

# The Catholic Church's War with Democracy

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According to Alexis de Tocqueville the Catholic Church ended up embracing feudalism closely, even though it had other origins, other destinies and a different nature.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in France, apart from exaction of labour which was the sole privilege of the nobility, the Church benefited from various monopolies, tax relieves and other special privileges. Furthermore, its representatives exercised certain state administrative functions and thus became local notables. The situation in Austria, Spain, Portugal and other Latin countries was similar. All in all, at the end of the Medieval Period the Church owned one third of the whole land in Europe and its functionaries made up one fifth of the European population.

No wonder then that the Church defended monarchy with a blind determination, as if it was the only political system which could be reconciled with the Gospels. And it can also be no surprise that the Church spoke out against the republic, democracy, and human rights before these were fully formed. In the breve *Quod aliquantum* of March 1791, addressed to the French bishops in the National Assembly, Pius VI condemned the idea that one cannot be discriminated because of his or her religion, and that anyone could think, say, and write what he or she wanted on the subject. The Pope declared: "In the eyes of the Assembly, this monstrous law is based in the freedom and equality natural to the human being, yet can there be something more incomprehensible than setting such a licentious freedom and equality? This freedom [...] which the National Assembly grants humans as an inalienable inborn right is incompatible with the law set by God the Creator. After all, as St. Augustine said, human society is nothing more than only a general contract to listen to kings whose power stems not from a social contract but from God."<sup>2</sup>

The view that democracy and human rights are incompatible with the principles of the Gospels was proclaimed unremittingly by *all* popes until the

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<sup>1</sup> "For though the Church derived its authority from a different source and had aims and functions quite different from those of the temporal power, it had gradually become tied up with the feudal system [...] and was so deeply involved as to seem part and parcel of it." (A. de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, Garden City N.Y., 1955, p. 29.)

<sup>2</sup> See A. Theiner, *Documents inedits, relatifs aux affaires religieuses de la France*, vol. 1, Paris 1857, p. 32 et seq.

middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> With his denunciation of the French Revolution, Pius VI thus inaugurated an unproductive 150 year battle of the Vatican against liberalism. Doomed it was from the start as there was no stopping the changes brought on by the industrial revolution and the development of capitalism – certainly not with epithets hurled from the throne of St. Peter.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most spectacular stages in the battle with democracy is marked by the 1864 encyclical *Quanta cura* by Pius IX censuring rationalism, freedom of the press, equality of religions before the law, freedom of conscience, as well as a system of government which steered clear of punishing attacks on Roman Catholicism. Appended to the encyclical was a document entitled *Syllabus errorum* in which the final and 80<sup>th</sup> error was the “propagated word and act” that the pope “can and should be reconciled with progress, liberalism, and modern culture.” The theses presented in the *Syllabus* comprised a continuation and systematization of the social teachings of the Church preached by predecessors of Pius IX, especially by Gregory XVI who called liberalism “an abominable doctrine” and freedom of conscience “a mistake, an absurdity, or even madness” in the *Mirari vos* encyclical of 1832. Testifying to the consistency of Gregory XVI in ignoring the transformations taking place in the world around him is his refusal to allow technical innovations – including the railway and gas lighting – in the Vatican State, leading, as a consequence, the potentially wealthiest Italian state to economic ruin.

Nonetheless, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a group of French Catholics emerged which felt that the Church should face the modern world and “christen” the new liberal institutions as it had once done with the Greco-Roman civilization, the medieval movement for the autonomy of urban communities, or the humanism of the Renaissance. These expectations, however, were at cross purposes with the official position of the Holy See. One of the most striking examples of this was the condemnation of the *Le Sillon* circle which tried through its periodical to square Christianity with the ideas of democracy and human rights – in a word, with the political system born of the French Revolution. Thus, in a letter to the French bishops of 25 August 1910, Pope Pius X stressed that he saw no necessity to introduce social changes, and that “one need only renew the structures damaged by the revolution and adapt them [...] to the new circumstances, [...] because true friends of the people are neither revolutionaries, nor innovators, but traditionalists.”

Its bond to the aristocratic-theocratic social order which had irrevocably vanished with the Middle Ages – but to which the bishops of Rome referred

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<sup>3</sup> Even as late as 1953, then-reigning Pope Pius XII reminded Roman Catholics on various occasions that freedom of conscience is “a mistaken idea which has no right to exist.”

<sup>4</sup> In the *Quanta cura* encyclical of 8 August 1864, Pope Pius IX described liberals as “unscrupulous people who splatter their lies like the foamy waves of a stormy sea and promise freedom while they themselves are the slaves of decay”.

continually, even into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – transformed the papacy into a heritage park of Europe, and exiled to the fringes of modern public life those Catholics wishing to remain within the Church. Moreover, blind conservatism, a love of monarchy, and fear of change pushed the Vatican leaders to attack not only liberalism and socialism, but to depreciate national aspirations behind which stood indubitable historical claims as well. The Roman Curia – looking backwards to the past and engulfed by medieval dreams of power – overlooked not only the birth of the bourgeoisie and the working class, but also the nation-building processes which shook 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. This led to odd pronouncements and exotic alliances. The doctrine of legitimism drove popes to denounce the uprisings of the Catholic Poles against the Orthodox Russians, and the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to generate appeals calling the recalcitrant Irish to obedience before Protestant England. Once the interests of the Vatican State were themselves threatened, the bishops of the Eternal City did not hesitate to summon foreign armies – French, Hispanic, and Austrian – to counter the unification of Italy which, despite all obstacles, ultimately swallowed the territory of Rome in 1870.

### **The Debacle of Legitimism**

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Church was more dependent on the secular authorities than at any other time in its history. At the same time, political rulers, treating Catholicism as a subservient educational and police institution, were more indifferent to religion than ever. Enlightened absolute monarchs did as they pleased with Church property, confiscating it without scruples whenever the national interests demanded. They annulled proclamations by the Church authorities (*appellatio ab abusu*) and made the promulgation of papal bulls, whose contents they reviewed, subject to their approval. They reorganized and liquidated religious orders and organizations. Finally, they established and closely supervised the curricula of seminaries and Catholic schools. In a word, they treated the local Church like a subordinate state agency. The symbols of the era were Josephinism in Austria, the policies of the Marquis de Pombal in Portugal, and the reforms of Pietro Leopold in Tuscany.

The Church's weapon in the battle with the enlightened monarchy was legitimism. This was created at the time of the Counter-Reformation and relied on an appeal to eternal, unchanging laws. Catholic legitimism placed the prerogatives of the Church above the prerogatives of the state and conflicted with monarchical legitimism, for which the superior constitutional principle was the absolute sovereignty of the ruler – sovereignty unlimited by anything, including the rights of Pope and bishops.

