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Maritain and the Church in the Modern World

The Cooperation of Church and State: Maritain's Argument from the Unity of the Person

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The root requirement for a sound mutual cooperation between Church and the body politic is not the unity of a religio-political body, as the respublica Christiana of the Middle Ages was, but the very unity of the human person, simultaneously a member of the body politic and of the Church, if he freely adheres to her.¹

On December 8, 1965 the curtain closed on a great religious event of the twentieth century, the Second Vatican Council. Culminating decades of initiatives for renewal, the Council reappropriated and refashioned its fundamental message, or “deposit of faith,” in order to bear it more effectively in the modern world. It was to unleash ferment, doubt, and hesitations within the Catholic Church for decades to come. On that closing day, in the still of a winter afternoon in Rome, perhaps an eye of a storm, a slightly stooped octogenarian approached Pope Paul VI and received from him a message from the Council Fathers to “Men of thought and science.” It was a poignant moment for both men, since Paul VI once had referred to Jacques Maritain as his mentor. The message was brief. It offered encouragement and admiration for the great duty and responsibility of intellectual inquiry and its long search. “Our paths could not fail to cross,” the Council Fathers wrote to the intellectuals of the world. And indeed Jacques Maritain was just the man at “the crossroads”—a man engaged with many of the great intellectual and practical issues of the century in science and philosophy, politics and ethics, art and religion. But he too was a man of deep faith, whose conversion to Catholicism was a great story in its own right.² So the Council Fathers also offered, “without dazzling brilliance,” the light of “our mysterious lamp which is faith.” This faith, they said, is a “great friend of intelligence,” and

¹ Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 160.

² See Raissa Maritain, *We have Been Friends Together and Adventures in Grace: The Memoirs of Raissa Maritain*, trans. Julie Kernan (Garden City, New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1961); and Raissa Maritain, ed. *Leon Bloy*,

they foresaw the possibility of a deep understanding and cooperation between science and faith. They only asked that one does not “stand in the way of this important meeting.” Some thirty years later Pope John Paul II would single out Maritain again as an exemplary philosopher whose life and work had exhibited the boldness of reason combined with the illumination of faith.³

So too do we find in Maritain’s life and work an exemplary account of the relation of Church and State. As a citizen of the world, engaged with the United Nations (UNESCO), and as a French ex-patriot in American Universities such as Princeton, Notre Dame and Chicago, Maritain was at the crossroads of new opportunities for Church-State relations. Here too did he often argue that the Church is a great friend of freedom, calling for new era of cooperation, and asking that obscurantists not stand in the way of such historic meetings. If faith and science have paths which cannot fail to cross, so too must the Church and State. Historically, the relation of Church and State is one of the major motifs of history.⁴ As early as the 1930s Maritain had begun to unveil his account of the new era for Church-State relations that he named “New Christendom.” It would involve the recognition of a new historic climate in which the permanent principles would be applied in new creative ways. *Man and the State* reiterates this theme, and often refers back to the groundbreaking work of his previous publications⁵ (*The Things that are not Caesar’s* and *Integral Humanism*). It anticipates the great work of Vatican II in this area, and it finds its fulfillment in Maritain’s poorly received book *The Peasant of the Garonne*, published in 1966 but written within a month after that poignant meeting between him and Pope Paul VI.⁶

In this paper I wish to sketch Maritain’s understanding of Church and State as developed in *Man and the State*; then take a brief look at the understanding of Vatican II on the role of the Church in the Modern World; and finally consider Maritain’s attempt in *The Peasant of the Garonne* to interpret the meaning of Vatican II in light of the new relation of Church and State that he had previously articulated.

Man and the State and the Reconciliation of Liberty and Religion

In 1949, Jacques Maritain delivered six lectures at the University of Chicago under the auspices of the Charles R. Walgreen Foundation for the Study of American Institutions. Maritain had high praise for the American constitution, describing it as “an outstanding lay Christian document tinged with the philosophy of the day.”⁷

³ Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1998), #74.

⁴ See Luigi Sturzo, *Church and State*, trans. Barbara Barclay Carter (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962).

⁵ See Jacques Maritain, *The Things That are not Caesar’s*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (London: Sheed and Ward, 1939) and Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973).

⁶ Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time*, trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968). On the controversy caused by this book see Brooke W. Smith, *Jacques Maritain: Antimodern or Ultramodern?* (New York: Elsevier, 1976).

⁷ *Man and the State*, p. 183.

The American political tradition he saw as a viable example of a tradition built upon a sharp distinction between Church and State combined with their actual cooperation: "The spirit and inspiration of this great political Christian document is basically repugnant to the idea of making human society stand aloof from God and from any religious faith." He sought to avoid two extremes which had plagued Europe: on the one hand, the practice of a form of civil intolerance which made non-Christians or non-Catholics second-class citizens; on the other hand, the behavior of those who sought to marginalize the Church by isolating it from the activities of modern society. The former extreme could take the form of maintaining clerical privilege and keeping up a façade of the Christian state. Maritain saw in this the effect of increased bitterness and misunderstanding, as well the encouragement of Pharisaical citizens. The latter extreme could take the form of indifference to religious affairs, or the historicist claim that the principles of prior ages are irrelevant and religion has no place at all in the modern world. Maritain finds the golden mean through a distinction between the fundamental principles, imperishable principles, and the conditions for application, historic conditions which call for analogous explication and application. That is, he does not merely say that the historic conditions are less than perfect and require a prudential application and approximation, but that the very historic climate of the modern age, different as it is from the sacral age of the medieval time, requires a different analogous understanding of the principles at work. Thus he is neither a historicist on matter of principle nor an absolutist on the question of proper understanding of the relationship between Church and State.

Maritain bases his account of Church and State on the notion of degrees or orders of human achievement and flourishing. The common good civil life is "an ultimate end" but in a certain order, that is, the order of temporal achievement. It is an end "worthy in itself." In his first chapter Maritain derives from the Greek sense of the polis an account of the dignity of the political order. The common good of the body politic is constituted by justice and friendship, a form of association that "tends toward a really human and freely achieved communion. It lives on the devotion of human persons and their gift of themselves."⁸ The common good includes economic and political infrastructure but most of all "the sociological integration of all the civic conscience, political virtues and sense of law and freedom, of all the activity, material prosperity and spiritual riches of unconsciously operating hereditary wisdom, of moral rectitude, justice, friendship, happiness, virtue and heroism in the individual lives of the members of the body politic." It is important to note that Maritain distinguishes the "state" from the "body politic" the former being the instrument of the body politic to administer justice and good order. Thus the very notion of Church and State must recall this distinction during the discussion of their relations and cooperation, for the church finds a place within

⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

the notion of the body politic with its various associations and heritage. So the common good of the political society must include “an intrinsic though indirect ordination to something which transcends it.” It is subordinate to a higher good because there is in human nature a higher aspiration. The seeds of such transcendence are to be found in natural human aspirations to “spiritual goods” such as truth, justice, and beauty which lead one beyond nation or state. The state can claim no sovereignty over the life of the mind. The political common good cannot be closed in on itself; nor should the state attempt to curb the impulse to truth and beauty, such is the basis for civil liberties for freedom of thought and expression. For the ancients, this aspiration was embodied in the philosopher who existed beyond the city, and who was even beyond that religion which was poetical or civil in nature. But the philosopher embraced a true philosophical religion, a rational or metaphysical religion.

