



Project
MUSE[®]

Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

The Catholic Wave

Philpott, Daniel, 1967-

Journal of Democracy, Volume 15, Number 2, April 2004, pp. 32-46 (Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: 10.1353/jod.2004.0034



► For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jod/summary/v015/15.2philpott.html>

Christianity and Democracy

THE CATHOLIC WAVE

Daniel Philpott

*Daniel Philpott is assistant professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame and faculty fellow at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. He is the author of *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (2001).*

In his influential study of the “third wave” of democratization—that is, of the thirty countries that made the transition to democracy between 1974 and 1990—Samuel P. Huntington notes that roughly three-quarters were predominantly Catholic. It was “overwhelmingly a Catholic wave,” he writes.¹ Rising in Portugal and Spain, the Catholic wave then surged across Latin America, carried democracy to the Philippines, and crested in Poland with the first of several East European revolutions against communism.

Catholicism and democracy? Historically, the two have clashed. Latter-day liberals still thrust with reminders of nineteenth-century papal condemnations of religious liberty and twentieth-century concordats between the Church and fascist dictatorships; contemporary Catholics still parry with the irony of French revolutionaries decapitating Catholic men in order to advance the rights of man. How, then, did democracy break out in Catholic-majority states the world over? The Catholic wave in fact culminated a centuries-long rapprochement by which the Church and the democratic state each slowly came to tolerate the other in doctrine and practice, eventually arriving at a mutual and reciprocal agreement upon what Alfred Stepan has termed the “twin tolerations.”² The tolerations are essential to liberal democracy: the state respects the rights of all religious bodies to practice and express their faith and to participate in democratic politics, while religious bodies accept religious freedom for people of all faiths (and no faith) and renounce claims to special constitutional status or prerogatives.

Church and state each had to do their part. The world’s states have embraced toleration in sporadic succession—in this time, in that place,

in waves, spurts, reversals, and resurgences, beginning with the English, French, and American revolutions. Even today, still less than half have arrived. The Church, chary toward the anticlericalism that so many European democracies had long practiced, clutching its own conviction that the state ought to promote the faith and restrict dissent, delayed its own embrace of toleration until 1965, when it endorsed the principle of religious freedom at its Second Vatican Council. Once the Church did give its approval to toleration, however, it found itself free to become an agent of change in states, predominantly Catholic in population, where democratic toleration had not yet achieved preeminence. In such states would the Catholic wave take place.

During this wave, the Church in Rome opposed authoritarianism globally. In each country, though, the opposition of the local Church varied in form and extent. In Poland, the Philippines, Brazil, and Spain, Church leaders and members defied authoritarianism with vigor and virtuosity. Elsewhere the Church cleaved, with some of its voices oppositional, others accommodationist. In still other locales, it was united in lukewarmth or even resistance toward democracy. Why did the Church's influence vary? To identify the reasons is to discover those features and activities of the Church—nay, of any religious body—that do the most to nurture the twin tolerations which lie at the heart of liberal-democratic governance.

The Long Rapprochement

Beneath the Church's historic hostility to democracy lay an even older hostility to the sovereign state itself. Scholars trace the origins of the system of sovereign states to the Peace of Westphalia, where European powers gathered in 1648 to settle the catastrophic Thirty Years' War. Pope Innocent X declared that settlement "null, void, invalid, iniquitous, unjust, damnable, reprobate, inane, empty of meaning and effect for all time." The Church tended its enmity well into the nineteenth century, when it condemned international law as a "Protestant science" and censured the works of the Dutch philosopher Hugo Grotius, often considered the intellectual godfather of international law.³

Westphalia drew the Church's scorn because it inflicted a mortal wound on the *Respublica Christiania*, the vision of society that the Church carried forward from medieval Christendom. At the core of this vision was a unity rooted in Christian faith. The trustees of this unity were authorities whose prerogatives mingled the religious with the political and the temporal with the spiritual—admixtures most sharply vivified when kings and emperors brandished arms to defend Catholic Christianity against threats to its unity.

Westphalia replaced unity with segmentation. What triumphed there was a system of polities, defined by territory, within each of which a single authority—typically a monarch at the time—was supreme, or sovereign.

