

"THE DESTINY OF THIS PEOPLE IS MY OWN...": EDITH STEIN'S PARADOXICAL SAINTHOOD¹

Oliva M. Espín

Edith Stein, perhaps one of the most controversial women to be canonized as a Saint by the Roman Catholic Church, was born on Yom Kippur, October 12, 1891 in Breslau (then Germany, now Poland). She was put to death in Auschwitz, August 9, 1942.²

On May 1, 1987, forty-five years after her death, Pope John Paul II, beatified Stein as a martyr and a confessor of the Catholic Church. He canonized her on October 11, 1998, the day before the 107th anniversary of her birth.³ The appellation "confessor," was based upon her exemplary life, her philosophical work on St. Thomas Aquinas, and her activities on behalf of Catholic women in German-speaking countries during the 1920s-1930s. She was deemed a "martyr" because her death, like her companions in the August 9 transport, was an act of Nazi retaliation, precipitated by the actions of the Catholic bishops of The Netherlands on behalf of Jews in their country.

Edith Stein's beatification and, later, her canonization, have stirred considerable controversy among Jews and perplexed many Catholics. If she was murdered because she was a Jew, how can she be a martyr of the Catholic Church? Compounding the confusion is her feminist posture, which she demonstrates in her writings on women. Why did John Paul II, with few feminist sympathies, consider her an exemplary model—a "confessor" of Catholic faith? In fact, he bestowed upon her a unique distinction—she is the only person ever to be beatified as both

a martyr and a confessor, “an event without precedent” (Sullivan 1998, p. 12). “When she was canonized in 1998 she was the first Jewish-born Christian since the days of the early church to be added to the roster of the saints” (Sullivan 2004, p. 18). The special circumstances of her canonization are the latest paradox in Edith Stein’s story.

My personal interest in her emanates from my more than forty-year interest in self-education on Jewish history and the Shoah/Holocaust in particular. I believe that Stein’s story and her canonization joins with other forces compelling Catholics/Christians to take responsibility for one of the most horrifying and shameful events of history and for all the long list of acts of cruelty and discrimination against Jews. Additionally, her views on women were highly influential for a segment of German-speaking women and men in the first part of the twentieth century, anticipating the feminist theology insights of the late twentieth century. These two factors fuel my interest in her life and writings.

My first encounter with Stein happened while I was working in Costa Rica (Central America) in the early 1960s at a girls’ high school directed by the sisters of Notre Dame de Sion, a congregation dedicated to educating Catholics about anti-Semitism. In the school library, I found a small pamphlet describing Stein’s stature as a philosopher of Jewish background who converted to Catholicism before World War II and the circumstances of her death. Several decades later, in my continued effort to learn more about the Shoah/Holocaust, I came across a book entitled *The Unnecessary Problem of Edith Stein* (Cargas 1994) in which several Jewish and Christian scholars presented their position about the beatification of Stein by John Paul II in 1987. The book prompted me to learn more about her life and writings. When I encountered Stein’s writings on women and on empathy in the early 1990s, her perspectives, so similar to mine, despite the cultural and historical differences between us fascinated me. It was a matter of course that Edith Stein would be included in my ongoing project on women saints.

Therefore, several years ago, I set out to follow some of Stein’s steps: I went to Poland to visit Wroclaw (Breslau) where she was born and Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was murdered. I visited the Cologne Carmel, where I spent an afternoon looking at Stein’s manuscripts—including the page she was writing when she was arrested—and talked at length with Mother Amata Neyer, the curator of Stein’s manuscripts

with the help of Fr. John Sullivan, a Carmelite priest, as our interpreter.⁴ That afternoon, on the day of St. Benedict (Stein's religious name), I also had the opportunity to see the ornaments the Pope used at the beatification ceremony, made out of the dress Stein wore for her profession as a Carmelite. The nuns had laid them out especially for my visit. I prayed Vespers with Mother Amata and Fr. John in the same chapel Stein had visited briefly to pray on her escape route to The Netherlands in December 1938 (two weeks after my birth!). Earlier that summer, in Rome, I had read the documents of her beatification at the General House of the Discalced Carmelites. Fr. John Landy, who had facilitated my access to these documents, learning that I was about to teach a course on women saints that would include Stein, kindly offered to get passes for me and the students to attend the canonization ceremony. So, on October 11, 1998, I was sitting on seventh row at St. Peter's square to witness and participate in Edith Stein's canonization ceremony with a group of students from San Diego!⁵

Stein, born a Jew, converted to Catholicism at the age of thirty in 1921-1922 and eventually entered a Carmelite convent. In contrast to many converts, she never denied her Jewish background and consistently reminded other Germans of it—including the nuns in her convent. Rather than hiding behind her conversion, she prepared herself to share the fate of her people. But, obviously, conversion entailed crossing over an emotional divide and cause great pain to her beloved mother.

Edith Stein was the seventh and youngest child of a lumber merchant family. Her mother had a special predilection for Edith for several reasons. Not only was her birth date of special significance, she was also the youngest child and showed intellectual gifts from an early age. In addition, two-year-old Edith was in her mother's arms when Frau Stein saw her husband for the last time before he died suddenly of sunstroke. At that time, her mother assumed charge of the family lumber business. The business prospered until the Nazi era. Thus, from a very early age, Edith was accustomed to seeing her mother as both breadwinner and loving parent. This seems to have convinced young Edith that women could practice all professions without "losing their femininity." More importantly, she interpreted her mother's competency to mean that God

wanted women to participate in all walks of life, a conviction that would become part of her own life and her teaching in later years.

While still living at home, Stein entered the University of Breslau in 1911, only ten years after women won admission to German universities. Women students were so few at the time that Universities in Germany did not know what to do with them. As we shall see later, she used her experience as a woman in academia to the benefit of many other women. After a year studying psychology, she decided this discipline did not offer the method for discovering the truth she so wanted to find. While at the University of Breslau, she had begun reading the works of Edmund Husserl. In 1913, she decided to go to Goettingen to study phenomenology⁶ under him and in 1916, she graduated *summa cum laude* with a thesis on the phenomenon of empathy (Stein 1917/1989).⁷ Stein was only the second woman to receive a degree in philosophy from a German university. The first woman to get a similar degree was to be her life-long friend, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, who was also a phenomenologist. It was hearing of Hedwig Conrad-Martius, who had obtained her doctorate under Husserl's direction that prompted Stein to start reading his work.

After graduation, Stein became Husserl's assistant. This was an unheard of position for a woman. Assisting Husserl, however, was not a glamorous job. In what she called her "philosophical kindergarten," she prepared incoming students for his lectures. She also deciphered and prepared his manuscripts, which were written in a confusing and disorganized manner, for publication.⁸ She tolerated his mood changes and arbitrary commands.

After a frustrating year and a half, in which Husserl paid little attention to her reviews and comments on his manuscripts and she accomplished little of her own work, she decided to find a faculty position—to apply for "habilitation"⁹ in another university. Husserl refused to recommend her; "on principle" he rejected the idea that women should be "habilitated." When he finally wrote a letter of recommendation full of praise for her, it was too late. The male faculty members in other German universities were not inclined to accept women in their midst. They also did not want to risk antagonizing prominent academicians by accepting a woman. Many were reluctant to welcome another Jew. The thesis she had written to apply for "habilitation" was returned unread.

