

Nature and Grace: The Theological Foundations of Jacques Maritain's Public Philosophy

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Throughout his writings on social, political, and cultural philosophy—in short, public philosophy—Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) rejects a sharp division within Christian life between nature and grace. This rejection has important implications for his view of the human person, the kingdom of God, the Church, and the nature of Christian involvement in the world. My thesis in this article is that the debate over Christian witness in public life today can, in some ways, be seen as a dispute over a proper theological and philosophical understanding of the relationship between nature and grace.

In section 1, Maritain's integral humanism is presented where man is considered in the totality of his natural and supernatural being. Section 2 offers an extended analysis of the theology of nature and grace that underpins his integral humanism. This theology has implications for Maritain's view of Christian witness in a pluralistic society, as well as the relationship between the state, the Church, and the kingdom of God. These implications are examined in sections 3 and 4, respectively. I conclude in section 5 with a summary of the fundamental ideas of Maritain's public philosophy.

Integral Humanism

[W]hat the world needs is a new humanism, a[n] ... integral humanism that would consider man in all his natural grandeur and weakness, in the entirety of his wounded being inhabited by God, in the full reality of nature, sin, and sainthood. Such a humanism would recognize all that is irrational in man, in order to tame it to reason, and all that is suprarational, in order to have reason vivified by it and to open man to the descent of the divine into him. Its main work would be to cause the Gospel leaven and inspiration to penetrate the secular structures of life—a work of sanctification of the temporal order.¹

In 1939, Maritain published an essay in *The Review of Politics* titled "Integral Humanism and the Crisis of Modern Times."² His starting point is what he viewed as the peculiar error of modern humanism: its anthropocentric concept of human nature and, with it, its rationalistic concept of reason. In other words, "the error in question is the idea of [human] nature [and reason] as self-enclosed or self-sufficient."³ Human nature and reason have been "shut up in

themselves" and insulated from both the supernatural lights above and the irrational forces below. As Maritain puts it,

Instead of a human and rational development in continuity with the Gospel, people demand such a development as replacing the Gospel. And for human life, for the concrete movement of history, this means real and serious amputations. Prayer, miracle, suprarational truths, the idea of sin and of grace, the evangelical beatitudes, the necessity of asceticism, of contemplation, and the means of the Cross—all this is either put in parenthesis or is once for all denied. In the concrete government of human life, reason is isolated from the suprarational. It is isolated also from all that is irrational in man, or it denies this—always in virtue of the very sophism that whatever is not reducible to reason itself, must be anti-rational or incompatible with reason.⁴

The development referred to here is elsewhere called by Maritain the "process of secularization"⁵ and is fully described in all its real and serious consequences. This process involves the loss of all the metaphysical and religious certitudes that had been the foundation of the Christian worldview, especially its anthropology. In Maritain's view (and pared down for my purposes here), the modernist embraces a number of faulty positions. First, the modernist rejects reason's capacity to reach metaphysical truths and the revealed truths given by the Word of God. Man's knowledge is limited to the relative and changing truths of science. Second, the modernist affirms the rights and dignity of man, but without God as their source and foundation. He seeks to base human rights and dignity, says Maritain, "on a godlike, infinite autonomy of human will, which any rule or measurement received from Another would offend and destroy."⁶ In other words, man is subject to no law other than that of his own will and freedom.

Third, given this concept of autonomy, the modernist believes that peace and fraternity are attainable "without Christ, for he did not need a Redeemer, he was to save himself by himself alone." In this connection, he also believes, fourth, that progress toward good is inevitable, that evil is only a developmental stage in man's evolution, which he would naturally and necessarily transcend. Fifth, human life has an infinite value, but no immortal soul created in the image of God as the ground of that value. Sixth, man's social and political life has no common good except that of "preserving everyone's freedom to enjoy private ownership, acquire wealth, and seek his own pleasure." Seventh, the modernist believes in freedom without responsibility. In other words, "modern man placed his hope in machinism, in technique, and in mechanical or industrial civilization—without wisdom to dominate them and put them at the service of human good and freedom, for he expected freedom from the

development of external techniques themselves, *not from any ascetic effort toward the internal possession of self.*"⁷

Eighth, modern man looked for democracy and for the human rights and dignity of the person, but with the acceptance of philosophical naturalism man is understood to be the chance product of matter-in-motion rather than the creature and image of God. Being an image-bearer of God means having, says Maritain, "a personality that implies free will and is responsible for an eternal destiny, a being that possesses rights [and responsibilities] and is called to the conquest of freedom and to a self-achievement consisting of love and charity."⁸ The denial of this Christian view of man entails a loss of the concept and the sense of purpose or finality for human beings.

According to Maritain, the denial of the Christian view of man has profound consequences. "Rationalistic reason winds up in intoxication with matter," and furthermore, "it enters a process of self-degradation." In reaction to anthropocentric humanism and rationalism, Darwin, Freud, and Nietzsche unmask the irrational in man. Darwin claims that the "human species is only a branch that sprouted by chance on the genealogical tree of the monkeys." In turn, Freud claims that "seemingly rational and free behavior is only an illusory appearance emerging from the inferno of our unconscious and of instinct." In other words, says Maritain, "all of our seemingly spiritual feelings and activities, poetic creation, human pity and devotion, religious faith, contemplative love, are only the sublimation of sexual libido.... Man is unmasked; the countenance of the beast appears. The human specificity, which rationalism has caused to vanish into pure spirit, now vanishes in animality."⁹ What began as rationalistic humanism was now heading in the direction of an irrational counterhumanism. In other words, "The irrational tidal wave is in reality the tragic wheel of rationalistic humanism; it reacts against a humanism of reason closed up in itself, but it does so by making man open to the powers from below and by shutting him off from higher communications and the spirit that liberates, and walling the creature up in the abyss of animal vitality."¹⁰ Maritain's final assessment of this secularization process exposes the ultimate implication of believing that human nature and reason are "shut up in themselves." "Having given up God so as to be self-sufficient, man has lost track of his soul. He looks in vain for himself; he turns the universe upside-down trying to find himself; he finds masks, and beyond masks, death."¹¹

Maritain's attitude toward modernism was not totally negative, however. There is a double movement in history—in the direction of good and in the direction of evil—but in history, good is not divided from evil; rather, according to Maritain's philosophy of history, they grow together.¹² Thus, good was

achieved in the process of secularization, says Maritain, "owing to the natural movement of civilization and to the primitive impulse, the evangelical one, toward the democratic ideal."¹³ Examples of these achievements that Maritain enumerates are religious freedom, man's reason and grandeur, and his democratic feeling that inspired great hopes in social and political improvements. The ever-widening split between the course of the increasingly secular Christian world and the moral and spiritual principles that had given these achievements and others their meaning and intelligibility, eventually resulted, says Maritain, in the crisis of our civilization. That is, lost now are the foundations of values such as human rights and dignity, reason's capacity to know the truth, the inviolable value of human life, moral goodness, and so on. Alluding to the Cold War context of the 1960s, Maritain asserts,

The most alarming symptom in the present crisis is that, while engaged in a death struggle for the defense of these values, we have too often lost faith and confidence in the principles on which what we are defending is founded, because we have more often than not, forgotten the true and authentic principles and because, at the same time, we feel more or less consciously the weakness of the insubstantial ideology that has preyed upon them like a parasite.¹⁴

Maritain's solution to this crisis is the idea of a new Christian civilization—a new Christendom, as he calls it: "The only way of regeneration for the human community is a rediscovery of the true image of man."¹⁵ Of course, this involves a positive retrieval of the true substance of the nineteenth century's ideals and genuine achievements, while saving these things from the errors of anthropocentric rationalistic humanism and irrational counterhumanism. Thus,

a world of genuine humanism and Christian inspiration must be built ... modern times have longed for a rehabilitation of the human creature. They sought this rehabilitation in a separation from God. It [is] to be sought in God. The human creature claims the right to be loved: It can be really and efficaciously loved only in God. It must be respected in its very connection with God and because it receives everything—and its very dignity—from him. After the great disillusionment of "anthropocentric humanism" and the atrocious experience of the antihumanism of our day, what the world needs is a new humanism [Maritain's integral humanism].¹⁶