Each sovereign could set the terms of religious practice across its realm, and some stripped ecclesiasts of their remaining temporal powers or even sought to supplant the Catholic Church altogether. To the Church, such a system was idolatrous, its authorities accountable to no larger moral order.

But the Church did not reject the state categorically. Were it ruled by a crown that upheld the Church's authority and proclaimed and enforced the faith in its realm—in effect creating a local remnant of Christendom—then it might be acceptable. Such were the Latin states of Spain and Portugal, as well as their replicas in Latin America and the Philippines.

When the doctrines of popular suffrage and the rights of man began to emerge in the eighteenth century, the Church saw in them much the same threats that it had seen in the system of sovereign states. It faced a rabid and at times violent anticlericalism in the French Revolution, in the republican movements that it inspired around Europe, in the *Kulturkampf* of Bismarck's Germany, and in socialist movements. Amid this atmosphere of assault, the Church denounced liberalism in edicts as stentorian as Innocent X's condemnation of Westphalia: In 1832, Pope Gregory XVI called freedom of conscience "an absurd and erroneous opinion."⁴ Even more pointedly, Pope Pius IX's 1864 *Syllabus of Errors* condemned religious freedom, the separation of Church and state, and "progress, liberalism, and recent civilization."

The Church thus upheld its old doctrine that temporal authorities ought to promote the Church's prerogatives and permit dissenters no rights. Where circumstances prevented this ideal, the Church could compromise in practice, but not in principle. In an 1895 letter to the U.S. Church, Pope Leo XIII praised the freedom accorded to Catholicism there, but rejected this arrangement as a universal, enduring ideal.⁵ Where facing far greater threats from authoritarian regimes, the Church sought concordats (agreements) for protection. It was in the spirit of this second-best strategy that the Church signed concordats with fascist regimes in Italy and Germany in the early twentieth century.

It was not until the 1930s that Catholic intellectuals began to offer more deeply principled arguments for religious freedom. What inspired them most was the United States, whose constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, they thought, merited a far stronger endorsement than Pope Leo XIII's. The most prominent of these intellectuals were Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray, who did the most to lay the theoretical groundwork for the Church's endorsement of liberal democracy.

Maritain excoriated the sovereign state and defended human rights and democracy via the Catholic tradition. Murray argued for the compatibility of Catholicism and the American founding. A Catholic understanding of natural law could provide the objective moral grounding that constitutional democracy needed, while the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment safeguarded the Church's right to exist and operate.

Though religious freedom was not to be thought of as an “article of faith,” or theological truth, it was still morally praiseworthy as an “article of peace,” that is, a law that helped the Church to flourish in a modern state.

Both Murray and Maritain would have to await the victory of their ideas. Under pressure from Rome, Murray’s Jesuit superiors ordered him in 1955 to cease writing on church-state issues. The Vatican would likely have condemned Maritain’s views, too, had Pope Pius XII not died in 1958.⁶

It was only four years later that Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, where the long rapprochement between Catholicism and liberal democracy culminated. In 1963, during the Council, John XXIII wrote his encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, in which the Church endorsed human rights for the first time. The most important departure from the medieval model, though, came in 1965 with Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Dignitatis Humanae*. Strongly influenced by Murray, the document declared that religious liberty is a basic right rooted in the very God-given dignity of the human person. The Church had always taught that authentic faith cannot be coerced. Now it affirmed that no individual, group, or state may rightly interfere with an individual’s search for truth. The first half of the document appealed to reason, arguing that true faith is explored and adopted through free communication, teaching, expression, dialogue, and assent, which require both psychological freedom and immunity from coercion. The second half argues from revelation, holding that coercion in faith is contrary to the way of Christ. The Church insisted that it was not abridging its doctrine of truth, affirming a “right to error,” or endorsing a theory of liberal democracy rooted in Enlightenment individualism, skepticism, or mere proceduralism. Rather, it was forbidding coercive restriction of the pursuit of truth.

