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Deus Vult: The Geopolitics of the Catholic Church

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The Catholic Church is a religious tradition with a highly centralised organisational structure which operates worldwide but that must adjust itself to and effectively operate in local and world-regional contexts that can often challenge and threaten to subvert its central doctrines, operational principles, and political compromises with secular authorities. The Church has long provided the source and model, with its base in the sacred origins of sovereignty, for a quintessentially Western statehood. In this context, I wish to raise three points for further discussion using the significant example of the Catholic Church that future research on the contemporary confluence between religion and geopolitics should address. The first is whether a church can have “geopolitics.” I answer in the affirmative with a number of arguments for doing so. The second is the idea, made in writing and in his practice by Pope Benedict, that Western civilisation is in crisis and that only a restoration of a historic Christendom (Europe) based on a reinvigorated Catholic Church can save it. I dispute the strategy of “hard” or coercive power and the focus on Europe he has apparently chosen as departing from what has often best served the Church in the past. Third, and finally, in the global struggle for souls, numbers matter. Somewhat akin to the struggle for primacy between states in the modern geopolitical imagination, the struggle for souls between faiths (Catholics and Protestants, Moslems and Christians, etc.) is once more in ascendance. But doesn’t this quantitative emphasis risk subverting the Church’s post-Vatican II emphasis on Christian practice in everyday life? The overall purpose of the article is to introduce religious organisation and associated theological claims into the problematic of

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geopolitics using the case of the world's largest Christian denomination.

If the Church had been merely a school of philosophy preaching pure morality, it would undoubtedly have disappeared like many other groups.

— Georges Sorel²

Christianity is something particular in the totality of history. . . . It cannot speak in the name of the entire universe.

— Michel de Certeau³

Christianity does not have a singular spatiality built into either its theology or its organisational history. In the most materialist of its basic theological accounts, the relationship between Heaven and Earth, with God located vertically above a Fallen World below, is not a relationship between two spaces as one would usually understand the meaning of terrestrial “spaces.” This essentially vertical relationship or Great-Chain-of-Being nonetheless conditions how Christian churches have had to come to terms with the terrestrial world in which they must operate. Above all, this is because the people who believe in Christ as the primary intermediary between themselves and God – either alone or in the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost – have had to visibly and publicly translate their vertical spiritual commitment into claiming a “horizontal” space for themselves in the material world.⁴ They have had to organise themselves on the ground, so to speak, by converting, conquering, and managing souls in operational terms into parishes, districts, dioceses, etc. They have also had to imagine how to bring the world outside their current influence and control under the organisational and theological umbrella of the Church.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS A SPATIAL ORGANISATION

The Roman Catholic Church, in particular, as the Christian Church which claims the most elaborate and longest-standing organisational genealogy going back to the early Christians, has harnessed together the confessional space of a privileged access to the sacred with the more worldly, and profane, association of the Church with the Roman universalism of the *imperium populi romani*. The tension between the two sides of this history is signified in the very name of the Church adopted by most commentators on it, the *Roman Catholic* Church, even if to its adherents it is usually simply “the Church.” The role of the Emperor Constantine in Christianising the

Empire requires no rehearsal. So, when the Roman Empire collapsed in Western Europe, only the Church represented institutionally in perpetuity what little was left of the *pax romana*. If the Church had thus inherited the mantle of the Roman Empire and its imperial territoriality, it has also, however, represented a universal mission to bring all souls within the walls of the one true worldwide church. The cross, signifying the sacrifice of Jesus on behalf of his followers, was in fact only introduced as the central symbol of the faith by the Emperor Constantine (around 320 AD) who used it as a sword to conquer the empire for himself.⁵ As we shall see, these two features of the Church, the Roman and the Catholic, have not always worked well together.

Long following a hegemonic calculus that has historically privileged an admixture of coercion and consent, Church decisions on such matters as essential doctrines, calendars, and liturgy are *expected* to elicit agreement or assent from others.⁶ Thus decisions on dividing up the world into Spanish and Portuguese spheres of influence in the late 1400s and the Gregorian reform of the calendar in 1582 were designed to claim global cultural hegemony, not start a negotiation. So, even as there was the *threat* of coercion, changes were instituted by creating a new popular common sense with the Church's long history and evident capacity to inspire both fear and shame as the main sources of its persisting power to exact conformity. Of course, the sword was never ever completely sheathed, as the sad history of the Crusades, the early Catholic missions in the Americas, and the Inquisition in early modern Europe remind us. The recruitment of violent surrogates, from medieval kings to twentieth-century dictators, has often obscured the motivating role of the Church. More often than not, however, the use of force was all the more effective for being occasional and, as frequently, hidden behind the hands of others.

Plausibly, the origins of the modern state system lie in the failure of the Catholic Church to respond effectively when faced with cumulative challenges to its spiritual authority ending with the Protestant Reformation. The symbolically significant Peace of Westphalia (1648) to which the modern state system is often traced was primarily the outcome of the collapse of the Church's role as one of the remaining vestiges of the Roman unification of Europe (and environs). Figures such as Nicholas of Cusa and Desiderius Erasmus who tried to arrest the break-up of Western Christendom into warring factions, noted that much of the problem with the Church went back to the temporal/spiritual tension evident in the Church's organisation: that it could not at one and the same time claim a universal spiritual authority yet also act as a central Italian principality using its wider religious role to justify its narrow political one, "creating their own armies and excommunicating their enemies," as Anthony Kenny puts it.⁷

Following the Reformation, the Church had to find a new political niche for itself in those parts of Europe that remained loyal (and that were

recaptured) and in their emerging colonies outside of Europe, primarily in Central and South America. In this context, the Catholic Church re-established itself as a geopolitical actor somewhat at odds with the conventional image of geopolitical action by modern states as typically privileging unmediated coercion. The Church now had to collaborate with newly empowered states and had to focus more unequivocally on its religious activities as a saviour and sustainer of souls. From this perspective, a plausible claim can be made that Machiavelli's and Gramsci's political theories, particularly the former's emphasis on political stagecraft or performance (particularly apparent in his *The Prince*) and the latter's emphasis on *egemonia* (enrolment by consent laced with the fear of shame and guilt), reflect in part the Italian experience with the quotidian power of the Catholic Church, whereas elsewhere in Europe Hobbes's view of the state as a military-coercive Leviathan has tended to prevail and led to a different definition of hegemony as simple coercive power rather than the mixture of assent, theatricality, deception, seduction, and coercion that Gramsci had in mind with *egemonia*. It has been argued that Gramsci's perspective is more helpful in understanding the contemporary globalising world under US auspices than is the state-centred Hobbesian one that has always tended to prevail among students of geopolitics.⁸ The geopolitics of the Catholic Church down the years certainly seems to exemplify the working of Machiavellian stagecraft and Gramscian hegemony somewhat more than the Hobbesian Leviathan.

Other churches have acquired or developed rather different political spatialities. The Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe, for example, have always maintained close ties with empires (Byzantine and Russian) and states, without the imperial/monarchical versus papal conflicts that wracked Western Europe long before the Protestant Reformation. The state churches of northern Europe, such as the Anglican in England, and the Lutheran ones in Scandinavia, have long been associated with an erastianism that denies the separation of church and state but in the final analysis subordinates the former to the latter. Pentecostal churches have a much "flatter" or networked spatial ontology, eschewing territorial privileges for a dynamic global networking between relatively independent congregations in different places. The currently most successful churches in recruiting adherents are those that take advantage of global networking and at the same time build on or help develop local religio-cultural identities.⁹ This puts traditional churches organised on a territorial-scalar basis such as the Catholic Church at considerable disadvantage.

