

Rescuing Maritain from His Reception History: A Reappraisal of William T. Cavanaugh's Critique in *Torture and Eucharist*

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Abstract: The influential writings on church and state of philosopher Jacques Maritain, who died in 1973, possessed a mid-twentieth century hopefulness about a new birth of freedom and lay-led Christian humanism. In light of the next twenty-five years—particularly the experience of the regime of Augusto Pinochet in Chile—William T. Cavanaugh, in his 1998 book *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*, argued that Maritain's work facilitated the marginalization of faith in the modern nation-state. Another quarter-century later, this essay reappraises Cavanaugh's criticisms of Maritain's views on the nature of the church, the role of the laity, and the power of the state. It argues that while Cavanaugh's concerns about sovereignty, subsidiarity, and formation have been vindicated, a careful reading of Maritain's lesser-known and later works suffices to justify Maritain's views on the laity and the church. Maritain remains a vital resource for theologians who seek to avoid both, on the right hand, resurgent integralism and Christian nationalism and, on the left hand, a relativizing of the Gospel in what Maritain called "kneeling before the world."

INTRODUCTION: TORTURED BODIES AND TWISTED READINGS

Jacques Maritain counts among the greatest Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century, having written over fifty books on topics from aesthetics to metaphysics to politics, with a legacy that continues to be promoted through twenty-odd national associations devoted to his work.¹ Yet it has been largely philosophers and political theorists who have continued this discussion into the twenty-first century, as none of the major recent work directly on Maritain and Christian political practice has been written by theologians.² This relative neglect of the philosopher Maritain by

¹ William Sweet, "Jacques Maritain," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 edition), plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/maritain.

² William McCormick, "Jacques Maritain on Political Theology," *European Journal of Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (2013): 175–94, doi.org/10.1177/1474885112471263; Miguel Vatter, "Politico-Theological Foundations of Universal Human Rights: The Case of Maritain," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 233–260, doi.org/10.1353/sor.2013.0039; Thomas Pink, "Jacques Maritain and the Problem of Church and State," *The Thomist* 79, no. 1 (January 2015): 1–42, doi.org/10.1353/tho.2015.0020; Jerónimo Molina-Cano, "Jacques Maritain y la teología

contemporary theologians is partly due to disciplinary boundaries. Another contributing factor is theologian William T. Cavanaugh's criticism of Maritain in his 1998 book *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*, which criticized Maritain to clear the ground for Cavanaugh's constructive project. Cavanaugh makes a strong case that Maritain's work proved deeply harmful to Christian political practice, directly in Chile and indirectly for the church at large. In the quarter-century since *Torture and Eucharist* was written, no sustained reply on behalf of Maritain has been made.³

Cavanaugh lived and worked in a co-op in Chile during the closing years of the Pinochet dictatorship, and this experience animates his criticism of Maritain.⁴ In 1966, Maritain had cautiously endorsed Pinochet's ideological predecessor, writing "I know only one example of an authentic 'Christian revolution,' and that is what President Eduardo Frei is attempting at this very moment in Chile, and it is not sure that he will succeed."⁵ Frei's "revolution" did not succeed: in 1970, Frei was succeeded in office by Salvador Allende, who professed Marxism rather than Christian democracy. The threat of communism was then used as justification for the military junta's *coup* in 1973, initiating General Pinochet's seventeen-year reign of terror. Yet the junta's "Declaration of Principles" positioned itself as precisely the New Christendom which Maritain had sought—espousing the "dignity of the human person," affirming "natural rights anterior and superior to the state" in "protecting the weak from all abuses by the strong," seeking "the common good" by allowing each and every citizen "to reach their full personal fulfillment," and pursuing this good through subsidiarity in an "organic, social, and

política de la democracia contemporánea," *Scripta Theologica* 52, no. 1 (2020): 39–72, doi.org/10.15581/006.52.1.39-71; V. Bradley Lewis, "Thomism, Personalism, and Politics: The Case of Jacques Maritain," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 151–173, doi.org/10.5840/qd2019929; D. Q. McNerny, "The Social Thought of Jacques Maritain," *The Catholic Social Science Review* 12 (2007): 155–172, www.pdcnet.org/collection/fshow?id=cssr_2007_0012_0155_0172&pdfname=cssr_2007_0012_0155_0172.pdf&file_type=pdf; Timothy Fuller and John P. Hittinger, eds., *Reassessing the Liberal State: Reading Maritain's Man and the State* (Washington, DC: American Maritain Association, 2001).

³ The closest that can be found are some clarifications in Maritain's favor, in Matthew A. Shadle, "Cavanaugh on the Church and the Modern State: An Appraisal," *Horizons* 37, no. 2 (2010): 246–270, doi.org/10.1017/s0360966900007271. At the time of writing, *Torture and Eucharist* had 750 citations listed on Google Scholar, a very large number for a contemporary work of theology. The lack of rebuttal combined with its widespread popularity implies that Cavanaugh's criticism of Maritain has been conceded, if not embraced, by his fellow theologians.

⁴ William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 17.

⁵ Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time*, trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968 [1966]), 23.

participatory” democracy.⁶ This self-professedly Christian civilization was maintained, we now know, in part by torturing at least 27,255 of its citizens.⁷

Cavanaugh emphasizes that the “great” and “holy” Maritain would have been the first to denounce the regime’s injustice, had he not died a few months before the coup;⁸ yet Cavanaugh also makes a strong case that Maritain’s understanding of church and state nonetheless “has sapped the church’s ability to resist regimes such as that of General Pinochet.”⁹ As democracy currently seems shakier in the Global North than at any point since the 1930s, and as Maritain’s ideas—developed but not replaced—remain foundational for non-integralist Thomistic Catholics, Cavanaugh’s claim is of urgent interest.

This paper will not dispute Cavanaugh’s telling of the reception history of Maritain’s work. Cavanaugh appears to be entirely correct in his assessment of the Chilean injustice as having been rationalized through readings of Maritain. However, these rationalizations were possible only by misreading or selectively reading Maritain: his influence in Chile was largely due to his main political writings in the early and mid-twentieth century; attention to his later ecclesial and theological work supplements and contextualizes his earlier political philosophy.¹⁰ It is no small tragedy that these clarifications failed to influence the tyrannical Pinochet regime.

