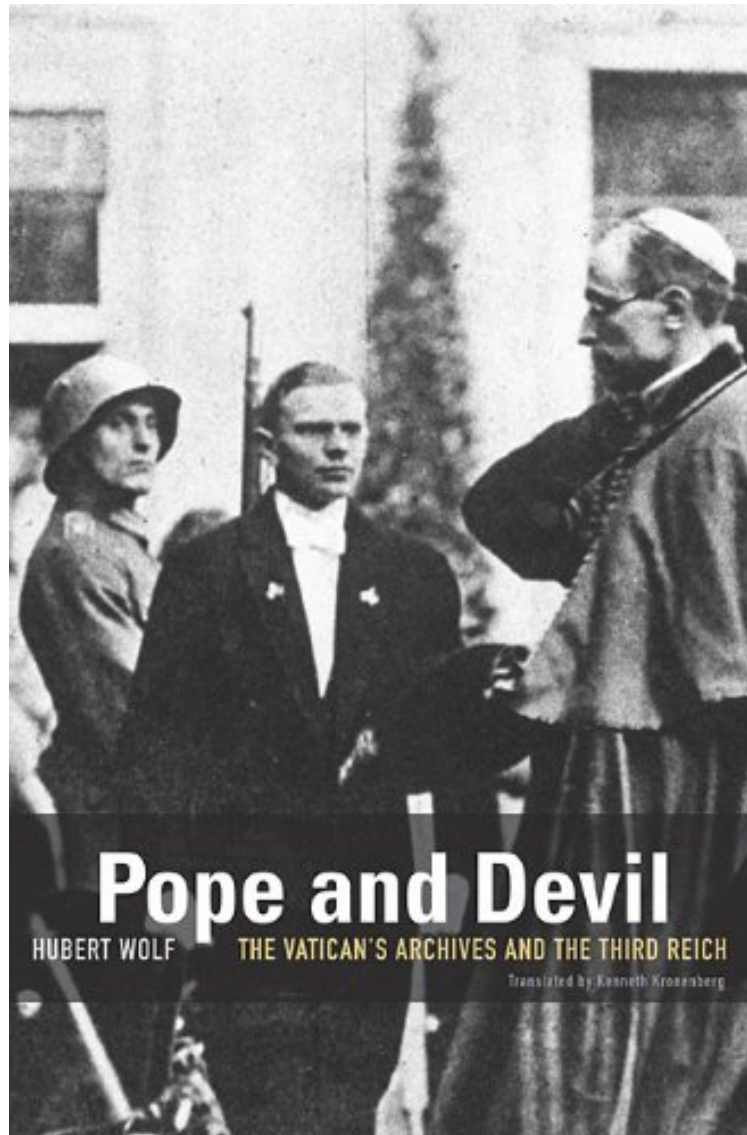


(Free pdf) Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich

Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich

Hubert Wolf

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Hubert Wolf : Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Lots of insights and very balancedBy MNhistorianIt is refreshing to read such a balanced book on this topic. Pius XII doesn't come off a totally likable character -- he's both a snob and a prude -- but he isn't the villain of Cornwell's (and others') book. This is not a conventional narrative. It is a book about