Subsequent popes taught democracy and human rights, especially religious freedom, all the more vigorously. John Paul II toted these ideas around the world, often proclaiming them in authoritarian states. He “seemed to have a way of showing up in full pontifical majesty at critical points in democratization processes,” writes Huntington. As the Pope explained: “I am not the evangelizer of democracy; I am the evangelizer of the Gospel. To the Gospel message, of course, belong all the problems of human rights; and if democracy means human rights, it also belongs to the message of the Church.”⁷ After the Cold War, he defended liberal democracy as the form of government most conducive to justice and the mission of the Church at great length in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1991). From the perspective of the long rapprochement, though, a more poignant message was his plaintive statement to the European Parliament in 1988:

Our European history clearly shows how often the dividing line between “what is Caesar’s” and “what is God’s” has been crossed in both directions.

Medieval Latin Christendom to mention only one example, while theoretically elaborating the natural concept of the State . . . did not always avoid the integralist temptation of excluding from the temporal community those who did not profess the true faith. Religious integralism, which makes no proper distinction between the proper spheres of faith and civil life, which is still practiced in other parts of the world, seems to be incompatible with the very spirit of Europe, as it has been shaped by the Christian message.⁸

The Contours of the Catholic Wave

Having come to teach liberal democracy, the Church could now act to bring it about. But if the Church's new teachings corresponded in timing and form to the Catholic wave, the extent of Church influence on any of the far-flung new democracies is hard to know. In degrees difficult to measure, this influence has had to compete with economic advancement, changing popular attitudes, the decay of authoritarian regimes, the role of secular actors, and the influence of powerful external democracies such as the United States. More readily identifiable are those actions through which the Church has consciously defied juntas and communists in the name of liberties and elections. Such defiance often corresponds to democratic transitions.

What then becomes clear is that the Church's support for democracy has not been the same everywhere. In some places, the Church has kindled a fire of oppositional soul force, with nuns facing down tanks, candlelight protests winding through medieval streets, a bishop risking his life by speaking out against a dictator, or a pope celebrating an open-air mass for tens of thousands under the windows of a communist commissariat. At the other extreme, Church authorities have languished in coexistence with autocracy, their defiance tepid.

The Church's democratizing influence, then, was complex, varying in time, manner, and extent. Complexity lies first in the Church itself. Sometimes, "the Church" is a metonymy for the pope, who speaks in its name. Papal preferences, though, are not always mediated smoothly as they gain distance from Rome: Bishops and other clerics often implement the Vatican's wishes with varying degrees of enthusiasm and efficacy, depending on their own convictions, politics, and local circumstances. The Church is also the "people of God," as the Second Vatican Council taught, comprising a laity of voters, parishioners, protestors, collaborators, Christian Democratic parties, base communities that serve and mobilize the poor, and conservative aristocrats, all of whom approach democratization differently and often separately.

Complexity also characterizes the sorts of democratic activities in which the Church's sundry actors may engage. Some become public protestors. Distinctively, Church leaders also celebrate masses and other ceremonies with a partly political intent, as did Pope John Paul II in his

choreographed travels. Leaders and laypeople within nations forge links with forces foreign and domestic—unions, parties, newspapers, non-governmental organizations—that can invigorate their struggle.

Such activity threatens regimes. It can establish a condition that George Weigel aptly calls “moral extraterritoriality”—an island of free thought and speech, of truth speaking to power, in a sea of regime-controlled discourse.⁹ From this island redoubt, dissenters can challenge the regime’s legitimacy as well as encourage others to join them. The resulting movement may well form the seed of a new, democratic government.

A survey of the Catholic wave shows who undertook what sort of democratization, and where. Not surprisingly, the contours of the Catholic wave corresponded to the distribution of the world’s Catholic population—a total of more than a billion people, with 461 million in Latin America, 286 million in Europe, and 120 million in Africa.¹⁰

In Europe, prior to the Catholic wave, two sorts of autocracy prevailed in Catholic countries. In Iberia there were Spain and Portugal, authoritarian Latin states that supported the Church and enjoyed the legitimacy that came from Church approval. To the east there were Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Lithuania, all governed by communist regimes that persecuted and sought to suppress the Church.

The Church in Spain was one of the most forceful democratizers in the Catholic wave. It is also one of the churches upon which Vatican II exercised its strongest influence. Among the factors that caused the demise of Spanish authoritarianism, the Church’s opposition was arguably the most formidable. Paradoxically, though, the Church did not apply this resistance through energetic popular participation, but rather through its power of withdrawal. It significantly aided democratization by deciding no longer to support the regime of Generalissimo Francisco Franco.

