

Revisiting Maritain in the Present Context— A Response to Gilbrian Stoy, Travis Knoll, and Brian Boyd

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Abstract: In this article, William Cavanaugh responds to Brian Boyd's critique of Cavanaugh's use of Jacques Maritain's work in Cavanaugh's book *Torture and Eucharist*. The article reassesses Maritain's views on the state, the church, and the laity in light of Boyd's analysis, which accepts Cavanaugh's critique of Maritain on the state but rebuts aspects of Cavanaugh's critique of Maritain's views on the church and the laity. Cavanaugh accepts some of Boyd's rebuttals, such as his defense of Maritain's views on the formation of laity and the temporal authority of bishops, but Cavanaugh pushes back on others, such as Maritain's views on the relationship of ends to means and eternity to time. After discussing the differences among Maritain's context, the context of Pinochet's Chile, and the present context of the church in Latin America and Europe, Cavanaugh argues for a different form of Christian politics that rises from the grassroots rather than tries to sway elites.

One of my prized possessions is a framed photo of Jacques Maritain given me by Wallace Fowlie, the late and great professor of French literature at Duke University. Maritain had been Fowlie's sponsor when he entered the Catholic Church. The photo is a copy of an official portrait taken, I think, by John Howard Griffin in Maritain's later years. Maritain is seated, his hand emerging from the shadows like a ghostly apparition, gripping a cane he uses to steady himself. His facial expression is dour and brooding, a shock of white hair dipping down toward his eyes. When Fowlie heard I was working on Maritain as part of my doctoral dissertation at Duke, he summoned me for lunch, regaled me with stories of his correspondence with Jim Morrison of the Doors, and gave me the portrait of Maritain to watch over me as I wrote. I often felt the old master looking down on me disapprovingly as I critiqued his work. While critical, I tried to be fair, recognizing Maritain's holiness and acknowledging that the misuse of Maritain in Chile was a matter of unintended consequences in a context different from the one in which Maritain wrote. Nevertheless, I wish I had succeeded in

being as charitable to Maritain as Brian Boyd has been to me in his response to the book my dissertation became.

I was asked to respond to Boyd's article, and my response follows. Just before this issue of the journal went to press, I was made aware that Travis Knoll and Gil Stoy had also contributed articles that address my critique of Maritain. Without the time to gracefully shoehorn responses to Knoll and Stoy into my response to Boyd, I have nevertheless briefly addressed both Knoll¹ and Stoy² in footnotes.

¹ I learned a lot from Travis Knoll's analysis of Maritain's influence in Argentina and Brazil. I have no doubt that most of Maritain's followers in those two countries were opposed to right-wing Catholic politics and military dictatorships. I am not sure, however, that Knoll has accurately rendered my criticisms of Maritain. Knoll believes I "see Maritain's philosophy as apolitical or undergirding Chilean neoliberal right-wing governance," and pushes back against my supposed "contention that a serious reading of [Maritain's] works would encourage silence in the face of authoritarian atrocities, or even buttress them." Furthermore, "Cavanaugh does not claim Pinochet's right-hand officials and reticent church officials misread Maritain." In my book, however, I write of the junta's ideologues: "Certainly they are a corruption of Maritain's intentions. I do not wish to argue that New Christendom thought is responsible for the rise of the Pinochet regime. What I want to argue is rather that this type of ecclesiology has sapped the Church's ability to resist regimes such as that of General Pinochet" (*Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1998], 202). The problem with Maritain's ecclesiology is not that his church is apolitical or stays silent on state-sponsored atrocities; but that it is disembodied, serving only to try to influence the temporal via "counsels" or "inspiration" or "animation." Maritain's admonition to act as Christians, but not as Christians as such, in the temporal realm, mutes Christian social action and filters it through individuals, not the church as a body. When combined with a failure to fully appreciate the power and ambition of modern states, I think Maritain's ecclesiology falls short, despite his intentions, of an embodied practice of resistance to the powers and principalities. I have no doubt that Christian Democrats in many countries have been a force for good and opposed tyranny. As I explain in my response to Boyd, however, the Christian faith of the first generation of Christian Democrats has not been replicated in succeeding ones. What is needed is a more direct embodiment of the Gospel in facing the issues of the day.

² I think that Gil Stoy's critique of Maritain on temporal ends is very interesting. Stoy shows that Maritain deviates from Thomas Aquinas in describing the end of the temporal plane as "ultimate," though it is still subordinate to the spiritual end. Making the temporal common good ultimate causes the state to reach for transcendence to anchor it. For Stoy, the ambition of the state for hegemony over both body and soul I criticize is thus embedded in Maritain's philosophy. But Stoy thinks my attempt to overcome this problem in Maritain is also problematic. "By claiming that the supernatural virtues not only elevate human nature, but 'transform' the acquired virtues and direct them towards their 'proper' ends, Cavanaugh erases any possibility of natural human goods *qua* nature. Human nature is not merely elevated, but destroyed and replaced by something new when grace introduces a new end." I don't see how my language of grace transforming nature necessarily entails grace destroying nature. In my brief treatment of Maritain's use of Aquinas, I attempt nothing more than to side with Henri de Lubac's critique of neo-scholastic distortions of Thomas and his view of the permeation of nature by grace without thereby

I am hoping that my response to Boyd is also in some ways a response to Knoll and Stoy, if only insofar as it indicates how my thinking on Maritain and the church has evolved. I will hope to continue the conversation with Knoll and Stoy at another time or in another venue.

