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Author: Casanova, Jose V

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Global Catholicism and the Politics of Civil Society

José Casanova, New School for Social Research

A transformation of the politics of Catholicism worldwide has taken place. The final recognition of the modern principle of religious freedom at Vatican II, together with the assumption by the church of the modern doctrine of human rights, has altered the traditional dynamic of church-state relations and the role of the church both nationally and transnationally.

National churches no longer aspire to become state compulsory institutions. It is this voluntary “disestablishment” that has permitted the church to play a key role in recent transitions to democracy throughout the Catholic world. Simultaneously, the papacy has assumed the vacant role of spokesman 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.

As the Catholic Church abandons the private sphere assigned to religion and enters the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society to take part in ongoing processes of normative contestation, a tension between catholic universality and Roman Catholic particularity becomes evident.

Vignettes from the Catholic “Spirit of the Times”

In the last decades a noticeable transformation of the politics of Catholicism worldwide has taken place. Let me offer some telling illustrations from four different angles.

1. The front-page news of the world press have carried some striking images of Catholics in action:

- Polish workers in the Gdansk shipyards kneeling to take Holy Communion in the midst of the foundational strike of Solidarity, an event that marked the beginning of the end of the Soviet system of states.
- Filipino nuns facing the tanks on the streets of Manila during “the people’s revolution” that toppled Marcos’s dictatorship.
- Spanish fascists in the final years of the Franco regime shouting on the steps of Madrid’s cathedral to put Spain’s Primate Cardinal Tarancón and the “red priests up against the wall.”
- Nicaraguan priests serving as ministers in the Sandinista junta, and priests

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GLOBAL CATHOLICISM AND

and nuns confronting military dictators regimes throughout Latin America.

Those images are so striking because we associate Catholicism with the Catholic Church on the other side of the revolutions. Certainly the Catholic Church was not a revolutionary force. Yet, as Samuel Huntington notes, the 1970s and 1980s was predominantly Catholic. Almost two thirds of the world’s Catholics were in countries that had undergone transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes. Indeed, the church’s withdrawal from its authoritarian regimes is perhaps the most clear indication of another swing of the pendulum but rather democratic regimes throughout the Catholic world.

2. Our contemporary epoch is characterized by two phenomena, the rise of democracy but also by a global emergence of religious fundamentalism. It is no surprise that the most significant study of religious fundamentalism was written by a Catholic, Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, is puzzling, but not found anywhere in the world a Catholic is worth the name Catholic fundamentalist. Although the name Catholic fundamentalist. Although the name Catholic fundamentalist was given to people such as the religious fundamentalist religion. The clerical counter-revolution of the “peasants, Integralism, Action Française, fascism” all may be viewed as prototypes of the powerful and flourishing today throughout the world. Various fundamentalisms there is no societal space where the Catholicism of the future is the most illustrative of the Catholic aggiornamento.

Only when it comes to the morality of the church, perhaps argue, does the church hierarchy have a soul. But even on those hotly contested issues, ambiguity and traditionalist strategy be depicted as undifferentiatedly antithetical.
and nuns confronting military dictatorships and bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes throughout Latin America.

Those images are so striking because we had grown accustomed to finding the Catholic Church on the other side of the barricades in most modern democratic revolutions. Certainly the Catholic Church had resisted the first two waves of democratization. Yet, as Samuel Huntington has pointed out, the third wave of the 1970s and 1980s was predominantly a Catholic wave (Huntington 1991; Casanova 1993). Almost two thirds of the thirty-some countries that have undergone transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes during this period were Catholic. Indeed, the church’s withdrawal of its traditional support of authoritarian regimes is perhaps the most clear indication that we are not just witnessing another swing of the pendulum but rather the definitive consolidation of democratic regimes throughout the Catholic world.

2. Our contemporary epoch is characterized not only by a global resurgence of democracy but also by a global emergence of religious fundamentalism. Yet a look at the Fundamentalism Project, the monumental six-volume interdisciplinary study of religious fundamentalisms throughout the world, conducted under the auspices of the American Academy of Arts and Science and directed by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, is puzzling in that apparently the editors could not find anywhere in the world a Catholic movement of large societal relevance worth the name Catholic fundamentalism (Marty and Appleby 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1994; Casanova 1994a, 1994b, 1995). The puzzlement derives from the fact that for centuries Catholicism had offered the most spirited, principled, fundamentalist, and apparently futile resistance to modern processes of secular differentiation in all the spheres. It militantly fought capitalism, liberalism, modern science, the modern secular state, the democratic revolutions, socialism, the sexual revolution. In brief, it has been the paradigmatic form of antimodern fundamentalist religion. The clerical counterrevolutionary mobilization of Catholic peasants, Integralism, Action Française, and Franco Spain’s “national-catholicism” all may be viewed as prototypes of the kind of fundamentalist movements flourishing today throughout the world. The fact that today in an era of global fundamentalisms there is no societally significant Catholic fundamentalism anywhere is perhaps the best illustration of the amazing success of the official Catholic aggiornamento.

