

Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal

Volume 6 | Issue 1

Article 7

February 2019

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Jair Peltier
University of Minnesota - Morris

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Recommended Citation

Peltier, Jair (2019) "Conclaves in the Modern Papacy: Factors That Influence the Elections of Popes (1846-Present)," *Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/horizons/vol6/iss1/7>

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Conclaves in the Modern Papacy:
Factors That Influence the Elections of Popes (1846 - Present)

Jair Peltier (pelti093@morris.umn.edu)

University of Minnesota, Morris

Paper submitted to Scholarly Horizons

10/31/2018

Abstract

This research paper seeks to identify and explain external and internal factors, including international conflict, ecclesiastical norms, and the actions, styles, and reputations of popes in their life times, in the elections of popes in the Roman Catholic Church from 1846 to 2013. Using historical context is important in identifying the international, social, and political climate that the conclaves were held in. Analyzing the papacies of the individual popes is another important aspect of this research. One pontificate begins when another ends. It would therefore be unproductive to disregard the successes and shortcomings of the popes after their elections. The conclaves over the last 160 years have been influenced by a changing world and a changing church. By looking at the key figures within the conclaves and international events in the world we can identify what the cardinals were attempting to accomplish with their choices. The unification of Italy, Two World Wars, The Second Vatican Council, social ideology, internal scandal and tradition, and globalization all influenced the outcomes of this ancient process to varying degrees since 1846.

Introduction

Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum habemus papam. These are the words that declare to the world that a new man has been selected to take the reign of the papacy. The Papacy is the oldest continuing absolute monarchy in history. The apostle Peter is considered to be the first pope and his successors number 265. The pope is the head of the Roman Catholic church and the head of the smallest country in the world, the Holy See or Vatican City. For the last 2,000 years the Papacy has been an influential force in the spiritual lives of billions of Catholics throughout the world as well as the secular lives of countless others. Although the papacy began with an illiterate fisherman from Galilee, it nevertheless would evolve to become the chief contender for absolute power in Europe. The pope's temporal power reached its zenith in the middle ages and, though it steadily declined, remained well into the 19th century. As the papacy came to influence the social and political sphere so too did these spheres come to influence the papacy. Although spiritual in its foundation, the papacy, like all human institutions, has built itself up on politics.

The Catholic church teaches that the pope is chosen by inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Although volumes could be written about this spiritual tradition, this paper seeks to identify the social and political influences on the outcomes of the election process. The election of the pope is heavily dependent on what is happening in the world at that time and who could best respond to it. The cardinals in conclave have been consistently interested in international affairs as well as internal issues. They not only analyze the issues but also the personalities. They have generally chosen people who have experience and skill. In times of tranquility they choose pastoral philosophers in times of war they choose diplomatic leaders. Depending on the time, the pope can be anyone from a curial bureaucrat to a strongman outsider. To say the pope is chosen as any other cleric would be an understatement. The cardinals understand the gravity of each and every conclave and do not take it lightly. That isn't to say the cardinals have carte blanche to elect anyone. There are taboos and norms that also affect the outcomes. It was a long tradition that members of the Roman Curia were not elected. Popes themselves can also have an impact. Depending on how one pope governs may determine whether there is a spirit of reform or continuation that pervades the process. All of these considerations must be understood to feel the weight of each conclave.

Review of Literature

In “‘I Will Observe Absolute and Perpetual Secrecy:’ The Historical Background of the Rigid Secrecy Found in Papal Elections” Frederic Baumgartner outlines the history of the secretive conclave¹. He explains that the conclave became increasingly secretive in the 18th and 19th centuries. Baumgartner points out that at one point personal records could be released by

¹ When studying the conclaves it is rather difficult to find any first-hand records. During the election process all ballots are burned and records are sealed.

the cardinals after a conclave had ended. This practice had been forbidden by the mid-1800's. As the conclave became more susceptible to foreign influence by world leaders several popes increased the level of secrecy that shrouded the conclave. One useful way to analyse the conclaves without much inside access is to look at newspaper stories from international sources. In doing so we can look at the different perspectives of what the Catholic church or the Vatican needed at the time. Expectations can say a lot about the motivations of the Cardinals.

In order to understand who the winning candidates were it is very important to look at biographies. John Julius Norwich did an excellent job of outlining the history of the papacy and describing the lives of many of the popes in his book "Absolute Monarchs." In this book Norwich offers an in-depth analysis of the various papacies. He describes the many intricacies within the Vatican and how various popes interacted with world politics. Norwich focuses almost exclusively on the political themes of various papacies. He is overall objective but often adds his own criticisms of the historical papacy. In the biographical encyclopedia "The Popes: Every Question Answered" Rupert Mathews offers a similar insight into the lives of the popes. More specifically, Mathews starts well before Norwich. Whereas Norwich is interested in the pontificates themselves, Mathews is much more wholistic. What is most important to Mathews is understanding who these men were before they were popes and what their backgrounds and upbringings were like. Both authors describe a 2,000 year history without going into minute detail. Both works give brief overviews of the popes. Some sources go into more individualized detail. Josef Schmidlin's book "Life of His Holiness Pope Pius X" and George La Piana's "From Leo XIII to Benedict XV" offer more detailed information of popes' lives.

Aside from these biographies, in-depth information of the conclave itself was still noticeably absent. Most authors mentioned the conclaves very little if at all. The conclave was

usually mentioned in passing to mark the beginning of any given pontificate. John Paul Adams compiled an archive of accounts of the conclaves. In a series of articles, he uses rare first and second-hand source materials to describe what happened in every conclave since the 1200's. In each article, he identifies the leaders of organic factions, the favored candidates, and various ballot counts. In doing so, he deduces the attitude that many electors had at the beginning and near the end of the conclaves. Valerie Pirie utilized the same kinds of sources in her book "The Triple Crown: An Account of the Papal Conclaves". Pirie's work only spanned as far as the conclave of 1876. Her research would be indispensable for understanding the conclaves from the renaissance era to the early modern papacy but unfortunately stops around where my work begins. Adams has been worked on accounting the conclaves to today. His work is much more comprehensive for the modern era.