What is the image of man in integral humanism? It is the image of man who is created in the image of God—a bodied person whose selfhood is immortal and who is created for truth, that is, who is capable of knowing God as Creator through reason, and of knowing him in his intimate life as Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit through the gift of faith. The person's rights and duties are grounded in the natural law, which express the eternal plan of divine Wisdom. It is the image of man who is wounded by original sin resulting in the punishment of death—a sin whose burden of estrangement from God weighs upon all of us. But man is redeemed by Christ through his cross and resurrection, forgiven his sins and reconciled to the Father, whose love was manifested in the gift of the Son and communicated through the Holy Spirit. He now can live the divine life-in-Christ through grace, and is “called upon to enter by suffering and love into Christ's very work of redemption.” Furthermore, says Maritain, “charity alone received from God as a participation in His own life makes man efficaciously love God above everything, and each human person in God.... The man of Christian humanism does not look for a merely industrial civilization, but for a civilization integrally human (industrial as it may be as to its material conditions) and of evangelical inspiration.”¹⁷

Maritain places the image of man in integral humanism along a track whose internal dynamism of human life is bipolar. This internal dynamism consists of double axes that are both natural and supernatural. In other words, says Maritain, “The vertical movement toward eternal life (present and actually begun here below) and the horizontal movement whereby the substance and creative forces of man are progressively revealed in history. These two movements should be pursued at the same time.”¹⁸ Yet it is not as though these twin movements are on separate tracks and are related to each other only extrinsically. The relation between the horizontal and the vertical, man's natural and supernatural ends, says Maritain, must be conceived in such a way that the horizontal is “within” the vertical.

As we shall see in section 2, Maritain decisively rejects a dualistic interpretation of the double axes of this internal dynamic, which is both natural and supernatural. Rather, he says, “the horizontal movement ... is effected only when vitally joined to the first, the vertical one, because this second movement, while having its own proper and properly temporal finalities, and tending to better man's condition here below, also prepares in history for the kingdom of God, which, for each individual person and for the whole of humanity, is something metahistorical.”¹⁹ That is, Maritain's integral humanism considers man in the totality of his natural and supernatural being, but he holds that the horizontal dynamism throughout which, man unfolds his creation potentialities in history can in truth be properly ordered only in Christ. Significantly, God's grace in Christ does not merely elevate man's nature and orient it toward its supernatural end, according to Maritain. Rather, the transforming efficacy of

Christ is *within* rather than alongside of or above man's nature—his grace penetrates and perfects and transforms nature.

Thus, integral humanism, according to Maritain, is the *humanism of the Incarnation*. Maritain accepts the full implication of this truth and concludes, “the grace of the Incarnation draws to itself all that is human.”²⁰ We now turn to the theology of nature and grace that underpins Maritain's integral humanism of the Incarnation. This theology provides a more general set of theological principles grounding and explaining Christian involvement in society.

Nature and Grace

There is one error that consists in ignoring [the] distinction between nature and grace. There is another that consists in ignoring their union.²¹

[A]s a result of the achievement of grace, as a result of grace [penetrating and] perfecting [and transforming] nature, nature is superelevated *in its own order*.... If we do not admit it, we are led willy-nilly to a kind of separatism between nature and grace, to a kind of naturalism—nature will have its own course separately from any contact with grace.²²

“One of the worst diseases of the modern world is its dualism,” says Maritain, “the dissociation between the things of God and the things of the world.”²³ Throughout his writings on social, political, and cultural philosophy, Maritain rejects a sharp division within Christian life between grace and nature, the kingdom of God and the world, religious and secular, supernatural and merely natural. Maritain gives one of the clearest descriptions of this dualism and its implications in the following extract:

In the practical and moral order, one will arrive then at this conception ... that man and human life are ordered simultaneously to two different *absolutely ultimate* ends, a purely natural *ultimate* end, which is perfect prosperity here on earth, and a supernatural *ultimate* end, which is perfect beatitude in heaven. Thus, by a sagacious division of labor that the Gospel had not foreseen, the Christian will be able to serve two masters at once, God for heaven and Mammon for the earth, and will be able to divide his soul between two obediences each alike absolute and ultimate—that of the Church, for heaven, and that of the State, for the earth. Here again we are confronted with a mechanical dichotomy substituted for an organic subordination. Man, such as mediaeval Christendom conceived him, has been split in two: On the one hand, one has a man of pure nature, who has need only of reason to be perfect, wise, and good, and to gain the earth; and on the other, one has a celestial envelope, a *believing double*, assiduous at worship and praying to the God of the Christians, who surrounds and pads with fluffs of grace this man of pure nature and renders him capable of gaining heaven. Knock over this double, or rather, for the thing is not so simple, reabsorb him into

the subject that he envelops—he will remain the man of pure nature, such as the *absolute humanist theology* conceives him.²⁴

Maritain is convinced that this sharp division, indeed dualism between nature and grace, where the things of God and the things of the world coexist in parallel tracks and relate to each other only extrinsically, is at the root of the dialectic of fideistic supernaturalism and secular humanism. He rejects the anthropocentric humanism of the Renaissance and the absolute humanist theology of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and later Enlightenment thinkers that developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the truncated vision of an antireligious, secular humanism—a rejection of Christian faith and the supernatural, indeed of every metaphysics of transcendence, according to Maritain. Yet he also rejects a fideistic supernaturalism that regards, as Germain Grisez puts it, “Human nature as the corrupt vessel of Christian life rather than an essential part of it.”²⁵ This dialectic contributes to Christian faith’s marginalization from modern culture, on the one hand, and to a humanism without God on the other, that has followed from the mutual estrangement of the Church and the world in the modern period.

Although Maritain firmly maintains the distinction between nature and grace, he nonetheless rejects dualism of both a “hard” and a “soft” sort.²⁶ Hard dualism conceives of nature first in terms of its own finality, to which is then “superadded” a second, supernatural finality. Yet, Maritain rejects a softer dualism, as well, in which a harmony between nature and grace is conceived but there is still an extrinsic relation between them. This more subtle form accepts that there is only one ultimate end for nature, a supernatural one, but it nonetheless fails to consider that this end directs and orders nature and all its intermediate ends, *from within* rather than alongside of or above nature. Thus, the key idea in Maritain’s theology of nature and grace is that *grace restores nature*.

It is clear that the order of redemption, or of the spiritual, or of the things that are God’s, should vivify to its most intimate depths the order of terrestrial civilization, or of the temporal, or of the things that are Caesar’s; but these two orders remain clearly distinct. They are distinct, [but] they are not separate. To abstract from Christianity, to put God and Christ aside when I work at the things of the world, to cut myself into two halves.... In reality, the justice of the Gospel and the life of Christ within us want the whole of us, they want to take possession of everything, to impregnate all that we are and all that we do, in the secular as well as in the sacred. If grace takes hold of us and remakes us in the depths of our being, it is so that our whole action should feel its effects and be illuminated by it.²⁷

There are four points to which I wish to draw attention with respect to Maritain’s theology on the relation of nature and grace and its implications.

