

The Globalization of Christian Democracy
Religious Entanglements in the Making of Modern Politics
Forlenza, Rosario; Thomassen, Bjørn

Published in:
Religions

DOI:
[10.3390/rel13070659](https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13070659)

Publication date:
2022

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Forlenza, R., & Thomassen, B. (2022). The Globalization of Christian Democracy: Religious Entanglements in the Making of Modern Politics. *Religions*, 13(7), [659]. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13070659>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact rucforsk@kb.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Article

The Globalization of Christian Democracy: Religious Entanglements in the Making of Modern Politics

Rosario Forlenza ^{1,*} and Bjørn Thomassen ²¹ Department of Political Sciences, Luiss University, 00197 Rome, Italy² Department of Social Sciences and Business, University of Roskilde, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark; bthomas@ruc.dk

* Correspondence: rforlenza@luiss.it

Abstract: This article throws light on a crucial, yet overlooked, aspect of global entanglements that significantly came to shape modern politics: the global spread of Catholic ideas that, from the late nineteenth century and through the twentieth century, became translated into various political platforms and, eventually, into Christian Democratic parties. The article will cover three broad periods where such global entanglements took shape: the mid-nineteenth century up until World War I, the interwar period, and the aftermath of World War II. We primarily address developments across the Atlantic in Europe and Latin America, while briefly touching upon Asian developments. The article aims to show the role of non-secular ideologies in political globalization processes and the co-existence of centric and multi-polar tendencies in such processes.

Keywords: political history; religion; globalization; Christian Democracy; Catholicism; political modernity; Europe; Latin America



Citation: Forlenza, Rosario, and Bjørn Thomassen. 2022. The Globalization of Christian Democracy: Religious Entanglements in the Making of Modern Politics. *Religions* 13: 659. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13070659>

Academic Editor: Paul Morris

Received: 15 June 2022

Accepted: 14 July 2022

Published: 16 July 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

We live in a world marked by global connections. Such connections might not be wholly new, but, at least according to quite a few scholars within the wider field of globalization, they deepened and intensified after the end of the Cold War. The very question of historicity has been paramount in global debates for some time now: how far back can we trace global processes? What are the drivers of such processes? In this article, we will not provide any final answer to these questions. We rather wish to zoom in on one particular prism through which they can be meaningfully discussed, namely the global spread of ideas that eventually led to the establishment of Christian Democratic parties in different parts of the world during the twentieth century—an evident, but so far overlooked, case of global transnational processes that, to a significant degree, has shaped political modernity.

The aim of this article is to take a first step in a wider attempt to cover this lacuna. Our primary focus is not on the Catholic Church as an institution, but on the ways in which political thinkers and actors elaborated a political vision broadly inspired by Catholic social philosophy that became institutionalized as Christian Democratic parties after World War II. Quite often, this happened in distance to, or even in opposition to, the Vatican and the national church hierarchies. The global spread of Christian democratic ideas was not planned by anyone; yet it happened, and in ways that still need to be accounted for.

The argument will proceed by sketching global entanglements of Catholic ideas and practices and their encounters with modern political ideas within the three main periods. We start by discussing how Catholic thinkers—within and beyond the Church—came to terms with political modernity during the nineteenth century. We then look at the decisive developments that took place in the interwar period, where Catholics in different parts of the world were confronted with authoritarian regimes. The fermenting of ideas that took place in the interwar period would come to fruition in the postwar period, resulting in the amazingly successful establishment of Christian democratic political parties—which will be the focus of the third section of the article.¹

The three periods singled out for attention roughly saw the transformation from three major ‘types’ of Catholic positioning towards the modern project that we have discussed elsewhere (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, pp. 57–90, 181–86). From the nineteenth century, the Church, and Catholicism writ large, went through a process of transformation that developed from radical *rejection* of modernity to *hesitant embracement* and, finally, *critical co-articulation* of the modern project. In this article, we wish to indicate the global and, more strictly speaking, political dimensions of this development.²

Within each of the three periods, we exclusively discuss developments in those countries where Christian Democracy eventually established as a hegemonic, or at least significant, political party (hence, we consciously omit any discussion of, for example, North American or Scandinavian developments). With that delimitation in mind, we primarily address political developments and entanglements across the Atlantic in Europe and Latin America, while briefly touching upon Asian developments. It goes without saying that our discussion cannot be exhaustive, even for those countries or parts of the world.

1. Catholicism on the Edge of Modernity: The Nineteenth Century

1.1. Against Political Modernity

With hindsight, the elaboration of a modern political vision based on Catholic ideas and values was not a given, far from it. After the French Revolution, and for the entire nineteenth century, the Catholic Church continuously condemned political modernity as a product of evils and rejected the idea that the popes, as Pius IX wrote in 1864 *Syllabus Errorum*, attached to the encyclical *Quanta Cura*, ‘would have to learn to accept progress, liberalism and modern civilization’.³ Thus the Church took the side of the ‘restauration’ at the Congress of Wien (1815) in the aftermath of revolution and of the Napoleonic era, and constantly positioned itself against the democratic revolutions that swept Europe and Latin America in subsequent decades.

However, from the middle of the century, and in the context of the process of nation-state formation in Europe and in Latin America, Catholic stances vis-à-vis political modernity started to change at the local and national levels. Everywhere, liberal political elites attempted to reduce the influence of the Church in society, abolishing its rights and privileges—most notably in Italy, where the process of national Unification culminated in 1870 with the dissolution of the temporal power of the popes. Thus, Catholics entered secular politics to defend their interests and those of the Church, creating a series of organizations, such as peasant leagues, youth and recreational associations, banking institutions, unions, and, eventually, political parties.

The result of these activities was a cultural and political war between the Vatican and the states, and between Catholics and their opponents,⁴ which eventually turned Catholicism into a political identity (Kalivas 1996, pp. 171–72). Arguably, the most significant development took place in Germany, where Catholics were confronted with Otto von Bismarck’s political-cultural campaign against the Church, the *Kulturkampf*. Ironically, the *Kulturkampf* triggered the birth of the Center Party (*Zentrum*) in 1870–1871. The party was in the hands of professionals and lay politicians. The clergy detained absolute authority over religious and theological matters, but Catholic politicians could now make independent political moves. This diverted from the secularization that Bismarck and the liberal elites had envisaged (Anderson 1986; Geoss 2004). One of the founders of the party was the Mainz bishop, Wilhelm von Ketteler. Von Ketteler responded to the social and political turmoil surrounding 1848 with a series of six sermons, the *Advent Sermons* that can be seen as an early articulation of a ‘modern Catholic social thought’; indeed, a sort of ‘manifesto’ delivered within a year of Karl Marx’s and Friedrich Engels’ Communist Manifesto (O’Malley 2008; Chappel 2012, pp. 7–14; Husslein 1920). Von Ketteler was a reformist, not a revolutionary. His political ideal was, first and foremost, based on a decentralized state and intermediate bodies and institutions, not simply the state and the individual. Using an anachronistic term, it was a deeply ‘personalist’ worldview, which consciously sought to articulate an alternative to both liberalism and socialism, individualism, and

collectivism—a ‘third way’ of thinking and doing politics. Von Ketteler defended the dignity and rights of workers, but he likewise took distance from the communist aim to prohibit any kind of private property.

From the point of view of the Vatican, however, an independent and national-based Catholic party or movement was quite a problem, in Germany as elsewhere. Electoral outcomes and party platforms could not be easily imposed from Rome. Thus, the Vatican disengaged from Catholic politics on the ground and its changing fortunes, continuing to deal directly with the established authorities. The official model that Catholics should follow, in principle, was the *non expedit*—the formula ‘né eletti, né elettori’, meaning ‘no representatives, nor voters’, which, in a country like Italy, forced Catholics to stay out of politics, at least at the national level.