One of the most important aspects of the research is context. When a conclave begins, it is at the end of one papacy and the beginning of another. In order to understand the context that the college of cardinals meet under it is important to understand the pontificate and style of the previous pope. "The Diplomat Pope" by James Ward, "The Unknown Pope" by John Pollard, and "The Pope and Mussolini" by David Kertzer examines how social and political climate changes over the course of one pontificate and how these changes can affect the election of a successor. Essentially, continuation or reform can be chief motivators for papal candidates. In "Liberating a Continent" David Naglieri identifies the work of John Paul II, then Karol Wojtyła, as an important factor in his election.

Literature on the papacy is quite extensive. Much of what exists is biographical in nature. Unfortunately many authors neglect the conclave. For many writers the conclave is glossed over. The research here takes the biographical material and expands upon the conclave as a chief

aspect of political and social understanding. This research identifies key players in the conclave as a way to understand the motivations of the cardinals at any given time. The social and political issues would have been heavily debated and the personalities and histories of individuals in the college of cardinals would have been deeply considered. This paper seeks to add depth to the narrative of papal history and understand why one man was chosen over so many others.

The Conclave

As the incumbent of the papal throne is supposed to be celibate, the papacy is not a hereditary monarchy. The process of selecting a pope to lead the Catholic church is quite interesting to say the least. The Pope is chosen through a secret process known as conclave, or “with a key” in Latin, in which the Cardinal-electors are locked in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican to deliberate and choose from amongst themselves who should next sit in the chair of Saint Peter. This specific selection process has been around since the eleventh century, when the election process for the Pope was structured into its current form. Cardinals are chosen by the reigning pope and retain the right of cardinal-electors until the age of eighty. When a cardinal loses the right to vote in a conclave, a new cardinal is appointed. The number of cardinal electors has increased since the middle ages having been just twelve in the earliest days of conclave. Today the number of cardinal-electors must remain at a constant 120, having been raised from sixty in the early 20th century. Once the cardinal-electors are processed into their sanctuary they take an oath to secrecy. The conclave is intended to be done in secret to avoid external influence and has become especially secretive throughout the late eighteenth century onward². The Master

² Frederick J. Baumgartner, “I will Observe Absolute and Perpetual Secrecy:”, *The Historical Background of the Rigid Secrecy Found in Papal Elections*, *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 2, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, April, 2003), p. 76.

of Papal Ceremonies decrees “extra omnes” to expel anyone who is not a cardinal elector. The Sistine Chapel is then locked and the cardinals begin deliberation. Four ballots are cast each day; two in the morning and two in the afternoon. After each ballot the votes are tallied by three scrutinizers and burned in a furnace. If there is no two-thirds majority, chemicals are added so that the smoke appears black, if there is a two-thirds majority the smoke is white. This is to signal to the outside world, as there is absolutely no coverage allowed from the inside, that a new pope has been elected. The pope-elect is then asked whether or not they accept and they choose a papal name. Afterwards they are brought before the crowds in St. Peter’s Square to give a blessing. This has been the process of the modern conclave. Minor changes can and have been made by the pope over the centuries but the basic mode of operation has remained unchanged³. The Conclave was most recently outlined by Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis* in 1996. Now that the procedure of the conclave has been established we can now examine the influences on these elections in the modern papacy.

Italian Unification and the Roman Question

Scholars generally maintain that the modern era of the papacy began with Pius IX whose papacy began in 1846. Under his papacy the Papal States were lost to the revolutionary unification of Northern and Southern Italy. It was the moment that marked a tremendous shift of papal power from a temporal hard power into a diplomatic and spiritual soft power. The conclave of 1846 would be deeply influenced by the tumultuous, revolutionary Europe. The conclave had

³ John Paul II, *Universi Dominici Gregis*, (Vatican City: February, 1996).

essentially begun with four “papabili” or favorites to be elected. As it is considered improper to campaign for the petrine office there are often organic factions that arise favoring one candidate or another. The four papabile at the beginning of this conclave were the conservative Cardinal Secretary of State Luigi Lambruschini, the liberal Pasquale Tommaso Gizzi, the Dean of the College of Cardinals Ludovico Micara, and Giovanni Mastai-Ferretti. As Micara was a favorite to only the people of Rome the cardinals dismissed his nomination and Micara’s chances of being elected diminished immediately. It essentially became a runoff between Lambruschini and Gizzi with Mastai-Ferretti receiving a few votes. The greatest matter of concern among the cardinals was that of the autonomy of the Papal States. Since the revolutions of Europe were knocking on the door of the Vatican the cardinals felt obliged to have someone who could communicate to the feelings of the revolutionaries. When it became apparent that Gizzi was not going to exceed the Lambruschini votes his lobby joined the Mastai-Ferretti crowd⁴. Mastai-Ferretti was known to have no diplomatic experience or curial(Vatican administration) experience. He was definitely an outsider. However, as a young priest he had been sent to Chile and Peru by Pope Pius VII to assist the Apostolic Nuncio(Vatican ambassador) as an auditor to hear cases in ecclesiastical court⁵. This was during the post revolutionary era of South America and Mastai-Ferretti would become quite attuned to the goings on of revolution and how to minister to revolutionaries. This was demonstrated by his ability to minister to a revolution hungry flock in Italy. In fact, he was seen as a liberal due to his record of generosity and charity towards nationalist movements while archbishop, and later cardinal-archbishop, of Spoleto. The college of cardinals felt that they did not need another bureaucratic pontiff. They chose Mastai-

⁴ John Paul Adams, “Sede Vacante of 1846,” *Conclave*; (Northridge, CA: California State University Northridge, September, 2015).

