Globalizing Catholicism and the Return to a “Universal” Church

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As a religious regime, Catholicism preceded and is likely to outlast the modern world system of nation-states. The transnational character of Catholicism can almost be taken for granted, but historically the nature and manifestations of that transnationalism have changed radically along with changes in the worldly regimes in which Catholicism has been embedded. The very attribute *transnational* only makes sense in relation to the system of sovereign nation-states that emerged in early modernity and eventually replaced the system of medieval Christendom, a system that had been centered on the conflictive interdependent relation between the Roman papacy, or “the political system of the popes,” and the Holy Roman Empire. The dynamic synergy of the new world system of sovereign states was such that one after another all the emerging national churches fell under the control of caesaro-papist rulers and the Roman papacy itself became just another, rather marginal and insecure, sovereign territorial state. It is precisely at the point when the Papal States were incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy and the papacy was finally forced to renounce its claims to territorial sovereignty, that the papacy could be reconstituted as the core of a transnational religious regime, this time on a truly Catholic, that is, ecumenical basis.

Ongoing processes of globalization offer a transnational religious regime like Catholicism, which never felt fully at home in a system of sovereign
territorial nation-states, unique opportunities to expand, to adapt rapidly to the newly emerging global system, and perhaps even to assume a proactive role in shaping some aspects of the new system. Conversely, an analysis of the contemporary transformation of Catholicism may offer some clues as to the direction of contemporary processes of globalization.

Progressively, from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present, one can trace the reconstruction, reemergence, or reinforcement of all those transnational characteristics of medieval Christendom that had nearly disappeared or been significantly weakened in the early modern era: papal supremacy and the centralization and internationalization of the Church's government; the convocation of ecumenical councils; transnational religious cadres; missionary activity; transnational schools, centers of learning, and intellectual networks; shrines as centers of pilgrimage and international encounters; transnational religious movements.

This chapter explores changes in the character of the papacy as the transnational core of Catholicism, particularly in terms of the papacy's relation to three different types of worldly regimes—namely, to the medieval system of Christendom of which the papacy was one of the core institutions; to the modern system of sovereign nation-states to which the papacy became rather marginal; and to a newly emerging and still undefined global system within which the papacy is attaining once again a central structural role.

**Papal Supremacy and the Globalization of the Papacy**

The most telling indicator of the modern reestablishment of papal supremacy was the proclamation of the dogma of papal infallibility by the First Vatican Council in 1870. It was only in the course of the fifth century, when the Christianization of Rome was completed and the bishop of Rome had established its spiritual and temporal hegemony in the city, that the most significant elements of what would become the doctrine of papal supremacy were developed:

- The cult of Peter and Paul and Roman law served to legitimate the cathedra petri, making the bishop of Rome the rightful heir of the Apostolic See.
- The latinization of the Roman liturgy and the standardization of the cult of Roman martyrs established the foundation of the Latin Mass and the Roman Rite.
- The doctrine of "the two powers" rejecting the right of the state to interfere in church affairs served to emancipate the Roman Church from Byzantine caesaro-papism.

- The Sylvester legend, later elaborated into the Donation of Constantine, shows that by the end of the fifth century, after the fall of the Western Roman empire, the Roman bishops already claimed a position equal to that of the emperor and thus the right to the title of Pontifex Maximus.

These Roman claims were never fully recognized by the Eastern churches that acknowledged the direct apostolic succession of the Roman bishops from Peter, and thus the claim to higher apostolic rank but not the claims to higher authority in doctrine or dogma. At first, the papal claims were no more successful in the West, but the preservation of papal letters in Rome, Spain, and Gaul and their later compilation into decreets with the addition of notorious forgeries served as the foundation for the eventual invention of a tradition of historical precedent and for the triumph of the doctrine of papal supremacy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The growth of papal government and the establishment of the medieval papacy as a central political institution of Western Christendom were determined primarily by three political developments that were to shape indelibly the self-identity and the geopolitical strategies of the papacy well into the twentieth century.

The Lombard conquest of northern Italy and threats to the Byzantine empire from the east in the second half of the sixth century first created the geopolitical conditions for the development of papal sovereignty over Byzantine Italy, that is, central and southern Italy and Sicily. This meant that, as put most succinctly by Bernhard Schimmelten, "the papacy had power where it had territory." Thereafter, the papacy would always insist on the need to maintain territorial sovereignty over the Papal States in order to preserve its spiritual autonomy. But the maintenance of papal territorial sovereignty always proved precarious.

The alliance of the Roman bishops and the Carolingian dynasty in the second half of the eighth century made possible the emancipation of the papacy from the Byzantine empire, the liberation from the Lombard threat, and the expansion of papal supremacy into northern Italy and Transalpine Europe. As patriicus Romanorum, however, it was now the turn of the Carolingian emperor to assume the protection of the papacy. From now on, papal sovereignty over its territories always required the protection of a powerful political overlord.

The Romanization of Western Christendom and the partial triumph of papal supremacy during the Investitures conflicts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was in many respects tied to monasticism. Along with the spiritual reform of ecclesiastical structures the monastic reform movement brought to Rome greater centralization and the internationalization of papal government. But from now on the disparate tasks of maintaining
spiritual power over all of Christendom, political control over the papal territories, and the right geopolitical balance in foreign policy proved impossible to reconcile. The concentration of the Renaissance popes upon the consolidation of princely power over central Italy, following the negative experience of the Avignon captivity and the ensuing schisms, led to the loss of spiritual supremacy over most of Christendom and to the geopolitical marginality of the papacy within the emerging system of nation-states.

