself with the secular left movements that greatly accompany such moral degradation. He wants to unite politicians and religious leaders under the same banner.

Those who wanted to uphold medieval ideals and were alarmed by what John XXIII was doing ended up canonizing the last medieval pope (Pius XII). The world today seems not to realize that the ecumenical union is becoming “a lair for demons and a haunt for every unclean spirit, every unclean bird, and every detestable beast” (Rev 18:2). Instead of calling religions to unite in this religious confusion, God extends a call to leave the harlot mother and the harlot daughters: Rev 17:5), not to be partakers of their sins, nor to receive the apocalyptic plagues that will fall upon them.

Let me summarize this review of David Kertzer’s book. In their efforts to regain power in the first half of the 20th Century, popes Pius XI and Pius XII pushed Europe’s dictatorial rulers to sign treaties to support their spiritual mission, in a clear turn to a medieval system of union of Church and State. But they failed. Today, the Roman papacy is seeking to agree with Protestants and other religions on the basis of common beliefs, to impose themselves on secular governments with the majority votes that they can obtain in democratic regimes, in order to force them to sponsor their common religious agenda. The outcome of this politico-religious enterprise will be the restoration of the lost authority of the papacy, which will produce in the end, the final apocalyptic crisis. Then the end will come.

Conclusion

When the Charade is over Forever

All the politico-religious scaffolding that for centuries the prince of this world has set up to raise the figure of the papacy above God, making it infallible by using doctrines that come from Roman paganism, will not succeed forever. The exaltation of the figure of the pope and saints supplants the exaltation of the only One worthy to be worshipped (Rev 15:4), and of Jesus Christ his Son, whom he sent. And no matter how much they seek to hide here on earth the filth that is hidden under human vainglory, no human power can purge the heavenly records.

Soon the charade will be over. If history can be laid bare here on earth through a meticulous study of the various preserved earthly archives, how much more sharply focused will the story appear that angels and redeemed will review in the most sophisticated and accurate archives in heaven? Indeed, apocalyptic visions show us that in heaven every human act is recorded, before which we will have to give account.

“As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened” (Dan 7:9-10).

“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Rev 20:12).

As seen in this synthesis of the history of Pope Pius XI and Mussolini, the Vatican has tried to hide some sensitive pages of its history. But no files can be hidden from heaven. The sins of men will appear in all their clarity. Only one who repents and asks for forgiveness will be saved, invoking the intercession of Jesus our Savior, through the price paid in his blood.