After the French Revolution, the contradictions between secular and religious legitimism were relegated to the background by the common foe of a

bourgeoisie growing in power and proclaiming liberal ideas. Striking at the Church, Enlightenment ideology inevitably turned against the king, God's anointed representative. But the converse was also true: the challenge to the monarchy was a challenge to the Catholic hierarchy that supported royalty. In other words, the fall of the secular pillar of the feudal system led ineluctably to the fall of its sacral pillar, and *vice-versa*. In such a situation, the Church renounced its old quarrels with monarchy and put up determined opposition to the bourgeoisie's aspirations to political emancipation. It was therefore hardly strange that in his apostolic letter of March 1791, Pius VI condemned the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens* voted by the French National Assembly, and especially the principles of equality and freedom of speech that it contained, as tending to "the overthrow of the Catholic faith and with it the obedience owed the King"<sup>5</sup>. Nor is it strange that the ideas of the sovereignty of the people and the admission of non-Catholics to state offices were also condemned by the Pope.

In 1815, the anti-Republican tendencies in the bosom of the Church were strengthened. The Congress of Vienna's restoration of the secular authority of the Bishop of Rome over the Papal States, in their pre-Revolutionary boundaries, organically cemented the interests of the papacy with those of the Holy Alliance<sup>6</sup>. The feudal-absolutist social system of that post-Napoleonic 'Petrine State' – in which Leo XII even recreated the Jewish ghetto – fostered added support of monarchies and conflicts with democratic and nationalist movements.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The significance and genesis of *Quod aliquantum*, a breve of March 10, 1791, are discussed in an interesting way by A. Mathiez in *Rome et la clerge francais sous la Constituante*, Paris 1911, pp. 488 et seq.

<sup>6</sup> As a result of his deepening conflicts with pope Pius VII, Napoleon Bonaparte liquidated the Papal States in 1811 and annexed them to France. After the defeat of Napoleon's army at Waterloo, by a joint decision of the victorious powers (especially Russia, Austria and Prussia), the peace conference held in Vienna in September 1814 restored the Papal States to their *status quo ante*. A year later they formed a military-political agreement in Paris, called the Holy Alliance. The primary goal of the alliance was defence of the monarchic regime in Europe, restored with great care by the Congress of Vienna, and an allied defy any and all - potential and real - national liberation and revolutionary movements. The Holy Alliance considered any sort of French-style democracy as, in the words of Austrian Chancellor Clemens von Metternich, 'the disease which must be cured, the volcano which must be extinguished, the gangrene which must be burned out with a hot iron, the hydra with a jaws open to swallow up the social order'. (Quote after: A. Palmer, *Metternich*, London 1972, p. 15.)

<sup>7</sup> A good example of this is the demand directed by Tsar Nicholas I to Pope Gregory XVI for the condemnation of the 1830 Polish insurrection, eagerly answered by the latter in a special encyclical. In the instructions to the Russian envoy in Rome that articulated Moscow's position, the Vice-Chancellor Count Nesselrode wrote: "The Emperor has all the fewer reservations about demanding support from the Pope in that, regardless of more telling reasons resulting from his obligations as head of the Catholic Church, [Nicholas] is convinced of the Holy Father's readiness to bear the witness of his gratitude to the efforts

The support of the Roman Curia for the forces of reaction and restoration manifested itself in a simple way: the papacy acknowledged only what the secular monarchies accepted, and attacked whatever they fought against. So, for instance, the 1821 bull *De salute animarum* drew up a new map of Prussian dioceses congruent with state boundaries, thus carrying the political results of the partition of Poland into religious grounds. The liquidation of the administrative integrity of the Polish church and the annulment of the status of the Archdiocese of Gniezno as See of the Primate were the next steps in the sacral legitimation of the division of Europe that had been carried out by the victorious powers in 1815. However, the papal document of those years that caused Poles the most pain was the *Cum primum* encyclical of June, 1832, promulgated after the collapse of the November Insurrection and condemning those who “under the guise of religious reasons [. . .] have lifted up their heads against the legitimate authority of monarchs and covered their homelands, deprived of all the bonds of deserved obedience, in very heavy mourning.”<sup>8</sup> This enunciation had been preceded, on the one hand, by ruthless Tsarist repression – trials, confiscation, hard labour and the exile to Russia of Polish children orphaned in the war – that outraged European public opinion, and on the other by the announcement in February 1832 of the Organic Law incorporating the Kingdom of Poland into the Russian Empire. This guaranteed the inviolability of clerical funds (Article 6) and acknowledged “special government protection“ for the Roman Catholic Church (Article 5), including censorship in the interests of respect for faith (Article 13). It is therefore hardly surprising that the pastor of the universal flock, Gregory XVI, who had „wept and begged God for peace in the unfortunate provinces“ (*provincias istras vestras*) opted unequivocally in favour of the Tsarist regime and called the leaders of the Insurrection “liars” and “sowers of ruin.”<sup>9</sup>

In the encyclical *Quanta cura*, promulgated two years after the condemnation of the November Insurrection, Pope Pius IX rejected the following as contrary to natural law: (1) the conviction that the best constitutional system is one that treats “true” religion and “false religions” equally; (2) the view that the state should not use physical force against “the violators of the Catholic faith”; (3) the doctrine that the sovereign will of the people is the highest secular law, and (4) the conviction that the individual deserves freedom of conscience and, with it, freedom of speech and publication. After enumerating a long list of condemnations, of which these four are only a small part, the encyclical formulated two positive principles in the form of pastoral instructions to bishops. According to these instructions monarchy continued to be seen as “the foundation

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recently undertaken in Italy by the Emperor's cabinet, in conjunction with the Vienna government, in favor of the Pope's interests." (see: M. Żywczyński, *Watykan wobec powstania listopadowego*, Kraków, 1995, p. 58.)

<sup>8</sup>*Ibidem*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 67-68.

of the Catholic religion”, and monarchs “have been given authority not so much to rule over the world, as to protect the Church”.

Pius IX’s doctrine was a simple continuation of his predecessor’s social ideas. Gregory XVI, in his encyclical *Mirari vos* of 15 August 1832, had come out against the growing strength of democracy and nationalist movements, and warned Catholics that “writings which ignite the torch of rebellion” by undercutting “the faith and submission due to the ruler [. . .] oppose the will of God, since, there is no other authority but from God. (*non est potestas nisi a Deo*). For this reason also, divine as well as human laws curse those who use shameful attacks, rebellion and conspiracies in an effort to break faith in sworn monarchs in order to remove them from their thrones”.