Even before the triumph of Erastian principles in Protestant countries, Spain's Catholic kings had been able to obtain from the papacy the series of royal privileges known as *Patronato Real* that allowed them to transform the Catholic Church in Spain and its colonies into an organ of state administration. Everywhere, the alliance of national hierarchy and national ruler had the same effect. Cardinal Richelieu's role in enforcing Gallicanism was only the most notorious example. But the special liberties of the Gallican Church had been recognized by the pope already in the Concordat of 1515. Again and again, the papacy exchanged its transnational spiritual claims for the protection of its temporal sovereignty at home. As long as the sovereign rulers maintained officially their Catholic confession, an impaired papacy absorbed with the internal and external affairs of its own territories acquiesced.

Pius VI's belated but eventually firm condemnation of the 1790 Civil Constitution of the Clergy, after the majority of the Gallican Church had expressed its refusal to take the public oath, marks a turning point in the papacy's attempt to reclaim its supremacy over national bishops and clergy. After the Spanish American colonies won their independence, the papacy refused to extend to the new republics the privileges of the old royal patronage, preferring to withdraw diplomatic recognition of the new states and to leave episcopal see vacant. When in the conflicts over "trusteeship" in American parishes the laity invoked the *jus patronatum*, arguing that the right of patronage, traditionally vested on the lay prince, now ought to be vested on the new sovereign, "the people," Rome consistently replied that patronage had never been a right but a privilege that it had conceded only under special circumstances.

Ironically, it was the 1804 Concordat with Napoleon that served as blueprint for the successive concordats with conservative governments throughout Europe through which the Church established a modus vivendi with the new secular states that allowed the papacy to regain control of the national hierarchies. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, as conflicts with the liberal state became endemic throughout continental Europe and Latin America, it became increasingly evident that it was easier to safeguard papal rights in Anglo-Saxon countries that had institutionalized freedom of religion than in Latin Catholic countries even when Catholicism was officially protected as the state religion. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant countries such as Holland or Germany, where Catholics constituted a sizable minority, became strongholds of modern Romanization and of a new liberal form of Catholic ultramontanism distinct from the integralist ultramontanism that was tied to the restoration of European monarchies.

In recent times, the pope's control over the process of nomination of bishops through the nuncios has proven to be perhaps the single most important factor in papal control of the transnational Catholic Church. To this day, disputes over the rights to episcopal nomination have remained one of the most important issues of contention between the Vatican and authoritarian regimes.

In 1870 the papacy lost its last remnant of temporal sovereignty, the province of Rome, at the very moment when the First Vatican Council issued its twin proclamation of papal primacy and infallibility. Pius IX's refusal to accept the 1871 Law of Papal Guarantee offered by the Italian government and the unresolved "Roman question" made him and his successors virtual prisoners at the Vatican until the signing of the Lateran Treaty with Mussolini in 1929. Nevertheless, from their position of seeming captivity Pius IX's successors began to renew the papal tradition of speaking ever more frequently *urbi et orbi*, thus setting the basis for the process of globalization of the modern papacy, a process that has accelerated since the 1960s.

This process of globalization finds expression primarily in three new directions: in the ever wider publication of papal encyclicals dealing not only with matters of Catholic faith, morality, and discipline but also with issues of the secular age and of the secular world affecting all of humanity; in the increasingly active and vocal role of the papacy in international conflicts and in issues dealing with world peace, world order, and world politics; and in the public visibility of the person of the pope as the high priest of a new universal civil religion of humanity and as the first citizen of a global civil society.

**Papal Encyclicals**

Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) inaugurated an impressive tradition of modern Catholic social teaching that has been constantly enriched and reformulated by later encyclicals—Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), and John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and *Centesimum Annun* (1991). Surely the early teachings were permeated by a paternalistic view of social relations of production and by Catholic affinity for premodern hierarchical, corporatist social and political arrangements. The mirage of a Catholic "third way" between capitalism and socialism served to obscure the complexity of impersonal markets and modern differentiated societies. But in
retrospect, the tradition appears as one of the most systematic, comprehensive, and consistent attempts to face the problems of modern industrial societies.\textsuperscript{13}

Critics on the left often disdained the exercise, at best, as impotent moralizing palliatives of the inevitable class struggle between capital and labor, and, at worst, as antisocialist propaganda barely veiled under a supposedly evenhanded critique of capitalism and socialism. But considering the post–World War II institutionalization of the welfare state on the basis of a compromise between capital and labor and the crisis of socialism as a viable solution to the modern “social question,” it would seem that Catholic social teachings have been closer to the historical mark than critics on the left wanted to acknowledge. Indeed, today those critics often welcome the papal encyclicals as one of the few public voices left criticizing the unjust division of labor and the dehumanizing effects of capitalism, while radical free market advocates on the right just as often dismiss the papal letters as rehashed Marxism.\textsuperscript{16}

The most important reformulation of Catholic social teaching was connected with John XXIII’s appropriation of the modern doctrine of human rights and the broadening of the papal vision to embrace also East-West and North-South conflictive relations. Paul VI and John Paul II have continued and furthered this tradition. Papal pronouncements have consistently presented the protection of the human rights of every person as the moral foundation of a just social and political order, the substitution of dialogue and peaceful negotiation for violent confrontation as the means of resolving conflicts and just grievances between peoples and states, and universal human solidarity as the foundation for the construction of a just and fair national as well as international division of labor and a just and legitimate world order.\textsuperscript{17} Furthermore, while earlier encyclicals were usually addressed to the Catholic faithful, beginning with \textit{Pacem in Terris} in 1963 the popes have tended to address their pronouncements to the entire world and to all people.