The human person transcends the state and the body politic through “what is supra-temporal.” Maritain recognizes a capacity for transcendence in all, not just the few, and that capacity finds an ultimate perfection in religion. From a Christian perspective the absolute ultimate end lies in the supernatural order, union with God through grace. But he is careful to explain each principle and each step of his argument from the standpoint of both the believer and the unbeliever. There will be an “unavoidable mutual misapprehension” between the two,⁹ but nevertheless a philosophical case can be made for the notion of “sharp distinction and actual cooperation.”

Maritain develops three general principles which he says are “imperishable” or true always and everywhere, but they require historic conditioning in their application. The three general principles are: (1) the freedom of the Church to teach and preach and worship; (2) the superiority of the Church – that is, of the spiritual – over the body politic and the State; and (3) the necessary cooperation between the Church and the body politic and the State. He elaborates and defends each one in turn.

Maritain presents a variety of reasons for freedom of religion. It follows from his overall account of the transcendence of the human person. The perfections of intellect and will which characterize the full development of the human person have a terminus beyond political life in “supra-temporal goods” which “constitute the moral heritage of mankind, the spiritual common good of civilization or the community of minds.”¹⁰ We can call this metaphysical ground for freedom of religion. Maritain also gives a more direct political argument. On the basis of freedom of association the freedom of religion or Church can be derived. Churches are one of the primary intermediate groups to which the human person is a member and derives much benefit; society as well derives such benefit. So too can we appeal

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

to freedom of conscience, which Maritain calls “the most basic and inalienable of all the human rights.” For the believer, on the other hand, there is a more profound basis for freedom of the Church. The Church is understood to be a superior society by virtue of its supernatural character. It derives from the mandate to preach the Gospel given by Jesus.

The second principle, concerning the superiority of the Church, derives from a historical, as well as a theological claim. Prior to the arrival of Christianity the political society would make divine claims for itself or for its ruler. The very distinction between Church and State is made possible by Christianity and the admonition to “Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” As Maritain so eloquently puts it “the terrestrial and national frameworks in which the spiritual was confined have been shattered.” The superiority of the spiritual is manifest in the very distinction – i.e., God is greater than Caesar.¹¹ And yet Maritain points out, following Leo XIII, the de-divinizing of the State does not harm the state. The State is “autonomous” within its own order. The Church makes no claim for direct rule over temporal affairs on this account.

Finally, for the third principle, perhaps most controversial, is an argument based upon the benefit of the Church to society. All the Church asks is freedom – in return much will be rendered to the State in terms of moral influence. Of course it is now the very influence on morality that many resent. But the argument from the unity of the human person is brought in precisely at this point. It would be unnatural for the Church and State to ignore each other because it would amount to splitting the person in two halves – for the sake of the integrity of the person there must be cooperation between Church and State. Determining what kind of cooperation is needed requires us to consider the historic climate in which we now live in contrast to the climate of an earlier era.

Maritain’s unique breakthrough on the topic of Church and State, and I might add an anticipation of the position adopted by Vatican II, derives from his account of history. Maritain proposes that we approach the issue in light of the “climate or constellation of existential conditions” dealing with juridical, social political and intellectual factors that define a given era. The application of the principles in each era calls for a different mode of application. That is, Maritain does not see the historical conditions as so many limits to a prudential application, which in more favorable conditions would allow for a greater achievement. Rather the new era requires an analogous application. The conservatives, if you will, do not grasp the historical climate or opportunities for a new style of Christian witness and a new style of Church-State relations. They are abstract absolutists with respect to the principles, but have a univocal grasp of what they mean or entail. For their position would entail a denial of equal civil rights to the non-believer and it would ultimately

¹¹ “The pagan City, which claimed to be the absolute whole of the human being, absorbed the spiritual in the temporal power and at the same time apotheosised the State. Its ultimate worship of the Emperors was the sure consequence of an infallible internal logic.” *The Things that are not Caesar’s*, p. 1.

entail a form of violence against them. The liberals, if you will, declare that the principles have now become obsolete and fall into historicism. Their problem stems from an equivocal understanding of the principles. It entails indifferentism and perhaps the aggressive attack on religion in the public square that we witness today. It is part of Maritain's life-long philosophical and theological project to confront the modern world from the standpoint of the Thomistic tradition and to extend the basic principles to the problems of the day. He wishes to embrace the advances of the modern world but by purifying the errors of its philosophy and first principles.

Maritain's understanding of the modern era centers on a distinction between the "sacral" versus the "lay" state. The distinction is most fully articulated in *Integral Humanism*, and it is the centerpiece of Maritain's understanding of the achievement of Vatican II as explained in *The Peasant of the Garonne*, to be examined below. Maritain describes the medieval era as characterized by a distinction between the two powers, temporal and spiritual, but a unification of the two through the use of faith for the unity of the body politic. Religious creed was used as the basis for unity in the body politic, so a rupture in belief was seen as a rupture in the body politic. The heretic therefore was seen as threat to the political order. The methods of the inquisition served both the Church and the State; the State could use it as an instrument for state unity; the Church could use the temporal power as a means for its goals. The temporal therefore was subordinated to the spiritual as a means or an instrument for a spiritual end.¹² The medieval era was also characterized by what Maritain calls "fortitude in the service of justice" as its public ideal. The public servant aimed at the embodiment of a noble ideal. With the fragmentation of the religious unity of the state by way of the reformation, the "Baroque era" attempted to refund the unity of the state through the absolutism of the ruler whose faith would guarantee the unity of the spiritual and political order. Maritain views this as a halfway house, unworkable in the long run. The true modern era is described as a lay state whose two guiding principles are the differentiation and autonomy of the temporal sphere, from economics to politics and the public ideal of the conquest of freedom and human dignity. The unity of the state could no longer be grounded in a spiritual and religious unity, so it must be based upon a temporal goal as such. The notion of human dignity and the use of temporal power to empower or liberate human beings from bondage to nature or oppressive rule became the public ideal. The autonomy of the secular affairs Maritain says is a rightful unfolding of the very distinction of the affairs of God and Caesar. The new climate therefore requires the analogous application of the imperishable principles. The entailments are as follows. The state is no longer viewed as the "secular arm" of the church. The state is "autonomous and independent" within its own sphere.¹³ Second, the equality of all members of the temporal society is

¹² See *Integral Humanism*, pp. 142ff.; see also Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), pp. 111-14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

recognized as a fundamental tenant. The holding of office or the enjoyment of the civil rights is the same for all. Third, the Church and State both recognize the importance of “inner forces” as a preferred mode over coercion. Faith cannot be imposed by force, but neither can political persuasion or other fundamentals of belief. This leads to the highlighting of conscience as the great key to the new era. Freedom of conscience entails freedom of inquiry and freedom of expression.