Only when it comes to the morality and politics of sex and gender, one could perhaps argue, does the church hierarchy maintain a “fundamentalist” attitude. But even on those hotly contested issues the church’s official position tends to be ambiguously modern and traditionalist simultaneously. In any case it can hardly be depicted as undifferentiatedly antimodern or fundamentalist.
3. For centuries, certainly in culturally dominant Anglo-Saxon Protestant areas, the words popish and popery have had markedly negative connotations; the papacy, a core institution of the medieval political system, became a marginal and negligible institution within the modern international system of states; and the popes had become virtual prisoners at the Vatican. But in the last decades, the image and influence of the papacy have been altered dramatically (Eckhardt 1937; Hanson 1987; Holmes 1981). The popes have become world travelers and first citizens of an emerging global civil society; the pope’s words and deeds receive prominent and extensive coverage in Western media; and, ironically, the diplomatic power of the Holy See has increased as the size of the Vatican state has shrunk. The number of countries that had established diplomatic relations with the Holy See were as follows: 4 in 1878 at the time of Pius IX’s death, 14 on the eve of World War I, 38 in 1939, 70 in 1973, and 144 by 1993. Most significantly, the Vatican has assumed lately a prominent conflictive and controversial role in international conferences and global public forums dealing with population, birth control, women’s issues, and the like.

The reason for the growing diplomatic relevance of the Holy See is clearly not that the 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 shown 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 on to 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.

4. Closer to home, in the United States we have witnessed in the 1970s and 1980s a new style of “public Catholicism” that is distinguishable from both the “liberal republican” and the “immigrant” styles of Catholic politics. The liberal republican style was based on the segregation of private religious and public political roles by autonomous lay Catholics. The “immigrant” style of urban Catholic politics was based on the collective organization and mobilization of ethnic Catholics, with the bishop often serving as “church boss,” in order to advance their particular group interests (O’Brien 1989).

Throughout the nineteenth century, U.S. Catholicism had been an insecure, barely tolerated, at times persecuted religious minority. Nativism in the United States from the 1830s to the 1920s had been directed primarily against Catholic immigrants. During the first half of the twentieth century, following the papal condemnations of the Americanist and Mazzinian movements, the church was not unlike Protestant fundamentalism, with its attacks on dissenting opinions. There emerged a self-sufficient Catholic culture that dominated the neighborhood ethnic parish, the Catholic school, and, increasingly, the life of the myriad Catholic voluntary associations. By the 1970s the post–World War II economic boom set US society on a path of cultural diversification, and the liberal Protestant ethic of the white Protestant establishment was challenged by the new wave of ethnic ethnic Catholics. By the 1980s, there were more than 100,000 Hispanic Catholics, including many who had been born in Mexico or other Latin American countries, and the church was becoming a center of political mobilization for these groups. The church was also becoming a center of political mobilization for African American Catholics, who had long been marginalized within the white Catholic establishment.

But at precisely the time when Catholicism and U.S. Catholics had become faithful foils for the transformations in world Catholicism that were occurring in the American civil religion (Casanova 1991). The Vatican and the liberal wall of separation and the civil rights movement had joined forces to create a new platform for the “Americanism” emerged. For the first time in U.S. public affairs.

Three events above all exemplify this: the 1983 Pastoral Letter, The Challenge of Peasantry, the 1986 Pastoral Letter, Economic Justice and the U.S. Economy; and the public interventions of “abortion” after the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision. Involvement in electoral politics since then has helped to set a political agenda for the church, and to intervene discursively in the public sphere (Casanova 1994b, pp. 184–207).

The bishops challenged the claims of economic spheres that they should be evaluated primarily on economic criteria without regard to external religious norms. They also challenged the basis of the church’s involvement in electoral politics since the 1976 presidential election. This is not to say that the church was not involved in political affairs, but rather that its involvement was limited to local and state-level elections, and that it did not have the same level of influence as other religious groups. The church was also involved in the civil rights movement, and it supported the legal challenges to education and employment discrimination.