Cavanaugh’s critique of Maritain in *Torture and Eucharist* was offered in order to clear the ground for his constructive project, which over the past twenty-five years has flourished in Augustinian soil.¹¹

⁶ Quoted in Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 198–199. These themes are at the heart of Maritain’s political thought; for brevity, in this essay I am presuming the reader’s general familiarity with the main lines of Maritain’s views on church and state, which sought a *concordat* with the democratic nation-state and were deeply influential in the *aggiornamento* of the Second Vatican Council. For a refresher, see John P. Hittinger, “The Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain,” *Liberty, Wisdom, and Grace: Thomism and Democratic Political Theory* (New York: Lexington, 2002), 3–20.

⁷ “Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation,” *United States Institute for Peace*, www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/collections/truth_commissions/Chile90-Report/Chile90-Report.pdf.

⁸ In a 1971 letter to his dear friend Saul Alinsky, Maritain heaps praise on *Rules for Radicals* but expresses dismay that Alinsky claims that “in war the end justifies almost any means.” Maritain rhetorically offers a list of self-evidently unjustifiable means: “Torture? Indiscriminate bombing? Annihilation of cities?” Quoted in Bernard E. Doering, “Jacques Maritain and His Two ‘Authentic Revolutionaries,’” *Thomistic Papers III* (Houston, TX: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1987), 103.

⁹ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 177, 202.

¹⁰ Joseph M. de Torre, “Maritain’s ‘Integral Humanism’ and Catholic Social Teaching,” in *Reassessing the Liberal State: Reading Maritain’s Man and the State*.

¹¹ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 197. Among his many subsequent works, of particular note is *Field Hospital: The Church’s Engagement with a Wounded World*

While Thomistic theologians ought to engage with and learn from Cavanaugh's postliberal perspective, they need not follow him in leaving Maritain's seeds on the shelf and planting new ones elsewhere. Instead, they ought to return to "the peasant of the Garonne" and do some careful cultivation, weeding included. For this is how the peasant-professor hoped to be remembered: as "a kind of spring-finder who presses his ear to the ground in order to hear the sound of hidden springs, and of invisible germinations."¹²

CAVANAUGH'S THREE MAIN CRITICISMS OF MARITAIN

Which views of Maritain would, in Cavanaugh's view, prove so disastrous? This paper will focus on Cavanaugh's objections to Maritain's understanding of the church, laity, and state. First, that the church is to the state as the soul to the body, an immaterial animating principle: Cavanaugh charges that this leads to a view of the church as ghostly, insubstantial, with some power to spook but none to compel. Second, that the laity have a rightful autonomy in their realm of action, one which will require that they dirty their hands in a fallen world: Cavanaugh charges that this neglects the way in which charity transforms and infuses moral virtue. Third, that the state which wrongly claims sovereignty can nonetheless rightly take responsibility for subsidiarity among and formation of its citizens: Cavanaugh demonstrates that there is an irreconcilable tension between sovereignty, subsidiarity, and formation, and that the internal logic of the modern nation-state is to at once expand and harden. While Maritain can be defended on the first two charges, the third must be conceded to Cavanaugh.

The first critique is the most fundamental. St. Thomas Aquinas compares the subordination of things temporal to things spiritual with the subordination of the body to the soul, and Maritain largely "considers it unproblematic to identify Thomas's medieval 'temporal' with the modern 'state.'"¹³ In analogizing the state as body and the church as soul, Cavanaugh charges that Maritain "seems unable to

(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016). The present author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers who pressed this point, and also through many other suggestions greatly improved this paper.

¹² Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Albany, NY: Magi, 1964), 3. Born and educated in Paris, Maritain was not literally a peasant; he calls himself one towards the end of his life to justify a willingness to risk putting "his foot in his mouth" while seeking to "call a spade a spade" (Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, Preface).

¹³ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 161. Cavanaugh recognizes Maritain's distinction between the "sacral" Middle Ages and the "secular" modern age, but is right to imply that it is not pertinent to this point.

contemplate the possibility that the modern distinction of temporal and spiritual, body and soul, has also served to subjugate the church by creating a sphere of purely temporal power.” Further, Maritain is “maddeningly vague” on how the Christian is to fulfill her responsibility to animate, influence, inspire, vivify, and elevate the temporal order.¹⁴ Maritain hoped for a soul as Aristotle defines it, a principle of organization which instantiates and unifies an organism; in the conditions of modernity, what results instead is a soul as understood by Descartes, an increasingly irrelevant ghost in an increasingly inexorable machine. And so the “very distinction of [spiritual and temporal] planes can function to augment the power of the state by eliminating the interference of the church. . . . Once the church has been individualized and eliminated as Christ’s body in the world, only the state is left to impersonate God.”¹⁵

Cavanaugh illustrates the life-and-death urgency of the problem by recounting a story Chilean Bishop Alejandro Jimenez told him. The bishop had an old friend who was an army lieutenant in the early days of the junta. Bishop Jimenez sought to convince his friend to stand against the regime’s kidnapping, torture, and lawless executions, but his friend replied that while “the authority of a bishop . . . goes directly to the conscience,” it can be disregarded, whereas the soldiers “form part of a body in which not they but their superiors have the final word.”¹⁶ The moral, as Cavanaugh interprets it, is that the status of the church as mystical body is inferior for being spiritual. The discipline that matters is material, embodied; the army’s orders must be obeyed.

More precisely, Cavanaugh says that true discipline is that which, “by taking hold of our bodies,” forms our souls into virtue or vice, as “body and spirit are but one.”¹⁷ A properly Thomistic psychosomatic unity wherein the soul is directly, without mediation, related to the body, entails that the soul-like church has the right to impose sacramental discipline on Catholics in the state without any intermediaries or interference. However, Cavanaugh claims that “for Maritain the power of the spiritual in the temporal must take the form of inspiration and mere counsels which do not require obedience. The result is a dysfunction between body and soul, a [Cartesian] false soul haunting a body which receives its orders from elsewhere.”¹⁸

As his second point, Cavanaugh argues that this abstracted view of the church entails a false view of the laity. Cavanaugh is scandalized—in the traditional, proper sense of the term—by Maritain’s position that the laity must accept “that there can be justice in employing horrible

¹⁴ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 161, 186.