In these new conditions Maritain sees a great new era for the relation of Church and State, traced back to the unity of the person. There are three aspects to the argument. First, the person is characterized by a unity or integrity – and although living in various orders with various pursuits, he has one conscience. The person is simultaneously a member of the body politic and a member of the Church. Hence “he would be cut in two if his temporal membership were cut off from his spiritual membership.”¹⁴ The wholeness of the person should incline us towards cooperation rather than antagonism. Second, the religious pursuit is essential to the “pursuit of happiness.” Therefore the common good of society, which includes the flourishing of its members, cannot but be favorable towards the religious pursuit. Third, through the influence on conscience “Christian truths and incentives” would pass into the sphere of temporal existence and thereby assist the democratic state in rousing the “inner strength and spiritual stronghold of democracy.”¹⁵ The religious beliefs and practices will have a “leavening effect.” They should uplift morality and sensitive moral conscience. The civil rights movement of the 1960s would be an example that Maritain has in mind. Maritain anticipates the communitarian critique of liberal philosophy – the attempt to develop a neutral, thin theory of the reason for the political society is impossible or weak. The pluralism of religious belief can be turned to the state’s advantage if the various religious traditions can agree on concrete practical principles, but provide a more full-bodied understanding and defense of the principles at a higher level. The educational efforts of the Church are very important for the well being of the political society.¹⁶ The students could see “the entire convictions” and personal inspiration behind their principles of government and social practice and embrace them more deeply. For this reason Maritain says that the isolation or separation of Church and State would “simply spell suicide.”

The very distinction between Church and State grants to the Church her new found influence. She stands for universality and for the higher supratemporal good to which the human person aspires. The superiority of the Church is therefore not the basis for the use of coercive methods or for the dictation of public policy, but it should operate through the springs of conscience and persuasion. In a poignant passage Maritain says, “A superior agent is not confined or shut up within itself. It radiates. It stimulates the inner forces and energies of other agents – even autonomous in their own peculiar spheres – whose place is less high in the scale of

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 121-22.

being. Superiority implies a penetrating and vivifying influence. The very token of the superiority of the Church is the moral power with which she vitally influence, penetrates and quickens, as a spiritual leaven, temporal existence and the inner energies of nature, so as to carry them to a higher and more perfect level in their own order.”¹⁷ So the autonomy of the temporal sphere is recognized and even celebrated, and the influence of the Church is to stimulate within the very political order its own proper excellence and achievement of its own proper end. It requires a distinct metaphysical conception, analogous to the relation of nature and grace – that grace does not destroy but rather builds upon and perfects nature.¹⁸ Maritain’s prophetic term for the new relation of Church and State, from the standpoint of the Church, is called the “sanctification of secular life.” The temporal itself bears within itself the mark of the divine, a *quid divinum*.¹⁹

The Church therefore seeks to persuade and to revive the inner energies within the human person, within conscience. It thus forever forswears the use of coercive power. Rather, the Church now asks for freedom, the freedom to pursue its spiritual mission. No special privilege is required, just an acknowledgement that the temporal common good of the state is advanced by granting to the Church her freedom. It is a temporal good for the reasons mentioned above, the essential component of the pursuit of happiness and the leavening effect of Christian conscience within society at large. This constitutes an in-principled argument against state coercion for religious purposes. In addition there are prudential reasons for limiting even the legitimate secular reasons for morality as mediated through religion. Maritain explains the Thomistic adage that law should be proportionate to the capacity of the people. Thus not every moral standard will be legislated in full force.²⁰

The actual cooperation should go beyond the negative freedom of the Church to be allowed to pursue her mission to preach the gospel. Maritain says that the state should ask the Church to do more in domains where she can assist – such as welfare and education. The state can help remove obstacles and “open the doors” for the Church to assist the “social and moral work of the nation, to provide people with a leisure worthy of human dignity, and to develop within them the sense of liberty and fraternity.”²¹

At the end of the day Maritain understands that there will always be an ultimate misapprehension between the believer and the non-believer. But he thinks that the task is now clear. The influence of the Church on liberty is for the good; she has

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 164-65.

¹⁸ See the book by Maritain’s theological mentor, Charles Cardinal Journet, *The Meaning of Grace*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Princeton: Scepter Press, 1996).

¹⁹ This notion of the *quid divinum* or the divine something that can be discovered at the heart of all secular work was brought to my attention by Fr. Bob Connor, of the Prelature of Opus Dei; he made reference to an important sermon by Mgr. Escrivá entitled “Passionately Loving the World,” in Josemaria Escrivá, *Conversations with Mgr. Escrivá De Balaguer* (Dublin: Scepter, 1968). Also see his *Friends of God* (Dublin: Scepter, 1981). An elaboration can be found in Jose Luis Illanes, *On the Theology of Work* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1982).

²⁰ *Man and the State*, pp. 167-71.

²¹ Ibid., p. 179.

forsworn the use of coercion for religious purposes. The blind forces, which have attacked religion in the name of freedom and the dignity of the person, must now drop their mask and appear, as they are – opponents of liberty and human dignity. Their anti-religious animus, their virulent secularism, now becomes the sole reason for attacking and excluding religion. Maritain has traced our way through the Tocquevillian dilemma: “Where then are we? Men of religion fight against freedom, and lovers of liberty attack religion; noble and generous spirits praise slavery, while low servile minds preach independence; honest and enlightened citizens are the enemies of all progress, while men without patriotism or morals make themselves the apostles of civilization and enlightenment!”²² And one hundred years later Maritain claims in his *Man and the State*: “Present times, however miserable they are, have the wherewithal to elate those who love the Church and love freedom. . . . The cause of freedom and the cause of the Church are one in the defense of man.”²³

Vatican II on “The Church in the Modern World”

Considered one of the four great documents of Vatican II, “The Church in the Modern World” outlined a new emphasis and new strategy for the role of the Church.²⁴ Seeking to read “the signs of the times” the Council Fathers traced out many positive developments of the modern world, as well as the frustrated aspirations of the modern world. It emphasizes the dignity of the human person and depths of conscience. But one must also notice its Augustinian thread of the dark side, the sinfulness of man, as the ultimate reason for the frustrations and failures of such noble aspirations. Thus it argues that religion, Christianity, the Church, have an important role to play in the development of the modern world. Its new emphasis will involve the laity and their special role in the modern world. But throughout, the essential distinction between Church and State is recalled and reaffirmed. “The Church and the political community in their own fields are autonomous and independent from each other.”²⁵ And following the position of Maritain the council fathers also emphasize the need for cooperation based upon the unity of the human person; both are devoted to the good of the “same man.” Both must therefore foster sounder cooperation between themselves for the good of all. Autonomy therefore does not entail separation or antagonism.

In one of the key sections the council addresses itself to the objection whether “a closer bond between human activity and religion will work against the independence of men, of societies, or of the sciences.” In order to properly answer

²² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), p. 17.

