



A Living Tradition:

The Holy See, Catholic Social Doctrine, and Global Politics, 1965-2000

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Abstract: In this thesis I explore the question of how the Holy See translates its own normative vision into concrete diplomatic practice. Drawing upon Alasdair MacIntyre's concept of a 'living tradition', I argue that Catholic Social Doctrine (CSD) is an exemplary case of a 'historically extended, socially embodied argument' about the good life that provides the Holy See with a source of inspiration and advice, shapes its perception of global politics, constitutes its identity and preferences, and constrains its diplomatic practice. However, due to its 'living' nature, CSD does not provide blueprints for action and falls short of determining papal diplomacy in global politics. A living religious tradition needs to be inherited, interpreted, and incarnated. This process is complicated and leads to political and ethical policy dilemmas as well as to changing patterns of conflict and cooperation with other international actors. I will examine this problematique in the context of four major case studies of papal diplomacy in the post-Second Vatican Council era: the Vietnam War, the Polish crisis in the early 1980s, the United Nations (UN) conferences on population control and women in Cairo and Beijing in the mid-1990s, and the Jubilee 2000 anti-debt campaign. My research findings have four broader implications. First, they will lay out a more fine-tuned approach to the study of religious traditions in IR. Second, they suggest a need for the field of religion and politics to avoid reducing the impact of religious ideas and practices to their causal impact on outcomes. Third, they undermine the analytical accurateness of widespread invocations of 'holy alliance' arguments for characterising Holy See diplomacy. Fourth, they provide good reasons for a more holistic perspective on CSD in particular and religion and politics in general.



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Bio: A. Alexander Stummvoll currently is Instructor in the Department of Catholic Studies and Research Fellow in the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology at DePaul University in Chicago. Following his successful defence his rank will be changed to that of Visiting Assistant Professor. He holds a B.Sc. (Econ) (Hons) in International Relations from Aberystwyth University (2005), an M.Phil. in International Relations from the University of Oxford (2007), and an M.Res. in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute (2009). In 2009 he co-founded the Religion and Politics Working Group at the EUI. His research and teaching focus on religion and politics, International Relations theory, Holy See diplomacy, Catholic Social Doctrine, and Church history. Alexander has published his work in *European Political Science*, *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, *St Antony's International Review*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *derstandard.at*, and *Europe Infos*. As part of his doctoral studies, he also worked as a trainee for the EU Delegation to the Holy See in Rome. His next research project is to rewrite his thesis into a publishable book manuscript.