¹⁵ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 193.

¹⁶ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 95–96.

¹⁷ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 196.

¹⁸ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 196.

means,” as worldly work entails that none will have “clean hands . . . [we] cannot touch the flesh of the human being without staining our fingers. To stain our fingers is not to stain our hearts.”¹⁹ These quotes seem to place Maritain in the company of Machiavelli²⁰ and suggest how a country claiming Maritain’s mantle in its Declaration of Principles could embrace torture as policy. This relates to Cavanaugh’s further objection that, by sharply distinguishing the material from the spiritual, Maritain divorces the moral from the theological virtues. Maritain, he charges, grants that charity “influence[s]” and “elevate[s]” the natural virtues, but neglects the virtues’ full transformation and infusion and moreover fails to show how virtues, as habituated, must be learned within communities of practice.²¹ While Cavanaugh concedes that Maritain follows St. Thomas in holding “that the politician who is caretaker of the common good must be *bonus vir*, a virtuous man in every respect, that is, natural and supernatural,” he claims that Maritain’s prudent ruler will merely “take into account” the supernatural end.²² Accounting for our supernatural end and yet accepting “horrible means” to justified earthly ends, Cavanaugh charges, undermines the possibility of sanctity for the laity.

Cavanaugh’s third criticism is the most complex and compelling. Maritain understood the liberal order in the later twentieth century to be in an unstable equilibrium, hoping that “our civilization has a chance to right itself,” but fearing it would sink deeper into “capitalist materialism” or “communist totalitarianism,” each of which are “rendered more formidable, and more similar, by technocracy.”²³ The cause of this instability is the tension between sovereignty, subsidiarity, and formation in the modern nation-state, each of which requires some discussion.

MARITAIN’S SHORTCOMINGS ON SOVEREIGNTY, SUBSIDIARITY, AND FORMATION

¹⁹ Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, quoted in Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 170.

²⁰ Whose company he utterly disavows. See Jacques Maritain, “The End of Machiavellianism,” *Review of Politics* 4, no. 1 (January, 1942): 1–33, doi.org/10.1017/s0034670500003235.

²¹ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 182–183.

²² Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 182.

²³ Jacques Maritain, *On the Church of Christ*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 92.

In *Man and the State*, Maritain asserts that only God is truly sovereign, “*transcendently* supreme.”²⁴ God grants the social body limited autonomy, but for the state to claim sovereignty is for it to claim power without accountability. Maritain argues that the very use of the concept of sovereignty “must be scrapped” by political philosophy, since it only belongs in metaphysics as an attribute of God.²⁵ Despite “the sovereign state” being a key concept for centuries, Maritain holds that its association with democracy is only a bad accident of history, that can in principle be remedied with a “New Christendom” (run by the people, not the monarch) to replace the modern sovereign state. Cavanaugh agrees that state sovereignty is a category error but argues it was no accident. Rather, asserting sovereignty in principle from God and in practice over the church was essential to the creation of the modern state. From Rousseau onward, “the object of the state [has been] to make citizens as independent as possible from each other and as dependent as possible on the state.”²⁶ Some individual leaders of modern states may work against this inherent logic; but what Maritain saw as the natural growth of the state to protect its citizens’ expansive and expanding rights, Cavanaugh demonstrates, in fact requires that the state aggrandize itself indefinitely.²⁷

The problems this causes for Maritain’s willingness to work with the nation-state become clearer when considering the principle of subsidiarity. A society governed by subsidiarity is one, as Cavanaugh explains, where “the organic City would be ruled not by the wheels of a bureaucratic machine but by decisions taken by men chosen as leaders of their several organizations.”²⁸ The many guilds, corporations, fraternal societies, churches, schools, and community organizations which make up the lifeblood of society are to be as independent and self-directing as possible, with the state only interfering to protect individuals when fundamental rights are infringed. Maritain famously upheld this view of subsidiarity in his close friendship with Saul Alinsky and support of community organizing as a counterweight to institutional power.²⁹ Yet in hoping that the state machinery could

²⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998 [1951]), 51.

²⁵ Maritain, *Man and the State*, 49–53, emphasis in original.

²⁶ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 165, 190–193.

²⁷ See William T. Cavanaugh, “Killing for the Telephone Company: Why the Nation-State is Not the Keeper of the Common Good,” *Modern Theology* 20, no. 2 (2004): 243–274, doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.2004.00252.x.

²⁸ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 194. See also William T. Cavanaugh, “The Road Not Taken: Figgis, Subsidiarity, and Catholic Social Teaching,” in *Neville Figgis, CR: His Life, Thought and Significance*, ed. Paul Avis (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

²⁹ C. J. Wolfe, “Lessons from the Friendship of Jacques Maritain with Saul Alinsky,” *Catholic Social Science Review* 16 (2011): 229–240, doi.org/10.5840/cssr20111620.

restrain and even efface itself, Maritain failed to contend with the Iron Law of Oligarchy, memorably paraphrased as “Bureaucracy happens. If bureaucracy happens, power rises. Power corrupts.”³⁰ In order to adjudicate disputes—particularly if the state claims to serve the common good, which Maritain wants—over time, Cavanaugh notes, “the state will find it necessary to build such strong controls of the intermediate associations into the system that meaningful participation and autonomy for these groups will be squelched.”³¹ Examples in American democracy are plentiful: the trajectory from federalism towards statism, the constriction of religious freedom (whose concept itself was a grab for power by the state),³² and the nationalization and bureaucratization of organizations such as political parties and unions.³³

A sovereign state which undermines subsidiarity in order to have an increasingly direct relationship with citizens has final power over the formation of its citizens. This secular formation is the third, and worst, problem for Maritain’s conception of the state. Cavanaugh points out that “Christians in modernity have often bought into a devil’s bargain in which the state is given control of our bodies while the church supposedly retains our souls. . . . But the state cannot be expected to limit itself to the body; it will colonize the soul as well The secular god is a jealous god.”³⁴ Maritain promoted the teaching of civics and even a “*civic or secular* faith, not a religious one” within democratic societies, but only as an interim measure.³⁵ In the long run, “States will be obliged to make a choice for or against the Gospel. They will be shaped either by the totalitarian spirit or by the Christian spirit.”³⁶ In an age where American presidents worked closely with the Papacy against tyrants,³⁷ professed the country to be “a Christian

³⁰ Darcy K. Leach, “The Iron Law of *What* Again? Conceptualizing Oligarchy across Organizational Forms,” *Sociological Theory* 23, no. 3 (September 2005): 312–337, doi.org/10.1111/j.0735-2751.2005.00256.x.