The spatial organisation of churches, therefore, raises general questions about political-spatial organisation tout court and, more specifically, about the continuing role and emergence of actors in world and national politics, such as churches, whose operations and activities have been systematically understated in political geography. Even self-described critical geopolitics remains almost entirely state-centred in its focus even when actors within states

beyond the “intellectuals of statecraft” (women, regional governments, etc.) are also included. Yet, a case can be made for seeing all churches and faiths as political organisations that actively spatialise the world in their modus operandi, in their search for converts, in their worldly operations as bureaucratic-organisational agents, and in the defence of their central doctrines against apostasy. Such could constitute at least a version of “geopolitics.”

Of particular importance in marginalising churches and other non-state actors, the term geopolitics has long suffered from the profound conflation of *power* with *coercion* also found in Hobbesian and other modernist accounts of politics tout court. Geopolitics is thereby often restricted to the locational assets and resource distributions which underpin the hard power associated with armies, navies, and projections of force at a global scale. But as Stephen Toulmin has remarked using the very example of the Catholic Church with a telling anecdote about the necessary distinction between power, here emphasising its *moral* dimension, and coercion:

In a moment of cynical joviality Josef Stalin once asked, “How many divisions has the Pope?” The fact is that, in the eyes of decent human opinion, moral challenges are *never* answered by displays of force. . . . Stalin failed to see that the military triviality of the Pope’s Swiss Guard increases his claim to a hearing, rather than undermining it.¹⁰

The Roman Catholic Church is perhaps an extreme case of a faith tradition with a highly organised hierarchical structure that operates worldwide but must adjust itself to local and world-regional contexts that can challenge and subvert its central doctrines, operational principles, and political compromises with secular authorities. The central conundrum for the Church (as for all churches and most religious traditions) is that its focus on expanding and deepening its “sacred space” to bring as many people into its communion as possible before the Day of Judgement requires an imperial vision that must of necessity conflict with its guarantee that each soul comes freely and without coercion into communion with the Church. At the same time, as Pope Gregory XVI stated most clearly in an encyclical of 1832, compromise over the doctrines of the Church and the Pope’s role in promulgating them cannot be permitted. You are either in or out of the Church.¹¹ The Catholic Church must thus square an impossible circle: it is a highly centralised and disciplined organisation that must ultimately operate by enrolling rather than coercing people into its membership if it is to be true to its gospel.

EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF GEOPOLITICS

Strangely, recent scholarship about religion and geopolitics has not exhibited much if any interest in such matters. Rather, to the degree that it has

developed at all, it has focused on the linkages between, on the one hand, so-called religious extremism (be it American Protestant biblical fundamentalism or Islamic jihadism) and, on the other hand, nationalist politics (including the strident “Americanism” of many US fundamentalists in which Americans are pictured as the latest and greatest Chosen People) and the putative clashes between civilisations now in the offing around the world (much of which reduces to such oppositions as Samuel Huntington’s “the West versus or the Rest” or Christianity versus Islam).¹² Often, little or no historical context is provided and religious belief (particularly eschatology and millenarianism) rather than religious organisation and practice is given pride of place. It is the theological exotica more than the mundane everyday practices of churches and religions in relation to politics that attract attention. These seem increasingly important at a time when the inevitable promise of a secular modernity seems everywhere in retreat. Even in Europe, often thought of as the most secularised of the world’s regions, religion in general (even if in the broadly cultural sense of religion as a differentiating macro-regional “marker”) and the Catholic Church in particular are increasingly central to a wide range of political issues, from the Christian elements (representing, even if only cynically, some essential aspects of “Europeanness”) that should figure in any Constitution for the European Union to which countries should and should not be admitted to its membership on religious grounds (e.g., Turkey).¹³

Some reasons for why extending the scope of the term “geopolitics” matters theoretically in discussions of geopolitics more generally also come to mind. Beyond the question of extending the concept of geopolitics to churches lies the question of how much states and other agents of sovereignty depend upon the Church (or churches) for the very sacred and ecclesiastical ground upon which they often claim to stand. First, Catholic Christianity (and Christianity more broadly) has been intimately involved in the development of the forms of discipline and governmentality of the self today exercised by other structures of power, including states, corporations, and a host of other agencies.¹⁴ The various arts of domination (from coercion to seduction and enrolment) depend, of course, on the recruitment of agents who, by definition, can refuse the most coercive forms of domination. Indeed, on one reading, Christianity involves a radical selfhood that rejects coercive discipline. But historically this has been largely unfulfilled. Churches remain – sometimes in alliance with states – the great mediators of religion. Yet, in Western history they laid the very groundwork for the modern self and its associated technologies.

Second, the Catholic Church has long been a model for statehood even as its own history is shamelessly idealised. Not only is law seen by a host of thinkers as having sacred origins, most states actively like to claim at least some minimal religious as well as secular justification for their unique status relative to other forms of socio-political organisation. The entire history of

the concept of “sovereignty” is bound up with this genealogy. The logic reaches its apogee with those, such as Carl Schmitt, who see the Catholic Church as a paradigmatic model for modern statehood. Papal infallibility, first pronounced by the Church as dogma only in 1870 after the First Vatican Council, is particularly attractive to Schmitt as providing the basis for the visibility of the Church and thus, by analogy, for the incarnation of the state: “The law cannot be mediated without an undisputed state power, whose essence consists precisely in the realization of law, just as the Church cannot make truth visible without having a personal head, without being represented, in its unity, by a representative person, the Pope, whose decisions must be recognized as indisputable and infallible.”¹⁵ The order represented by the state, therefore, finds its most important precursor in that of the modern (post-1870) Catholic Church. Schmitt thus “theologized the political.”¹⁶ He has not been alone. He is only the most coherent and extreme exponent of statehood based, initially and finally, on theological/mythological fiat rather than on liberal contract, mere despotism or some mix of despotic and infrastructural power.

Third, the Catholic Church can be seen as an important precursor and ongoing contributor to globalisation.¹⁷ From its outset the Church was based on what Oliver O’Donovan has called the “universalist transcendence of place.”¹⁸ Territorial jurisdiction might become part of the Church’s very fabric in the medieval and early-modern periods, with its very own territory in central Italy, as the imperial ideal was challenged by the emergence of independent Christian kingdoms, but a powerful theology within the Church still claimed that:

Humanity itself would only have fulfilled God’s purpose for the world once, in the words of the Psalm, “the Word had reached to the end of the Earth” (Psalms, 18.5). This implied a future state, but it was one that would one day be fulfilled, and when it was the purely Christian polis – the *respublica christiana* – it would come to embrace literally the whole Earth.¹⁹

So, although today we often confuse globalisation tout court with neo-liberalism or a global production system, its political-cultural roots are much more longstanding in the desire by the Church (and its offshoots) to missionise the world as a whole and bring it under a common congregation of the faithful.

THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In brief compass, I cannot hope to cover the wide range of issues that a close examination of the geopolitics of the Catholic Church might raise. I

just want to bring up three questions for discussion using the significant example of the Catholic Church that future research on the contemporary confluence between religion and geopolitics should address. Much of this discussion is intended to throw some new light on what “geopolitics” can entail by using the example of a church rather than a state, but I also want to say something about the current trend in the Catholic Church towards a more militant and coercive engagement with other religious groupings (inside and outside of Christianity), how this reflects rather poorly on the understanding of its current leadership about the historic roots of Catholic hegemony, and how ill-suited it is strategically to the emergent political spatiality of the contemporary material world beyond the confines of the Church itself.

Can a Church Have Geopolitics?

The first point is whether a church can have “geopolitics.” Typically, the term has had a state-centred meaning since its first use in 1899. Of course, the Roman Catholic Church is today nominally and once really was a territorial state, today as the Vatican City State (dating back to a 1929 accord with the Italian national government) and historically as the Papal States of central Italy. Of course, it also grew out of the Roman Empire and was to prove perhaps that empire’s most lasting organisational contribution to later world history. Putting this to one side, however, the more general claim would be that the naming, doctrines, and organisation of the Church conspire to produce within the Vatican (as the HQ of the Church) a *Weltanschauung* or geopolitical ideology for the Church as whole. Many other churches have imitated the basic structure even if with different content, both theologically and geopolitical. Perhaps the Mormon Church would be a good recent example. If the state-centrism of the social sciences is an increasing liability today in the face of understanding both the powers and the limitations of the powers exercised by states relative to other agents, then perhaps giving back to churches and religions some degree of the powers they “once” held and alleged to have “lost” during the irresistible rise and rise of the territorial nation-state can be seen as a small step forward in engaging with the world as it is than as we have rather imagined it to be.

Two aspects of the Church’s geopolitical engagement can be distinguished. The first its formal role in international politics; the second is how this role is given direction in the policy directions chosen by particular papal administrations. With respect to its role, the Church has, if anything expanded its presence as a unique “church-state” (based on its status as a sovereign state initially conferred by the Italian government in 1929) over the past half-century. Indeed, much of this has happened since 1978 when John Paul II was elected Pope. At that time the Vatican had full diplomatic ties with only 85 states, by the time he died the figure was 174 including the

US, the former Soviet Union, and Britain. Today, China, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam are some of the few states without formal diplomatic ties to the Vatican.²⁰ Over the same period, the Church has also joined numerous inter-governmental organisations including the UN, the African Union, and the Organization of American States. In such organisations the Church's representatives have not been shy in lobbying for official policies on family planning, "sanctity of life," and other issues. Yet, these issues play out differently in different parts of the world. For example, abortion has been much more central to US politics than it has been in Europe. Given the numerical minority status of the Church in the US it has been its alliance with evangelical Protestants on abortion and other issues that has given it renewed clout, at least at the national level. So, the Church must always be attentive to the fact that, under modern systems of communication and information, its positions need to be nuanced sufficiently to travel well but nevertheless express some apparently timeless kernel of truth over which the Church exercises guardianship. Alliances are also often necessary, particularly when the Church is not completely dominant religiously. A frequent challenge is that the Vatican and the various national councils of bishops that operate around the world can be in conflict over how much to adapt to local circumstances. Even with the Vatican close by, the Italian National Episcopal Conference (of Bishops) has been blindsided by papal positions at odds with its own.²¹

The Papacy has also been very active in conventional diplomacy: helping to both negotiate treaties and resolve international disputes. But it is also active in defending and promoting the interests of Catholic communities around the world. The greatest strength of the Church lies in its charitable activities. It is the largest single supplier of health services and education in the world; its food and medical charities provide much of the social cohesion in large parts of rural Africa; it has been a major critic of India's caste system; and is now a major proponent of sustainable development and fair trade. These varied tasks do not always conform easily. The Church's role is thus a rather distinctive one; more like a non-governmental organisation in much of what it does but still claiming to practice a traditional type of inter-governmental diplomacy as its main mission. In other words, the Church seems stuck structurally between two organisational models only one of which, the non-governmental one, seems to match best its major contemporary purposes yet it plausibly depends on the formal status of the Vatican City as a state to carry out many of its putatively pastoral duties.²²

Turning next to policy directions; this is where geopolitical orientations come directly into play. All of these are the outcome of political struggles within the Vatican in particular and the Church more generally over the mission of the Church and the collaborations and oppositions this entails for what becomes official policy, usually in the form of encyclicals or bulls promulgated in the name of the Pope. Examples of this in recent practice

would be the initiatives for ecumenism associated with the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960s called by Pope John XIII and which succeeded in part in engaging the Church with other Christian churches and other religions in a “multilateral” manner that could be fruitful for all (if in different ways) rather than threatening to the health or prosperity of the Catholic Church in any particular place; Pope Paul VI’s strident, even revolutionary, intervention in 1967 into the public debate over the great income divide between global North and South in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* that was condemned by conservatives within and outside the Church as “reheated Marxism” but which was to inspire an entire generation of activist Catholics to struggle against global poverty and human degradation;²³ Pope John Paul II’s exhausting global travels to establish the good offices of the Vatican as a mediator in world conflicts based in good part on that Pope’s charisma and reputation for dealing productively with difficult political situations as a result of his own experience in Communist Poland;²⁴ and, most recently, in a speech at Regensburg, Germany, in September 2006, Pope Benedict XVI’s public excoriation of the core role of violence in Islamic *belief* as the source of current Islamic jihadism rather than the latter as a radical departure from Islamic orthodoxy.²⁵

In all of these cases the Church’s imperatives to censure, convert, and multiply have involved explicit strategies for dealing with parts of the world (Protestant and Orthodox Europe) and the Muslim World that are not (yet) within the fold. The Second Vatican Council, while it may not have marked a huge disruption in the beliefs and practices of the Church, did involve the adoption of a novel set of more latitudinarian attitudes towards other religions (not least towards other Christians) and the reinvigoration of an epideictic language emphasising reconciliation rather than the previously dominant patristic form accentuating confrontation and judgement.²⁶ Over the past fifteen years or so, however, the process of building a more militant Church seems very much in the ascendancy; perhaps as a result of perceived diminished centrality to both Christianity and world politics, not through accommodation with liberal secular states or through adjusting practices (such as priestly celibacy, the exclusion of women from the priesthood or allowing the use of contraception) to make the Church more like mainstream Protestant ones and put it in tune with the actual behaviour of many self-confessed Catholics, but by purification: to make it more definitively Christian in a medieval sense: observant, obedient, and disciplined in the global struggle for souls.²⁷ Of course, there are also reasons internal to the Church for re-emphasising purification and discipline; not least, the scandals over priestly abuse of children in their care in the US and Ireland, the well publicised gap between official Church doctrines and the actual practices of many nominal Catholics, and the rise in political significance of abortion, fertility, sexual identity, and end-of-life issues around the world.²⁸

