

Rebuilding the City of God: Locating the Politics of Virtue within the Politics of Sin and Grace

JACOB W. WOOD
Franciscan University of Steubenville
Steubenville, OH

IN *THE POLITICS OF VIRTUE*,¹ John Milbank and Adrian Pabst propose that liberalism is undergoing a “meta-crisis.” On the presupposition that “to do something wrong is also to do something badly, to botch things up in a way that is bound sooner or later (even if decades or centuries later) to fail, because vices are hard to sustain and ultimately self-defeating,”² the authors combine Milbank’s critique of liberalism with Pabst’s critique of capitalism to argue not only that the liberal-capitalist order is wrong in principle but also that it has failed at its task of achieving peace and justice.³ In order to save liberal society from collapsing in on itself, Milbank and Pabst propose a politics of soul-craft,⁴ a virtue ethic built upon Christian virtues of “love, trust, hope, mercy, kindness, forgiveness and reconciliation,”⁵ which could

¹ John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

² Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 6.

³ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 2–3. Milbank’s critique of liberalism was initially expressed in *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990; 2nd ed., 2006) and later developed in *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2013). The foundation of Pabst’s critique of capitalism can be found in Adrian Pabst, “Modern Sovereignty in Question: Theology, Democracy and Capitalism,” *Modern Theology* 26 (2010): 570–602.

⁴ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 30.

⁵ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 7.

replace the ethic of absolute freedom and conflict inherent in the liberal political order. Since all virtue is received as a gift of grace and can be accepted only in gratitude,⁶ this new, post-liberal order would be based on “gift-exchange or social reciprocity as the ultimate principle to govern *both* the economic and the political realms.”⁷ The polity resulting from such a view of virtue would be horizontally socialist and vertically aristocratic:⁸ socialist because it would be built upon the re-formation of trust and solidarity among the members of society through virtuous interactions among them;⁹ aristocratic because virtue cannot be thus practiced without exemplars,¹⁰ each standing at the head of a corporate mediating institution with a real and subsidiary share of sovereignty,¹¹ leading the members of that corporation in the virtuous pursuit of the common good,¹² in harmony with other corporations.¹³ Such an aristocratic socialism, being itself born of Christian ideals and arising from Christian history,¹⁴ could prepare society for a return to Christendom and the Church for a return to unity.

The book contains a number of familiar themes from the Radical Orthodoxy movement: the critique of ontological violence and the substitution of an ontology of peace; the critique of coerced equality and the substitution of relational difference; the critique of philosophical dialectics and its subordination to theological metanarrative; the critique of egalitarianism; and the exaltation of aristocracy as exemplar. Although each of these themes deserves a critical discussion in its own right, for reasons of space, I would like to take up only the first of them here. Milbank and Pabst rightly prioritize an Augustinian-Thomistic ontology of peace in their rethinking of political theology. However, their metanarrative inadequately accounts for the way in which sin corrupts ontological peace into *non*-ontological violence in the fallen state. Consequently, when Milbank and Pabst

⁶ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 208.

⁷ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 3. See also 47, 71, 78, 143.

⁸ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 70–71.

⁹ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 206.

¹⁰ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 7–8, 74, 209.

¹¹ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 81–88, 206, 213–15, 298.

¹² Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 288–89.

¹³ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 373.

¹⁴ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 44: “Socialism and certain other post-romantic radicalisms . . . revived the ancient and Catholic projects of the pursuit of substantive, shared ends of flourishing through mutual cooperation and reciprocal exchange.”

propose the adoption of aristocratic socialism as part of their plan for rebuilding Christendom out of liberalism, they overlook the extent to which John Courtney Murray's liberal critique of socialism still applies. Murray's proposal for limited government is better suited to the theological demands of a human nature that has fallen from grace, since it was based on a sober theological account of ways in which the wounds of sin corrupt any attempt to construct a political order outside of the sacramental economy of grace, while Andrew Jones's very recent study of the sacramental kingdom of King Louis IX suggests that the politics of virtue are inseparable from the sacramental grace that heals the fallen will, and that the politics of grace entail a more radical vision for the political order than Radical Orthodoxy has as of yet proposed.

The present essay will proceed in six sections. In the first, I will identify two forms of liberal Catholicism: that arising from the doctrine of a natural desire for a natural end, and that arising from the doctrine of a natural desire for a supernatural end. In the second, I will review Radical Orthodoxy's critique of liberalism as found in *The Politics of Virtue* and the major works of Milbank leading up to it. In the third, I will reexamine the liberal Catholicism of John Courtney Murray, showing how he embedded it within a metanarrative of sin and grace. In the fourth and fifth, I will confront Murray and Milbank/Pabst with the turn toward doctrinaire liberalism in American politics and ask whether or to what extent their respective proposals are likely—as a matter of fact—to be widely agreed upon or widely practicable in that context. By appealing to faith and grace, received principally in a liturgical context, Milbank's and Pabst's proposal appears to overcome the challenge of explaining how fallen man can be expected to know and agree widely upon common principles as the basis for a socio-political order. However, their proposal falls short by underemphasizing the need for charity, received through the sacraments in that liturgy, to heal the fallen will so that people will *want* to act consistently on the principles that they agree upon. In the sixth, I will show how Jones supplies the emphasis on sacramental charity that is missing in Milbank's and Pabst's theological politics and, in so doing, offers a vision for politics marked by the mystical ascent from sin to sanctity. Jones's picture of thirteenth-century polity cannot and should not be replicated in the present, but it does challenge the Church to reimagine the ultimate goal of the New Evangelization.

Catholicism and Liberalism

To say that Catholic theology had an uneasy relationship with liberal democracy in the nineteenth century is to state the obvious.¹⁵ To say that Catholic theology still persists in that uneasy relationship after the publication of *Dignitatis Humanae* in the twentieth century is not. For, whether one holds that the Declaration on Religious Liberty from the Second Vatican Council marked a dramatic development of the Church's understanding of freedom or was a juridic accommodation to the political structures of the modern age, there has been a general scholarly consensus over the last fifty years that, while the Church continues to distance herself from the most ideological forms of doctrinaire liberalism, she has somehow (and finally) made peace with the political developments that followed the American and French Revolutions.¹⁶ The basis of this peace is a compromise in which the

¹⁵ For a thorough and balanced account of the plight of liberal Catholicism in the nineteenth century, see Bernard Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975). For a more critical view of the Church's approach to liberalism, see Peter Steinfels, "The Failed Encounter: The Catholic Church and Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century," in *Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to American Public Philosophy*, ed. R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 19–44.

Accounts of Catholicism and liberalism in the nineteenth century typically focus on two magisterial interventions. The first is Gregory XVI's condemnation of liberalism in the encyclical *Mirari Vos* in 1832, as well as his condemnation of Hugues Robert Félicité de Lamennais in *Singulari Nos* in 1834. The second is Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* in 1864. In spite of these condemnations, a more limited form of liberalism did enjoy popularity in French Catholicism under the patronage of Henri-Dominique Lacordaire. See my "Ressourcement," in *The T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed. Jordan Hillebert (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2017), 101–5.

¹⁶ For the view that *Dignitatis Humanae* is a juridic accommodation without a shift in anthropology, see Joseph Komonchak, "Vatican II and the Encounter between Catholicism and Liberalism," in Douglass and Hollenbach, *Catholicism and Liberalism*, 895. For the view that it represents a shift from neo-Scholastic to personalist anthropology, see David Schindler, "Freedom, Truth, and Human Dignity: An Interpretation of *Dignitatis Humanae* on the Right to Religious Freedom," in Schindler and Nicholas J. Healy Jr., *Freedom, Truth, and Human Dignity: The Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 39–209. For the view that it represents a moderate embrace of liberal anthropology in view of natural rights, see Thomas Bushlack, *Politics for a Pilgrim Church: A Thomistic Theory of Civic Virtue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 61–64. All of the aforementioned authors agree that *Dignitatis Humanae* does not in any way embrace "doctrinaire" liberalism.

Church agrees not to demand of the state anything above the natural law, while the state agrees not to demand of the Church anything contrary to it.¹⁷

Among Thomistic scholars, explanations of how this Catholic–liberal peace functions vary if we take into account the recent debates about nature and grace in Thomistic anthropology, as well as corresponding differences in natural law theory.¹⁸ Reinhard Hütter,

¹⁷ John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 56, 78. Murray describes the first two articles of the American Constitution as “articles of peace,” which he juxtaposes generally with “articles of faith.” Articles of the latter sort are held as a matter of principle; articles of the former are held as a matter of prudent compromise (49) and of agreement in matters of procedure, not principle (84).

¹⁸ An initial attempt at reading Murray in light of the contemporary nature–grace debate can be found in James Dominic Rooney, “Murray’s Balancing Act: The Harmony of Nature and Grace,” *Journal of Church and State* 58 (2015): 666–89. While, for reasons of space, I will take as my point of departure the views expressed by Murray in *We Hold These Truths*, Rooney provides an indispensable history of the development of Murray’s theological anthropology in its relationship to his political theology, as well as a careful analysis of how an appreciation for the fallenness of man in the order of history forms an essential component of Murray’s political theology.

One shortcoming of Rooney’s work is that he summarizes the debate between neo-Thomists and *ressourcement* Thomists in the mid-twentieth century as being about whether man has a natural end or not. Since Murray admits that man has a natural end and that this natural end is achieved in the political order, Rooney categorizes Murray among the neo-Scholastics and argues that Murray’s neo-Scholastic anthropology was to blame for the fact that his views were not more widely adopted in the post-conciliar period, when the *ressourcement* anthropology of de Lubac was widely adopted. This categorization relies on a false dichotomy. Initially, the debate between neo-Scholastics and de Lubac was not about whether man has a natural end at all, but about whether the natural end of man, such as it may be conceived apart from the beatific vision, is found in contemplation or politics. See Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 463–65. Read against that background, Murray appears to us not as a neo-Scholastic, but as a *ressourcement* thinker whose anthropology and political theology aligns very closely with that of de Lubac.

In point of fact, it is only the more radical figures of postmodernity who refuse to acknowledge any natural end for man at all, even in politics. Thus, Milbank admits in *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 104–8, that, in order to deny a natural end for man simply speaking, he has to part ways from de Lubac. Bernard Mulcahy recognizes that Milbank has developed de Lubac, but he sees that development as the logical consequence of de Lubac’s anthropol-

Steven Long, and Bernard Mulcahy have shown how those who see pure nature as normative for our understanding of nature can center the state's observance of the natural law in the promotion of natural happiness through the virtue of *religio*.¹⁹ Speaking concurrently with the majority of the Dominican and Jesuit Thomistic commentatorial traditions, they observe that the natural end of man is the contemplation of God as first cause;²⁰ since the virtue of *religio* falls under the virtue of justice, and since justice is a natural virtue, the state can be ordered by justice through *religio* toward God as its highest end.²¹ The state thus ordered pursues the worship of God "within the limits of reason"—so to speak—but according to a classical *sapientia* that transcends the boundaries placed on reason and religion by Kant, permitting reason to ascend by analogy to the contemplation of its efficient and formal exemplar cause, and prescribing the civic actions of its citizens based on man's natural desire to know and to worship that cause.²²

On the other side of the nature–grace debate, John Courtney Murray speaks in harmony with a minority position in the Dominican commentatorial position that posits that man's natural happiness is not a naturally achievable contemplation, but rather the exercise of political virtue in itself.²³ Politics thus conceived does not direct

ogy (*Not Everything is Grace: Aquinas's Notion of Pure Nature and the Christian Integralism of Henri de Lubac* [New York: Peter Lang, 2011], 215).

¹⁹ Steven Long, *Nature Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 10–51, and Mulcahy, *Aquinas's Notion*, 202–20, speak of the centrality of the natural law and natural theology. Reinhard Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 102–26, connects similar observations to the importance of the virtue of *religio*.

²⁰ Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and his Interpreters* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010), 211–76.

²¹ Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven*, 104–5. Hütter acknowledges later on that the political practice of that virtue requires grace to heal the fallen will (124–26), a theme to which we will return below.