The process of repositioning the private sphere of the Catholic Church in the public sphere of social and political life is not, however, complete. The church is still a major force in the political arena, and it continues to influence social policies and to shape public discourse on issues such as abortion, contraception, and same-sex marriage. However, the church has also been forced to confront the challenges of globalization and the rise of secularism, and it is increasingly having to reevaluate its role in the public sphere. The church is also facing challenges from within, as it struggles to adapt to the changing demographics of its membership and to address the needs of its diverse flock.
condemnations of the Americanist and Modernist heresies, U.S. Catholicism, not unlike Protestant fundamentalism, withdrew into a sectarian cultural ghetto. There emerged a self-sufficient Catholic subculture organized around the neighborhood ethnic parish, the Catholic school system, Catholic mass media, and myriad Catholic voluntary associations. But World War II, the GI Bill, and the post–World War II economic boom set U.S. Catholics on a new journey of geographical, educational, and occupational mobility that undermined the carefully built Catholic subculture. Simultaneously, the anti-Communist crusade of the Cold War brought a resolution to the old tension between Roman Catholicism and the American civil religion (Casanova 1992).

But precisely at the time when Catholicism had finally become “American” and U.S. Catholics had become faithful followers of the American civil religion, transformations in world Catholicism challenged the nationalist particularism of the American civil religion. The Vatican aggiornamento put into question both the liberal wall of separation and the civil religion fusion. Private faith could no longer leave secular public matters alone. Nor could spiritual truths ignore the ‘signs of the times’ or be immune to freedom of inquiry. But an eschatological dimension also warned not to identify any social order with God’s Kingdom. A new tension, this time voluntary and purposeful, between Catholicism and “Americanism” emerged. For the first time, Catholic faith dared to challenge U.S. public affairs.

Three events above all exemplify the new type of public Catholicism: the 1983 Pastoral Letter, The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response; the 1986 Pastoral Letter, Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy; and the public interventions of the U.S. bishops into the politics of “abortion” after the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision and their involvement in electoral politics since the 1976 presidential elections. Taken jointly, these public interventions have established the right of the church, or of any other religion, to intervene discursively as well as agonically in the public sphere (Casanova 1994b, pp. 184–207).

The bishops challenged the claims of the differentiated political and economic spheres that they should be evaluated solely in terms of intrinsic, functionally rational criteria without regard to extraneous moral considerations. Similarly they also challenged liberal individualist claims that morality should be left to the individual moral conscience. The result of this contestation is a dual interrelated process of repoliticization of the private religious and moral spheres and re-normativization of the public economic and political spheres. Such a process may rightly be termed the “deprivatization” of modern religion in a dual sense. It simultaneously introduces publicity—that is, intersubjective norms—into the private sphere and morality into the public sphere of state and economy.
The Catholic Aggiornamento

It is generally recognized that the transformation of world Catholicism was a direct outcome of the aggiornamento that was officially initiated and legitimated by the Second Vatican Council. Two documents in particular, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatis Humanae*, formed the doctrinal core of the Catholic reformation (Abbott 1966). In terms of the internal transformation of Catholicism, particularly of its economic and political ethics (in Max Weber’s sense of the term), *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, marked the most radical departure from tradition with visible world-historical consequences. It represents the lifting of the Catholic anathema that was hanging over modernity and the final acceptance of the legitimacy of the modern saeculum, that is, of the modern age and of the modern world. This process of secularization in its spatial dimension entails a change from an otherworldly to an innerworldly orientation. From now on, action on behalf of peace and justice and participation in the transformation of the world will become not an added but a constitutive dimension of the church’s divine mission. In its temporal dimension, the legitimacy of the modern age entails the acceptance of the principle of historicity and the church’s obligation to discern “the signs of the times.”

The most consequential document of Vatican II, however, was the Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*. It establishes the very conditions of possibility for a modern type of Catholic public religion. Without this declaration every other document would have been for all practical purposes meaningless. The recognition of the inalienable right of every individual to freedom of conscience, based on the sacred dignity of the human person, means that the church abandons its compulsory character and becomes a “free church.” The immediate historical consequences of the declaration were (a) the acceptance of the modern principle of disestablishment and separation of church and state; (b) the contestability of any Catholic party or political movement officially sponsored by the Catholic Church; and (c) in the long run, the incompatibility of a dogmatic conception of authoritative tradition and the principle of freedom of conscience.