³¹ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 195.

³² William T. Cavanaugh, “Are We Free Not to Be a Religion? The Ambivalence of Religious Freedom,” in *Field Hospital*, 234–248.

³³ Perhaps the most compelling account of the anti-democratic nature of bureaucracy is to be found in David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (New York: Melville House, 2015).

³⁴ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 196.

³⁵ Maritain, *Man and the State*, 110, 119–126, emphasis in original. Maritain presumably had in mind the French tradition, going back to the Revolution, of required courses in *éducation civique*.

³⁶ Maritain, *Man and the State*, 159.

³⁷ W. David Curtiss and C. Evan Stewart, “Myron C. Taylor, Part Two: President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Ambassador Extraordinary,” *Cornell Law Forum* 33 (2007), heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/corlawfofe33&i=76.

nation” in great need of “a renewal of faith,”³⁸ and claimed in the State of the Union that “religion [is] the source of . . . democracy and international good faith,”³⁹ Maritain may be forgiven for a hope that looks in hindsight to have been ill-founded. The use of American civil religion to turn the nation itself into an idol had not yet been made clear.⁴⁰ Citizens of the United States are not formed into a civic faith that tends towards Christian civilization; rather, as Cavanaugh demonstrates, they have been formed as citizens in a patriotic liturgical cycle that grounds the present reality on past sacrifice which created order from chaos, leading to indebtedness requiring fresh sacrifice and “new good wars.”⁴¹ Moreover, the nation-state in “ordinary time” forms citizen-consumers, as the market is the closest thing there is to a common good.⁴² Here again, Maritain foresaw possible dangers, and he strongly condemned the bourgeois state which sees economic growth as its highest end.⁴³ Yet his belief that America could be much more than the colossus of the market has turned out to be in vain, and not just accidentally. For if the state has ultimate and increasing responsibility for the protection of the rights of its citizens, and the Lockean rights of “life, liberty, and property” are foremost in American jurisprudence, then an ever-increasing

³⁸ Harry S. Truman, “Exchange of Messages with Pope Pius XII,” *American Presidency Project*, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/exchange-messages-with-pope-pius-xii.

³⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Annual Message to Congress,” *American Presidency Project*, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-congress.

⁴⁰ The classic article is Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (Winter 1967): 40–55. Bellah prefaces his article by writing, “I conceive of the central tradition of the American civil religion not as a form of national self-worship but as the subordination of the nation to ethical principles that transcend it [and] in terms of which it should be judged.” Frederick Douglass’s 1852 speech “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” exemplifies the kind of self-scrutiny offering a path towards national self-improvement, the positive sense of American civil religion. Yet Bellah wrote during the Vietnam War and saw that this tradition of self-scrutiny was losing ground to self-worship alternating with self-hatred; since then, the language of civil religion has arguably become a comforting myth, a now-fraying mask to hide from Americans the reality of the United States’ impact in the world. See William T. Cavanaugh, “Telling the Truth about Ourselves: Torture and Eucharist in the US Popular Imagination,” *The Other Journal*, no. 15 (Fall 2009), theotherjournal.com/2009/05/telling-the-truth-about-ourselves-torture-and-eucharist-in-the-u-s-popular-imaginat/.

⁴¹ William T. Cavanaugh, “The Liturgies of Church and State,” *Liturgy* 20, no. 1 (2005): 29, doi.org/10.1080/04580630590522876. Eighteen years later, one wonders to what extent Cavanaugh would extend this analysis of “new good wars” to present calls for increased intervention in Ukraine.

⁴² Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

⁴³ Maritain, *Man and the State*, 110. See also his posthumous exploratory essay on political economy, “A Society Without Money,” *Review of Social Economy* 43, no. 1 (April 1985): 73–83, doi.org/10.1080/00346768500000022.

idolatry of money will necessarily mirror and complement the growth of the state.⁴⁴

That the state falsely considers itself sovereign, an authority higher than God; that the principle of subsidiarity might fall prey to the bureaucratic machinery upholding individual rights; and that citizens would be formed by means intrinsically opposed to faith—these all occurred to Maritain as risks for democratic nation-states. However, Cavanaugh is right to argue from a more contemporary standpoint that these defects are more akin to fatal flaws. It is understandable that, in 1951, Maritain hoped that “the totalitarian State,” acting as “the old spurious God of the lawless Empire bending everything to his adoration,” would be defeated by the joint cause of freedom and the church, “one in the defense of man.”⁴⁵ In hindsight, it becomes clear that any such victories were temporary, indeed partly illusory.

DEFENDING LATER MARITAIN ON THE CHURCH AND THE LAITY

Cavanaugh is right that the nation-state has used its false sovereignty to undermine subsidiarity and distort the formation of Christian citizens, and thus the *concordat* which Maritain sought with the modern state is a lost cause. Yet that does not mean that there is nothing of worth to be found in Maritain for the contemporary theologian. Rather, Maritain’s thought, particularly his later work, can fully respond to Cavanaugh’s other criticisms concerning the relationship of church and body politic and the dirty hands of the laity. Offering a clarification and defense of Maritain on these two points gives grounds to seek a renewal of Maritain’s influence in theology.

Return first to the criticism that Maritain held the church to be in psychosomatic unity with the body politic, yet it became a mere Cartesian haunting ghost. Cavanaugh is right to decry this disembodiment of the church as a pernicious development in modernity, one particularly ubiquitous after the Second Vatican Council. To remedy it, he calls for a deepened appreciation of the way in which “to participate in the Eucharist” is “to be caught up into what is really real, the body of Christ,” to be given a more fundamental identity than any of “the state’s [attempts] to define what is real.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ These claims are contentious and deserve further support than space allows. Proper elaboration would draw on Cavanaugh, “Telephone”; “Are Corporations People?”; *Field Hospital; Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). See also Michael Sandel, “The Skyboxification of Everyday Life,” in *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012), and Alasdair MacIntyre, “Introduction,” in *Marxism and Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bloomsbury, 1995).