The efficacy of the Church’s withdrawal lay in the strength of its legitimization of Franco’s regime in the first place. Through most of the history of this country that remains 94 percent Catholic, the Vatican and the Crown collaborated closely, a bond that Franco fortified when he reestablished the Church’s privileges, its moral authority, and its religious near-monopoly upon his triumph in the Spanish Civil War in 1939.

Following the Second Vatican Council, the Church in Rome jarringly reversed its attitude toward Franco. The Spanish Church, devoutly loyal to Rome, accepted a virtual mandate to disentangle itself from state institutions. In 1971, its bishops endorsed the separation of church and state, called prelates to resign government posts, and, by a majority vote (though still short of the two-thirds needed to pass), disavowed the Church’s role in the civil war: “[W]e must humbly recognize and ask pardon for the fact that we failed to act at the opportune time as true

‘ministers of reconciliation’ in the midst of our people divided by a war between brothers.” After Franco’s death in 1975, the Church exercised its taciturn iconoclasm, withdrawing from politics and allowing proponents of democracy to establish a new constitution.¹¹

In Eastern Europe, democratization meant bringing down communist regimes that sought to control Church governance and finances; suppress religious education and ban Catholic schools, presses, newspapers, and civic organizations; confiscate Church property; take control of Church hospitals, nursing homes, and orphanages; abolish monastic houses; and imprison or murder dissenting priests and prelates. Virtually every East European church—Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox alike—suffered thus under a communist regime.

Long before it took up the cause of human rights, the Church regularly excoriated communism. Pope Pius XII showered it with his choicest invective. The next two popes, John XXIII and Paul VI, continued to oppose communist regimes, but now in the language of human rights and through a strategy of *Ostpolitik*, by which, through diplomatic dialogue, they would seek concordats with communist regimes to protect the Church. John Paul II challenged communist regimes more assertively by speaking directly to their citizens, animated by a vision of Europe as a Christian civilization united by human rights and democratic governance.¹²

Among the national churches, Poland’s was a prototype of nationalist resistance to communism. In a country where more than 90 percent of the population identifies itself as Catholic, the Church has been an important symbol of the nation. In the early years of communist rule, Stefan Cardinal Wysziński spoke out against the regime, spent three years in prison, and then asserted the Church’s autonomy in a nine-year “Great Novena” of pilgrimages, catechesis, and preaching. “The fulcrum of the revolution of 1989,” though, was the election to the papacy of native son Karol Cardinal Wojtyła, who, as Pope John Paul II, visited Poland three times beginning in 1979, galvanized Poles to protest, and encouraged the formation of the free trade union known as Solidarity.¹³

Lithuania, like Poland, is a highly Catholic country—81 percent of the population—where religion is woven into the national identity, and where the Church sustained a strong and consistent opposition to communist rule, championing liberal constitutionalism and human rights, sustaining underground publications, and remaining the most important symbol of nationalist opposition through song, story, and traditional ritual. By contrast, no strong Catholic opposition movement emerged in Czechoslovakia, though here, too, John Paul II inspired resistance, emboldening Bohemia’s František Cardinal Tomášek to speak out more strongly against the regime and mobilizing popular protest. In Hungary, apart from the lonely resistance of József Cardinal Mindszenty,

the Church largely remained supine, showing little effective resistance until 1988, the year before communism collapsed.¹⁴

The Church in Developing Countries

Latin America is home to a larger share of Catholics—44 percent—than any other region of the world, and had the highest concentration of democratizing states in the Catholic wave. Virtually all these states, in South America and Central America alike, began as colonies, where Church and state were closely integrated partners. But in most of these states all or part of the post-Vatican II Church—sometimes the national bishops, sometimes other communities within the Church, in different patterns, to different degrees—sooner or later came to oppose authoritarianism in the name of human rights and democracy.