²² See Matthew Levering, "Christians and the Natural Law," in *Natural Law: A Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Trialogue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 66–110. Levering provides a bibliography of moral theologians and philosophers who support this view on 73n19. To that list may be added more: Steven Jensen, *Knowing the Natural Law: From Precepts and Inclinations to Deriving Oughts* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015); John Rziha, *The Christian Moral Life: Directions for the Journey to Happiness* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).

²³ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 191–92. Murray contrasts this view of the state not with a view that is based on a natural desire for a natural end, but with a

man to a natural end beyond itself; no such end exists apart from the beatific vision of God in heaven.²⁴ Rather, politics arranges for a

supposedly “Augustinian” view that uses the natural desire for a supernatural end, together with an emphasis on the woundedness of fallen nature, to locate all of man’s natural perfection only in heaven (184–89). Tellingly, Murray does not see these two views as conflicting in any point of doctrine, but rather only as laying alternative emphases on the goodness and woundedness of human nature (193). In fact, he explicitly affirms that both emphases have a place in the Church and that each is necessary to avoid the potential pitfalls of the other (193–94).

Prescinding from the question of the interpretation of Thomas Aquinas, we may note as a matter of historical record that Scholastic discussions of the relationship between Church and state came to maturity only after Aquinas’s death, in the thirteenth-century dispute between King Philip IV and Pope Boniface VIII over the temporal power of the papacy. Murray’s distinction of positions reflects the positions taken in this dispute. All participants agreed that man has a supernatural end. Where they disagreed was on whether man also had a natural, temporal, political end. Jean Quidort argued for Philip IV in the affirmative in *De potestate regia et papali*, ed. Jean Leclercq in *Jean de Paris et l’ecclésiologie du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1942); English translation: John of Paris, *On Royal and Papal Power*, trans. J. A. Watt (Toronto: PIMS, 1971). Giles of Rome argued for Boniface VIII in the negative in *De ecclesiastica potestate*, ed. R. W. Dyson, in *Giles of Rome’s On Ecclesiastical Power: A Medieval Theory of World Government, A Critical Edition and Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). As Rooney notes, Murray’s mature political theology was based upon his reading of Jean Quidort (“Murray’s Balancing Act,” 671–78). See also John Courtney Murray, “Contemporary Orientations of Catholic Thought on Church and State in the Light of History,” *Theological Studies* 10 (1949): 177–234. Among the Thomistic commentators, Jean Quidort’s view is taken up in broad strokes by Domingo de Soto, *De natura et gratia* 1.4 (Paris: Jean Foucher, 1549), fols. 9v–13v. For contemporary discussions of de Soto, see Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 197–207.

²⁴ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 286. Murray sees this separation of man’s spiritual end from his temporal end as the chief contribution of Christianity to human polity, disrupting the naturalist integralism of the Roman Empire (202–4, 289).

In support of the idea that Murray should be classed with those who see in human nature a natural desire for a supernatural end, rather than a natural desire for a natural end, we may point to Murray’s understanding of the virtue of religion. In *We Hold These Truths*, he explicitly affirms that God’s “existence and sovereignty as the Author of the universe” are knowable by natural reason (80). However, it is not clear that he views acting on that knowledge as the achievement of a natural end. Hence, when Murray otherwise describes the manner in which the American state prescinds from “transcendental truth,” he carves out one exception, the motto “In God We Trust,” which he associates not with the natural law, but with divine law (75). Speaking later of the rela-

degree of human happiness by securing the general benefits of peace and prosperity among citizens.²⁵ Observing a Kantian distinction between the *is* of natural desire and the *ought* of civic virtue, Germain Grisez, John Finnis, Robert George, and other proponents of New Natural Law theory articulate the basis of this natural peace and prosperity in terms of incommensurate basic goods that are self-evidently intrinsic to human nature.²⁶ While there exists no single natural end for man, the work of the Church is safeguarded otherwise by the inclusion of religion among the basic, incommensurate goods that pertain to human nature and of a right to religious liberty among the rights that protect those goods.²⁷

tionship between the Ten Commandments and the natural law, he mentions only the second table of the Decalogue (332). This is reminiscent of the tension he expresses in *The Problem of God: Yesterday and Today* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964) between Thomistic natural theology (66–76) and postmodernity (101–21).

²⁵ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 62: “In [the concrete order of jurisprudence] the highest and most general norm is the public peace, the common good in its various aspects. This is altogether a moral norm.” For Murray, the virtuous achievements of the state serve as a *praeparatio evangelica* because they arrange for the perfection of man according to his rational nature, and grace builds upon this nature (191). The state—even the secular state—thus serves as an instrument of Christ in the evangelization of culture to the extent that it follows the natural law (192–93).

²⁶ See the works listed in Levering, “Christians and the Natural Law,” 73. To these could be added: Robert George, “Natural Law and Human Nature,” in *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays*, ed. Robert George (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 31–41; Patrick Lee, “Is Thomas’s Natural Law Theory Naturalist?” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1997): 567–87.

Murray himself had a pre-Kantian view of the derivation of the natural law: “The order of being that confronts [man’s] intelligence is an order of ‘oughtness’ for his will; the moral order is a prolongation of the metaphysical order into the dimensions of human freedom” (*We Hold These Truths*, 328). Hence, Tracey Rowland is right to observe that “the relationship between the Whig Thomist Project,” which gives a public face to liberal Catholicism, “and the New Natural Law project is not clearly defined” (*Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II* [New York: Routledge, 2003], 172n18).

²⁷ On the relationship between religion as a basic human good and the right to religious liberty, see especially: Robert George, “Religious Liberty and the Human Good,” in *The Crisis of Religious Liberty: Reflections from Law, History, and Catholic Social Thought*, ed. Stephen M. Krason (Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 1–10; George, “Natural Law, God and Human Dignity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Natural Law Jurisprudence*, ed. George Duke and Robert P. George (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 57–75.

Radical Orthodoxy's Critique of Liberal Democracy

Post-liberal theologians have consistently critiqued Christianity's relationship with liberalism on the basis of an exegesis of Augustine's *De civitate Dei*.²⁸ In *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank argues that Augustine's two cities offer two rival metanarratives for contemporary society.²⁹ The *civitas terrena* lives, acts, and thinks as though it were ontologically independent of God. Separated from God, it inhabits an ontology of violence in which the presupposition of scarcity turns the perception of difference into a conflict of domination.³⁰ Within this world of conflict, it attempts to create a language and a system of thought to justify its ontological rebellion against God. The resulting philosophy is "secular reason" whose purpose is to legitimate the community's prior choice to conceive itself apart from God. By contrast, the *civitas Dei* lives, acts, and thinks from the standpoint of ontological communion with God. It inhabits an ontology of peace in which the perception of difference entails an ordered harmony of beauty. According to Milbank, nominalist and voluntarist theologians from the fourteenth century onward substituted the ontology of the *civitas terrena* for that of the *civitas Dei* and Locke's social contract theory, which stands at the basis of liberalism, arose primarily out of the insights of those theologians.³¹ To live as citizens of the *civitas Dei* in the world, Christians must reject the anthropology of the *civitas terrena*, together with the liberalism on it, in favor of a post-liberal ontology of peace.³²

In *Beyond Secular Order*, Milbank develops a more complete critique of liberalism, as well as a strategic vision for responding to it. He develops the critique in terms of four themes: univocity, knowledge by representation, possibilism, and concurrence. Of these four, univocity concerns us most here because of its implications for the politics of virtue.

²⁸ See: Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 62–65; Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 56–67. For a more sanguine approach to contemporary politics in light of the two cities, see Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 389–92.

³⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 431–32.

³¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 13–15.

³² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 434.

Milbank understands the medieval world to have been marked by a radical apophaticism concerning the knowledge of God that resulted in a priority of equivocity and analogy over univocity. The equivocal distance between humanity and God could be overcome only by symbolic analogy in communal liturgical worship.³³ In political terms, just as knowledge was embodied in corporate worship, so was politics embodied in corporate action.³⁴ In this context, secular, nonliturgical reasoning arose from the substitution of univocity for equivocity and analogy.³⁵ The shift from equivocity to univocity meant the substitution of an abstract, detached notion of politics for a corporate, participatory one because the kataphatic term of univocity removes the need for worship to overcome the epistemological gap of apophaticism.³⁶

Following from a univocal worldview, a shift from knowledge by identity to knowledge by representation led to the idea that a detached government “represents” the people the way that the concept “represents” its object. It “flattened” society by removing the aristocracy and the corporations of which they were the heads,³⁷ because, “without an assumption of continued identity of form, there is no guarantee of the reliability of the copy.”³⁸ This shift from realism to possibilism led to the idea that the monarch, like God, possesses *potentia absoluta* above and beyond his or her *potentia ordinaria*

³³ For a development of the relationship between liturgy and language from within the Radical Orthodoxy movement, see Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998). Denys Turner points out in *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) that the decrees of Vatican I mitigate against apophatic absolutism in Catholic theology. For a more kataphatic approach to analogy in the medieval period, see: Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E. M. Macierowski, Pol Vandeveld, and Andrew Tallon (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004); John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 501–75.

³⁴ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 215.

³⁵ Milbank associates this shift with the thought of John Duns Scotus. For a critical view of Milbank’s interpretation of Scotus generally, not just on the question of univocity, see Daniel Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2014).

³⁶ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 138.

³⁷ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 176.

³⁸ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 140.

to act by means of mediating institutions, and thus excluded the very possibility of aristocrats and mediating institutions sharing in real governance.³⁹ A corresponding shift from influence to concurrence theories of primary and secondary causality separated divine law from human judgment in such a way that it “reduce[d] jurisprudence to a system of repeatable procedures and rules for handling precedent,” which were but the expression of a voluntaristic human will.⁴⁰ That will was the will of the sovereign, which now claimed an absolute authority rivaling that of God.⁴¹

Having identified what he believes to be the origin of liberalism in the creation of the sovereign state, Milbank proposes a three-part vision for the recovery of Christendom from liberalism: the democratization of virtue, the democratization of grace, and the call to a new, global ecumenism.

For Milbank, the move toward an ontology of peace happens through the replacement of democratized violence with democratized virtue. This democratization of virtue is achieved through what we might call “aristocratic socialism.” On the leftward side, “[this] socialism . . . believes that the most important human goods are in principle achievable by all,” while on the rightward side, “it does not equate these goods with what people—individually or collectively—‘happen to want.’”⁴² In Milbank’s aristocratic socialism, the many, led by the example of the few, participate with the one as “rational, social, artistic and grace-imbued animals, on the way to a ‘deified’ unity with the Triune God.”⁴³

Given the reference to deification, it goes without saying that, when Milbank speaks of the democratization of virtue, he intends the democratization of *infused* rather than *acquired* virtues.⁴⁴ For this reason, he argues that the democratization of virtue must be

³⁹ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 203–4.

⁴⁰ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 153.

⁴¹ Milbank here arrives at the fundamental concern of de Lubac in *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, albeit by a different genealogy.

⁴² Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 264.

⁴³ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 269.