The recent papal-legitimised revival of the Latin Mass, after previous post-Second Vatican Council efforts at restricting its use and punishing “schismatics” who embraced it, is one sign of the times. Catholic priests will no longer have to receive permission from a bishop to conduct the Mass in Latin, as long as a “stable group of faithful” requests it. The Latin version of the Good Friday Mass still contains a prayer calling for the conversion of the Jews, even though the offending prayer had been dropped from the vernacular versions adopted when the Second Vatican Council overhauled Catholic practices and liturgy in the 1960s. At that time, a group of traditionalists broke away and formed the Society of St. Pius X. Relaxing the restrictions on the Latin Mass seems clearly directed at luring this group back into the fellowship of the Church. Mel Gibson, director of the film perhaps most emblematic of the new Church, *The Passion of the Christ*, and a member of a “traditionalist” Catholic group with its own church in Malibu, California, can once more feel at home in the bosom of Mother Church with its restored Tridentine Mass. Indeed, the schismatics were invited back in February 2009, including one bishop, Richard Williamson, who was an unrepentant denier of the Holocaust.²⁹ Another sign of the times is the open reassertion of the primacy of the Catholic Church within Christianity after the ambiguity of the years following the Second Vatican Council. An official document issued in July 2007 denies the very appellation “church” to many other Christian denominations, except for the Orthodox ones which are said to have apostolic succession and thus enjoy “many elements of sanctification of and of truth,” but even they are said to suffer from the defect or “wound” of not recognising the primacy of the Pope.³⁰

In official declarations, including publications by the Pope himself, “pluralism” and “relativism” are now the avowed enemies. But in reality the main adversaries are other militant missionary religions (from Islam to Pentecostalism and Mormonism) threatening the global scope and role of the Catholic Church as well as the liberalism and secularism that have long been viewed as outside the zone of acceptable politics.³¹ Indicative of his particular discomfort with religious ecumenism, Pope Benedict is more comfortable debating with a European secular intellectual like Jürgen Habermas than with a Moslem Imam or an Orthodox prelate. Much of the media coverage of Pope Benedict’s visit to Brazil in May 2007 reflected official Vatican pronouncements and involved depicting the trip as designed to halt the “exodus” from the Church to Protestant Pentecostalism. The expressed purpose of the journey was to impose a new doctrinal and liturgical discipline on a lower clergy and population increasingly drawn to the Pentecostal style and, if less so recently than thirty years ago, perhaps tempted by the siren song of a Liberation Theology in which the Church stands alongside the poor more than the rich and powerful and to signal a renewed concern for the finer points of Catholic theology in the aftermath of a Papacy, that of John Paul II, which, while conservative in many of its

effects, was based rather more on personal charisma and ending the terrible effects of the Cold War on his beloved Poland than on doctrinal purification per se. But the purifying ideal goes way beyond criticising or lauding this or that belief or practice, as it does equally with Protestant fundamentalism. It involves a radical particularising of the road to spiritual salvation. For example, to Pope Benedict the divinity of Jesus is as much a feature of the first and earliest three gospels as it is of the clearly more mystical fourth, that of John.³² Yet, as much recent biblical scholarship suggests, the mysticism of John and that of the Epistles of Paul is very probably a later addition, grafted onto the basic story of Jesus of Nazareth. But to Benedict there is no scope for agreeing to disagree about any such matters, not simply his preference for a divine Jesus. On this, of course, he is not alone. Most Christian sects have specific beliefs that go well beyond either textual or historical justification.

Dogma thus rules and makes meaningful exchange with other religious views all but impossible. The Pope arguably thus implicitly denies one of the clearest lessons taught in the Christian Gospels themselves about the universal nature of divine revelation and, consequently, the possibility that truth emerges from other cultures and traditions, thus confronting the dishonesty inherent in the notion that truth has been exhaustively disclosed within one's own tradition or discourse.³³ In light of the narrative tropes and storylines emanating from the Vatican, the Catholic Church seems set on a more militant and confrontational path towards both many states and all other religions. Yet, even such a course could be conducted without the threat of excommunication or militant confrontation. Indeed, the beauty of the positions on ecumenism and theological renewal emanating from Vatican II was that they allowed for flexibility in orientation towards outsiders and Church members alike through empowering the episcopate and turning away from that ultramontanist which had only since 1870 turned the Pope into an absolute ruler. Even as some inside the Vatican counsel such a course, particularly the editor of the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, external critics lambaste the newspaper and those it "represents" as "clueless" about the Church's own absolutist views.³⁴ Signs of putative coercive domination come from all directions.

Can Catholic (European) Christendom Be Restored?

The second major geopolitical question I wish to address is the idea, made in writing by Pope Benedict himself, that Western civilisation is in crisis and that only a restoration of a historic Christendom as he understands this can save it. To the Pope the crisis began with the Protestant Reformation. In his essay in the widely publicised book, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam*, written when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, the Pope argues that until the Reformation and the rise of what he always calls

“Germanic Protestantism,” there had been a theology of history based on Christianity’s renewal and transformation of the Roman Empire into the Holy Roman Empire.³⁵ But, and following the Pope’s narrative, the Reformation fused the powers of Church and state and by subordinating spiritual power to political power, as it had already in Byzantium and in the Orthodox tradition, forcefully broke the continuity of European identity by creating nation-states organised around linguistic/sectarian not sacred/Catholic particularities. Only in one sentence does the Pope acknowledge that the Catholic Church did much the same both before and in the aftermath of the Reformation in forging discriminatory alliances with this or that royal dynasty or nascent state. The papacy has had a long history of playing political favourites and, until it lost its territories in the nineteenth century, behaving like any other state. But this acknowledgment of the Church’s long hold on temporal power is merely incidental to the Pope’s invocation of a universal Church idealised as a continental spiritual authority transcending all other political and social cleavages yet also, somehow, responsible for what has become European (Western) Civilisation. In this view from deep in Catholic Bavaria (Pope Benedict’s home region in Germany), only Western Christianity under papal authority institutionalised the crucial doctrine differentiating priestly authority from political power. Hence the role of the Roman Church as uniquely universal and independent of any state and therefore, more specifically, the only fit guardian of Europe’s identity. This explains not only the new hostility to ecumenism but also why the current papacy is so strongly opposed to (Moslem) Turkish membership in the EU. That is about some other European project.

Theologically, notwithstanding the increasingly common ground occupied by both the Catholic Church and American Evangelical Protestants on matters of sexuality and bio-medical intervention, it is clear that the Catholic Church is in this view at rock bottom all about the recognition of the Pope’s right to define what is and what is not “central” to the Church. This is not to say that all policies emanating from the Vatican are simply those of the particular Pope himself, only that the Pope remains symbolically central to the Church in the way that existing monarchs no longer are in most nation-states (except perhaps in Thailand). Of course, many Protestant pastors are mini-popes in their own way; laying down the law about the meaning of this or that bit of Scripture while claiming divinely inspired inerrancy for their interpretations. From this viewpoint, it is the relative absence of recognition of the Pope’s role as *singular* spiritual authority in contemporary Europe that has led to its moral relativism and cultural pluralism. One is clearly reminded here of the reactionary Joseph de Maistre’s (1819) thesis that “the only Christian is a Catholic and that the Catholic is such not because he believes in God but because he obeys the Pope.” Indeed, one contemporary Italian philosopher argues that ultimately it is solely the authority of the Pope that lies behind all of the doctrines and practices of

the Catholic Church given how labile many of them have proven to be and how difficult it is for many of its adherents to actively believe in many of the others.³⁶ It is the body and the voice of a Pope, today as in time immemorial, that lies behind the authority of the Church.³⁷ In fact, as many Church historians insist, this image is in fact at considerable odds with a historically much more pluralistic state of affairs.³⁸