the Vatican archives, and in particular those sources made available by Pope Benedict in 2006. As such, it is not necessarily a book that everyone with a passing interest in the subject is going to find easy to read. But for someone with a little background, this is an engaging read, full of memorable details and insights. 15 of 17 people found the following review helpful. This book should be read by anyone who has read John Cornwell's "Hitler's Pope." By Peter S. Bradley For anyone interested in the Pius Wars - the argument that Pius XII was somehow complicit with the Holocaust by virtue of his alleged silence or other actions - or for anyone who has read the execrable John Cornwell's "Hitler's Pope" - "Pope and Devil" by Hubert Wolf is an essential resource for arriving at a balanced assessment of the issues. Wolf's book largely refutes Cornwell's specious arguments by meticulous attention to archival material released in 2003. Not all of the relevant material have been released, but in 2003, the papacy of Pope John Paul II, released files relating to the nunciature - the diplomatic representatives of the Vatican - in Munich and Berlin during the period 1922 - 1939, as well as files relating to the Vatican's interaction with these nunciatures. This information was not available to Cornwell, and essentially disproves Cornwell's thesis that Pius XII, as Secretary of State Pacelli, pulled the strings that resulted in the Catholic Center Party supporting the Nazi Enabling Act. The proof is established by correspondence between Pacelli and the nunciatures indicating Pacelli's opposition to the Center Party's decision to dissolve itself. Wolf also brings balance and depth that is missing from Cornwell's Manichean good- liberal versus evil- conservative story. Thus, Wolf describes the case of the Amici Israel, which was an association of Catholic priests, including bishops and cardinals, that in the late 1920's was committed to eradicating anti-semitism within the Catholic Church. Part of the agenda of Amici Israel was to eliminate the Good Friday prayer's reference to "perfidious Jews." This project was unsuccessful, and Amici Israel was suppressed, not because of anti-semitism, but because of a party of anti-liberal, conservative irredentists within the curia, led by Cardinal Merry De Val, who opposed anything that smacked of "modernism." The point of the story is that the Catholic Church, and particularly its bureaucracy, has not ever been monolithic. There were parties within the church with their own agenda, entirely unrelated to the agendas that people like Cornwell want to find. Hence, the blanket accusation by Cornwell, Goldhagen and Carroll that the Church, pope and curia have all been anti-semitic is simply wrong. Moreover, irony is a constant of history. One of the results of the Amici Israel affair was that the decree of dissolution of Amici Israel in March of 1928 contained a clear condemnation of racial anti-semitism long before Kristalnacht. (p. 120.) Wolf's chapters generally are as follows: Chapter 1 - Neutralizing Evil? Vatican Prescriptions for Germany (1917 - 1929). This chapter largely deals with the Vatican's diplomatic history with Germany between 1917 and 1929. Wolf points out that the Vatican's decision to reach out to Nazi Germany was not unusual or unexpected; it had reached out on three separate occasions to conclude a concordat with Stalinist Russia. (p. 9.) No one views those efforts as recognizing the legitimacy of the Soviet Union. What was particularly interesting in this chapter was the fact that the up until the Weimar Republic, German states - including Protestant German states - were directly involved in selecting Catholic bishops. In Berlin, the Protestant state was able to choose which candidates would be put to the local church from which it could choose a bishop. Even though Weimar Germany, saw many German states give up their control over the Catholic Church, this movement was not entirely complete, and the concordat process was intended to cement the separation of church and state. Not surprisingly, the bishops that were selected under the prior arrangement tended to be more conciliatory to the state, including the Nazi state, than the bishops selected by Rome after the concordat was signed. Galen and Von Preysing were both bishops who became known for being anti-Nazi stalwarts who would not have been chosen under the prior system. Not surprisingly, this fact completely escapes Cornwell's potted history. Chapter 2 - Perfidious Jews? The battle in the Vatican over Anti-Semitism. This chapter covers the interesting, relatively unknown and important Amici Israel affair. Chapter 3 - The Pact with the Devil? The Reichskonkordat (1930 - 1933.) This chapter covers the circumstances leading to the execution of the concordat between Nazi Germany and the Vatican. Contrary to Cornwell's unsubstantiated claims that the perfidious Pacelli single-mindedly engineered the Nazi police state, Wolf's scrutiny of the dispatches between Pacelli and the nunciatures show that Pacelli was outside the loop, and that the Center Party and German Catholic bishops were running their own shows. Chapter 4 - Molto Delicato? The Roman Curia and the Persecution of the Jews. This chapter addresses the many petitions to Pius XI to speak out and condemn Nazi persecutions of the Jews. Wolf describes how both Pius XI and Pius XII desired to speak out against anti-semitism, and encouraged others to speak out, but believed that because of their position as leader of the worldwide church were required to maintain a position of public neutrality. Chapter 5 - Dogma or Diplomacy? The Catholic Worldview and Nazi Ideologies (1933 - 1939). In this chapter, Wolf looks at the compatibility of Catholic and Nazi ideological claims and concludes that those claims were not compatible. In reaching this conclusion, Wolf outlines the various occasions when the Catholic Church condemned core Nazi doctrines as being incompatible with Christianity. Wolf also tackles a "talking point" advanced by Christopher Hitchens that since the Church didn't put "Mein Kampf" on the Index of Forbidden Books, it must in some sense have endorsed Nazism. Wolf points out that although Mein Kampf was not placed on the Index, Alfred Rosenberg's "The Myth of the Twentieth Century," which was viewed as the key ideological treatise on Nazism was put on the Index. Wolf concludes that the reason Mein Kampf was not indexed was due to the curia placing diplomacy ahead of doctrine, particularly with respect to a book "written by a head of state who had come to power through legal means and with whom the Vatican had just signed an

