
TOO MUCH DIPLOMACY, TOO LITTLE PROPHECY

Hubert Wolf: *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich*. Translated by Kenneth Kronenberg. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. 325. \$29.95, cloth.)

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Anglophone audiences finally have a chance to appreciate one of Germany's most prolific and exciting modern church historians, Hubert Wolf. Although his previous works touched on such controversial topics as the Index of Forbidden Books, the current work, which wades into the "Pacelli wars," is his first translated into English, and promises a wide circulation through Belknap. Its contents should satisfy neither the Pius XII apologists nor those in the Hochhuth/Cornwall camp, which speaks to its quality.

As Wolf explains, the Vatican's 2003 and 2006 release of data from the secret archives during the Pius XI papacy (1922–1939) has made available a trove of documents that will take a team of researchers decades before being able to comment definitively on the period under question. Wolf offers a tantalizing foretaste that gives insight, hitherto impossible, into the motives and machinations of Eugenio Pacelli as papal nuncio and secretary of state.

Pope and Devil consists of five chapters, each of which explains church relations during a time period or event through an examination of important archival material. As papal nuncio in Munich and Berlin from 1917 to 1929, Pacelli was the Vatican's "eyes and ears on the ground" in Germany. Wolf's long first chapter aims to identify Pacelli as an intelligent, talented diplomat, but also as suspicious, reticent, and unable to remove his curial spectacles in order to understand a local situation.

The second chapter, about the fate of the "Amici Israel," gives readers a break from Pacelli. This group of Catholic philo-Semites "counted 19 cardinals, 278 bishops and archbishops and approximately 3,000 priests among its members" (85). Wolf details their attempt to eliminate the Good Friday prayer for perfidious Jews. Using arguments familiar to Vatican II Catholics, the group issued a plea to Ildefons Schuster, head of the Congregation of Rites, who agreed to reform the Good Friday liturgy. The Holy Office, however, proved more obstinate. Its head, Rafael Merry del Val, objected strenuously, seeing to it that Amici Israel was dissolved and Schuster received a stern reprimand. Wolf does not let Pius XI off easily for this tragedy. When given the chance to omit "perfidious Jews" from the liturgy, Pius not only refused, but was also responsible for the circumstances in which "every single person who championed this reform was forced to recant his error before the Holy Office" (121).

To the well-trod ground of the *Reichskonkordat*, Wolf contributes Pacelli's personal notes and audiences from the early 1930s. Despite being critical of the Vatican throughout most of the book, Wolf reminds readers that the

German bishops, the Vatican, and the Center Party did not act in unison. Pacelli did not consider the intervention of his office into the political affairs of a sovereign nation appropriate. Although many deem the Concordat as a legitimacy-giving gesture, Wolf offers a reasonable counterexplanation.

In retrospect, of course, a firmer and morally unambiguous assessment and rejection of the evils of National Socialism and anti-Semitism would have maintained and improved the Vatican's moral authority. The Vatican breathed in a thick antimodernist air that conditioned many of its attitudes. The great evils, we now know of course, were anti-Semitism and totalitarianism, not ecumenism and liberalism. Pius XI became more focused on the former evils toward the end of his papacy. In addition to the 1937 *Mit brennender Sorge*, he initiated an encyclical against racism. Wolf concludes that in the final years of his papacy Pius XI was the prophet and Pacelli the diplomat. The church needed more prophecy and less diplomacy in the opening years of the next pontificate. A lifelong diplomat, Pacelli clearly revered such bishops as von Galen, the most vocal episcopal voice against Hitlerism, but considered it unfitting to his office to issue similar prophetic denunciations.

About this silence Wolf must wait until the post-1939 archives are made public. When they are, one hopes that Wolf writes and Kronenberg translates another book like this one—accessible to beginners, yet containing new riches for those already waist-deep in the “Pius XII” wars.

—Grant Kaplan

BACON ON VIRTUE AND THE HUMAN GOOD

Svetozar Y. Minkov: *Francis Bacon's "Inquiry Touching Human Nature": Virtue, Philosophy, and the Relief of Man's Estate*. (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010. Pp. vii, 149. \$60.00.)

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One of the core difficulties of Francis Bacon's thought concerns the absence of any clear link between his scientific and his moral works. What do the *Essays*, for example, have to do with the *New Organon*? Much of the contemporary scholarship on Bacon aims at either deepening our understanding of Bacon's account of scientific knowledge or explaining how his moral and political reflections underpin his project of advancing modern science. In *Francis Bacon's "Inquiry Touching Human Nature,"* Svetozar Minkov takes a different tack. While Minkov is well versed in Bacon's corpus, and is therefore