\textbf{Public Role of the Papacy in World Affairs}

Besides its power to consecrate rulers and thus to confer or withdraw legitimacy, to arbitrate between power disputants, and ultimately to excommunicate rulers, thus releasing their subjects from their oaths of fidelity, the medieval papacy also played the historical function of an international court of arbitration and appeal, guarantor of international conflicts, and peacemaker. Indeed, canon law and papal rulings served as the solely recognized authority in medieval international relations.

Naturally, the papacy could only play this role effectively as long as it was not a party to the conflicts and showed some impartiality. The theocratic claims of the pope, however, and the dual role of the papacy as spiritual and temporal ruler made the task difficult. The frequent abuses of spiritual power to advance temporal goals added to the general discredit of the papacy from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{18}

At a time when temporal rulers were singularly bent on the expansion, consolidation, and centralization of internal and external state power, two claims of the Church sounded particularly obnoxious: the power to bestow on the people the right of resistance to illegitimate rule and the \textit{novit ille}, or the claim of the pope to have the right to annul international treaties or to free one of the parties from their sacred oath to honor the treaty. At the Congress of Westphalia (1648), the Catholic and Protestant princes of all of Europe (with the exception of Spain) agreed not only to exclude the papacy from being a party to the treaty but also to disregard all papal protests against the treaties of Münster, Osnabrück, and Westphalia. This concerted effort of secular rulers successfully shut out the papacy from European international affairs.\textsuperscript{19}

At the Lateran Treaty (1929) Mussolini extracted from the papacy the acceptance of the definitive loss of temporal sovereignty and the promise that it would not lead an independent papal foreign policy nor interfere with Italy’s foreign policy. Article 24 states, however, that the Holy See “reserves the right in every case to exercise its moral and spiritual power.”\textsuperscript{20}

The first modern pope who tried to exercise such a power was Benedict XV. Elected shortly after the outbreak of World War I, at a time when people, intellectuals, political leaders, and the clergy throughout Europe were caught up in war euphoria and jingoistic frenzy, the pope became one of the most eloquent spokespersons for peace.\textsuperscript{21}

But the pope’s interventions fell on deaf ears. Both sides viewed them as irriitant siren songs interfering with their sacred national interests and their aims of military victory. He was accused by both sides of aiding the enemy and of trying to sap national resolve. His reply that he was supporting the cause of mankind rather than that of the belligerent parties was not appreciated. Ultimately, like transnational proletarian solidarity, Catholic or human solidarity proved much weaker than national solidarity or blind devotion and obedience to the state.\textsuperscript{22}

Despite the apparent lack of immediate success, Benedict XV’s interventions form the basis for the growth in international prestige and, ironically, diplomatic recognition of the papacy in the twentieth century. The role of Benedict XV’s successors, Pius XI and Pius XII, in the rise to power of fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany, as well as during World War II, is much more controversial. At least a posteriori, the papal interventions and, more damaging, the failure of the papacy to stand up to the dictators and to condemn publicly in the most unambiguous terms the Nazi Holocaust, reveal themselves as grave moral failures. This is so from the perspective of
the ethical principles that have gained global acceptance after World War II, namely universal human rights and the defense of the sacred dignity of the human person, principles that the papacy itself has increasingly made its own.23

One can offer numerous explanations for the course of papal action:

- The clerical suspicion against autonomous lay movements and Catholic parties that were not under the direct supervision and control of the hierarchy; thus, the mandated dissolution of Don Luigi Sturzo’s Popular Party and the lack of support and interest in the survival of the German Center Party. Both parties were the key to any viable organized effort to block the rise to power of Mussolini and Hitler.24
- The view of socialism at home and bolshevism abroad as the greater evil; thus, the adamant opposition to any Catholic-Socialist alliance or the view of Hitler as a shield against bolshevism. The 1933 Concordat with the Third Reich included secret clauses dealing with a common front against Russia.25
- The elective affinities between Catholic social teachings and fascist corporatism, of which Pius XI’s Quadragesimo Anno is the paradigmatic expression. Generally, Italian Catholics supported fascism and various types of authoritarian corporatist regimes were established throughout the Catholic Iberian world.26
- Eugenio Pacelli’s personal bias and professional preference for private diplomatic negotiations between elites over public prophetic condemnations.27 The same professional diplomatic bias was noticeable in the Vatican’s assumption of a policy of appeasement and its anxious and fastidious neutrality, more typical of a small neutral power caught in the middle of a struggle between superpowers than of the head of the universal church.

But above all, the course of action taken by the papacy can best be explained by reference to its traditional guiding principle, namely the protection of libertas ecclesiae. After the French Revolution and the global expansion of the modern secular state, the Vatican transnational policy initiated with the 1804 Concordat with Napoleon and followed thereafter consistently has been, at least until very recently, to extract from each and every state through the signing of concordats the most favorable conditions possible to protect the freedom of the Church. The Vatican assumed correctly that it would be possible to extract from Mussolini a concordat more favorable to the Church than any attainable with a liberal state. The 1929 Lateran Treaty comprised both an international treaty between the Kingdom of Italy and the State of Vatican City that settled definitively “the

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Roman question” and a concordat between the Catholic Church and the Italian state.