Sociologically, since the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s Europe has become ever more pluralistic religiously and thus ever less likely to be squeezed back into a singular Catholic mold.³⁹ The Second Vatican Council had clearly recognised the impossibility of identifying Christianity, let alone the Catholic Church, with a particular civilisation. This would seem to be even wiser counsel today. Of course, "Europe" is also not confined to those parts in which the Church formerly or presently has a strong presence.⁴⁰ Yet, there is another strand in Catholicism going back to the onset of European industrialisation and urbanisation in the early nineteenth century that sees the Church as the last bastion against modernity and has imagined it on an organic, rural model even as the Church has itself reorganised around modern corporate-bureaucratic principles. Today, we once again seem to have a Pope who operates with an organic model of "fortress Catholicism."⁴¹ If his writings are any guide, Pope Benedict cannot conceive of a successful society that is not uniform in its values and doctrines. Yet, at least since Durkheim and Weber, the idea that a society can thrive because of the *solidarity of interdependence*, based on high levels of specialisation and difference among populations, just as well as because of *solidarity based on sameness* of values, challenges the very sociological ground on which the Pope treads. As the Anglican clergyman Giles Fraser puts it: to idealise an organic Catholic past is a false radicalism because "what gets forgotten in the celebration of faux medieval community is that this was an era of ecclesiastical authoritarianism and murderous religious intolerance, where power and superstition were fused – not least in the person of the Pope."⁴² It is thus totally disingenuous for a Pope to defend Christendom in his writings by associating it with what have arguably become such key tropes of Europe's modern self-image as consent, liberty and democracy, problematic as this association may well be, when his sociological vision of Europe involves abandoning these hard achieved very practices and the values they reflect.

In a more immediately practical vein, as Michel Foucault has pointed out for sexuality after the Middle Ages, but which can be extended to a much wider sphere of everyday concerns in modern Europe (and elsewhere): "The secure bond that held together the moral theology of concupiscence and the obligation of confession (equivalent to the theoretical discourse on sex and its first-person formulation) was, if not broken, at least loosened and diversified: between the objectification of sex in rational discourses, and the movement by which each individual was set to the task

of recounting his own sex, there has occurred, since the eighteenth century, a whole series of tensions, conflicts, efforts at adjustment, and attempts at retranscription." The "dispersion of centers" and "the diversification of forms," as Foucault puts it, in other words, an active pluralism, will not readily yield to the reimposition of some singular norm.⁴³ The Church must cope with a social and political consciousness that is heterogeneous and difficult to police according to the old confessional and disciplinary procedures that currently dominant thinking within the Church would like to reinstitute.

Is There a Global Struggle for Souls?

Third, and finally, practical geopolitics is always about who claims to control or manage whom where. For a Church one long-term goal must be winning over as many people to your way of thinking as possible. In the global struggle for souls, therefore, numbers matter. The Italian journalist, Fabrizio Mastrofini, notes the importance for the Church of the changing geographical focus of the struggle for souls.⁴⁴ Even as the Pope laments the crisis of historic Christendom in Europe, and looks back to a Golden Age to resolve it, the stagnation of the Church's membership in Europe and North America has led to an increased emphasis on recruitment of converts and religious (priests, monks and nuns) in Africa and Asia. This is precisely where the Church comes up against a newly invigorated Islam. This shift in regional emphasis is taking place in a global context where the Church's share of total world population is actually diminishing somewhat while world population continues to grow inexorably.⁴⁵ If in 1978 18% of the world's population was (nominally) Catholic, by 2003 the figure had slipped to 17%. The absolute extent of this decline can be exaggerated. As Rupert Shortt reminds us, "There are almost as many Catholics as there are citizens of China."⁴⁶ Indeed, if population predictions hold up, and they are at the heart of the logic of the struggle for souls, Africa south of the Sahara is likely to become the locus of conflict both with a reinvigorated Islam and with other brands of Christianity. By some estimates, in 2025 there will be as many Christians in sub-Saharan Africa (around 640 million) as in South America. As one Kenyan writer, John Mbiti, has put it: "The centers of the church's universality [are] no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa, and Manila."⁴⁷

Somewhat akin to the idea of a primordial struggle for primacy between states in the modern geopolitical imagination, the struggle for souls between faiths is once more in ascendance after a period when it was certainly less visible around the world.⁴⁸ One strategy is to try to reclaim lost ground in the conquest of souls. This can be seen at work in contemporary Italy, where the Church bureaucracy has adopted a much more open and militant involvement in national politics over the past ten years. As the

“homeland” of the Roman Catholic Church, and thus very much a symbolic keystone in the struggle for souls, the Church has long had a difficult relationship with the Italian state.⁴⁹ From 1870 until 1929 the Church did not recognise the Kingdom of Italy (as it then was). Within the Church, democratic and Fascist sympathies had an uneasy co-existence even after the defeat of the Fascist regime of 1922–1943. In the country at large, tensions between formal and popular Catholicism, in the sense, respectively, of doctrinal discipline and local syncretism, have long co-existed with a militant anti-clericalism which was one of the roots of support for the largest Communist Party in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War down until the 1980s. More recently, the Church in Italy has found itself increasingly embattled socially as well as politically. Its increased involvement in public life is designed to push back against secular reforms initiated by recent governments to give marital rights to homosexuals or unmarried couples and to extend personal control over the end of life and allow medical research on fetal tissues. But some also involve issues such as economic fairness and the treatment of immigrants on which the Church tends to take official stands more like those of the political left than the centre-right whose leading politicians, such as Silvio Berlusconi, have most cleverly cultivated the Church for implicit and practicing Catholics for explicit electoral support.⁵⁰

But renewed militancy also reflects the fact that the Church no longer has the strong implicit representation within national politics that it once had when the Christian Democratic Party was the dominant political force in the country from 1948 until 1992.⁵¹ Since it disappeared in 1993–1994 as a result of corruption scandals and the end of the Cold War politics that divided Italy, the Church has had to learn increasingly to fend for itself in everyday politics. The problem for the Church is that Italy is by no means as homogeneously Catholic as it once was because of increased secularisation and immigration. Indeed, Italy now has one of the world’s lowest birth rates thanks in part to defiance of the Church’s teachings against contraception. Fully one-quarter of young cohabiting couples are unmarried. Even in the traditionally “most Catholic” region of Italy, the Northeast, church attendance once a month is at a low rate of 23% compared to a much higher percentage of 45% as recently as the 1970s. Other churches and religions are also actively recruiting adherents. Immigration to compensate for the overall failure of the native population to reproduce itself will produce an even more heterogeneous religious mix in the future. Reestablishing the social and religious centrality of the Church in Italy, the homeland of the Church, will be no easy matter.⁵²

An alternative approach to underwriting the command and control of the Church is to move away from historic heartlands and expand in places with fewer current adherents. Unfortunately for this strategy, many states now put limits on evangelism and the mission frontier is increasingly

crowded by missionaries from an ever-increasing range of sects and denominations. The case of China, where the Vatican has turned from shunning the state-sponsored substitute church established in the 1950s to actively encouraging rapprochement with it, is a sign of the desire to expand the Church's presence even in the most unpropitious of circumstances. In December 2007, for the first time during one of his visits to Italy, the Tibetan Dalai Lama, anathema to the Chinese colonists of Tibet, was not welcomed at the Vatican. Pope Benedict's push to normalise relations with China thus trumped the continuation or deepening of inter-religious dialogue that, on this front at least, reached its apogee during the papacy of John Paul II.