Pius IX’s successor Leo XII proclaimed in his *Diuturnum illud* encyclical of 29 June 1881 that all political authority is derived from God. He claimed that “the Church finds incontrovertible witness of this view in Holy Scripture and the landmarks of ancient Christianity. It is impossible to conceive of any doctrine more consonant with reason, as well as with the good of rulers and peoples”. Leo XII went on to invoke Clement VII’s letter to Ferdinand, king of the Czechs and Hungarians, in which he had written: “Affairs of faith are also your affair, as well as the affairs of all rulers. On them rest your dignity and your interest; each violation of faith entails the unavoidable weakening of your position.”

In the nineteenth century, the Church put the Catholic religion at the service of monarchs to support an archaic, quasi-feudal social order. In turn, it demanded the protection of its own interests by the states: the preservation of its religious authority and privileged political position. In other words, over the heads of the faithful and at the cost of their wants, the Church in the nineteenth century offered a mutually advantageous political pact to monarchs who were tottering on the edge of collapse. This deal treated God’s people as objects in a double sense and, as it then seemed, permanently ensured the interests of both the *imperium* and the *sacerdotium*, the reign of the state crown and the reign of the Triple Crown.

No matter how decided and energetic the support of the Catholic hierarchy for the forces of the old order, it could not prevent the collapse of such anachronistic regimes as the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian monarchies, nor the independence by subjugated nations, the political emancipation of such underprivileged social classes as the bourgeois and the proletariat, and the expansion of the new ideologies of liberalism and socialism. The map of Europe, its regions, institutions and social consciousness, the aspirations and living conditions of the masses, all changed. Altogether this was a defeat for legitimism and a fiasco for the Church policies. Yet the Vatican still supported it, even when it took the form of a caricature and degenerated into support for rightist dictatorships.

## The Church and Fascism

“If state authority rests with the people”, Pius X asked in a letter to the French episcopate of 25 August 1910, “what then will become of authority? It will become a shadow, a myth. Then there is no law in the true meaning of the word and no obedience.” Two decades later Pius XI again recalled the Church’s irreconcilable opposition to the principle of freedom of conscience and discussion.”In the Catholic state”, he announced authoritatively, “there can be no question of freedom of conscience.”<sup>10</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, the bishops of Rome treated democratic systems as a fundamentally evil, degenerated political order, as a social system deprived not only of moral foundations, but also of any legal basis. The fascist system was seen in a totally different light. The Curia *never* condemned such a system of political authority, neither at the outbreak of the Second World War, nor at the height of Nazi genocide. On the contrary, the Roman Church “canonized” fascism, repeatedly lending it public support and concluding various agreements with it, of which the most spectacular were the Lateran Pact with Italy (1929) and the concordats with Germany (1933), Portugal (1940) and Spain (1953).

There had been a "cold war" between the papacy and Italy from the moment in 1870 when, following the occupation of the Eternal City by Giovanni Lanza’s military government and the liquidation of the Papal States, Pius IX proclaimed himself a prisoner of the Vatican.<sup>11</sup> This went on for more than fifty years, until the fascist coup in 1922 caused a radical change of Church’s attitudes towards the Italian state. In the encyclical *Ubi Arcano Dei* announced shortly after the March on Rome, Pope Pius XI opposed the participation of the people in ruling Italy, thus, in effect, supporting Mussolini’s dictatorship. Less than two

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<sup>10</sup> *Open Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, May 30, 1929.*

<sup>11</sup> A measure of this hostility is indicated by Pius IX's strong complaints against his strict imprisonment, which denied him "the free performance of the supreme pastoral authority" (*Respicientes*, November 1, 1870). His enmity towards the Republic of Italy is also evidenced by his unending appeals to the faithful to help him recover his freedom or, in plain terms, to rebuild the Papal States. These appeals were, naturally, highly troubling to the Italian government. In order to intensify the resonance of such pleas by the Pope, his fervent apologists spread rumors about his humiliating poverty and bits of the straw on which the successor of Peter was allegedly compelled to sleep were peddled to pilgrims with the sanction of the appropriate Church authorities (see: V. Gorresio, *Risorgimento scomunicato*, Florence, 1958, pp. 196 et seq.). This stubborn *non possumus* towards a weak, freshly unified Italy confirmed the influential anticlerical wing of public opinion in its aversion to the Church. For instance, the national hero Giuseppe Garibaldi complained in 1875 that parliament did not want to free Italy from the yoke of the papacy and clergy – those "irreconcilable foes of the fatherland and culture". A significant part of the press revelled in attacks on the clergy and high Catholic hierarchy, even resorting to crude mockery and caricature; and, despite stern steps by the state authorities, there were attacks on priests and blasphemous masquerades on the streets of Rome.

years later Pius XI demanded Catholic obedience to the Duce who, he said, was ruling the state "with unprecedented strength and freshness of spirit". Moreover, the Pope emphasised that disobedience to the Duce was a sin<sup>12</sup>. This was very helpful to the Fascists in overcoming their social isolation and a deep political crisis caused by the assassination of the popular socialist Giacomo Matteoti<sup>13</sup>.

The Vatican contributed significantly to the overthrow of parliamentary government in Italy and the seizure of power by the Fascist party.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the ruling circles of a party that had initially been decidedly anticlerical became convinced that the Catholic hierarchy could be an important pillar of the new system. The culminating phase of the cooperation of the Fascists and the Church in exercising secular-religious control over the Italian people was the Lateran Pact of February 11, 1929. In this pact, the Vatican made far greater concessions to Mussolini than it had been prepared to offer any of the pre-Fascist Italian governments: it reduced its territorial demands to a minimum, renounced any international guarantees and markedly curtailed its demands for financial compensation. For their part, the Fascists repaid the Apostolic See with the most favourable concordat concluded in modern times.

As opposed to the earlier democratic cabinets, the Fascist government did not have to deal either with the tradition of the *Risorgimento*, or with the principle of national sovereignty, or with the anti-clericalism of the Italians. As a consequence of the conditions of the concordat, it was able to raise Catholicism to the rank of "the one state religion," limit the religious freedom of Protestant denominations, introduce compulsory religious education in school, abolish divorce, and place matrimonial law under Church jurisdiction. The Roman Curia accepted these regulations with the highest appreciation. Two days after signing the concordat, Pope Pius XI in an address to the Faculty of the Catholic University in Milan, defined Mussolini as a statesman free of "liberal prejudices sent by Providence". The Lateran Pact meant the end of democratic institutions and political pluralism in Italy for more than fifteen years. The Apostolic See

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<sup>12</sup> See P. Scappola, *Chiesa e stato nella storia d'Italia*, Bari, 1967, p. 520.

<sup>13</sup> The dimensions of this crisis are attested by the fact that, in the face of the universal outrage at the murder of Matteoti, many fascists lacked the courage to show themselves in public, while Mussolini himself broke down and panicked. Twenty years later, the Duce still quaked at the memory of this part of his life, and admitted in a discussion with the journalist Carlo Silvestri that he had thought then of submitting his resignation to the king, and even expected to be imprisoned and sentenced to death (see P. Monelli, *Mussolini piccolo borghese*, Milan, 1965, p. 160).

