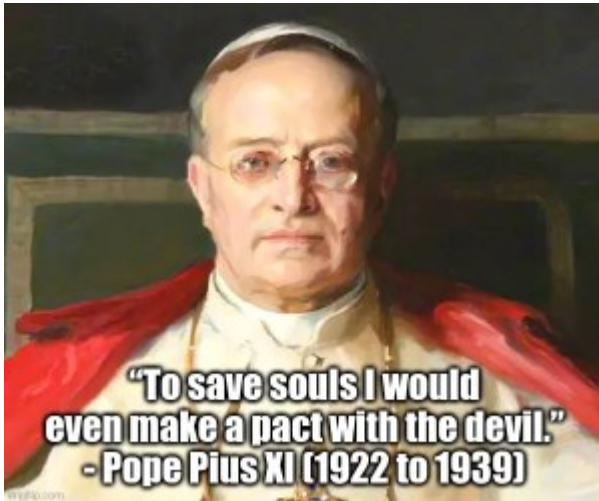


The Pope And The Devil



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TWO of the most important utterances of the late Pope Pius XI were: 1) "To save souls I would even make a pact with the devil;" and 2) that Mussolini was "a man sent to us by Providence."

The latter statement was made after Pope Pius XI signed the Lateran Pact with Mussolini on February 11, 1929, and was a clear statement of approval of Mussolini and his regime, especially because of the solemn treaty and concordat just concluded with him. Much publicity was given to this 'divine' approval of Mussolini, and the phrase '*L'Uomo della Provvidenza*,' became a commonplace expression on the lips of the people of Italy to designate Mussolini and to prove God's special intervention in sending him to save Italy. The Pope had said so, and the people therefore did not doubt it.

The Pope's statement that he would make a pact with the devil, was made to a group of American newspapermen after the signing of the concordat between the Vatican and Hitler, less than six months after he came to power in 1933. It was tantamount to telling these inquisitive American reporters to mind their own business and that the Catholic church would make a pact with anyone that suited its policies.

Now that Mussolini and Hitler are dead and execrated by all decent men, the Catholic church has been trying to explain away these incriminating statements of the Pope who negotiated with them in the heyday of their glory. For a while it was even denied by Catholic propagandists in America that the above statements were ever made at all by Pope Pius XI. Now it is admitted by the Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano* that he made both statements, but an attempt is made to twist their meaning. The occasion of the *Osservatore Romano*'s admission was in answering the charges of the Russian newspaper *Pravda* last January, as reported in a Rome dispatch in the Catholic weekly, *The Register*, of January 6.

The Vatican newspaper frankly admits that Pope Pius XI declared: "To save souls I would even make a pact with the devil." The interpretation given this statement, however, is that the Pope knew Mussolini and Hitler to be devils, and negotiated with them in order to save souls. On the other hand, it denies that the actual words of the Pope's other statement praising Mussolini were that he was "a man sent by Providence." It gives its version of the Pope's words as follows: "What was said is this: 'Perhaps even a man such as the one that' Providence has us meet was needed.'"

The statement was made by Pope Pius XI in an address to the College of Cardinals on February 13, 1929, just two days after the signing of the Lateral Pact. The Jesuit *Civiltà Cattolica* of Rome published it on March 2, 1929, (p. 467) and put the Pope's phrase thus: "And perhaps there was need of a man like him [Mussolini] whom Providence has allowed us to meet." Don Luigi Sturzo, noted Italian priest-leader of the *Partito Popolare*, in his most recent book, "*Italy and the Coming World*," (p. 127), translates it as, "the man sent to us by Providence."

Even admitting the *Osservatore Romano's* wording to be the correct version of the Pope's Italian phrase, the reader can judge for himself if there is any difference in saying that Mussolini was "a man sent by Providence," and that he was "a man that Providence has allowed us to meet." Pope Pius XI was referring to his recent meeting between himself and Mussolini shortly after the signing of the Lateran Pact between them. The distinct meaning of his words was that God had sent Mussolini to meet with him to sign the Lateran Pact.

Putting the two statements of the Pope together – as this official Vatican newspaper quotes and interprets them – the Pope, on the one hand, declared that God had arranged for him to meet and sign a pact with a man whom he (the Pope) knew was little better than a devil! If he knew Mussolini was such an evil man, why did he make a pact with him? And how did it happen that Providence arranged and willed that the Pope, the so-called "Vicar of Jesus Christ," should sign agreements with two men, Mussolini and Hitler, who were little better than devils!

The New Testament tells us that the devil once appeared to Jesus Christ in order to induce him to negotiate an agreement, in return for which the devil promised him power over "all the kingdoms of the world." As recorded in Matt. 4:10, Jesus contemptuously rejected the devil in one short phrase: "Get thee hence!" – or as we would say in our language: "Get out!"