agreement binding under international law." (p. 264.) On the other hand, "the dangerous opinions to be found Mein Kampf [were] refuted in the syllabus of the Congregation of Studies and contrasted to the true Catholic doctrine in the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*." [p. 270.] In other words, the Church compromised short of placing Mein Kampf on the Index, but it was clear to all that the noxious teachings of Mein Kampf were condemned. Finally, similar constraints prevented the excommunication of Hitler - which in 1938 Mussolini, of all people, was advocating. [p. 270.] As Wolf concludes the book, "Pronouncing a Reich chancellor and head of state anathema was simply out of the question. Hitler remained a member of the Catholic Church until the day he died. Like the pope, even the devil could be Catholic." All in all, this is a readable and balanced book that examines the real world nuances facing real people in real history, which is a far cry from the comic book version of history that is currently so popular. 1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Pius XI throws away an opportunity; to Hitler's benefit By Lewis M. Weinstein Prof. Wolf has done a sterling job of assembling details of the Catholic Church's attitudes and actions before and during the Nazi era. So far I have focused on the chapter regarding a group called Amici Israel (Friends of Israel), formed in 1926 and disbanded in a humiliating way by Pius XI in 1928. Amici Israel was initiated by Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich (and others) and grew in two years to include 1800 cardinals, bishops and priests. In 1928, they produced a document called *Pax super Israel* (Peace over Israel) which, among other things, recommended eliminating the pejorative word "perfidious" from the Good Friday liturgy. The Vatican's most respected liturgical scholar reviewed the recommendations contained in *Pax super Israel* and gave all of them his approval. Then ... a Cardinal named Merry del Val, the head of the Holy Office of Inquisition, reviewed the document at the request of Pius XI and rendered an excoriating judgment. Merry del Val wrote ... "The entire attitude of this little book is decidedly positive toward the Jews with rather adverse imputations about the Church and its servants. It is as if the bride of Christ stood accused of negligence, or even worse of unjustified aversion toward the people which is called the Chosen." ... the activities of the "so-called Friends of Israel" must be stopped once and for all ... the reform of the Good Friday prayer is completely unacceptable and nonsensical, not even a matter for discussion ... the liturgy aptly (and correctly) expresses "the abhorrence for the rebellion and treachery of the chosen, disloyal and deicidal Jewish people" ... the Good Friday prayers are not about individual Jews; they are about stiff-necked Jewish people burdened with the curse that they as a people (properly) bear for having spilled the blood of the holiest of the holy. The Holy Office of the Inquisition then rejected the reform of the Good Friday prayer and all the other Amici Israel recommendations with very little discussion, repeating Merry del Val's demand that Amici Israel be disbanded. Pius XI very quietly issued a decree incorporating Merry del Val's recommendations and dissolving Amici Israel. He later asked his close associate Enrico Rosa, publisher of the more or less official journal of the Catholic Church called *Civiltà Cattolica*, to write a public defense of his actions. Rosa wrote ... "the Church must protect against the appearance of friendship with the Jews, to which Amici Israel has fallen prey ... the danger emanating from the Jews should never be underestimated ... Jews have become presumptuous and powerful since their emancipation at the turn of the 19th c ... Jews have come to dominate large portions of the world's economic life and to build up their hegemony in many sectors of public life ... Jews have manipulated all revolutionary activity from the French Revolution of 1789 up to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution ... Jews are forging plans for world hegemony." LMW COMMENT: THESE WORDS OF CARDINAL MERRY DEL VAL AND ENRICO ROSA, ENDORSED BY POPE PIUS XI, ARE OF COURSE PRECISELY THE SAME JEW-HATING MESSAGE OF HITLER AND THE NAZIS, ADOPTED WITH ENTHUSIASM BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN 1928. Amici Israel was a huge opportunity for the Catholic Church, upon the recommendation of high-ranking Cardinals and approval by its own foremost liturgical experts, to change the whole tone of antisemitism that had pervaded Catholic liturgy and sermons for centuries. This change, if adopted in 1928, would have sent a message to Germans and others that Hitler's hysterical Jew-hatred was unacceptable to the Church, and perhaps there is every reason to speculate that Hitler would not have come to power in 1933. The bishops of Germany, led by Cardinal Faulhaber, were pleading for support in their efforts to hold back the Nazi surge. The Vatican in Rome sent exactly the opposite message: Hitler's Jew-hatred was fine with them. In my view, Pius XI deserves to be condemned for this clear act of antisemitism and its awful consequences. AFTER NOTE The elimination of the word perfidious and all of the other changes recommended by Amici Israel, which had been rejected in 1928, were adopted by the Catholic Church in 1965 in the conclave known as Vatican II.