<sup>14</sup> Some historians speculate that Mussolini and the Vatican had already concluded a secret informal agreement before the March on Rome. Otherwise, the favorable attitude of the Roman Curia to the power-grabbing fascists, who just a few months earlier had been proclaiming the slogan "abasso il papa" (down with the Pope) and had been breaking up religious processions, seems incomprehensible (see E. Rossi, *Il manganello e l'aspersorio*, Bari, 1968, p. 46).

expected that Mussolini's Fascist state would become a model for other Catholic countries. After the Lateran Pact, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs began actively supporting Vatican diplomacy and contributed to the undertaking of negotiations between the papacy and Hitler. This was capped by the concordat concluded in record time with Nazi Germany.

Germany, the home of the Reformation, had become the one large European country torn by Protestantism. The fact that the Rhineland, Bavaria and Austria had refused to accept Lutheranism led to a permanent division of Germany which not even Bismarck's unification of the Reich three hundred years later could overcome. The Lutheran Hohenzollern empire had arisen as a result of the eighteenth-century expansion of Prussia, but it did not include Catholic Habsburg Austria. The Wilhelmian empire came to an end together with the First World War, which it had started. Its place was taken by the Weimar Republic, created as a provision of the Versailles Treaty. It allowed the German Catholic minority a previously unknown degree of religious freedom, including the creation of new bishoprics, monasteries and more than a thousand parishes.<sup>15</sup> In this light, it might seem shocking that the Church had a negative attitude towards Weimar democracy, born, as Cardinal Faulhaber put it, of "faithlessness and treason."<sup>16</sup> This attitude can be attributed primarily to the similarities between Weimar democracy and the "blasphemous" French Republic which rested, among other things, on the separation of church and state.

The seizure of power by the Fascists radically changed the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy to the German state. Less than half a year after becoming Chancellor, Hitler could claim an unquestionable Catholic moral mandate in the form of the concordat signed on July 20, 1933<sup>17</sup>. In later years, the church repeatedly renewed this mandate. For instance, the official Catholic press organ, *Klerusblatt*, regarded the racist Nuremberg Statutes of 1936 as "an essential safeguard of the structural quality of the German nation"<sup>18</sup>. And when Hitler's army illegally entered the demilitarized Rhineland, Bishop Galen thanked the

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<sup>15</sup> K. F. Reinhardt, *Germany: 2000 Years*, New York, 1961, p. 706.

<sup>16</sup> G. Lewy, *The Catholic Church in Nazi Germany*, New York, 1964, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> As a consequence of the signing a concordat with the III Reich, the German Episcopate annulled its previous decision which forbade Roman Catholics from joining the NSDAP, and Catholic members of parliament – alongside the fascists – voted on 23 March 1934 to give Hitler full power. In the 5 March 1934 parliamentary elections, the Nazis had attained 44% of the Reichstag seats; after the Communist mandates were rescinded, the NSDAP constituted half of the house (288 out of 566). However, in order to pass extraordinary powers for the Führer, a 2/3 majority was necessary. In the face of the Social Democratic opposition, it was the 90 Catholic representatives of the Centrum Party led by Dr. Ludwig Kaas who assured the government of the requisite support. In this way the Catholic deputies actively contributed to the suicide of the German parliament and the consolidation of Hitler's power.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

Fuhrer in flowery words for all he had done for the glory of the German nation and asked the Almighty to support Hitler's further intentions.

The Austrian and Sudetenland crises of 1938, which brought Europe to the edge of war, provided the next occasion for patriotic exultation and manifestations from the German clergy. The incorporation into the Reich of ten million Austrians and Sudeten Germans – raising the proportion of Catholics to 43% of the population – was greeted by the head of the German episcopate, Cardinal Bertram, with the enthusiastic statement: "now we are truly the Church of the nation."<sup>19</sup> When the Germans attacked Christian Poland in the autumn of the following year, having first divided the latter country with "godless" Soviet Russia, the Catholic bishops of the Third Reich appealed to front-line soldiers not to hesitate to give their whole persons over to the Fuhrer.

### **The Church and Democracy**

Absolute monarchy, the embodiment of the unlimited sovereignty of the ruler, was the political force from which the Church sought support from the time of the French Revolution and with which it associated itself organically after the Congress of Vienna. But absolute monarchies slowly began to disappear from the Catholic part of Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the Protestant part, this process had taken place much earlier and had had a more radical character. So it was that in the third quarter of the nineteenth century successive absolute monarchs became hostages to liberal constitutions that reflected the growing economic power of the bourgeoisie: Prussia in 1849, Portugal in 1852, Austria in 1860, Italy in 1866 (with the establishment of the united state) and finally Spain in 1868. France, "the eldest daughter of the Church," rejected monarchy entirely in 1871 and transformed itself into a republic based on the principle of popular sovereignty.

The vigorous influence of secular or downright anticlerical bourgeois liberalism, regarding the Church as an archaic institution and haven of reaction, was visible in the internal politics of all these states. It was evident either in the repudiation of concordats (as in Austria in 1870), in organized campaigns against Catholicism (as in the Prussian *Kulturkampf*), or in the introduction of legislation assaulting the ideological principles of the Vatican – such as the law on divorce passed by the French parliament in 1884, and in the 1905 law on the separation of church and state. The anticlericalism of the ever more powerful bourgeoisie and the progressive weakening of the aristocracy, heretofore the main prop of religion, relegated Catholicism to the margins of political life in the later nineteenth century, gradually changing the balance of power between church and state in favour of the state. The Roman Church reacted to this painful process in

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

two ways. On the one hand it "pulled its ranks together" leading to the extremes of centralism, absolutism and papal supremacy. On the other hand, it "declared war" on the democratic states, attempting as far as possible to weaken their structures and thereby to recover lost influence.

The First Vatican Council of 1871 defined the status of the Pope as an absolute and infallible ruler. "The Roman Pope, successor to St. Peter", Canon 218 announced, "enjoys not only precedence of honour, but also supreme and full authority over the whole Church, both in matters of faith and customs, as well as in those concerned with the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world." This monarchical system of control was built up from the bottom by the Council Fathers with impressive consistency, making it into a multi-layered pyramid of authority resting on solid anti-democratic foundations: the bishops over their diocese and priests over their parishes were granted a supremacy just as absolute as that of the Pope over the whole church. Remnants of lay influence over clerical rule and the opportunity for lower levels of the Catholic hierarchy to affect the higher levels in any way were entirely eliminated. This ultra-hierarchical internal Church structure, like the absolute supremacy of the Church's institutional apparatus over lay believers, were finally confirmed by the codex of canon law announced by Benedict XV in his bull of May 27, 1916. The Second Vatican Council introduced no substantive changes in either the internal organization of the Church or the relations between the individual, hierarchical components of the system of authority.

