

0. BAD LAWS - Story Preface

1. UNSETTLING QUESTIONS

2. BAD LAWS

3. ...ALLOW BAD ACTIONS

4. A LEGAL KIDNAPPING

5. LAWS in the PAPAL STATES

6. PARENTAL ANGUISH and a KIDNAPPING

7. INTERCESSION FAILS

8. POPE PIUS IX GETS INVOLVED

9. EDGARDO MORTARA CONVERTS

10. THE PAPAL STATES FALL

11. EDGARDO REFUSES to ESCAPE

12. EDGARDO REJECTS HIS FAMILY

13. HOW CAN A SINGLE ACTION CHANGE OUR DESTINY?

14. UNSETTLING QUESTIONS, HOPEFUL ANSWERS

15. MORE BACKGROUND MATERIAL



Jewish people were required to wear distinctive costumes and use specific markings on their clothing long before Hitler and his regime ordered them to wear the Yellow Star of David. This compiled illustration depicts various types of Jewish clothing identification from the medieval era. France, for example, required Jewish people to wear a red/white badge (see the top row, in position 6, from a 14th-century manuscript maintained at the [BNF](#)). From *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Volume 4, edited by Isidore Singer, originally published by Funk and Wagnalls, in 12 volumes, between 1901-1906, and republished by KTAV Publishing House, Inc., in the 1960s. Click on the image for a full-page view.

The law in effect in Edgardo Mortara's town was "canon" (Catholic Church) law. When certain provisions of church law were applied to the Jews of Bologna in 1858, kidnapping was *not* a crime.

What kind of law would allow a child to be legally removed from his parents?

- The same kind of law which allowed it for centuries, with very little resistance.
- The same kind of law which required Jews to live in ghettos long before the rise of Hitler in Nazi Germany.
- The same kind of law which required Jews to wear an emblem on their clothes so everyone who saw them would know they were Jews. (In Modena, Italy, that emblem was a red ribbon which Jews wore on their hats.)

What kind of law would not only condone, but *require*, such things? In 1858, Canon (church) law as it was applied to secular (non-church) life.

On June 23, 1858, some of those laws were still in effect in the Italian Papal States. Laws like:

If a Jewish child is near death any Catholic can baptize the child EVEN IF the child's parents do not approve

AND

If a Jewish child has been baptized, the child is a Christian and cannot be raised in a Jewish home EVEN IF the home belongs to his parents.

Although canon law in Bologna no longer required Jews to work (as well as live) inside the ghetto, the baptism law was still in effect during 1858. So was the law proscribing where a baptized Jewish child (considered,

thereafter, to be a Christian child) had to live.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BAD-LAWS-Kidnapping-of-Edgardo-Mortara>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BAD-LAWS-Kidnapping-of-Edgardo-Mortara>

Media Stream



Map: Modena, Italy

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Modena-Italy>