Stein protested formally against this action, even though she realized her protest would not make any difference in her case. On December 12, 1919, she wrote the Ministry of Science, Art and Education protesting prevalent “habilitation” practices. Several months later, the Minister ruled that “belonging to the female sex may not be seen as any hindrance to obtaining habilitation” (Koeppel 1990, p. 63). In a 1987 article written to commemorate *Fifty Years of Habilitation of Women in Germany*, German feminists Elizabeth Boedeker and Maria Meyer-Platt (1974), give Stein credit for initiating the challenge to the exclusionary rules with her protest. Stein’s courage as a pioneer woman in academia determined the fate of many other women who benefited from the official changes initiated as a consequence of her action. Even if she did not benefit directly from it, many other women in the last eight decades have been “habilitated” in Germany thanks to Stein’s decisive action. Thus, the effects of her protest against unjust sexist discrimination are still felt.

Other events were developing in her life simultaneously. The phenomenologists in Stein’s circle, many of them agnostic Jews, had been actively seeking an understanding of “the phenomenon of religion.” They strove to exclude metaphysical considerations while striving to explain all phenomena. This proved difficult, partly because phenomenology did not want to exclude the analysis of any phenomenon and partly because of the personal interests in metaphysical phenomenon of many of the best-known phenomenologists, including Husserl himself. Eventually, many phenomenologists in Stein’s circle converted to Christianity in the course of their philosophical explorations. These Jewish phenomenologists may have been part of what historian Alan Levenson (1995) calls “the conversionary impulse” that was sweeping through Jewish Germany at the turn of the century. Most of those who embraced Christianity at the time, within phenomenological circles as well as outside of them, converted to Lutheranism, the prevalent and more prestigious religion in Prussian Germany. Husserl had converted to Lutheranism in Catholic Vienna in 1886 when he was twenty-seven-year old. Adolf Reinach, Stein’s teacher and close friend had also become a Lutheran together with his wife right before his departure to the War front. Max Scheler, another of Stein’s professors, moved in and out of the Catholic Church for several years while Stein was a student at Goettingen. Stein’s close friend, Hedwig

Conrad-Martius and her husband were also converts to Lutheranism.¹⁰ It was unavoidable that Stein's professed atheism be called into question by these decisions of her friends and colleagues.

She had visited Adolf Reinach's widow, shortly after his death in battle in 1917. In the course of this visit, Stein was impressed by Frau Reinach's acceptance of her husband's death and her conviction that they would be reunited again upon her demise. Although deeply moved by Anna Reinach's faith, apparently nothing changed for Stein. Then, in the summer of 1921, she found herself at a significant spiritual crossroads. She had, by chance, picked-up Saint Teresa of Avila's autobiography from Hedwig Conrad-Martius's library shelf. After reading it, throughout the night, she became convinced that this was, in her own words, "the truth." Significantly, Teresa's Jewish background was unknown until several years after Stein's death. But I wonder if it was not the tone of Teresa's writing, as a woman of Jewish ancestry, which touched a deep chord in Stein's heart in ways that other, purely intellectual arguments could not.

Edith Stein was baptized and officially became Catholic on January 1, 1922.

Judith H. Banki, who was Associate National Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee, ponders "where Stein could have turned in the Jewish community of her time, given her extraordinary combination of intellectual brilliance and spiritual hunger [...]. How could she have latched onto the rich and demanding legacy of rabbinic thought as a woman, and an argumentative woman at that?" (Banki 1994, p. 48). Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer (1991, 1998), wonders "whether and how Stein sought spiritual nourishment from Judaism before she turned to Christianity" (p. 162) and follows this comment by recalling the story of Franz Rosenzweig (Stein's contemporary who re-embraced the Judaism of his ancestors after considering conversion to Christianity). Fuchs-Kreimer asks herself whether Rosenzweig would have remained a Jew if he had been hurried upstairs to sit behind the screen segregating women in the synagogue, which is where Edith probably sat when she attended synagogue with her mother. Her answer to her own question is "Frankly, I doubt it" (p. 162). Thus Fuchs-Kreimer suspects that "Stein's being a woman had something to do with the direction of her spiritual journey" (p. 162). She thinks, as I do, that "it

seems hardly a coincidence that the book that decisively turned Stein toward faith was written by a woman—Teresa of Avila.” (p. 162). And she adds, “Does a female author of similar status exist within the Jewish spiritual canon? No. The life with women to which Stein was ultimately attracted [as a Carmelite nun, a member of the religious order that Teresa had strengthened and reformed]—the paradoxically restricted and liberated life of the cloistered nun—has no parallel in the Jewish world. The tremendous focus on family which is so characteristic of Jewish life may have been made even more difficult for a single, thirty-year old, female philosopher to find adequate models within Judaism.” But, at the same time as a Jewish woman seeking Jewish women role models, Rabbi Fuchs-Kramer felt abandoned and betrayed by Stein’s conversion. Rabbi Fuchs-Kreimer admits to anger “when a Jew chooses not to continue to struggle with the civilization into which she was born” (p. 163) and feels “sad and cheated” that Edith Stein’s profound work as a translator, philosopher, inspirational writer, and spiritual director “enhance another tradition.” Nevertheless, while she writes that Edith Stein can never be a role model for her as a Jewish woman, she is still someone from whom Jewish women can learn. She can, after all, the rabbi observed, “be a teacher to us. Though she found her bread elsewhere, we can use some of her leaven in our own Jewish lives” (p. 163). She concludes that there is much for all of us, Christians and Jews, to learn from this remarkable woman with her attractive yet enigmatic personality.

As it happens with religious converts, Stein believed that her new-found faith was all good while the faith of her ancestors was lacking in many crucial aspects. She was like many others who convert to a different religion without ever having studied some of the fine points of their old faith. They become knowledgeable about the new faith in the process of conversion in ways they never attained concerning the religion of their ancestors. In Stein’s case, she attributed the sexism she encountered in the Catholic Church to the influence of Judaism and Roman law. She believed Catholicism had given her the possibility of remaining an intellectual, as in fact, it did. But we will never know what she would have accomplished intellectually had she not converted. From an early age, Stein demonstrated an unrelenting thirst for truth. Even if she had not converted to Catholicism, she probably would have found a way to continue her pursuit and this pursuit somehow would have brought her

to God; after all, she believed that “all who seek truth, seek God, whether this is clear to them or not” (Stein, cited in Sullivan 2004, p. 37). In fact, there was also an effervescence and “brilliant renaissance of Jewish learning was occurring at the same time of her conversion” (Fuchs-Kreimer 1991, 1998, p. 162).

After her conversion, Stein had continued her job search but, unable to find a position as a philosopher at a German university, she took employment at a Catholic girls' high school and teachers' college in Speyer, teaching German literature. During her eight years at Speyer, Stein became very interested in the education of women. She began writing and lecturing on women's issues and developed a reputation in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland as a prominent Catholic feminist. Her writings about women date from these years. Stein's feminist writing and her theorizing concerning the education of girls and the importance of women in national life have been given little attention amidst the controversy surrounding her canonization. Many of her writings in this area actively contradicted the Nazi government policies concerning women. They also challenge some present day teachings of the Catholic Church, including the ban on the ordination of women.

Stein had been an active feminist, concerned with women's suffrage and rights in her youth. As a university student, she was a member of the Prussian Society for Women's Right to Vote. She obviously believed that women were capable of intellectual achievement and deserved equal rights, as demonstrated by her writings, life, and actions. Although later in her life she did not apply the label “feminist” to herself as readily as she had done in her youth, her behavior and her writing demonstrate a deep commitment to feminist ideals all through her life.