1.2. Social Catholicism and *Rerum Novarum* as a Response to Modernity

The development of a social and political Catholicism in Germany would soon inspire developments elsewhere. With Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903), the defensive position of the Vatican started to undergo a slow change from within the Church. Leo encouraged French Catholics to participate in the political life of the Third Republic, which raised concerns among more radical Catholic monarchists; recognized Germany’s monarchy; and even tried to reach a compromise with Bismarck in terms of diplomacy and appointments of clergy, while withdrawing Pius IX’s explicit support for the *Zentrum* (Anderson 2000, pp. 132, 140; Sedgwick 1965; Kalivas 1996, pp. 150–52). He also committed to smooth the thorny relations with Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and, most notably, Argentina—which re-established contacts with Rome after more than a decade and officially recognized the Vatican’s ambassador in 1900 (Andes 2014, pp. 11–12). Leo was less successful in Italy (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, p. 64). He never expected the return of the papal territories from the Kingdom of Italy. However, in the hope of securing a sovereign Vatican State, freed from the intrusion of Italy’s government, he did not cancel the ban that prevented Catholics from participating in national elections. As his predecessors and successors, Leo did not encourage the formation of Catholic political parties, preferring diplomatic relations with the nation states. Any form of government was acceptable, he believed, provided that such a government would recognize the rights and the properties of the Church, the freedom of education, and the ‘Catholicity’ of the State—an evident move to fight both secular and Protestant influences, in Europe as well as in Latin America.

With his ‘social’ encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Catholics everywhere were urged to unite and engage with in all sectors of society and civic life, opposing the liberal and anti-clerical policies of governments and responding to the challenge of socialism (Furlong and Curtis 1994; Williams and Houck 1993). The result of this call for a Catholic social action was the emergence of a full-fledged Catholic sub-culture, similar to the socialist political culture that was spreading across the globe. Catholic initiatives flourished in Europe and Latin America: Credit unions or *casse rurali* (banks organized as co-operatives that lent money to peasants) in Italy and Germany; trade unions in (Poland) and in Mexico; literary circles and cultural and charitable associations in Belgium, Switzerland, and Chile; transnational youth movements everywhere. Catholics also founded newspapers and bulletins, amplified papal documents, mounted public campaigns, created study groups, and organized conferences on social issues or (in Latin America) on problems such as indigenous integration.

Two important aspects need to be stressed here. Firstly, Catholic social activism was already alive before the *Rerum Novarum*, both in Europe and Latin America. Thus, the encyclical both sanctioned and gave systematic and ideological coherence to hitherto loose initiatives, endorsing and further spurring Catholic social and political activism (Misner 1991; Lynch 1984). Indeed, much of the content of *Rerum Novarum* can be traced back to the social and political Catholicism developed by von Ketteler and other Catholic thinkers in Germany from the 1830s onwards.

Secondly, Catholics in Latin America were not passive recipients of practices and ideas invented in Europe. For example, already in the 1880s, Mexican Catholics began to reflect

on the need for Mexico to deal with its own specific socio-economic and cultural issues associated with the authoritarian government of Porfirio Diaz (Andes 2014, pp. 25–26; Meyer 1992; Recalde 1985). The papal policy, while setting boundaries around acceptable forms of Catholic activism, remained flexible enough to allow local, regional, and national differences. This was all the more relevant because the encyclical was issued at a time of crucial historical processes: urbanization, industrialization, and migration across continents. Importantly, the overlapping of these processes with local particularities triggered a global wave of Catholic social activism in Latin America that allowed local Catholics to interact in new ways with the Vatican and its representatives (Edward 2016).

Despite the Vatican's reiterated skepticism on Catholic politics, the social activism of Catholics inevitably spilled over into the political sphere. 'To restore all things in Christ', as Pius X's wrote in his 1903 encyclical *E Supremi*, resonated within Catholic circles around the world as an invitation to engage with party politics, to transform Catholic social action into *realpolitik*. Sure, Leo XIII, in his 1901 encyclical *Graves de Communi Re*, had admonished that the word Christian Democracy 'must be employed without political significance', meaning nothing else than a 'beneficent Christian action on behalf of people'. Yet, the somewhat contradictory call to Catholic social action, while dissuading the creation of proper confessional political parties, generated a bustling profusion of enterprises and activities completely beyond the control of the Vatican. For many lay Catholics, the 'political significance' was, indeed, all that mattered.

1.3. The Question of the Nation: For God and for the Fatherland

Political Catholicism was never a well-defined kind of ideology, nor will it ever be. However, a crucial aspect has to do with the quintessential terms of 'people' and 'nation' and how to interpret these in a Catholic fashion. Between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Catholics around the world became increasingly aware of the need to elaborate an independent stance toward the issue of the nation (for the Italian case see Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, pp. 70–71; other cases are outlined below in this section). This was an absolutely crucial development for the articulation of Catholic political stances. The Church had by then set aside its rejection of the myth of the nation born of the French Revolution, which had considered it the expression of a new principle of people's sovereignty against monarchic sovereign of Divine origin. The Church, the Jesuits of the influential *La Civiltà Cattolica*, and increasingly large groups of Catholics were now committed to building a Catholic myth of the nation that stressed the religious factor in forming the national identity. According to the Jesuit Agostino Gemelli (the founder of the *Università Cattolica* in Italy in 1921), nations were 'wished by the God-Providence'. Consequently, 'the source of love' of the nation is God himself, as 'one country is the instrument of power, goodness and Divine providence, [and therefore] love of the Fatherland is included, like the least in the most and the detail in the general, in the cult that is God's right' (Gemelli 1918, pp. 60–61).

A powerful ideological link between faith and fatherland emerged, most notably, in Poland. Polish Catholic rhetoric was shaped by the needs of its adherents to make Catholicism modern. The overarching theme of such a rhetoric was the encroachment of nation and nationalism—quintessential products of modernity—into Catholic practice and thought. The ultimate and disturbing manifestation of such an encroachment was the emergence of a worldview that blamed Masons, Jews, and then Bolsheviks for the perceived challenges of modernity to faith and family (Porter-Szucs 2011, pp. 3–15).

Likewise, in keeping with the nationalist fervor that swept Mexico before the 1910 Revolution and in opposition to the Porfirian authoritarian regime, Mexican Catholics increasingly linked religion and nation, foregrounding an alternative vision of Mexican nationalism in which Catholicism was an essential aspect of national identity (Martinez 2014, p. 200). The *Operarios Gaudalupanos*, a Catholic association created in 1909, worked hard to promote within Mexican Catholics the firm conviction of 'the providential vocation of the Mexican

nation to unite with the Latin America nations to thwart the absorbing ambition of the Northern Anglo-Saxon nations' (Ceballos Ramirez 2005, p. 65).

In both the Polish and Mexican cases, the Church was a site for the enactment of ethnicity. At key moments in history (Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* for the former, or the revolution for the latter), defending the Church and defending the nation seemed synonymous. Thus, Polish and Mexican national consciousness became strongly tied to the Catholic religious identity. In the case of Poland, the nation was incorporated into Catholicism as a device to define the nation in opposition to external (Orthodox Russians and then atheist Soviets, Protestant Prussia, the Habsburg Empire), as well as internal (Jews, Masons, and Protestant and Orthodox Poles), enemies. Similarly, in Mexico, the definition of the nation in Catholic terms functioned as a device to the external enemy (the US and Anglo-Saxon Protestantism) and competed with the internal enemy (other political-cultural forces struggling at the time of the Revolution, which was also a civil war). In the post-revolutionary era, the link between Catholicism and nation served to unite Mexicans from different regions and ethnic backgrounds.⁵ In 1911, Mexican Catholics united in their party, which took the name of National Catholic Party (then outlawed by the revolutionary government). In short, as Stephen Andes has written, the Mexican case (as well as the Chilean case) revealed 'the creative power of national loyalty to mobilize Catholic activists: *'por Dios y por la patria'* ('for God and for the Fatherland') was a common refrain taken up by many lay militants of the era' (Andes 2014, p. 5).

Elsewhere, Catholics, in similar ways, sought to come to terms with the nation as a perceived need to achieve independence from an external dominance, even when the dominance was Catholic. This was, for example, the case in the Philippines. In colonial time, the 'indio-priests' advocated for the 'secularization' of the Catholic Church to allow 'native priests' to head parishes. At that time, this was regarded an act of treason that demanded the death penalty, for only 'Filipinos' (i.e., Spaniards born in the Philippines) and not native people could serve as parish priests. The 1872 mutiny, which ended up with the execution (by *garrote*) of the three priests (Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora), became the seed of the revolution that inspired the Filipino heroes Rizal and Bonifacio to 'imagine a Filipino nation' against Spanish domination. In the anti-Spanish revolution, and then in the war of resistance against the Americans, many native priests played a heroic role. Some joined the armed struggle, while others extended financial and other forms of assistance to Philippine fighters. For these reasons, more than a few of them were executed, tortured, or exiled. As a result of these upheavals, the rebel priest Gregorio Aglipay founded a Philippine Independent Church separate from Rome (Pineda Ofreneo 1987, p. 321; see also Schumacher 1981; Francisco 2006; Clymer 1986).