⁴⁴ Milbank works around this distinction by reducing virtue to the category of gift (*Beyond Secular Order*, 236–40). In Thomistic theology, the question of whether infused and acquired virtues can coexist in the same person simultaneously has generated a significant amount of literature recently. For a bibliography of significant contributions to that debate, see William Mattison, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Virtue Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 159nn139–40.

supported by what we might term the “democratization of grace.” Milbank articulates this second democratization in Blondelian terms. In Maurice Blondel’s *L’Action*, the “givenness” of human action (it is received from without) and the ecstatic nature of human action (it transcends the inner resources that seem to produce it) serve as an immanentist apologetic for the existence of God on the natural level.⁴⁵ Milbank imbues these categories with supernatural significance. Identifying what Paul calls our “spirit” with the locus of transcendence in the human person, Milbank argues that the transcendent dimension of human action is not just an anticipation of grace (as it was for Blondel), but already the reception of grace.⁴⁶

Elaborating Blondel, I would suggest that the priority which he gave to the surplus of the achieved act over this innate drive (in contrast to Karl Rahner) implies that the “inspiration” involved in every cultural product is already the actual work of grace, which alone sustains our very being since the fall of Adam, and which is always a typological anticipation or repetition of the saving work of Christ. The “cultural supplement” to which our purely animal natural reason is already, through our “trans-naturality,” obscurely drawn by the lure of the supernatural implanted within us, simply is, as revealed in the light of the Incarnation, the supplement of grace, the beginning of the work of deification which is always (as Sergei Bulgakov saw,

⁴⁵ See Maurice Blondel, *L’action : Essai d’une critique de la vie et d’une science de la pratique* (1893), 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950, originally 1893), 352–56. For the details of Blondel’s life, see Oliva Blanchette, *Marice Blondel: A Philosophical Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

⁴⁶ Here Milbank echoes the early-twentieth-century Thomist Francisco Marin-Sola. Marin-Sola’s understanding of grace is worked out in three articles: “El sistema tomista sobre la moción divina,” *La Ciencia Tomista* 17 (1925): 5–54; “Respuesta a algunas objeciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina,” *La Ciencia Tomista* 18 (1926): 5–74; “Nuevas observaciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina,” *La Ciencia Tomista* 18 (1926): 321–97. For an English translation of these articles, see Michael Torre, *Do Not Resist the Spirit’s Call: Francisco Marin-Sola on Sufficient Grace* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013). The most significant work on grace that relies on Marin-Sola’s thought is Charles Journet, *Entretiens sur la grâce* (St-Maurice, FR: Editions St-Augustin, 1969); English translation: *The Meaning of Grace* (Princeton, NJ: Scepter, 2016). More recently, the view is defended in Michael Torre, *God’s Permission of Sin: Negative or Conditioned Decree? A Defense of the Doctrine of Francisco Marin-Sola, O.P., Based on the Principles of Thomas Aquinas* (Fribourg, CH: Academic Press Fribourg, 2009).

through his eastern appropriation of western [*sic*] experience) the work of a further participation in divine creativity.⁴⁷

As already noted above, Milbank locates the principle locus of our reception of grace in liturgical worship.⁴⁸ If we therefore place the democratization of grace in a liturgical setting, this means that there is an element of grace that anticipates (and indeed, participates in) the grace of Christian liturgy even in pagan worship:

Might it not be, despite Christianity's indeed authentic and salutary breaking of fetishistic boundaries and questioning of pagan metonymic-synecdochic closure, that this religion does not rather, at its liturgical and sacramental heart, propose a heightened enchantment able to charm down even the absolute (though by and through his ordaining of such cultic means), and therefore able also to include, resume and perfect all local enchantments which it must perforce respect out of its own very incarnating logic? So whereas historical Christianity has excessively tended to wreck all local "magic," in such a way as to give rise to an abstractly formal secularity or "enlightenment" as the only shared human discourse and practice, it might be argued that a genuine Christianity uniquely offers a shared theurgic carapace.⁴⁹

Thus, the democratization of virtue is inseparable from and dependent on the democratization of grace. Milbank sees in all the great cultural practices and religions of the world the works of grace and charity

⁴⁷ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 213. See also 224: "But as [Blondel] also stressed, every action is a work of love and of sacrificial love, since we cannot act without self-limitation as well as self-extension (as Chesterton also realised). To act, then, is not just ecstatically to anticipate grace, but also actively to receive grace in advance by 'typological anticipation' of the content of the act, besides that subjective anticipation of grace which is somehow neither grace nor nature, and yet both at once."

⁴⁸ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 235–36.

⁴⁹ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 17. Here Milbank's thought verges on the nexus of questions that relate to the balance struck in *Lumen Gentium* §8 in the claim that, while the Church of Christ "subsists" in the Catholic Church, there are "many elements of sanctification and of truth . . . found outside of its visible structure." For a bibliography of that debate, see Paolo Gamberini, "A Leap Forward in Understanding *Subsistit in*," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 81 (2016): 363n2.

deifying not just the one or the few, but also and especially the many.

The democratization of grace means that the democratization of virtue is not a purely political project (if the “political” is conceived in liberal terms as distinct from the “religious”). Rather, since Augustinian grace “pre-vents” virtue, the corporate political unity sought in aristocratic socialism cannot be achieved without corporate ecclesial unity. Milbank proposes that such a unity would take place in the institutional reunification of the Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican churches. This could pave the way at the political level to the creation of a world government that was either informed by or “not opposed to Christian aims.”⁵⁰ The intentional goal would be the restoration of Christendom.⁵¹ But, while this new Christendom would gradually assume the political order into itself, it would need to be continually guarded against the late-medieval tendency to drag the Church downward into the political order.⁵² For, in the early fourteenth century, Giles of Rome (as theologian) and Boniface VIII (as pope) both tried to assume the temporal order into the Church in such a way that they actually ended up dragging the Church into the violence and sin from which it is her vocation to save the world.⁵³

⁵⁰ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 257.

⁵¹ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 257.

⁵² Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 256.

⁵³ The criticism of Giles is misplaced. The real trouble with Giles is similar to the trouble that de Lubac observes with regard to Jansenism (*Surnaturel*, 48–54). Giles thinks that natural concupiscence is so strong that human nature would have been created “averse” from God had God not given it original justice at creation (Giles of Rome, *In II sent.*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 1, corp., in *Commentarius in Secundum Sententiarum*, 2 vols. [Venice, 1581], 2:fol. 443A). Original justice in integral nature and grace in fallen nature are therefore necessary for Giles in order to constitute any stable socio-political order (*De ecclesiastica potestate* 1.4–6, 2.7, trans. R. W. Dyson [Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 1986], 16–39, 131–41). The consequence of these anthropological presuppositions is that Christendom is the only *possible* stable socio-political order (*De ecclesiastica potestate* 2.9–13 [pp. 152–247]). This marked a departure from the thought of Giles’s *magister*, Aquinas, who thought that human nature as such was capable of forming connected virtue and expressed the opinion in *De regno* 2.3 that, in a state of pure nature, kings would be sufficient for directing humanity to its end (Leonine ed., 42:466).

The utopian nature of Giles’s political theology was already sensed by his student, James of Viterbo, who obliquely criticized his master for failing to account for the reality of temporal regimes outside of Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New. See James of Viterbo, *De regimine christiano* 2.3, in *De regimine christiano: A Critical Edition and Translation*, ed. R. W. Dyson (Boston: Brill, 2009), 130–131.

If *Beyond Secular Order* gives us a strategic vision for returning to Christendom, *The Politics of Virtue* proposes a tactical plan for beginning the realization of that vision. Of course, any talk of a return to Christendom raises the specter of a rejection of all modern values and a return to the absolute sovereignty that Milbank had criticized in *Beyond Secular Order* as the fourteenth-century corruption of a genuine medieval polity. Milbank and Pabst are careful here to state that they are seeking a *post*-liberal solution, not a *pre*-liberal one.⁵⁴ For this reason, they extend Milbank's democratization of grace to include what we might term the "democratization of truth."⁵⁵

Milbank and Pabst reject liberal Catholicism's reliance on the natural law as the basis upon which people of different religious traditions can agree upon a socio-political framework. Instead, they believe that the same grace that empowers the wills of the *demos* in virtue can illumine their intellects with truth. Since "the people are potentially the *ecclesia*, and since nature always anticipates grace, truth lies finally dispersed amongst all people, since the Holy Spirit speaks most infallibly through the voice of all."⁵⁶ This democratization of truth legitimates a progressive approach to the restoration of Christendom, since it empowers democracy outside of the visible Church to find an orientation toward the true and the good: it empowers the various corporations in society to be legitimate possessors of shared sovereignty and empowers the aristocrats associated with those corporations to lead them as moral exemplars.⁵⁷

However, since the democratization of truth is made possible only by the democratization of grace, and since the possibility of grounding the democratization of truth in a "secular" knowledge of the natural law is therefore excluded from the outset, the democratization of truth necessarily entails a fourth democratization, which we might term "the democratization of faith." Seeing grace as dispersing faith in the intellects of the *demos* as it disperses virtue in

What is often missed in discussions of Boniface VIII and of *Unam Sanctam* is that, whatever one may wish to make of the decree, Boniface pulls back from Giles's more radical claims about temporal government. *Unam Sanctam* does not argue for the direct submission of temporal to spiritual power the way that Giles does, nor does it deny the possibility of a stable socio-political order outside of Christendom.

⁵⁴ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 2.

⁵⁵ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 21, 307.

⁵⁶ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 235 (see also 210).

⁵⁷ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 236.

their wills, Milbank and Pabst argue that the liberal state must abandon its preferential option for disestablishment (e.g., in Wales and Northern Ireland) and give public expression to the democratization of grace and truth by expanding the notion of establishment where it still exists (e.g., in England and Scotland). In England, this means seeing the Church of England not as the possessor of a pre-liberal monopoly on truth and faith in England,⁵⁸ but as one corporation of faith among many,⁵⁹ which happens to enjoy its privileged position because a majority of people who have lived or do live in England have happened to belong to it. Even so, its establishment should not exclude contributions from other religious corporations.⁶⁰ The same goes for the Lords Spiritual. The bishops from the Church of England who sit in the House of Lords are aristocratic leaders of one religious corporation. Milbank and Pabst propose opening up the House of Lords to participation from the leaders of other faith communities⁶¹ so that the aristocrats of other religious corporations may contribute equally to civil government, so that a broader “voice of faith [may be] heard” in it,⁶² and so that religious corporations may take the place in society previously occupied by the mediating institutions that collapsed under liberalism.⁶³

Liberal Catholicism and the Wounds of Sin

One of the potential weaknesses of Milbank’s and Pabst’s work is that it does not engage substantively with the liberal Catholic tradition. This seeming oversight causes the authors to overlook genuinely post-liberal

⁵⁸ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 232. Here Milbank and Pabst acknowledge that the Church of England is “one possible, very imperfect but still surely authentic, mode” of ecclesial reality.

⁵⁹ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 229.

⁶⁰ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 231: “Even though the Church of England represents one particular religious option assented to by a national majority across time, the perceived basis of the collective assent in individual conscience logically requires respect for all consciences, including dissenting ones—as has come to be accepted in the course of time and was advocated by some from the early modern outset.” Milbank’s and Pabst’s appeal to a Chestertonian “democracy of the dead” could make one legitimately wonder whether they have not confused the Church *in* England with the Church *of* England in their argument for the preferential treatment of the latter. See G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane, 1908), 85.

⁶¹ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 227.

⁶² Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 228.

⁶³ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 186, 330.

considerations that appear in the midst of the liberal Catholic tradition. The most significant of these considerations can be found in the work of John Courtney Murray. Although Murray is most often identified with the view that political philosophy can and should be separated from theology,⁶⁴ he was acutely aware of the importance of taking the wounds of sin into account when articulating any political-theological vision. In fact, he embedded his account of liberalism and sin in an Augustinian theological metanarrative that offers us an alternative vision—and in some ways preferable one—for the future of liberal states today.

While the idea of the freedom of conscience in religious matters is in theory accessible to natural reason, John Courtney Murray thought that, as a matter of historical record, the idea came to the fore in Western society as a development in *theology* of the doctrine of the freedom of the Church, not as a development in *philosophy*.⁶⁵ In the nineteenth century, it was commonly thought that the most prudent way to ensure the freedom of the Church was by its establishment in a confessional state. This understanding was reflected in Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*, where the proposition was condemned that "the abolition of the civil power that the Apostolic See possesses would be extremely conducive to the liberty and prosperity of the Church."⁶⁶ Looking back on the history of confessional states a hundred years later, Murray argued that they often had the opposite effect. The governments of Catholic states tended to exact very powerful concessions from the Church, including rights that the *Syllabus of Errors* had in fact condemned, in order to allow the Church to maintain her established status.⁶⁷ Thus, although Pius IX condemned the idea

⁶⁴ In this, he is most often portrayed as a proponent of "Whig Thomism." See Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition*, 16. For a bibliography of foundational works from the Whig Thomist movement, see Tracey Rowland, "Theology and Culture," in *Being Holy in the World: Theology and Culture in the Thought of David L. Schindler*, ed. Nicholas Healy and David L. Schindler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 79n85.