The general dilemma facing the opening of new mission fields is two-fold under contemporary conditions. First, unlike in the past when mission fields were readily territorialised by following on behind this or that imperial power, today the mission field is a relatively open surface. If all religions bear the signs of their cultural origins, they also make claims about the meaning and purpose of life that are more universal than particular. So they all have possible global appeal. Nowadays, though, "they" are often down the street rather than across the world. In other words, the Church faces a buyer's market everywhere it goes.⁵³ Second, and as a response to this, increased evangelism, therefore, will require an infusion of personnel and funds that currently seems beyond the capacity of the Church to provide. Recall the crisis of clerical "vocations" that continues to afflict the (formally) celibate male clergy of the Church. The massive exodus of "liberal" priests and nuns in the 1970s and 1980s in large parts of the Western world and in Latin America has not been adequately compensated for by recruitment elsewhere.⁵⁴ Payouts and payoffs from lawsuits in the numerous scandals over sexual abuse by priests have almost bankrupted many previously wealthy dioceses in the United States, Ireland, and elsewhere. More structurally, notwithstanding the popular image of the Church as a wealthy institution, its actual monetary liquidity, absent the sale of its properties, is probably not commensurate with the tasks at hand. In this context, some currently embattled liberal Catholic theologians are calling for a reinvigoration of "inter-faith dialogue and engagement, together with renewed reflection on the life of virtue in a globalized world and a developed critique of cultural ideologies which would promote short- (e.g. excessive nationalism) and long- (e.g. neo-liberalism) term [spiritual] decline. The pre-eminent religious challenge is whether world religions can become mediators of the healing vector of divine grace or become instruments of bias and decline."⁵⁵

The preferred current alternative of simply rhetorically confronting and potentially coercing erroneous religious adversaries in Europe and elsewhere in both the global struggle for souls and in righting the civilisational decline of Europe thus seems like a gospel of despair. If the history of the Catholic Church's deployment of its power is any guide, Popes would

seemingly have nothing to learn from Stalin. Surely the trend towards a medieval Church redux is something about which we all should be concerned, not least because states and other agencies will undoubtedly find themselves recruited into one side or another in new “religious wars,” both rhetorical and actual. *Cuius regio, eius religio* (to whose is the region, his is the religion), the maxim of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, this time globally rather than continentally, and with considerable scope for a *modus vivendi* in multi-religious milieux such as that urged by the Second Vatican Council, once again seems like wise counsel.

HOW TO MATCH CHURCH GEOPOLITICS TO PAST STRATEGY AND THE EMERGING WORLD ORDER

The current emphases of the Catholic Church on the domineering role of the Pope, the Eurocentric definition of Christendom, and the global struggle for souls say something more generally about the strategic content of geopolitics whoever is practicing it, particularly the relative significance given to coercion versus consent. From a different vantage point, however, contemporary processes of globalisation also represent something of a challenge to the territorialised-hierarchical conception of the world that the Catholic Church has always inhabited, if somewhat uncomfortably, in the modernist world of states, as the contemporary world drifts away from a geometry of fixed borders and hierarchical sovereignties towards one in which “being together [in the Church] is not reabsorbed into the Truth but simply coincides with the sense of the local, the particular, that is in each ‘node’ of a ‘network,’ without returning to either a [rational individual subject] or to a theological Other.”⁵⁶In other words, the centre no longer holds in a world of fragmenting religious beliefs and preferences even when some of these still reflect plausible claims about what is universal and Catholic.

In articulating and putting into practice a largely coercive vision of its relations with other churches and states, in Pope Benedict’s evident nostalgia for an organic-fortress view of a Catholic Europe, and in a messianic revival of a numerical conception of the future of the Church, the contemporary Catholic Church has adopted a much more clearly Hobbesian-Stalinist model of its future place in the material world than that which has tended to characterise it previously, particularly after Vatican II but also more generally in the past. In looking backward at presumed past achievements, therefore, current Catholic geopolitics invests in a revitalised and centralised Leviathan when, to use Stephen Toulmin’s Swiftian language about the “far side of modernity,” Lilliputian initiatives based on multiple engagements and decentralised activities are increasingly the order of the day and, one might add, probably more in tune with the original message of the Christian Gospels before the imperial institutionalisation of the early, pre-Roman

Church, and precisely what Stalin missed about much of the history of the Church in his infamous commentary on the Vatican.⁵⁷ Perhaps an Italian-born Pope who had read his Machiavelli and Gramsci or one who had a more pluralistic conception of the Church's past engagement with the world as whole would not have made this mistake? Notwithstanding the particularities of the present engagement of the Church with the world, it is evident that the Church does indeed practice geopolitics and its various features can cast considerable light on contemporary global geopolitics tout court.

NOTES

1. *Deus Vult* or "God wills it" was the chant of the First Crusade in 1095. I use it here to represent both the renewed militancy of the Catholic Church under Pope Benedict XVI and the tight historic association often assumed between the geopolitical desires of the papacy as the central institution of the Church and God's will. The paper began life as a presentation at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting in San Francisco, April 2007.

2. J. L. Stanley and C. Stanley (eds.), *From Georges Sorel: Essays in Socialism and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press 1976) p. 73.

3. Remark in a radio broadcast (quoted in Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Quest of Michel de Certeau', *New York Review of Books*, 15 May 2008, p. 58).

4. Carlo Galli, *Spazi politici. L'età moderna e l'età globale* (Bologna: Il Mulino 2001) p. 23.

5. As James Carroll argues in his *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews – A History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin 2001), notwithstanding the fact that Jesus was himself a Jew, Christian anti-Semitism has its roots in the Christian message that the Jews had not only rejected Jesus but were directly responsible for his death. Of course, one can also argue compellingly that, according to the Christian Gospels, Jesus's death was preordained and thus the identity of whoever killed him is entirely beside the point. Constantine is important, according to Carroll, in that following on from him the urge to homogenise the Empire (and later Europe) following the collapse of Roman paganism and the rise of Christianity could not include equality for Jews, a Chosen People now on the losing side of history. From this perspective, portraying Jews as Christ killers is perhaps one of the original sins of Christianity.

6. The Anglican theologian Andrew Shanks makes a strong case that any church should, however, refrain from all types of manipulation in the pursuit of an "honest" rather than a "correct" faith merely concerned with its own perpetuation or fidelity to "tradition." To do otherwise is essentially to abandon the core purpose on which the church was founded (Andrew Shanks, *Faith in Honesty: The Essential Nature of Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2006)).

7. Anthony Kenny, 'Follies of Roman Catholicism: How the Catholic Church failed to Save Itself from the Reformation', *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 March 2009. This is a review of Nicolas of Cusa, *Writings on Church and Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2008) and Desiderius Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly and Pope Julius Barred from Heaven* (London: Oneworld Classics 2008).

8. John Agnew, *Hegemony: The New Shape of Global Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2005). For a brilliant discussion of the analytic uses of Gramsci's writings in relation to contemporary global geopolitics see Adam David Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Economy* (London: Pluto Press 2007). My understanding of Gramsci's political theory and its relevance to the matter at hand owes much to Nadia Urbinati, 'From the Periphery of Modernity: Antonio Gramsci's Theory of Subordination and Hegemony', *Political Theory* 26 (1998) pp. 370–391. I am not suggesting that the Church was the sole source of interest on Gramsci's part in Italian civil society; far from it. But he concerned himself with the Church because it was one of the very institutions that mandated a different kind of popular politics in Italy from what had transpired, for example, in Russia.