First, *there is a fundamental antithesis between the kingdom of God and the world*. With Saint Augustine, Maritain affirms that the totality of human life is the theater in which rages a battle for our souls, indeed for the whole creation. This battle is between the two implacably opposed spiritual forces of the City of God and the City of the World, or as Maritain puts it, “*the World as Antagonist*” and “*the World as redeemed and reconciled*.” Maritain explains this most significant of conflicts as follows:

The Gospel considers the world *in its concrete and existential connections with the kingdom of God*, already present in our midst. The world cannot be neutral with respect to the kingdom of God. Either it is vivified by it, or it struggles against it. In other words, the relation of the world with the universe of grace is either a relation of union and inclusion, or a relation of separation and conflict.... If the relation of the world with the kingdom of God is a relation of separation and conflict, then, and to that extent, we have the world as Antagonist and Enemy to the kingdom.... If the relation of the world with the kingdom of God is a relation of union and inclusion, then, and to that extent, we have the world as assumed by and in the kingdom, the world that God loves to the point of giving his only son as sacrifice, the world whose sin is taken away by the Lamb of God, and for whose salvation the love and sufferings of the Church apply here and now, as long as history lasts, the blood of the Redeemer.²⁸

In the concrete order of human culture, ethics and politics, morality and social justice will not be neutral with respect to the kingdom of God. Concretely, then, human culture and all that it entails will be transformed (penetrated and sanctified) depending on whether it is developed from within the cultural order rather than alongside of or above it and thereby only extrinsically related to the transforming efficacy of the redemptive grace of Christ. Says Maritain, “If Christ is the Savior of the world, then politics, too, can be saved, that is, it can be penetrated and quickened by the grace of Christ; therefore it must not be considered rebellious in its most intimate nature to this grace, or to justice, or to love.”²⁹

Second, *grace neither replaces nature* (because human nature is so corrupt that grace, no longer able to transform it, merely replaces it altogether), *nor leaves nature untouched*. In other words, Maritain argues that it is from within that grace forms nature, and, far from replacing it altogether, or leaving it untouched, raises nature up, in order to make it serve its own ends. As Maritain puts it,

I have long insisted on this point—that as a result of the achievement of grace, as a result of grace [penetrating and] perfecting [and transforming] nature, nature is superelevated *in its own order*. In my opinion, the temporal common good of the body politic, for instance, will be superelevated in a Christian society. Brotherly love, Christian love will play a part in civil life itself—it is not restricted to the interrelation between saints in the kingdom of God. From there it superabounds and quickens civic friendship.... To my mind it is very important that we admit this superelevation *in the very order of nature*. If we do not admit it, we are led willy-nilly to a kind of separatism between nature and grace, to a kind of naturalism—nature will have its own course separately from any contact with grace.³⁰

Third, *life here and now, nature in general and culture specifically, is not merely instrumental with respect to the attainment of the supernatural end. It is by no means extrinsic to the kingdom of God.* Maritain puts the point this way in a passage worth quoting in full:

[T]he world, as the entire order of nature, is in actual fact in vital connection with the universe of the kingdom of God. Hence it appears that in actual fact it is ordained, not only to its own natural ends, but also ... to an absolutely supreme end that is supernatural and that is the very end of the kingdom of God.... But I would also insist ... that the natural end of the world, though it is not the absolutely supreme end, is, nevertheless, a real end [in the order of nature]; it is not a mere means. In other words, temporal things are not mere means with respect to the attainment of the supernatural end. Of course, they are ordained to it, but not as mere means ordained to an end. I would say that they are intermediate or *infravalent* ends—they are possessed of an intrinsic merit and goodness in themselves, and they are therefore worthy of attainment in themselves, though they are also means with respect to the supernatural end. I am but applying here what Saint Thomas says about civil life, to wit, that the common good of civil life is an ultimate end *in a given order*.³¹

Maritain holds that the natural end of the world is threefold. There is first man's mastery over nature and his conquest of autonomy. Maritain understands the mastery over nature in the biblical sense of subduing the earth. He adds to this a mandate for self-mastery. Man is a rational agent rooted in animality. In this respect, man's end is his conquest of autonomy, that is, "his conquest of freedom in the sense of autonomy—liberation from bondage and coercion exercised by physical nature on this being who has an element of spirit in him, as well as liberation from enslavement by other men."³² Second, there is the development of man's many-sided, self-perfecting activities, which are intrinsic goods such as knowledge, creative activity in art, and moral activity. This aspect captures the important truth in the Calvinist position that we

have received a cultural mandate as well. Finally, Maritain affirms the unfolding of all the potentialities of human nature as the third natural end of the world. This, too, follows from the understanding that man is embodied, not a pure spirit but a spirit united to matter. "It is normal for a spirit to manifest itself. And because man has so many hidden potentialities, it is normal that he reveals progressively this inner universe that is man himself."³³ This unfolding of the properly human life is displayed in culture or civilization. Such human development includes, says Maritain, the necessary and sufficient conditions of material development, moral development, intellectual development, as well as the development of artistic and ethical activities.

What is, then, the principal part that religion plays in the development of culture or civilization?³⁴ Culture and civilization belong to the temporal order of things and, as such, their qualifying goods are intermediate or *infravalent* ends. It is subordinate to the supernatural ultimate end, as an intermediate end to the ultimate end. Yet such subordination superelevates culture and civilization within their own proper order. That is, culture and civilization are transformed by grace such that it vivifies and transforms this temporal order. Maritain puts it this way, "If we reflect that, in a Christian civilization, charity and the infused moral virtues strengthen the friendship and virtues so vitally necessary for social life, we see that the supreme moral regulations, by virtue of which such a civilization accomplishes its terrestrial task, fall within the province of the supernatural order. Even a Christian civilization, however, a civilization superelevated in its proper order, because it is Christian, by virtues proceeding from above, becomes so superelevated through realizing ... the very postulates of nature."³⁵

Still, Maritain insists that these natural ends are *not mere* means ordained to a spiritual end. Of course, he affirms the primacy of the spiritual, but the temporal order is not subordinate to the spiritual order as an instrumental agent, as a mere means in relation to eternal life, because it is a proper good in its own order, namely, as an intermediary or *infravalent* end.

The natural end of the world—in its threefold character, as expressed above—is superelevated by its connection with the supernatural end and with the supernatural virtues. And I would insist that, given the actual condition of the world—that is, the fact that the world is not in a state of pure nature but is vitally and organically related to the kingdom of God—the *actual* natural end of the world is this natural end superelevated ... Similarly, the natural end of the world—in its threefold character—is a *relatively* ultimate end, an ultimate end in the order of nature, whereas only the supernatural end is the *absolutely* ultimate end. It seems to me that there is a serious drawback to disregarding this value

as end—inferior, infravalent, but still, end—of the natural end or ends of this world.³⁶

The serious drawback to which Maritain is referring results from not distinguishing between the proper finalities of the natural order on the one hand—the temporal order with its own activities and goods, which have a proper value as infravalent ends, though they are ordered to still higher ends—and the use of temporal means for spiritual ends on the other. This last point regarding the value of infravalent ends is essential to Maritain's understanding of the temporal role of the Christian in transforming the world.

This would be an affirmation of the autonomy of the temporal as an *intermediate or infravalent end*, in line with the teachings of Leo XIII, which say that the authority of the State is supreme in its own order... In virtue of a process of differentiation normal in itself, though vitiated by the most erroneous ideologies, the secular or temporal order has in the course of modern times been established, as regards the spiritual or sacred order, in such a relation of [differentiation and] autonomy that in fact it excludes instrumentality. In short, it has come of age.³⁷

The upshot of this positive development—temporal society has gained complete differentiation and full autonomy in its own sphere and domain—is that a new attempt must be made by Christians to bring the Gospel to bear on temporal existence. This attempt “will aim at rehabilitating man in God and through God, not apart from God, and will be an age of sanctification of secular life.”³⁸

Fourth, *Christians are called to a new style of sanctity that is conceived “above all as the sanctity and sanctification of secular life.”*³⁹ Maritain explains:

If a new Christendom succeeds in coming into existence, its distinctive character will be, that this transfiguration—whereby man, consenting to be changed and knowing that he *is changed* by grace, works to *become* and to realize the new man that he *is through* God—that this transfiguration will have to attain, really and not only figuratively, the structure of the social life of humanity, and to comprise thus—in the degree to which this is possible here on earth for such-and-such historical climate—a veritable sociotemporal realization of the Gospel.⁴⁰

According to Maritain, the sanctification of secular life is the deepest requirement of the modern age, which is not a sacral but a secular age. The Christian sacral concept of the temporal order, medieval Christendom, in which the earthly community and civilization were based on the unity of theological faith and religious creed, must give way to a Christian secular concept, the concrete historical ideal of a New Christendom. A return to the sacral pattern is in no way

conceivable, says Maritain. Civil society has gained complete differentiation and full autonomy in its own sphere and domain from the spiritual realm of the Church. This society is also religiously and philosophically pluralistic and is now based on a common good and a common task of an earthly, temporal, or secular order.