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 (Hebblethwaite 1985; Hollenbach 1979, 1981). Significantly, the most eloquent voices in the crucial debate of the Declaration on Religious Freedom at the floor during the Council came from opposite blocs: from the U.S. bishops, who unanimously defended religious freedom not only on grounds of practical expediency but rather on theological grounds provided to them by their *peritus*, the great U.S. theologian John Courtney Murray, and from Cardinal Karol Wojtyla from Cracow, who had led the defense of the freedom of the church under communist rule, both theoretically and practically, was the principal advocate of the human person to freedom of conscience. The emergence of the principle of libertas ecclesiae, progressively through the ages, to the individual human libertas personae (Murray 1960, 1964, 1968).

With the emergence of the system of papacy had lost not only its relevance as a control over the national churches. One church fell under the control of caesars, itself became just another, rather marginal state. Everywhere, the alliance of national states. Again and again, the papacy claims for the protection of its temporal sovereignty through the recognition of sovereign rulers maintained officially their official acceptance of the internal and external authority.

Pius VI’s belated but eventually firm recognition of the clergy, after the majority refusal to take the public oath, marks a turning point. The Concordat with Napoleon that served as an example with conservative governments throughout Europe established a modus vivendi with the new sovereign states. The signing of concordats the most favorable for their own papal expansion of the modern secular state has been, at least until very recently, to extricate the national churches. The concordats established with the papacy as the axis of this traditional policy (Lewy 1964; Roderick 1966). In Italy, the concordat in Italy and the Vatican City, “the Roman question,” and a concordat for a concordat state. Mussolini conceded practically everything.

Similar considerations marked Vatican II. The Second Vatican Council was not at first a success. The Center Party, German Catholic bishops opposed the modernizing ideology and forbidden the faithful to vote
Karol Wojtyła from Cracow, 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 transfer of the principle of *libertas ecclesiae*, which the church had guarded so zealously through the ages, to the individual human person, from *libertas ecclesiae* to *libertas personae* (Murray 1960, 1964, 1966; Weigel 1992, pp. 70–74).

With the emergence of the system of sovereign states in early modernity, the papacy had lost not only its relevance as an international political institution but also control of the national churches. 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. Everywhere, the alliance of national hierarchy and national ruler had the same effect. 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 Gallic 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. 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 churches. After the French Revolution and the global expansion of the modern secular state, the Vatican transnational policy had 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 (Hales 1960; Chadwick 1981).

The concordats established with the fascist states may well serve to illustrate this traditional policy (Lewy 1964; Rhodes 1973). In its dealings with Italian Fascism 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 Italian state. The 1929 Lateran Treaty comprised both an international treaty between the Kingdom of Italy and the Vatican City State, which settled definitively the "Roman question," and a concordat between the Holy See and the Italian state. Mussolini conceded practically everything the church wanted. 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.

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 came only 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.  

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 mayo. It would seem that paramount in the mind of the pope was not so much an even-handed 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 abridgement of the rights of Catholics could the Mexican regime be placed on a par with the Nazi and Stalinist regimes.

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 is the fact that, while negotiating the concordat with the Third Reich, Secretary of State Cardinal 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 official recognition of the modern principle of religious freedom as a universal human right opened the way for a realignment in the relations between religious and worldly regime. From then 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 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 spokes-

man of humanity, the defensor hominis. And from the medieval trappings of territorial power so much its freedom of movement churches needed to carry out their spiritual and political overlords who always ended up supporting the movement but rather a free global civil society.

Transnational Catholicism

Naturally, the pope's voice could reach across state boundaries and be heard everywhere national resources and the local churches were actually joining and adding volumes of voices everywhere until state was questioning the principles of state sovereignty of the modern system of nation-states, the role of local social forces and transnational movements, working towards the establishment of a world order towards the constitution of one free global society.

Especially in those societies in which special weight this concordat civil effects, human rights doctrines could be used to denounce the national-catholicism of the Franco regime, the repressive-authoritarian regimes through the dictatorship of a Cold War caudillo, the interests of people's democracies in Poland and Hungary of the pope most seriously—priests and laity—were at the forefront of a new wave of demands.

The striking image of a penitent pope, at a higher spiritual authority of a pope in one temporal power, has always served as the prelude to the medieval papal authority. In the last decades of surrendering their power without resistance, people's power," or to "the power of the people," which becomes ever more frequent. When human rights become everybody's business, being cooked by the mass media, and by governmental organizations, and when global public opinion is the principle of noninterference in the movement becomes more difficult for sovereigns to protect their frontiers from an ever-expanding transnational Catholicism.
man of humanity, the *defensor hominis*. At long last, the papacy could free itself from the medieval 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 rule of political overlords who always ended up restricting the church’s freedom of movement but rather a free global civil society.