9. Perhaps the best comprehensive survey of Pentecostalism as the most dynamic geopolitical face of contemporary Christianity is found in D. E. Miller and T. Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2007).

10. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1990) p. 197.

11. Pope Gregory XVI, 15 Aug. 1832: *Mirari Vos* – ‘On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism.’ “Indifferentism” is the belief, in the Pope’s words, “that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained.”

12. See, for example, the special issue of *Geopolitics* 11/2 (2006) on “Religion and Geopolitics.”

13. See Peter J. Katzenstein and Timothy A. Byrnes, ‘Transnational Religion in an Expanding Europe’, *Perspectives on Politics* 4/4 (2006) pp. 679–694. Inter alia, they note that most of the founding fathers of what has become the EU were Christian Democratic and anti-Fascist politicians with a deep personal loyalty to the Catholic Church.

14. Thomas Lynch, ‘Confessions of the Self: Foucault and Augustine’, *Telos* 146 (2009) pp. 124–139.

15. Alexandre F. de Sà, ‘The Event of Order in Carl Schmitt’s Thought and the Weight of Circumstances’, *Telos* 147 (2009) p. 18. Schmitt’s argument about the Church as the model for the state dates from 1917. Many of his writings on the Church are collected and translated into English in Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press 1996).

16. Raphael Gross, *Carl Schmitt and the Jews: The “Jewish Question,” the Holocaust, and German Legal Theory* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press 2007) p. 96. For an interesting confrontation of Schmitt’s political theology with rational justification (which *pace* some Schmitt aficionados is hardly the same as their hated liberalism) see Victoria Kahn, ‘Political Theology and Reason of State in *Samson Agonistes*’, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 95 (1996) pp. 1065–1097. Schmitt’s mythologising of “the state of exception” is taken as being akin to that of Sorel on the general strike by Denis Trierweiler, ‘Georges Sorel et Carl Schmitt: d’une théorie politique du mythe à l’autre’, in Yves Charles Zarka (ed.), *Carl Schmitt ou le mythe du politique* (Paris: PUF 2009) and Hobbes is defended against Schmitt by Yves Charles Zarka, ‘Le mythe contre la raison: Carl Schmitt ou la triple trahison de Hobbes’, in Yves Charles Zarka (ed.), *Carl Schmitt ou le mythe du politique* (Paris: PUF 2009).

17. Agostino Giovagnoli, *Storia e globalizzazione* (Rome/Bari: Laterza 2003). Indeed, the recurring reference to St. Augustine and other avatars of Catholic Christianity in a self-defined radical work such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2000) favourable to the onset of globalisation and the revolt of the “multitude” (suitably biblical language) it augurs makes the point, if somewhat uncomfortably for more secular leftists.

18. Oliver O’Donovan, ‘Christianity and Territorial Right’, in Allen Buchanan and Margaret Moore (eds.), *States, Nations, and Borders: The Ethics of Making Boundaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003) p. 131.

19. Anthony Pagden, ‘The Christian Tradition’, in Allen Buchanan and Margaret Moore (eds.), *States, Nations, and Borders: The Ethics of Making Boundaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003) p. 105.

20. The US established full diplomatic relations with the Vatican only in January 1984. Massimo Franco (in *Parallel Empires: The Vatican and the United States – Two Centuries of Alliance and Conflict* (New York: Doubleday 2009)) suggests that this had much to do with the revived anti-Communism of the period under the presidency of Ronald Reagan and the papacy of John Paul II. The increasingly potent popular front between the Church and American Protestant fundamentalists in the US “culture wars” (largely in terms of the so-called Right-to-Life movement) beginning in the late 1970s may also have had something to do with it.

21. A case in point in 2009 has been the dispute over how much to criticise the private life of Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, with the papacy being much more reticent than the Italian Bishops in both criticising Berlusconi and in responding to his provocations, such as the counterattack by his “family” newspaper, *Il Giornale*, against the editor of the newspaper of the Italian Bishops, *L’Avenire*, Dino Bofo (see, e.g., Gian Guido Vecchi, ‘Il travaglio e le tensioni della Chiesa’, *Corriere della Sera*, 6 Sep. 2009).

22. ‘God’s Ambassadors’, *Economist*, 19 July 2007, pp. 58–60.

23. That this position has deepened down the years into a major critique of neo-liberal capitalism is shown by the first encyclical issued by Benedict XVI in July 2009, entitled *Caritas in veritate*, in which Catholic social doctrine is contrasted favourably with the excesses and sinfulness of contemporary world capitalism (see, e.g., C. Dougherty, ‘Catholicism as an Antidote to Turbo-Capitalism’, *New York Times*, 12 July 2009).

24. Michel Foucher, *Fragments d’Europe. Atlas de l’Europe médiane et orientale* (Paris: Fayard 1993) p. 60, in a map of the trips made in Europe by Pope John Paul II between 1979 and 1991 shows how much the Pope concentrated his energies before 1986 behind “the Iron Curtain” but specifically in the traditionally Catholic parts of Central Europe. Benedict XVI has had a much less successful start to

his pontificate as far as diplomatic travel is concerned (*Economist*, 'A Chapter of Accidents', 16 May 2009). The conventional wisdom is that he lacks the star power and ability to connect with ordinary people of his predecessor.

25. Eric Fassin, 'The Geopolitics of Vatican Theology', *Public Culture* 52 (2007) pp. 233–237.

26. John W. O'Malley, 'Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?', *Theological Studies* 67/1 (2006) pp. 3–33. This article is reprinted in a valuable collection surveying the significance of Vatican II for the recent history and geopolitics of the Church (David G. Schultenover (ed.), *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen* (New York: Continuum 2008)) and is a brief prospectus for the magisterial account by O'Malley in *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2008) which places this Vatican Council in the history of previous Church councils and outlines its consequences for the contemporary Church.

27. Jane Kramer, 'The Pope and Islam', *The New Yorker*, 2 April 2007.

28. For example, R. Dennehy, 'Liberal Democracy as a Culture of Death: Why John Paul II Was Right', *Telos* 134 (2006) pp. 31–44; P. Steinfels, 'Roman Catholics' War Over Abortion', *New York Times*, 9 May 2009, p. A15; G. D'Avanzo, 'Zagrebelsky: Se il potere nichilista si allea con la Chiesa del dogma. Parla l'ex presidente della Consulta 'Dialogo sull'etica è impossibile con lo scontro tra dogmi', *La Repubblica*, 11 Feb. 2009; *Corriere della Sera*, 'La Ue replica al Papa sui preservativi: 'Sono essenziali nella lotta all'Aids'', 9 March 2009; S. Pogatchnik, 'Catholic Church Shamed by Irish Abuse Report', *Associated Press*, 20 May 2009; J. Banville, 'A Century of Looking the Other Way', *New York Times*, 23 May 2009, A17.

29. For example, for two very different perspectives, M. S. Winters, 'The Crowded Catholic Cafeteria. Pope Benedict XVI Tries to Heal the Schism with Catholics who Deny the Second Vatican Council', *Slate*, 30 Jan. 2009; G. Dinmore, 'God's Mauled Rottweiler', *Financial Times*, Feb. 7/8 2009.