2. The Interwar Period

2.1. After World War I: Towards Popular/People's Parties

With the Great War, the bridge between God and fatherland, faith and nation, narrowed down dramatically. The nationalist fervor pervading the war years reached large constituencies of the Catholic world. Pope Benedictus XV declared the neutrality of the Holy See and mediated peace in 1916–1917. However, most bishops, the lower level of the clergy, and many ordinary Catholics committed to the cause of the nation, mixing their Christian beliefs with the love for country. As a priest serving in the French troops wrote: 'The love of our country and the love of God so long separated were now as one' (Gaëll 1916, p. 3). Other works in local history confirm the emergence of a proper 'patriotic Catholicism, which is also Catholic patriotism' (Becker 1998, p. 10; Houlian 2012).

The revolutionary and anti-clerical waves that swept across Europe soon after the end of the war, inspired by the Russian revolution, convinced Catholics to enter national politics to defend their interests. The Weimar Republic, the emergence of the nation states in central and eastern Europe, the introduction of electoral reforms elsewhere—in Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, and the Netherlands—encouraged them to seek political unity.

In 1919, Benedict XV lifted the ban on Italian Catholics participating in national political life. The Sicilian priest Luigi Sturzo, appealing to ‘all strong and free men’, had just founded the Italian Popular Party (PPI), Italian Catholics’ first sustained experiment in mass politics (Sturzo 1951, pp. 2–7).⁶ Following the Italian example, Catholic political movements expanded rapidly and Catholic or, as they were often called, ‘popular’ or ‘people’s’ parties emerged in Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Lithuania, joining the long-standing parties of Catholic inspirations (the German *Zentrum*, the Austrian Catholic Social Party, and the Belgian Catholic Party). Latin America likewise saw a proliferation of Catholic parties, organizations, and electoral leagues. By the 1920s, in Argentina, several groups that shared distrust of liberalism and fear of socialism coalesced into a religious-political movement, subsequently known as ‘Catholic Nationalism’, who soon turned to party politics (Burdick 1995, pp. 28–31). It was a crucial period for global political Catholicism.

Catholic parties competed with liberal politicians, and well as with socialists and communists, but soon had to deal with a novel political creature, fascism, and then with the authoritarian regimes that flourished everywhere in Europe and Latin America. The Vatican maintained a highly ambiguous relationship with Catholic independent political parties and organizations. From the point of view of Rome, lay Catholic political action helped in defending Catholic values and principles and the interests of the Church’s interests. However, the Holy See wanted Catholics to enter existing parties rather than establishing their own party, keeping for the Vatican the privilege to deal directly with secular governments (Andes 2014, pp. 41–70, 105–25; Conway 1997, pp. 29–30; Pollard 1996, pp. 76–82). Thus, the Vatican’s secretary initially called the PPI the ‘least bad’ of all Italian parties.⁷ Eventually, the Holy See turned against Sturzo and its creature, which was outlawed in 1926 by Mussolini. Rome also turned against the German *Zentrum* and other Catholic parties or groups that had emerged elsewhere. In Brazil, the Vatican and the national bishops dissuaded the formation of Catholic groups and encouraged activists to support the Brazilian Integralist Party, led by Getúlio Vargas (who shortly afterwards became dictator of the quasi-fascist *Estado Novo*), which appealed to the middle class, with a conservative and anti-revolutionary platform that placed Catholicism as the central and unifying symbol of the nation. Similarly, in Chile, the Church supported the Conservative Party, encouraging Catholics to enter its rank. From the late 1920s to the 1930s, the approach of the Vatican vis-à-vis the regimes was to sign concordats and agreements to define the place and roles of the Church in the state; guarantee the fundamental rights of the Church, especially in the realm of religious education; and to protect ecclesiastic influence.

2.2. Catholicism, Fascism, and Authoritarian Politics

On 11 February 1929, an historic treaty was signed between the fascist Italian government and the Vatican, re-establishing the power and diplomatic standing of the Catholic Church, which had been lost when Italy seized Rome. The Lateran Pacts established the Vatican City as an independent State, restored the civil sovereignty of the Pope as a monarch, and regulated the position of Catholic religion in the Italian state. A financial convention compensated the Holy See for the loss of the Papal States (Pollard 2008, pp. 85–87).

After the Concordat with Mussolini in 1929, in 1933, the Vatican signed the agreement with Hitler (*Reichskonkordat*). Throughout the 1930s, the Church and ample sectors of Catholicism flirted, or frankly supported, authoritarian regimes in Europe and Latin America. The corporatist core of Catholic social thought, from the *Rerum Novarum* to Pius XI’s encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), could be seen to resemble the corporatist model of state and society that the authoritarian regimes in Portugal (*Estado Novo*), Spain, Austria (*Ständestaat*), and Italy were implementing, and that right-wing parties propagated elsewhere in the world (Kertzer 2014; Wolf 2012; Griffin 2007; Feldman et al. 2008).

A right-wing re-alignment, thus, took place in interwar Catholicism (Conway 1997, pp. 34–55). The German *Zentrum* voted in favor of the “enabling act” of 1933 that gave full powers to Hitler, sealing its own dissolution. Before Hitler violated the agreement and became increasingly anti-clerical, many German Catholics could welcome national

socialism as a modernizing force that could oppose socialism and the degeneration of Weimar, while defending locality and family. Some of Hitler's political and economic advisors were after all convinced corporatists, well disposed to the Catholic tradition (Chappel 2015, p. 27). Likewise, in Italy, Catholic economists Amintore Fanfani and Sergio Paronetto collaborated with the social and economic policies of the fascist regime.

The Austrian dictatorship of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg and the regimes of Franco and Salazar owed their origins, at least in part, to the support of Catholics and accorded the Church a privileged role within the State and the society. The consequence was to draw many Catholics into alliance with the regimes, even if, with the passage of time, the identity between Catholic interests and those of the regimes came to diverge (Conway 1996, p. 7; Conway 1997). Clerical fascism and *falangismo* spread in Europe—in Slovakia, Hungary, and Croatia—and in Latin America. A 1935 treatise written by the Argentinian Cesar Pico stated that, for Catholics, fascism was an acceptable political order as long as fascist governments did not infringe upon the rights of the Church (Burdick 1995, p. 31). In Argentina, a 'Christianized fascism' emerged, which lambasted liberalism in the name of an authoritarian, nationalist, and Catholic political order. This was supported by Argentina's most important Catholic newspaper, *El Pueblo*, which was constantly praising *jefes* and dictators such as Salazar, Franco, and, in the early 1940s, Petain.

In the 1920s and 1930s, from the point of view of the Vatican and for almost all Catholics, the main enemy, the real Evil, was Soviet bolshevism and the horrors of revolutions that swept across Europe (Weimar and Spain) and Latin America (Mexico). Catholics became obsessed with the Soviet menace and its entailing consequences (Chappel 2018, pp. 59–107). The Soviet Union was inflaming the world with its tales of industrial triumph and societal engineering. Under the direction of Moscow, Popular Front movements unified the Left and came to power in France and Spain. From a Catholic perspective, the various Popular Fronts were paramount threats and the Vatican saw in them the atheist and ferociously anti-clerical arm of Moscow at work. Thus, for many Catholics, fascism and authoritarian regimes were the only possible social and political model for the preservation of Christian values and for the battle against atheistic communism. In Italy, Mussolini could boast fascism's ability to contain the communist threat and restore the proper order to civil society. The regime of Mussolini, wide sectors of Italian Catholicism thought, had indeed been 'Catholicized'.