While, despite various obstacles, democracy was putting down roots and sweeping across Europe the Catholic Church was evolving in the *opposite* direction, growing more and more alien from contemporary European civilization. The process of internal constitutional transformation made the Roman Church into an island of absolutism and autocracy among the republican states of the West, increasing the level of its antagonism with an outside world that was largely non-religious and secularized. The bitter enmity of the Catholic hierarchy towards any democratic system founded on respect for pluralism of values had, however, another source *beyond* ideology. The church would never be able to make a deal with democracy over the heads of "the people of God" since the essence of democracy lay in empowering society. As opposed to monarchy or fascism, democracy was in no position to grant the Church a privileged legal or political position, and so the Church could not "do business" with democracy <sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> One of the few exceptions to this rule is the Latvian concordat of May 30, 1922, in which this Lutheran state granted far-reaching privileges to its microscopic Catholic minority. Aside from a lack of experience among the diplomatic corps of the young republic, this one-sided pact can be explained in terms of the aspirations of the Latvian government to create its own, national archbishopric with borders corresponding to those of the state. Calling into being the archdiocese of Riga was a condition *sine qua non* for liberating Latvian Catholics from foreign dependency, either on the Samogitian diocese based in Telles in Lithuania, or the Mohyla archdiocese in the Ukraine as was still the

For instance, a truly democratic system could not offer Catholicism a constitutional role as a "national religion," as the fascist-like dictator of Portugal, Antonio Oliveira de Salazar did in the 1950s, or cede to the Church full control over schooling, the press, publishing and filmmaking, as happened in General Franco's Spain.

On the strength of the concordat concluded between the Apostolic See and the fascist government in Madrid on August 27, 1953, Catholicism became the "state religion" of Spain, while all other denominations, including Christian ones, were degraded to the status of "cults" whose public manifestation was strictly forbidden. The Caudillo and the Vatican dignitaries who reached agreement with him, regarded the teaching of religion as compulsory in all schools from the primary to university levels. The 1953 concordat further bestowed a massive government subsidy on the Church while freeing it of tax obligations and exempting the clergy from the legal jurisdiction of the state. The marriage of Catholicism and Francoism became part and parcel of everyday life for millions of Spaniards. It also reached to the very peak of the executive and legislative organs: Church dignitaries sat as full members of the most important state bodies, the government, the Cortes and the Regency Council.

No democratic state could guarantee the Church similar privileges -- privileges to which the Catholic hierarchy had grown accustomed over the centuries. Nor did the democratic system, as opposed to oligarchies or autocracies, need the Church as an institution, either as a partner in authority or as a dispenser of ideological legitimation. The republic, after all, drew its rationale from the idea of popular sovereignty, and its right to make arbitrary decisions from its respect for the will of the majority as periodically expressed with the help of formal procedures. For reasons exactly the opposite to those for which

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case under the terms of the 1847 concordat signed by pope Pius IX and tsar Nicholas I. These natural yearnings of a small Baltic nation to reinforce its fledgling sovereignty were ruthlessly exploited by the Roman Curia, which exacted a heavy price for a reorganization of the ecclesiastical administration that lay in its own interests as well.

Another case worth mentioning is Ireland which won independence in 1921 after bloody years of war with England. Due to the Catholic Church's unyielding resistance to the ruthless Protestant occupation, the Episcopal hierarchy enjoyed particular prestige in the newly created state. As such it won, among other things, the right to censor films (1923), and publications (1929). Moreover, in recognition of its historic service to the nation, the 1937 Constitution -- prepared by Eamon de Valera -- proclaimed that the state recognizes "the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens", and in Article 41 precluded the legalization of any law aimed at the insolvency of marriage. None of the political groups sitting in the parliament (including the oppositional Labour Party) dared to question de Valera's proposal to legally endow the Catholic hierarchy with privileged status. This state of affairs existed until 1995 when a national referendum led to the abrogation of Article 41, and introduction of divorce in the Republic of Ireland.

democracies had no need of the Church, fascism and other right-wing dictatorships needed the Church even when the leaders of such regimes were anticlerical (like Mussolini) or religiously indifferent (like Hitler). At the altar, they sought such support for their authority as they did not enjoy among the people.

As early as 1920, Adolf Hitler included in his political programme the formulation that the Nazi world-view is based on "positive Christianity" – *positives Christentum*.<sup>21</sup> When he wrote *Mein Kampf* several years later, he acknowledged Protestantism and Catholicism as the foundations of the German state.<sup>22</sup> He did not cease repeating such views after he became Chancellor of the Third Reich. Thus, in his radio speech on the occasion of the opening of the Reichstag on March 23, 1933, the Fuhrer announced a ruthless war on materialism and atheistic communism. He saw in Christianity "the inviolable ethical and moral basis of the life of the nation". It took the Church leadership only five days to repay those soothing words and "morally neutralize" the anti-Nazi political opposition. In their Fulda Declaration, the Conference of Bishops withdrew their earlier "ban and warning" against the Nazi party and called on German Catholics to show "loyalty to the legitimate authorities" as well as "rejecting illegal and subversive attitudes."<sup>23</sup>

This stubborn antipathy to democracy and predilection to form alliances with rightist regimes did not always serve the interests of the Church. By supporting unscrupulous tyrants, the Catholic hierarchy frequently prepared the ground for future anti-religious persecution. So it happened in Italy, where Pius XI – who had helped Mussolini take control of the country – in answer to the abrogation of Church control over education, condemned fascism in the June 29, 1931 encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno*, saying that it was a "purely pagan idolatry of the state". So also it was in Germany when, three and a half years after signing a concordat, the Vatican in the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* of March 14, 1937 protested against wholesale Nazi violations of the agreement. Who could be surprised? As soon as Hitler felt comfortable at the helm, he declared baldly that the pact with the Church would not hinder him from "thoroughly extirpating Christianity in Germany".<sup>24</sup>

## Corporatism

When the monarchical system lay in ruins after the First World War, and it became obvious that the Catholic Church had lost the battle for the confessional

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<sup>21</sup> F. Zipfel, *Kirchenkampf in Deutschland 1933-1945*, Berlin, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Munich, 1933, pp 127, 379.

<sup>23</sup> U. v. Hehl, *Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus im Erzbistum Koln 1933-1945*, Mainz 1977, pp. 32 et seq., 251 et. seq.