The Southern Cone states, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, typify this contrast. In Brazil, home to more Catholics than any other state in the world—115 million in all—the opposition of priests and bishops was among the strongest in Latin America. Not only the teachings of Vatican II, but also liberation theology, a doctrine of social justice for the poor that had caught fire at the 1968 Latin American bishops' conference at Medellín, Colombia, inspired the clerics, who then carried these ideas to Brazil's thousands of ecclesial base communities, where they mobilized opponents of the regime.¹⁵

The Church in Chile also became a strong voice for human rights, creating advocacy groups to oppose the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet after he took power in a 1973 coup. Relative to Brazil and Chile, the Church in Argentina was passive, stuck in a long history of close association with the state and economic elites. During the dictatorship and the dirty wars of 1976 to 1983, only a few Church leaders denounced human rights violations or criticized the military (two of the exceptional bishops were murdered), while the official Church did not advocate democracy until 1981.

In three Central American lands, the Church ceased being the partner of an authoritarian state and became either one of its foes or else a body divided in its loyalties, in each case in an atmosphere of brutal civil war. In Guatemala, a traditionally anticommunist Catholic Church began to speak out against human rights violations and to call for peace, especially in the late 1970s, when the dictatorship there stepped up its violence. A traditional Church-state alliance in El Salvador also began to break down in the early 1970s, when Archbishop Luis Chávez y González adopted Medellín and Vatican II. His successor was Óscar Romero, whom the regime assassinated in 1980 because he spoke out on behalf of the poor and their rights. Opposition was strong, too, among the poor in the ecclesial base communities, many members of which took up arms, though usually not with the encouragement of Church activists. In the Nicaraguan Church,

the grassroots supported the revolution of the communist Sandinistas in 1979 against the rightist Somoza dictatorship, while the hierarchy opposed both the Somoza family and the Sandinista revolution.

Elsewhere in Latin America, the Church had broken its ties with the state many years before democratization. The Mexican Church, suppressed by an anticlerical government for most of the twentieth century, arose in the 1980s to challenge electoral fraud and became a force for democratization in the 1990s. The Peruvian Church, long a progressive force, helped democracy in the 1980s by developing ties of solidarity with the urban and rural poor, thus making them more likely to reject the Shining Path terrorist movement. In two other states—Uruguay and Paraguay—the Church hierarchy remained largely passive while grassroots Catholic organizations mounted modest opposition.¹⁶

It was not in Latin America proper, however, but in a former Spanish colony far across the Pacific that Catholics would marshal their most redoubtable effort against an authoritarian Latin state. In the Philippines (84 percent Catholic) as elsewhere in the Latin world, the Church had long been tied to the state and the landed aristocracy. Vatican II and Medellín then recast the Church's stance even more thoroughly than elsewhere, inspiring numerous groups to proclaim and live a mission to the poor, including the national bishops' conference, several social-justice groups, and two-thousand base communities. After President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972, the Church gradually grew more unified in its stance against him. Following the assassination of opposition politician Benigno Aquino in 1983, Manila's Jaime Cardinal Sin and his fellow bishops cited the Gospel in leading a sustained nonviolent movement for democracy, culminating in two-million-strong "people power" protests that forced Marcos out in February 1986.¹⁷

In two other East Asian states, the Church also impressively resisted authoritarian regimes. In South Korea, groups of Catholics joined Protestant counterparts in advocating human rights, democracy, and economic justice in the wake of Vatican II and Medellín. Increasingly during the 1970s and 1980s, Catholic students followed the call of Seoul's cardinal-archbishop Stephen Kim Su-hwan to take to the streets in peaceful protest against the dictatorship of President Park Chung Hee.¹⁸

In East Timor, the Church's historic relationship to the state followed the colonial model. When Portugal granted independence in 1975, Indonesia promptly invaded, touching off a bloody conflict that lasted until 1999, when a new Indonesian president at last allowed East Timor to vote on independence. During the war, Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo led the Catholic Church and the people of East Timor in resisting occupation.¹⁹

Finally, in several African countries, Catholic opposition helped to bring about democratization. Most striking was Malawi, where the national bishops' pastoral letter of 1992, "Living Our Faith," distributed to parishes across the country, was the first public criticism leveled

against the one-party rule of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, and a turning point in bringing him down. In Kenya, Zambia, and Ghana, the Church led popular opposition movements against authoritarianism as well. In other African states, though—Uganda, Cameroon, and Rwanda—Catholics proved ineffective as brokers of democracy and, in the case of Rwanda, were sometimes even implicated in atrocities.²⁰

All along the general sweep of the global Catholic wave, the Church coaxed and goaded the state to take up democracy, but not everywhere or to the same extent. Catholic opposition could be high-profile enough to win the Nobel Peace Prize—Lech Wałęsa and Bishop Belo were both so honored—and yet could also be moderate, lukewarm, or even feeble.