Pius XI condemned paganism and the totalitarian characters of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, with the 1937 encyclicals *Mit brennender Sorge* (drafted largely by cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII) and *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*. However, in the same year, confronted with the Spanish Civil War and religious persecutions in Mexico and the Soviet Union, Pius XI issued the encyclical *Divinis Redemptoris*, which branded atheistic communism as 'the all too imminent danger . . . undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization'. In the same year, in the much less famous encyclical *Firmissimam Constantiam*, he specifically addressed the situation in Mexico, making the momentous move of endorsing armed violence against the anti-clerical regime (Chamedes 2016). In 1935, the Vatican had created a Secretariat on Atheism (led by the Jesuits), which opened the way for the establishment of an anti-communist international opposed to the communist international movement. This ambitious transnational campaign opened the way for its 'tactical cooperation with Nazi-Fascist forces on the ground, in the practical fight against communist expansion' (Chamedes 2019, p. 263; Chappel 2018, p. 94). The most crucial episode of such a collaboration was certainly the Spanish Civil War, with Catholics from across Europe running to Spain in support of Franco and fearing that the Bolshevik evil would triumph (Gottwald 1986, p. 460; Othen 2013; Plaza 2008, p. 43; Albert 2004, p. 3).

Even in the Philippines, in the 1930s, and after the launching of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) and the growth of a strong party-led leftist mass movement, there was a reaction from within the Church, particularly the Jesuits who led the Social Justice Crusade. These sectors were rabidly anti-communist as a response to the civil war in Spain, violence against priests and religions in Mexico, and other attacks on the Church elsewhere in

Europe and Latin America. The Catholic newspaper *Commonwealth* issued stern warnings against cooperating with communists in the Popular Front and asked readers to report communist activities to their parish priest.

2.3. Catholic Action and Politics in the Interwar Era

The Lateran Pact institutionalized and sanctioned the model of Catholic action in politics—a model which then had been developed in the Italian context of the 1920s and was then exported everywhere in Europe and in Latin America. Let us consider this development in some more detail.

The date of 2 October 1923 is conventionally seen as the date for the Catholic Action's birth in Italy. This was initially an Italian development, but soon with global repercussions. On that day Pius XI approved the new structure of the organization, which until then had been a loose network of initiatives—and its name had simply served as a generic brand for activities of Catholics in society. In 1923, instead, Catholic Action became the umbrella organization under which the activism of lay Catholics must be organized and developed under strict ecclesiastical control. All lay activities were canalized under a central leadership composed by lay Catholics, but under the firm control and authority of the hierarchy. The different branches of Catholic Action (men, women, workers, students, youth) existed at parish and diocese levels, and then on a national scale. Each level had an ecclesiastical assistant, whose task was to monitor and channel the lay organizational efforts and initiatives, as well as to provide spiritual and theological support. Statutes written by the bishops, under the directive given by Rome, guided the entire machine.

With the Concordat of 1929, the Italian Catholic Action was ordered to remain strictly apolitical. This was the model exported in every other context. Throughout the 1930s, the Vatican severed ties with Catholic party politics and groups in Europe and in Latin America, while encouraging individual Catholics (as private citizens outside the institutional Church) to participate in politics (joining political parties that defended Christian principles), at the same time imposing Catholic Action as a group to abstain from direct political activity and party politics. This model meant a sharp line of separation between lay groups led by clergy and political parties, leaving it to the Vatican to deal directly with secular governments to secure the Church's rights. Working through a Catholic party or group, the Vatican thought, would fundamentally undermine its negotiating position.

After 1931, this non-party political model of Catholic Action was promoted globally (Pollard 2013; Faggioli 2014, pp. 48–52). It worked as a Vatican-directed means of social, political, and cultural control, also defined by Vaillancourt as 'normative and manipulative means (e.g., through socialization and co-optation)' (Vaillancourt 1980, p. 2). As Stephen Andes has written with reference to Latin America (but this holds true at a wider level), 'in essence, the Vatican desired to monopolize political power within ecclesiastical ranks and sought to do so by redefining Catholic activism' (Andes 2014, p. 2). Yet, Catholics in Europe and in Latin America far from always agreed with this policy. This continuously created moments of political electricity between the Holy See and Catholics on the ground, between the center and the periphery. In Mexico and in Chile, Andes continues, 'as the Vatican sought to circumscribe the action of confessional political movements, Catholic activists pushed back against regulation, even rejecting papal attempts to centralize Church authority and universalize Church practices on national and local level'. In short, it was this 'intra-ecclesial power struggle' that 'came to shape Catholic participation in Mexican and Chilean national politics in the 1920s and 1930s' (Andes 2014, p. 2).⁸

At the level of global comparison, a few salient points concerning Catholic Action and the Catholic experiences in the interwar period need to be stressed. To begin with, in fascist Italy, as well as in other authoritarian regimes in Europe and in Latin America, Catholic Action was never completely put under the control of the regime. In fact, it continued to work and function as essentially the only organization not controlled by the authoritarian states, despite the repeated efforts by those states to restrict its activities. Secondly, somewhat ironically—considering the Vatican's weariness about social-cultural

action crossing over into the direct political sphere—Catholic Action became an important, perhaps the most important, way to prepare Catholics for constructive political engagement in post-World War II Europe and Latin America. Social-cultural activism on the one hand and political activism on the other, were, after all, indissolubly linked and could not be clearly demarcated. Their aim was similar: to provide an alternative to both secular liberalism and to the threat of Bolshevism.

The authoritarian experience marked profoundly the intellectual and cultural journey taken by a whole global generation of young Catholics—those Catholics who, too young to be involved in the activities of pre-fascist Catholicism, grew up in fascist and authoritarian Europe or Latin America, as well as those who had seen liberal regimes falling prey to the crisis engendered by mass politics.

In particular, a generation of young Catholic intellectuals, strongly influenced by fascist visions of modernity and initially not necessarily opposed to authoritarian politics, started to elaborate their own project of an alternative Catholic modernity.⁹ While fascism and authoritarianism for many had seemed the only viable defense against communism, this did not deprive Catholics of independent mentality and culture. For example, ample sectors of Catholic Action in Italy (especially university students) espoused a cultural line that came to express—once fascism and Nazism had revealed their more pagan and racist tendencies—a firm, moralistic rejection of fascist ideology, a modern departure from God on the cultural and spiritual level. The challenge for Catholics, thus, was to reinvent a new and self-sufficient Catholic culture that could engage with the modern world, eventually bridging the gap between faith and reason, political modernity and religion (Montini 1928).

This was a significant break with the defensive and reactionary tradition of nineteenth-century political Catholicism, but also with the experience of People's Parties. It was also a significant break with the medieval nostalgia that captured other sectors of interwar Catholicism, most notably in Spain. Here, Franco's 'national Catholicism' (*Nacionalcatolicismo*), which was enlivened and animated by the spirit of a new *Reconquista*, fashioned on Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile's 1492 re-conquest against Muslim and Jews—now against liberalism, secularism, and modern culture (Payne 1984, pp. 171–91). It was an endeavor 'more nationalistic and revanchist than traditional and Tridentine' (Faggioli 2014, p. 53), a political-cultural environment that favored the emergence of a movement that is still very influential today: *Opus Dei*.

Catholic Action's response to the epochal crisis of the 1930s was different. It perhaps arose from the same need to react and respond to the crisis and with the same aim of a Christian re-conquest of the world, but the response unfolded along a modernizing line. In short, new generations of Catholics everywhere in the world thirsted for a new cultural inspiration, and this took place in a context in which the initial objective was more to correct authoritarianism than to build democracy, which was unfamiliar to them and seemed unattainable in the 1930s. In the search for a dialogue with the modern world, the young and less young Catholic Action members everywhere in the world engaged with an eclectic and rich combination of cultural references. Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier, and the French neo-Thomists were the moral and intellectual compass in this search.

2.4. Maritain and the French Personalists Go Global

Maritain had been close to the quasi-fascist Action Française in the 1920s, but had abandoned the movement when it was condemned by the Vatican in 1926 (on this and what follows below see also Müller 2011, pp. 134–38; Moyn 2015, pp. 65–100; Invernizzi Accetti 2019, pp. 53–79). Maritain's writings—and those of Mounier, for whom Maritain was for a while a mentor—were published by the journals, bulletins, and newspapers of the Catholic Action and its branches, and widely read by Catholic intellectuals and activists all over the world before and during World War II. Mounier's elaboration of personalism—as a broadly grounded social philosophy that considered the 'person' as a spiritual, transcendent, and communitarian entity on which the common good could be articulated—and Maritain's distinction between the spiritual and the temporal—and his claim that democracy must

have spiritual foundation—sparked a crucial debate within Catholics on the relationship between religion and politics. Many Catholics found in these thoughts the antidote to clerical fascism, authoritarianism, and the medievalist, pre-modern nostalgic utopia of theocracy, a crucial source for rethinking the relationship between Catholicism and politics.