The Vatican's dealings with the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich have long been swathed in myth and speculation. After almost seventy years, the crucial records for the years leading up to 1939 were finally opened to the public, revealing the bitter conflicts that raged behind the walls of the Holy See. Anti-Semites and philo-Semites, adroit diplomats and dogmatic fundamentalists, influential bishops and powerful cardinals argued passionately over the best way to contend with the intellectual and political currents of the modern age: liberalism, communism, fascism, and National Socialism. Hubert Wolf explains why a philo-Semitic association was dissolved even as anti-Semitism was condemned, how the Vatican concluded a concordat with the Third Reich in 1933, why Hitler's Mein Kampf was never proscribed by the Church, and what factors surrounded the Pope's silence on the persecution of the Jews. In rich detail, Wolf presents astonishing findings from the recently opened Vatican archives - discoveries that clarify the

relations between National Socialism and the Vatican. He illuminates the thinking of the popes, cardinals, and bishops who saw themselves in a historic struggle against evil. Never have the inner workings of the Vatican's most important decisions and actions been portrayed so fully and vividly.

Pope and Devil is a must-read for anybody interested in the Vatican's relationship with Germany in the tumultuous years leading up to World War II, including the hotly debated issue of 'the silence of Pius XII.' This book brings new complexity and insight to the debate on Pius XII's 'silence.' (John W. O'Malley, S.J., author of *What Happened at Vatican II*) [An] excellent examination of the Pius XI archives...No stranger to the dark side of church history, and intimately familiar with ecclesiastical dogma, politics, and procedure, Wolf presents sensitive material with admirable evenhandedness, avoiding both apology and easy condemnation...*Pope and Devil* gives us a behind-the-scenes exploration of what made the Vatican tick, providing the sort of background information with which political historians contextualize the decisions of secular leaders like Churchill or Roosevelt. Wolf shows that in the last months of his life Ratti became consumed with the issue of Nazi-inspired racism, and devoted much of his waning energy to it; while Pacelli, for his part, "was clear in his rejection of racial anti-Semitism, and...believed that the church had a general responsibility to support human rights." Both men, however, understood their responsibilities in the light of traditional Catholic priorities. Both viewed Catholic dogma as immutable; and both consistently put Catholic institutional objectives--understood as an essential requirement of salvation--first and foremost. (Michael R. Marrus *Commonweal* 2010-05-07) Hubert Wolf's extraordinarily lucid and well-researched *Pope and Devil* performs the much valued task of throwing light into dark corners sans the sensationalism and tendentious argumentation that have defined too much scholarship in the area...