What Makes the Churches Effective

Why these differences? What features and activities have led some national Catholic churches to help democracy, and others to hinder it or do nothing? What sort of church can best avoid being coopted by caudillos or crushed by communists? This is indeed to ask: What sort of church flourishes most robustly in the modern political world, so far removed from anything like Christendom?

Surely it is the one that takes up the Catholic magisterium's teachings on justice in the modern political world. Promulgated from Rome to the entire Church, these teachings again and again changed the political posture of national churches. Spain is the strongest example. But again, some churches have imbibed these teachings more deeply and spread them more widely than others. Why? The answer leads back to the twin tolerations.

In a democracy, church and state are differentiated. Churches eschew constitutional privileges, their clerics forgo temporal powers, and state officials in turn refrain from trying to govern the Church. Differentiation of Church and other social spheres was an important concept among sociologists of religion in the 1950s and 1960s, who considered it a sign of religious decline that accompanied enlightenment, reason, and scientific progress.²¹ What has become apparent over the decades since, though, is that differentiation may well foster the health of religion, giving it the very autonomy by which it flourishes. This is what the French Catholic intellectual Alexis de Tocqueville observed in America in the 1830s and what Murray and Maritain observed a century later—religion thriving in a liberal-democratic state. Not only might a differentiated Church flourish, but its very distance from the state might allow it to influence politics more powerfully—and democratically, through persuasion, protest, and appeals to legitimacy. Even in the modern world, the church can remain robustly public, as sociologist José Casanova has argued.²²

If the Catholic Church may flourish through the differentiation that democracy entails, then might it not also be true that those churches

which best bring about democracy are the ones that, even while living under authoritarianism, already embody—albeit in a limited, beleaguered way, to be sure—the differentiation that they will enjoy far more fully once a democratic constitution has been realized? From their differentiated position, they can engage in the protodemocratic politics of contesting the regime's legitimacy. From its differentiated nook, the Church can wield the tools of democracy to bring about a democratic regime.

Differentiation is in fact a conglomerate of factors that embody and strengthen the Church's separation from the state. The strength of each factor varies from state to state, of course. One of the most important is governance: Does the Church enjoy autonomy from the state in its finances, appointments, doctrine, and practice? The most effective democratizers were churches that maintained some autonomy under authoritarianism, even in the face of duress and persecution. The Polish Church doggedly guarded its prerogatives right up through the 1980s, drawing on a degree of popular prestige that made government attempts at suppression costly indeed. The Church and Catholic organizations in the Philippines, though hardly free from suppression, remained able to govern their internal ranks and thus lead their flock in mass protest when the time came. Churches in Brazil, Lithuania, Peru, South Korea, East Timor, Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, and elsewhere also enjoyed substantial autonomy and were a democratizing influence. By contrast, in countries such as Argentina, where Church and state remained interlocked, the Church was a weak democratizer.

Often, the churches that preserved relative autonomy were inheritors of a legacy of autonomy that long predated modern authoritarianism. The Polish Church had established a fierce tradition of resistance to encroachment during Poland's triple occupation by neighboring great powers from 1795 to 1918. Three decades later, the tradition was available to be resumed. By contrast, the Catholic Church in Bohemia, which was weakly resistant to communism, had cooperated with the Habsburg monarchy in forming a Counter-Reformation state in the seventeenth century and continued to remain cozy with it into the twentieth century. In South Korea, too, the Church had remained distant from the state since the arrival of missionaries in the late eighteenth century.