<sup>24</sup> H. Rauschnig, *Gesprache mit Hitler*, Wien, 1973, p. 50.

state, Pius XI formulated the corporationist doctrine. This was intended to replace legitimism as the leading ideological weapon for defending the institutional interests of the Church. He concentrated on three spheres of human life: education (*Divini Illius Magistri*, December 31, 1929), the family (*Casti connubi*, December 31, 1931) and the social economic order (*Quadragesimo anno*, May 15, 1931 and *Divini redemptoris*, March 19, 1937). These domains were to be excluded from state influence and subjugated directly to the Catholic hierarchy. By denying the state the right to interfere these domains, Pius XI was breaking no new ground. On the contrary, he continued the doctrines formulated by Leo XIII on all these issues. The essential novelty in Pius XI's views lay elsewhere, namely in the limitation of Church influence *exclusively* to these three areas of social life.

Pius XI stated that the act that marks the inception of the family – marriage – lies in the sphere of the sacraments. As such, it belongs under Church rather than civil jurisdiction (*Casti connubi*, 5). Education falls under the auspices of the Church by "positive divine law" and the family "by natural law" (*Divini Illius Magistri*, 19, 33). Thus, both the first and second of these institutions have a superior position in relation to the state, which is limited to the task of aiding the education of the younger generation for "aims of the common worldly good" (*Divini Illius Magistri*, 41). Similarly, social estate organizations -- or, in other words, groups of people associated in the process of production -- should be directed by the Church rather than the state since their main goal is the "religious-moral" training of workers, towards which "all organizational work should be directed" (*Quadragesimo anno*, I, 3).

The Vatican's patrimonial corporationism, proclaiming a return to the Middle Ages in those areas of human life which were to remain under Church control, was an essentially defensive doctrine. Pius XI backed away from any suggestion of restoring the Catholic nature of the state, since this idea had proven unrealistic in the twentieth century. Instead, he offered a doctrine that radically limited the competence of the state and guaranteed a wide scope of autonomy for the three strategic institutions of family, school and trade unions. The Pope thought, first -- and not without reason -- that the authority of the Church had been least eroded in exactly these social domains, and second – completely erroneously – that these institutions could in future become a starting point for regaining Church influence over the state.

"Joyous harbingers of imminent social rebirth", the Bishop of Rome announced in 1931, "are the workers' associations, among which to the great joy of Our heart we also see solid ranks of young Christian workers. They are marching voluntarily to the voice of Divine Grace, informed with a noble ambition of winning their comrades to Christ" (*Quadragesimo anno*, III, 3). Pius XI's hopes for a prompt "social rebirth" would melt into air. Only a small fraction of workers was willing to treat Christian doctrine as the basis for employer-employee relations; even fewer accepted Church authority in this area. Moreover, instead of engaging in the organic evangelization of unbelievers as the Pope had

planned, labour unions exercised a "malignant influence" by disseminating socialist, secular, lay- leftist and lay-ant clerical ideas among workers<sup>25</sup>.

The fiasco of the theories of corporatism and solidarism, in which successive Popes from Leo XIII to Pius XI had placed such long-range plans, gradually became apparent even to the helmsmen of the Apostolic See. Thus, the Holy Office formally banned the activity of worker-priests in July 1959, admitting that priests labouring in factories are exposed to the demoralizing sway of a materialistic environment and, worse, drawn into the class struggle. The last nails in the coffin of Catholic corporatism were driven by two well-known encyclicals of John XXIII: *Mater et Magistra* (May, 1961), which affirmed the appropriateness of state regulation of labour affairs in effectively defending the interests of employees, and *Pacem in terris* (April 1963), which for the first time in the history of the Church recognized the democratic system as completely in accordance with the Biblical principle that "all authority derives from God".

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<sup>25</sup> The only country in which an idea of Catholic corporatism did materialize to some extent was Portugal between 1932-1968, when it was ruled by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, the creator of the fascist-like *Estado Novo* (*New State*), inspired by the *Rerum novarum* (Leo XIII) and *Quadragesimo anno* (Pius XI) encyclicals. The script for the birth of the *Estado Novo* actually comprised (worth emphasizing here) the negation of the Vatican conception: it was not the corporations which transformed the then-existing Portuguese state, but the Portuguese state which, after overthrowing democracy by a military coup, called the corporations into being. The fundamental unit of the *Estado Novo* was the family while its primary organs were to be corporations – moral, intellectual, and economic. The corporations of Salazar's Portugal encompassed specific labor and professional organizations: syndicates, cultural centers, seafarer associations, guilds, trade chambers, etc. In corporate unions were joined, for instance, workers and industrialists, farmers and landowners, fishermen and boat owners. According to the law which established them, corporations were to rule out conflicts and eliminate contradictory interests between employers and employees; they were to guard "social peace" and harmonious cooperation amongst all the participants of the national process of production. As a matter of fact, corporations actually functioned in Portugal as one of the three main pillars of the right-wing political dictatorship, alongside censorship and the secret police. The Portuguese National Surveillance and Defense Police (PVDE) became infamous for unscrupulous torture and murder, and sending dissidents to prisons and concentration camps (in time, the most notorious of these, Tarrafal on one of the Cape Verde Islands, would become a symbol of the regime). Censorship, in turn, hermetically gagged all forms of public communication: theatre, cinema, radio, and subsequently television. No political, religious, or moral content could be broadcast without the approval of the appropriate functionary of the New State, designated a "corporate republic" by the 1943 Constitution.

## Catholic Personalism

Catholic corporatism excluded three strategic institutions – the family, school and "vocational state" – from the influence of the state and turned them over to the Church as principal instruments of control over community life, and in the struggle against secularized temporal authority. The "vocational state", the weakest link in the "Pius XI's anti-state triad", the new Catholic, personalistic doctrine replaced by human rights which the Curia had denounced for a century and a half as contrary to natural law.

The origins of personalism as an official church doctrine can be found in the teaching of Pius XII, who took over from his predecessors the idea of the subsidiarity (auxiliary character) of all social institutions, with the state foremost among them. "The reason for the existence of society", he argued in a radio address of 24 December 1942, "is to stimulate the development of man's personality while helping him to achieve the most perfect possible realization of the religious and cultural ideal set out by the Creator".

The essence of Catholic personalism was the thesis that the state should serve man and not, conversely, that man should serve the state. "The principal obligation of all public authority", said the Pope in his Christmas Eve radio speech, "is the defence of the inviolable rights of the human person". The Church itself was also to realize similar aims, but with one significant limitation, as Pius XII put it, "without undermining in any way its hierarchical structure". In other words, according to the Pope the human person exists above the state, but not above the Church! Furthermore, the human person must submit for his or her own good to permanent *supervision* by the monarchical Catholic hierarchy.

The thesis that the state is for people, and not people for the state, marked a revolution in the Church's social teaching. For long centuries, unceremoniously denouncing freedom of conscience and "destructive liberalism", the Roman Curia had propounded a view that was diametrically opposite. The change was not without reason. For centuries, the state had simply been a confessional state or, to put it differently, the secular arm of the Church. Obedience to the state had entailed obedience to the Catholic hierarchy. This is in essence the political sense of legitimism.