⁵ Miguel Angel, *El Papado y la Iglesia Naciente*; (Mexico City, Mexico,: Seminario Conciliar de México, Viajeros, 1991).

Ferretti on the second day and he chose the name Pius IX in honor of the pope who sent him to South America⁶. The cardinals felt that Pius IX would be forward thinking enough to quell the revolutionary forces and maintain the temporal power of the papal states. The conclave of 1846 was influenced by the growing concern of the power of revolutionary forces in Europe and the desire to maintain the status quo while moving forward. They chose a man who they saw as being able to do so due to his history of working with revolutionary forces in the past and his seemingly liberal approach to pastorship.

Pius IX would be triumphed by liberals in the early years of his papacy. After granting amnesty to revolutionaries and lifting restrictions on Jewish citizens he was hailed around the world as a reformer. Later in his papacy he began to shift more conservatively. After the assassination of Count Pellegrino Rossi, Pius IX condemned the revolutionary forces and moved to preserve papal primacy and autonomy at the first Vatican Council in 1869. At this council the bishops of the world came together in Rome and promulgated the dogma of papal infallibility. The Franco-Prussian war broke out and French troops who guarded the Papal States were recalled to fight and the Papal States were left unprotected. The Italian revolutionaries seized the city of Rome in 1870 and Pius IX, in protest, never left the Vatican again or blessed the city of Rome. This policy became known as the “prisoner of the Vatican” policy. The papacy was now stuck in a kind of limbo. No one knew whether the Vatican should become a part of Italy or remain autonomous and receive compensation from the new Italian state. This would become known as the “Roman Question” and it would be a looming question for decades to come. In an effort to influence the parliamentary elections of the new Italian state Pius IX declared the elections “non expedit” and declared that Catholics in Italy should abstain from voting. His

⁶ Valerie Pirie, *The Triple Crown: An Account of the Papal Conclaves*; (London, UK: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1935), p. 326.

inability to deal with the Roman Question and his adoption of the “non expedit” policy severed the Papacy’s likeability. The fact that he became the longest serving pope in history, almost 32 years, meant that under his reign there was little innovation or progress and his papacy became sedentary and disastrous for Papal autonomy. He died in 1878. The cardinals had decidedly erred in their decision to choose an outsider. Pius IX was unable to meet the expectations of the cardinals and they would set out to find a more diplomatic, internal candidate.

Diplomacy in the Age of the Nation State

The stage was set for the conclave of 1878. After the death of Pius IX the cardinals convened in the Sistine Chapel seeking a diplomatic pontiff who could understand international relations⁷. The Papal Camerlengo Vincenzo Pecci was the sole papabile in the conclave. The Camerlengo is a chief figure in the Roman Curia. He holds the power of the Papacy during the interregnum, the time between the death of a pope and the election of a new pope⁸. At the time he was considered tactful and charming and is said to have had an appreciable level of diplomatic skill⁹. Cardinal Pecci’s reputation as a diplomat was so strong that upon his election the French statesman Leon Gambetta quipped that this new pope was “more diplomat than priest¹⁰”. His history with diplomacy was unparalleled in the college of cardinals. He had been a provincial minister in the Papal States of Pope Gregory XVI and was the Apostolic Nuncio to Belgium in 1843. During his time as Apostolic Nuncio he made strides in diplomatic relations for the Papacy. He managed to curry favor with the royal court including Queen Louise

⁷ Bernard O’Reilly, *Life of Pope Leo XIII: From an Authentic Memoir*; (New York, NY: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1887), p. 297.

⁸ John Paul Adams, “Sede Vacante of 1878,” *Conclave*; (Northridge, CA: California State University Northridge, September, 2015).

⁹ James E. Ward, “Leo XIII: ‘The Diplomat Pope’”, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1966), pp. 50-61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

and King Leopold I. Nuncio Pecci helped establish the Belgian College in Rome and encouraged the construction of the Cologne Cathedral in Germany. After a successful term in the nunciature he was made a cardinal and appointed to the post as Archbishop of Perugia later that year. This was in the wake of several revolutions in Western Europe. Pius IX intended to shield Cardinal Pecci from the international turmoil. While serving as archbishop he assisted worker's rights movements in order to prevent staunch socialism from taking hold in Italy. After serving as Cardinal Archbishop of Perugia for thirty years Pius IX made him Camerlengo. Considering his success in the diplomatic corps as well as his success as an administrator the cardinals elected him on the first day on the third ballot. He chose the name Leo XIII and took the reins as the first pope after the loss of the Papal States¹¹. The greatest influence on the election of Leo XIII was simply his prospects as a diplomatic voice in the new age of revolution and the Nation-State. Leo XIII could use his skills as a diplomat to gain back what the church had lost in hard power as soft power. He used Catholic populations in foreign countries to remind foreign monarchies or republics of his own influence as a world leader. Aside from his desire to preserve prominence he desired to use his voice to gain favorability. The new pope became the first pope to recognize revolutionary republics such as France and the newly unified Italy. Although he demonstrated contempt for the Italian republic, by continuing to be a prisoner of the Vatican, he was still open to negotiating with the Italian state. In this way he managed to appease the hostility of these states and effectively transitioned the papacy into its modern form. He continued to work towards strengthening papal autonomy but later moved his focus more towards ecclesiastical doctrine and administration. It was under Leo XIII that the papacy was successfully installed into a softer temporal realm¹².

¹¹ Pirie, *The Triple Crown*, p. 340.