Her understanding of women's psychology predates and echoes many late twentieth century feminist psychological theories. Today, her views may be considered too conservative, particularly because of her strong essentialism. She believed women had innate characteristics that enabled them to perform specific roles. However, if we take into consideration the language of the times—and her philosophical background, grounded in Aquinas and Husserl—I find that her perspectives are not that different from those of some present day feminists. Similar perspectives are represented in psychology by the works of the Stone Center for Developmental Studies at Wellesley College in Massachusetts and other

feminist psychologists who, like Stein, believe that women are different from men and more capable of intimacy and caring (e.g., Jordan et al. 1991).

Some of Stein's ideas concerning women are worth citing extensively because of their uniqueness among saints' writings. For example, discussing what she considers the "essence" and "nature" of women, she describes as

a quality unique to woman [...] her singular sensitivity to moral values and an abhorrence for all which is low and mean; this quality protects her against the dangers of seduction and of total surrender to sensuality. This is expressed by the mysterious prophecy, become legendary, that woman would be engaged in battle against the serpent [...] (Stein 1996, p. 78).

It is interesting to note that Stein attributes to all women the struggle against the serpent, not just to Mary the mother of Jesus as it has been traditional in Catholic theology.

For Stein, essential differences between men and women are never to be construed as proof of women's inferiority but rather as a sign of women's unique value and of their God given role as educators of humankind. Stein presents this morally superior position of women as a positive trait, and as a statement of women's responsibility to use these capabilities to combat evil. Stein firmly believed "that woman has a mission in society as well as in the home" (Oben 1988, p. 55). Nonetheless, she rejected all idealizations of women, particularly those that could be used to exclude women from active participation in their chosen profession or from involvement in national political life or the life of the Church.

In a discussion that contains a very current feminist tone, Stein supports this argument while recognizing the differentiation within the sexes. She asks the rhetorical question:

Should certain positions be reserved for only men, others for only women, and perhaps a few open for both? I believe that this question also must be answered negatively. [...] Many women have masculine characteristics just as many men share feminine ones.

Consequently, every so-called “masculine” occupation may be exercised by many women as well as many “feminine” occupations by certain men (Stein 1996, p. 81).

She strongly supported this conviction on a broader scale, in that “no legal barriers of any kind should exist” which would prevent a “natural choice of vocation” (Stein 1996, p. 81) for either women or men.

The following quotes from the many lectures on women’s issues she presented in the 1920s-1930s serve to illustrate her positions. Many of these statements have a contemporary “ring” to them:

Until a few decades ago, public opinion concurred that woman belongs in the home and is of no value for anything else; consequently, it was at the cost of a weary and difficult struggle that woman’s too narrow sphere of activity could be expanded [...]

There is still a multitude of thoughtless people satisfied with expressions concerning the weaker sex or even the fair sex. They are incapable of speaking about this weaker sex without a sympathetic or often a cynical smile as well. They do this without ever reflecting more profoundly on the nature of the working woman or trying to become familiar with already existing feminine achievements.

Sporadically, there are Romanticists who idealize women, painting them in delicate colors against a gold background, who would like to shield woman as much as they could from the hard facts of life. Curiously, this romantic view is connected to that brutal attitude which considers woman merely from the biological point of view; indeed, *this is the attitude that characterizes the political group now in power. Gains won during the last decades are being wiped out because of this Romanticist ideology, the use of women to bear babies of Aryan stock, and the present economic situation* (Stein 1996, p. 144). [Emphasis mine]

Positions that emphasized biologism were abhorrent to her. From her perspective, “[v]iolence is being done to the spirit by a biological misinterpretation and by today’s economic trend” (Stein 1996, p. 144). It is important that we appreciate her assertions actively contradicted the doctrines of the rising Nazi party on women and their exclusive

biological/reproductive mission. This statement was part of one of her last public lectures on the relationship of women to national life and to international politics during a time of intense Nazi propaganda designed to keep women at home and away from public life. Coming from a woman of Jewish descent in those perilous times, her statements impress as doubly courageous. Stein presented her views publicly, intending to address directly the Nazi positions to prevent Catholics from being seduced by these doctrines.

According to Stein, the political trends she was witnessing in Germany could be dangerous for the incipient women's movement. Because the women's movement could be threatening to the increasingly powerful Nazi party, the hard-won changes could be lost before being given a chance to solidify. She warned that even though

we have today such an extensive system of vocational training [for women] and of professional life that we can scarcely imagine retrenchment, [...] we must realize that we are at the beginning of a great cultural upheaval; at this early stage we must expect to suffer what we might call "childhood diseases" and make every effort to overcome them. There is still essentially basic work to be done (Stein 1996, pp. 139-140).

At this historical junction, more than ever, Stein asserts,

Women need basic political and social preparation for civic responsibilities; however, this is true not only for women but for the entire German nation which entered into a democratic form of government while still immature and unfitted for it. And we need special methods to prepare for government service in posts open to women. All this would come about if we had years of peaceful development before us. Naturally, we cannot foresee how conditions will be formed after a forcible break with the organic development (Stein 1996, p. 147).

Stein was adamant about the importance of education; she suggests that one way to counter the beliefs imposed by the Nazi party was

through teaching. By giving girls the necessary skills, an uninspired, traditional life would not have to be their only option.¹¹

When Stein turned her attention to the role of women in the Catholic Church, her opinion was equally forceful. Although she accepted the authority of the Church's traditions concerning women, she differentiates "between the attitude expressed in dogma, in canon law, and by the hierarchy of the Church and that taken by Our Lord Himself." She asserts that although some people "interpret certain remarks of priests concerning women's vocation as binding dogma of the church," this is not so because "we do not have a precisely defined dogma *ex cathedra* on the vocation of woman and her place in the Church" (Stein 1996, p. 147).¹²

In her words, although

[n]o doubt there have been utterances in the patriarchal vein stating that woman's activity outside of the home is out of the question and the man's tutelage of woman is necessary in all domains. Although there are still advocates of this opinion, it is by no means universally true. And, on the other hand, we must emphasize that straightforward, farsighted theologians were part of the very first group who set out to examine impartially the claims of the liberal feminist movement; they evaluated its compatibility with the entire Catholic philosophy of life; and, in doing so, many of them became the pioneers of the Catholic Women's Movement (Stein 1987, p. 148).

Stein continued to differentiate between dogma, patriarchal interpretations, and the actual text of the Bible. For example, she gives an interpretation of the story of creation in Genesis, refuting the traditional (male) reading that has historically been used to justify the subservient position of women. She uses this text of the Bible to explore the assumptions made so readily about the superiority of man, made in the image of God, and the inferiority of woman as the punished temptress. She points out that they were *both* created in the same light, given mutual responsibility *together*. Indeed, Stein believes that we must *all* follow in the footsteps of Christ and in his image. "Whether man or woman, whether consecrated or not, each one is called to the imitation of Christ" (Stein 1996, p. 84). She believes

that the Church needs womanpower, and strongly asserts that the call to work for the transformation of the world was issued to both man and woman (Oben 1988, p. 56). These interpretations echo the work of feminist theologians both past and present.

