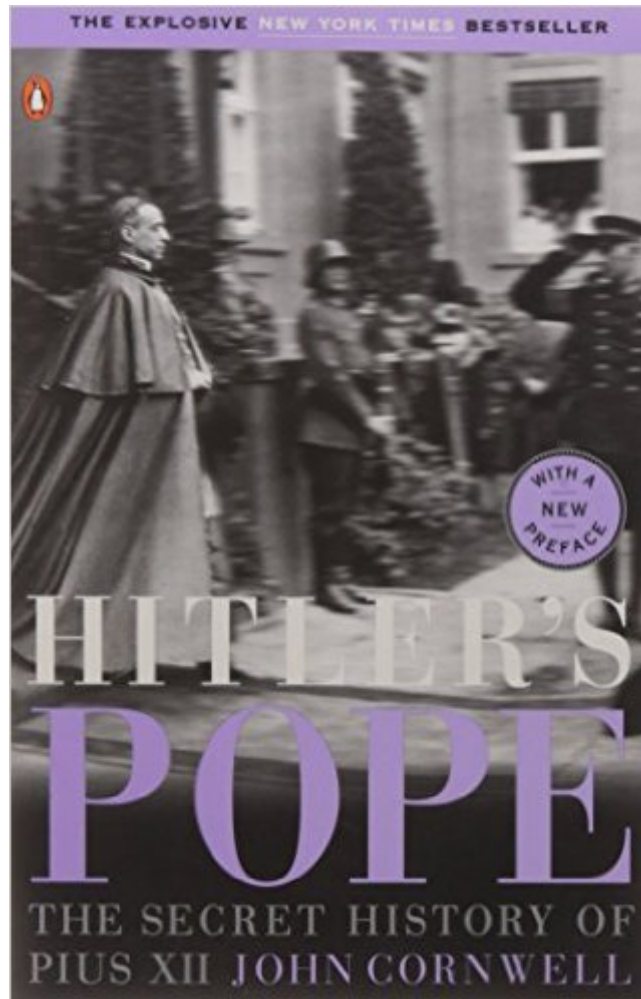


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Hitler's Pope: The Secret History Of Pius XII



Synopsis

The "explosive" (The New York Times) bestseller "now with a new introduction by the author" When Hitler's Pope, the shocking story of Pope Pius XII that "redefined the history of the twentieth century" (The Washington Post) was originally published, it sparked a firestorm of controversy both inside and outside the Catholic Church. Now, award-winning journalist John Cornwell has revisited this seminal work of history with a new introduction that both answers his critics and reaffirms his overall thesis that Pius XII, now scheduled to be canonized by the Vatican, weakened the Catholic Church with his endorsement of Hitler "and sealed the fate of the Jews in Europe.

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Customer Reviews

I personally could care less whether Pope Pius XII was a good pope or a bad pope. Anyone who knows Vatican history knows that there have been both kinds of popes in the history of the Church... and it's certainly possible that Pius XII was the callous, immoral fraud that Cornwell depicts him as being. But there are two things that have always troubled me about this denunciation of Pius XII plainly also despise the Catholic Church for other reasons; and, more significantly, (2) the people who actually LIVED through World War II (including the former Chief Rabbi of Rome) had only PRAISE for Pius XII's courage when dealing with the Nazis (who were, by the way, stationed with tanks about 100 yards from where the pope slept!). Cornwell fails utterly to explain why, if Pius XII was so bad...1. Golda Meir, the former prime minister of Israel, said upon Pius XII's death that "

During the ten years of Nazi terror, when our people passed through the horrors of martyrdom, the Pope raised his voice to condemn the persecutors and to commiserate with their victims."2. Elio Toaff, the Chief Rabbi of Rome during the Nazi terror, said, "More than anyone else, we have had the opportunity to appreciate the great kindness, filled with compassion and magnanimity, that the Pope displayed during the terrible years of persecution and terror."3. Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, said that, "with special gratitude we remember all he has done for the persecuted Jews during one of the darkest periods in their entire history."4.

You have to read 370 pages into this book to get to the crux of the matter, Cornwell's real aim:"Those who long for the realization of collegiality in the Catholic church may also come to accept, in the light of this narrative ... that papal autocracy, carried to the extreme, can only demoralize and weaken Christian communities. ... It has been the urgent thesis of this book, however, that when the papacy waxes strong at the expense of the people of God, the Catholic Church declines in moral and spiritual influence to the detriment of us all."I have no illusions about the power of the Papacy to inflict harm needlessly and unconsciously on the Christian church. I have no doubt that past popes have been responsible for death and destruction to further their own political power. However, I do not think Cornwell presents a credible case to damn Pius XII. He merely presents an indictment of the papacy as a strong, reactionary, unresponsive office badly in need of reform from his own perspective.To do this, he invokes the name of Hitler in the title, conjuring up all the evil of history associated with that name, hoping some will rub off on the pope. He then calls him by his Christian name, stripping him of title and making him into a faceless bureaucrat. Finally, he associates him with every evil of the era, from fascism to McCarthyism, hoping for some revolt against John Paul II at the end, in a chapter which seemed hastily added on and beside the point until you arrive at page 370, the next to last page.This is history as polemic, and not necessarily well done either. The section dealing with Pius' death is, frankly, dispicable. Because of the nature of the work as revealed at the end, this book calls all of its conclusions into suspicion.

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