⁴⁵ Maritain, *Man and the State*, 187.

⁴⁶ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 279. As noted above, developing this positive vision is the main purpose of the book.

Yet in this there is no disagreement with Maritain—either Jacques or Raïssa, his wife and intellectual partner. They jointly wrote that in order to understand terms such as “fraternal love” and “social justice,” Christians must pursue a “liturgical renewal” which helps “the faithful to realize better, through their union with the public prayer of the Church, their belonging to the Mystical Body” as their primary identity.⁴⁷ While the view of the ghostly, Cartesian church-soul described above is deeply harmful, it is not Maritain’s position.

The first point to press on is Cavanaugh’s attribution to Maritain of the view that “the power of the spiritual in the temporal must take the form of inspiration and mere counsels.”⁴⁸ This claim seems plausible in light of Maritain’s more general comments.⁴⁹ Moreover, Cavanaugh is right about the harms that come from too complete a separation of spiritual and temporal.⁵⁰ However, in this distinction which Maritain makes, he is careful to emphasize that the church is restricted in its counsels concerning material things *per se*, but her binding teachings on faith and morals do concern material things *per accidens*.⁵¹ That this distinction makes a real difference can be seen by referring back to Cavanaugh’s example of the lieutenant and the bishop. In interpreting the text wherein Aquinas compares the church to the soul of the body politic, Maritain approvingly quotes Cajetan’s commentary:

The spiritual power by its very nature has authority over the temporal power *in view of the spiritual end*. . . . That means that the secular power is not subject absolutely and in every respect to the spiritual power: for instance . . . in the military order the Commander of an army [must be obeyed], rather than the Bishop, who has no business to meddle in such matters unless in relation to spiritual things. But *should anything whatsoever in temporal things in any way jeopardize eternal salvation*, the prelate then intervening in that demand by a command or a prohibition is not thrusting his scythe into another man’s harvest but legitimately exercising his own authority: because *all secular powers are subject on that score to the spiritual power*.⁵²

⁴⁷ Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, *Liturgy and Contemplation*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1960), 78.

⁴⁸ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 196.

⁴⁹ For instance: “‘Authentically and vitally Christian’ [political activity,] while drawing its inspiration from the Christian spirit and Christian principles, would involve only the initiative and responsibility of the citizens who conduct it, without being in the slightest degree a politics dictated by the Church” (Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 22).

⁵⁰ William T. Cavanaugh, “‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House:’ The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State,” *Modern Theology* 11, no. 4 (October 1995): 397–420, doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.1995.tb00073.x.

⁵¹ Jacques Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar’s*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1931), xiii.

⁵² Maritain, *Things That Are Not Caesar’s*, 129–130, emphasis in original.

Things jeopardizing eternal salvation are things concerning grave matter, wherein sins committed with full knowledge and intent become mortal (*Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, no. 17). In order to know his authority to intervene, the Chilean bishop need not have read Maritain or Cajetan (although he could have); he need only have read *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 27, promulgated not even a decade before the coup. The Council expressly condemned “torments inflicted on body or mind” as “violat[ing] the integrity of the human person” and thus one among many grave “infamies.” It is only through culpable ignorance and dereliction of duty that a bishop could fail to see widespread torture and unjust executions as falling under his authority to forbid on pain of excommunication. By 1980, the bishops of Chile finally did come to see their duty, excommunicating “not only those participating in the actual torture but also those who order[ed] it or [were] in a position to stop it but [did] not.”⁵³ This is the kind of intervention which Maritain had endorsed in a case where the evil was far less obvious, namely the Pope’s forbidding Catholics to participate in the political movement *Action Française*.⁵⁴ For the church to have right of intervention in mundane matters which touch on salvation is for the church to have right of intervention on the gravest issues in social, economic, and political life, as *Gaudium et Spes* implies.⁵⁵

Through excommunication, a Catholic is shown to have expelled him- or herself from the Body of Christ, and thus is forbidden from approaching the altar and receiving Christ in the Eucharist. Cavanaugh faults Maritain for insufficiently appreciating “the church’s own character as a *contrast society*, a counter-performance of the body to that of the state,” a “social body,” and indeed “a body *sui generis*.”⁵⁶ It is true that the embodied church receives little emphasis in Maritain’s chief political writings, such as *The Person and the Common Good* (1947) and *Man and the State* (1951), but they are not altogether missing.⁵⁷ Moreover, Maritain details this truth in his later

⁵³ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 116.

⁵⁴ See Maritain, *Things That Are Not Caesar’s*, 44–77.

⁵⁵ It is important to keep in mind Maritain’s close connection with Vatican II. Hittinger compellingly argues that Maritain inspired the Council’s declaration that the “split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age” (*Liberty*, 286).

⁵⁶ Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 180, emphasis in original.

⁵⁷ “For the believer the Church is a supernatural society, both divine and human—the very type of perfect or achieved-in-itself, self-sufficient, and independent society—which unites in itself men as co-citizens of the Kingdom of God and leads them to eternal life, already begun here below; which teaches them the revealed truth received in trust from the Incarnate Word Himself; and which is the very body of which the head is Christ, a body *visible*, by reason of its essence, in its professed creed, its worship, its discipline and its sacraments, and in the refraction of its supernatural

works, particularly *The Peasant of the Garonne* (1967) and *On the Church of Christ* (1973). In the former, Maritain warns against two opposed errors: one which through a deficit of charity and a surplus of moralism, fear, and self-denial would condemn the world as evil, irredeemably corrupt for practical purposes; and the other, a “*kneeling before the world*” which seeks nothing more than to be accepted by and become part of it.⁵⁸ Instead, he would have the church live the Gospel truth that contrasts “the world in its concrete and existential connections” with the church which is “the kingdom of God, already present in our midst . . . at once visible in those who bear the mark of Christ and invisible in those who, without bearing the mark of Christ, share in his grace.” Maritain emphasizes that because “Jesus came not to condemn the world but to save it, the kingdom of God, which is not of the world, is itself growing in the world.”⁵⁹ Cavanaugh considers it of utmost importance that the church not be held on a separate plane from the world, but rather that the two offer competing performances on the same stage, one a Divine Comedy and the other a mundane tragedy.⁶⁰ In this Cavanaugh is echoing Augustine on the two cities—precisely as Maritain had done decades before.⁶¹ In offering the world a new performance of human life, Maritain’s ideal is to become a contemplative “on the roads of the world,” a lofty state only reached through bodily practices such as “asceticism, mortification, or

personality through its human structure and activity” (Maritain, *Man and the State*, 151), emphasis in original.