**Transnational Catholicism in a Global Civil Society**

Naturally, the pope’s voice could only have its effect if it 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; if the pope’s voice were actually joining and adding volume and prestige to already existing cho- ruses of voices everywhere until state walls came falling down. Indeed, in question- ing the principles of state sovereignty and *raison d’etat*, 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 towards the establishment of autonomous civil societies and towards the constitution of one free global civil society.⁶

Especially 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 bu- reaucratic-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. 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.⁷

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 tem- poral power, has always served as the paradigmatic symbolic expression of me- dieval papal authority. In the last 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 the ability of the papacy to exploit the opportunities created
by this process of globalization has its 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 of realigning themselves and joining 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 the Christian Democratic West, leading the process of integration of the European Community. The centrality of the papacy in the new global system was even recognized by the Soviets when Khrushchev welcomed John XXIII’s mediation during the Cuban missile crisis (Hanson 1987).

Thereafter, the Vatican’s Ostpolitik and the United States policy of détente took parallel tracks (Dunn 1979; Stelie 1981). Yet the Vatican has been 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 state sovereignty, arbitrate international disputes, and represent the interests of the entire family of nations. In the last decade, the Vatican has been an active participant in international conferences dealing with global issues.

The papacy has also eagerly assumed 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 recreate 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. Moreover, given its highly centralized structure and its imposing transnational network of human, institutional, and material resources, the church can reasonably assume that it has some competitive advantage.

Considering the fact that for centuries, practically since the early modern era, the papacy had 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 non-Catholics, all over the world. In particular John Paul II has used this direct contact with the masses of faithful extremely well in his plebiscitarian support for his authority and the necessary to impress secular leaders, to bypass negotiators in presenting tendencies from Catholic elites.

The fact that the public appearance of two papal media events is in itself an impressive aspect of papacy on world public opinion does not mean that it is passive, but rather from the prominent role of media and the words and deeds receive in Western secular society, Paul II’s personal charisma, it would seem to me, that meets the expectations of a much wider public than the pope has learned to play, perhaps more so the role of first citizen of a catholic (i.e., global) world. It happens that this role is often in tension with the head and supreme guardian of the particularities of the Una, Sancta, Catholica and Aeterna.

The Tensions of Catholicism and Globalization

In order to validate its claims to catholica, the Catholic Church and its supreme pontiff has identified first the tensions between the Roman, the universal, character of the ecclesiastical institution, the universality of its norms, both sets of tensions are closely related to the globalization (Robertson 1992; Robertson and Baeck 1991; Beyer 1994).

Looking at Catholicism globally through the world, particularly since the 1960s, one can observe a number of tensions with one another. There is first the tension of the First Vatican Council and the papacy, on the one hand, the Second Vatican Council and the papacy, on the other. The tensions produced not only administrative and doctrinal differentiation and globalization of Catholic cultures, but also the Catholicism in the world.

Simultaneously, however, with this process, there has taken place a parallel process of administrative structures and of globalization. The Roman Catholic Church has ceased being an aggressive institution. Along with the demog
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.

The fact that the public appearance of the pope has become today a positive media event is in itself an impressive achievement. Indeed, 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 secular media. Without discounting John Paul II's personal charisma, 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 (i.e., 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 Tensions of Catholicity

In order to validate its claims to catholicity (i.e., to universality) the Roman Catholic Church and its supreme pontiff have to resolve two sets of tensions. The first is the tensions between the Roman, the national, and the increasingly global character of the ecclesiastical institution. The second is the tension between the particularity and the claimed universality of its doctrinal principles and moral norms. Both sets of tensions are closely related with ongoing processes of globalization (Robertson 1992; Robertson and Chirico 1985; Robertson and Garrett 1991; Beyer 1994).

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, a process that in the modern age began with the convocation of the First Vatican Council and the proclamation of papal infallibility. Most of all, the Second Vatican Council and the ensuing general aggiornamento have 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, however, with this process of Romanization of Catholicism, 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 1 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. Though laggingly, the episcopal and administrative cadres of the church have changed in the same direction (Holmes 1981, pp. 23–24, 187, 233). Moreover, the contemporary process of internationalization of Catholicism 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 criss-cross nations and world regions, often bypassing Rome (Lernoux 1989; Smith 1990; Hanson 1987; Della Cava 1992, pp. 169–199; Della Cava 1993).