¹² *Ibid.*

Leo XIII died as the oldest pope in history at the age of 93. He was pope for twenty-five years. By the twentieth century the College of Cardinals had been packed with a new generation of clergy created by the late pontiff. Pope Leo XIII created the most cardinals in one pontificate ever at 147 cardinals¹³. In fact only one cardinal in the conclave of 1903 had even elected a pope before¹⁴. Many of the Cardinals by this time did not even remember the Papal States and it had become increasingly apparent that the hard temporal power that was enjoyed by the papacy was no longer on the horizon. The cardinalate had become heavily conservative and less concerned about the prospects of papal influence in temporal matters. At this point the strongest point of interest for the clergy was simply managing the faith and faithful. The church had become threatened by modernist ideologies and it was becoming more and more difficult to convince the faithful to stay in the Catholic Church. With all the ideas being thrown around Europe, namely marxism and nationalism, the cardinals needed a philosopher king to lead them through these times. Cardinal Mariano Rampolla was the favorite. He was an intellectual and archivist of the Vatican archives. Though he had advocated for the restoration of authority over the Papal States it was more important to the Cardinals that Rampolla was a defender of the clergy. He actively fought unjust penal codes that sought to harm Catholics and Catholic clergy. Rampolla was on course to being elected as a modern pope but it was an ancient rule that prevented him from taking his place on the papal throne. After the first ballot had indicated a majority in favor of him the Prince-Archbishop of Kraków, Cardinal Jan Puzyna de Kosielsko, declared a veto on behalf of the Austrian Emperor¹⁵. The papal veto was a right afforded to traditionally Catholic

¹³ John F. Broderick, "The Sacred College of Cardinals: Size and Geographical Composition (1099-1986)," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, Vol. 25 (1987), p. 66.

¹⁴"Sixty-Two Cardinals in Rome for Conclave," *The New York Times*, July 29, 1903, p. 7.

¹⁵Josef Schmidlin and Anton de Waal, *Life of His Holiness Pope Pius X* (Cincinnati, OH: Benziger Brothers, 1904), p. 188

monarchs who did not want a certain cardinal elected. They would send a veto with their local cardinal archbishop and if their vetoed candidate had been elected the candidate's election could be barred. The cardinals in conclave were outraged but many felt obliged to follow their own procedures. The cardinals then turned to Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto. The man had always been reserved and contemplative. He was seen as a more spiritual choice¹⁶. Cardinal Sarto was completely apolitical and devoted entirely to philosophy and theology¹⁷. As a young priest he studied canon law and Thomistic theology. He spent most of his life teaching dogmatic theology and moral theology and then became an assistant to Leo XIII who made him cardinal patriarch of Venice. After five ballots Sarto was elected and chose the name Pius X, in honor of Pius IX. Having been outraged by the veto of his colleague Pius X immediately abolished the papal veto. He threatened that the use of the papal veto would lead to automatic excommunication. The greatest influence of this conclave was growing concern over ideologies and a twist of fate. As a conservative Pius X had been chosen to maintain orthodoxy in the ideological anarchy of post revolutionary Europe just as Rampolla had been expected to do¹⁸.

The pontificate of Pius X was a success. In a sense he had rediscovered the spiritual authority of the Papacy. The papacy had long been a political force. The spiritual aspect had been a secondary matter of interest until Leo XIII maneuvered the papacy away from many temporal aspirations and Pius X honored that decision. Pius X would go on to implement “anti-modernist” policies throughout his papacy. These policies were aimed at preventing radical ideas from corrupting church teaching. He placed significant focus on dogma above all else and forbade

¹⁶George F. La Piana, “From Leo XIII to Benedict XV,” *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (May, 1917), p. 175

¹⁷Herbermann, Charles G., Edward A. Pace, Conde B. Fallen, Thomas J. Shahan, and John J. Wynne *The Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 12 (New York, NY: Robert Appleton Company, 1907).

¹⁸John Paul Adams, “Sede Vacante of 1903,” *Conclave*.

Catholics from participating in modern ideologies and even some political elections. These policies also significantly consolidated authority into the pope¹⁹. A modern day inquisition had arisen. Under the papacy of Pius X the clergy had embraced a more ultramontane interpretation of doctrine and communicated this attitude towards the faithful. The voice of the pope became more influential to faithful Catholics and this became more influential to democratic leaders. In order to appease the Catholics of any given country there had to be good relations with the pope in Rome. A few years later Europe was on the cusp of a bloody conflict. Pius X had an untimely death in August of 1914.

Two World Wars

The Cardinals convened in Rome. World War I had just begun. The Vatican was uncertain about which stance to take. Whether the Vatican would be neutral or supportive of Catholic nations, whether or not the cardinals should be conservative or reactionary had become matters of intense debate²⁰. The Cardinals were heavily divided in the conclave of 1914. The votes were heavily divided. In the first ballot Cardinal Pietro Maffi of Pisa and Cardinal Giacomo della Chiesa of Bologna both got twelve votes and almost thirty other votes were divided among the other cardinals. Nine more ballots would transpire. Various anti-modernist cardinals gained some support but on the tenth ballot there was only one cardinal who managed to obtain a majority of votes in the plurality. Cardinal Giacomo della Chiesa eventually received the two thirds majority by one vote. This prompted an examination of the ballots as the cardinals are forbidden from voting for themselves. Della Chiesa did no such thing²¹. This indicates that

¹⁹ La Piana, "From Leo XIII to Benedict XV," p. 178.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 187.