⁶⁵ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 201–6. He even goes so far as to call the freedom of conscience a "Christian revelation" in this regard (215).

⁶⁶ Pius IX, *Syllabus of Errors*, §76 (H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* [DH], 43rd ed., ed. Peter Hünermann, English edition ed. Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012], no. 2976).

⁶⁷ Pius IX, *Syllabus of Errors*, §71. Recalling the story of the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris who asked Benjamin Franklin for the United States Congress to approve the erection of a Catholic hierarchy in the United States and noting the reply in which Franklin disclaimed any authority of Congress in this matter one

that the liberty of the Church could be increased through the separation of Church and state, the implication of Murray's argument is that such a condemnation should be classed among what Ratzinger later described as "magisterial decisions that cannot be and are not intended to be the last word on the matter as such, but are a substantial anchorage in the problem and are first and foremost an expression of pastoral prudence, a sort of provisional disposition,"⁶⁸ instead of a definitive condemnation as such.

It is not that Murray thought that a rapprochement between Catholicism and liberalism would be utopian for the Church. In the final chapter of *We Hold These Truths*, where Murray discusses the role of the natural law and its importance for the composition of the liberal state, he makes a casual, almost catechetical remark on the limits of natural law that should give us pause about the extent to which he thought that liberal states would succeed at ensuring the Church's freedom. The implications of his remark for our understanding of the wounds of sin can be used to explain why he thought that confessional states ultimately resulted in a loss of that freedom:

Natural-law theory does not pretend to do more than it can, which is to give a philosophical account of the moral experience of humanity and to lay down a charter of essential humanism. It does not show the individual the way to sainthood, but only to manhood. It does not promise to transform society into the City of God on earth, but only to prescribe, for the purposes of law and social custom, that minimum of morality which must be observed by the members of a society, if the social environment is to be human and habitable. At that, for a man to be reasonably human, and for a society to be essentially civil—these are no mean achievements. The ideal of the reasonable man, who does his duty to God, to others,

way or the other, Murray remarks: "The good nuncio must have been mightily surprised on receiving this communication. Not for centuries had the Holy See been free to erect a bishopric and appoint a bishop without the prior consent of government, without prior exercise of the governmental right of presentation, without all the legal formalities with which Catholic states had fettered the freedom of the Church" (*We Hold These Truths*, 81). The idea of a right of presentation is condemned in Pius IX, *Syllabus of Errors*, §50 (DH, no. 2950).

⁶⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, "Theology is Not Private Idea of Theologian," *L'Osservatore Romano*, English weekly edition, July 2, 1990, 5.

and to himself, is not an ignoble one. In fact, it puts such a challenge to the inertness and perversity which are part of the human stuff, that *Christian doctrine from the day of St. Augustine has taught the necessity of divine grace for this integral fulfillment of the natural law.*⁶⁹

At the outset, we are told that the natural law should be the charter of the liberal state; at the conclusion we are warned that basic Christian doctrine teaches that it is impossible for anyone to fulfill the natural law without the aid of grace.⁷⁰ To extend Murray's argument a bit further, we might say that, in a hypothetical state of pure nature, *mutatis mutandis*, the liberal state would be a practicable means of organizing humanity's common life.⁷¹ But man does not and has never existed in a state of pure nature. In the state of integral nature, man could have kept the natural law even without grace but required grace to achieve the supernatural end to which he was called. In the state of fallen nature, man still requires *gratia elevans* to raise him up to a supernatural end, but he also requires *gratia sanans* to heal him from sin so that he may keep the natural law.⁷²

Individual human *actions* may be directed toward a natural end without *gratia sanans* (if it is granted that such an end exists), but individual human *persons* will never form true and perfected virtue by means of those actions. The wounds of sin leave human nature

⁶⁹ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 297 (emphasis added).

⁷⁰ Murray goes so far as to reference Freud in this regard. "When Freud fulfilled his promise, 'Acheronta movebo,' he shattered forever the 'angel-mindedness' of the Cartesian man, and the brittle rationalistic optimism founded on it with the aid of eighteenth-century mechanicism, which supposed that there were 'laws of reason' in human affairs that needed only to be discovered to be acted upon, and likewise (with Rousseau) supposed that all men would, as has been said, cease to be evil, if only no one tried to compel them to be good" (*We Hold These Truths*, 310–311). So shattered does he consider the Enlightenment naiveté about the integrity of human nature that he describes it jokingly as "as 'dated' as the clothes Locke himself wore" (311).

⁷¹ Aquinas, *De regno* 2.3.

⁷² Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 109, a. 2, corp. (Leonine ed., 7:291). On man's ability in a state of integral nature to keep the natural law without grace, see also ST I-II, q. 109, a. 8, corp. (Leonine ed., 7:303). on man's inability in a state of fallen nature to keep the natural law without grace, see ST I-II, q. 109, a. 4, corp. (Leonine ed., 7:297). Murray thought that the wound to the will was much deeper than the wound to the intellect, hence he appealed to our knowledge of the natural law more often than our performance of it (*We Hold These Truths*, 195–96, 289).

in too unstable a moral state to allow for the formation of connected virtue without grace.⁷³ At most, a person may form imperfect virtue in one area while he yet succumbs to vice in another.⁷⁴ In recognition of this truth of theological anthropology, Murray thought that liberal Catholicism had to support strict limits on the state so as to make it as difficult as possible for the state outside of grace to act like an individual outside of grace.⁷⁵ The lack of such limits was the problem in confessional states. Even in a state of grace, man must continually contend with concupiscence and the lust for power;⁷⁶ even in a *state of grace*, the political order will struggle with the same temptation.

Murray proposed three ways of limiting the state in a liberal society so that it would not encroach upon the freedom of the Church the way that confessional states had. The first limit comes from without: the distinction between the state and society.⁷⁷ The state must recognize that, even in the sphere of nature, it does not have a universal claim to authority over human action. In virtue of the principle of subsidiarity, its authority over its citizens is mediated through cultural institutions.⁷⁸ The second limit comes from within: the division of power and authority among individual components in the state, together with a series of checks and balances against the corruptive use of that power and authority. In virtue of the division of powers and the checks and balances among them, one person's sin

⁷³ On the connection of the virtues, I generally follow the interpretation of Aquinas in Thomas Osborne: "The Augustinianism of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory," *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 279–305; "Perfect and Imperfect Virtues in Aquinas," *The Thomist* 71, no. 1 (2007), 39–64. The latter contains a detailed discussion of the nexus of texts in the Thomistic corpus relevant to this issue.

⁷⁴ Osborne observes that there is significant disagreement among the Thomistic commentators as to how Thomas thinks that this imperfect moral virtue relates to perfect moral virtue, and Osborne takes the view that it is true virtue but unconnected to the other moral virtues ("Perfect and Imperfect Virtues," 57). In this, he is responding principally to Angela McKay, who argues that even imperfect virtues are connected by prudence ("Prudence and Acquired Moral Virtue," *The Thomist* 69 [2005]: 535–55).

⁷⁵ On the necessity of such limitation, see Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 68–69.

⁷⁶ ST III, q. 69, a. 3, corp.; a. 4, ad 3 (Leonine ed., 12:107–9).

⁷⁷ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 35, 182.

⁷⁸ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 35, 70, 73, 204–6. Murray identifies Locke with the destruction of these mediating institutions, particularly in France (334), but he notes that Locke's ideas were not able to have their full effect on English, and *a fortiori* American, society (306–8).

against the natural law in one area would (ideally) be checked and balanced by another's observance of it in that area (and vice versa) in such a way that the risk of abuses (which follow inevitably from the "rule of [ungraced] men") would be mitigated by the "rule of law."⁷⁹ But here again, the state's action is subject to a third limitation, since the state that seeks to embrace the natural law cannot legislate the entirety of the natural law's particulars into existence.⁸⁰ The state's particular sphere of authority does not concern *every* act associated with the natural law, but only those external actions that affect public goods that the state is bound to promote.⁸¹

Murray thought that, without this threefold limitation, the state would inevitably enjoin upon its citizens a unity of force rather than of love, a "demonic" unity rather than a humanistic one,⁸² in which the state usurps the role of society and attempts to remake man in its own image through a tyrannical over-legislation arising from the conflation of the moral order and the judicial order, as well as an equally tyrannical violence that results from the state's attempt to enforce its over-legislated, wrongly grounded vision for society.⁸³

⁷⁹ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 32–33, 313. Murray thinks that, in the exaltation of law over the people who govern, Locke preserved an inherently medieval approach to government, albeit in a minimalistic form (313–18).

⁸⁰ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 156, 166.

⁸¹ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 166.

⁸² Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 133. Murray here sounds reminiscent of a post-liberal Augustinian: "Since St. Augustine's description of the 'two cities,' it has been realized that societal unity may, broadly speaking, be of two orders—the divine or the demonic. It is of the divine order when it is the product of faith, reason, freedom, justice, law, and love. Within the social unity created by these forces, which are instinct with all the divinity that resides in man, the human personality itself grows to its destined stature of dignity at the same time that the community achieves its unity. Societal unity is of the demonic order when it is the product of force, whether the force be violent or subtle."

⁸³ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 165–67. Murray associates such a desire for political hegemony with Rousseau and Hobbes, whom he notes complained about the Church's insistence on the separation of the Church *from* the state (206–7). He thought that such an idea of the state had, as a matter of fact, gained more ascendancy than the one he was proposing. Prior to Murray, such concerns were articulated more fully in Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée* (Paris: Éditions Spes, 1944); English translation: *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. Edith M. Riley, Anne Englund Nash, and Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988). More recently, similar concerns can be found in the criticism of Marxism by Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), §§26–29.

There is no sense in Murray's writing that confessional states are exempted from this possibility; they fall under same critique as any other form of excessive government.

Liberalism in a Doctrinaire Setting

While Murray initially crafted his vision for liberal Catholicism in an American context only half a century ago, there have been signs that the American Catholic–liberal relationship of the late twentieth century has already begun to deteriorate. Regardless of whether religious freedom has been positively supported by the American courts (as in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores Inc.* and *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*), negatively affected by them (as in *Obergefell v. Hodges*), or ultimately remains unaffected by them because of a settlement (as in *Zubik v. Burwell*), the very existence of these and other challenges raises the legitimate question of whether the state—in the United States—is or remains as interested as the Church continues to be in a relationship of natural-law-based compromise, and whether any lessening of interest in that regard results from a change in understanding, a change of desire, or both.

Robert George argues that the current uneasiness in American Church–state relations is due to the Rawlsian understanding of liberty that undergirds recent challenges to religious freedom.⁸⁴ This was a possibility that Murray foresaw.⁸⁵ If George is correct in his assessment of present circumstances, then the Church finds herself in a setting that poses new challenges to her teaching on religious freedom. As noted above, contemporary scholars may differ on their understanding of how and why the Church accommodated herself to liberalism after *Dignitatis Humanae*, but they generally agree that doctrinaire liberalism represents an ideological worldview to which the Church did not and never intended to accommodate herself. While one may legitimately debate the question of whether the recent turn toward doctrinaire liberalism in the United States

⁸⁴ The contrast is briefly noted in Robert George, “Two Concepts of Liberty . . . and Conscience,” *Journal of Christian Legal Thought* 4 (2014): 4–6. It is treated more expansively in relation to recent legal challenges in George, *Conscience and its Enemies: Confronting the Dogmas of Liberal Secularism* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2016). See also Ryan Anderson, John Corvino, and Sherif Girgis, *Debating Religious Liberty and Discrimination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁸⁵ Murray foresaw this possibility (*We Hold These Truths*, 42–43, 52–53, 130–131, 322–27).

represents a change from the founding ethos of the nation's Constitution,⁸⁶ the fact of contemporary challenges to religious freedom and the question of what to do about them remain pressing issues of political-theological orthopraxy.