Yet, Stein's writing can often be viewed as a negotiation between her own feminist beliefs and the teachings of the Church. Most often she takes a strong stance, as in her insistence that there is no theological reason that women should not become priests, or in her convictions about women education. At other times her ambiguous or almost contradictory statements become confusing. Perhaps, the balance between her beliefs becomes difficult to maintain. Or perhaps she uses seemingly contradictory statements as a way of presenting her position without appearing to oppose Church teachings. Stein recognizes that

in present canon law, equality between man and woman is doubtlessly out of the question inasmuch as she is excluded from all liturgical functions [that require ordination into the priesthood. However,] the legal status of women in the Church and their present position have deteriorated in comparison to the early years when women had official duties as consecrated deaconesses. *The fact that a gradual change took place indicates the possibility of development in an opposite direction.* (Stein 1987, p. 148) [Emphasis mine].

This faith in the possibility of change in the Church reflects the basic feminist tenet of the possibility of social change. Stein's feminism is evident in her struggle to understand and shape the place of women in the Church as well as in the larger society. Knowing that the possibility for change exists provides her with the hope for the effort to continue. Thus, she could not see any theological reason why women should not be ordained to the priesthood in the future since she believed the status of women in the Catholic Church could be transformed. However, she realistically did not anticipate rapid change and proceeded to accept the present status on the basis of historical precedence.

In summary, for Stein,

The goals of the Catholic Women's Movement have much in common with the non-Catholic feminist movement and are indebted to it for valuable preparatory work: the opening up of educational opportunities and gainful employment in the economic field for women; the establishment of jobs in the legal, political and social fields; also in the value placed on marriage and motherhood, the Catholic Women's Movement is in agreement with the moderate elements of the feminist movement (1996, p. 159).

There is no question that for nearly a decade Edith Stein was "the voice of Catholic feminism" in the German-speaking world (Oben 1988). Some of Stein's Catholic biographers (e.g., Graef 1955; Nota 1987b) have some difficulty explaining away her insistence that there is no theological reason against the ordination of women as priests. And, it is puzzling that during her beatification and canonization processes the Vatican authorities chose to ignore her statements about women's ordination at almost the same time they were forbidding discussion on this topic in the Church at large because they considered dogmatic the exclusion of women from ordination and, therefore, closed. How could she be a "confessor" of the faith when her statements contradict the Vatican's?¹³

Stein remained in her teaching position at St. Magdalena College in Speyer until 1932. After another failed attempt at obtaining a professorship teaching Philosophy at a state University, and because of her prominence in the Catholic Women's Movement, she was offered a new position at the Institute for Scientific Pedagogy in Munster—a teacher training, higher education institution. In Munster she lived at the Collegium Marianum, a residence that housed some faculty and students of the Institute.

While she was working at this institution, on an evening in early 1933, a casual acquaintance, unaware of her Jewish ancestry, talked about the anti-Jewish measures instituted by the Third Reich. Hitler had been elected Reich Chancellor in January of that year. Years later, as she was about to flee Germany for Holland, Stein recalled this significant life moment:

I had indeed already heard of severe measures being taken against the Jews. But now on a sudden it was luminously clear to me that once again God's hand lay heavy on His people, and *the destiny of*

this people was my own (Stein 1938, *The Road to Carmel*, cited in Poselt 1952, p. 117).

Compelled to action, she requested an audience with Pope Pius XI. She hoped she could convince him to condemn Nazism. After all, she was well known among Catholics for her translations and interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy and her participation in the Catholic German Women's Movement. Because of her prominence she had expected that her request would be accepted. It was, but not for a private audience. She could have participated in a semi-private audience with several others. She was disappointed, as a semi-private audience would not provide her with the opportunity to present her views in adequate detail. She rejected the offer and decided instead to send a sealed letter to the Pope in summer 1933. In her words, "through my inquiries in Rome I ascertained that, because of the tremendous crowds, I would have no chance for a private audience. At best I might be admitted to a 'semi-private audience,' i.e., an audience in a small group. That did not serve my purpose. I abandoned my travel plans and instead presented my request in writing." (Batzdorf 1990, p. 17). Abbot Walzer, Superior of the Benedictines in Germany, and Stein's spiritual director, hand-delivered the letter. The Pope sent her his spiritual blessing rather than respond to the content of the letter.¹⁴

Shortly after this attempt to influence the Vatican against anti-Semitism, she was asked by the director of the Pedagogical Institute to stop lecturing because she was a Jew. Supposedly, she was to stay in the Marianum doing research, with the restriction that she could not meet her classes. By the end of the academic year she was informed that her contract would not be renewed. In one of her many statements of identification with the Jewish people, she wrote in reaction to this news:

I was almost relieved to find myself now involved in the common fate of my people, but I had of course to consider what I was to do (Stein 1938, *The Road to Carmel*, cited in Poselt 1952, p. 117).

And what she decided after her dismissal was that the time had come to honor her greatest desire, born after reading the autobiography

of Teresa of Avila and her conversion to Catholicism twelve years earlier: enter a Carmelite monastery.¹⁵

Many in Stein's family were actively seeking emigration to escape Nazi persecution. All of them agonized over the situation, anticipating the worst possible fate. They could not understand her decision to join the Carmelites at that explosive juncture. Her entry into a convent must have felt like an act of treachery, particularly in that historical moment of such extreme Jewish vulnerability. It deepened the wound she had inflicted with her conversion and baptism. Her niece, Susanne (Biberstein) Batzdorf, who was twelve at the time of Stein's entry in the convent, remembers asking her aunt, "Why are you doing this now?" To which her Tante Edith answered, "What I am doing does not mean that I want to leave my people and my family...And don't think that my being in a convent is going to keep me immune from what is happening in the world" (Batzdorf 1994, p. 37). Prophetic words.

In the summer of 1933 Stein went to Breslau to tell her mother of her decision to enter a convent. Despite her pain, Frau Stein spent as much time as she could with Edith during this visit. It was the last time they saw each other.¹⁶ In 1936, at a ceremony in which Stein pronounced her vows as a Carmelite, she felt a strong presence at her side. Several days later a telegram informed her that her mother had died at the moment Edith pronounced her vows. Upon her death, a rumor circulated that Frau Stein had converted to Catholicism. Edith was impatient and annoyed by this suggestion. In a letter to a friend dated October 4, 1936, she writes:

The announcement of my mother's conversion is a completely unfounded rumor. Who began it, I don't know. My mother remained steadfast in her own beliefs until the very end. But since her firm faith and trust in God remained unshaken from her earliest childhood to her eighty-seventh year and was her last support in her hard struggle with death, I am confident that she has found a most merciful Judge, and that she is now my most helpful helper on my own journey towards my homeland (Stein 1993, p. 238, cited in Poselt 1952, p. 169).

After her mother's death, Edith's sister Rosa was baptized as a Catholic in Cologne. Rosa was the only member of Stein's immediate family who shared her beliefs. She chose not to embrace Catholicism openly during her mother's life to spare Frau Stein further suffering.

By 1938, the persecution of the Jews was intensifying daily. Stein's continued presence in Germany became dangerous both to her own safety as well for the other nuns in the convent. Her superiors decided to send her to the Carmel in Echt, Holland. Like other German Jews who crossed the border into the Netherlands (probably the most famous are Anna Frank and her family), Stein hoped for safety. But this geographical move was not to protect her like she had expected because the Nazis were to cross that border themselves to invade the Netherlands in a few years...¹⁷ In June, 1939 Rosa joined her in Echt after a failed attempt at entering a new religious congregation in Belgium. For the next few years Rosa served as a portress of the Carmelite monastery in Echt.