As long as the interests of the state and the interests of the Church were parallel, the Bishops of Rome saw no reason to deprive state institutions of control over the individual. However, when the secular authorities in the majority of European countries introduced the separation of Church and state – following the example of the law passed on December 9, 1905 by the French National Assembly – and went on to base public education on "secular civic morality", as the French had done, the Catholic hierarchy began its determined defence of "the

inalienable rights of the human person"<sup>26</sup>. An even stronger motivation compelled the Curia to defend the "natural rights of man" in the socialist countries, where authority used atheist doctrine and legal-administrative means – up to and including physical coercion – to combat the Catholic religion. Pius XII's *Congregatio Sancti Officii* decree of July 1949 excommunicated *ipso facto* all Catholics "professing communism, propagating it or cooperating with the communists". Two and a half years later the Bishop of Rome, who had been so moderate in his assessment of Nazi crimes, said in a 24 December 1952 radio speech that "the Church upholds its condemnation of Marxism, since the protection of the people from influences that threaten their eternal salvation is its permanent right and obligation".

When Jacques Maritain and other thinkers initiated Catholic personalism in the 1930s, they were accused of insufficient religious orthodoxy. However, it was in time elevated to the status of official Church teaching for two main reasons. The first was the total failure of corporatism as an idea for restoring the influence of the Catholic hierarchy in secularized western societies, and the need to replace it with some new doctrine. The second was the drastic curtailment of the religious freedom of the Catholic faithful in the socialist countries. In the face of aggressive totalitarian atheism, liberalism and its ideal of respect for individual autonomy could finally serve the Church in the defence of its influence. This is how the philosophy of French nonconformists was recast as the official doctrine of the Vatican bureaucracy. The personalism of Pius XII was developed by his successors John XXIII and Paul VI. It went on to become the ideological foundation of the Second Vatican Council. The liberal concept of human rights made possible the construction of one of the Council's most important documents, the declaration of religious freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*.

This declaration (section 2) announces that the Council affirms that the human person has the right to religious freedom". The civil authorities should therefore "take care that the equality of citizens never be violated for religious reasons and that there should be no discrimination for such reasons. Consequently, the public authorities are acting wrongly if, with the aid of force or intimidation, they attempt to impose a faith on citizens, force them to reject any religion, or hinder anyone in joining or withdrawing from a religious community" (section 6).

The declaration on religious freedom meant, among other things, the indirect condemnation of rightist Catholic regimes, like that of Franco. Moreover, it also stood in contradiction to Church tradition, one of the two sources of faith.

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<sup>26</sup> The defence was determined, but not exaggerated. After all, it could not be allowed to diminish the Church's worldly sway over its flock. It is significant that six months after the first attempt was made to include personalistic themes in official Church doctrine, Pius XII promulgated the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* (June 29, 1943) in which he alluded to the most radically papist document in the history of Catholicism: Boniface VIII's *Unum Sanctum* (1302), which contains the theory of the two swords (of religious authority as well as political one) wielded by the Bishop of Rome.

In the words of *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Church had "acted unworthily" for more than fifteen centuries and barely a hundred years before the Second Vatican Council the Pope had regarded as pure absurdity the conviction that "the Church is not entitled to make use of force" (*Syllabus errorum*, 24). It is therefore hardly surprising that the declaration on religious freedom evoked violent opposition from conservative members of the Catholic hierarchy. Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, the superior of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, thundered in his address at the Council that: "This scheme is based neither on tradition nor on Scripture, but on false Rousseauian doctrine. The true sources of this scheme are the eighteenth-century philosophers: Hobbes, Hume, Locke and Rousseau, as well as the Catholic liberal de Lammenais who was condemned by Leo XIII" (21 September, 1965).

The criticism by Archbishop Lefebvre, the future schismatic, was only partially true. The declaration *Dignitatis humanae* indubitably clashed with Church tradition, but not with the spirit of Revelation. The leaders of the Reformation had after all appealed to Revelation as they fought against the despotism of the Church more than five centuries before the Second Vatican Council. The American leaders also drew inspiration from Revelation when they framed the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Primal elements of Revelation lay behind the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789) as well. In short, the idea of religious freedom was alien to Catholicism, although not to Christianity.

The declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* marked the cancellation of fifteen centuries of Church history and the adaptation of Protestant theology and, to a degree, socialist thought to the institutional needs of the Church. Like socialism, the declaration defined human rights in a positive rather than a negative way, conceiving of human freedom as the "freedom to" rather than "freedom from." Finally, it protected the individual from the state, but not from the Church, to which it granted the right to unlimited interference in every sphere of human life.

### **The Political Sense of Ecumenism**

In August 1964, Paul VI issued the encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, in which he distinguished three different domains: (1) humanity, (2) people who believe in any religion, and (3) the Christian world (Catholics and their "separated brethren"). According to *Ecclesiam suam*, the main dividing line was between those who believe in the existence of God and those who deny such existence. While sanctioning the cooperation of Catholics with all other people, the encyclical differentiated the scope of such cooperation according to the attitudes of specific groups to Catholicism.

The Second Vatican Council referred to the ideas of *Ecclesiam suam* in its *Nostra aetate* declaration and the decree *Unitatis redintegratio*. Thus, according

to *Nostra aetate* (section 2), an "acknowledgement of a supreme Deity" is common to all the religions of the world. The religions that have grown out of the Old Testament -- Judaism, Christianity and Islam -- are additionally bonded by certain weighty truths of faith. For this reason, the Church "rejects nothing that is true and holy in these faiths" (section 3). The decree on ecumenism, which referred to certain non-Catholic Christian religions, distinguished between "the deposit of faith" (section 6) on the one hand, and, on the other, "differing formulations of divine truths" (section 17). The Church had previously treated these "differing formulations" as heresies pure and simple and, for as long as it could, fought them with fire and sword. The decree *Unitatis redintegratio* broke with this approach, ordaining the search for what linked other religions with Catholicism, and not what divided them from Catholicism.

Before 1959 Roman Catholics all over the world prayed for the Muslims "plunged in the darkness of Islam", and before 1960, for the "perfidious Jews." At the same time, the Holy See did not permit its faithful to participate in congresses organized by non-Catholics as it deemed impossible any "work for the unification of Christians except by preparing for the return of dissidents to the one true church of Christ" (the Pius XI's 6 January 1928 encyclical *In mortalium animas*). In other words, until the pontificate of Pius XII, the Vatican had treated the ecumenical movement as harmful and superfluous, on the grounds that it diminished the salience of the dogmatic cleavages that appeared between faiths. With the accession of John XXIII to the papal throne, this policy underwent a profound change. Aware that its power was shrinking, the Roman Curia initiated a broad programme of cooperation with other religions, aimed at creating a common front of "people of faith" against growing anti-religious and atheistic tendencies. This strategy had a deep political sense. The rejection of pretensions to a privileged position, in a situation where the realization of these pretensions had become impossible, was *de facto* less a concession than a consolidation of the Catholic hierarchy's position. It was a transition from isolation to alliance.