One consequence of the state's gradual turn toward doctrinaire liberty that is not as obvious from the standpoint of the Church is that it results in the state's subtle reinterpretation of the terms of the natural-law-based compromise that forms the basis of liberal Catholicism. Murray may have initially articulated liberal Catholicism to protect the freedom of the Church, but the Church's insistence on religious freedom in an atmosphere of doctrinaire liberalism often makes her appear as encroaching on the freedom of the state. The precise guise of this illiberal appearance will differ, depending upon whether one articulates liberal Catholicism on the basis of a natural desire for a *supernatural* end or a natural desire for a *natural* end.

On the side of the natural desire for a supernatural end, there are two ways in which liberal Catholicism can appear illiberal to the state. The first, as Thomas Bushlack observes, is by placing the end of man outside of the reach of the state and only within reach of the Church.⁸⁷ In a similar vein, Milbank points out that the natural desire for a supernatural end was initially articulated in the middle ages by Giles of Rome as part of a system that proposed not just the indirect subjection of temporal power to spiritual power, but the intentionally *direct* subjection of temporal power to spiritual power;⁸⁸ Henri de Lubac's support

⁸⁶ The contrast between these two kinds of freedom was an important theme for Murray, who associated positive liberty with the American Revolution and negative liberty with the French Revolution, seeing in the American Revolution an attempt to realize the freedom to do what "ought" to be done and in the French Revolution an attempt to engage in a rationalist and voluntarist exercise of absolute freedom to create society in man's own image (*We Hold These Truths*, 37–38, 57, 67–69, 182–83).

⁸⁷ Thomas Bushlack, "The Return of Neo-Scholasticism? Recent Criticisms of Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace and Their Significance for Moral Theology, Politics, and Law," *Journal for the Society of Christian Ethics* 35 (2015): 86. Bushlack is responding to de Lubac, whose natural desire for a supernatural end he thinks "leaves few tools that could enable Christians to think about the pursuit of the temporal common good as a penultimate, created, natural good that has inherent worth for the human community." However, this misinterpretation of de Lubac depends on a failure to distinguish de Lubac from his subsequent interpreters, as was noted above, n18.

⁸⁸ On Giles's understanding of natural desire, see my "Henri de Lubac, *Humani Generis*, and the Natural Desire for a Supernatural End," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 15 (2017): 1209–41, especially 1212–14. Giles used his anthropology

for the liberal democracy of de Gaulle over the authoritarianism of Vichy France occurred in some ways *in spite* of his understanding of natural desire, not because of it.⁸⁹ Thus, for the Church to preach that the end of man can be found only above and beyond the political order seems to imply the dissolution of the state into the Church.⁹⁰

The second way in which a liberal Catholicism built upon a natural desire for a supernatural end can appear illiberal is in the manner in which it prioritizes rights claims hierarchically. It has been a hallmark of the Church's response to recent challenges to religious liberty to describe it as our "first liberty."⁹¹ Yet, when a state that is guided by doctrinaire liberalism happens to recognize a right to religious liberty, it finds itself compelled to perform a Rawlsian balancing act between this claim to a right and other claims to rights, as though all rights were on equal footing.⁹² Without what Long calls a "theo-normative" account of human teleology, the state feels compelled to temper the claim of religious liberty in view of claims to other supposed rights. In a doctrinaire setting, claimants of other rights—whether grounded in the natural law or not—can easily appear to be equally or more justified in their claims than those claiming a right to religious liberty.⁹³

desire to support the direct subjugation of the temporal power to the spiritual power in *De ecclesiastica potestate* 1.8 (pp. 46–54).

⁸⁹ Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, 59.

⁹⁰ Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 187–89.

⁹¹ The United States Council of Catholic Bishops' document, "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty" (usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/upload/Our_First_Most_Cherished_Liberty.pdf) makes this explicit, distinguishing the historical fact that religious liberty was enshrined in the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States from the moral claim that religious freedom is also humanity's "first liberty" as such.

⁹² The paradigmatic instance of such a "balancing act" can be found in Justice Anthony Kennedy's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 14–556: "The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity" (1–2). When Kennedy describes the rationale for the decision to enumerate a right to same-sex marriage within those rights, he establishes as "a first premise" that "the right to personal choice regarding marriage is inherent in the concept of individual autonomy" (12) because "through its enduring bond, two persons together can find other freedoms, such as expression, intimacy, and spirituality" (13).

⁹³ For an example of such a balancing act, see *Zubik v. Burwell*, 14–1418: "We do not question the sincerity or importance of petitioners' religious beliefs. But as seven courts of appeals have held, their legal claim stretches RFRA [the

A liberal Catholicism built upon a natural desire for a natural end avoids the difficulty of seeming illiberal by claiming that the end of human nature as such can be found only in the Church, but its hierarchicalization of rights claims on the basis of theo-normative natural inclinations can still *appear* to encroach upon the freedom of the state. As Bushlack also observes, to the extent that Catholic accounts of liberalism take the wounds of sin into account, they tend to hold that a given person may experience desires contrary to his or her natural inclinations, that these desires will obscure that person's ability to experience the teleology of natural desire and natural inclinations as such, and that the person will therefore be less able to judge competing rights claims correctly in view of them. Although the Church and her members may intend to adopt a posture of dialogue with the state focused on the natural law, significant numbers of individual citizens of the state can therefore be expected to reason incorrectly about the natural law because they lack a consistent basis in their subjectively experienced desires from which to begin that reasoning. To add to what Bushlack says and to put it simply, they will derive other "oughts" from the "is" of their fallen desires, such as "reproductive rights" and "marriage equality rights." The existence of such rights claims, based upon such desires, puts the Church into the ironic posture of *preaching the natural law* alongside its preaching of the divine law.⁹⁴ Thus, for all the liberality of her intentions, the Church ends up appearing illiberal to the state once again, as her appeals to the

Religious Freedom Restoration Act] too far. In our diverse and pluralistic Nation, the right to the free exercise of religion does not encompass a right to insist that the government take measures that 'unduly restrict other persons, such as employees, in protecting their own interests, interests the law deems compelling'" (5–6 [Brief for the Respondents]).

⁹⁴ Bushlack, "The Return of Neo-Scholasticism?" 93–94; Bushlack, *Politics for a Pilgrim Church*, 145–49. Bushlack is correct to note the incongruity between the claim that the natural law is accessible to natural reason and the reality that it is often only those with faith who are thought to possess an accurate knowledge of it, but he is simply incorrect in attributing to Long and Hütter the idea that "all forms of natural law reasoning will be intrinsically flawed if they are not subsumed into revelation and the Church's magisterial authority" ("The Return of Neo-Scholasticism?" 94; see also *Politics for a Pilgrim Church*, 148). Bushlack's mistake here is to conflate our knowledge of the natural law with our fulfillment of it.

Murray was aware of the possibility that the Church could appear to the state as a preacher of the natural law, though he denied the legitimacy of arguments claiming that an assent to the natural law requires an assent to the Catholic faith (*We Hold These Truths*, 109).

natural law, while technically distinct from any appeal to divine law, seem like dogmatic impositions upon perceived rights that arise from the experience of disordered desires.⁹⁵

In addition to the fact that the Church often appears illiberal to the state concerning the *knowledge* of the natural law and the judgment of rights claims based upon it,⁹⁶ the Church can also appear illiberal to the state concerning the *performance* of the natural law. That is because, as Murray, Milbank, and Pabst all agree, no citizen of the state could ever fulfill the natural law without grace. While there is no mistaking Milbank and Pabst on this point, it is worthwhile to ask what Murray thought on the matter. To those used to seeing him as a proponent of the idea that the state as such can direct its citizens toward the fulfillment of the natural law, his response is sobering:

The community, as [Ulpian] knew, is neither a choir of angels nor a pack of wolves. It is simply the human community which, in proportion as it is civilized, strives to maintain itself in some small margin of safe distance from the chaos of barbarism. For this effort the only resources directly available to the community are those which first rescued it from barbarism, namely, the resources of reason, made operative chiefly through the processes of reasonable law, prudent public policies, and a discriminatingly apt use of force. . . .

The necessary defense against barbarism is, therefore, an apparatus of state that embodies both reason and force in a

⁹⁵ Bushlack, *Politics for a Pilgrim Church*, 149. Bushlack accurately diagnoses the problem, but his proposed solution, which he grounds in supposed “humility” (151–53) and calls “intellectual solidarity” (161), overlooks the extent to which the grace of faith, being an effect of *gratia gratum faciens*, is not only *gratia elevans*, which adds to what we know by natural reason, but also *gratia sanans*, which heals our ignorance of what we could have known by natural reason (e.g., the *praeambula fidei* and the natural law) but as a matter of fact may not have known because of the wound of ignorance.

⁹⁶ Murray was aware of this difficulty and expressed his concerns about it in *We Hold These Truths*, 86–89. Hence, he proposed not that the natural law was *already* the basis of an American public political philosophy, but that such a basis needed to be adopted by American society because the philosophical pluralism of American society (as distinct from its religious pluralism) was negatively affecting its achievement of peace. So keenly did he experience the general absence of natural law reasoning in American society that he admits that, among the American people, “the tradition of reason, which is known as the ethic of natural law, is dead” (293).

measure that is at least decently conformable with what man has learned, by rational reflection and historical experience, to be necessary and useful to sustain his striving towards the life of civility. The historical success of the civilized community in this continuing effort of the forces of reason to hold at bay the counterforces of barbarism is no more than marginal. The traditional ethic, which asserts the doctrine of the rule of reason in public affairs, does not expect that man's historical success in installing reason in its rightful rule will be much more than marginal. But the margin makes the difference.⁹⁷

In Murray's view, the hope of avoiding barbarism depends as much on Providence as it does on human ingenuity. That is why Jacques Maritain, and Murray after him, could say that the preservation of democracy requires "faith"—not the theological virtue of faith, but faith in the democratic process itself together with God's providential guidance of it.⁹⁸ Murray's own *fides democratica* required belief that Providence would guide the actions of a liberal government in such a way that, in view of checks and balances, the entire government would not fall into the same sin together. If it ever did, it risked quickly slipping below the margins of civility and into the realm of barbarism.

Post-Liberalism in a Doctrinaire Setting

It goes without saying that, although Milbank and Pabst do not deal directly with Murray, they find the sort of democratic faith that he espouses to be ill-placed in the order of nature, because they think the democratization of virtue can be caused only by the democratization of grace. For Murray, such a reliance on grace would overstep the terms of the liberal Catholic compromise and represent a step backward toward confessional states and toward the limits on the freedom of the Church that those states imposed. But, since Milbank and Pabst think that the democratization of grace causes the democracy of truth and faith, they are able to claim that their proposal is one "that can be shared for the most part by people of other faiths and by non-religious people of metaphysical sensitivity"⁹⁹ without appealing to natural reason and the

⁹⁷ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 289.

⁹⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 111. See also Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 34, 206.

⁹⁹ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 383.

natural law. This reliance on grace and faith helps Milbank and Pabst to avoid the difficulty in Murray's proposal arising from the fact that fallen nature without grace—especially in a doctrinaire setting—struggles not only to perform the natural law but even to attain an adequate knowledge of it.

However, while Milbank's and Pabst's reliance on grace saves them from the difficulty of accounting for fallen man's knowledge of the natural law, it inevitably leads them to another, similar difficulty. For, while there are, no doubt, “many elements of sanctification and of truth’ . . . found outside the visible confines of the . . . Church,”¹⁰⁰ classical Christian theology also recognizes that those elements have differing degrees of explicitness and that, to the extent that they are implicit, they are typically admixed with varying degrees of error because of the fact that sin wounds the intellect along with the will.¹⁰¹ Not everyone in a given society can be expected to agree concretely on matters pertaining to Revelation, and where that agreement can be found, it will not be complete.¹⁰² There are a variety of forces at work in the world that compete for a hold over people's minds, and the Christian faith in all its fullness is not always the victor in every given individual.