⁵⁸ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 48, 54, emphasis in original. Maritain extended this line of thought in *On the Church of Christ*: “Those Churchmen who bend the knee before the world, fabricate for it a religion made to measure, and believe themselves dedicated to the social progress and to the happiness of man here on earth, know moreover very badly the world; and the command optimism displayed by them with regard to the future of a civilization which in fact, and for the moment, finds itself in full decadence is nourished by as many illusions as by holy desires” (*On the Church of Christ: The Person of the Church and her Personnel*, Joseph W. Evans [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973], 92).

⁵⁹ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 37, emphasis in original.

⁶⁰ William T. Cavanaugh, “From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space,” *Political Theology* 7, no. 3 (2015): 299–321, doi.org/10.1558/poth.2006.7.3.299.

⁶¹ “The world is the domain *at once* of man, of God, and of the devil. Thus appears the essential ambiguity of the world and of its history; it is a field common to the three. The world is a closed field which belongs to God by right of creation; to the devil by right of conquest, because of sin; to Christ by right of victory over the conqueror, because of the Passion. The task of the Christian in the world is to contest with the devil his domain, to wrest it from him; he must strive to this end, he will succeed in it only in part as long as time will endure. . . . Divided between two opposing ultimate ends, the history of the temporal city leads at one and the same time toward the kingdom of perdition and toward the kingdom of God” (Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 35–36), which in turn echoes a theme of his much earlier work, *True Humanism*.

penance.”⁶² For Maritain equally as for Cavanaugh, ascetical and liturgical practices confirm us in and conform us to the church as our primary membership. For while the state is a body analogously, lacking the kind of full integration which an animate body possesses, the church is not only a true body—the Body of Christ—but even a true person—the Bride of Christ. Maritain would have us take these traditional concepts not as analogies but as archetypes, great mysteries of divine splendor and fundamental truth. Our mundane citizenship, which can be revoked or renounced, is but a faint echo of our membership in the church, which literally makes the Christian a “new creation,” one now bearing “the likeness of the man from heaven.”⁶³ That few of the lay baptized believe this or have even seriously considered it is a great tragedy, “the true and authentic need of our age” to remedy, so that contemplative love may “go out of doors and spread its wings” to reach the four corners of the earth.⁶⁴

The church can only serve as a living, forming soul for the body politic, then, if the laity have already been formed and found their true identity as the Body of Christ. Maritain holds that the Christian’s relation to the world is best understood through spelling out what it means for her to have been born and then born again. She was first “*born of the world*, and in original sin,” and then “by baptism” was born again, “*born of God*.”⁶⁵ This latter birth is second in time but first in importance. From the day of baptism, the Christian is not a member of the world, but of the church. To be in the world but not of it means that the laity do not have two separate vocations, one temporal and the other spiritual, but rather one vocation with a mundane object and a spiritual mode. That is, the object of lay discipleship, “absolutely basic and *necessary for all*,” is simply to enact the daily labors of the life of the world, but to do each thing in the mode of “*the spirit . . . as a Christian*.”⁶⁶ To claim that the spirit of Christ will radiate from the Christian, giving “witness to the Gospel, not by preaching it, but by living it, and by the *manner* in which [s/]he carries out the most banal

⁶² Maritain and Maritain, *Liturgy and Contemplation*, 74; Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 54.

⁶³ Maritain, *On the Church of Christ*, chap. 3.

⁶⁴ Maritain and Maritain, *Liturgy and Contemplation*, 73.

⁶⁵ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 207, emphasis in original. Maritain emphasizes that one is a true member of the church, indeed ontologically one has full personhood precisely because one is a branch from the vine that is the Body of Christ; one is analogously a member of one’s society because man is by nature a political animal; but one is not a member of the world *per se* because the world lacks organic unity (208).

⁶⁶ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 208–210, emphasis in original.

tasks” is precisely to claim that charity, an unearned gift from God, infuses all the virtues and hence all their acts.⁶⁷

For Maritain, one can and must not only rule or philosophize as a Christian; all of life, in his example extending even to having a drink at the pub with one’s friends, is lived as a Christian. This requires not constant preaching but rather constant integrity, which means allowing the Gospel’s radiance to shine through mundane mediums such as a friendly word or even a spontaneous reaction or gesture. This is the straightforward but difficult means to healing the centuries-long cleavage between “the temporal work of the lay Christian and [her] spiritual vocation,” which “for many centuries our Western civilization has suffered from” as among its gravest evils.⁶⁸ Cavanaugh calls for the Christian to offer a counter-performance to the ways of the world; yet this is precisely the result of the transformation in charity of one’s every action, as insisted upon by Maritain. Maritain paraphrases the famous quote from his “old godfather,” Léon Bloy, that “there is only one sadness; it is not to *be a saint*.”⁶⁹ Thus the church offers a soul to the social body: by offering saints who uplift its life.

In response to Cavanaugh’s charge that Maritain undervalues the role of charity in forming the cardinal virtues, consider the conclusion to *The Peasant of the Garonne*. Maritain quotes an entry from his wife Raïssa’s journal, published posthumously, which insists that “what one must first and foremost tell men, and go on telling them, is to love God—to know that he is Love and to trust to the end in his Love.”⁷⁰ The foremost and final word is the love of God, and this applies also, Jacques makes clear earlier in the work, to “those who take charge of guiding [political] parties of Christian inspiration.”⁷¹ Such leaders require a solid formation in doctrine and character in order to fulfill their “mission to transform the world,” a literal transformation so that the world might be informed by “the spirit of Christ and of his

⁶⁷ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 208–210, emphasis in original.