²³ *Man and the State*, p. 187; “Here [Vatican II] is accomplished the great reversal of virtue of which it is no longer the human which take charge of defending the divine, but the divine which offers itself to defend the human.” *The Peasant of the Garonne*, p. 4.

²⁴ *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1965); subsequent references will be to section numbers of “GS.”

²⁵ GS, #76.

that fear various meanings of autonomy are explored. The proper meaning of autonomy comports with the Christian notion of creation:

If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by modern man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator. For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts.²⁶

Politics and economics therefore have their own proper autonomy – i.e., their own fundamental laws and intelligibility. The political community achieves its proper differentiation from the religious association, the Church or any other religious association. Political life has its proper excellence; its own proper dynamism; and its own proper role to play in the development of human beings. But by this same token, the political sphere is not the ultimate; it must not claim the mantle of religion for itself. It is not divine. One manner of claiming divinity or ultimacy for itself would be through self-sufficiency. That is if the State recognizes no power higher than itself, then it will verge towards idolatry of its own proper purpose and thereby distort it. Thus the council fathers rightly describe the “false” sense of autonomy:

But if the expression, the independence of temporal affairs, is taken to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator, anyone who acknowledges God will see how false such a meaning is. For without the Creator the creature would disappear. For their part, however, all believers of whatever religion always hear His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures. When God is forgotten, however, the creature itself grows unintelligible.²⁷

Echoing the Thomistic notion of the *exitus et reditus*, the coming forth from God and the return of creatures to God, the council fathers point out that the origin and end of human life transcend the political order, for which a due reverence and respect must be acknowledged.²⁸ In fact, a great theme of this council is that the denial of this higher origin and destiny leads to the very assault upon human dignity with which the modern world is so concerned. The loss of the Creator entails the loss of the creature. The Church is therefore a “sign and safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person.”²⁹ By fostering and elevating all that

²⁶ GS, #36.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Only God is great. God alone is the beginning and end. God alone is the source of your authority and the foundation of your laws.” Paul VI, “To the Guardians of Temporal Power: Message to Heads of State,” appendix, p. 246. See GS #13: “Often refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, man has disrupted also his proper relationship to his own ultimate goal as well as his whole relationship toward himself and others and all created things.”

²⁹ GS, # 76

is true, good and beautiful, the Church has a great role to play in developing the modern world and the temporal and political community. It must be said that she uses her own proper methods – “the ways and means proper to the Gospel” which are different from those of the earthly city. In her turn the Church asks for freedom “to preach the faith, to teach her social doctrine.” In his Message to Heads of State, Paul VI said “She asks of you only liberty.”³⁰ The Church does not threaten temporal order but rather, “heals everything human of its fatal emptiness, transfigures it and fills it with hope, truth and beauty.”³¹

This role becomes especially pronounced in light of the Augustinian theme of human weakness with its need for healing; this theme is taken up into the Thomistic idea of grace perfecting nature and elevating from within. It is the very autonomy of the temporal that is respected here – the ministrations of the Church are for the sake of the proper development of the political, the temporal, and the human as such. From the very outset of the document the Council fathers refer to the problem of evil: the Church wishes to help the modern world find the fulfillment of its quest for dignity and freedom. But they must realize that this world is divided by sin.³² It is an illusion to think that a genuine or total emancipation of mankind will be brought about without an acknowledgement of the deeper root of human failure.³³ It is anthropocentric humanism, premised upon this false sense of autonomy, which thinks that the world can sustain meaning without any reference to the divine, indeed, the modern temptation is to believe that the world lacks meaning only to be filled in by human creativity.³⁴ But the Council Fathers press the question: “What is this sense of sorrow, of evil, of death, which continues to exist despite so much progress? What purpose have these victories purchased at so high a cost?” Is it not apparent that human beings struggle with evil and find themselves almost unable to deal with it?³⁵ Sin obscures the very light of conscience.³⁶ Good human energies are distorted by pride and self love: “constantly imperiled by man’s pride and deranged self-love, [they] must be purified and perfected.”³⁷ The purification and perfection of the natural activity and disposition is a task assigned to the lay people. This is a great achievement of the council. The Church will fulfill this mission, this benefit to the earthly city, not by assuming temporal power or by using the means proper to the earthly city such as coercion

³⁰ “To the Guardians of Temporal Power: Message to Heads of State,” appendix, p. 246.

³¹ Ibid.

³² GS, #2.

³³ Ibid., #10.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness. Indeed, man finds that by himself he is incapable of battling the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as though he is bound by chains. But the Lord Himself came to free and strengthen man, renewing him inwardly and casting out that prince of this world (*John* 12:31) who held him in the bondage of sin. For sin has diminished man, blocking his path to fulfillment.” Ibid., #13.

³⁶ Ibid., #16.

³⁷ Ibid., #37.

or political power. Rather through the very means proper to the Gospel, through the inspiration of conscience and through a sacramental approach. It is through the lay people because of their unity of life. It is the same person who is a member of the Church and who is also a member of the political community. The burden of unity falls upon the individual person, the individual Christian, who is a member of both societies. Vatican II is known for its lack of anathemas and condemnations, taking a new approach to modernity no longer in terms of a syllabus of errors or condemnation of mistakes, but “to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit.”³⁸ And thus one of the few errors condemned is that on the part of Christians who divorce their own earthly affairs from their religious life: “This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age.”³⁹ A Christian may not claim a warrant to neglect or to shirk their earthly duties because of a concern with the otherworldly. In fact such a Christian “jeopardizes his eternal salvation.” The council fathers call for Christian laymen to gather into a “vital synthesis with religious values” all their earthly activities – humane, domestic, professional, social and technical enterprises. Indeed “secularity” is the very mark of the layman – “secular duties and activities belong properly to laymen” and they should work according to the “laws proper to each discipline” and yet seek to inscribe the divine law into the very life of the earthly city – by way of their own conscientious action.⁴⁰ The very secular work of the layman accomplishes both a religious mission and a temporal mission, to the benefit of both:

Even by their secular activity they must aid one another to greater holiness of life, so that the world may be filled with the spirit of Christ and may the more effectively attain its destiny in justice, in love and in peace. The laity enjoys a principle role in the universal fulfillment of this task. Therefore, by their competence in secular disciplines and by their activity, interiorly raised up by grace, let them work earnestly in order that created goods through human labor, technical skill and civil culture may serve the utility of all men according to the plan of the creator and the light of his word . . . Thus, through the members of the Church, will Christ increasingly illuminate the whole of human society with his saving light.⁴¹

It is part of the universal call to holiness that the layman receives such an important new emphasis according to Vatican II. No longer is the notion of holiness to be reserved for the priests, the religious. And yet the layman is not called to holiness by a secondary imitation of the religious by a flight from the world or by an explicitly ecclesiastical mission; rather it is through unity of life, unity of religious devotion

³⁸ Ibid., #3.

³⁹ Ibid., #43.

⁴⁰ “Lumen Gentium,” in Austin Flannery, ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, vol. 1 (Northport, New York: Costello, 1998).