Transnational ties with allied outsiders are another way in which the Church remains differentiated from the state. For the Catholic Church, such ties are built into its very structure. More than any other Christian church or world religion, the Catholic Church teaches that its unity is a visible one, sustained by a network of bishops that teaches faith and morals commonly and obligingly to all and links distant Catholics together in solidarity. Such a network was a formidable asset against authoritarian regimes. The teachings of Vatican II could be transmitted easily and authoritatively across borders. A peripatetic pope could travel to a country and speak to ready crowds of Catholics, sometimes numbering in the millions.

The strength of transnationalism also varied. Some national churches were more receptive than others to Vatican II teachings. The Spanish Church's strong respect for the authority of Rome allowed it to be transformed from the outside, even though it ranked low on other dimensions of differentiation. Other churches, such as Argentina's, were less receptive to the new teachings. Popes differed, too, in their transnational strategies. Pope Paul VI's caution toward communist regimes contrasted with John Paul II's far more aggressive approach of traveling to Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Philippines, Nicaragua and other sites of autocracy. In many of the Latin American countries that democratized, the papal nuncio played an influential role.

Links to movements and organizations outside the Church but within the same state can provide another ally against undemocratic regimes—also a mode of differentiation. In Poland, the Church and Solidarity fortified one another. In Brazil, the oppositional Church allied closely with labor unions and social movements for the poor. In other settings—Chile, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, the Philippines, South Korea, Zambia, and elsewhere—Catholics forged ecumenical contacts with prodemocratic Protestants to create a unified movement.

A final mode of Church differentiation from the state was an alliance with national identity that fostered an antiregime solidarity with citizens at large. Poland, again, is the quintessential case. During long years of occupation, the Church had become a symbol of the Polish nation's ability to survive despite hardship. Under communism, the Church drew upon this same bond to great effect. In Lithuania, the Church's identification with the nation was also exceptionally strong, and a source of solidarity against communist rule. In Brazil, the Philippines, and Spain, the Church also symbolized national identity to great effect.

In all of these ways, differentiation fortified the Catholic Church even in locales where secularism was gaining ground, as evidenced, say, by declining rates of religious observance. In Europe, for instance, even as the Church was exercising democratizing power, religious attendance was sliding. The nature of the Church's relationship to the state, then, is more important for democracy than a country's level of religious belief or practice. Of course, high levels of Catholic devotion can certainly strengthen an oppositional Church, as they did in Poland and the Philippines. But the example of the Orthodox Church in Greece shows that a high level of religiosity measured in belief and practice is perfectly compatible with a church that remains passively on the sidelines of democratization.

The Church and Democracy Today

Today it is difficult to think of an influential Catholic sector in any state that actively opposes liberal democracy. That is the significant result of the revolution in the Church's approach to politics of the past

generation. Far more common are Catholics who are persecuted for their faith, as many of the estimated 7.5 million Catholics are in China. If one day these Catholics help to overthrow their oppressors, then they will become the last bursts of energy in the Catholic wave.

The far more prevalent challenge for the Catholic Church is to navigate its way through democratic politics, finding the proper contours of the twin tolerations, the appropriate limits of differentiation. Within democracy, as outside of it, the Church is advantaged by differentiation. Lacking temporal powers, it need not amend its message or activities in order to safeguard them. The state reciprocally grants the Church freedom to govern itself. From this healthy distance, the Church may then promote human flourishing through characteristic democratic activities such as persuading, lobbying, preaching, and advising voters. The dilemma of democracy for the Church is that in comparison with the pre-Vatican II ideal state, it enjoys far less certainty that its teachings will be promoted actively in the political order; electoral politics, in fact, may well yield antithetical policies. The Church then faces a choice. It can accept temporary defeat and continue to play the democratic game; it can withdraw from the game; or it can challenge the very terms of the democratic association, risking a loss of support among those who perceive it as overstepping its bounds.

Poland and the Philippines exemplify these dilemmas. In both cases, the Church plays a strong role in democratic politics, as it did in making such politics possible. In both cases, critics charge it with violating democratic boundaries. In Poland, the Church sought to shape the new constitution so that it would make Christian values the foundation of law, to secure passage of laws to uphold marriage and the protection of life from the moment of conception, and to secure a concordat between Poland and Rome that guarantees substantial rights to the Polish Catholic Church. The Church gingerly declares that it will support no ticket in an election but urges Catholics to vote for tickets that uphold Catholic commitments.²³ In the Philippines, Cardinal Sin again exercised the “power of the people” by calling for mass prayer vigils and demonstrations to oust the corrupt government of President Joseph Estrada in 2001.

