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José M. Sanchez. *Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy*. Washington D. C.: Catholic University of America Press. 198 pages. \$19.95 (Paper).

[1] Jose Sanchez begins his book posing the question "Why another work on Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust?" A reader might be forgiven for thinking that the world does not need another book on this topic. However, Sanchez's book is less about Pius XII and the Holocaust and more about the historical investigation of Pius' actions and inactions during World War II. This focus makes the book a much more valuable contribution. Sanchez has written a short, accessible book, which touches on both the practical and normative difficulties of reaching a judgment regarding Pius. This book provides a solid introduction to this growing field of scholarship and popular history about the Roman Catholic Church and the defining events of the twentieth century.

[2] The book breaks down into three sections. The first section is a brief background of Pius himself, the history of his times, and the political issues facing the Roman Catholic Church. The second section takes up the major arguments regarding Pius' actions and inactions by devoting a chapter to each argument. In each of these second section chapters, Sanchez sets out the major proponents of the viewpoint, their critics, and the sources of evidence for and against the argument. In the final section, Sanchez sets out his own analysis to bring some clarity to the subject, not offering a definitive conclusion for reasons set out below.

[3] Properly investigating Pius' activities during the Holocaust is a daunting task. For example, the primary source documents are in Italian, German, French, Latin, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Russian and English. In addition, whether the Vatican has released the totality of its primary documents is part of the controversy. Finally, the sheer evil of the Holocaust makes it an emotional and controversial subject.

[4] In spite of these obstacles, Sanchez does three things well. First, he points out a major flaw of many of the defenders of Pius, as well as his detractors. Both sides suffer from a fair degree of prejudgment about whether Pius is innocent or guilty before starting their investigation. The defenders of Pius include authors who "have adopted a pietistic tone, exacerbated by a sickly adulation and combined with outrage that their pope should be so

attacked" (178). On the other side, the detractors have their share of anti-Catholic prejudice. Sanchez's critique of both sides is not a simplistic criticism that seeks an artificial balance of pro and con; instead, it is logically consistent and allows the reader to draw more nuanced conclusions.

[5] The second thing that Sanchez does well is to point out certain inherent tensions regarding the papacy. He captures these tension well with the idea of the pope as a symbol. This symbolic nature of the papacy makes the pope responsible for everything the Roman Catholic Church does, including what its members do. In addition, the juridical and religious authority of the pope within the structure of Roman Catholicism, as well as Pius' own particular aura of expertise, often gives observers the false impression that the pope commands the Roman Catholic Church with military precision. This false impression is compounded by the fact that the modern popes have often cultivated this illusion precisely in order to buttress and strengthen the authority of the papal office.

[6] Finally, Sanchez's best accomplishment in the book is to point out the logical impossibility of drawing definite conclusions regarding Pius' actions. The dominant criticism of Pius is that he should have done more, and Pius' defenders counter with the claim that Pius was constrained by event, and has he done more, matters would have been made worse. Sanchez points out the difficulty of deciding who has the better argument. We can draw speculate about the possible effects of additional actions by Pius, but as is the case in any counterfactual analysis, any conclusions we might draw are tentative. This is true regardless of the amount of evidence we possess because of the "might have been" nature of all such analysis.

[7] While overall a very interesting book, it does have some flaws. First, the literature review in chapter two is disappointingly short. In a book that is an extended commentary of the major works on this subject, Sanchez does not explicitly analyze the works in sufficient detail. While he extends his review of the literature over several chapters, it is easy to forget who a particular critic or defender of Pius is over the course of the book. For example, chapter nine discusses Pius' fear of communism and uses Saul Friedlander as the primary author arguing that point. Friedlander was mentioned on in chapter two in a brief description of his *Pius XII and the Third Reich: A Documentation*. Chapter nine; however, does not repeat any of the explanation of Friedlander or go into in any greater detail. While I would recommend Sanchez's book to anyone interested in this subject, his book does not give as much guidance as one might hope for further reading on this subject.

[8] The second flaw is the lack of a proposed plan for further investigation of this controversy. Sanchez's book is not only a review of the investigation of Pius XII, but also a review of historical investigations in general. As such, the book would work well in an introductory class in the study of history of religion or the study of history in general. Sanchez's book is a good roadmap of where we have been, but it does not show where we should go from here.

[9] Despite these minor flaws, I recommend this book to anyone interested in this subject. Sanchez effectively points out the difficulty in making a sharp distinction between a pope's spiritual life and his political actions. He argues that Pius, and any pope, is both a bureaucrat and a religious leader. Therefore, Pius was on the horns of a dilemma. The papal office must

both seek the preservation of the institutional church and offer the moral witness of the Vicar of Christ. While I wonder about the worth of the former without the latter, Sanchez's fine scholarship prevents me from premature post hoc judgments, highlighting the human limitations and frailty of Pius himself, as well as those who seek to judge him.

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