⁴¹ Ibid., #36; on the positive meaning of “secularity” for the laity see Pope John Paul II, *The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1988) sections 9, 15, 17.

and professional energy, the former illuminating and purifying the latter, that the layman achieves holiness of life. It may be called a sanctification of the world, a sanctification of the temporal order itself, in terms of the proper finalities and autonomy of the temporal order itself. For good reason then did Paul VI remark in his message to rulers that the freedom of the Church will first of all benefit "your peoples" since the Church "forms for you loyal citizens, friends of social peace and progress." A sharp distinction is drawn between the proper orders of Church and State; yet a vital cooperation is recognized, for the benefit of each. Also for good reason, did Paul VI acknowledge Jacques Maritain at the end of the council by presenting him with his Message to Men of Thought and Science. Paul VI rightly indicated that the Vatican Council was in some ways the fulfillment of the life-long work of Maritain. Indeed, in his own closing remarks, Paul VI spoke about the religious significance of the Council turning upon a proper understanding of the "whole man."⁴² And yet within a few months of that historic occasion, Jacques Maritain published what many took as a bitter attack upon the very work and promise of the council. *The Peasant of the Garonne*, significantly subtitled, "An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time," does not in any way retract or attack his life-long aspiration and work for a "new Christendom." Indeed this book amplifies it and hones it. It is Maritain's cry of the heart; it is a very personal book for which any careful reader can discern beneath the bitterness of its surface, a rich, a sweet, a highly personal testimony of hope.

The Peasant of the Garonne: Maritain's Last Word, Bitter or Sweet?

The impact of the new council went far beyond what anyone had anticipated. The effects have led some to question whether the council should have been called at all, and others who say that it did not go far enough and further changes are necessary. We still live in the chaos and confusion. But in 1967, Maritain saw the root principle of the excess and wrote this book, *Peasant of the Garonne*, designating a man who would not hesitate to call a "spade a spade." Maritain offers his book as a corrective, a rebuke to both extremes; he attempts to stabilize the core meanings of the council in light of history, spirituality, and philosophy.⁴³ Maritain wrote *Peasant* less than a year after the close of the council. Its relevance now more than thirty years after is astounding. John Paul II has accomplished the corrections and he has stabilized the core

⁴² He said "Etiam ut nos hominem, hominem verum, *hominem integrum* penitus noscamus, Deum ipsam antea cognoscamus necesse est." Or "In order to know our humanity, true man, the whole man, it is necessary to know God." Emphasis added. See Maritain's use of this term in *Peasant*, p. 4.

⁴³ Pope Paul VI also made such attempts on the theological front with his post-conciliar writings, especially see Pope Paul VI, *On the Mystery of Faith* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1966); Pope Paul VI, *On Saints Peter and Paul* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1967); Pope Paul VI, *The Credo of the People of God* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1968). See also Candido Pozo, *The Credo of the People of God: A Theological Commentary*, trans. Mark A. Pilon (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1980).

meanings much in the vein traced by Maritain in *Peasant*. But much still waits to be discovered. Its call for renewal is still waiting to be discovered. To cover some of the scope of *Peasant*, I plan to explore two themes: first, the achievement of Vatican II, especially the key role of the laity in fulfilling the promise of the new age; second, the difference between the false and true renewal, namely what went wrong after the council and the intellectual and spiritual basis for the true appreciation and fulfillment of the promise of Vatican II.

The Achievement of Vatican II

Maritain opens the book with a chapter entitled "Thanksgiving." He reminds the reader that the council was primarily pastoral and not doctrinal and that it met a historic task requiring "progress in evangelical awareness and attitudes of the heart," rather than the definition of dogma. This pastoral nature has itself been distorted and has become a rationale for abandoning doctrine or changing doctrines. As Maritain wryly notes, the council did in fact devote two documents to dogmatic constitutions; and further, he says that the dogmas have been defined once and for all, and new developments simply make explicit and complete old ones.

He outlines the great achievements – freedom and human dignity, especially freedom of conscience and religion; a new approach to non-Catholics, both Christian and non-Christian, especially the Jewish people; an affirmation of the value, beauty and dignity of the world; the universal call to holiness, especially of the laity. Each of these great achievements is subject to distortion. Each must be separated from an ideology which preys upon the truth and obscures the great opportunity for a new age. Indeed, the progressive interpretation of these items, both within and outside of the Church, conjures up a heady brew of liberalism, ecumenism, secularism, and laicism, the very things which many Catholics have found an enemy, the things that are wrong with modernity. Briefly stated here is what Maritain understands by these achievements: by liberalism, authentic liberalism, as Maritain sought to defend in *Man and the State*, he means the recognition of the "true idea of freedom" and a deeper appreciation of the dignity of the person and human rights. It also mean the recognition of religious freedom and the sanctity of conscience. By ecumenism, he celebrates friendship with non-Catholics, Christian and non-Christian. It especially means the elimination of anti-Semitism. By secularism, Maritain understands the very Thomistic principle of the "value, beauty, and dignity of world" and a corresponding temporal mission of the Christian. And finally, the emphasis upon the laity means that all are called to perfection of charity and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, all are called to instill the spirit of the gospel in the temporal order.

These four achievements constitute a massive shift—in Church-State relations in particular. It is the end of an era, and the beginning of a new age. The council fulfills the great project which Maritain began with *Integral Humanism* and continued with *Man and the State*. Indeed, it is a fulfillment of a project initiated

by his fellow Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville, to whom we referred above: "Here is accomplished the great reversal of virtue of which it is no longer the human which takes charge of defending the divine, but the divine which offers itself to defend the human." The overarching achievement concerns an epochal change: "every vestige of the Holy Empire is today liquidated; we have definitively emerged from the sacral age and the baroque age." It is an era that requires of the church only freedom — freedom to preach the truth and act with charity. The Church's temporal mission is "reaffirmed under the sign of freedom" with a right to intervene not "ratione peccati"⁴⁴ to repress evil, but "ratione boni perficiendi" — "to quicken and prod and assist from above and without trespassing on the autonomy of the temporal."

The great achievements of Vatican II are best brought to focus in the temporal mission of the laity. Maritain elaborates upon the fundamental distinction of the two ends of human history that he made in *Man and the State*. It involves the differentiation of the temporal and the eternal ends of the human person. And this requires a proper understanding of the meaning of the autonomy of the temporal or secular. For as Maritain has long insisted, "we must distinguish in order to unite." The two ends, and their corresponding two missions, are complementary and interactive.

The very distinction between a "relative ultimate end" and an "absolute ultimate end" does present some initial confusions. In *The Peasant of the Garonne* Maritain draws a distinction between the "natural end" or "relatively final end" and a "supernatural end" which is the "absolutely final end." The kingdom of God is beyond history and requires a radical transfiguration of the natural. The natural end engages man in history and constitutes the progress of the temporal or secular order. The Christian engages this secular end in his "temporal mission" as a Christian. The supernatural end engages the Christian in history but as pointing to another world. This constitutes the proper mission of the Church, or the "spiritual mission" of the Christian. Now as we shall see, the two are very much interconnected and bound to each other. But the distinctions must be kept.