Against this light, Maritain claims that the nature and responsibility of Christian secular activity with respect to world and culture becomes clear. “While the Church itself, above all, anxious not to become the adjunct of any one particular system, has been more and more freed, not from the necessity of judging things from above, but of administering and directing the temporal things of this world, the individual Christian finds himself more and more engaged in exactly these things, not so as a member of the Church, but as a citizen of the earthly city, that is, as a *Christian citizen*, conscious of the task incumbent on him of working for the inauguration of a new secular order.”⁴¹ In other words, with the shift from a sacral to a secular concept of the temporal order comes a new way for Christians to be involved in the world—a new style of sanctity and sanctification of secular life. Firmly maintaining the distinction between the sacred and the secular, Maritain nonetheless affirms a universal call to holiness in both orders. “Both, the men involved in the secular or temporal order and those involved in the sacred order, must tend to the perfection of human life; that is, to the perfection of love, and to inner sanctity.”⁴² Here, too, Maritain's theology of grace and nature leads him to break with any hint of naturalism in the secular realm. The secular order must be superelevated in its own order by grace.

Chartered Pluralism and Its Underlying Rational Justification

The revitalized democracy we are hoping for ... is of the *pluralistic* type ... I affirm that without genuine and vital reconciliation between democratic inspiration and evangelical inspiration our hopes for the democratic culture of the future will be frustrated ... I insist as forcefully as T. S. Eliot that the Christian leaven is necessary to the life and integration of our culture.⁴³

More than half a century ago, Maritain developed a Catholic public philosophy. This is the vision of a Christian commonwealth, a new Christendom, where Christian faith, by the integral character of its theocentric humanism, could unify, without denying the distinctness of, the temporal and the spiritual, and that would provide a positive framework for the flourishing of a personalist, communal, and pluralistic democracy. In this section, I will say something briefly about the personalist and communitarian features of Maritain's

vision of a revitalized democracy. However, I will devote most of my attention to Maritain's position on the pluralist principle in democracy.

According to Maritain, a democratic society is, first, *communal*. That is, it recognizes, over against individualism, the remedy of a Christian personalism where *person* (unlike "individual") is relationally defined, naturally ordered toward society and communion, and thus, the whole man is engaged in the common good of civil society. What this means is that the proper and qualifying end of civil society and of civilization is a *common good*. This good is, says Maritain, "different from the simple sum of the individual goods and superior to the interests of the individual insofar as the latter is part of the social whole. This common good is essentially the right earthly life of the assembled multitude, of a *whole* composed of human persons: This is to say that it is at once material and moral."⁴⁴

Second, a democratic society is *personalist*. The common good of this society is not the human person's ultimate end. The human person has transcendent ends that exist prior to and independent of the common good of society. In respect of those ends that transcend the body politic, says Maritain, "both society itself and its common good are indirectly subordinated to the perfect accomplishment of the person and his supratemporal aspirations as to an end of another order."⁴⁵ This order of ends is both natural and supernatural. The body politic is subordinate, not as a pure means but as an *infravalent* end (an end intrinsically good yet of lesser dignity), to the transcendent *natural goods* of justice and love for all men, the life of the spirit, moral rectitude, the dignity of truth, knowledge, and beauty, and so forth.

First and foremost, however, the body politic is indirectly subordinate to the supernatural end to which the human person has been created. "Now the Christian knows that there is a supernatural order, and that the ultimate end—the absolute ultimate end—of the human person is God causing his own personal life and eternal bliss to be participated in by man." Man is created by and for God and his dignity is grounded and perfected in communion with him. Adds Maritain, "Here is the rock of the dignity of the human person as well as of the unshakeable requirements of the Christian message."⁴⁶ Furthermore, the common good of civil society should not be made into the absolute good. In its own order, this common good is a relatively ultimate end, but not the absolute ultimate end, according to Maritain. If we absolutize the common good of society, we pervert its nature and we consequently also undermine the conditions that are conducive to promoting and fostering both the natural and supernatural higher ends of the human person. As Maritain puts it,

The end of political society is not to lead the human person to his spiritual perfection and to his full freedom of autonomy, that is to say, to sanctity, to a state of freedom that is properly divine because it is the very life of God living then in man. Nevertheless, political society is essentially destined, by reason of the earthly end itself that specifies it, to the development of those ... conditions that will raise men in general to a level of material, intellectual, and moral life in accord with the good and peace of the whole, that each person will be positively aided in the progressive conquest of his full life as a person and of his spiritual freedom.⁴⁷

In the third place, Maritain's vision of a democratic society is *pluralistic*. This involves respecting the diverse philosophical and religious creeds and traditions of contemporary society. In his public philosophy, Maritain develops with sophistication the prospects for a common foundation in religiously and philosophically pluralistic societies. He advances a *chartered pluralism*⁴⁸ that is able to explain (a) the pluralist principle in democracy, (b) the charter and basic tenets that are at the core of its existence, and (c) the philosophical and religious justification of the democratic charter.

The pluralist principle in democracy states that "a genuine democracy cannot impose on its citizens or demand from them, as a condition for their belonging to the city, any philosophic or any religious creed."⁴⁹ This principle is foundational in a society of free men, a liberal society. Maritain wholly accepts this principle, but he rejects its interpretation by the disciples of the optimistic rationalism and individualism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The claim is that truth will likely emerge in a neutral society, that is, a society free of religious and metaphysical claims, where opinions can clash in the marketplace of ideas and where men can freely, in the sense of politically or socially uncoerced, accept the truth.⁵⁰ Of course, Maritain fully accepts the free competition of ideas in a democratic culture in order to further the epistemological ends of free cognitive agents—truth is their aim! The notion contested by Maritain is that this conflict of ideas best takes place in a supposedly neutral society. He writes:

One of the errors of individualist optimism was to believe that in a free society "truth," as to the foundations of civil life, as well as the decisions and modes of behavior befitting human dignity and freedom, would automatically emerge from the conflicts of individual forces and opinions supposedly immune from any irrational trends and disintegrating pressures; the error lay in conceiving of a free society as a perfectly *neutral* boxing-ring in which all possible ideas about society and the bases of social life meet and battle it out, without the Body Politic's being concerned with the maintenance of any common conditions and inspiration.⁵¹

Maritain argues that a democratic society with no concept of itself, man, human freedom, and human rights, is “disarmed and paralyzed,” as he puts it, and unable to defend itself against totalitarian efforts to destroy freedom and human rights. Rather than a neutral society, says Maritain, a democratic society must be pluralistic. Yet if this society is to resist disintegration, and if it is to foster cooperation in the common task and for the common welfare among men of different religious and philosophical convictions, what is required is a common faith, a civic, or secular faith, says Maritain, in the basic tenets of a society of free men. In other words, Maritain’s vision of a pluralistic society could best be described as a *chartered* pluralism. He writes: “For a society of free men implies basic tenets that are at the core of its very existence. A genuine democracy implies a fundamental agreement between minds and wills on the bases of life in common; it is aware of itself and of its principles, and it must be capable of defending and promoting its own concept of social and political life; it must bear within itself a common human creed, the creed of freedom.”⁵²

Maritain makes it quite clear that this creed reflects a secular faith, not a religious one. This faith involves basic beliefs in the truth-oriented capacities of human reason, the dignity of the human person, love of neighbor, and the absolute value of moral good. This charter is made up of beliefs that are recognized and asserted by the people and held by them to be true. It includes, for example:

[R]ights and liberties of the human person [and] corresponding responsibilities; ... functions of authority in a political and social democracy, moral obligation, binding in conscience, regarding just laws as well as the Constitution that guarantees the people’s liberties; ... human equality, justice between persons and the body politic, civic friendship and an ideal of fraternity, religious freedom, mutual tolerance and mutual respect between various spiritual communities and schools of thought; ... obligations of each person toward the common good of the body politic and obligations of each nation toward the common good of civilized society, and the necessity of becoming aware of the unity of the world and of the existence of a community of peoples.⁵³

Now Maritain carefully distinguishes between this creed, which is at the root of common life in a pluralistic society and that is, he says, “a set of *practical conclusions* or of *practical points of convergence*,” and the *theoretical justifications*, metaphysical or religious outlooks, which justify or ground “these practical conclusions in reason.”⁵⁴ At the metalevel of common rational justification, the differences in such underlying outlooks regarding truth, liberty, justice, goodness, rightness, conscience, rights, and so forth seem to be ultimate, irreducible, irreconcilable, and powerless to create agreement among men.⁵⁵ And, yet,