In Italy, Maritain was highly influential and inspired, among others, the young philosopher Augusto Del Noce and the last secretary of the PPI Alcide De Gasperi, a group of young intellectuals of the Catholic University of Milan, who had flirted with fascist corporatist ideology, and the members of two intellectual branches of Catholic Action: the Fuci (Federation of Catholic University Students) and the *Movimento Laureati* (Association of Catholic Graduates and Professionals). The Fuci's spiritual head, Giovanni Battista Montini (the future Paul VI), translated Maritain's *Trois réformateurs* into Italian in 1928, and wrote an introduction to the Italian version of his *Humanisme Intégral* (1936) (Thomassen and Forlenza 2016a, 2016b; Spectator 1935; Dagnino 2017).

In Latin America, Maritain became a major source of 'Catholic' democratic theory. The lay head of the Brazilian Catholic Action Amoroso Lima, at first close to the Brazilian Integralists and Getúlio Vargas, became a strong opponent of authoritarianism and, inspired by Maritain, became a leading exponent of Catholic social doctrine. In Chile, a group of young Catholic intellectuals active in Catholic Action formed an association within the Conservative Party, which the hierarchy endorsed, called the National Falange (*Falange Nacional*). The new name contained a certain ambiguity. Some of those young Catholics manifested a certain affinity for the corporativism of the Spanish falangists and for the politics of Primo de Rivera. However, the group would soon distance from the Spanish experience, referring to themselves as 'Falange, pero...' (e.g., Falange, but not in the Spanish sense). One of its leaders, Eduardo Frei, met Maritain during a journey to Europe in 1934 and was hugely impacted by this encounter. During that same journey, Frei and many other Latin American Catholics—such as Rafael Caldera (later president of Venezuela and future leader of the COPEI, first Catholic party in the country)—met in Rome with other national Catholic Action delegates, finding inspiration on how to organize Catholic Action Youth and student movements in their own country. A few years later, Maritain visited Argentina while his *Letter on Independence* was published in Chile. Castillo and Frei wrote books and pamphlets on Maritain's books. Finally, in 1935, the Chilean Falange broke away from the Conservative Party, becoming an independent party and presenting its own roster of candidates. While still opposing the ideologies of the Left and liberal anticlericalism, the Falange increasingly embraced social justice issues, seen through the lens of Maritain's new Christianity. In a 1940 letter, Frei wrote to Maritain:

A universal phenomenon has occurred in Chile: a deep divorce between our generation and the old one. Ours formed in Catholic Action, fundamentally differing from the other in its formation, in its sensitivity, in a sense of things, and in the conception of who Christians should be in this world. Catholicism in Chile has taken refuge in the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. It is the religion of the possessors of the land, of the well-off people. The Church appears united with this 'class' and hence the small bourgeoisie is today radical and socialist and the people completely antagonistic, if not to the Christian idea, to the Church as a material organization. . . . One party, the Conservative, represented Catholics politically Well then, our generation did not feel linked in any way with that Party. We . . . consider it economically liberal, united to capitalism in all its forms, formed by a class and with a class spirit, with the pretense of representing the Church and Catholics. We do not accept its tutelage. We work in Catholic Action and pure Social Action, but both our purpose and the study of the possibilities led us to form a movement, not a party, inspired by Catholic philosophy. We did not pretend, nor do we want, to create a Catholic party and we demand the right of Catholics to join any party that is not opposed to the teachings of the Church.¹⁰

Against the old generations, Frei wanted his group to be a movement of Catholics inspired by Catholic values and not a confessional or a Catholic party. Yet, the Falange was

a proper party and ran, quite unsuccessfully, for a series of elections until the mid-1950s. This was the main dilemma of Frei and other Catholics elsewhere in the world: the creation of a party of devout Catholics and pervaded by Christian inspiration that nonetheless rejected the idea of acting in politics through a confessional Catholic party.

This was, in many ways, a quite direct application of Maritain's approach to the Chilean context. A Spanish translation of *Humanisme Intégral*, published in Madrid and Buenos Aires, also influenced the leaders of the Venezuelan Catholic movement, and pushed them to call for free elections (end of the 1930s) and to abandon their conservative, if not frankly authoritarian, past.

In short, Maritain was widely read by those Catholics who were trying to find a passage between the threat of totalitarianism (Bolshevism and Nazi-fascism) and a liberalism too individualistic and materialistic, and ultimately proving itself weak vis-à-vis mass politics. The challenge was to imagine how Catholics could enter the political sphere as Catholics, without being subordinate to other political, ideological and cultural positions—bringing into modern, secular politics the novelty and specificity of Catholicism.

Thus, only in a superficial reading could one call the interwar period as 'disastrous' for political Catholicism (as in Müller 2011, p. 134). One could even claim that Catholic thought flourished at the national and global level, exactly as a reflection on the fatalities of the interwar period. Quite importantly, it goes to show that even in epochs routinely seen as periods of deglobalization—as the interwar period, marked by economic protectionism, nationalism, and anti-liberalism, routinely is—a fermenting and cross-fertilization of religiously inspired ideas took place with subsequent global consequences. True, these developments did not touch the institutional and structural level. However, the search for the foundations of a new social and political Catholic culture that marked the experience of Catholic intellectuals and activists in the 1930s proved highly significant in post-war Europe and Latin America at the level of institutional outcomes. It furthered and fostered the building of a democratic political system inspired by and based on Christian principles. A very significant number of Christian Democrats in post-war Europe and Latin America had been active participants in the Catholic Action and its branches. It was from this generation of Catholics that one would find future ministers, heads of governments, presidents of States (Aldo Moro in Italy or Eduardo Frei in Chile, for example), MPs, and members of Constituent Assemblies, as well as political entrepreneurs, journalists and opinion-makers, university professors, pragmatic politicians willing to intervene in public life by means of cultural analysis, and 'technocrats' (sociologists, economists, social scientists) willing to play the democratic game, searching for a synthesis between Catholic faith and political responsibility. They became spokespersons of an alternative or intermediate 'third way' between, or perhaps beyond, liberal individualism and unfettered capitalism, on the one hand, and socialist collectivism and Soviet-style communism on the other. This 'way' took shape as a distinctive political action, based on and nurtured by a constellation of political concepts and ideas that descended from Catholic philosophy and social teaching. These included, in addition to personalism, key concepts such as anti-materialism, popularism—the idea of a 'people' whose unity come from within and from the solidarity between its members, all committed to the temporal common good—and subsidiarity—the principle of distribution of power downward to the local level, as close as possible to the citizens (Invernizzi Accetti 2019, pp. 29–52, 80–110, 111–38).

3. The Age of Christian Democracy

3.1. Christian Democracy in Europe

Even before the end of the war and the fall of authoritarian regimes, Catholic politicians and intellectuals founded Christian Democratic parties almost everywhere in Europe. In much of Western and Central Europe, they collaborated with other political forces and with the Allies in the anti-fascist struggle and in the political transition (or the return) to parliamentary democracy. Via Christian Democracy, central principles of Catholic social teaching, as well as the personalist and communitarian language of Maritain and Mounier, were introduced

into the constitutions of Italy, West Germany, France, and other European countries: the centrality of the person, a social view on the economy, the defense of non-statal entities from the family to the Church, and the validation of forms of organization that were both political (parties) and corporatist (trade unions) (Pombeni 2000; Thomassen and Forlenza 2016b). In much of continental Europe, Christian Democracy formulated and implemented an impressive reformist social agenda, which included pension schemes, public housing plans, fiscal redistributive policies, and agrarian reforms. This social market economy (*Soziale Marktwirtschaft*) opened the way for a distinct Christian Democratic welfare state, based on Catholic social teaching. (Forlenza 2010; Chappel 2015; Invernizzi Accetti 2019, pp. 193–247). Compared to the Northern European social democratic model of welfare state, based on an idea of equality and universal access to certain principles and services, the ‘Christian democratic’ type of welfare state had instead a very different *remedial structure*, based on an organic conception in which different sectors of society had different roles and functions to fulfill. In addition, the philosophical and socio-political tenets of Catholic social thought were translated into the process of European integration, a process led by Catholic and Christian Democratic politicians, such as Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide De Gasperi (Forlenza 2017; Invernizzi Accetti 2019, pp. 248–79; Kaiser 2007).