Mussolini conceded practically everything the Church wanted: the confessionality of the state, the primacy of canon law on issues dealing with religion and marriage, compulsory religious education in all schools and state recognition of religious schools and universities, the payment of state salaries to bishops and priests, abolition of legislation against religious orders and legal recognition of religious congregations, the recognition of religious holidays as state holidays, the freedom to appoint bishops and free communication between the pope and bishops all over the world, and the promise of privileged treatment and freedom for all nonpolitical activities of Catholic Action.28

Similar considerations marked Vatican relations with Hitler’s regime. Generally, the Nazis had not been very successful in winning Catholic votes from the Center Party. German Catholic bishops had repeatedly condemned Nazi pagan ideology and forbidden the faithful to vote for the Nazis. But by March 1933, under apparent pressure from Rome, as negotiations for a concordat started, there was an about-face. The bishops lifted the prohibition for Catholics to join the Nazi Party and allowed the Center Party and the Bavarian People’s Party to vote for Hitler, giving him the two-thirds majority needed to accomplish the revolution legally. Once the concordat was signed, the Center Party and the Bavarian People’s Party agreed to dissolve themselves as a sign of goodwill toward the new regime.

It is true that the Church eventually condemned the “statolatry” and the “pagan worship of the state” propagated by fascism and in the process developed a consistent critique of modern totalitarianism. But the public condemnations only came after it had become evident that those regimes were abridging the freedom of the Church and the privileged rights for Catholics that the Church had laboriously negotiated. Non abiamus bisogno (1931), the encyclical directed at fascism, came after the Fascists had begun to repress Catholic Action and youth organizations. Mit brennender Sorge (1937), written after a petition from the German bishops, was more a critique of the anti-Catholic policies of the Nazi regime than an outright condemnation of Nazism.29

Within days of the publication of Mit brennender Sorge, Pius XI also published his condemnations of communism, Divini Redemptoris, and of the Mexican regime, Nos es muy. It would seem that paramount in the mind of the pope was not so much an evenhanded critique of communist and fascist totalitarianism, as apologists tend to argue, but rather a joint critique of the anti-Catholic policies of those militantly atheist regimes. Only from the perspective of the lack of freedom of the Church and the abridgment of the rights of Catholics could the Mexican regime be placed on a par with the Nazi and Stalinist regimes.
There is an even more telling and reprehensible indicator that the Church viewed as its task the protection of the particular rights of Catholics and not the defense of universal human rights. While negotiating the Concordat with the Third Reich, Secretary of State Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli tried to inscribe a clause guaranteeing for baptized Jews the same status as that negotiated for German Catholics. But Cardinal Pacelli was able to obtain only a verbal promise that baptized Jews would be treated as Christians and not victimized as Jews.

The definitive assumption by the Church during the papacy of John XXIII of the modern doctrine of universal human rights has altered radically the traditional dynamic of Church-state relations and the role of the Church both nationally and transnationally. It has opened the way for a realignment in the relations between religious and worldly regimes. The cornerstone of the process is the Vatican II Declaration on Religious Freedom, Dignitatis Humanae. Significantly, the most eloquent voices in the crucial debate at the floor during the Council came from opposite blocks: from the American bishops, who unanimously defended religious freedom not only on grounds of practical expediency but also on theological grounds provided to them by their peritus, the great American theologian John Courtney Murray, and from Cardinal Karol Wojtyla from Kraków, who had learned from the experience of trying to defend the freedom of the Church under communism that the best line of defense, both theoretically and practically, was the defense of the inalienable right of the human person to freedom of conscience. Theologically, this entailed the transference of the principle of libertas ecclesiae that the Church had guarded so zealously through the ages to the individual human person—to libertas personae.30

From now on, the most effective way for the papacy to protect the freedom of the Church worldwide would no longer be to enter into concordats with individual states trying to extract from both friendly and unfriendly regimes the most favorable conditions possible for Catholic subjects but rather to proclaim urbi et orbi the sacred right of each and every person to freedom of religion and to remind every government not through discreet diplomatic channels but publicly of their duty to protect this sacred human right. In the process, the pope could be transformed from being the Holy Father of all Catholics to becoming the common father of God’s children and the self-appointed spokesman of humanity, the defensor hominis. At long last, the papacy could free itself from the postmedieval trappings of territorial sovereignty that historically had hampered so much its freedom of movement. What the papacy and the national churches needed to carry out their spiritual mission was not the protective role of political overlords who always ended up restricting the Church’s freedom of movement but rather a free global civil society.