Shortly after the Germans attacked and invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the Christian churches in that country began protesting the deportation of Jews. The Nazi authorities offered the Dutch churches a bargain: if Church authorities agreed to keep silent about the deportation of Jews they would guarantee the protection and exemption from deportation for converted Jews. The Dutch Reformed/Lutheran Church, after some initial resistance, accepted this bargain and chose to keep silent. The bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, however, refused to comply. On Sunday, July 26, 1942, priests read in all Catholic churches a pastoral letter from the bishops condemning the deportation of the Jews.¹⁸ A part of the letter read as follows:

All of us are living through a period of great distress, both from a spiritual and from a material standpoint. But there are two sets of people whose distress is deeper than that of others, the distress of the Jews and the distress of those who are deported to work abroad. Such distress is the concern of us all; and it is the purpose of this pastoral to bring it before your minds [...] The following telegram in favor of the Jews and others was dispatched on Saturday the eleventh of July: "The undersigned religious organizations of the Netherlands, deeply shaken by the measures against the Jews which have excluded them from the normal life of the

people, have learnt with terror of the later regulations by which men, women, children and whole families are to be deported to the territory of the German Reich. The suffering which has been imposed on thousands of people, the awareness that these regulations offend the deepest moral convictions of the Netherlands people, and above all, the denial in these regulations of God's precepts of justice and mercy, forces the undersigned religious organizations to request most urgently that these regulations shall not be carried out..." (Poselt 1952, p. 203).

It was the text of the telegram, which was cited in the Pastoral, that the Nazi invaders had sought to keep out of any public statements by the Churches. The pastoral letter continued by praying for the Jews and asking all Dutch Catholics to reflect on their participation in acts of cruelty to others.¹⁹ Apparently, the Nazis had counted on the silent submission and/or anti-Semitism of Christian religious leaders they had encountered in Germany and other countries.

The Nazi authorities in the Netherlands were outraged at what they saw as audacity on the part of the Catholic bishops. In retaliation, euphemistically, they "refused to guarantee the safety of Catholic Jews" (Poselt 1952, p. 204). On August 2, all non-Aryan members of religious communities were arrested. Edith Stein and her sister Rosa were among them. They were first taken to Amesfoort Camp; then they were transferred to Westerbork and later to Auschwitz, arriving there on August 9 where they were gassed upon arrival.

One of the primary paradoxes surrounding Edith Stein, one of the places where she stands at the crossroad of established lines, was her death. She was murdered as a direct consequence of one of the few *official* actions of the Catholic hierarchy to protect the Jews from Nazi persecution.²⁰ I am not "heroizing" this action of the Dutch bishops, particularly in light of its tragic, unanticipated consequences. My intention is to highlight that this small act of resistance of the Church hierarchy provoked the Nazis into deadly retaliation and Stein's life was lost. It is possible that her murder was unavoidable since the Nazis were bent on Jewish destruction. However, historical evidence tells us that while many Dutch Jews who had converted to Lutheranism (approximately

9,000) were not deported, practically all Catholic Jews in the Netherlands lost their lives, including many nuns and priests.

In her last letters, Stein wrote about her identification with Queen Esther and her desire to save her people from further destruction by pleading their cause with “the Heavenly King” (Stein 1938, 1993, p. 291).²¹ People who were standing outside the convent at the time of her arrest claim that she took her sister Rosa’s hand and said, “Come, let us go for our people.”

The concept of offering to die for others is not a Jewish concept.²² But in Christianity Jesus death is considered a redemptive act. As a Christian, Stein believed that we are members of the body of Christ and that every human suffering assumes redeeming power through Jesus Christ (Stein 1994). She probably did not deliver one single person from death through the offering of her life, not even some of the members of her own family who stayed in Germany. However, if we believe in the power of prayer, we cannot but believe that her death was not in vain, if not for the physical salvation of her fellow Jews, certainly for the spiritual salvation of her fellow Catholics/Christians, perhaps her life and death have had a purpose after all in demanding Catholics become aware of the horror of the Shoah/Holocaust. Confronted with Stein’s life and death and her canonization by the Catholic Church, we cannot but reflect on our life choices in relation to our Jewish brothers and sisters.

Stein was convinced that God called her to sacrifice her life for the safety and salvation of other Jews, even though her theological understandings were mired in the perspectives of her historical times. She asked her mother prioress in Echt for permission to do such an offering to God. In her last testament, composed in 1939, she wrote that she offered her life for “the Jewish people [...] the deliverance of Germany and world peace [...] the destruction of the Antichrist [meaning implied: Hitler and Nazism] [...] for all my relatives [...] that none of them may be lost.”²³

Edith Stein converted out of conviction rather than convenience. Perhaps that is why she never rejected her Jewish roots. She did not perceive any real opposition between the two religions. In fact, she saw them as a complementary whole. In the words of Shoah/Holocaust scholar Rachel Felhay Brenner (1994),

It appears that Stein's Jewishness played a crucial role in her Christian life. Her determination to assert her Jewish identity at the time of the Nazi terror emerges, paradoxically, as the validation of the vision of redemption that she strove to find in the Church. Stein's *Weltanschauung* thus denotes a convergence of religious identities, rather than the conversion from one identity into another: she seems to find no contradiction claiming her part in Jesus, and at the same time, asserting her ties to the Jewish people (p. 258).

Perhaps, as Daniel Boyarin (2004, 2007) and others believe, there was no inevitability to the division between Judaism and Christianity. And if history had followed a different course, Edith Stein's position may not have been perceived as so controversial or absurd.²⁴

During her stay in Breslau in the summer of 1933, immediately before her entry into Carmel, Stein began writing her autobiography, *Life in a Jewish Family*. She continued writing during her years in the convent. As she stated in the foreword, the book constitutes a response to "the horrendous caricature" of Jews that emerged from "the programmed writings and speeches of the new dictators." Her purpose in writing this book is to counteract "the battle on Judaism" launched by the Nazis. In her introduction to this book she tells us

Repeatedly, in these past months, I have had to recall a discussion I had several years ago with a priest [...]. In that discussion I was urged to write down what I, child of a Jewish family, had learned about the Jewish people since such knowledge is so rarely found in outsiders. [...] Last March, when our [government] opened the battle on Judaism in Germany, I was again reminded of it. [There are] persons, [who] having associated with Jewish families as employees, neighbors, or fellow students, have found in them such goodness of heart, understanding, warm empathy, and so consistently helpful an attitude that, now, their sense of justice is outraged by the condemnation of this people to a pariah's existence. But many others lack this kind of experience. The opportunity to attain it has been denied primarily to the young who, these days, are being reared in racial hatred from earliest

childhood. To all who have been thus deprived, *we who grew up in Judaism have an obligation to give our testimony* [Emphasis mine] (Stein 1986, p. 23).

She left the unfinished manuscript in Germany when she crossed the border into The Netherlands because its discovery would have endangered her safe passage. A few months later a volunteer transported it. In Holland, she continued developing her manuscript and finished the last chapter during the last months of her life. At this time, she was also writing a study on the theology of St. John of the Cross that was interrupted by her arrest (Stein 1994). In her years in the convent, Stein had also continued writing philosophy. Her most important book, *Finite and Eternal Being*, was not published during her lifetime because of the German prohibition against publications by Jewish authors and her refusal to publish under a false non-Jewish name.