²¹ John Paul Adams, "Sede Vacante of 1914," *Conclave*, (Northridge, CA: California State University Northridge, September, 2015).

there was heavy reluctance coming from the opposition. The old guard, the anti-modernist inquisition, was unsuccessfully clinging to power. Though Cardinal Maffi had been a liberal favorite he was seen as being too close to the house of Savoy having presided at the wedding of Prince Umberto and as a war monger having advocated for a “fight to the finish” approach to the war. Della Chiesa had been known to the cardinals as a man of the Curia for quite some time. Upon becoming a priest he was placed in the diplomatic corps of the Vatican in a junior position and after a few years was elevated to a post as secretary for the nunciature in Spain. Cardinal Rampolla served as nuncio to Spain for several years but was then called to Rome to serve as the cardinal Secretary of State under Leo XIII. He brought della Chiesa with him²². Della Chiesa was the main liaison between Leo XIII and Cardinal Rampolla. As the architect of Leo XIII’s foreign policy Cardinal Rampolla kept Della Chiesa closely attuned to international affairs. When Pius X became pope della Chiesa was removed from the curia and sent to be the bishop of Bologna. It is believed that his association with Rampolla’s international policies was seen as an opposition to those of the pontiff. This is what prompted his removal. Three months before his death, however, Pius X elevated della Chiesa to the cardinalate and della Chiesa was then elected pope²³. His election was motivated by his history with Leo XIII’s diplomatic policies. The greatest influence on the divisive conclave of 1914 was the milieu of Europe’s “war to end all wars.” Benedict XV was elected to be a diplomatic leader that could lead the church through the First World War.

The neutral stance of the papacy was established under Benedict XV. After being elected he made a plea for peace and an end to the war which he called a “senseless butchery.” After supporting measures to preserve peace in Europe and even meeting with Woodrow Wilson to

²²Rupert Mathews, *The Popes: Every Question Answered*; (San Diego, CA: Thunder Bay Press, 2014), p. 286.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

discuss the League of Nations Benedict XV had effectively gained the papacy a place of prominence in international politics. There was still a long way to go. This was evident in the way Italy had managed to convince the allied forces to not invite the Vatican to the Paris peace talks²⁴. The Roman Question was still a matter of concern and Italy did not want it to come up. This indicates that while the Vatican may have been seen as a strong force for peace in the world it was still considered less legitimate than any state. The conclave of 1922 would be instrumental in securing papal autonomy in a Europe ravaged by war, on the brink of a sequel, trying to put the pieces back together. This conclave was split into two factions known as the conservative integrationists and the conciliatory syndicalists. The integrationists were led by Cardinal Secretary of the Holy Office Rafael Merry del Val and the syndicalists were led by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Gasparri. These factions were interested in maintaining the policies of Pius X and Benedict XV respectively²⁵. Both sides sought to settle the Roman Question. Essentially Merry del Val wanted to use hard power and Gasparri wanted to use soft power. Neither group managed to gain a strong advantage. The conclave was deadlocked. Among the cardinals was a scholarly man, Achilles Ratti. He was the prefect of the Vatican library and had dabbled in diplomatic affairs as Nuncio and Apostolic Visitor to Poland²⁶. He had made a name for himself in his dealing with Communists in Eastern Europe. He had even intended to visit the USSR in the hopes of building bridges but was prevented by Pope Benedict XV out of fear for his life. Ratti was seen as a forward thinking man who was not afraid to reach out to the enemy. The Gasparri faction turned to him as a progressive who would most closely emulate their modus operandi. After fourteen ballots, the longest conclave in the twentieth century, Achilles Ratti was

²⁴John F. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope: Benedict XV (1914-1922) and the Pursuit of Peace* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000).

²⁵David I. Kertzer, *The Pope and Mussolini* (New York, NY: Random House, 2014).

²⁶Philip Hughes, "Pius The Eleventh," *Blackfriars*, Vol. 20, No. 228 (May, 1939), p. 167.

elected as Pius XI and was seen as a strong leader who would still exercise an autonomous papacy while maintaining openness towards the growing power of the nation state. The conclave of 1922 sought an intellectual leader who would continue the diplomatic practices of Benedict XV. Pius XI was elected on the hopes that the Roman Question could be settled once and for all²⁷.

At the beginning of his pontificate Pius XI said that he chose his name because he wanted “a Pius to end the Roman question which had begun under a Pius.” He would eventually fulfill this goal. Over the course of Pius XI’s pontificate he managed to make a deal with the newly established fascist state in Italy. Using the diplomatic skill of his Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, he managed to make a concordat with Mussolini that recognized the Vatican as an independent state. Pius XI would be the first sovereign of the modern day Vatican city state, the Holy See. 1929 was the year that the Roman Question was finally answered. The Pope and the Vatican would remain autonomous and separate from Italy and be paid 750,000,000 lire and 1,000,000,000 lire in consolidated bearer bonds in reparation for the loss of the Papal States. Throughout his pontificate he would be consistently outspoken about numerous issues. Pius XI was considered no-nonsense and blunt. By 1937 Nazi Germany was becoming more of a problem and Pius XI was prepared to condemn the practices of the Nazi’s, the chief ally of fascist Italy. Mit Brennender Sorge was a very critical document and was the only encyclical letter written in German as opposed to Latin. This was a very significant gesture. It was smuggled into Germany to be read from the pulpits on Palm Sunday. Pius XI continued to be critical of the Nazi’s until his death in 1939.

²⁷John Paul Adams, “Sede Vacante of 1922,” *Conclave*.

The conclave of 1939 sought a diplomat who could storm a potential second world war²⁸. Anticipating a brutal war the cardinals sought a soft-spoken diplomat to contrast Pius XI's unfiltered record. Though it is speculated that there were a few favorites, there was only one among the cardinals who had an impeccable record. Cardinal Secretary of State and Camerlengo Eugenio Pacelli was the papabile in the college of cardinals. Pacelli was born into an old Roman aristocratic family that served the papacy for generations. Having been apart of this aristocracy he was poised to be a top official in the Roman Curia from infancy. After becoming a priest he began working with the Secretary of State working on several diplomatic agreements and accords. In 1917 he was made nuncio to Bavaria and had become the de facto nuncio to all of Germany. He remained the top diplomatic church official in Germany for twelve years. Probably his most famous work came under the Reichskonkordat which was a negotiated treaty with the newly established Nazi Germany in 1932. He was also extremely influential in the writing of Pius XI's encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*. Of all the cardinals in the conclave Pacelli was the only one to have such a strong record with German diplomacy²⁹. The conclave ended almost as soon as it began. The cardinals had a clear favorite. After only one day and three ballots the cardinal who was considered by Pius XI to be "indispensable," and by some accounts his personal favorite to succeed him, was chosen to lead the church into the storm of WWII. Considering Cardinal Pacelli's intimate knowledge and understanding of German culture and politics the cardinals felt he was the optimal choice. The biggest influence in the conclave of 1939 was the growing threat of Nazi Germany and WWII³⁰.