To illustrate this point, let us look at two examples in Milbank's and Pabst's text in which they imagine encounters between people who disagree on matters of religious faith. The first concerns how a person ought to reconcile his own religious commitments with those of people with whom he disagrees only somewhat. We may perhaps imagine here two Christians of different denominations. We are told that, “even if there are groups with whose ideals you do not fully agree, you can, nevertheless, acknowledge that in one sense they are pursuing social goals that are compatible with yours,

¹⁰⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §819, quoting *Lumen Gentium*, §8.

¹⁰¹ Prior to the sixteenth century, the topic of implicit faith was generally treated with regard to laity and clergy. See, for example, *ST II-II*, q. 2, a. 5 (Leonine ed., 8:31–32). After the sixteenth century, it tended to be treated in terms of unevangelized peoples. See Avery Dulles, “Who can be Saved?” in *Church and State: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures, 1988–2007* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 522–34.

¹⁰² Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 262. Milbank and Pabst seem to admit this when they say here that “what tends to prevail in the public light and amongst most people, especially under the influence of the contagion of opinion, is not necessarily truth but, much more certainly, plausibility.”

and promote a shared sense of human dignity and respect for life.”¹⁰³ This statement is self-evident only if we grant two premises: (1) the ideals upon which these two people do not agree—whatever those ideals may happen to be (Milbank and Pabst do not specify)—have negligible social consequences; and (2) human dignity and respect for life are mutually acceptable ideals whose social consequences can substitute for the negligible social consequences of the controverted ideals. The first premise is inconsistent with the post-liberal structure of Milbank’s and Pabst’s argument, which consistently emphasizes the fact that theological beliefs have non-negligible political consequences. This brings us to the second premise. One way to understand the second premise is as an appeal to common truths accessible by reason when there is no shared ground on the basis of faith. This is how Murray employs the natural law in a humanistic (and Thomistic) attempt to find common ground in nature where common ground in faith does not exist.¹⁰⁴ But Milbank and Pabst exclude the possibility of an appeal to any religiously neutral territory from the outset. Thus, their appeal to human dignity and respect for life cannot be an act of *humanism* so much as an act of *ecumenism*, in line with Milbank’s proposal at the end of *Beyond Secular Order* for a renewal of Christendom.

The trouble with this line of reasoning is that, while it has laudable intentions that only the most intransigent of denominationalists would question, it can function only in a society whose cultural presuppositions arise at least originally from the same faith. But what if a given religious faith, albeit operating in a post-Christian society, has ideals that conflict with those of Christianity? This is what we find in the radical forms of Islam that typically sponsor terrorism. Moreover, what if those ideals are irrevocably tied to a socio-political program that is at odds even with human dignity and respect for life, such as is the case with some aspects of shari’a law? This is the point at which Thomas Aquinas, and Murray after him, saw the necessity of appealing not to “secular” reason (*ratio saecularis*), but to “natural” reason (*ratio naturalis*),¹⁰⁵ a reason based not in the separation of man from God, but in the indelible nature that God gives, sustains, guides, and by grace

¹⁰³ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 82.

¹⁰⁴ Aquinas expresses this principle most clearly in *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] I, ch. 2 (*Editio Leonina Manualis*, p. 2).

¹⁰⁵ SCG I, ch. 2 (*Editio Leonina Manualis*, p. 2).

befriends,¹⁰⁶ a reason whose goals may be modest in the fallen state but whose successes are nevertheless real.¹⁰⁷ By excluding the possibility of such a humanism through their rejection of the “secular,” Milbank and Pabst are left with only one other option: the demonization of an “ideological, civilizational enemy” in which the prospects for ecumenism are grim.¹⁰⁸ This gives their supposedly post-liberal political program a certain pre-liberal edge. Democratized faith evidently has its limits, and beyond the limits of ideological compatibility we find crusade (though Milbank and Pabst do not use the word).

Milbank and Pabst are comfortable with Islam acting as a corporate mediating institution and with non-radical Muslim leaders taking a place in the House of Lords alongside religious leaders of other faiths. But in a somewhat pedantic note, they admit that their hope is that the shared sovereignty conferred upon the Islamic community thereby will somehow relieve that community of the perceived need to govern itself according to shari’a law.¹⁰⁹ This, too, is inconsistent. If Milbank and Pabst are right about the socio-political consequences of religious faith, then we should see shari’a as every bit as much the socio-political consequence of those forms of Islam that entail it as Milbank and Pabst want us to see aristocratic socialism as the socio-political consequence of Christianity. This inevitability forces Milbank and Pabst to admit, albeit obliquely, that the post-liberal must at some point become pre-liberal:

Society cannot and should not tolerate at all dissenting practices that do not exaggerate shared common principles so much as reject them altogether. For example, it is fine if shari’a law brokers marriages according to Islamic custom, so long as this does not permit polygamy or the coercion of women disal-

¹⁰⁶ ST I, q. 8, a. 3 (Leonine ed., 4:86–87); II-II, q. 23, a. 1 (Leonine ed., 8:163–64).

¹⁰⁷ Here we should avert to the view of A. Patfoort, “Le Somme contre les Gentils, école de présentation aux infidèles de la foi chrétienne,” in *Saint Thomas d’Aquin: Les clefs d’une théologie* (Paris: FAC, 1983), 103–30 (cited in Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and his Work*, trans. Robert Royal, revised ed. [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003], 105–6), which argues that SCG is aimed at the formation of Christian missionaries. For, it is in SCG I, ch. 2 that Thomas counsels the use of natural reason where there is no common faith. Thomas does not counsel the use of natural reason as an alternative to preaching, but in support of it.

¹⁰⁸ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 370.

¹⁰⁹ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 242n29.

lowed by either Roman or Common Law as informed by the Christian Canon law tradition. That would violate the necessarily organic element in post-liberal pluralism, in the name of a diabolical combination of liberal pluralism and barbaric disrespect for the female sex and human dignity.¹¹⁰

In the face of a religion whose socio-political consequences contradict the *vestigium Christianitatis* that may yet be found in Europe and that, in a variation on a theme by C. S. Lewis, we might call “Mere Post-Liberalism,” Milbank and Pabst are forced into a pre-liberal corner, to condemn, demonize, and suppress a political enemy as the promoter of heresy and sin.

This brings us to a second question that it is necessary to ask Milbank and Pabst: whether their proposal can be widely practiced. We saw above that Murray considered it a basic point of Christian doctrine that man, outside of a state of grace, cannot fulfill the natural law, and so the state, constituted outside of the Church, cannot be expected to fare much better.¹¹¹ Here again, Milbank and Pabst seem at first to provide a solution: democratized grace, which is necessary for the formation of any true democratized virtue, can form the basis of our actions in the civil order. This transforms Maritain’s and Murray’s democratic faith into what Milbank and Pabst call a “trust in ‘common decency,’” which is really an implicit recognition of democratized faith.¹¹²

The difficulty here is that faith cannot stand alone. As the Apostle says, “faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead,”¹¹³ and as Milbank and Pabst also admit, “principles of themselves engender no concrete unity or power.”¹¹⁴ Alongside a democratized faith, there is need for a democratized charity, healing the wills of the *demos* in such a way that people will actually *want* to live out the ideals that Milbank and Pabst propose. Milbank and Pabst are aware of this need. They admit that “there is simply no truth in the liberal (and Marxist) assumption that, once freed from the shackles of oppression, people will

¹¹⁰ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 82.

¹¹¹ This follows even if we grant, with Murray and against Aquinas, that the actions of the state should not be thought of on analogy with the actions of the individuals in it.

¹¹² Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 79.

¹¹³ James 2:17.

¹¹⁴ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 335.

‘by reason’ choose equality and justice.”¹¹⁵ Rather, the ideals have to be “incarnate[d] . . . in some possible degree” because, without an exemplar and as purely abstract, they do not actually guide anyone to do anything.¹¹⁶ Accordingly, Milbank and Pabst refer several times to the role of charity in their proposal. But almost every time that they explain what they mean by the word, it is described as another set of ideals to be thought of and attained in liturgy,¹¹⁷ not as a gift that heals the will through the sacraments received in the midst of that liturgy.¹¹⁸ Thus, we are led to same problem that Murray tried to avoid through checks and balances: the fallen *state* entails a fallen *state*. A man without Christian charity may believe in a number of Christian ideals, but without charity healing his fallen will, he is not likely to act on those ideals with the consistency required to constitute a stable and just socio-political order.

Murray was aware of the pull of concupiscence on fallen man, and so sought to place strict limits on the state’s activity so as to ensure

¹¹⁵ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 195.

¹¹⁶ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 339.

¹¹⁷ We are told, for example, that charity entails “locating the *logic* of gift-exchange at the heart of ordinary economic practices” (Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 146, emphasis added), that it is a “*notion* . . . which, in certain dimensions, means a generous giving of the benefit of the doubt, as well as succour, even to the accused or wicked” (194, emphasis added), and that it is equivalent to “social reciprocity or gift exchange” as “*objectives* beyond the realization of freedom and justice” (239, emphasis added).

¹¹⁸ For the distinction between liturgy as dispositive and sacrament as causative, see *ST* III, q. 83, a. 4, ad 1 (Leonine ed., 12:278). Milbank deals with the relationship between desire and sacrament in John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 100–111. Milbank and Pickstock argue: “Aquinas . . . insists that what is primarily salvific even if one does receive, is desire for the Body and Blood of Christ. And this tends to make sense of the fact that we can never receive once and for all, and have to go on receiving. If there is no end to receiving the Eucharist, and we have never received enough, this does indeed imply that desire is as good as receiving, just as receiving the Eucharist with the right desire is essential. Thus Aquinas repeatedly suggests that the whole of the liturgy is primarily directed towards preparing in people a proper attitude of receptive expectation” (107). Milbank thus reduces the sacrament to the liturgy, and so collapses the distinction between desire for the Lord in hope and union with the Lord in charity. It is union with the Lord in charity that Aquinas identifies as the principal effect of receiving communion, not desire for union (*ST* III, q. 79, a. 1, corp. [Leonine ed., 12:217]), and the daily need to be refreshed in that union that he identifies as the principal reason for frequent communion, not the daily nourishing of its absence (*ST* III, q. 80, a. 10, ad 1 [Leonine ed., 12:242]).

the freedom of the Church to form consciences. Milbank and Pabst, by contrast, remove those limits both vertically (in the revival of aristocracy) and horizontally (in the call to corporatized socialism). They propose, in essence, the matter of Christendom (such as they understand it) without the form. Yet, without the form of charity received from the sacraments and healing the wills of aristocrats and bureaucrats alike, what is to stop their proposed aristocratic-socialist behemoth from assuming the form of an uncontrollable Hobbesian Leviathan before adequate preparations are made for its baptism?

Since liberal Catholicism admittedly lacks even the *ideal* of Christian charity in its program for the socio-political order, Milbank and Pabst are critical of the way in which it establishes relationships among various branches of government because it views those relationships in terms of checks and balances, rather than as a reciprocal gift exchange.¹¹⁹ This criticism is important; one could hardly deny that checks and balances are not the ideal way to envision human relationships. Then again, humanity does not live in an ideal state; it lives in a fallen state. Without the democratization of sacramental charity, Milbank and Pabst are themselves forced to admit the necessity of checks and balances as well.¹²⁰ Examples abound. We are told that monarchy acts as a “check” against aristocracy and democracy,¹²¹ elections as a check on aristocracy,¹²² the constitution as a check on a “populist demotion of high culture,”¹²³ corporatism as a check on political bureaucracy.¹²⁴ The only person who is not “checked” is the monarch.¹²⁵ But why the exception? Here at last we have an appeal not just to liturgical knowledge, but to sacramental charity. The monarch can go unchecked because he or she is answerable to God in virtue of his/her baptism.¹²⁶

It seems, therefore, as though Milbank and Pabst really envision two distinct socio-political realities. One is that of the monarch, who needs no check or balance because his/her will is healed by charity through the sacraments of the Church; he/she inhabits a world of peace. The other is that of the *demos*, who need to be checked and balanced because their wills cannot be assumed to be so healed;

¹¹⁹ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 182–83.

¹²⁰ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 288.