*Pope and Devil* takes the reader through the labyrinthine corridors of Vatican diplomacy in the 1920s and 1930s, the political turmoil that defined those papal strategies that tried to make sense of or at least limit the damage of the rising totalitarianism inundating Europe, and the intrigue and politicking that characterized the often fraught relationship among such parties as the nuncios or Vatican ambassadors in Berlin and Munich, the papal Secretary of State and the Head of the Supreme Congregation more commonly known as the Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition. No easy feat and Wolf manages it in a way that is both enlightening and entertaining. (Michael W. Higgins *New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal* 2010-07-24) Wolf's absorbing study shows in fascinating detail how ready Pius XI was to sup with authoritarian devils of both left and right in hopes of striking the best balance he could. (Michael Kerrigan *The Scotsman* 2010-07-31) The Vatican's dealings with the Third Reich during the reign of Pius XII's predecessor, Pius XI (1922-1939), have received rather less attention. But since the archives for that pontificate were opened in 2006, our understanding has increased enormously. Hubert Wolf's book contributes greatly to that understanding. (John Pollard *Times Higher Education* 2010-08-19) Wolf has written a very important book. It does not explain the 'silence' of Pius XII, though it certainly exonerates him of the charge that he was in any way sympathetic to the regime in Germany. It also reveals a man with a misplaced confidence in his own competence. (Michael Walsh *The Tablet* 2010-08-28) [*Pope and Devil*] is useful in helping us understand the reasons for the Vatican's consistent refusal to take a bold stand against Hitler and his policies in the years leading up to the war. (Sergio I. Minerbi *Haaretz* 2010-09-01) The "silence of Pius XII" remains a contentious issue among historians studying the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Based on documents released by the Vatican Secret Archives during the last decade, Wolf offers an analysis of the pontificate of Pius XI (1922-1939). He carefully sketches the Vatican view of Germany during these years when Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, was a nuncio in Germany and subsequently cardinal secretary of state. Wolf's explication of these documents reveals the historical environment within which Pacelli matured and developed his Roman perspectives on Germany and so helps explain his future "silence" as pope. The documents (memoranda, etc.) offer clarifying insights into the sometimes convoluted policies of the Vatican with respect to its position on anti-Semitism, racism, the negotiations surrounding the Concordat of 1933, and the relationship between politics and dogma, always a tense problematic within the Roman Catholic Church. This book also opens windows on the Vatican perception of German Episcopal reactions to Hitler's ideology and to such issues as the euthanasia policy. Wolf's groundwork will make future archival releases more comprehensible. (D. J. Dietrich *Choice* 2010-11-01) [An] important book...In 2008, [Pope] Benedict [XVI] resuscitated a Good Friday prayer for the Jews, and last year he raised the cause of canonizing Pius XII to a higher stage. For many students of church history, such steps have been deeply troubling. Those hoping to form a judgment of Benedict's course should read Wolf's learned book and ask themselves whether the Pius they encounter in the memoranda salvaged from the Vatican's secret archives seems like a saint--with a charisma that speaks through the ages--or whether he appears as fallible as any of us, a man who sought wisdom but ultimately failed to see beyond the horizons of his own time. (John Connelly *New Republic* online 2011-02-08) About the Author Hubert Wolf is Professor of Church History at the University of Mⁿster.