²⁸John Paul Adams, "Sede Vacante of 1939," *Conclave-*

²⁹ Mathews, *Every Question Answered*, pp. 290-291.

³⁰ Adams, "*Sede Vacante of 1939*," *Conclave*.

The Second Vatican Council

Pius XII led a successful papacy throughout WWII and beyond. His experience with German society and media allowed him to lead a fruitful resistance underground; successfully saving 850,000 Jews. He maintained Vatican sovereignty while surrounded by fascist and Nazi occupied Italy throughout the war. He continued as pope into the late 1950s. By 1958 Pius XII had made some modest reforms in church liturgy and structure. He had been pope for almost twenty years. The cardinals had decided to elect an older pope. This was a tradition in papal conclaves. If the cardinals did not want another long reigning pope they would elect a “papa di passaggio” or “caretaker” pope³¹. This caretaker would be expected to hold office for a few years without making many changes or lasting impacts. Angelo Roncalli was the cardinal patriarch of Venice. He was also advanced in age. Many in the conclave had desired the innovative, progressive Archbishop of Milan Giovanni Battista Montini. Montini, however, was not a cardinal. Although it is not a technical requirement the cardinals always choose from among the college itself. Even if Montini had been a cardinal he was young and perhaps the cardinals would have agreed it was not his time. Roncalli was old and overweight. They knew he would not last long. As bizarre as it may sound the biggest deciding factor for the election of John XXIII in 1958 was his lack of potential to change things in any meaningful way until a “real” pope could be chosen³².

Unfortunately for the cardinals they were not as clever as they may have imagined. Pope John XXIII may have had the biggest impact on the Catholic church in the last 400 years. John XXIII convened the Second Vatican council to bring about sweeping reform. The spirit of Vatican II had been one of reform but lacked a clear mission. John XXIII had decried that this

³¹John Julius Norwich, *Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy* (Hoboken NJ: Random House, 2011), p. 453.

³²John Paul Adams, “Sede Vacante of 1958,” *Conclave*.

“aggiornamento” would “air out the church” by “opening up the windows” but he never clarified what that meant³³. The council ended up lasting longer than expected and John XXIII died of stomach cancer half way through the council. The conclave of 1963 would decide the fate of the council and, in a sense, the future of the Catholic church. By this time the former favorite, Archbishop Montini, had been made a cardinal and was now eligible to be elected. However, by this time there was also a fractional issue within the college of cardinals. The second Vatican council had divided bishops from around the world and the cardinals were not immune. The conservatives, who wanted to cancel the council all together, supported Cardinal Giuseppe Siri. The progressives, who wanted stronger reforms added to the council supported Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro. It was reported that Francisco Franco had offered “advice” to the conclave through the Spanish Cardinal Arcadia Larraona. El Caudillo had attempted to block the election of Cardinal Montini in a de facto Papal Veto. This indicates that Cardinal Montini had a reputation for being unfriendly to absolutist conservatism³⁴. By the second ballot it had become apparent that Lercaro would not have enough votes, as many saw him as too liberal, and he threw his support behind Cardinal Montini who had indicated his intent to continue a reformative council while keeping a slightly conservative attitude about doing too much too soon. Montini was a moderate and that was seen as a key characteristic in winning over the college of cardinals. As Montini gained votes in successive ballots Siri lost all hope. Montini was elected on the sixth ballot³⁵. The great issue of the conclave of 1963 was the Second Vatican council; what to do and how to do it. Cardinal Montini chose the name Paul VI to “reach out to modern gentiles.” Paul VI would take the reigns of this complicated council for three years to come.

³³ Norwich, *Absolute Monarchs*, p. 453.

³⁴ Adams, *Sede Vacante*, 1958.

³⁵ Norwich, *Absolute Monarchs*, p. 459.

The second Vatican council finished in the third year of Paul VI's pontificate and he spent the rest of his papacy implementing the changes of Vatican II. He also was bent on "updating" the papacy by removing countless medieval practices that were deemed too spectacular and overly regal. He famously abolished the Papal Court and abandoned the Papal Tiara, the crown jewels of the papacy. As time went on Paul VI even traveled extensively. He was the first pope to leave Italy in centuries. This established a strong international presence of the papacy and set expectations high for future popes. Paul VI also reigned over the 60's and 70's and many of his intellectual and pastoral writings outlined the errors of the sexual revolution and extreme progressivism. Near the end of his life Paul VI ran into issues with the radical communist group, The Red Brigade. They kidnapped the Pope's personal friend and former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro and publically assassinated him in 1978. This took a toll on the Pope's emotional health and his overall health declined. He died a few months later³⁶.