What is the specific end of secular progress? Maritain combines ancient and modern philosophy in his description of human purpose in this world. He describes it as a "triple and progressive expansion and conquest of man." The triple end comprises, first, the mastery of nature; this means we can affirm "loftiest ambition of modern science" and exercise control over the physical world and aim at elimination of servitude and subjection to another and the "violence of instrumentality." Maritain also speaks of action toward the goal of eliminating hunger, poverty, war, and injustice. The triple end also includes the development of self-perfecting spiritual activities such as knowledge and art and ethical achievement. Finally, it includes the development of the "manifest potentialities of human nature." It is part and parcel of the ontosophic truth to affirm the goodness

⁴⁴ On the notion of the *ratione peccati*, see Maritain's *The Things That are not Caesar's*, pp. 128-30.

of the structures and these ends of temporal society. Christians are called to fully participate in these human purposes and help to bring them to perfection.

Although he mentions Descartes, Maritain's position must be distinguished from the modern attempt of mastery of nature for a number of reasons.⁴⁵ To begin with, Maritain sets forth a three-point program for this relatively final end, the natural end or purpose of human history. It is not reducible to mastery alone, but is balanced by moral and cultural achievement. In addition, Maritain says that the goal cannot be attained once and for all, it is an unending path to be approached asymptotically. But more can be said—Maritain reminds us of the fact of death. The aspiration of enduring good is rendered futile by death.⁴⁶ Maritain in another context speaks about the natural aspiration for immortality and the transnatural aspiration for complete salvation which cannot be a result of natural development.⁴⁷ Finally Maritain points to the mystery of evil: the development of evil alongside that of good, and in the practical order the very real futility of individual moral striving. The Thomistic adage concerning grace perfecting nature takes on an additional Augustinian dimension. Society requires “the stimulus and elevation which Christianity naturally brings to the activities of nature in its own sphere.”⁴⁸ Maritain chastises the modernists because they neglect the role of the cross and asceticism. They forget that we need the life of grace and prayer to make “natural energies more pure and upright in the very order of nature,” that is, nature must be healed by grace. Readers of *Gaudium et Spes* often neglect the striking passages on sin in the middle of its description of the Christian's temporal mission, as we noted above. The temporal mission requires a spiritual mission for the reason of sin. Laymen must receive doctrinal and spiritual formation to be ready to go forth in the temporal mission. But so formed the Christian laity can enter deeply into the struggles and anguish of modern world and work for the progress in its own order, fully respecting its autonomy.

Towards Authentic Renewal

At Vatican II the council fathers acknowledged an opportune time for renewal. Maritain ratified this view and he characterized our era as one of “immense spiritual ferment” and “religious aspiration” and as an era harboring a “nostalgia for the gospel, a passion for the absolute, a fervent presentiment of the liberty, the breadth and variety of the ways of God, a whole hearted longing for the perfection of charity.”⁴⁹ Catholics, and indeed all Christians, have been presented with a

⁴⁵ See Richard Kennington, “Descartes and Mastery of Nature” in *Organism, Medicine and Metaphysics: Essays in Honor of Hans Jonas*, ed. S. F. Spicker (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1978), pp. 221-33; compare Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), and Jacques Maritain, *The Dream of Descartes*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (London: Editions Poetry London, 1946).

⁴⁶ *Peasant*, pp. 202-03.

⁴⁷ “The Immortality of the Soul,” in *The Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), pp. 51-65.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

wonderful opportunity for living lives that “bear witness to the love of Jesus for all men and to the generosity of God’s spirit.” So what is gone wrong? Why are Catholics in such disarray? Why the quibbling and bitter divisions? Indeed why the “immanent apostasy” and desperate forms of witness among contemporary Catholics who thus seem to save but a “dying Christianity for the modern world”? Why the uncertainty and lack of confidence in the “Catholic moment”?⁵⁰

The deepest source of the crisis is a religious one, a spiritual one. It traces back to a pendulum which has swung from a “masked manicheism” characteristic of the Church prior to the council to the post-council mistake of “kneeling before the world.” The one called forth the other. Both extremes rest upon a fundamental error concerning the value of the world and temporal affairs. It turns on a “misunderstanding with a bitter fruit” concerning the distinction between the “mystical” and the “ontosophic” meaning of the “world.” The mystical truth concerning the world is a practical truth, lived out by the saints. The ontosophic truth concerning the world is a speculative truth, affirmed by both theologians and philosophers. The practical truth lived by the saints is a contempt for the world deriving from their boundless love for God. St. Paul refers to the world as a dung hill in comparison with Christ and the knowledge of God. The world is seen as an obstacle to God insofar as the world is in sin and refuses God. The world hates God; it persecutes Christ and his followers. The saints, overwhelmed by their love of God, struggle against the world, exercise self-denial, and show contempt for the world. This is the mystical truth of contempt for the world. The ontosophic truth, a truth of theology and philosophy, reason and revelation, affirms the goodness of the world. The world has natural structures which are intelligible and natural ends which are good. This is the speculative truth. Grace builds upon and perfects does not destroy nature. The dangerous misunderstanding lies in making the practical truth a speculative one, or vice versa.

Centuries prior to the council the church came to misunderstand the mystical truth. The “dung hill” was extended to the world itself and “a masked Manicheism was thus superimposed on the Christian faith without ruining it.”⁵¹ It was a pastoral failure, not a doctrinal one, by which Manicheism was “spread inwardly, in the form of purely moralistic prohibitions, injunctions to flight, habits of fear, disciplines of denial in which love had no part, and which led the soul to starvation and sickness, and to a torturing sense of impotence.”⁵² The moral took precedent over the theological; flight from sin, precedence over charity. Human initiative, and refusal to sin, obscured the divine initiative of love and grace. In addition to this mistaken contempt for the world, Christians prior to the council were well

⁵⁰ See Ralph McInerney, *What Went Wrong with Vatican II: The Catholic Crisis Explained* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1998), and Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967).

⁵¹ *Peasant*, p. 46.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

aware of the growing hostility of modern civilization to Christianity and thus formed a defensive reaction and inferiority complex. Further, there was generally poor doctrinal formation. Thus at the time of the council there was present an “enormous weight of frustration and disillusionment and resentment” which burst out into the open on the occasion of *aggiornamento*, or “updating.” The pendulum swung from masked manichesim to frenzied modernism. For the theologians it was to mean a love for the latest trends and a love for the ephemeral. The spiritual teaching affirmed the goodness of the world, but failed to mention the other world, the cross, and the demands of sanctity. The temporal mission of the layman was mistaken for the mission of the Church as a whole. Such a position of kneeling before the world amounted to a complete temporalization of Christianity, an absorption of the kingdom of God by the temporal mission of the world. The prayer for the kingdom of God was mistaken for a dream of a “glorious parousia of collective man.” This describes the present day activists well enough — either the liberation theologians or the radical feminists, among others, who demand that the Church embrace latest trends of the day. Of course, for the average churchgoer in the West the crisis persists in many confusions about the great achievements of Vatican II: concerning the role of the laity, who must now assume a position in the sacristy; concerning the affirmation of the world which has come to signify middle-class achievement and consumerism; concerning the ecumenical opening of the council which has come to mean little more than religious or doctrinal indifference and the ascendancy of the affective over cognitive religious education; and the hard-won emphasis upon the freedom and dignity of the human person which has come to the refusal of strict moral demands in the name of free conscience.