First Citizen of the Emerging Global Civil Society

Naturally, the pope’s voice could only have its effect if three conditions were met: if the voice could infiltrate and cross state boundaries and be heard everywhere; if the papacy could use its transnational resources and the local churches to amplify its voice; and if the pope’s voice could actually join and add volume and prestige to the already existing choruses of voices everywhere, until state walls came falling down. The globalization of mass media and the extremely effective use by the papacy of these media have met the first condition. The centralization and homogenization of Catholicism achieved by the Second Vatican Council and by the general process of aggiornamento to modernity have met the second condition. The third condition was also met, for, in questioning the principles of state sovereignty and raison d’état, the two cornerstones of the modern system of nation-states, the Church was only joining a whole array of local social forces and transnational institutions, organizations, and social movements, working toward the establishment of autonomous civil societies and toward the constitution of one free global civil society.31

Particularly in those societies in which the voice of the papacy carried a special weight, this concerted civil effort had dramatic effects. Suddenly, human rights doctrines could be used to put into question simultaneously the national-Catholicism of the Franco regime, the national security doctrines of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes throughout Latin America, the corrupt oligarchic dictatorship of a cold war caudillo like Ferdinand Marcos, and the official lies of people’s democracies in Poland and elsewhere.32 Those who took the voice of the pope most seriously—priests and nuns, pastoral agents, and engaged laity—were at the forefront of a new worldwide democratic revolution.

Ironically, the diplomatic power of the papacy has also increased as the size of the Vatican state has shrunk and as the Holy See agreed to “remain extraneous to all temporal disputes between nations and to international congresses.” The number of countries that have established diplomatic relations with the Vatican has increased continuously: It was four in 1878 at the time of Pius IX’s death, fourteen in 1914 when Benedict XV began his papal reign and twenty-five in 1922 at the time of his death; by 1939, on the eve of World War II, the number was thirty-eight, and it reached seventy by 1973. At long last in 1984, overcoming its anti-popish bias, the 1867 U.S. congressional ban on diplomatic relations with the Vatican was lifted and the Reagan administration established full diplomatic relations with the Vatican. The collapse of the Soviet system of states and the disintegration of the Soviet Union have added a significant number of countries to the diplomatic corps at the Vatican. By 1993, 144 countries had established diplomatic relations with the Vatican.33
The reason for the growing diplomatic relevance of the Vatican is clearly not that Vatican City is such a powerful sovereign state. Rather, the Catholic Church has become such an important transnational organization in the emerging world system that no state can afford to ignore it. In the open public field of a global civil society the pope’s divisions and their allies have appeared to be more effective and to have greater freedom of movement than the riot control units and the mechanized tank divisions amassed by Machiavellian princes and statesmen following the outmoded rules of engagement of realpolitik. In today’s world, power does not come solely or even primarily from the barrel of a gun, particularly when states holding onto the monopoly of the means of violence have no legitimacy in civil society and do not have the moral or political resolve to use those guns against unarmed civilians.

The striking image of a penitent emperor at Canossa, submitting to the higher spiritual authority of a pope in order to regain his legitimacy and his temporal power, has always served as the paradigmatic symbolic expression of medieval papal authority. In recent decades, images of apparently powerful rulers surrendering their power without resistance to higher forms of authority, to “people’s power,” or to “the power of the powerless” have repeated themselves ever more frequently. When human rights and the internal affairs of sovereign states become everybody’s business, being constantly monitored by governments, by the mass media, and by governmental and nongovernmental transnational organizations, and when global public opinion and the United Nations no longer respect the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, it becomes ever more difficult for sovereign absolutist rulers to erect Berlin Walls or to protect their frontiers from an ever-expanding civil society.

To a large extent this process of globalization and the ability of the papacy to exploit the opportunities created by this process, thereby enhancing its role and prestige in the emerging world system, have their origins in World War II and its aftermath. The cold war and the policy of containment of communism offered the Catholic Church, Catholic countries, and Catholic minorities within Protestant countries the possibility to realign themselves and to join the center of the North Atlantic Protestant capitalist system from which they had been alienated or marginalized since the Counter Reformation. The Washington-Rome alliance became one of the key axes in the policy of containment of communism. Catholics became full partners of a Christian Democratic West and of the North Atlantic alliance. Catholics and Christian Democracy led the process of integration of the European Community. The Second Vatican Council had to be called precisely in order to ratify officially the process of aggiornamento to modernity that was already well under way in Catholic Western Europe. Once convened, however, the Council created a totally unforeseen dynamic of Catholic transformation and globalization.

The centrality of the papacy in the new global system was even recognized by the Soviets when Nikita Khrushchev welcomed John XXIII’s mediation during the Cuban missile crisis and solicited that this mediation for the cause of peace and the sacred values of human life should not be limited to moments of crisis. When the superpowers and the entire world saw themselves at the brink of nuclear war, a higher principle of mediation had to be found. Once it could no longer be taken for granted, the survival of the species had to become a conscious and concerted effort of all of humanity. The security of humanity and of the planet had to have precedence over national and state security. Thereafter, the Vatican’s Ostpolitik and the United States policy of détente took parallel tracks. Yet the Vatican was careful to cultivate an image of mediation above the superpowers. Indeed, it claims to represent the interests of the international system as a whole. Since Benedict XV’s enthusiastic support for the League of Nations, the popes have been consistent advocates of worldwide international bodies, from the World Court to the United Nations, which would limit absolutist state sovereignty, arbitrate international disputes, and represent the interests of the entire family of nations.

The papacy has also assumed eagerly the vacant role of spokesperson for humanity, for the sacred dignity of the human person, for world peace, and for a more fair division of labor and power in the world system. The role comes naturally to the papacy since it is fully in accordance with its traditional claims of universal authority. In a sense the papacy has been trying to re-create the universalistic system of medieval Christendom, but now on a truly global scale. The fundamental difference, however, is that the spiritual sword can no longer seek the protection of the temporal sword to buttress its authority against competing religious regimes in order to gain monopoly of the means of salvation. The official recognition of the principle of religious freedom means that the Church has accepted the challenge to compete in a relatively open global system of religious regimes. Given its highly centralized structure and its imposing transnational network of human, institutional, and material resources, the Church can reasonably assume that it has a competitive advantage.