⁶⁸ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 210.

⁶⁹ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 212, emphasis in original. In *Man and the State*, 139–141, Maritain more explicitly relates sanctity to social life in speaking of the “prophetic shock-minorities” who are the people’s “inspired servants.” Although he warns against false prophets and speaks of the need for discernment of spirits, one may wish he wrote in a more expressly theological mode. His full treatment of the question of how much one saint may inspire and elevate the life of a people is offered in considering St. Joan of Arc in *On the Church of Christ*. A fuller exposition of Maritain’s view on the lay life would take into account the way in which the true common good is found in the Kingdom of God, and the autonomy of the political sphere is not full sovereignty but freedom with respect to a subordinate order of creation hierarchically ordered towards life in God.

⁷⁰ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 260.

⁷¹ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 201.

kingdom.”⁷² For “justice without love is inhuman, and love for men and for peoples . . . is itself fragile without theological charity. Without the love of charity, work as we might, we will work *nothing*.”⁷³

This call for charity to inform justice and prudence at first glance sits uneasily with Maritain’s assertion that none of the laity can have “clean hands.” While this claim might seem to imply a compromise with Machiavelli, Maritain’s writings on the laity in context and development in fact are profoundly opposed to any “end justifies the means” view. His suggestion that the laity ought to have dirty hands does not undermine his insistence that intrinsic evils must be avoided. Rather, it comes in the context of explaining his understanding of the relationship of means to ends, which he considers “*the basic problem in political philosophy*.”⁷⁴

Maritain describes a hierarchy of means. The highest actions are “pure spiritual means directed towards eternity” (e.g., prayer and fasting for the conversion of sinners); next are “spiritual means directed towards the material world” (e.g., prayer and fasting for an increase of integral human development); then come temporal means, richer or poorer to the extent that they serve the spiritual order (e.g., spiritual works of mercy taking priority over corporal works).⁷⁵ The point of this gradation of means is to help us identify which means are proportionate to their end, in traditional Thomistic fashion. For example, the right to self-defense includes, in the most dire circumstances, the right to kill one’s aggressor; but a higher material means to be sought when possible would be incapacitating the aggressor, a higher still material means would be nonviolent resistance, and a spiritual means would be the use of one’s dignity to forestall aggression altogether.⁷⁶ The virtuous Christian officer of order will be prepared to kill, but will regard this as a failing in almost every circumstance, and will seek in prudence to elevate his means and reduce his violence wherever possible.⁷⁷

⁷² Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 204.

⁷³ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 204.

⁷⁴ Maritain, *Man and the State*, 54, quoted in Nicholas C. Lund-Molfese, “Maritain’s Contribution to the Development of the Magisterium on Means,” in *Reassessing the Liberal State*.

⁷⁵ Lund-Molfese, “Maritain’s Contribution,” 229.

⁷⁶ Lund-Molfese, “Maritain’s Contribution,” 234–237. For a compelling illustration of this kind of spiritual means defusing aggression before it strikes a blow, see Gichin Funakoshi, “No Weapons: An Important Lesson,” *Karate-Do: My Way of Life* (New York: Kodansha America, 1981), 21–29. Magisterial practitioners of the martial arts often find pacifism to be an aspirational ideal.

⁷⁷ Lund-Molfese, “Maritain’s Contribution,” 237–240. See also Maritain’s appreciation of Mahatma Gandhi in *Man and the State*, 68–71. For an overview, see Gregory M. Reichberg, “Jacques Maritain: Christian Theorist of Non-Violence and Just War,”

Maritain's hierarchy of means can give the impression that in contrasting material means with "pure" spiritual ones, he condemns the material as impure and thereby sinful. To avoid this misunderstanding, Maritain emphasizes the inevitability and necessity of dirty hands, leading to the passages in *True Humanism* to which Cavanaugh objects. What Maritain means by insisting that Christians will not have "clean hands" is absolutely not that they are to commit evil acts expecting good to come. Instead, his point is that they cannot expect to detach themselves from the material world, that they cannot serve as the Body of Christ and leaven of the world if they are not engaged in tilling the soil. Maritain's emphasis on dirty hands is not much different from Pope Francis's insistence that priests be close to the poor, like shepherds living with the smell of the sheep.⁷⁸

CONCLUSION: RETRIEVING MARITAIN WHILE RETAINING CAVANAUGH

Jacques Maritain was no optimist or naïve idealist. He worked on behalf of the Free French during World War II, and believed that the Allies' victory at best bought some time for deep reforms, both of nation-states and the church. He poured substantial efforts into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the founding of UNESCO.⁷⁹ He also served as an inspiration in the lead-up to the Second Vatican Council, with Pope St. Paul VI naming himself "a disciple of Maritain."⁸⁰ While Cavanaugh in *Torture and Eucharist* focused on Maritain's reception in Chile, Maritain also had an extensive impact in Europe.⁸¹ Yet towards the end of his life, in the works which have been the focus of this article, Maritain seemed to

Journal of Military Ethics 16, nos. 3-4 (2017): 220-238, doi.org/10.1080/15027570.2017.1413216.

⁷⁸ Pope Francis, "Chrism Mass Homily," March 28, 2013, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html. There are interesting parallels in Jacques Maritain, "To Exist with the People," in *The Range of Reason* (New York: Scribner, 1952). The comparison falters when it comes to war, but even here, Maritain cautions that "those who claim to be the champions of Order and of the Spirit must serve Order and the Spirit even in the means they employ to defend them" ("Right" and 'Left,'" *Blackfriars* 18, no. 212 [November 1937]: 809, www.jstor.org/stable/43811003).

⁷⁹ Jacques Maritain, "The Goal of UNESCO," *Modern Schoolman* 25, no. 4 (May 1948): 211-223, doi.org/10.5840/schoolman194825436.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Brooke W. Smith, "The Jacques Maritain Controversy in Perspective," *Thought* 50, no. 199 (December 1975): 394, doi.org/10.5840/thought197550434.