30. This statement draws explicitly from a document written by Benedict when, as Cardinal Ratzinger, he was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2000. That document, *Dominus Iesus*, riled Protestant and many other denominations at the time because it said they did not have the "means of salvation." In "clarifications" issued along with the 2007 statement, Benedict's reason for issuing it was said to be that many theological interpretations of the Second Vatican Council had been "erroneous or ambiguous" thus prompting confusion and doubt about the one true Church. This language about clarifying the "ambiguity" of the Second Vatican Council was used in many news reports about the papal statement on 11 July 2007.

31. For a fascinating look inside recently dominant "Vatican thinking" on this score, see the fascinating article by the Catholic theologian Vito Mancuso, 'Cosa vuol dire la salvezza al di fuori della Chiesa', *La Repubblica*, 28 April 2009, pp. 1, 43.

32. Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Doubleday 2007).

33. Andrew Shanks, *Faith in Honesty* (note 6) p. 2.

34. George Neumayr, 'L'Osservatore Romano and the Illuminati', *The American Spectator*, 8 May 2009. On the editor and the travails he faces, see John Hooper, 'Behind the Scenes at the Pope's Newspaper', *Guardian*, 20 July 2009.

35. J. Ratzinger and M. Pera, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam* (New York: Basic Books 2006).

36. Maurizio Ferraris, *Babbo Natale, Gesù Adulto. In cosa crede chi crede?* (Milan: Bompiani 2006).

37. Problems arise, therefore, when a Pope dies and a new one has to be selected. As the metaphorical incarnation of the Church, the new Pope then becomes the literal embodiment of the Church. This paradox is explored fascinatingly in Agostino Paravicini-Bagliani, *The Pope's Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2000). Arguably, when transferred to temporal kingship it is the historical root of most Western notions of state sovereignty as we know them today (most generally, see John Agnew, *Globalization and Sovereignty* (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield 2009) Chapter 2, and more particularly, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1981)).

38. See, for example, John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?* (note 26) and, most importantly, Ian Linden, *Global Catholicism: Diversity and Change since Vatican II* (New York: Columbia University Press 2009).

39. For some of the flavour of scholarly discussion about the idea of Europe, see, e.g., Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002).

40. Confusion over what is meant precisely by "Europe" is one of the political strengths of the term itself. People can invest their own meaning in it. The Christendom motif is certainly powerful in the discourse over European unification going back to the founders of what has become the European

Union in the 1940s and 1950s. For those with somewhat longer memories, however, such thinking can also be redolent of the Catholic authoritarianism that afflicted numerous European countries, from Spain and Ireland to Poland by way of Austria, in the 1920s and 1930s (Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin 1998) pp. 26–31).

41. A peculiar feature of the career of Pope Benedict is that he was once a severe critic of papal highhandedness and closely associated himself with the reformers at Vatican II. But he seems to have worried that the Church had compromised itself too much with secular society and as a university-based theologian, following the student sit-ins of 1968, he began to argue for increased “unity” and against ecumenism. Yet he has also shunned the cult of personality of his predecessor and has so far avoided witch hunts against putative enemies. Rupert Shortt (‘Resurgent Rome’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 April 2009) sees Benedict as a “caretaker Pope who put off the day of reckoning for the papacy as currently constituted.”

42. Giles Fraser, *Christianity with Attitude* (Norwich: Canterbury Press 2007) p. 138.

43. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage 1980) pp. 33–34.

44. Fabrizio Mastrofini, *Geopolitica della Chiesa cattolica* (Rome: Laterza 2006)

45. Ian Linden (note 38).

46. Rupert Shortt (note 41).

47. In Martin Walker, ‘The World's New Numbers’, *The Wilson Quarterly* 33 (Spring 2009) p. 29.

48. The struggle for primacy among states and empires as a fundamental feature of the modern geopolitical imagination is raised in John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge 2003) Chapter 5.

49. Francesco Traniello, *Religione cattolica e Stato nazionale. Dal Risorgimento al secondo dopoguerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino 2007).

50. Berlusconi's very public controversial private life has only slowly raised the ire of the Catholic hierarchy. Largely blind and deaf to his many conflicts of interest as a businessman-politician, it has only been with publicity about his sexual peccadilloes in the summer of 2009 that the Church has finally begun to distance itself from him and his political allies (e.g., John Follain, ‘Sex Tapes Force Sober Summer on Berlusconi’, *London Sunday Times*, 26 July 2009). The right-wing Northern League, allied with Berlusconi in the current Italian government, has taken to attacking the Church over its defence of immigrants' rights and Church leaders, although not the Pope, have fired back (Alberto Custadero, ‘Sicurezza, la Lega attacca la Chiesa. La Cei: ‘Non basta l'ordine pubblico’’, *La Repubblica*, 4 July 2009, p. 6). The issues and personalities of the period 2006–2008 in Italian politics are brilliantly captured in the editorials of Giovanni Sartori, *Il Sultano* (Rome/Bari: Laterza 2009). Notwithstanding all of the controversy, opinion surveys in September 2009 suggest that Berlusconi has kept the support of the vast majority of those practicing Catholics who had voiced support for him before the scandals broke: around 50% (Renato Mannheimer, ‘Caso Boffo, il premier ‘resiste’: popolarità al 50% tra i credenti’, *Corriere della Sera*, 6 Sep. 2009).

51. The Italian Church hierarchy was never very comfortable with the Christian Democrats as a “Catholic party”, not least because its plurality of the vote meant it had to find coalition partners in government and the party was factionalised and autonomous of anything other than subtle clerical influence. It was the “challenge from the Communist Party,” to quote Mark Donovan (in an article with the overstated title ‘The Italian State: No Longer Catholic, No Longer Christian’, *West European Politics* 26 (2003) p. 95) that led the Church to support the party.

52. Ilvo Diamanti and Luigi Ceccarini, ‘Catholics and Politics After the Christian Democrats: The Influential Minority’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 12/1 (2007) pp. 37–59; Franco Garelli, ‘The Public Relevance of the Church and Catholicism in Italy’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 12/1 (2007) pp. 8–36.

53. It cannot have gone without notice in the Vatican that in 2008 the government of historically “Catholic” Chile declared 31 October a public holiday in honour of the “evangelical and Protestant churches.” This marks the date in 1517 when Martin Luther pinned his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, thus unintentionally starting the Protestant Reformation. Hitherto, only Slovenia and some German *lander* took this as a holiday (‘Hola, Luther’, *Economist*, 8 Nov. 2008, p. 52).

54. Ian Linden (note 38).

55. Neil Ormerod, ‘Theology, History and Globalization’. *Gregorianum* 88/1 (2007) p. 47.

56. Carlo Galli, *Spazi politici* (note 4) p. 164.

57. On Leviathan (Hobbes) versus Lilliput (Swift) as involving spatially distinctive strategies of power, see the remarkably insightful discussion in Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis* (note 10) pp. 207–208 where he notes, inter alia, that it can be “more adaptive to be disarticulated, and so ready to react to local problems by local changes” and “when antinuclear demonstrators march with candles through the streets of Leipzig, when prisoners of conscience bring General Pinochet’s torturers into public scorn, when women’s organizations speak for their fellow women in fundamentalist states, they question the nightmare side of the Modern inheritance. . . . We have seen power and force run up against their limits. In the third phase of Modernity, the name of the game will be *influence*, not *force*; and, in playing on that field, the Lilliputians hold certain advantages” (emphasis in original).