It is not clear that a Church which seeks to shape its state’s laws on marriage and life or even its constitution or its concordat is acting illiberally or undemocratically. The United Kingdom and all of the Scandinavian countries retain established churches, while states such as Germany recognize and support official religions, even while guaranteeing religious freedom. Still, the calumnious rhetoric of some Polish prelates violates the democratic virtue of civility and risks alienating the Church from mainstream Polish opinion. In the Philippines, though Cardinal Sin’s religious leadership in bringing democracy in 1986 continues to inspire, his continued use of mass popular pressure to force out leaders, albeit unsavory ones, raises questions about the viability of the rule of law.

Such dilemmas of democracy are variations of a much older dilemma for the Church: discovering how to advance its timeless truths in the political order. A new development in the Church's understanding of this dilemma brought it not only to favor, but to help create, a new sort of regime—one that safeguards human rights, especially religious freedom. In modernity, the Church has committed itself to conduct politics from a distance. Modernity's surprise is that this commitment turned out not to be a retreat from politics, but rather an effective strategy for speaking the Church's timeless truths authentically in the public realm. Partisans of these truths will celebrate this strategy's victories, but in witnessing liberal democracies' own injustices, will soberly remember, too, its limits and its setbacks, its retreats and its dilemmas.

NOTES

The research for this article was completed through support provided by a grant for a project on "Religion in Global Politics" sponsored by the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University and the Smith Richardson Foundation. For helpful research reports, I thank Edgar Chen, Robert Portada, Robert Dowd, Laurie Johnston, Katherine Diaz, and Colleen Gilg. I also thank Kevin McCormick and Erin Urquhart for their research assistance. For helpful comments on the manuscript, I thank Scott Mainwaring and James McAdams.

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 76.

2. Alfred Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations,'" *Journal of Democracy* 11 (October 2000): 37–57. See also Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 213–53.

3. Quoted in Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 87, 261–62.

4. Quoted in John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 241.

5. Pope Leo XIII, "Longinqua Oceani," in John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Bruce, 1956), 517–18.

6. John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History*, 201–8.

7. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 83–84.

8. Quoted in Luigi Accattoli, *When a Pope Asks for Forgiveness* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1998), 178.

9. George Weigel, *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 151.

10. Figures are for the year 2000 and are drawn from David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:12.

11. Stanley G. Payne, *Spanish Catholicism: A Historical Overview* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 194, 201, 213; and Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi Aizpurua, *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979).
12. J. Bryan Hehir, "Papal Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy* 78 (Spring 1990): 26–48; Michael Sutton, "John Paul II's Idea of Europe," *Religion, State, and Society* 25 (March 1997): 17–30; and John Paul II, "Ecclesia in Europe," Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation delivered on 28 June 2003.
13. George Weigel, *Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism*, 129–37.
14. Kestutis Girnius, "Nationalism and the Catholic Church in Lithuania," in Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1989); Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR: Before and After the Great Transformation* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1992), 182, 246–56.
15. Edward L. Cleary, "The Brazilian Catholic Church and Church-State Relations: Nation-Building," *Journal of Church and State* 39 (Spring 1997): 235–72.
16. On events in Latin America, see Emilio Mignone, *Witness to the Truth: The Complicity of Church and Dictatorship in Argentina* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1986), 366; Jeffrey Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorship, and Democracy in Latin America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1998), 66–91.
17. Robert L. Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990).
18. Yun-Shik Chang, "The Progressive Christian Church and Democracy in South Korea," *Journal of Church and State* 40 (Spring 1998): 437–66.
19. Robert Archer, "The Catholic Church in East Timor," in Peter Carey and G. Carter Bentley, eds., *East Timor at the Crossroads: The Forging of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 120–33.
20. An excellent comparative study of the role of the Church in African democratization is Paul Gifford, *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).
21. On differentiation and secularization, see David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).
22. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
23. Timothy Byrnes, "The Challenge of Pluralism: The Catholic Church in Democratic Poland," in Ted Gerard Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: The One, the Few, and the Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 27–46.