Christian Democracy, thus, became the dominant political force of much of continental Western Europe and a central actor in the process of building a modern mass democracy. The purpose of Catholic action changed dramatically. Christian Democrats were, in post-war Europe, less engaged in protecting the Church from anti-clerical assault, and instead proactively trying to articulate and develop, in competition or in cooperation with non-Catholic forces, political and socio-economic platforms. Thus, Christian Democracy achieved what traditional political Catholicism had, until then, only dreamt about: gaining a leading role within the modern world.

While supportive of the new parties, the Vatican kept affirming that what mattered was Christian action, not Christian party politics. The rather conservative Church of Pius XII had a penchant for countries such as Portugal and Spain, without Christian Democratic parties, led by austere dictators able to convince Catholics that a genuine attempt was being made to shape policies and politics following Catholic values. In quite a few cases, Catholic parties around Europe found themselves attacked by the Vatican as negative signs of ‘modernism’. Once again, as after World War I, the fear was that Catholic faith would be reduced to one party among many others, rather than a pre-political moral glue of society writ large.

The main change in most of post-WWII Europe was that Christian Democrats solved the *Kulturkampf* that the Vatican had led against modernity since the French Revolution. Schuman made direct reference to Maritain in his writings. Democracy, he believed, following Maritain, had its origins in Christianity and the rights of man was a Christian idea.¹¹ In Italy, Sturzo insisted that, in the past, liberty had been ‘badly understood by clericals’, but now had to be ‘re-linked to the Christian tradition of popular sovereignty and to the democratic regime’ (Sturzo 1945, p. 309). Christian Democrats here followed the directions indicated by Maritain and Mounier, whose thoughts had very direct influences on Christian Democrats, especially in France and Italy—less so in Germany. Maritain was, in fact, not in favor of founding explicitly Christian parties; rather, as he often repeated, Christianity and the Gospel should be ‘the yeast’ of political, social, and civic life. Thus, for example, Sturzo advocated ‘personalism’, ‘pluralism’, and ‘institutionalism’ as the philosophical pillars of Catholic involvement in politics (Sturzo 1947, p. 12), while the Italian *Reconstructive Ideas of Christian Democracy* (which circulated secretly in 1943 even before the end of Mussolini’s dictatorship) echoed central aspects of Maritain’s thought: the value and dignity of the ‘person’, the principle of ‘political liberty’, the appeal to ‘fraternity’, and other Christian values, which alone could reconcile conflicts among people and nations (now in Atti 1968, pp. 1–8).

3.2. Christian Democracy in Latin America

After 1945, Christian Democracy swept Latin America—Chile in the 1950s; El Salvador, Guatemala, and Venezuela in the 1960s; and Costa Rica and Mexico in the 1980s (Mainwaring and Scully 2003; Invernizzi Accetti 2019, pp. 280–316). In these countries, but also in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, Christian Democratic parties elected presidents. Almost everywhere, this involved a struggle against authoritarian regimes. We have seen already how Maritain was influential on Chilean political Catholicism. In 1957, the Falange combined with other moderate groups to reconstitute itself as Christian Democracy and supported the 1958 presidential campaign of Frei. Frei became president of Chile from 1964 to 1970, constantly highlighting that Christian Democracy was a non-confessional party (Frei 1964, p. 37). In Bolivia, the Social Christian Party was founded in 1954, and then changed name and became the Christian Democratic Party in 1964. Its origins were the center for the study of the Church's social doctrine, the Bolivian Catholic Action, and *Integral Humanism*, a cultural center for the study of Maritain's philosophy. Jeffrey Klaiber's research on Peru found that 'nearly all of the leaders of the Christian Democratic party, founded in 1955–1956, had been formed in Catholic Action' (Klaiber 1983, p. 150). The founders of Venezuela's Christian Democracy (which was established in 1946 and known by the name of the Social Christian Party COPEI, *Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente*), including its undisputed leader Rafael Caldera, were politically and culturally educated in the 1930s in Catholic student movements. Caldera ran three times as a president of the country before winning the election in 1968 under the slogan 'el cambio va', change is coming (he was then re-elected from 1994 to 1999). For the first time in the modern history of a country constantly beleaguered by political turmoil and violence, the transfer of power from a party to another occurred peacefully.

A few points can be made about Christian Democracy in Latin America. Firstly, Christian Democratic parties in Latin American had far less electoral success regionwide than in Europe. Yet Christian Democracy had a major impact on Latin American history, opposing authoritarian regimes and fostering transitions to pluralistic political regimes—for example in Chile (1973–1990, even though many Christian Democrats applauded the military takeover led by Pinochet in 1973, believing that the government would quickly be turned over to them by the military), El Salvador (from the 1960s to 1985), Guatemala (from the 1960s until 1986), Mexico (from the early 1980s to 2000), Peru (from 1968 to 1978), and Venezuela (from 1948–1958)—while in many other countries smaller Christian Democratic parties were active players in opposing authoritarian rule. Secondly, as in Europe, Christian Democracy contained a great degree of ideological variety. In general, however, it was certainly much more progressive than its European counterparts, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. Latin American Christian Democrats professed a commitment to democracy; presented themselves as the real alternative between oligarchy and revolution, rejecting violent class struggle and favoring important reforms (primarily agrarian reform); and wanted to, as outlined in a 1959 document of Chilean Christian Democracy, 'fight democratically for a new social order based on brotherhood and justice' (Grayson 1968, p. 336).

Héctor Cornejo Chávez, who was, for a while, president of the Peruvian Christian Democracy, published a book in 1967 titled *Democracia cristiana y revolución*, which captures very well how far to the left some leading Christian Democrats went. He not only called for radical, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist reform but also claimed that violence was compatible with democracy and Christianity, thereby justifying its possible use. While rejecting Leninism, he placed himself far to the left politically and endorsed alliances with Leninist organizations.

In 1964, Frei and the Chilean Christian Democracy—in alliances with other social-democratic and liberal parties, with the covert help and funding of the CIA, and with the votes of conservative and liberal voters—defeated the socialist-communist Allende. Frei wanted to carry out what he defined as a 'Revolution in Liberty'. Abjuring alliances with other parties, Chilean Christian Democracy began to put into practice Catholic social thought. Following the central principle of subsidiarity, the new government created a

program called Popular Promotion, which encouraged the organization of women, slum dwellers, young people, and, more importantly, a rural farm worker union. Following St. Thomas Aquinas and the papal social encyclicals on the social function of property, they adopted an ambitious agrarian reform law that established rural cooperatives and provided compensation for expropriated lands in bonds that were viewed by right as confiscatory (this reform was much more progressive than, say, the Italian agrarian reform of the early 1950s). As in Europe, the Chilean Christian Democrats supported the political and economic integration of Latin America, but they differed from the Europeans in their enthusiasm for land redistribution and their hostility to their more conservative opponents. Their principal ideologist, James Castillo, argued that the establishment of a communitarian society modeled on Maritain's ideas would solve the problems of Chile and Latin America (Castillo 1972, pp. 462–65; Frei 1958).