The Second Vatican Council engaged the Roman Church in the current of ecumenical endeavours more than half a century after the initiation of the movement by the Lutheran bishop of Uppsala, Lars Soderblom. This was at a time when the World Council of Churches (founded in 1948) already included almost all the Protestant and Orthodox denominations. This enabled the Curia to influence the ecumenical movement "from the inside" and to steer it in a direction favourable to the interests of the Church. And while the religious effects of the post-conciliar "ecumenical dialogue" turned out to be negligible, the same can certainly not be said of the political consequences of Catholic opening to other faiths.

In 1994, the international media reported extensively on the exotic alliance concluded between Vatican diplomats and Islamic fundamentalists at the United Nations demographic conference in Cairo. The aim of the alliance was to torpedo the conference's final declaration, supported by the United States and the European Union. A year later, at the UN World Conference on Women in

Beijing, a similar scenario was re-enacted: with the support of the Islamic countries, the Vatican opposed the West <sup>27</sup>, defined by John Paul II as "the civilization of death".

The Cairo and Beijing conferences revealed the true *alienation* of the Catholic Church from European culture. It has turned out that in questions of morality the Vatican has more in common with Islamic fundamentalism than with the European Parliament in Strasbourg or the European Commission in Brussels. Moreover, the Cairo and Beijing conferences have also shown that in its unyielding fight against the democratic state – once again regarded, after the fall of communism in 1989, as enemy number one – the Vatican is ready to form alliances with its recent religious enemies, with Islam leading the way.

The ecumenical movement sanctioned by the Second Vatican Council as an admissible form of contact with the non-Catholic outside world, has notoriously failed to bear any significant fruit in the religious sphere, or to contribute in any meaningful way to a true rapprochement among the Christian "separated brethren". Yet it has rendered the Church no mean service as a political instrument in the struggle against democracy. The fact that in the final analysis Catholicism's best ally has turned out to be Islam – rather than Protestantism or the Orthodox Churches – is striking evidence that in its obsessive "dream of power", the Roman Curia has alienated itself for good not only from western secular culture, but also from Christianity or, to be more precise, from what remains of Christianity.

Islamic fundamentalism and the Vatican share not only a common enemy – liberal capitalism described by John Paul II as "the civilization of death" – but also a religious interpretation of human rights which both developed in opposition to that of Western democracies. This interpretation – perceiving human rights as an element of the revealed truth – mars their original meaning. To put it clearly, religious concept of human rights transformed them from an instrument serving protection of individual freedom into means of control over the individual. In rejecting abortion and euthanasia while tolerating capital punishment, the Roman Catholic Church refers to some vague "right to life" (which in the case of euthanasia turns into its negation: obligation to live regardless of circumstances), and counters feminist progress and equal gender rights with an elusive "women's right to dignity".

Similar is the strategy of Islamic leaders who present attempts to protect the interests of religious institutions as a fight to realize natural human rights. Hence, for example, Article 22 of the *Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam*, signed by the Organization of Islamic States on 5 August 1990, guarantees each person the right to information and unhindered expression of his or her views, while concurrently limiting this exclusively to content which does not

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<sup>27</sup> Apart from the Islamic states, the Vatican delegation was supported at Beijing by some African countries, Slovakia, the Philippines, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela and Colombia.

contradict the Shariate, thus sanctioning religious censorship. In turn, Article 10 forbids proselytism which encourages conversion from Islam to other religions while disregarding the reverse situation.

In place of delineated and comprehensible civil liberties which have been rooted in Western civilization for the past two centuries, the religious interpretation of human rights introduces generalized ideological constructs which protect the interests of the institution at the cost of the individual, and turns guaranties of freedom into doctrinal prohibitions. It is worth noting that these constructs can legitimize both psychological and physical coercion. The twisted logic of a religious interpretation of human rights can perhaps be best demonstrated through a statement by the General Secretary of the Hezbollah, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah. Justifying a death sentence for Salman Rushdie on the basis of a fragment of his book, *Satanic Verses*, which was incongruent with Shariate law, the Sheik said: "Human rights, which you in the West prize so highly, must also protect the religious sensibilities of believing Muslims. Rushdie, after this ignominious act, is no longer a human being. He has lost all human traits. If someone lowers himself to this level, then issuing a death sentence on him brings me no pain" (*Der Spiegel*, 17 August 1995).

## Resumé

### Boj katolické církve s demokracií

V roce 1791 papež Pius VI odsoudil princip svobody a rovnosti občanů hlásanou francouzským Národním shromážděním, neboť se domníval, že je „v rozporu s Božím zákonem“. Tímto způsobem také začal více než sto padesát let trvající boj papežství s liberalismem a se zřízením republiky. Názor, že demokracie i lidská práva jsou v rozporu s křesťanstvím neúnavně vyjadřovali všichni papežové až do poloviny 20. století.

Po vypuknutí francouzské revoluce katolická církev souhlasila s využitím křesťanství ke službě monarchiím, aby byl udržen jejich archaický, feudální společenský řád a na oplátku požadovala na státních institucích upevnění její náboženské moci a její privilegovanou politickou pozici. I po pádu monarchistického systému v Evropě na začátku 20. století se Vatikán stále křečovitě držel starého typu politiky, která časem nabyla karikaturní povahy a zdegenerovala až tak hluboce, že dokonce podporovala pravicové i fašistické diktatury.

V roce 1963 papež Jan XXIII vůbec poprvé v dějinách církve uznal, že demokratický řád je v souladu s biblickou zásadou, že „všechna moc pochází od Boha“ a II. Vatikánský koncil začal obhajovat „nezadatelná lidská práva“. Díky této nové politice mohla římská kurie účinněji bránit náboženskou svobodu

katolických křesťanů žijících v zemích bývalého východního (komunistického) bloku, které potíraly náboženství administrativním způsobem, právní šikanou a politickou převahou.

Po pádu komunismu v roce 1989 katolická církev obnovila svůj neústupný boj s demokratickým pojetím státu, znovu považovaným pro křesťanství za „nepřítele číslo jedna“. Papež Jan Pavel II. označil západní kulturu za „civilizaci smrti“, a jím vedená církev přistoupila k uzavírání taktických spojení se svými nedávnými náboženskými nepřáteli v čele s islámem, s nimiž by společně útočila na liberální ideologii států Evropské unie.

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