The great vision of Christian renewal of temporal structures, the true activation of the temporal mission of the lay Christian, requires a preparation in the order of philosophy and spirituality. It requires “a great and patient work of revitalizing in the order of intelligence and the order of spirituality.”⁵³ We can but briefly outline the tasks ahead which Maritain calls the “true new fire” of renewal: ecumenical dialogue, the liberation of intelligence, and the sources of spiritual renewal in contemplation and liturgy. In these chapters Maritain illustrates and deepens the positions of *Man and the State*; he shows the inner depth behind the formulae. In *Man and the State* Maritain suggested that different points of view on the Church-State are often derived from different understandings of “Church.” For an unbeliever the Church is but a sociological or natural phenomenon; for the believer the Church is a society representing a reality of a higher order. Misapprehension is inevitable; but if one wishes to do justice to the issue it is incumbent upon both sides to make the best understanding as the other understands itself. Maritain provides a unique opening to the post-conciliar understanding of the Church and its self-understanding in a new age for Church-State relations.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 53.

The claim for a new age for Church-State relations begins with an inner renewal, according to Maritain. It shall take a new attitude. The new attitude respects the dignity of the person; the Catholic is called to love the person as a person and not simply as a potential convert to the faith. In addition to the theme of a new attitude towards those of a different faith, Maritain returns to a theme found in *Man and the State*: the possibility of practical cooperation in a divided world.⁵⁴ Maritain is still confident about the possibility of practical cooperation in a divided world because of a convergence upon the notion of human rights. He always conceded that such an agreement was a minimum one, open to many ambiguities and ultimate differences. But such an agreement upon a “democratic charter” was necessary for political peace. Yet he is now more insistent that we not be led to an opposite extreme of “ignoring the imprescriptible rights of the speculative order—in other words of truth itself, which is superior to every human interest.” As we cooperate more frequently on a practical level, truth will be served only if we are willing to actually “strengthen the edges of opposite convictions which divide us.” In other words true ecumenical dialogue is vital to the secure peace and the deeper understanding of human rights. Maritain cites a marvelous line from Jean Cocteau concerning dialogue: “We must have a tough mind and a tender heart.” To which Cocteau adds “the world is full of dried up hearts and flabby minds.” Maritain also elaborates the various new approaches opened by Vatican Council II for Christian approaches to non-Catholics and unbelievers. Direct conversion is no longer the only mode nor the first mode of engagement with men and women of diverse creeds. Of particular note is the importance of the sphere of action, all the works of mercy and the efforts to develop social, economic and cultural advancement for all people. And yet Maritain is not a utopian in his praise for these efforts. He recognizes the limits of achievement in this area. And most of all he says that the renewal requires contemplative love and prayer.

The work of speculative reason is necessary for the proper understanding of the goodness of nature, the “ontosophic” truth of the world which was lost by many prior to the council and confused with a practical truth after the council. Maritain’s philosophical efforts must be traced back to his metaphysical approaches to the world, especially his notion of the intuition of being.⁵⁵ Maritain fears that the emphasis upon efficacy and pragmatism has obscured the fundamental principles of philosophy. In an age of increasing influence of technology, the love of truth, the superior value of truth will have a liberating effect. Men look for substitutes in myths and fables because science itself is unable to answer the deeper personal

⁵⁴ *Man and the State*, pp. 76-80, 108-114; *Peasant*, pp. 64-70. The original speech which Maritain gave to UNESCO on the topic of practical cooperation and the UN Declaration of Human Rights may be found in Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968), pp. 180ff.

⁵⁵ See *Peasant*, pp. 99-101, 132-35; see also John P. Hittinger, “The Intuition of Being: Metaphysics or Poetry?” in *Jacques Maritain: The Man and His Metaphysics*, ed. John F. X. Knasas (Notre Dame, Indiana: American Maritain Association/University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 71-82.

questions about man, God and the world. Science will try to extrapolate from science to create fables and myths to answer these questions. Maritain was critical of Teilhard de Chardin because he viewed his efforts as an extrapolation, a poetic myth of science, covering over the deeper yearning for a true philosophical approach to the big issues. Also he criticizes the forms of contemporary philosophy because they bracket the question of being. As forms of epistemological idealism they trap the thinker within his own mind and never experience the relish of true being.

The most important point has to do with faith and reason. The relation of faith and reason is emblematic of the relation between Church and State. The issue of faith and reason brings the issue to a very personal dimension, not only a sociological or political one. And the resolution on the level of the person, the concrete thinker, provides clues to the larger political issue. It is as if Maritain would have us reverse the Socratic ploy to see the soul through the city; on this issue of Church and State it may be better to view the city through the soul.

Maritain's argument for the cooperation of faith and reason proceeds as follows. There is a distinction between philosophy and theology but not a separation. First, a philosopher is a human being with a set of beliefs about man, God and the world. These cannot be "locked up in a strong box." It is natural for these beliefs to influence the philosophy of the concrete person. Reason verges into the domain of faith because it has questions to ask of faith. It is not uncommon for the very spark of philosophy to derive from theological considerations, as for example with the ancient Greeks.⁵⁶ It also has a desire to discover the internal order of truth and finds an attraction to the higher domain.⁵⁷ Finally the very quest for wisdom impels us to seek a higher perspective. For its part faith may seek to enter the domain of reason. It is a superior light which elevates reason in its own order. As Maritain said in *Man and the State* – a superior agent is not shut up within itself; it radiates and stimulates from within the very activity of reason or nature. This issue cannot be understood without a proper understanding of nature and grace.⁵⁸ Faith can assist reason in being more alert to its own internal limits – such as overcoming allurements and irrational dreams of ideology.⁵⁹ If the person refuses to allow faith and reason to speak to each other in his own heart and mind then distortions occur in both domains. From the side of faith it is the distortion of "fideism" to allow faith to become separated from the intellectual life of the person. Faith would lie "like a stone at the bottom of a pond, no longer vitally received by a living being."⁶⁰ Skepticism and or indifference is bound to occur, undermining faith from within on a popular level. And as for the intellectuals, pastoral values and

⁵⁶ See Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (South Bend, Indiana: Saint Augustine's Press, 1998), pp. 117-134.

⁵⁷ See Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*.

⁵⁸ See Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Grace*.

⁵⁹ On the need for theology to prevent overall distortions in education, see John P. Hittinger, "Newman, Theology and Crisis of Liberal Education." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 11, no. 1/2 (1999), pp. 61-82.