The strength of Communism in Europe had become a matter of concern. After seeing how close communist extremism had gotten even to the Pope the cardinals were deeply distressed. By the conclave of 1978 there had been much to discuss in terms of communist influence in society and what that could mean for Catholicism in Italy and Eastern Europe. This was paired with the uncertainty of the reforms of Vatican II. The reforms would need to be continued under a new pontificate if they were going to have a meaningful impact. This led to Cardinal Giuseppe Siri making another surge as a papabile. The conservatives saw Siri as someone who would have a more conservative interpretation of the council and even reverse some policies that were seen as too liberal. The liberals supported Cardinal Giovanni Benelli who was expected to have a liberal interpretation of the council and possibly expand on some

³⁶ Mathews, *Every Question Answered*, pg. 295.

policies. Benelli, however, was also accused of being too autocratic and his gained him some resistance. The two papabile were dismissed as too polarizing and interests began to shift. Interestingly enough the cardinals did not elect a papabile. In fact, the virtually unknown Cardinal Patriarch of Venice Albino Luciani had been elected instead. As a young priest in Belluno, Italy he was well known among Italian clerics for his contacts with left-wing politicians and his good working relationship with local branches of the Communist Party³⁷. He was seen as a warm pastoral figure who would be a good leader to fulfill the council and who could build a bridge of dialogue with Catholics in communist countries and perhaps even the communist regimes themselves. His consideration was unexpected because of his lack of ties to the Roman Curia. Although he was a Cardinal he was never tapped for any church administrative positions. This indicates that the Cardinals were more interested in a pastor than executive³⁸. Luciani was seen as the perfect champion over communist division and continuing the work of Vatican II. Indeed Albino Luciani indicated his intent to continue the work of the council right away by choosing the names of his two immediate predecessors John and Paul. John Paul I was the first pope to choose two names and to call himself “the first.” He greeted the crowds of St. Peter’s square with a smile brimming with joy. The “smiling pope” had won the hearts of many in that very instant.

The Era of Non-Italian Popes: Communism, Sexual Abuse, and Globalization

John Paul I had a promising future ahead of him. He was relatively young and very vibrant. Unfortunately a genetic hiccup caused him to suffer an untimely heart attack after a pontificate of only thirty-three days. Historians now can only speculate about the work that could

³⁷ Ibid., pg. 296.

³⁸ John Paul Adams, “Sede Vacante of 1978,” *Conclave*.

have or would have been done under the first John Paul. The cardinals met in conclave for the second time in one year. The conclave of October 1978 would seek a replacement for the short lived, “smiling pope.” The two favorites from the previous election were favorites in this one as well. Cardinals Siri and Benelli would divide the conclave yet again. Cardinal Giovanni Colombo was considered a compromise candidate by the Italian cardinal electors. However he declared that he would not accept election. It may not have mattered anyway. The Italian cardinals may have been quarreling among themselves with propositions of support and compromise but they failed to realise that the college of cardinals had become vastly diverse over the last two decades. By 1978 Italian cardinals went from 55% in the 1940’s to 23%³⁹. Pius XII in 1953 had expressed his desire that the college of cardinals should “portray in a living manner the universality of the Church⁴⁰.” Essentially Paul VI had expanded the college from 90 to 136 cardinal electors and packed it with non-Italians. Over his pontificate he created 143 cardinals; the second most in history⁴¹. For the first time in history Italians were a minority in the sacred college. Many speculated on the possibility of electing a non-Italian. This opened the door for Austrian Cardinal Franz Konig, with the support of Spanish Cardinal Vicente Enrique y Tarancon and American Cardinal John Krol, to advance the nomination of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Poland. As the issues from the last conclave had carried over the cardinals were seriously considering this outlier. Surely Karol Wojtyla, a bishop in a communist occupied country, understood the importance of resisting communist injustice. He did, after all, deal with such issues on a daily basis⁴². Cardinal Siri and moderate cardinals threw their support behind this simple, pastoral bishop and he chose the name John Paul II, in honor of the short lived John

³⁹ Broderick, *The Sacred College*, pg. 65.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 66.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 67.

⁴² Adams, “Sede Vacante 1978,” *Conclave*.

Paul I. John Paul II was elected to lead the post Vatican II church and respond to the growing red problem in eastern Europe. Having been elected as the first non-Italian pope in almost 500 years, there was a strong indication that curial traditions were on the way out.

John Paul II made many pastoral visits to his home in Poland and many eastern european countries to address the growing concern for Catholics in communist countries. In many respects John Paul II was successful. Communism fell in Eastern Europe in an uncanny sequence that mirrored his pastoral visits⁴³. Near the end of his life however, there came his greatest failure. As John Paul II got older and diagnosed with Parkinson's disease he became negligent of a growing crisis. This may have led to great mismanagement in the sexual abuse scandal that rocked the church in 2002. In the 1990s sexual abuse cases had been consolidated under the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith under new head Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of Bavaria. Under his leadership the cases were brought under one department in order to understand the scope and scale of the crisis. Unfortunately Ratzinger was only an advisory figure in this matter and the Pope was the ultimate authority. The abuse cases were not dealt with with much severity or gravity. Many pastors who abused victims were simply moved to other parishes. It is unclear whether or not this was a mismanagement on the part of local dioceses, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, or the Pope himself. Either way the abuse was essentially unchecked and the story broke in the early 2000s as an embarrassment to the Vatican and the withering pope. John Paul II would not endure criticism for long. After his diagnosis of parkinson's in 2001 his physical health declined rapidly and he died in 2005 after a long personal struggle.

The cardinals convened for the first conclave of the new millenium. In this conclave there were two overarching issues. The sexual abuse scandal was obviously number one. The cardinals

⁴³David Naglieri, *Liberating a Continent: John Paul II and the Fall of Communism*, Directed by David Naglieri. 2015; (Washington D.C.: Ignatius Press, 2016).

were very concerned with this crisis, some among them to blame, and were seeking a resolution. The second issue was the globalization of the church. The Catholic church was no longer a sole European institution. It was growing in South America, Africa, and Asia. Vatican II set the groundwork for this but the church hierarchy had not necessarily caught up. The cardinals recognized this and were very interested in finding someone who could respond to the growing church in the developing world. Two cardinals were papabile: Joseph Ratzinger, the dean of the college of cardinals who knew more than anyone about the sexual abuse scandal as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, and Jorge Bergoglio, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina who made a name for himself ministering to the poor in the barrios of his home city. The ballots seemed to be shifting in Bergoglio's favor. John Paul II had reigned for twenty-seven years. Many of the cardinals wanted Ratzinger for his experience but also his advanced age. He was already seventy-eight, eleven years older than Bergoglio. Once again some of the cardinals were considering the "caretaker" option. Still Bergoglio surged ahead by the third ballot receiving an increase from twenty-five votes to forty. Seventy-seven votes were need to secure an election of two-thirds. Although Bergoglio seemed to be gaining favor he reportedly made a plea to no longer be considered⁴⁴ during a lunch break between ballots. He claimed that he would not be ready for a task of this magnitude. Cardinal Alfonso Trujillo of Colombia urged his colleagues to listen to Bergoglio. It worked. Bergoglio's ballots dropped enough in the fourth ballot to secure the election of Cardinal Ratzinger with eighty-four votes⁴⁵. Joseph Ratzinger would now be known as Benedict XVI in honor of the "Pope of Peace" Benedict XV.