In Venezuela, Caldera and the COPEI worked hard for the pacification of the country; introduced a series of reforms in the sectors of education, housing, and infrastructure; and decided on the nationalization of oil and gas industries. In a series of books—such as his 1972 *Especificidad de la Democracia Cristiana*—he explained the Christian democratic understanding of democracy, which was profoundly imbued with and inspired by the principles of Christian philosophy and Catholic social teaching. His most original contribution to the constellations of Christian Democratic ideas was the concept of 'international social justice'. In a 1970 speech to the joint session of the US congress, he said:

I believe in international social justice. Recalling Aristotle's old aphorism that justice demands that we render 'to each his own' may I remind you that in the transformation of his thought in Christian philosophy, 'his own' does not evoke exclusively that which belongs to each individual but also the idea of that which belongs to 'society' for the 'common good'. No difficulty lies in transferring this concept onto the international community. Just as 'society' in the international ambit has the right to impose distinct types of relationships on its members, so the 'international community', if it exists, demands that the various nations participate in proportion to their capacity in order that 'all' may lead what could be termed a human existence. The rights and the obligations of the different countries should be measured, therefore, in terms of its potential and the needs of each one, making peace, progress, and harmony viable, and making it possible for us all to advance within a true friendship.¹²

4. Conclusions

Outlining how religiously inspired political ideas germinated and spread in and beyond Europe from the nineteenth century onwards, we have wished to provide an overall framework for understanding the globalization of Christian Democracy, which became such a crucial political antagonist in the interwar period and then again after 1945 in many parts of the world. The institutionalization of Christian Democracy after World War II in Western and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, and the Second Vatican Council, are indeed pivotal historical events. However, as we have shown, this was just the culmination of local, national, and global streams of thought that had started to spread and circulate much earlier. For sure, the fuller picture of this crucial, but overlooked, aspect of global political history is in need of further elaboration, much beyond the limits of a single article.

Outlining this history of local developments and global entanglements has descriptive value in and of itself, but also relates to a series of larger and more conceptual discussions of pertinence to how we think of global history. Let us end by briefly underlining just one of these.

Our narrative underlines the limits of a purely secular reading of political (and indeed social) globalization. From the middle of the nineteenth century, a 'Catholic modernity' emerged as a historically significant alternative to liberalism, socialism, and fascism that reincorporated transcendence as a legitimate perspective of truth and reason, and re-

anchored democracy, justice, and freedom in a religiously argued ethos. As we have shown, this was never laid out as a well-defined political platform from above, but rather emerged as a broad set of ideas, that would only find their more defined forms alongside the institutionalization of Christian Democratic parties after World War II. This throws light on the role of religiously inspired ideas in global political processes, and the existence of multiple culture-specific roads towards modernity and democracy. It underscores the fact that globalizing political processes originated not only from liberal pro-market figurations in competition with socialist or communist internationalist ideology, but likewise from Catholic and Christian democratic ideas.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen; writing—original draft preparation, Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen; writing—review and editing, Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: This study does not report any data.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The literature on Christian Democracy is extensive. Among many others see (Conway 2003; Gehler and Kaiser 2004; Kaiser 2007; Kosicki and Lukasiewicz 2018; Invernizzi Accetti 2019; Mainwaring and Scully 2003; Forlenza 2017; Driessen 2014).
- ² For a discussion on recent works on political Catholicism see (Driessen 2021) and (Forlenza 2019).
- ³ The text in English of all encyclicals and papal documents quoted in this article can be found at the official website <https://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/it.html> (last accessed: 1 July 2022).
- ⁴ For Europe (Clark and Kaiser 2003); for Latin America see (Beozzo 1992, pp. 117–32; Mallimaci 2004; Butler 2016).
- ⁵ This was what Catholic schools taught in the revolutionary years; see (Schell 2003, p. 35). See also (Quirk 1973) and (Aguirre Cristiani 2008).
- ⁶ Sturzo made his appeal on 18 January 1919, the day when the Paris peace conference opened.
- ⁷ See the words of the Vatican secretary of State cardinal Pietro Gasparri as quoted in (Molony 1977, pp. 47–48).
- ⁸ For the widespread Catholic lay resistance see (Fallaw 2013).
- ⁹ For the specific case of Italy see (Dagnino 2012).
- ¹⁰ Letter from Eduardo Frei to Maritain (4 January 1940) in (Montalva 1989), our translation.
- ¹¹ ‘Democracy owes its existence to Christianity . . . It was born the day man was required to set the best example, during his life on earth (i.e., by respecting human dignity, individual rights and freedom and by exercising brotherly love towards his neighbor). Before Christ, ideas such as this had never been expressed . . . Our great Christian philosopher, Jacques Maritain, who we, the French, wrongly abandoned to study in a distant university instead of taking advantage of his brilliant teaching, indicated the parallel between the development of Christian thought and democracy. Thus democracy is linked to Christianity doctrinally and chronologically’; (Schuman 2010, p. 43); see also (De Gasperi 1948).
- ¹² <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1970-pt13/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1970-pt13-7-2.pdf> (last accessed: 24 June 2022).

References

- Albert, Marcel. 2004. *Die Benediktinerabtei Maria Laach und der Nationalsozialismus*. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Anderson, Margaret Lavinia. 1986. The Kulturkampf and the Course of German History. *Central European History* 19: 82–115. [CrossRef]
- Anderson, Margaret Lavinia. 2000. *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Andes, Stephen J. C. 2014. *The Vatican and Catholic Activism in Mexico and Chile: The Politics of Transnational Catholicism, 1920–1940*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Atti. 1968. *Atti e Documenti della Democrazia Cristiana, 1943–1967*. Edited by Andrea Damilano. Rome: Cinque Lune, vol. I.
- Becker, Annette. 1998. *War and Faith: The Religious Imagination of France, 1914–1930*. Translated by Helen McPhail. New York: Berg.
- Beozzo, José Oscar. 1992. The Church and the Liberal States. In *The Church in Latin America, 1492–1992*. Edited by Enrique Dussel. New York: Orbis, pp. 117–32.

- Burdick, Michael A. 1995. *For God and the Fatherland: Religion and Politics in Argentina*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Butler, Matthew. 2016. Liberalism, Anticlericalism, and Antireligious Currents in the Nineteenth Century. In *The Cambridge History of Religions in Latin America*. Edited by Virginia Garrard-Burnett, Paul Freston and Stephen C. Dove. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 231–50.
- Castillo, Jaime. 1972. Property and the Communitarian Society. In *The Ideologies of the Developing Nations*. Edited by Paul Sigmund. New York: Praeger, pp. 462–65.
- Ceballos Ramirez, Manuel. 2005. Los operarios guadalupanos: Intelectuales del catolicismo social mexicano 1909–1914. In *Catolicismo Social en México: Las Instituciones*. Edited by Manuel Ceballos Ramirez. Mexico City: Academia de Investigación Humanística, vol. 2, pp. 57–103.
- Chamedes, Giuliana. 2016. The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anticommunism. *Journal of Contemporary History* 51: 261–90. [CrossRef]
- Chamedes, Giuliana. 2019. *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Chappel, James. 2012. Slaying the Leviathan: Catholicism and the Rebirth of European Conservatism, 1920–1950. Ph.D. dissertation, 2012, Columbia University, New York University, New York, USA.
- Chappel, James. 2015. Catholicism and the Economy of Miracles in West Germany. *New German Critique* 42: 9–40. [CrossRef]
- Chappel, James. 2018. *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Clark, Christopher, and Wolfram Kaiser, eds. 2003. *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clymer, Kenton J. 1986. *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898–1916: An Inquiry into the American Colonial Mentality*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Conway, Martin. 1996. Introduction. In *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965*. Edited by Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 1–33.
- Conway, Martin. 1997. *Catholic Politics in Europe, 1918–1945*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Conway, Martin. 2003. The Age of Christian Democracy: The Frontiers of Success and Failure. In *European Christian Democracy: Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspective*. Edited by Thomas Kselman and Joseph A. Buttigieg. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 43–67.
- Cristiani, María Gabriela Aguirre. 2008. *¿Una Historia Compartida? Revolución Mexicana y Catolicismo Social, 1913–1924*. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.
- Dagnino, Jorge. 2012. The Intellectuals of Italian Catholic Action and the Sacralisation of Politics in 1930s Europe. *Contemporary European History* 21: 215–33. [CrossRef]
- Dagnino, Jorge. 2017. *Faith and Fascism: Catholic Intellectuals in Italy, 1925–1943*. London: Palgrave.
- De Gasperi, Alcide. 1948. *Le basi morali della democrazia*. Rome: SELI.
- Driessen, Michael D. 2014. *Religion and Democratization: Framing Religious and Political Identities in Muslim and Catholic Societies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Driessen, Michael D. 2021. Catholicism and European Politics: Introducing Contemporary Dynamics. *Religions* 12: 271. [CrossRef]
- Edward, Lisa M. 2016. Message Sent, Message Received? The Papacy and Latin American Church at the Turn of the Twentieth Century. In *Local Church, Global Church: Catholic Activism in Latin America from Rerum Novarum to Vatican II*. Edited by Stephen J. C. Andes and Julia G. Young. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, pp. 3–20.
- Faggioli, Massimo. 2014. *Sorting Out Catholicism: A Brief History of the New Ecclesial Movements*. Translated by Demetrio S. Yocum. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.
- Fallow, Ben. 2013. *Religion and State Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Feldman, Matthew, Marius Turda, and Tudor Georgescu, eds. 2008. *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Forlenza, Rosario. 2010. A Party for the Mezzogiorno: The Christian Democratic Party, Agrarian Reform and the Government of Italy. *Contemporary European History* 19: 331–49. [CrossRef]
- Forlenza, Rosario. 2017. The Politics of the Abendland: Christian Democracy and the Idea of Europe after the Second World War. *Contemporary European History* 26: 261–86. [CrossRef]
- Forlenza, Rosario. 2019. New Perspectives on Twentieth-Century Catholicism. *Contemporary European History* 28: 581–95. [CrossRef]
- Forlenza, Rosario, and Bjørn Thomassen. 2016. *Italian Modernities: Competing Narratives of Nationhood*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Francisco, José M.C. 2006. Christianity as church and the story and the birth of the Filipino nation in the nineteenth century. In *The Cambridge History of Christianity: World Christianity c.1815-c.1914*. Edited by Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 8, pp. 528–41.
- Frei, Edoardo. 1958. *Pensamiento y acción*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial del Pacífico.
- Frei, Eduardo. 1964. Paternalism, Pluralism, and Christian Democratic Reform Movements in Latin America. In *Religion, Revolution and Reform: New Forces for Change in Latin America*. Edited by William V. D'Antonio and Fredrick B. Pike. New York: Praeger, pp. 27–40.
- Furlong, Paul, and David Curtis, eds. 1994. *The Church Faces the Modern World: Rerum Novarum and Its Impact*. Scunthorpe: Earls Gate.
- Gaëll, René. 1916. *Priests in the Firing Line*. Translated by H. Gibbs, and M. Berton. London: Longmans and Green.
- Gehler, Michael, and Wolfram Kaiser, eds. 2004. *Christian Democracy in Europe since 1945*. London: Routledge.
- Gemelli, Agostino. 1918. *Principio di nazionalità e amor di patria nella dottrina cattolica*. Turin: Libreria sociale internazionale.

