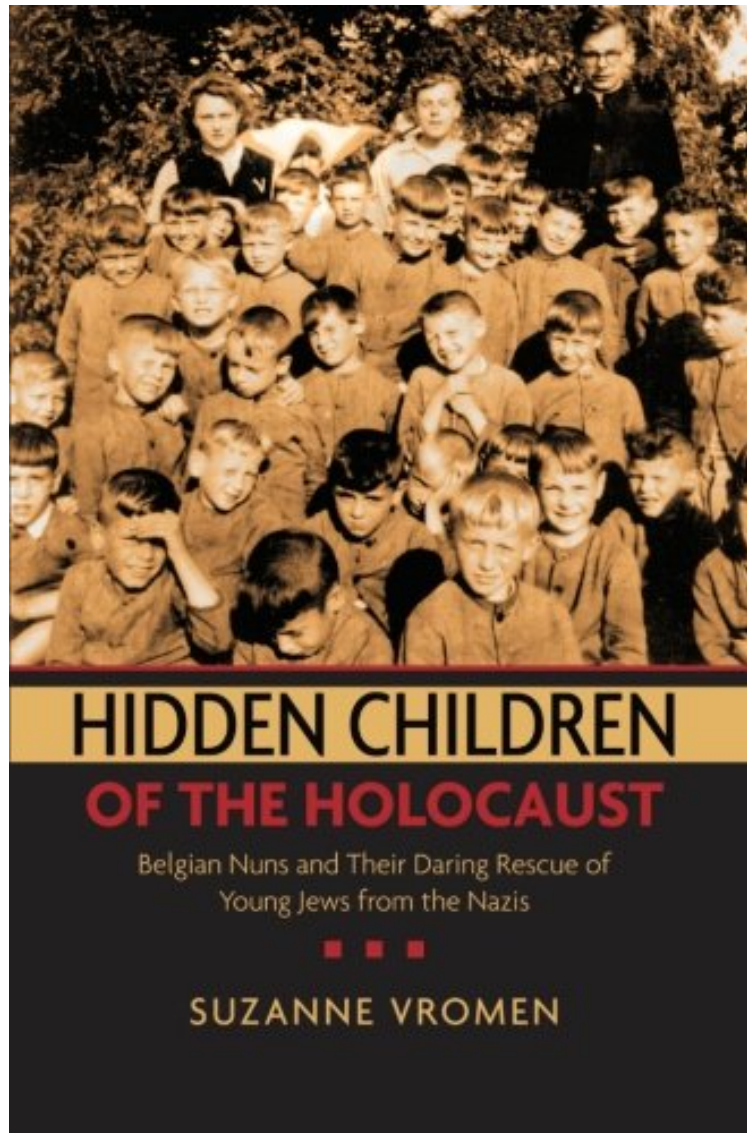


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Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis

Suzanne Vromen

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In the terrifying summer of 1942 in Belgium, when the Nazis began the brutal roundup of Jewish families, parents searched desperately for safe haven for their children. As Suzanne Vromen reveals in *Hidden Children of the Holocaust*, these children found sanctuary with other families and schools--but especially in Roman Catholic convents and orphanages. Vromen has interviewed not only those who were hidden as children, but also the Christian women who rescued them, and the nuns who gave the children shelter, all of whose voices are heard in this powerfully moving book. Indeed, here are numerous first-hand memoirs of life in a wartime convent--the secrecy, the humor, the admiration, the anger, the deprivation, the cruelty, and the kindness--all with the backdrop of the terror of the Nazi occupation. We read the stories of the women of the Resistance who risked their lives in placing Jewish children in the care of the Church, and of the Mothers Superior and nuns who sheltered these children and hid their identity from the authorities. Perhaps most riveting are the stories told by the children themselves--abruptly separated from distraught parents and given new names, the children were brought to the convents with a sense of urgency, sometimes under the cover of darkness. They were plunged into a new life, different from anything they had ever known, and expected to adapt seamlessly. Vromen shows that some adapted so well that they converted to Catholicism, at times to fit in amid the daily prayers and rituals, but often because the Church appealed to them. Vromen also examines their lives after the war, how they faced the devastating loss of parents to the Holocaust, struggled to regain their identities and sought to memorialize those who saved them. This remarkable book offers an inspiring chronicle of the brave individuals who risked everything to protect innocent young strangers, as well as a riveting account of the "hidden children" who lived to tell their stories.

From BooklistNever will every Holocaust story be told, but powerful tales of courage, rescue, and compromise continue to surface. Vromen, professor emeritus of sociology at Bard College, casts light on the precarious lives of hidden Jewish children in occupied Belgium and the brave nuns who gave them shelter and care. Her groundbreaking research was inspired by her own experience. As a child, Vromen escaped occupied Belgium with her family, who found refuge in the Belgian Congo, where she attended a convent school. Recalling her initial bewilderment at being plunged suddenly into a Catholic milieu, Vromen was able to connect at the deepest level with the surviving rescuers and former hidden children she interviewed. These remarkably detailed and profoundly moving conversations are matched by Vromen's fresh and insightful analysis of knotty questions of identity, inheritance, faith, and survival. Writing with a disciplined clarity, Vromen chronicles the integration of young Jews into convent life, the baptism of many and the conversion of some, and the psychological, social, and spiritual repercussions. Vromen's exacting and correctivework of history and remembrance is uniquely sensitive and illuminating. --Donna Seaman "Suzanne Vromen's deeply moving book about Jewish children hidden in Belgian convents during World War II is an extraordinary study of human courage, devotion, and transcendent spirit. Capturing the voices of those who were saved and of their rescuers, Vromen illuminates history and offers us inspiration." --Susannah Heschel, author of *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*"Suzanne Vromen masterfully uncovers the hidden history not just of Jewish children rescued during the Holocaust, but also of the courageous women who saved their lives. Vromen has restored a missing piece of the Belgian and Jewish past. She tells the story of the children and their saviors with tact, gentleness, and insight." --Deborah Dash Moore, author of *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation*"*Hidden Children of the Holocaust* offers important insights into the lives of children who disappeared behind Convent doors in Belgium during the Holocaust. We still know far too little about what happened to children during the Nazi period and even less about those who were hidden by Catholic institutions. Relying on both the printed record and interviews with some of the children and the priests and nuns who hid them, Suzanne Vromen paints a vivid picture. This is an important book that will captivate readers and open a door to a body of knowledge that has been hidden for far too long." --Deborah E. Lipstadt, author of *History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving*"An important book." --TabletAbout the AuthorSuzanne Vromen is Professor of Sociology Emeritus at Bard College.