Pope Benedict XVI would be pope for the next eight years. He did much to respond to the sexual abuse scandal including pursuing the notorious Father Marcial Degollado. There was

⁴⁴Joseph S. O'Leary "New Pope, New Hope," *The Furrow*, Vol. 64, No. 5 (May, 2013), pg. 259.

⁴⁵John Paul Adams, "Sede Vacante of 2005," *Conclave*.

still much that needed to be done in the sexual abuse crisis but from his time as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith throughout his papacy he secured great strides to combat the sex abuse scandal. He would also give special attention to the growing universality of the Catholic church. He elevated ninety cardinals. Over thirty percent of the cardinals created under him were from Africa, South America, and Asia. He also elevated six members of the Eastern rite churches to the college of cardinals. Citing advanced age he resigned in 2013. Benedict XVI became the first pope in almost 500 years to resign the office. His resignation triggered the conclave of 2013. Going into this conclave the cardinals had their minds set on the growing church in the developing world. Benedict XVI had diversified the college of cardinals greatly. The number of cardinals from the developing world had increased and there was one man among them who was their champion. This time the cardinals would go through with electing Jorge Bergoglio whom they believed would be effective in dealing with the growing diversity of the church. It is believed that Cardinal Bergoglio reignited support for himself after his remarks before the conclave. In his speech he made references to St. Paul and alluded to Paul VI. In this way he spoke of evangelization and charismatic zeal. He announced that the next pope should live by “the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing.” The Cardinals were very moved by this speech and saw it as an indication that Bergoglio would be evangelical at a time when the church was expanding its borders. This time he would accept the election as Pope Francis after the fifth ballot⁴⁶. He is the first pope named Francis, the first pope from the western hemisphere, the first pope from South America and, more remarkably, the first pope from the Society of Jesus; the Jesuits.

⁴⁶John Paul Adams, “Sede Vacante of 2013,” *Conclave*.

According to Pope Francis the Cardinals joked about what name he should take. Some recommended Clement XV as payback to Clement XIV who suppressed the Jesuits. Others recommended Hadrian the VII as Hadrian VI was the “reformer” and the church “[needed] reform”. Jokes can be very telling. This indicates that the Cardinals had reform on the brain as well. Over the past five years Francis has made the curia less Italian and the college of cardinals less European overall, even more so than any of his predecessors. He is leading significant reform in how the church governs and insists that the leadership should reflect the growing diversity of Catholicism around the globe. As of June 2018 more than half of the cardinal electors have been created by Pope Francis and he has even had whole consistories where he has created no European or American cardinals at all. He has also expressed his desire to reform the Vatican bank and launch inquiries into canonical reforms, such as women in the church⁴⁷. In 2014 Pope Francis established the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. He has made it clear that the sex abuse scandal is still an issue that must be addressed. In May 2018 all thirty-four bishops in Chile resigned their posts over the sexual abuse scandal under pressure from Francis himself⁴⁸. In July of the same year Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, former archbishop of Washington, resigned his office. He was the first Cardinal to resign since 1927⁴⁹. He is the most senior member of the Catholic Church to resign or be charged over sexual abuse allegations. The zero tolerance approach has promise but even Pope Francis has admitted there is a lot of work to be done. There is a high probability that the next pope will have been elevated to the cardinalate by Francis. The next pope will more than likely be non-European and probably

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Harriet Sherwood, “All Chilean Bishops Offer Their Resignation Over Sexual Abuse Cover-Up,” *The Guardian*, May 18, 2018.

⁴⁹ Shannon Van Sant, “Cardinal Theodore McCarrick Resigns Amid Sexual Abuse Allegations,” *NPR*, July 28, 2018

from a developing nation. The changes in administration made by Pope Francis will have a large effect on the next conclave whether it be within the next decade or beyond. We will more than likely see a pontiff that will read the signs of the times and continue the reforming spirit of Francis.

Conclusion

Since 1846 the cardinals in conclave have sought less political popes and more pastoral ones. Today external issues have been given less significance over internal problems. In the mid-1800s the question of the papal states and temporal power shifted after the Italian revolution. For the cardinals there was less debate about maintaining the papal states and more about regaining international influence. As Europe began to shed its imperial identity, the cardinals in conclave sought to be more diplomatic and neutral. World War I and II saw an increase in the need for diplomatic skill and the sexual revolution saw an increase in moral pastorship. The conclaves responded to the external communist abuses of religious liberty and then internal abuses of church authority and power. The most recent conclave was more responsive to the changing world and growing diversity of the church itself. The influences on the conclaves in the modern papacy have varied vastly over the last 150 years and will continue to do so throughout the 21st century. As the influence of the papacy on the world evolves so too will the influences of the world on the conclaves. As Catholics face persecution in Central Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Communist Asia, while losing numbers in Europe and North America, the papacy will need to have a leader with a strong ability to communicate to these regions, promote the faith, and protect religious liberty. Only one thing is certain, the next pope, whoever it may be, will be chosen from the most diverse College of Cardinals in history and be in an unusual

position to harken a new era of papal authority.

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