Maritain is persuaded that rational justification is indispensable “because each of us believes instinctively in truth and only wishes to give his consent to what he has recognized as true and rationally valid.”⁵⁶ Maritain explains:

I am fully convinced that my way of justifying the belief in the rights of man and the ideal of freedom, equality, and fraternity is the only one that is solidly based on truth. That does not prevent me from agreeing on these practical tenets with those who are convinced that their way of justifying them, entirely different from mine or even opposed to mine in its theoretical dynamism, is likewise the only one that is based on truth. Assuming they both believe in the democratic charter, a Christian and a rationalist will, nevertheless, give justifications that are incompatible with each other, to which their souls, their minds, and their blood are committed, and about these justifications they will fight. And God keep me from saying that it is not important to know which of the two is right! That is essentially important.⁵⁷

We can appreciate why Maritain is not a skeptic or a relativist about the powers of reason to attain the truth if we distinguish between subjective and objective rationality.⁵⁸ Maritain can be interpreted to mean that *R* is rationally justified in holding his beliefs about the democratic charter even though *C* thinks those beliefs are false, and even though, in fact, he thinks that there are no objectively good reasons for the truth of *R*’s beliefs. *R* is subjectively rational in holding his beliefs because he is satisfying his own intellectual standards. Thus, justification is, in one sense, person-relative because the subjective rationality of a belief is unavoidably person-relative. Yet, essentially important, is Maritain’s insistence that the belief’s truth is not person-relative, and hence this notion of subjective rationality is incomplete and left to stand on its own leads to skepticism or relativism. Maritain embraces, then, a notion of objective rationality that presupposes a realist notion of truth—a proposition is true, if and only if, objective reality is the way that the proposition says it is; otherwise the proposition is false.

Against the background of holding that his religious and metaphysical justification is true in the above sense, we can also understand Maritain’s claim that the Christian Gospel is necessary to the life and integration of our democratic culture. This claim is based on the general premise “that religion and metaphysics are an essential part of human culture, primary and indispensable incentives in the very life of society.”⁵⁹ So, although Maritain carefully distinguishes between practical tenets of convergence and their quite diverse, even opposite, theoretical justifications, he is nevertheless persuaded that only Christian convictions and the religious faith that inspires them can justify, nurture, strengthen, and enrich culture and the life of the community as a whole, and the secular

faith in the democratic charter in particular. In other words, without the backing of the Christian faith our basic beliefs in the truth-oriented capacities of human reason, the dignity of the human person, love of neighbor, and the absolute value of moral good are in peril. This point brings us back to the pluralist principle and to the clash of worldviews, and the free competition of diverse philosophical and religious schools of thought in a democratic culture. Says Maritain, “Let each school freely and fully assert its belief! But let no one try to impose it by force upon the others! The mutual tension that ensues will enrich rather than harm the common task. As for myself, who believe that the idea of man propounded by the metaphysics of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas is the rational foundation of democratic philosophy, and that the Gospel inspiration is its true living soul, I am confident that, in the free competition of which I just spoke, the Christian leaven would play an ever-growing part.”⁶⁰ In practical terms, the self-conscious Christian confronts the self-conscious secularist in a battle of ideas; they both have a place in public life as public actors, arguing and evangelizing, each trying to persuade the other.⁶¹ So, for Maritain, it is the persuasive power of truth that will bring about the Christian integration of culture, not ecclesiastical or state power. In a passage worth quoting in full, Maritain writes:

If I affirm that without genuine and vital reconciliation between democratic inspiration and evangelical inspiration our hopes for the democratic culture of the future will be frustrated, I do not appeal to police force to obtain such reconciliation; I only state what I hold to be true. It would be foolish intolerance to label as intolerance any affirmation of truth that is not watered down with doubt, even if it does not please some of our democratic fellow-citizens. I insist ... forcefully ... that the Christian leaven is necessary to the life and integration of our culture. From the religious point of view, I would wish all men to believe in the integrity of Christian truth. From the social-temporal point of view, I would be satisfied if the Christian energies at work in the community were radiant with the fullness of supernatural faith in a number of men, and retained at least a sufficient degree of moral and rational efficacy in those in whom these energies still exist, but in a more or less incomplete—or secularized—form. Supernatural faith, if it is truly lived—in other words, if Christians know “of what they are”—provides them with basic inspiration and vital truths that permeate their social and political systems and work for human dignity.⁶²

Given Maritain’s insistence on cultural integration and his attendant claim that the Christian Gospel is necessary to the life and integration of our democratic culture, there remains to ask what his view is of the relation between church, state, and the kingdom of God.

Church, State, and the Kingdom of God

The Lord Christ said: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s: and to God the things that are God’s.” He thereby distinguished the two powers and so doing emancipated the souls of men.⁶³

“All power is given to me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). Here is a formal and decisive text that cannot be interpreted with a good conscience in two ways. Those who really believe in the words of Christ will never admit a State separate from the kingdom of God, an absolutely independent and sovereign temporal power. There is only one power on earth and that power belongs not to Caesar but to Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

In one sense, the kingdom of God has already come—in the form of the Church, or the Mystical body of Christ, which is ... the kingdom in the state of pilgrimage and crucifixion. In another sense, the kingdom of God is to come, namely, as to its fulfillment in the Jerusalem of glory—the Church triumphant—and in the world of the resurrection. It is in relation to this second sense that we have to consider the problem of the kingdom of God on earth, or the realization of the Gospel on earth.⁶⁵

In his study *On the Philosophy of History* as well as *Integral Humanism*, Maritain reflects on the topic of the kingdom of God and the mystery of the world. This mystery is that the world and the City of Man is the kingdom at one and the same time of man, God, and of the Devil. Thus Maritain writes:

Thus appears the essential ambiguity of the world and its history; it is a field common to the three. The world is a closed field that belongs to God by right of creation; to the Devil by right of conquest, because of sin; to Christ by right of victory over the conqueror, because of the Passion. The task of the Christian in the world is to dispute with the Devil his domain, to wrest it from him; he must strive to this end, he will succeed in it only in part as long as time will endure. The world is saved, yes, it is delivered *in hope*, it is on the march toward the kingdom of God; but it is not *holy*, it is the Church that is *holy*; it is on the march toward the kingdom of God, and this is why it is a treason toward this kingdom not to seek with all one’s forces—proportionate to the conditions of earthly history, but as effective as possible, *quantum potes, tantum aude*—a realization or, more exactly, a refraction in the world of the Gospel exigencies; nevertheless this realization, even though relative, will always be, in one manner or another, deficient and disputed in the world. And at the same time that the history of the world is on the march (it is the growth of the wheat) toward the kingdom of God, it is also on the march (it is the growth of the tares, inextricably mingled with the wheat) toward the kingdom of reprobation.⁶⁶

In holding this view, Maritain distinguishes his position from three others that he regards as erroneous. First, there is the *anthropocratic* illusion, according to which, man himself is ultimately responsible for bringing about in this life the kingdom of God. Second, the *satanic* illusion holds that the temporal world

wholly belongs to the Devil, being a mere waiting room for the next life, with no possible advancement and realization of the Gospel in the temporal order. Third, he distinguishes his position from the *theocratic* illusion, which identifies the world—as Maritain puts it, “*hic mundus*, our historical world, and the social-temporal and political City”—with the kingdom of God.⁶⁷

In response, Maritain urges first that Christians have a responsibility to realize the Gospel in temporal life as *Christifideles Laici*. Second, he affirms that the world belongs to God and hence it cannot escape the government of God, the supreme ruler. Third, the kingdom of God has already come in Jesus Christ’s person and mission, and in that sense we live in the state of fulfillment; but in another sense we live in the state of pilgrimage and crucifixion awaiting the eschatological consummation of the metahistorical kingdom of God. This eschatological hope also embraces the fallen creation, now redeemed in Christ and headed toward the fullness of the kingdom, which is the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:1–8) realized in glory at the end of time. Earlier in this paper, we described the dynamics of this kingdom as the antithesis between “*the World as Antagonist*” and “*the World as redeemed and reconciled*.”⁶⁸ Maritain describes this dynamic as also one in which the kingdom of God and the world are in “a relation of separation and conflict” in contrast to “a relation of union and inclusion.”⁶⁹ This mystery will come to its final consummation in the kingdom of God beyond the present world in triumph and glory.