⁶⁰ *Peasant*, p. 94; also pp. 144-45.

efficacy become the supreme rule, not truth itself. But faith is held as mystery of truth, inviting a humble penetration of the truth. The dynamic of "pastoral" gives rise to historicism and a constant reinterpretation of faith in light of the times. Vatican Council II called for the reinterpretation of the signs of the times in light of the enduring truths of faith and philosophy. The distortion from the side of reason concerns its own self-discipline and a refusal to generate ideology and myths of reason. Modern intellectuals tend to enclose themselves within a rational self-sufficiency which did not characterize ancient philosophy with its sense of enduring wonder and the position of the metaxy between beasts and gods. The ever-recurring temptation of science is the one first initiated so well by Lucretius – the poeticizing of the mechanisms of the world. Edward Wilson consciously invokes this same muse.⁶¹ The great questions of meaning about man, God and the world must lie beyond the scope of science. But science will make its poetic attempt, often doing bad theology rather than doing none at all. As Maritain says, the bad money chases out the good. The great hunger of the soul goes unfed. What is needed is an attention to the very intrinsic order of human intelligence, not the indiscriminate mixing together. Here again is the very rationale for reason's forays into faith – to better appreciate the internal ordering of truth and to complete its aspiration for wisdom.

This relationship of faith and reason is emblematic of the relationship between Church and State. It is the nodal point for the cooperation for church and state. The elevating influence of faith must primarily come through the person, in conscience and mind, not through external law.⁶² Indeed it may well be that the different understandings of Church and State relations tracks the fate of faith and theology in higher education.⁶³ On the basis of the unity of the person, and the need for a dynamic unity in the cognitive life of the person, faith will either be engaged or it will become unhinged. Surely it is not a good thing for the polity to have a proliferation of cults and enthusiasms smacking of servitude and irrationality. So too does the state exercise its own self-discipline by refusing ideologies which divinize itself or the make the fashions of the time the height of wisdom itself. The distinction between the things of Caesar and the things of God, State and Church, rest upon this proper and salutary relationship between faith and reason.

The final point from the *Peasant* which develops the argument from the unity of the person sketched out in *Man and the State* concerns the very life of the Church itself and the new understanding of the role of the laity, the primary agents and the locus for the cooperation between Church and State. Maritain celebrates the achievement of Vatican II in putting forward the mystery of the Church as a great themes for its reflections. As he said in *Man and the State*, there is an inevitable misapprehension between the believer and the unbeliever because of their different approaches to the reality and nature of the Church. If one wishes to understand the agent as he understands

⁶¹ Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience - The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), and Edward O. Wilson, "Resuming the Enlightenment Quest," *The Wilson Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1998), pp. 16-27.

⁶² See Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, "On the use which Americans make of associations in civil life," especially p. 515.

⁶³ See James Tunstead Burtchell, "The Decline and Fall of the Christian College." *First Things*, April 1991, pp. 16-30.

himself, then the document *Lumen gentium* is a very important text for all those who are concerned about the relation between Church and State. Maritain briefly points out that the council emphasized the mystery of the Church; it is more than a sociological phenomenon or a set of external laws and institutions. Perhaps that is all that the unbeliever can see. But there is in addition a historic reality, a unity of being and life across time. There is memory and voice. The recent statements by John Paul II make sense only within such a context or frame of understanding. He can apologize for what various personnel of the Church have done, all the while maintaining the integrity and holiness of the Church.⁶⁴ In terms resonating with Solzhenitsyn, Maritain quotes his own mentor Cardinal Journet who said that the line of good and evil, of Christ and Belial, passes through the heart of each believer.⁶⁵ The emphasis upon the phrase “People of God” adds the historic dimension of the Church, its presence in the world as a pilgrim. And it thus follows the emphasis upon the laity to be sent out into the midst of the world. No longer would the Church seek separation from the world but be in the midst of the world in service to the world. The cooperation between Church and state is actively sought out by the believer, not in the mode of conversion, but as a witness through the very service to the world. As we saw above, Maritain distinguishes the two missions of the believer – a spiritual mission and a temporal mission. The spiritual mission is the work proper of the Church – transforming the world spiritually for the ultimate end. But in addition members of the Church have a mission to transform the temporal world with a view to the good of the world itself. Here again we face a potential divide with extremes at both ends. There is a divide between the spiritual and the temporal missions, or vocations, of the lay Christian. The separation between the two is an unnatural gash or cleavage which must be remedied first of all. How is this to be done? Maritain outlines the philosophical basis for this. The two vocations are distinct but not separate. It is the unity of the person which must forge their integration. For the concrete person is not a “laborer of the world with a certain portion of his being, and a member of the church with another portion: it is a member of the Church who is the laborer of the world, sent to the land of the things which are Caesar’s.”⁶⁶ And the unity of the person is achieved as follows: the object of the work is the temporal vocation; the manner or mode in which the work is done is the spiritual vocation. The object of the work is to do the temporal task well – whatever portion of the secular work for which one has responsibility. The effects of the cooperation are salutary for the body politic. “Such a work needs to be vivified, for without the strengthening of Christ’s grace our nature is too weak to

⁶⁴ See “The Church, Holy and Penitent,” *Peasant*, pp. 185-89; and for a much greater elaboration, see Jacques Maritain, *On the Church of Christ*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973).

⁶⁵ *Peasant*, pp. 188-189; cf. Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago: Two*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 615; see Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, pp. 128-30.

⁶⁶ *Peasant*, p. 208.

carry it out.”⁶⁷ It is precisely through religious inspiration that we have some hope for overcoming internal weakness and restraint of evil. Justice without love is inhuman; friendship must add to justice. The polity itself needs the ministrations of charity for which the Church is a primary agent. The spirit of the work will reflect the Christian’s devotion to God and charity of life. The “radiance of the gospel” will shine through the daily task itself. The grace of religion will penetrate and transform the natural activity itself and perfect it within its own order. Maritain thus comes to apply the basic principles of St. Thomas Aquinas, on nature and grace, to the great issue of the day – the vital cooperation of Church and State in the new age of freedom.

Conclusion

Maritain prepared the way for a new approach to Church and State relations. In the groundwork he laid in earlier works and in *Man and the State* we find a clear mature formulation of the position. In *The Peasant of the Garonne* we find its final elaboration in light of the definitive achievement of Vatican II: “In truth, every vestige of the Holy Empire is today liquidated; we have definitely emerged from the sacral age and the baroque age. After sixteen centuries which it would be shameful to slander or repudiate, but which have completed their death agony and whose grave defects were incontestable, a new age begins.”⁶⁸ Maritain has given us a fulfillment of Tocqueville’s deepest wish. The lover of liberty and the lover of God are one and the same. And with a further echo of Tocqueville, Maritain believes that the new approach will be advanced not by large mass programs or political deals, but through intermediate groups, which Maritain affectionately calls “Little Flocks.” Only in the small flocks can the relentless pressures of technology and “massification” be resisted. In the small associations of men and women devoted to the inner tasks of renewal will the promise of the new age be at last fulfilled. As Maritain was fond of saying, the prospects for a “new Christendom” may not be for tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. But it is a concrete historical ideal worth our devotion. And the life of the spirit and efforts of renewal, exemplified by Maritain and his wife, will be a testimony for centuries to come.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 204; see also p. 226.

⁶⁸ *Peasant*, n. 4