⁸¹ See James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). I thank an anonymous reviewer for the reference. For Maritain's impact on Italy in particular, see Mehmet Ciftci, "A Case Study of Catholic Social Thought in Action: Giorgio La Pira, Politician, Jurist, and the Sainly Mayor of Florence," *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* 2, no. 2 (2021): 78-87, www.coursesidekick.com/arts-humanities/3181764.

intuit that his legacy would be ambiguous. One reviewer called *The Peasant of the Garonne* “quite literally a bomb” thrown into the discourse; others felt that the book was “a betrayal of the Council and his own life’s work.”⁸²

It is understandable that in the quarter-century since publishing *Torture and Eucharist*, Cavanaugh has not drawn on Maritain as a resource. Cavanaugh’s work on politics and economics is instead perhaps best summed up by Pope Francis’s metaphor of the church as “field hospital”: a site on the battlefield yet ordered towards healing, not fighting; a physical presence that makes an immediate difference for those who encounter it; a shelter open to any in need, but a waystation more than an entrenchment. While calling for a profound change in the political work of Christians, Cavanaugh does not offer a systematic plan of action, endorsing instead the personalist revolution of Dorothy Day and the call for improvisation made by Samuel Wells.⁸³ He would have Christians regain an Augustinian politics, which rather than empires prefers small political units in peaceable concord with their neighbors, and above all emphasizes the Christian’s primary status as pilgrim towards the City of God who has renounced her birthright citizenship in the City of Man.⁸⁴ He thus makes the case for pacifism and “fugitive democracy,” as well as “working alongside other people of good will from other faiths and none” while still “knit[ting] together our spiritual lives with our material lives.”⁸⁵

Cavanaugh’s perspective offers essential insights which must be taken up by theologians who consider themselves Thomists. He offers a third way, an escape from the false dilemma which characterizes too much Christian political discourse, especially popular discussion of political theology—a dilemma which suggests that the only alternative to (mal)formation by the sovereign state and subsequent ‘kneeling before the world’ is the imperative to conquer the world through a renewed integralism or ‘political Catholicism.’⁸⁶ These are not mere

⁸² Quoted in Smith, “The Maritain Controversy,” 381.

⁸³ Respectively, in Cavanaugh, “We Are to Blame for the War’: Dorothy Day on Violence and Guilt,” in *Field Hospital*, 249–263; and Cavanaugh, “From One City,” 317. Pointing this out is not meant as a criticism. It is a sign of prudence and humility, not an intellectual failing, when Cavanaugh elsewhere writes “I am not in the business of setting forth models for a new global order. I tend to think such global models are inherently problematic” (“If You Render Unto God What Is God’s, What Is Left for Caesar?,” in Daniel Philpott and Ryan T. Anderson, eds., *A Liberalism Safe for Catholicism?: Perspectives from The Review of Politics* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017], 572).

⁸⁴ Cavanaugh, *Field Hospital*, 153.

⁸⁵ Cavanaugh, *Field Hospital*, 54, 155.

⁸⁶ Pink, “Jacques Maritain,” argues that since history has proven Maritain a failure, the only faithful position is integralism. By contrast, a Thomistic perspective harmonious with Cavanaugh’s is offered in Andrew Willard Jones, “The End of

ivory-tower disputes. Misreading Maritain had a lethal impact in Chile, and Cavanaugh is right to generalize the point by claiming that Christian nationalism inevitably involves a “collective narcissism” which requires “the identification of God with the ‘we’ [in] a blatant form of idolatry.”⁸⁷ Moreover, when integralism leaves blue-sky theorizing and moves towards concrete plans for a common-good constitutionalism—with the common good defined by a small minority and asserted through force if necessary—the only paths forward seem to lead in the same direction as Chile’s junta.⁸⁸

Yet, having now gained sufficient distance from Maritain to understand the deep harm caused by his understatement of the problem of sovereignty, we can also retrieve insight from the old peasant, who both foresaw and lived through the horrors of last century’s polarization. In a 1937 essay, Maritain decried political extremism, writing that “to array hate against hate is to head for catastrophe and the utter destruction of all political life. Neither impatience nor violence—no matter under what provocation—can ever work the good of society or nation.”⁸⁹ What was necessary then and is necessary now is to transcend the dichotomy of Right and Left altogether. One must be a “true conservative” with reverence for the life handed on by tradition, and yet also look to the “needs of the future” through a commitment to innovation and “the most radical of revolutions” which can only come about through “the spirit of Faith in God.”⁹⁰ In his emphasis that the laity must be formed liturgically and spiritually into the Body of Christ, so that they might be salt, light, and leaven to the world; in his careful distinctions among spiritual and material means, so that prudence might find the most apt means to attain a just and good end; and more generally, in his emphasis upon the both/and nature of the person in relationship to the common good as the church’s alternative to the zero-sum mindset of both totalitarian collectivism and technocratic individualism,⁹¹ Jacques Maritain continues to offer vital insights to contemporary theologians. Those

Sovereignty: An Essay in Christian Postliberalism,” *Communio* 45 (Fall-Winter 2018): 408–456, www.communio-icr.com/files/45.3-4_Jones_WEB.pdf.

⁸⁷ William T. Cavanaugh, “The Splendid Idolatry of Nationalism,” *Pro Publico Bono – Public Administration* 9, no. 2 (2021): 4–25, doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197679043.003.0007.

⁸⁸ To which the integralist might offer a *tu quoque*: in the words of President Obama, “we tortured some folks,” but “it’s important for us not to feel too sanctimonious in retrospect about the tough job that those folks [i.e., the torturers] had” (Roberta Rampton and Steve Holland, “Obama Says that After 9/11, ‘We Tortured Some Folks,’” *Reuters* [August 1, 2014]).

⁸⁹ Maritain, “‘Right’ and ‘Left,’” 808.

⁹⁰ Maritain, “‘Right’ and ‘Left,’” 809.

⁹¹ Although not central to this essay, Maritain’s most enduring work is almost surely to be *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006 [1946]).

who read him will find that the last lines of his last book, published in 1973, speak with a prophetic humility: “What I have tried to furnish here is the last testimony of an old solitary. . . . I have an idea that today it will displease many. But who knows? In fifty years, one will find perhaps that all of this has been very poorly said, but that after all, it was not so stupid.”⁹² **M**

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⁹² Maritain, *On the Church of Christ*, 241.