Interrelated with, yet in tension with, this dual process of Romanization of world Catholicism and internationalization of Rome, there has also taken place a process of centralization of the Catholic churches at the national level. National conferences of bishops since Vatican II have reinforced the dynamics of a process 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 towards 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 towards 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. It is this voluntary “disestablishment” that has permitted the church to play a key role in recent transitions to democracy throughout the Catholic world. As national churches transfer the defense of their particularistic privileges to the human person, Catholicism becomes mobilized again, this time to defend modern universal rights and the very right of a democratic civil society to exist.

One of the most significant developments that have emerged from recent transitions to democracy in Catholic countries is the fact that, despite finding itself in a majority position with an unprecedented prestige and influence within civil society, the Catholic Church has not only accepted the constitutional separation of church and state and the principle of religious freedom, but also has abandoned its traditional attempts to either establish or sponsor official Catholic parties, which could be used to defend and politically advance the ecclesiastical privileges and claims of the church. In this respect, the “age” of reactive organismism, of secular–religious cleavages and clerical–anticlerical cultural and political warfare, of Catholic Action, and of Christian Democracy has come to an end. If the church today no longer seeks to reenter the state through the mobilization of the laity in order to regain control over society, it is to a large extent due to the fact that the church no longer feels or by hostile social movements. The disappearance of public religiosity in Catholic countries is perhaps the most significant change.

The fact, however, that the church and its establishment from the state, but also its autonomy, does not mean that Catholicism becomes a church is no longer likely to play any public role in the public sphere. Ultimately, only public religions associated with modern universalistic principles and institutions have succeeded the differentiated public sphere of processes of normativity contestation, discursive and institutional boundaries between private and public, reality, justice and the good life, a tension between Catholic particularity and civic commonality often becomes evident.

Striking in recent papal and episcopal pronouncements dealing with issues of public morality, is how the Church, as faithful members of the church, today, privileges and rights of humanity, obliged to follow universal human values of life and freedom, effectiveness as a public religion in modern pluralistic societies. The interventions will have to be, and are in principle, aimed at presenting its public interventions not as an alternative to traditional Catholic opposition to abortion, but as an alternative to presenting its public interventions not as an alternative to the secular state, which defend the right to life and the right to free and open, public, rational discourse in the public sphere.

But given modern structural conditions, how can the Church maintain its universalistic claims, it will have to let the faithful participate in the constructive processes of normative teachings and allow for different...
due to the fact that the church no longer feels threatened by a hostile secular state or by hostile social movements. The disappearance of anticlericalism from everyday politics in Catholic countries is perhaps the most telling indicator of this historical transformation.

The fact, however, that the church appears to have accepted not only disestablishment from the state, but also disengagement from political society proper, does not mean that Catholicism becomes necessarily privatized or that the church is no longer likely to play any public role. It only means that the public locus of the church is no longer the state or political society, but rather civil society. Ultimately, only public religions at the level of civil society are consistent with modern universalistic principles and with modern differentiated structures. As the Catholic Church abandons the private sphere assigned to religion and enters the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society to take part in ongoing processes of normative contestation, discursive legitimation, and redrawing of the boundaries between private and public, religious and secular, morality and legality, justice and the good life, a tension between catholic universality and Roman Catholic particularity 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. Indeed, in order to maintain its effectiveness as a public religion in modern civil societies the church’s public interventions will have to be, and appear to be, nonpartisan and nonsectarian; 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. In fact, the Catholic Church today is presenting its public interventions not as the defense of a particular group or of 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, whatever position or option it takes, the church will have to justify it through open, public, rational discourse in the public sphere of civil society.

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 specially inside the church. The lessons of the public interventions of the U.S. bishops indicate that the church will have to learn to let the faithful participate in the constant elaboration and reformulation of its normative teachings and allow for different practical judgments as to how to in-
interpret those normative teachings in concrete circumstances (Casanova 1994b, pp. 201–207).

Indeed, the bishops' interventions have brought into public view two unintended effects. The first is that the bishops today have much less power of political mobilization than suggested by old Protestant and liberal fears. At times they sound much like prophets clamoring in the desert. The second is that the bishops cannot enter the public sphere without necessarily exposing Catholic normative traditions and ecclesiastical institutional structures to public scrutiny. The failure to effectively mobilize the Catholic faithful and Catholic politicians for a pro-life constitutional amendment only made publicly evident what had already become obvious in the sphere of private morality, namely that the Catholic hierarchy does not control the consciences of U.S. Catholics. The widespread rejection by lay Catholics of the church's teachings on sexual morality have made clear not only that Catholics were ready to disobey church commandments, something that as sinners Catholics have always done, but that they were consciously dissenting from church doctrines, in good conscience, without thinking that they were acting immorally, and without believing that they were unfaithful to the Catholic Church.