Interestingly, in her autobiography, Stein omits all references to her subsequent conversion and vocation as a nun, but rather ends with her doctoral dissertation and makes no reference to the circumstances of her later life. In a footnote, she places her autobiographical undertaking in the context of the memoirs of other Jewish women such as Glueckel von Hameln and Pauline Wengeroff, rather than refer to the many Christian women autobiographers who had preceded her, most notably, her fellow Carmelites Thérèse of Lisieux and Teresa of Avila, whose autobiography had played such a significant role in Stein's final decision to convert to Catholicism.

Some biographers believe that the manuscript was interrupted and left incomplete by her arrest (for example, Koepfel, who is the translator of this document into English, in her introduction to Stein 1986). Others, however, believe that the omission was done consciously. These scholars²⁵ believe the silence about her later life was motivated by "an awareness that under the circumstances of Nazi anti-Jewish persecution the story of a conversion would not help to promote the cause of racial tolerance" (Brenner 1994, p. 264). I tend to agree with this latter view. It is certain that the manuscript was left unrevised. But even if she did not have time to write about her later life, she could have made reference to her adult activities and convictions while writing of her earlier life. In fact, many autobiographies rewrite the events of early life in light of future events. But there is

nothing of the sort in Stein's *Life in a Jewish Family*. I concur with Brenner that this self-imposed silence was most probably a conscious choice. "Her decision to write about her Jewish life at that particular historical moment communicates a moral attitude which, at the time of moral disintegration dismisses not only religious differences, but also the risk of personal danger" (Brenner 1994, p. 89).

The circumstances surrounding Stein's arrest were the basis for the Catholic Church's beatification of her as a martyr. The Roman Catholic Church has never issued a dogmatic definition of martyrdom. However, there is a model of what is recognized as the yardstick of martyrdom. A martyr is an innocent person who dies at the hands of a tyrant in defense of his or her faith. It is the martyr's fidelity to his or her faith that "provokes the tyrant" into executing him or her (Woodward 1996, p. 129). Although Stein did not herself "provoke the tyrant" (a condition to be considered a martyr) her arrest and death were a consequence of the action of the Dutch bishops.

In many cases, martyrdom has been a historically political act because it involves a refusal to bow to the authority of the tyrant over the martyred person. Since the beginning of Christianity, those considered "tyrants" were non-Christians who persecuted Christians for their faith. The term was developed during Roman persecutions of Christians. It comes from the Greek word for "witness." Earlier Christian saints were martyrs of the Roman Empire. The Nazis, with their pretense of Christianity, as well as, say, the death squads in El Salvador or Guatemala, uniquely challenge the Catholic Church's definition of who is a tyrant and who is a martyr.

According to journalist Kenneth Woodward, author of *Making Saints* (Woodward 1996), "The beatification of Stein [...] was one of the most controversial episodes in the papacy of John Paul II," (p. 128).²⁶ The Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints, encouraged by the Pope's decision to beatify and canonize Stein and others, is extending this transformation of the concept of martyrdom to include under the definition of "tyrants" other right-wing dictators who hide under a pretense of Christianity. Several beatifications and canonizations have been test cases for this new understanding. In addition to Edith Stein, these include: Titus Brandsma, a Carmelite from Holland, killed in Dachau for encouraging the Dutch Catholic Press to resist Nazi propaganda;

Maximilian Kolbe, the Polish Franciscan who died in Auschwitz after offering his life for the life of another prisoner who had been condemned to starve to death; Rupert Mayer, a Jesuit from Munich, and others. Among them, Stein is the only Jew and the only woman.²⁷ In the process of their beatifications and canonizations, the Pope made an important point about the definitions of tyrants and martyrdom, and opened the door for the future canonization of others in which he may have been less interested, such as Archbishop Romero and the six Jesuits priests and their housekeepers, all murdered by Salvadoran right-wing death squads.²⁸ Clearly, John Paul “used” the lives of those he beatified and canonized to make deliberate theological statements as well as statements about world history and politics.²⁹

One more paradoxical and unexplained issue surrounding Stein’s canonization is that John Paul, who had canonized large groups of people who were martyred together, chose to canonize only Stein from among all the others who were imprisoned with her and presumably died with her. As Carmelite Father John Sullivan puts it,

one would have welcomed a decision by the Vatican authorities to include the other Catholics who met their deaths with her in the Nazi reprisal against their bishops’ gesture of solidarity with Dutch Jews. [...Indeed,] history has seen many individuals have been made saints along with their “companions” [...]. If that approach had been taken in this case, her blood sister Rosa [...] would be commemorated liturgically along with [...Stein], as well as many other people like the five Cistercians of the Loeb family, [who also died with Edith Stein and her sister Rosa] and others (Sullivan 1998, p. 13).

If John Paul intended to apologize to the Jews by beatifying and canonizing Stein, his apology has not been well received. There is no doubt that John Paul proved himself over and over as an advocate of respect for the Jewish people. He publicly apologized to the Jews for the Catholic Church’s silence during the Shoah/Holocaust. He visited Jerusalem and met with Jewish leaders. But after centuries of abuse and cruelty to Jews by Christians, a reaction of mistrust and outrage at what might appear

to some as an attempt at “Christianizing” the Shoah/Holocaust and a devious way to promote conversions is almost unavoidable.

The conflict surrounding her canonization is at the core of her paradoxical sainthood. As I asked earlier, if she died because she was a Jew, how could she be a Catholic saint? But if she was not a Jew anymore after her conversion, how come she died because she was a Jew? For the Nazis, who did not consider conversion in their “racial” definition of Jewishness, she was just another Jew. From a Jewish perspective, Stein had renounced her claim to Judaism with her conversion. Personally, she identified with both Jews and Catholics. But, in more than one way, she spoke as a Catholic.

Catholic theological perspectives on Judaism during Stein’s life were rather anti-Semitic. Not only did they foster negative stereotypes (Ruether 1981, 1982) but they definitely lacked insight into the special vocation of the Jewish people later developed by Vatican Council II in the 1960s.³⁰ There is no doubt that anti-Semitic theological perspectives were to blame for the success of the Nazi anti-Semitic policies. Stein’s theological perspectives on Jews and Judaism did not benefit from the later understandings. However, her sense of commitment to her people was unshaken by Christian prejudices. As a psychologist, I can only guess at her pain and internal conflict as she struggled with her two identities and loyalties and lived with the negative reactions and suspicion of both Jews and Catholics who surrounded her. To feel Jewish and yet feel Catholic, at her particular junction in history, was by no means an easy task.

The Catholic Church has no authority to pass judgment on the sainthood of non-Catholics. Only because she was a Catholic could the Pope canonize her. Herein lays the dilemma. If only Christian victims of the Holocaust are made saints by the Church, the Pope would appear to minimize the death of the majority of the victims who were Jews, not Catholics. If a converted Jew is made a saint, the Pope appears to be endorsing conversion...³¹

Needless to say, there are many lessons the church as an institution, as well as individual Catholics, need to learn about the Shoah/Holocaust. And many efforts need to be made to find ways in which Jews and Christians can engage in fruitful contacts “beyond the dialogues of the deaf called interfaith dialogue” (Boyarin 2007, p. 19). One way to start on this road is “to disinvest ourselves in difference” (Boyarin 2007, p. 19).