Considering the fact that for centuries, practically since the early modern era, the papacy has been physically tied to the Vatican and symbolically to Rome, it is striking how eagerly recent popes have tried to globalize their image and become world travelers. Modern mass media and means of communication have given the papacy the opportunity to communicate directly with Catholics, as well as with non-Catholics, all over the world. Particularly, John Paul II has deployed this direct contact with the masses of faithful extremely effectively as a kind of popular plebiscitarian support for his authority and his policies, using it whenever necessary to impress secular leaders, to bypass national hierarchies, or to check dissenting tendencies from Catholic elites.
Even though the Catholic Church has its own network of national and transnational mass media, the impact of the papacy on world public opinion does not derive primarily from Catholic mass media but rather from the prominent and extensive coverage that the pope’s words and deeds receive in Western media.\(^\text{37}\) Considering that since the late Middle Ages the image of the papacy had been associated, at least in modern hegemonic Protestant cultural areas, with strongly negative symbols, the fact that the very person of the pope has become today a positive media event is in itself an impressive achievement, indicative of the level of prestige and influence reached by the modern papacy. Without discounting the relevance of John Paul II’s repeatedly manifest personal charisma, nor the role of a well-orchestrated job of charismatic image management by the Vatican staff, it would seem that the papacy has found a fitting role that meets the expectations of a much wider audience than the Catholic faithful. The pope has learned to play, perhaps more effectively than any competitor, the role of first citizen of a catholic, that is, a global and universal, human society. It just happens that this role is often in tension with his other official role as infallible head and supreme guardian of the particular doctrines, laws, rituals, and traditions of the Una, Sancta, Catholica, and Apostolica Roman Church.

The Globalization of Catholicism

In order to validate its claims to catholicity, or universality, the Roman Catholic Church and its supreme pontiff have to resolve two sets of tensions. There are tensions between the Roman, the national, and the increasingly global character of the ecclesiastical institution. There is further tension between the particularity and the claimed universality of Catholic doctrinal principles and moral norms. Both sets of tensions are closely related with ongoing processes of globalization.

Looking at Catholicism globally throughout the twentieth century and particularly since the 1960s, one can observe three interrelated processes in dynamic tension with one another. There is first the strengthening of papal supremacy, Vatican administrative centralization, and the Romanization of Catholicism throughout the world. Among signposts in this process one could mention: the convocation of the First Vatican Council and the proclamation of papal infallibility, the papal control of the selection of bishops, the uncontested condemnation of the Americanist and modernist heresies, the promulgation of the 1918 Universal Code of Canon Law and of a new Code of Canon Law in 1983, the continuous expansion of the Roman Curia and of the Vatican diplomatic corps, the prominent role of papal nuncios in the internal affairs of national churches, and the preponderant role of Roman universities, collegia, and institutes in the education and socialization of the prospective hierarchy and of national and transnational clerical elites.\(^\text{38}\) Most of all, the Second Vatican Council and the ensuing general aggiornamento produced not only administrative and doctrinal centralization but also the homogenization and globalization of Catholic culture, at least among the elites, throughout the Catholic world.

Simultaneously with this process of Vatican centralization and Romanization of Catholicism, however, there has taken place a parallel process of internationalization of the Roman administrative structures and of globalization of Catholicism as a religious regime. The Roman Catholic Church has ceased being a predominantly Roman and European institution. Along with the demographic increase in Catholic population from 100 million in 1900 to 600 million in 1960 and to close to one billion in 1990, there has been a notable displacement of the Catholic population from the Old to the New World and from North to South. The episcopal and administrative cadres of the Church have changed accordingly. The First Vatican Council was still a predominantly European event, even though the forty-nine prelates from the United States comprised already one-tenth of the gathered bishops. The Second Vatican Council, by contrast, was the first truly ecumenical council. The 2,500 Fathers in attendance came from practically all parts of the world. Europeans no longer formed a majority. The U.S. delegation, with over 200 bishops, was the second largest, though it was already smaller than the combined number of 228 indigenous Asian and African bishops at the end of the Council. The number is significant considering that only under the papacy of Benedict XV did the Vatican begin to promote the recruitment of indigenous clergy and the formation of native hierarchies, thus abandoning the European colonial legacy of considering missions as religious colonies. Even more significant has been the internationalization of the College of Cardinals and, though more slowly, the internationalization of the Curia. Since the time of Julius II (1503) not only the popes but also most of the curialists had been Italian. In 1946, Italians still constituted almost two-thirds of all cardinals. That year Pius XII created thirty-two new cardinals, only four of whom were Italians and thirteen were non-European. The College of Cardinals that voted for a non-Italian pope in 1978 already had a much more international and representative composition: 27 Italians, 29 from the rest of Europe, 12 Africans, 13 Asians, 19 Latin Americans, 11 North Americans.\(^\text{39}\) The contemporary process of internationalization of Catholicism, moreover, does not have only a radial structure centered in Rome. In the last decades there has been a remarkable increase in transnational Catholic networks and exchanges of all kinds that crisscross nations and world regions, often bypassing Rome.\(^\text{40}\)