Implicitly at least, by their ecclesiastical disobedience in combination with their expressed unwillingness to leave the church, indeed through their refusal to consider that by disobeying the church hierarchy they are breaking communion with the church, Catholics are saying that they have internalized the teachings of the Second Vatican Council in a way in which the Council Fathers may not have anticipated when they proclaimed the doctrine of freedom of conscience and when they defined the church as the people of God. Implicitly, Catholics are saying that they are the people of God, that the church belongs also to them, not only to the hierarchy, that irrespective of what the hierarchy says, they will not feel excommunicated from their church, that they also have a right to participate in the interpretation of the meaning of the Catholic normative tradition for contemporary circumstances, and that ultimately they individually have the moral obligation to apply in conscience Catholic normative principles to their own personal situation.

If the hierarchy no longer controls the consciences of the faithful in the private sphere, much less do they control the consciences and the activities of Catholics in the public sphere. It is well understood that in a modern, pluralistic, democratic civil society the church can no longer legislate public morality and therefore has to abandon the model of church establishment. But beyond that, the church will also have to abandon the very model of Catholic political mobilization. Given the pluralistic internal structure of "the people of God," every political mobilization in one particular direction can only call forth the counter-mobilization of dissenting Catholics in the opposite direction.

The liberal wall of separation served society from religious establishment and extraneous normative concerns, but also from public intervention and from public intervention have now asserted themselves in public affairs, at least implicitly they are right to judge their speech in accordance with rational debate, which at least ideally gives everyone the right to accept these criteria in their public new wall of separation between the church as a private ecclesiastical institution and public approval, criteria from the public sphere will apply and one can expect that the people of God will demand equal access to it and that that even the ecclesiastical institution can open to the human dignity of all its members, and for the purposes and purposes of its new sphere and abandoning its claims to be a public church escape the unintended consequences.

As shown by the ideological struggle of the accessions of Karol Wojtyla to the Papacy of Cardinal Ratzinger to the old post of modern social philosophy among the relevant ideological interpretation of the texts of Vatican 1989; Hitchcock 1979; Dinges and Hitchcock 1979, 1990). But sociologically its consequences, intended or unintended, that we have the widespread internalization of the meaning of Vatican II. The conservative thesis, central to the "Gallican Question" issued by Cardinal Ratzinger, that the expansion of other Catholic intellectuals led to an illegitimacy from the bishops has to viewed Vatican to regain centralized doctrinal meaning of Vatican II. The ideological lines today are not primarily those between a co-
The liberal wall of separation served historically not only to protect state and society from religious establishment and the political and economic spheres from extraneous normative concerns, but also to protect the private religious sphere from public intervention and from public scrutiny. If the bishops through their public intervention have now asserted their "right and competence" to intervene in public affairs, at least implicitly they also have come to recognize the public's right to judge their speech in accordance with the universalistic criteria of open, rational debate, which at least ideally govern the public sphere. Once they have come to accept these criteria in their public interventions, any attempt to draw a new wall of separation between the church as a public institution and the church as a private ecclesiastical institution will become increasingly difficult. Inevitably, criteria from the public sphere will spill over into the ecclesiastical sphere, and one can expect that the people of God will demand participation in the continuous historical process of interpretation of the church's normative teachings, that women will demand equal access to the universal priesthood of the people of God, that eventually the ecclesiastical institution will have to learn to respect the human dignity of all its members, and that the church will have to stop inquisitorial proceedings against its own theologians and peremptory demands of public recantation from its dissidents. Ultimately, a church that claims to be a public, universal church will have to accept "faithful dissent" within its walls in the same way that modern democratic societies have to accept the principle of "civil disobedience." Only by retreating again to a private fundamentalist sectarian refuge and abandoning its claims to be a public religion in the modern world can the church escape the unintended consequences of having entered the modern public sphere.