¹²¹ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 212, 216.

¹²² Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 289.

¹²³ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 289.

¹²⁴ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 380.

¹²⁵ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 218–19.

¹²⁶ Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 219.

they inhabit a world of violence in search of peace. The irony is that these two worlds are in fact the same because evil is always privative of some good. The world of violence that the *demos* seeks to escape through liturgy is but the corruption of the world of peace that the monarch inhabits through the sacraments. This suggests that there is another vertical axis that Milbank and Pabst do not adequately account for: it is not the vertical axis of aristocracy; it is the Dionysian ascent from sin to grace and glory through sacramental purgation, illumination, and perfection.

Conclusion: Searching for the Politics of Virtue among the Politics of Sin and Grace

Outside of the post-liberal tradition, an historical reading of Augustine's *City of God* has recently emerged in the work of Robert Dodaro that offers a more thorough account of Augustine's understanding of the wounds of sin in the individual and supplies the necessary, corresponding emphasis on sacramental charity in the community.¹²⁷ Dodaro's work arises out of a conversation different from those of Murray and Milbank. It is not a work of contemporary political theology so much as a work of patristic historical theology, implicitly correcting liberal readings of Augustine on virtue and politics by offering an alternative to the historical framework of Robert Markus upon which they tend to be based.¹²⁸ By placing Augustine's *City of God* in the context of the Pelagian controversy,¹²⁹ Dodaro is able to show how Augustine's discussions of justice—in the intellect and the will, individually and communally—always presuppose that justice in a fallen world can come only from Christ.¹³⁰ As C. C. Pecknold argues, this means that the only truly just society is therefore the Church as *totus Christus*, the hearts of whose members are healed by sacramental love in such a way that they receive from Christ the humility required to renounce the lust for power over others and to live as a virtuous community in the world.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹²⁸ Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

¹²⁹ Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 27–71.

¹³⁰ Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 72–114.

¹³¹ C. C. Pecknold, "Church and Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2018); Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 210. Theologians have generally failed to see the

Given that Dodaro's work focuses on the period right after the collapse of the Roman Empire, it gives us a theological vision for the relationship between grace and human society without a concrete account of how that relationship might function. Yet, by applying a similar understanding of sin and grace to a later period in history, Andrew Jones is able to supply a concrete example of one way in which Dodaro's anthropology has been lived out in history.¹³² Like Dodaro's, Jones's work is historical; it focuses on the kingdom of France under the reign of Louis IX. Yet, irrespective of its historical context, the picture that Jones presents of a sacramental kingdom in the thirteenth century can offer us at least one way of seeing how sin and grace, faith and charity, and the temporal and the spiritual can be related to one another in a single socio-political order.

Where Milbank and Pabst see the ontology of violence and ontological of peace as competing ideologies, Jones argues that thirteenth-century France was marked by analogous categories that existed alongside one another.¹³³ Jones agrees with Milbank and Pabst on the ontological priority of peace. Peace, marked by original justice in human persons, an original hierarchy of relation-in-difference among them, and original grace elevating them in charity, is the original historical setting for humanity and for its socio-political order.¹³⁴ Empowered by charity, those who live in this peace inhabit hierarchy, but they renounce what we now call "sovereignty," for they desire the good of the other as other.¹³⁵ Sin disrupts this order.¹³⁶

consequences of Dodaro's anthropology for our understanding of political community in the way that Pecknold observes. Eric Gregory, for example, is approving of the Christological focus of Dodaro's anthropology (*Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008], 255–56) and positively references Dodaro's claim that there can be no true justice apart from Christ ("Augustinians and the New Liberalism," *Augustinian Studies* 41 [2010]: 322), but he fails to appreciate the difference between Milbank's liturgical conception of grace and Dodaro's sacramental one. Consequently, some scholars have read the two as proposing compatible visions of Augustinian liberalism. See, for example, Benjamin Wood, *The Augustinian Alternative: Religious Skepticism and the Search for a Liberal Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2017), 85–88.

¹³² Andrew Jones, *Before Church and State: A Study of the Social Order in the Sacramental Kingdom of St. Louis IX* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2017).

¹³³ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 13–15, 146, 424, 444.

¹³⁴ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 13, 401–2, 415, 421.

¹³⁵ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 416–19, 451–52.

¹³⁶ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 13, 290, 402.

By separating man from God and from grace at the fall, it introduced concupiscence into human persons, violent competition into their relations, and idolatry into their religion; by separating man from God and from grace here and now, it removes from us the ability to withstand the corruptive influence of these temptations on human life, both individually and communally.¹³⁷

The kingdom of France under Louis IX was an attempt to incarnate the socio-political consequences of these beliefs about sin and grace.¹³⁸ The heart of this socio-political order was the sacramental economy of the Church.¹³⁹ The liturgy, more than a place to overcome an apophatic knowledge of God, was the setting for a dynamic ascent from sin to sanctity though the sacraments received in the midst of it.¹⁴⁰ Standing atop the sacramental hierarchy was the pope. While Milbank accuses successive late-medieval popes of gradually falling prey to an Augustinian *cupiditas dominandi*, and so entering into the City of Man by amassing absolute sovereignty,¹⁴¹ Jones observes that, in the thirteenth century, both pope and king sought the City of God together.¹⁴² Jones's pope thus appears to us very similar to Milbank's and Pabst's monarch. He is "unchecked" not because of absolute sovereign power, but because his action at the head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the spiritual order is the very source of everyone else's ability relinquish the desire for that power.¹⁴³ Even then, the pope could dispense release from the lust for power only because he had first received it by the same sacramental means and ascended to what was commonly called "a state

¹³⁷ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 403–8.

¹³⁸ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 419–20.

¹³⁹ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 72.

¹⁴⁰ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 27, 154, 443. For an example, see 45–47. Jones's emphasis on the centrality of the sacramental finds resonance in recent contributions to Thomistic sacramental theology, e.g.: Reginald Lynch, *Cleansing of the Heart: The Sacraments as Instrumental Causes in the Thomistic Tradition* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 111–53; Roger Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 99–150.

¹⁴¹ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 13.

¹⁴² Jones, *Before Church and State*, 449–54.

¹⁴³ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 146, 168–70. Read in light of the idea that sacramental charity renounces sovereignty, Giles's *De ecclesiastica potestate* appears in some respects as the culmination of the medieval worldview, rather than the inchoation of the modern, as Milbank claims (see especially *De ecclesiastica potestate* 1.2–3 [pp. 6–17]).

of perfection.”¹⁴⁴ Not that he was necessarily perfect in himself—pure perfection was recognized as something that could be possessed only in our heavenly homeland.¹⁴⁵ Rather, the pope occupied a state of life externally marked by the trappings of perfection. Consequently, he was unable to use any physical violence;¹⁴⁶ his “sword” was spiritual, the sword of excommunication.¹⁴⁷ It was an ironic weapon. By wielding it, he could cut off those who spurned grace from the sacraments by which they might be healed of their hubris in the hopes of preaching to them so that they might realize their error and repent.

The king was situated at the head of a temporal hierarchy just as the pope was situated at the head of a spiritual one. In essence, the king’s task was the same as the pope’s, “the business of the peace and of the faith”: the peace because his role was to promote ontological peace within the realm; the faith because it was only by the practice of the faith in the reception of the sacraments that the peace he was supposed to promote could exist.¹⁴⁸ But, while king and pope had the same material task, they had formally differentiated and non-competitive roles in accomplishing it.¹⁴⁹ The pope concerned himself primarily with the goods of the soul, and the king with the goods of the body; the pope offered spiritual assistance through the sacraments in the ascent to God and wielded a spiritual sword against those who spurned it, while the king offered material assistance through the administration of the realm and wielded a temporal sword against those who corrupted it.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 153. In his own reading of Augustine, Dodaro points out the need for such an account of sacramental humility among the ordained. The fundamental error of the Donatists in this regard was to suppose that the Church imparted its *own* justice to the faithful, rather than being a humble mediator of Christ’s justice. See Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 201–2.

¹⁴⁵ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 416. See *ST II-II*, q. 182, a. 4, corp. (Leonine ed., 10:444).

¹⁴⁶ While Jones thus agrees with Milbank that the high medieval synthesis insulated the spiritual power from physical coercion, that very insulation suggests that Milbank is wrong to conclude that the close relationship between spiritual and temporal power at the end of the thirteenth century caused the descent of the spiritual into the temporal. See Giles of Rome, *De ecclesiastica potestate* 1.3 (pp. 14–15).

¹⁴⁷ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 429–30.

¹⁴⁸ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 29–165.

¹⁴⁹ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 75–94.

¹⁵⁰ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 426–29. The complementarity of body and soul as it relates to the temporal and spiritual powers is taken up in by Giles in *De*

Although the pope and the king each sat atop his own hierarchy, Jones shows that the two hierarchies were not unrelated to one another. The king was a member of the Church and ruled—as Milbank also notes—in his capacity as a baptized Christian, through the sharing in the royal office of Christ that was conferred upon him by this sacrament.¹⁵¹ This did not make the king a mere functionary of the pope, nor did it make the kingdom the equivalent of a diocese.¹⁵² As the purpose of the sacraments was to heal people from the lust for power, there existed in the thirteenth century a sense of subsidiarity in spiritual and temporal governance. The pope administered spiritual affairs, while the king administered temporal affairs.

In his administration of spiritual affairs, the pope acknowledged the legitimate jurisdiction of a variegated harmony of other authorities: cardinals, bishops, abbots, religious superiors of the mendicant orders, and even kings.¹⁵³ This latter instance of shared governance may seem surprising, but Jones shows how the pope claimed no jurisdiction over the temporal affairs of the king except in certain very limited respects: the clergy were exempt from direct temporal subordination to the king in their persons, and so they could not be tried in civil courts;¹⁵⁴ the king was subject to direct spiritual subordination to the pope only in those matters that concerned sin (that is, *ratione peccati*).¹⁵⁵ The reason for the first was that the clergy occupied

ecclesiastica potestae 1.6–7 (pp. 28–47). James of Viterbo’s attempt at preserving the analogy of matter/body/kingship to form/soul/priesthood while yet allowing for the existence of kings apart from priests may be in part responsible for the views on matter he expresses in James of Viterbo, *Quodlibet* 2.5, ed. Eelco Ypma (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1969), 59–96.

¹⁵¹ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 137, 145–65, 247.

¹⁵² Jones, *Before Church and State*, 280–281, 451–52.

¹⁵³ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 226–27. Most instructive is Jones’s treatments of cardinal legates *de latere*, who were seen as so united to the pope that they could be relied upon to render an accurate account of his intentions even after his death (312–38, 371–91, esp. 384).

¹⁵⁴ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 228–29. The clergy were also, by decree 46 of Lateran IV, exempt from direct civil taxation (*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman Tanner [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990], 1:255).

¹⁵⁵ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 320n14. For instance, we may consider the account that Jones records of the king ordering a group of monks to absolve a seeming unjust excommunication “unless . . . their excommunication was on account of a sin against God” (231). This is where Giles of Rome falls short (*De ecclesiastica potestate* 3.5–6 [pp. 318–41]), because his understanding of *ratione peccati* is already embedded within a narrative of the direct subordination

an external state that represented a higher form of spiritual perfection in the ascent to God; the reason for the second was that the king, like any other Christian, constantly depended on the sacramental economy of the Church to make the interior ascent that the clergy signified. Assuming that the king remained in a state of grace, he enjoyed a high degree of freedom in the administration of temporal affairs because those temporal affairs were *his* affairs.¹⁵⁶ Even so, he did not possess sovereignty in the modern sense.¹⁵⁷ Freed of the lust for power through the sacraments, his was a subsidiary rule that acknowledged the temporal jurisdiction both of temporal nobility and of certain spiritual prelates.¹⁵⁸ The coordination of all of these various spheres of authority was not by force; it was by oath, which established charitable networks of counsel and aid (*consilium et auxilium*) among all the various spheres of temporal and spiritual jurisdiction.¹⁵⁹

An individual person's experience of this socio-political order would depend upon the state of his soul.¹⁶⁰ If he were inhabiting ontological peace by living in a state of grace, he could expect minimal external interference in his affairs from the temporal government. Instead, his life would be marked primarily by an inward ascent to God through sacramental grace. If he corrupted that peace by living in a state of mortal sin, he would become at once a danger to the Church and to the kingdom: to the Church because he might lead others to abandon their ascent to God; to the kingdom because, by doing so, he would gradually corrupt the otherwise peaceful temporal order. Consequently, if he persisted, he might find himself subject to the two swords: to the spiritual sword of excommunication that would prevent him from harming the Church and call him back to mystical ascent, and to the temporal sword of the king's coercion to compel him to cease his harm to the realm.¹⁶¹ This modeled the experience of the people of God in the two Testaments of Sacred Scripture. In the Old Testament, when humanity was still being prepared for grace, the

of temporal to spiritual power. For a more careful treatment of that provision, see James of Viterbo, *De regimine Christiano* 2.8 [pp. 242–43].