Intercalated with, yet in tension with this dual process of Romanization and internationalization of Rome, there has also taken place a process of "nationalization," that is, of centralization of the
Catholic churches at the national level. The institutionalization of national conferences of bishops following Vatican II reinforced the dynamics of the process of nationalization that had been carried primarily by different forms of Catholic Action with their shared strategy of mobilization of the Catholic laity to defend and promote the interests of the Catholic Church in what was perceived as a hostile modern secular environment. This political mobilization of Catholicism had been oriented toward the state, its aim being either to resist disestablishment or to counteract state-oriented secularist movements and parties. The final Catholic recognition of the principle of religious freedom, together with the Church’s change of attitude toward the modern secular environment, has led to a fundamental transformation of the national Catholic churches. They have ceased being or aspiring to become state compulsory institutions and have become free religious institutions of civil society. In the process, Catholic churches throughout the world have dissociated themselves from and entered into conflict with authoritarian regimes that were predominant in many Catholic countries. This voluntary “disestablishment” of Catholicism has permitted the Church to play a key role in recent transitions to democracy throughout the Catholic world.41

The traditional position and attitude of the Catholic Church toward modern political regimes had been that of neutrality toward all “forms” of government. So long as the policies of those governments did not infringe systematically upon the corporate rights of the Church to religious freedom, libertas ecclesiae, and to the exercise of its functions as mater et magistra, the Church would not question their legitimacy. The assumption of the modern doctrine of human rights entails, however, more than the acceptance of democracy as a legitimate “form” of government. It implies the recognition that modern democracy is not only a form of government but a type of polity based normatively on the universalist principles of individual freedom and individual rights. As national churches transfer the defense of their particularistic privileges to the human person, Catholicism becomes mobilized again, this time to defend the institutionalization of modern universal rights and the very right of a democratic civil society to exist.

As national conferences of bishops take an active role in defining national issues, there emerges a dynamic tension between Roman and national centralization. Such a tension accounts for both the globalization of a Catholic position on many issues as well as the particular reflections that the general Catholic position assumes in any given national context. As the conference of bishops take a “Catholic” position, however, a tension between Roman Catholic particularity and catholic universality often becomes evident. Striking in recent papal and episcopal pronouncements, particularly in those dealing with issues of public morality, is the fact that they are not addressed to Catholics as faithful members of the Church, obliged to follow specific particular rules of the Catholic moral tradition, but rather to every individual qua member of humanity, obliged to follow universal human norms, which are derived from the universal human values of life and freedom. The fact that those allegedly universal norms and values are tied to a particular religious tradition is certainly bound to affect the reception of these universalistic claims by non-Catholics. But at the same time, in places where this particular religious tradition is alive, it will probably serve to sanctify and legitimate modern norms and values as Christian ones.

But given modern structural conditions, if the Catholic Church wants to maintain its universalistic claims, it will have to learn to live with social and cultural pluralism both outside and, especially, inside the Church. In order to maintain its effectiveness as a public religion in modern civil societies its public interventions will have to be and appear nonpartisan and nondenominational; that is, they will have to be framed in a universalistic language. This by no means precludes a “preferential option for the poor” or a continuation of the traditional Catholic opposition to abortion. Indeed, the Catholic Church today is presenting its public interventions not as the defense of a particular group or a particular moral tradition but on the basis of its moral obligation as a universal church to protect human life and the sacred dignity of the human person and to demand universal access to discourse, justice, and welfare. This means that, whichever position or option it takes, the Church will have to justify it through open, public, rational discourse in the public sphere of civil society. The lesson of the public interventions of the American bishops indicates, moreover, that the Church will have to learn to let all the faithful participate in the constant elaboration and reformulation of its normative teachings and allow for different practical judgments as to how to interpret those normative teachings in concrete circumstances.42

Roland Robertson has convincingly argued the dual nature of the ongoing processes of globalization, the emergence of global humankind, and the emergence of a global system of societies. These entail the relativization of the personal identity of the self in reference to humankind as a whole, the relativization of membership in any particular society by reference to global humankind, and the relativization of particular national societies from the perspective of the world system of societies.43

The combination of globalization, nationalization, secular involvement, and voluntary disestablishment has led the Catholic Church to a significant change of orientation from nation-state to civil society. National churches ceased viewing themselves as integrative community cults of the nation-state and adopted a new transnational global identity that permitted them to confront prophetically the state and the given social order. Among the most significant developments of recent decades has been the crisis of
absolute principles of state sovereignty and raison d'État and the emergence of global dynamics of democratization. The collapse of the system of socialist states, the global defeat of national security doctrines, the crisis of the established principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of nation-states, the crisis of state-led models of economic development and modernization are all related with new dynamics of civic society formation both intrasocietally and globally. Transnational religious regimes are reacting to the new challenges and are playing a crucial role both in the revitalization of particular civil societies and in the emergence of a global civil society. Particularly, the Catholic Church, which resisted so long and ineffectively the emergence of the modern system of nation-states, is now responding successfully to the opportunities offered by the crisis of territorial state sovereignty and by the expansion of a global civil society.44