- Geoss, Michael B. 2004. *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gottwald, Herbert. 1986. Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland. In *Lexikon zur Parteiengeschichte. Die bürgerlichen und kleinbürgerlichen Parteien und Verbände in Deutschland (1789–1945)*. Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, pp. 436–66.
- Grayson, George W. 1968. *El Partido Demócrata Cristiano chileno*. Buenos Aires: Francisco de Aguirre.
- Griffin, Roger. 2007. The Holy Storm: Clerical Fascism through the Lens of Modernism. *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8: 213–27. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Houlian, Patrick J. 2012. Local Catholicism as Transnational War Experience: Everyday Religious Practice in Occupied Northern France, 1914–1918. *Central European History* 45: 233–67. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Husslein, Joseph. 1920. William Emmanuel von Ketteler. In *The Church and Labor*. Edited by John A. Ryan and Joseph Husslein. New York: Kessinger, pp. 24–54.
- Invernizzi Accetti, Carlo. 2019. *What Is Christian Democracy? Politics, Religion and Ideology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaiser, Wolfram. 2007. *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kalivas, Stathis. 1996. *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Kertzer, David I. 2014. *The Pope and Mussolini: The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe*. New York: Random House.
- Klaiber, Jeffrey. 1983. Catholic Lay Movement in Peru, 1867–1959. *The Americas* 40: 149–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kosicki, Piotr H., and Slawomir Lukasiewicz, eds. 2018. *Christian Democracy Across the Iron Curtain: Europe Redefined*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Linch, John. 1984. The Catholic Church in Latin America, 1830–1930. In *The Cambridge History of Latin America, vol. 4: c.1870 to 1930*. Edited by Leslie Bethell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 527–96.
- Mainwaring, Scott, and Timothy R. Scully, eds. 2003. *Christian Democracy in Latin America: Electoral Competition and Regime Conflicts*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Mallimaci, Fortunato. 2004. Catolicismo y liberalismo: Las etapas del enfrentamiento por la definición de la modernidad religiosa en América Latina. In *La modernidad religiosa: Europa latina y América Latina en Perspectiva Comparada*. Edited by Jean-Pierre Bastian. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, pp. 19–44.
- Martinez, Anne A. 2014. *Catholic Borderlands: Mapping Catholicism Onto American Empire, 1905–1935*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Meyer, Jean. 1992. *El catolicismo social en México hasta 1913*. Mexico City: Instituto Mexicano de Doctrina Social Cristiana.
- Misner, Paul. 1991. *Social Catholicism in Europe: From the Onset of Industrialization to the First World War*. New York: Crossroad.
- Molony, John M. 1977. *The Emergence of Political Catholicism in Italy: Partito Popolare, 1919–1926*. Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Montalva, Eduardo Frei. 1989. *Eduardo Frei Montalva: Memorias (1911–1934) y correspondencias con Gabriela Mistral y Jacques Maritain*. Santiago: Planeta.
- Montini, Giovanni Battista. 1928. Idee-forze. *Studium* 24: 341–46.
- Moyn, Samuel. 2015. *Christian Human Rights*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. 2011. *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- O'Malley, Martin. 2008. *Wilhelm Ketteler and the Birth of Modern Social Catholic Thought*. Munich: Utz.
- Ofreneo, Rosalinda Pinedo. 1987. The Catholic Church in Philippine Politics. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 17: 320–38. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Othen, Christopher. 2013. *Franco's International Brigades: Adventurers, Fascists, and Christian Crusaders in the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Payne, Stanley G. 1984. *Spanish Catholicism: A Historical Overview*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Plaza, Arthur. 2008. From Christian Militants to Republican Renovators: The Third Ralliement of Catholics in Postwar France, 1944–1965. Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, New York, NY, USA.
- Pollard, John. 1996. Italy. In *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965*. Edited by Tom Buchanan and Marin Conway. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 69–96.
- Pollard, John. 2008. *Catholicism in Modern Italy: Religion, Society and Politics since 1861*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Pollard, John. 2013. Pius XI's Promotion of the Italian Model of Catholic Action in the World-Wide Church. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 63: 758–84. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Pombeni, Paolo. 2000. The Ideology of Christian Democracy. *Journal of Political Ideology* 5: 289–300. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Porter-Szucs, Brian. 2011. *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Quirk, Robert. 1973. *The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910–1919*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Recalde, Héctor. 1985. *La Iglesia y la cuestión social (1874–1910)*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina.
- Schell, Patience Alexandra. 2003. *Church and State Education in Revolutionary Mexico City*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Schumacher, John N. 1981. *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalism Movement, 1850–1903*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press.
- Schuman, Robert. 2010. *For Europe*. Geneva: Nagel.
- Sedgwick, Alexander. 1965. *The Ralliement in French Politics, 1890–1898*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Spectator (Alcide De Gasperi). 1935. La quindicina internazionale. *L'Illustrazione Vaticana* 6: 179–80.
- Sturzo, Luigi. 1945. Has Fascism Ended with Mussolini? *The Review of Politics* 7: 306–15. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Sturzo, Luigi. 1947. The Philosophic Background of Christian Democracy. *The Review of Politics* 9: 3–15. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Sturzo, Luigi. 1951. *I discorsi politici*. Rome: Istituto Luigi Sturzo.

- Thomassen, Bjørn, and Rosario Forlenza. 2016a. Christianity and Political Thought: Augusto Del Noce and the Ideology of Christian Democracy in Post-War Italy. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21: 181–99. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Thomassen, Bjørn, and Rosario Forlenza. 2016b. Catholic Modernity and the Italian Constitution. *History Workshop Journal* 81: 231–51. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Vaillancourt, Jean-Guy. 1980. *Papal Power: A Study of Vatican Control over Lay Catholic Elites*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Williams, Oliver F., and John W. Houck, eds. 1993. *Catholic Social Thought and the New World Order: Building on One Hundred Years*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Wolf, Hubert. 2012. *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich*. Translated by Kenneth Kronenberg. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.