Perhaps the controversies created by Edith Stein's canonization, as well as scholarly work about her, can become a source of education; a harbinger of the effect Stein can have on Christians. Her canonization—all its paradoxes notwithstanding—can have an impact on Catholics' reflections about their attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. Her story focuses our attention on the martyrdom of Jews and on the brutal injustices committed against them through the ages; an endeavor that is a duty for Christians in this twenty-first century (Rastoin 1998).

If we do not believe in God or in the value of prayer, Edith Stein's death is just another useless murder. Judith Banki, cited earlier, writes that if the questions raised by Stein's beatification and canonization "lead to serious self-examination regarding historic anti-Semitism in and out of the Church, if reflection on the life and death of this remarkable woman serves to uproot traditional sources of hostility to Jews and Judaism then, in Jewish terms, her memory may yet be a blessing" (Banki 1994, p. 48), which in no way would diminish the reality of the injustice that caused her death and the deaths of so many.

By the same token, if her writings on women become known among Catholics, her thinking could exercise a significant influence on the role of women in the Church. Her words now carry the authority of a canonized saint...and no canonized saint has ever been so explicit about sexism in and outside of the Church or openly defined herself as a feminist.

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Notes

1. Versions of this text have been presented at Lipinsky Institute for Judaic Studies, San Diego State University, February 1997 and Center for Spiritual Ministry, University of San Diego, October 2003.
2. Biographical information is from Stein (1986, 1993) and from biographies by Poselt (1952); Graef (1955); Oben (1987, 1988); Koepfel (1990). Elaboration of this biographical information, based on the above works, is found in McAlister (1989); Batzdorf (1994); Brenner (1994, 1995). Unless otherwise specified, biographical data appears repeatedly in all of the biographies. Many other books about Stein have been published after her canonization.
3. "Beatification," in the Roman Catholic Church, is the step immediately prior to "canonization" in the saint-making process. It is an act whereby the Pope, after a long and thorough examination of a (deceased) Catholic's life and beliefs, recommends that he/she be venerated. A beatified person is called "blessed." "Canonization" is the official declaration made by a Pope that a deceased member of the Church (already beatified) is indeed sharing in eternal glory. After this declaration, the person so canonized is henceforth venerated as a saint throughout the whole Church. A canonized saint has a specific feast day on the Church's calendar in which his or her life and virtues are celebrated. Several miracles, usually physical healings from some illness that defy modern scientific explanations, certified as due to the intercession of the particular deceased person are required as proof of this person's "proximity to God" after their death. With the new procedures instituted by John Paul II, only one miracle is required before beatification, except if the person in question is considered to have died a martyr's death—in which case, a miracle is not necessary for beatification. At least one miracle is required without exception before final canonization and elevation to sainthood. It is the Pope's proclamation that makes a person a "Blessed" after beatification or a "Saint" after canonization, but he may or may not be involved at different stages in the process of an individual's beatification and/or canonization. For the most part, these processes are administered by Vatican bureaucrats who collect verbal and written testimonies about a candidate's life and virtues, analyze the validity of proposed miracles and decide who will be presented to the Pope for beatification or canonization (Woodward 1996).
4. By sheer coincidence, I stayed in Cologne in the same hotel where Stein's family had stayed ten years earlier when they came for her beatification and where they were together for the first time after decades.
5. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was present at the canonization in one of his last official ceremonies. So was Benedicta McCarthy, the girl whose survival from Tylenol poisoning in Boston was the subject of Stein's canonization miracle, with her family. Many members of Stein's family—both Jews and Christians—came from three different continents for the ceremony. Of these family members, I have been in contact with her niece, Susan (Biberstein) Batzdorf who has translated and edited some of Stein's works and commentaries about her (see references). Batzdorf has kindly reviewed my manuscripts on Stein and provided valuable details and accurate information on some points as well as put me in touch with Gabriela Grobelna, who served as my informal Polish interpreter and guide when I visited Wrocław.

6. Phenomenology, associated with the teachings of Edmund Husserl and his followers, was a philosophical movement that understood itself as a rigorous search for and analysis of foundational meanings and essences of all thought phenomena. It greatly influenced German philosophic thought during the thirty years that preceded the Nazi takeover.
7. Empathy, the capacity to “feel with” others, is an essential component of psychotherapy. It is also one of the skills in which women tend to excel. Stein believed that the capacity for empathy was essential for the full development of the human person.
8. Ten years later, the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who had also been Husserl student, published the master’s lectures that Stein had laboriously edited during her time as Husserl’s assistant without even mentioning her name. And, just a few years after this publication, Heidegger’s Nazi loyalties made him completely disengage from and reject his mentor, who died alone after losing his post at the University of Freiburg because he was born a Jew (Mueller 1998).
9. Term used in Germany to describe the process of qualifying for a University professorship.
10. This turn of the century “conversionary impulse” was affecting not only German Jews but also intellectual circles all over Europe; the converts were not always Jews. In France, philosopher Jacques Maritain and his wife Raisa, writers Leon Bloy and Charles Peguy, painter George Rouault and other intellectuals and artists, many of whom had been baptized Catholics at birth but had lived most of their youth as atheists or agnostics, converted back to Catholicism at this same juncture in history. The reasons that motivated these intellectuals to return to the faith of their ancestors may have been different from the reasons of many Jews who converted to Christianity. However, for Jews like Stein, who did not convert for pragmatic reasons, the “conversionary impulse” may have been motivated by a search for truth. Franz Rosenzweig, who re-embraced the Judaism of his ancestors after seriously considering conversion to Christianity, also exemplifies the search in which many intellectuals were involved at the time.
11. She states that “an essential part of the educational process is the activation of one’s practical and creative capacities. And practical abilities in life are required of the majority of women. Only if we allowed them to already act during the time of schooling will we rear practical, able, energetic, determined, self-sacrificing women” (1996, p. 137). Her use of the word “act” emphasizes the practical involvement necessary in the education of girls. Stein encouraged women to “an intensified participation...in girls’ education on the principle that authentic women can be formed only by women” (p. 155). Because “...only women and, indeed, only adequately prepared women are able to educate young girls, which requires theoretical foundation as well as practical application, this is specifically a feminine responsibility” (p. 172).
12. To this day, no Papal pronouncements, encyclicals, and other writings on women (including John Paul II) meet the conditions for “ex-cathedra” teachings (i.e., officially declared dogmas).
13. I have my own theory. I believe that Stein’s canonization—as well as other events in Church history that contradict prevalent positions of the hierarchy—is a “wink” of the Holy Spirit...Catholic feminists now have a canonized feminist to whom to pray for the end of sexism in the world and in the Church... (smile).

14. Earlier on, in 1937, Pius XI had written an encyclical to German bishops condemning Nazism but did not address the Jewish question specifically. We do know that a few years later Pius XI asked Jesuit priest Fr. John La Farge, to prepare a draft for an encyclical against racism and anti-Semitism (Nota 1987a,b). Father La Fargue at that time was a champion for the equality of all races in the United States. With the help of other Jesuits he indeed drafted an encyclical against anti-Semitism and submitted it to the Pope. Unfortunately, Pius XI's sudden death interrupted this process. His successor, Pius XII, did use sections of this draft to write an encyclical about peace after World War II erupted.