Against this background, we can now look briefly at the Christian case that Maritain makes for a free society along with an understanding of the relation between the Church and the State in which he affirms the single but complex aim of the *primacy of the spiritual*—“[1]the freedom of the Church to teach and preach and worship, the freedom of the Gospel, the freedom of the Word of God; [2] the superiority of the Church—that is, of the spiritual—over the body politic or the State; and [3] the necessary cooperation between the Church and the body politic or the State.”⁷⁰

Maritain believes that the freedom of the Church is based on the right of freedom of association and the right to religious freedom without interference from the State. Of course, theologically the Church’s radical freedom is, says Maritain, “grounded on the very rights of God and [is] identical with his own freedom in the face of any human institution. The freedom of the Church does express the very independence of the Incarnate Word.”⁷¹ Maritain repeatedly appeals to the basic scriptural warrant for the Church’s radical freedom—Christ himself makes the fundamental distinction between the things that are God’s and the things that are Caesar’s (Matt. 22:21). However, he rejects interpreters of this text who would claim that this distinction entails the separation, that is,

sheer isolation, of the Church from society and of religion from public life, leading to a dualistic view of the Christian life.⁷² When we rightly speak of the two realms, Caesar’s and God’s, we must not overlook the fundamental point that nothing, including Caesar’s realm, can be withdrawn from God’s dominion. Says Maritain,

In its own sphere [the state] is subject to the universal *temporal* sovereignty of Christ; for Christ, as Man, received from God dominion “over the works of His hands” and “all things have been subjected under His feet,” and it is from Him that kings and the heads of States and every human power derive their authority; the State, as such, is bound to observe His Law and the precepts of His morality.... The State, therefore, is indeed sovereign in its own domain, but its domain is subordinate, so that its sovereignty can be neither absolute nor universal. There is only one universal, absolute sovereignty, the sovereignty of the Creator. The sovereignty of the Church, universal through the whole range of salvation, is clearly more extensive and elevated than that of the State.⁷³

The universal kingship of Jesus Christ is both spiritual and temporal because he is the center and goal of all reality—all things were created in Jesus Christ, by him, through him, and for him (Col. 1:16), and everything will be gathered together under him (Eph. 1:10). This concept of Christ’s universal temporal kingship is not merely the abstract concept of his rule to which men must submit; it is rather a dynamic power at work among men in the realm of the body politic. “The universal principle of Christ’s royalty [kingship], the axiom that without Christ nothing firm or excellent can be built, even in the political order, applies here in all truth.”⁷⁴

Bringing about the dynamic presence of Christ’s kingship in the realm of the body politic, indeed in the world as such, superelevated in its own natural order by the Christian leaven, as Maritain urges, is primarily the work of the Christian laity. This work is carried out in light of the realization that the kingship of Christ takes on its full meaning and full dimensions at the consummation of history:

The realization of the Gospel in temporal life that Christians must hope for and strive for will always be, in one way or another, deficient and thwarted; this world will never be fully reconciled with Christ within temporal history. This is all the more reason why we should strive toward it. But we know that it will never come about before the end of history.... The kingdom in its full completion will only come after the end of time; but the actual march toward the kingdom, at each step of history, is a thing that can be, and should be, carried in effect on earth, in this world, within history. And for this march toward the kingdom Christians must not only pray, they also must indefatigably work and strive.⁷⁵

Maritain draws several implications from the fundamental distinction between the Church and the State. First, we need to keep in mind that the modern age is not a sacral age, like that of medieval Christendom, but a secular age. We now affirm the “intrinsically *lay* or *secular* nature of the body politic.”⁷⁶ The term *secular* does not mean “irreligious or indifferent to religion.” Says Maritain, “I say that by nature the body politic, which belongs strictly to the natural order, is only concerned with the temporal life of men and their temporal common good. In the temporal realm the body politic ... is fully autonomous [in its own sphere and domain]; the State, the modern State, is under the command of no superior authority in its own order. But the order of eternal life is superior in itself to the order of temporal life.”⁷⁷ Thus, the civil, political, and legal power of the State is not the secular arm of the Church’s spiritual power. Yes, the spiritual has primacy over the body politic, indeed over the order of earthly life and of temporal society as such, but in a secular age the Church now exercises her influence through the *Christifideles Laici*. Maritain explains:

The things we can admire in the Middle Ages ... are a dead letter in our [secular] age. The supreme, immutable principle of the primacy of the spiritual and the superiority of the Church can [nevertheless] apply otherwise—but not less truly, and even more purely—when, from the very fact that the State has become secular, the supreme functions of moral enlightenment and moral guidance of men, even as concerns the standards and principles that deal with the social and political order, are exercised by the Church in a completely free and autonomous manner, and when the moral authority of the Church freely moves human consciences in every particular case in which some major spiritual interest is at stake. Then the superior dignity and authority of the Church asserts itself, not by virtue of a coercion exercised on the civil power, but by virtue of the spiritual enlightenment conveyed to the souls of the citizens, who must freely bear judgment, according to their own personal conscience, on every matter pertaining to the political common good.... Thus the superior dignity of the Church is to find its ways of realization in the full exercise of her *superior strength of all-pervading inspiration*.⁷⁸

The second implication Maritain draws from the distinction between God’s and Caesar’s domains is the basic tenet that all members of the body politic are equal. For instance, the State does not grant any legal privilege to the citizens who are members of the Church, making all non-Christians second-rate citizens. Rather, from the perspective of justice there exists an equality of rights of all citizens, whatever their religious or irreligious convictions (or race and social standing) may be. The import of this equality of rights becomes abundantly clear in the third implication, which is that the basic dynamic of the inner epistemic freedom of the human person is ordered toward truth. The epistemo-

logical end of cognitive agents, which human beings are, is to know the truth. Our epistemic freedom means that we are to enjoy the free and uncoerced pursuit of the truth by virtue of our human dignity. Maritain speaks of the right of religious freedom or freedom of individual conscience. At issue for Maritain is not whether “error” has “rights.” “It should be pointed out in this connection, first, the subject of rights are not abstract entities such as ‘truth’ or ‘error,’ but human persons, individually or collectively taken; second, that the equality of rights of all citizens is the basic tenet of modern democratic societies.”⁷⁹ Thus, human persons have rights (and duties), they are the subject of rights, chief among these being the right of persons to be free from the coercive power of the State in matters of conscientious conviction. “The State has no authority to impose any faith whatsoever upon, or expel any faith whatsoever from, the inner domain of conscience.”⁸⁰

Finally, Maritain draws one more conclusion, but this time from the right of religious freedom or freedom of conscience. This right is the irreducible foundation, the *sine qua non*, of a free society.⁸¹ Maritain puts the point this way:

[A] reasoned-out awareness has developed, at least in those parts of the civilized world where love for freedom is still treasured—and is growing all the keener as freedom is more threatened—with regard to the fact that nothing more imperils both the common good of the earthly city and the supratemporal interests of truth in human minds than a weakening and breaking down of the internal springs of conscience. Common consciousness has also become aware of the fact that freedom of inquiry, even at the risk of error, is the normal condition for men to get access to truth, so that freedom to search for God in their own way, for those who have been brought up in ignorance or semi-ignorance of him, is the normal condition in which to listen to the message of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, when grace will illumine their hearts.⁸²

The human person’s obligation to follow his conscience, to affirm the truth to the extent that he knows it, implies a right to follow his conscience even when it is erroneous. Hence the claim that the “subject of error has no rights” is entirely repudiated by Maritain, and repudiated on specifically Christian grounds as well as on reason alone. This general point holds even if we were to return to the sacral era of the Middle Ages. On this Maritain says:

Even if, by the grace of God, religious unity were to return, no return to the sacral regime in which the civil power was the instrument or secular arm of the spiritual power could be conceivable in a Christianly inspired modern democratic society. The Catholics who are ready to give their lives for freedom do not cling to these assertions as a matter of expediency, but as a matter of moral obligation or of justice. Yet that

does not mean that they disregard in any respect, it means that they assert and maintain more than ever, the principle of the superiority of the spiritual order over the temporal order and the principle of the necessary cooperation between the Church and the body politic.... The cause of freedom and the cause of the Church are one in the defense of man.⁸³

Maritain argues regarding the principle of mutual help between the body politic and the Church alluded to in this last citation that the spiritual mission of the Church and her radical freedom is best achieved in practice when there is no state establishment of religion. Disestablishment ought to serve the end of the primacy of the spiritual, or, in other words, the free exercise of religion. Yet disestablishment does not mean that the State is morally and religiously neutral, at least not in the particular concept of a Christian political society that Maritain defends. For instance, the State has to foster a general morality, justice, the enforcement of law, especially in its moral function as “*pedagogue of freedom*,”⁸⁴ supervising the development of the civil conditions for human flourishing in the body politic.⁸⁵ In this respect, human beings are indirectly assisted by the body politic in pursuit of their natural and supernatural ends.