As shown by the ideological struggles taking place within the church since the accession of Karol Wojtyla to the Papacy, and particularly since the accession of Cardinal Ratzinger to the old post of modern "grand inquisitor," there is much room for disagreement among the relevant collective actors over the correct theological interpretation of the texts of Vatican II (Hebblethwaite 1986; Lernoux 1989; Hitchcock 1979; Dinges and Hitchcock 1991; Marty and Appleby 1991; Kelly 1979, 1990). But sociologically speaking, the sociohistorical consequences, intended or unintended, that were unleashed by the publication and by the widespread internalization of the message of these documents are undeniable. The conservative thesis, central to the "Catholic Restoration" aggressively pursued by Cardinal Ratzinger, that the expansion of the role of the theologians and other Catholic intellectuals led to an illegitimate usurpation of the church's magisterium from the bishops has to be viewed as part of a revisionist attempt by the Vatican to regain centralized doctrinal control by reinterpretating the "correct" meaning of Vatican II. The ideological struggles taking place within the church today are not primarily those between a conservative hierarchy and a liberal laity.
nor even those between bishops and dissenting theologians. They are struggles within the hierarchy and within the laity over the correct magisterium of the church. The present Vatican project of centralizing once again the control of doctrinal teaching through the replacement of liberal bishops with conservative ones throughout the world is at best a process fraught with contingencies whose outcome not even a long-reigning and powerful pope could control.

ENDNOTES

1This article draws on the more elaborated arguments and more extensive information presented in Casanova (1994b, 1996).

2An adequate analysis of the Catholic morality and politics of sex and gender would require, however, a more substantive and systematic treatment than the one possible here. For a critical analysis of the Catholic church’s public intervention in the politics of abortion in the United States see Casanova (1994b, pp. 192–201).

3In terms of its effects on the tradition of authoritative magisterial teaching, the church is only now beginning to come to terms with, or actually trying to avoid, the unintended consequences of the modern principle of freedom of conscience.

4Pius 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” (Holmes 1981, p. 56).

5The 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, while Mit brennender Sorge was distributed secretly and read throughout Germany from Catholic pulpits on Palm Sunday.


8Catholic elites worldwide tend to reproduce similar “internationalist” attitudes (Vaillancourt 1980, pp. 134–167).

9Of course, the papacy has also effectively used its own transnational media. 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 more than 200 hours of programming per week in 35 languages, has been particularly relevant for persecuted Catholics.

10The whole range of Catholic counterrevolutionary movements from the time of the French Revolution to the Spanish Civil War, which David Martin has aptly characterized as “reactive organicism”: the political mobilization of religious minorities reacting or protesting against different types of Kulturkampf coming from the state or from other religious or secular movements or parties; structural systems of religious-political “pillarization,” such as those characteristically developed in Belgium or Holland; the church’s mobilization of the laity through “Catholic Action” to protect or advance the church’s interests and privileges; the system of Christian Democratic parties that crystallized after World-War II in Catholic and, to a lesser extent, in Lutheran countries—all these cases could be viewed as different types of “public religion.”

11Not surprisingly, the thesis comes from a liberal cardinal (see The Ratzinger Report 1985). Central to it: authoritatively the correct meaning of the four key words: Gaudium et Spes, Lumen Gentium, and Christus Dominus relativism and moral subjectivism that could be science, the duty of the individual conscience to subjugate the individual conscience to it is the idea, against a “populist” definition of the church and against an immanentist social gospel, the transcendence of the Kingdom (c) against the participation of the theologians in the magisterium of the church, the hierarchy and the Pope; and (d) against the collegial institution of synods and episcopal conferences, the canonization of each bishop in direct communication with the people of God.

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could be viewed as different types of "public" religion located at the level of political society. There are many analyses of the various types of mobilized political Catholicism. (For general analyses, see Martin 1978 and Rokkan 1977. For Europe, see Fogarty 1957; Lannon 1987; Evans 1974; Molony 1977; Poggi 1967; Kertzer 1980; Rokkan 1970; Dobbelaere and Billiet 1983. For Latin America, see Levine 1981; Smith 1982; Fleet 1985; Bruneau 1974.)

1Not surprisingly, the thesis comes from a liberal theologian turned neoconservative bishop-cardinal (see The Ratzinger Report 1985). Central to the Ratzinger restoration is the attempt to define authoritatively the correct meaning of the four key documents of Vatican II, Dignitatis Humanae, Gaudium et Spes, Lumen Gentium, and Christus Dominus, by stressing: (a) against the danger of doctrinal relativism and moral subjectivism that could be derived from the principle of freedom of conscience, the duty of the individual conscience to submit to revealed truth and to the objective moral order; (b) against a "populist" definition of the church, the church as "supernatural mystery," and against an immanentist social gospel, the transcendent, eschatological, and spiritual character of God's Kingdom; (c) against the participation of the laity in the universal priesthood and of the theologians in the magisterium of the church, the hierarchic structure of the episcopal office under the authority of the Pope; and (d) against the collegial structure of the episcopate and the doctrinal function of synods and episcopal conferences, the canonical, doctrinal and ministerial, sovereign jurisdiction of each bishop in direct communion with the pope.

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