NOTES

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1. Ivan Vallier, "The Roman Catholic Church: A Transnational Actor," in Transnational Relations and World Politics, edited by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972). Mart Bax has pointed out that the dynamics of religious regimes spring from three sources, namely: "the relationship between the religious regime and the worldly regime with which it is linked; its confrontations with other religious regimes; and internal tensions and polarities between what may be called the 'dominant religious regime' and the 'dominated regime.'" Mart Bax, "Religious Regimes and State-Formation: Toward a Research Perspective," in Religious Regimes and State-Formation, edited by Eric R. Wolf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 11. The present essay only addresses the first source of Catholic dynamics, and thus focuses on the papacy as the institutional core of Catholic transnationalism and its relations to the external worldly regime. If one wanted to address the other two sources of Catholic dynamics, then one would have to focus more systematically on the changing relations among papacy, episcopacy, religious orders, and laity and to focus, above all, on Church councils. Throughout its history, it is primarily through local, regional, and ecumenical councils that the Catholic Church has defined its "official" hegemonic doctrines and anathematized "error" while reacting to internal "schismatic" and "heretical" challenges and to external competition from "infidels" and "pagans." Traditionally, these four categories—"schism," "heresy," "infidelity," and "paganism"—have served to mark the internal and external boundaries of Catholicism as a religious regime.


4. The outbreak of missionary activity that accompanied the early modern overseas colonization by Western European states and the establishment of the Jesuits as a militant ultramontanist order at the service of the papacy to counter the Reformation as well as the emerging system of nation-states are two significant exceptions. However, colonial Catholicism soon fell even to a larger extent than the territorial national churches into the caesaro-papalist control of secular state rulers who severed any direct link of the colonial churches with the Vatican. The expulsion of the Jesuits from all Roman Catholic dominions during the second half of the eighteenth century and the final suppression of the order by papal decree in 1773 mark the high points of Catholic caesaro-papism and of papal accommodation to absolutist state sovereignty. See C. R. Boxer, The Church Militant and Iberian Expansion, 1440–1770 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Christopher Hollis, The Jesuits: A History (New York: Macmillan, 1968); and William J. Callahan and David Higgs, eds., Church and Society in Catholic Europe of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).


13. Ironically, the foundations for the doctrine of papal infallibility had been first laid toward the end of the thirteenth century, at the height of papal power, by Franciscans who were critical of Pope Boniface VIII. According to Schimmelpennig, it was "an attempt to limit the pope's jurisdictional competence by binding him to the
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Catholic orders, proved unable to side with the pope and resist nationalism. Over 850 French Jesuits and 534 German Jesuits returned from exile to take part in the war as combatants (a majority), military chaplains, or auxiliaries. See Holmes, Papacy, 20, and Hollis, Jesuits, 247. See also Christine Aix, Le Saint-Siège et les nationalismes en Europe, 1870-1960 (Paris: Sirey, 1962).


27. In self-defense against the accusations of callousness toward the fate of European Jewry, the Vatican has replied that, under the circumstances, discreet diplomatic initiatives and the personal humanitarian efforts of the pope to help rescue and give shelter to as many individual Jews as possible was to prove more effective than public condemnations of Nazism that were likely to jeopardize the success of the humanitarian initiatives. See Holmes, Papacy, 152-168.

28. Pius XI expressed effusively his satisfaction with the Concordat: “[If not the best that could possibly be made, it] is certainly among the best that have so far been devised . . . through it We have given back God to Italy and Italy to God.” In Holmes, Papacy, 56.

29. The mode of publication of both encyclicals shows how effectively the Church could use its transnational resources when it wanted. Both were written in the vernacular rather than in the customary Latin. To bypass state censorship and the totalitarian control of the media, Non abiamo bisogno was first distributed abroad, and Mit bremender Sorge was distributed secretly and read throughout Germany from Catholic pulpits on Palm Sunday.


34. See Hanson, *Catholic Church*.


36. A survey of lay Catholic elites from 103 different countries taking part in the Third World Congress for Lay Apostolate in Rome in 1967 shows positive attitudes toward “internationalism”: 69 percent favored the development of the United Nations into a world government; 84 percent agreed that individual countries should give up some power so that the United Nations could do a better job; 67 percent considered immigration quotas immoral, thinking that anyone should be able to immigrate freely into another country; and 90 percent asserted that Catholic organizations should be active in peace movements. The survey's classification of the geocultural origin of the delegates to the lay congress was the following: African, 11 percent; Asian, 11 percent; Latin American, 19 percent; English-speaking outside Asia and Africa, 18 percent; Western European, 26 percent; Eastern and Southern European, 15 percent. The survey evinces relative homogeneity and few significant differences of opinion among the geocultural groups, and even between the Third World delegates and others, on these or on most other issues. See Vaillancourt, *Papal Power*, 134–167.

37. Vatican Radio was used first by Pius XI in the 1930s as a symbol of the independence of the Holy See. Pius XII used it more extensively to communicate with Catholics throughout the world. The Vatican foreign radio service, which broadcasts over 200 hours of programming per week in thirty-five languages, has been particularly relevant for persecuted Catholics.

38. Other transnational centers of Catholic learning, such as Louvain, Paris, Lyons, Freiburg, Innsbruck, and so on have played a similar role in the process of cultural homogenization of Catholicism and, at times, in the socialization of more liberal transnational Catholic counter-elites. Theologians from such centers played a crucial role as *periti* at the Second Vatican Council.


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42. See my discussion of the public interventions of the American bishops on nuclear policies, the economy, and abortion in *Public Religions*, 184–207.


44. All significant differences notwithstanding, the current situation of Islam is similar in this respect.