¹⁵⁶ Significantly, this even included the temporal consequences following excommunication, in which the king's rights were separate from those of the pope (Jones, *Before Church and State*, 133, 220–222, 234–47).

¹⁵⁷ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 126–28.

¹⁵⁸ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 114–15, 167–217, 233–34.

¹⁵⁹ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 249–74, 339–69.

¹⁶⁰ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 420, 418–26.

¹⁶¹ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 53–73, 426–27.

people of God were given an external law that coerced their bodies, but only within the context of a covenanted relationship with God;¹⁶² in the New Testament, when all of humanity was offered grace, the Church was given an interior law that calls the souls of the faithful by love, again in the context of a covenanted relationship.¹⁶³

By its attention to the wounds of sin, Jones's account of the thirteenth century can acknowledge with Murray the difficulties that liberalism has encountered concerning the knowledge and performance of the natural law in the contemporary world. By its connection of the wounds of sin with the *cupiditas dominandi*, it can help explain more clearly than Murray how the move toward limited government is integral to the move away from sovereignty. By its recognition that the solution to sin and sovereignty is found in a particular faith, it can explain the difficulties that Milbank's and Pabst's proposal would encounter in finding widespread recognition without preaching.¹⁶⁴ Finally, by its recognition that this faith's key contribution to overcoming sin and sovereignty is charity, understood not as an ideal but as a sacramental virtue that heals the wills that have been corrupted by sin, it offers the "one thing necessary" to realize Milbank and Pabst's vision for a post-liberal Christendom.

As Bernard Mulcahy has shown, the principal fear that tends to animate criticisms of Radical Orthodoxy's political theology, and that any use of Jones's theological history is sure to animate all the more, is that of an integralism in which nature is dissolved into grace, the state into the Church, and man into God, an integralism in which the created order loses the integrity that God himself, in the language of Sacred Scripture, thought it "good" to confer upon it.¹⁶⁵ If Jones's consistent denial of a division between the spiritual and the temporal were read with a systematic lens rather than the historical one, it could easily lead to this conclusion. But this would be a mistake of genre, and it is the same mistake that we could make with regard to Thomas Aquinas if we were to fail to distinguish the systematic from the historical in his work as well. The same Aquinas who gave us five proofs of God's existence in the *prima pars* tells us that, as a matter of history, most people believe in God's existence because they do not

¹⁶² Jones, *Before Church and State*, 407–15.

¹⁶³ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 415–18.

¹⁶⁴ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 292.

¹⁶⁵ Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 179–200; Edmund Waldstein, "An Integralist Manifesto," *First Things*, October 2017, 52–53.

understand the arguments for it.¹⁶⁶ The same Aquinas who gave us a careful exposition of the natural law in the *prima secundae* tells us that, as a matter of history, most people need the Ten Commandments because they do not reason out the precepts of it.¹⁶⁷ The same Aquinas who gave us a careful exposition of the cardinal virtues in the *secunda secundae* tells us that, as a matter of history, *all* people need sanctifying grace in order to form them in a true and perfected way.¹⁶⁸ The denial that two things are usually or ever found apart from one another in history does not mean that those two things (faith and the summit of metaphysical knowledge, grace and perfected virtue, the spiritual and the temporal orders) are not metaphysically distinct.¹⁶⁹ As a matter of fact, nature may have fallen from grace. But the same grace that raises nature to glory (*gratia elevans*) also sets nature on its own two feet again (*gratia sanans*).¹⁷⁰

If Jones is correct about the relationship between violence and peace in the present, then his work can help to give us a sense of the breadth of the axis along which the politics of virtue may be sought. The first pole of that axis is the politics of sin. As Murray argued, the *cupiditas dominandi* had made such great inroads into the hearts of temporal rulers that, even in Catholic countries, the Church had lost

¹⁶⁶ For the proofs of God's existence, see *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3, corp. (Leonine ed., 4:31–32). For Thomas's reticence about their becoming widely known, see *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1, corp. (Leonine ed., 4:6).

¹⁶⁷ For Thomas's exposition of the natural law, see *ST* I-II, q. 94 (Leonine ed., 7:168–73). For Thomas's reticence about our knowledge of it, see *ST* I-II, q. 99, a. 2, ad 2 (Leonine ed., 7:200).

¹⁶⁸ For Thomas's exposition of the cardinal virtues, see *ST* I-II, q. 61 (Leonine ed., 6:394–400), and II-II, qq. 47–170 (Leonine ed., 8:348–10:364). On the relationship between grace and moral virtue, see notes 73–74 above.

¹⁶⁹ On the distinction between natural and supernatural habits, acts, and ends in Aquinas, see my "The Study of Theology as a Foretaste of Heaven: The Influence of Albert the Great on Aquinas's Understanding of Beatitudo Imperfecta" in this issue of *Nova et Vetera*. On the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal, see Jones, *Before Church and State*, 158–65, 172–76. In his treatment of Aquinas on integral nature, Jones mistakenly says that man, without grace, would be "not capable of the perfect virtue for which he was created, which was 'infused virtue'" (402; similarly on 415). For Aquinas, *virtus perfecta* is not a superlative; it refers to a virtue that has all the characteristics pertaining to proper virtue, and so is connected with the other virtues. Thus, in a state of integral nature, *virtus perfecta* could have been connected by prudence, though as a matter of historical record, it was connected by charity.

¹⁷⁰ For a treatment of this theme in the thought of Augustine, see Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 113–14.

the vast majority of her freedom over the intervening years since the thirteenth century. Murray called for extremely limited government not because he was a partisan of the Republican party, but because he thought that Western society had reached the point on the axis of sin and grace where any serious extension of government (even that of a confessional state) would inevitably lead to the manipulative control of the people and of the Church. In this respect, Murray's liberal Catholicism can be rehabilitated in a post-liberal context. To propose Murray's liberal Catholicism as a post-liberal model for political theology is really to restore to Murray the Augustinian theological metanarrative in which he originally embedded his thought. It is to recognize with Murray that his thought was not intended to be an indelible set of abstract truths, but rather a prudential response to a situation in which the human community occupied a particular point on the axis of sin and grace.

To think, however, that the politics of sin is our only option is to succumb to political-theological "despair."¹⁷¹ If we supplement Milbank's and Pabst's proposal for a post-liberal order with Murray's awareness of the effects of sin on the state, as well as Jones's reworking of the categories of violence and peace as an historical continuum upon which persons and nations live out the drama of sin and grace, then a second option opens up to us: the politics of grace. In an age in which the ruler was a saint and the people were saintly, it was possible to in-corporate man's sacramental journey into the very structure of the temporal order without tarnishing the freedom of the Church or of the state. It was a short-lived age because the lust for power—which is a temptation for every man and every nation in every age—gained too much ground in the following century among less saintly rulers, less saintly popes, and less saintly people. To the extent that a similar lust for power reigns in presidents, prime ministers, and people today, it would be not only unwise but also impossible to recreate Christendom as Milbank and Pabst propose, even if only materially. For, while it would be a mistake to suppose that the ultimate freedom of a man or of men could be found anywhere other than in the Church of Christ,¹⁷² it would be a contradiction in terms

¹⁷¹ Jones, *Before Church and State*, 442–44.

¹⁷² This is the argument behind Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris: Cerf, 2003); English translation: *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard and Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

to compel a person or a people to embrace that freedom.¹⁷³ That is because the move from liberalism to Christendom is not effected by replacing one set of ideals or laws with another, however Christian the new ideals or law may be (or may have been). The move from liberalism to Christendom in the temporal order, like the move from sin to grace in the spiritual order, is vertical. “Every perfect gift”—in the soul and in the *polis*—“is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”¹⁷⁴ It is received as a sacramental gift into the hearts of the faithful through that humble act of sacrificial thanksgiving that makes the Church¹⁷⁵ and—to the extent that the members of the Church cooperate with the fullness of its effects—remakes the world.

Jones’s study focuses on a particular point in history. It does not, because it cannot, furnish us with a program for political action in the present. But it does suggest for us that the other pole on the axis of secular and sacred governance is more radical than Radical Orthodoxy. To bring about socialism within a sacramental kingdom would be to corrupt it from the inside by replacing charity with sovereignty. To bring about socialism *in anticipation* of a sacramental kingdom would be a political and theological disaster, because it would introduce the corruption of society without its salutary remedy. Murray was right to turn toward limited government in order to rescue the Church from encroachments on her freedom by modern sovereignty. Milbank and Pabst were right to identify that sovereignty with a violence that is rooted in sin. But Jones is also right to show how violence and peace are not opposing ideologies that can be exchanged for one another without the healing of the will by sacramental charity.

To the extent that the Church now finds herself beset by a form of liberalism in the state other than the one that confronted Murray, she has “the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel,”¹⁷⁶ which is to say, she must chart her course in the light of the unchanging truths that God has revealed to

¹⁷³ ST III, q. 68, aa. 7 and 10 (Leonine ed., 12:98, 102–3).

¹⁷⁴ James 1:17.

¹⁷⁵ Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: l’Eucharistie et l’église au Moyen Age: Étude historique* (Paris: Cerf, 2010), 104: “l’Eucharistie *fait* l’Église [the Eucharist makes the Church]” (emphasis original; unfortunately, the emphasis, which brings out the constitutive nature [*fait*] of the Eucharist in the Church, has not been preserved in the published English translation: *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages: Historical Survey* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983], 83).

¹⁷⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, §4.

her about sin and grace, and of her prudential estimation of how sin and grace are at work in the hearts of persons and nations here and now. In the meantime, it would be salutary for her to recover the theological vision behind Murray's political theology and, by a grasp of the principles at work in that vision, to read the present the way that Murray read the past. Murray offered the Church a careful path to tread so as not to be ensnared by the lust for power in the evangelization of the secular order. That vision was based on reason and the natural law because Murray thought that the people to whom the Church needed to bring the Gospel in that age were virtuous enough to be receptive to it. Yet, to the extent that the natural law begins to fall on deaf ears and the lust for power corrupts classical liberalism into doctrinaire liberalism, Murray's very own methodology challenges the Church to consider the practical effectiveness—though not the objective validity—of natural law arguments in the public square, as well as to rediscover the importance of embedding those arguments in the theological metanarrative of the Cross. Doing so means seeing Murray's proposal for limited government as a prudential accommodation to the politics of sin. But the moment we place the socio-political order on the axis of sin and grace, Murray, Milbank, Pabst, and Jones all challenge us to set our sights above politics of sin and to imagine the redemption of the socio-political order in the politics of grace. St. Louis's sacramental kingdom gives us one concrete example of what the politics of grace can look like. Contemporary political theologians have yet to explore what another might be for the present day. It cannot be a mere replica of St. Louis's society; the temporal order has moved on from medieval monarchy, and the Church's work of evangelization faces different—but not for that reason less valid—political structures today. Nevertheless, whether the world's vision for the temporal order is taken from ancient Rome, from medieval France, or from modern America, the Church's vision for the spiritual order remains consistent. As Dodaro rightly observes, that vision is fixed in Christ. And while Christ unfailingly calls fallen *man* to sacramental deification, the same Christ invariably calls fallen *men* to the same perfection. N·V