15. The Carmelites are an enclosed order wherein nuns pray and fast both for specific people and the world. Christian hermits on Mount Carmel in Israel founded the Carmelite order in the twelfth century. They sought prayer and life in isolation following the prophet Elijah's example. In the sixteenth century, Teresa of Avila, herself an unacknowledged descendant of Spanish converted Jews (*conversos*), reformed the order to bring Carmel back to its original austerities.

16. On this visit, they attended synagogue together. In the above-mentioned essay, *The Road to Carmel*, Stein relates the account of their joint synagogue visit that occurred on her last day at home, also her birthday and the last day of Sukkot. It offered them a chance to spend additional time together. Attending religious services with her mother was most probably a rare event (Batzdorf, personal communication, 1997). But when she was in Breslau after her conversion to Catholicism, she sometimes accompanied her mother to synagogue and prayed with her, particularly the Psalms. Her mother was both baffled and moved by her daughter's newfound prayerfulness after years of self-defining as an atheist. After the October 1933 service, Frau Stein asked Edith if she had liked the sermon. Following Edith's affirmative response, her mother asked, "Then it is possible for a Jew to be pious?" Edith responded, "Certainly, if one has not learned anything more." To which her mother's replied despairing: "Why did you have to learn more? I don't want to say anything against him. He may have been a very good man. But why did he make himself God?" (Stein 1938, *The Road to Carmel*, in Poselt 1952, p. 130). Frau Stein, like most Jews and Christians, did not understand that Jesus never "made himself God" and, in fact, was never other than a religious Jew, committed to his faith and relationship with God within the Judaism of his time.

17. Stein's passport picture taken in December 1938 is apparently an excellent likeness of her during this period. This and another taken during the spring or summer of 1942 are her last pictures. The passport picture is the one used by the Church as her "official image" in all publications concerning her beatification and canonization.

18. It is not clear if the Dutch Catholic Bishops were, at this point, aware of the existence of death camps or if they were only referring to deportation to what were purportedly work camps.

19. It enjoined them to discontinue and reject any association with the Nazis: "Dear Brethren, let us examine our own selves [...] We cannot but confess that we have failed [...]" (Poselt 1952, p. 204). Years earlier, before the Nazi invasion, on February 2, 1934, the Catholic Bishops in The Netherlands had distanced themselves forcefully from National Socialism and strongly warned the faithful against the dangers emanating from the Nazi movement. They had stated unequivocally in this earlier letter, "We therefore forbid membership or active

participation [in Nazi organizations] ...” In October 1940, the first anti-Semitic measures in Holland had provoked immediately an official protest from the Catholic bishops (Koehler 1998). But the pastoral letter of July 26, 1942, where the Bishops actively challenged the policies of the Nazi invaders, was the last drop for Reichkommissar Seyss-Inquart.

20. It is important to distinguish official acts of the Church hierarchy from the actions of individual Catholics and nuns and priests who did protect the Jews, sometimes at great risk (e.g., Baron 1993). It is also important to acknowledge that the Roman Catholic Church is not a monolithic institution. It is not the same in every country. The Dutch Catholic Church has been rather unique, avant-garde, and rebellious towards Rome. The Catholic Church was not monolithic during the Nazi persecution either. The actions (or inaction) of Pius XII was not the only response of Catholics. For example, Archbishop Roncalli, who later became Pope John XXIII was active in rescuing Jews in Turkey; the Papal Nunciature in Budapest also became actively involved in rescue efforts.

21. Stein was actively seeking transfer to a convent in Switzerland for her and her sister Rosa at the time of her arrest. However, she had prepared herself for this moment while taking precautions to ensure her safety.

22. In a course on Holocaust literature I took with Elie Wiesel at Boston University in the 1970s, we read André Schwarz-Bart’s *The Last of the Just* (Schwarz-Bart 1961). Ernie, the protagonist of this novel, is a Jew who voluntarily offers his life to God for the deliverance of others. I remember Wiesel’s comment on how the character of Ernie represented a Christian value system rather than a Jewish perspective. Not that ideas about the spiritual significance of suffering are absent from Judaism. Wiesel himself speaks of “the will to suffer so as to infuse one’s suffering and that of others with meaning” (Wiesel 1995, p. 150). Edith Stein, like fictional Jewish Ernie in *The Last of the Just*, believed in the redemptive value of offering to suffer for others.

23. The full text of her last testament, in her own handwriting says, “I ask the Lord to accept my life and death for His honor and glorification, for all concerns of the most Holy Heart of Jesus and Mary and the Holy church, especially for the sanctification and completion of our Holy Order, particularly the Carmels of Cologne and Echt, for the atonement for the unbelief of the Jewish people and in order that the Lord may be accepted by his own [people] and that His Kingdom come in magnificence, for the deliverance of Germany and world peace, the destruction of the Antichrist, and finally for my relatives both living and dead and all whom God has given me: that none of them may be lost.” It is now usually quoted in abridged form, so as not to give offense to Jewish readers, but this is how she wrote it (Batzdorf, personal communication, 1997). This uncensored text speaks more about Catholic theology before Vatican II than it does about Stein’s feelings for her fellow Jews, as her autobiography demonstrates.

24. During my ARIL Coolidge Fellowship in summer 2005, I had a personal conversation with Boyarin about my understanding and relationship with Jesus as a Jew. He probably does not even remember this conversation. But, the effect of the new understanding he gave me has had a deep impact on my thinking about Stein and on my identity as a Catholic/Christian.

25. Most notably, Rachel Feldhay Brenner (1997). In addition to her cited works, see her *Writing as Resistance: Four Women Confronting the Holocaust*, 1997. University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

26. Aside from his interest in phenomenology (John Paul's thesis was on Max Scheler), and his respect for Stein's work, he apparently envisioned her beatification and canonization as an apology for the silence of his predecessors during the Holocaust. His homily at Stein's canonization ceremony focused on this theme.

27. This gender ratio, by the way, is typical. Before the twentieth century only 13 percent of canonized saints were women. In the twentieth century only 24 percent have been women, bringing the total ratio to 20 percent.

28. John Paul participated, in his youth, in the Polish resistance against the Nazis. As Pope he was intent on stretching the definition of martyrdom to include resistance to Nazism, but much less willing to apply the same criteria to other historical or political context.

29. Indeed, whenever he traveled, he found a way of including at least one or two beatifications in his schedule. He canonized 482 saints and beatified many more people. These numbers are larger than all of his twentieth century predecessors who, combined, canonized ninety-eight, and beatified seventy-nine.

30. In *Nostra aetate*, the 1965 Vatican Council's Declaration concerning non-Christian religions, the spiritual connections of the Catholic Church with Judaism and the Jewish people are presented in a new light. Both *Nostra aetate*, and the more recent document from the Pontifical Biblical Commission (2002), *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, insist on the continuity of Israel's covenant and the debt of Christians to Jewish scripture and traditions. The natural consequence of this acknowledgment should be a new form of Catholic-Jewish relationships as well as a new Catholic understanding of Christian scriptures and traditions (see, for example, J. T. Palikowski 2007, "Reflections on covenant and mission forty years after *Nostra aetate*." *CrossCurrents* 56(4), 70-94, and Rastoin (1998).

31. It may be interesting to note that readings of the Mass of Stein's canonization were from Ch. 4 in the book of Esther, when she pleads with God to give her the strength to save her people and from Ch. 4 of John's Gospel, in which Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that "salvation comes from the Jews."