Conclusion: *Christifideles Laici*

To conclude this study, I will now enumerate in a summary fashion the foundational ideas, as I understand them, of Maritain’s public philosophy:

1. In 1952, almost twenty years after Maritain’s call for a new style of lay sanctity and, with it, a sanctification of secular life, Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote, “Today there is no doubt that the hour of the laity is sounding in the Church,” and “The future of the Church (and today she has the greatest opportunities),” he adds, “depends on whether laymen can be found who live out the unbroken power of the Gospel and are willing to shape the world.... So that the simple Christian among other Christians may do what all have to do on earth: Live and work for the salvation of the world in the world.”⁸⁶ With clarity of vision, Maritain had already foreseen this very need some decades earlier, namely, that the emergence of a new form of Christian apostolate is required in the modern age in order to bring the Gospel to bear on the temporal order. My main thesis in this paper is that Maritain’s theology of nature and grace—grace transforming nature—provides a general set of theological principles that ground and explain his concept of lay sanctity and, with it, the sanctification of secular life. Christ transforming culture, society, indeed *all that is human*, is the *leitmotif* of Jacques Maritain’s Christian humanism.⁸⁷

2. During the first half of the twentieth century, Maritain produced a body of works that expressed a public philosophy that provides a positive framework

for the flourishing of a personalist, communal, and pluralistic democracy. Maritain was persuaded that democracy could be reinvigorated only by drinking at the deep wells of the Christian faith, which, he argued, had given birth originally to the democratic state of mind—implying as it does faith in justice, freedom, brotherly love, conscience, deep-rooted aspirations for social and political progress, human rights as well as responsibilities, and the dignity of the human person. This paper defends the thesis that Maritain’s public philosophy can contribute to revitalizing our sense of citizenship and its spiritual and moral foundations in contemporary America.

3. Maritain defends the simultaneous unity and distinctness of the relationship between Church and State in the context of the following three principles: First, there is the principle of religious liberty, which includes the freedom of the Church to teach and preach and worship, the freedom of the Gospel, and the freedom of the Word of God. Second is the principle of the superiority of the Church, that is, of the spiritual, over the body politic. Third, there is the principle of the necessary cooperation between the Church and the State. Furthermore, democracies protect religious freedom or the freedom of conscience because the basic rights of the human person require it. Given Maritain’s views about the project of rationally justifying the foundations of chartered pluralism, as we also saw above, disestablishment of a state religion cannot require the separation or isolation of the body politic and the Church. The attempts at religiously and metaphysically justifying the right ordering of a pluralistic society cannot be barred from public debate. Clearly, then, disestablishment does not rule out of bounds, in Maritain’s view, the right of the Christian faith to claim truth for itself in public policy discussions. Indeed, as leading English philosopher Roger Trigg has recently argued, “If religion cannot claim truth, it can have no genuine public role to play.”⁸⁸

In conclusion, Maritain always returned to the basic thesis of his Catholic public philosophy: The Christian Gospel is necessary for the life and integration of our democratic culture. Christian faith is, says Maritain, “the very soul, inner strength, and spiritual stronghold of democracy.”⁸⁹ He adds: “Just as democracy must, under penalty of disintegration, foster and defend the democratic charter; therefore, a Christian democracy, that is, a democracy fully aware of its own sources, must under penalty of disintegration, keep alive in itself the Christian sense of human dignity and human equality, of justice and freedom. For the political society really and vitally Christian that we are contemplating, the suppression of any actual contact and connection, that is, of any mutual help, between the Church and the body politic would simply spell suicide.”⁹⁰

Notes

1. Jacques Maritain, "Christian Humanism," in *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain: Selected Readings*, ed. Joseph W. Evans and Leo R. Ward (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1965), 155–69, and here at 164–65.
2. Jacques Maritain, "Integral Humanism and the Crisis of Modern Times," *The Review of Politics* 1, no. 1 (January 1939): 1–17. This essay was later published in *Scholasticism and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 11–31. This essay was apparently first delivered on February 8, 1939, as a public lecture at the Marigny Theater in Paris titled "The Twilight of Civilization." It was published in Jacques Maritain, *The Twilight of Civilization*, trans. Lionel Landry (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1943). On this information and more, see Deal W. Hudson and Matthew J. Mancini, "Introduction: Maritain and the Ambivalence of the 'Modern' World," in *Understanding Maritain: Philosopher and Friend*, eds. Deal W. Hudson and Matthew J. Mancini (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 1–13. See also Jacques Maritain, *Some Reflections on Culture and Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933).
3. Maritain, "Integral Humanism and the Crisis of Modern Times," 2.
4. *Ibid.*, 13.
5. Maritain, "Christian Humanism," 156.
6. *Ibid.*, 157.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, 160.
9. *Ibid.*, 161.
10. Maritain, "Integral Humanism and the Crisis of Modern Times," 15.
11. Maritain, "Christian Humanism," 161.
12. Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. W. Evans (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1957), 42–75.
13. Maritain, "Christian Humanism," 158.
14. *Ibid.*, 159.
15. *Ibid.*, 163.
16. *Ibid.*, 164.
17. *Ibid.*, 167–68.
18. Maritain, "Integral Humanism and the Crisis of Modern Times," 18–19.
19. *Ibid.*, 19.
20. Jacques Maritain, "The Conquest of Freedom," in *The Education of Man: The Educational Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, ed. Donald and Idella Gallagher (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), 159–79, and here at 179.
21. Jacques Maritain, *Clairvoyance de Rome* (Paris, 1929), 222, as cited in Henri de Lubac, "Apologetics and Theology," *Theological Fragments* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 91–104, and this citation at 103, n. 28.
22. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, 130.
23. Maritain, "Integral Humanism and the Crisis of Modern Times," 29. Some thirty years later, the Second Vatican Council in three of its documents, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity) made similar affirmations and developed a position on the temporal mission of the Christian in the world that is anti-dualistic. Indeed, we find the same idea expressed in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* (no. 43): "One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith that many profess and the practice of their daily lives." Some interpreters argue that Maritain had a profound influence on Vatican II. On this, see Gerry Lessard, O.P., "The Critics of *Integral Humanism*: A Survey," in *Thomistic Papers III*, ed. by Leonard A. Kennedy, C.S.B. (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1987), 117–40. More than twenty years after the Council, John Paul II wrote the Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* (The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World),

in which he wrote that the lay faithful are confronted with two temptations: "the temptation of being so strongly interested in Church services and tasks that some fail to become actively engaged in their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural, and political world; and the temptation of legitimizing the unwarranted separation of faith from life, that is, a separation of the Gospel's acceptance from the actual living of the Gospel in various situations in the world" (no. 3). Like Maritain, John Paul develops an anti-dualist account of the temporal mission of the Christian lay faithful in the world.

24. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, trans. Joseph Evans (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 22.
25. Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 16–17, and this citation at 16; see also 807–30.
26. For the conceptual distinction between "hard" and "soft" dualism, I am indebted to David L. Schindler, "Christology, Public Theology, and Thomism: de Lubac, Balthasar, and Murray," in *The Future of Thomism*, eds. Deal W. Hudson and Dennis William Moran (American Maritain Association, 1992), 247–64.
27. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 292–93.
28. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, 133, 135–37.
29. Maritain, *The Twilight of Civilization*, 36.
30. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, 130, n. 10.
31. *Ibid.*, 130–31.
32. *Ibid.*, 125.
33. *Ibid.*, 126.
34. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 96.
35. Jacques Maritain, "Religion and Culture," in *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain: Selected Readings*, ed. Joseph W. Evans and Leo R. Ward (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1965), 213–22, and here at 216.
36. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, 130–32.
37. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 176–77.
38. Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 160.
39. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 123.
40. *Ibid.*, 93–94.
41. *Ibid.*, 119.
42. Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 101.
43. *Ibid.*, 170.
44. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 133.
45. Maritain, *Man and the State*, 148.
46. *Ibid.*, 149.
47. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 134.
48. This is how Os Guinness describes Maritain's public philosophy whose influence, along with that of John Courtney Murray, S.J., he acknowledges on his own views. On this, see *The American Hour: A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 239–57, at 251 and 254. See also Murray's important and influential study, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1960).
49. Maritain, *Man and the State*, 110.
50. The key inspiration behind this concept of a liberal society is John Stuart Mill. See chapter 2, "Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion," in Mill's *On Liberty*, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978). For a good analysis of chapter 2, see Paul Helm, "Responsibility for Belief and Tolerance," in *Belief Policies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), especially 182–88. Basil Mitchell identifies the view that Maritain rejects as one of three main varieties of liberalism in his study *Law, Morality, and Religion in a Secular Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 96. Mitchell writes: "There are, then, I suggest, three main varieties of liberalism. (1) A liberalism that bases itself on a conviction about the nature of man and of his destiny and that insists on the need of the individual for freedom to choose the way he shall live. It is a liberalism that has an

explicit metaphysical [and theological] context. (2) A liberalism that is skeptical of religious and metaphysical claims and that sees as the supreme values of human life as the discovery of truth and the attainment of happiness. It regards the need for individual freedom partly as a self-evident truth, partly as a precondition of the discovery of truth and the attainment of happiness. [This is Mill's view.] (3) A liberalism that is skeptical not only of religious and metaphysical claims but of morality also, except insofar as it is a necessary condition of the survival of any society. It sets a high value on human beings and on the ideal projects men desire for themselves, although it does not regard these ideals as, in any sense, objective."

51. Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, 166.

52. Maritain, *Man and the State*, 109.

53. *Ibid.*, 112–13.

54. *Ibid.*, 111. See also Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, 167.

55. Maritain stresses in the following passage the inability to establish, in actual fact, universal agreement. He writes: "If a theoretical reconciliation, a truly philosophical synthesis, is desired, this could only come about as a result of a vast amount of probing and purification, which would require higher intuitions, a new systematization, and the radical criticism of a certain number of errors and confused ideas—which, for these very reasons, even if it succeeded in exerting an important influence on culture, would remain one doctrine among many, accepted by a number and rejected by the rest, and could not claim to establish in actual fact universal ascendancy over men's minds." *Man and the State*, 79. Maritain holds out, nevertheless, for real cultural integration, which depends on the Christian faith and its metaphysical implications. Later in the same book, Maritain writes: "If a new civilization is to be Christianly inspired, if the body politic is to be quickened by the leaven of the Gospel in temporal existence itself, it will be because Christians will have been able, as free men speaking to free men, to revive in the people the often unconscious Christian feelings and moral structures embodied in the history of the nations born out of old Christendom, and to persuade the people, or the majority of the people, of the truth of Christian faith, or at least of the validity of Christian social and political philosophy" (167).

56. *Ibid.*, 77.

57. *Ibid.*, 78.

58. For my specific understanding and use of the conceptual distinction between subjective and objective rationality, I am indebted to Del Kiernan-Lewis' study, *Learning to Philosophize: A Primer* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999), 72–76.

59. Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, 166.

60. *Ibid.*, 170.

61. See Glenn W. Olson, "The Quest for a Public Philosophy in Twentieth-Century American Political Thought," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 340–62, at 360.

62. Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, 170–71.

63. Jacques Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 2.

64. Vladimir Soloviev, *La Russie et l'Eglise universelle*, 74, as cited in Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, 184, n. 15.

65. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, 150.

66. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 108–9.

67. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, 151. See also, *Integral Humanism*, 102–8.

68. *Ibid.*, 133, 135.

69. *Ibid.*, 136.

70. Maritain, *Man and the State*, 151–54.

71. *Ibid.*, 150.

72. Accordingly, Maritain would object to the dualistic strategy of the current mayor of New York City, Rudolph W. Giuliani. See the Mayor's 1994 Tanenbaum Memorial Lecture, "Politics and Faith: Tensions of Living in Two Worlds," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 449–54.

73. Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, 6.

74. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 169.

75. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, 155–56.

76. Maritain, *Man and the State*, 153.

77. *Ibid.*, 153.

78. *Ibid.*, 164, 162.

79. *Ibid.*, 174.

80. *Ibid.*, 173–74.

81. See George Weigel, "Religious Freedom: The First Human Right," in *Freedom and Its Discontents: Catholicism Confronts Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1991), 7–24.

82. Maritain, *Man and the State*, 161–62.

83. *Ibid.*, 181–82, 187.

84. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 183.

85. I cannot address here the important question of what a legislator is to do in a civil society such as ours that is composed of diverse religious and moral traditions. Maritain has written much of importance and contemporary relevance on moral direction and the place of the natural law in a religiously and ethically diverse society. See *Integral Humanism*, 183, 217–19, 220–23; and *Man and the State*, 167–71. For a recent attempt to apply some of Maritain's insights, see Joseph F. Power, O.S.E.S., "Bishops and Politicians," *America*, October 16, 1999: 8–11.

86. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Razing the Bastions: On the Church in This Age*, trans. Brian McNeil, C.R.V. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 38, 42–43.

87. On the various ways that Christians have conceptualized the relation between Christ and culture, see H. Richard Niebuhr's development of a typology in his influential *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951). I have profited from James M. Gustafson's discussion of Niebuhr's typology in *Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) for my analysis of Maritain's own position on the relation between Christ and culture, nature and grace. Especially influential in my thinking on the relation between nature and grace has been the reflections of Dutch neo-Calvinist philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977). For a brief introduction to his thinking, see *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1968).

88. Roger Trigg, *Rationality and Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 8–28, and at 27.

89. For more on this idea, see Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy* (London: Centenary Press, 1945), 39–43. "Not only does the democratic state of mind proceed from the inspiration of the Gospel, but it cannot exist without it. To keep faith in the forward march of humanity despite all the temptations to despair ... [.] to have faith in the dignity of the person and of common humanity, in human rights and in justice ... [.] to have, not in formulas but in reality, the sense and respect for the dignity of the people ... [.] to sustain and revive the sense of equality ... [.] and to respect authority ... [.] an heroic inspiration and an heroic belief are needed that fortify and vivify reason, and that none other than Jesus of Nazareth brought forth in the world ... Democracy needs the evangelical ferment in order to be realized and in order to endure. The lasting advent of the democratic state of mind and of the democratic philosophy of life requires the energies of the Gospel to penetrate secular existence.... The point is that right political experience cannot develop in people unless passions and reason are oriented by a solid basis of collective virtues, by faith and honor and thirst for justice. The point is that without the evangelical instinct and the spiritual potential of a living Christianity, political judgment and political experience are ill-protected against the illusions of selfishness and fear; without courage, compassion for mankind, and the spirit of sacrifice the ever-thwarted advance toward an historical ideal of generosity and fraternity is not conceivable.... As [Henri] Bergson has shown in his profound analyses [in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*], it is the urge of a love infinitely stronger than the philanthropy commended by philosophers that caused human devotion to surmount the closed borders of the natural social groups—family group and national group—and extended it to

the entire human race, because this love is the life in us of the very love that has created being and because it truly makes of each human being our neighbor.... For the kingdom of God is not miserly, the communion that is its supernatural privilege is not jealously guarded; it wants to spread and refract this communion outside its own limits, in the imperfect shapes and in the universe of conflicts, malice, and bitter toil that make up the temporal realm. That is the deepest principle of the democratic ideal, which is the secular name for the ideal of Christendom. That is why, Bergson writes, "Democracy is evangelical in essence and ... its motive power is love."

90. Maritain, *Man and the State*, 177.