I am genuinely grateful to Boyd for his careful and sympathetic reading of my critique and Maritain's writings twenty-five years after *Torture and Eucharist* was published. It has given me an opportunity to think about how I and Chile have changed in the years since I lived there. The story I told in the book was overall a positive one for the Catholic Church in Chile, which had summoned its resources to become a center of resistance to the military dictatorship. Since the end of the Pinochet regime, however, the Catholic Church in Chile has seemingly lost its way, pulling back from social involvement and suffering the necessary consequences of its failure to curb sexual abuse by priests. In the *estallido social* (social outburst) that rocked Chile in 2019–2020, the Catholic Church was a target, not a catalyst, of the protests; several churches were looted and burned. Membership in the Catholic Church has fallen precipitously in Chile in the last three decades, and the same can be said of other countries across Europe and Latin America. In light of this unfolding situation, the task of reassessing Maritain's work is about more than the reputation of a scholar who died fifty years ago. It is rather about constructing practical ecclesiologies and political theologies that can help the church live faithfully in contexts increasingly unmoored from their Christian past.

In responding to Boyd's article, therefore, I will address both text and context. I will respond to Boyd's analysis of Maritain's writings in each of the three areas of critique he identifies in my book. I will also make comments about the French context in which Maritain wrote and the Chilean context into which his writings were received, and relate both to the broader needs of the church today for a truly Gospel-based theory and practice of the political.

STATE

destroying nature. De Lubac sees the interpenetration of the natural and supernatural in Thomas, which early modern Dominican commentators like Cajetan had separated. Stoy appears to think he is disagreeing with me and de Lubac in positing "pure nature" as a hypothetical state, but this was in fact de Lubac's own position. He thought Aquinas entertained "pure nature" as a hypothetical, but Cajetan and others turned it into an actuality. See Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Herder & Herder, 1967), 80–81, 94. When I write, "De Lubac showed that the Dominicans' understanding of a hypothetical state of 'pure nature' and the resultant dual finality of human nature was nowhere to be found in Thomas" (*Torture and Eucharist*, 184), I mean that Aquinas thought *natura pura* was only hypothetical, and the way the early modern Dominicans understood it was not how Aquinas did.

Of the three main criticisms Boyd identifies in the fourth chapter of my book—of Maritain’s views of the Church, the laity, and the state—Boyd concedes the last one and contests the other two. Maritain’s view of the state, Boyd agrees, was insufficiently critical. Assigning to the state the sovereignty that belongs to God alone was not an historical accident but a consequence of the centralization of power that is part of the basic logic of modern states. Maritain tried to balance the necessary power of the state with an emphasis on subsidiarity, a central theme of Catholic social thought. The passage Boyd quotes about the “organic City” ruled not by a bureaucratic machine but by “men” is in fact a quote not from me but from Maritain’s *Freedom in the Modern World*, which I quote in *Torture and Eucharist*.³ The principle of subsidiarity is meant to delegate a task to the lowest level of authority capable of handling it, thus preferring local control and decentralization whenever possible. The key problem with subsidiarity is the question of who does the delegating; who decides at which level tasks will be handled? The principle of state sovereignty ensures that the state itself decides and, as Boyd notes, bureaucracies are not usually very good at relinquishing their own prerogatives to those outside their control.⁴ Maritain was unable fully to appreciate this essential conflict between the state and subsidiarity.

As Boyd points out, Maritain knew that the civil religion or secular faith a modern state requires was unstable, and it would either evolve toward a Christian-inspired civilization or devolve toward idolatry. He expressed his hope for the former path in his *Man and the State*, published in 1951. Maritain can be forgiven, says Boyd, for allowing his postwar optimism and confidence in the *Pax Americana* to cloud his judgment: “The use of American civil religion to turn the nation itself into an idol had not yet been made clear.” I am not sure, however, what could be clearer evidence of idolatry than the detonation of a nuclear weapon under the code name “Trinity” in July of 1945 and the subsequent use of the same type of weapon to obliterate tens of thousands of civilians a few weeks later. Nagasaki was the center of Catholicism in Japan; the American crew that dropped the bomb used the spires of Immaculate Conception cathedral as a landmark.⁵ Boyd

³ In Boyd’s article, the quote comes after “as Cavanaugh explains” and the footnote simply cites *Torture and Eucharist*, without making clear that the quote is Maritain’s, not mine.

⁴ I deal with these matters in much greater detail in my chapter “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), 220–245.

⁵ The death rate from leukemia in Hiroshima and Nagasaki peaked between four and six years after the bombings, when *Man and the State* was published. Leukemia was

is right not to cast stones at Maritain for his hopefulness. The important and broader question is why Christians on the whole have been reluctant to name the idolatry of various kinds of state violence. Boyd acknowledges in his footnote to the above comment that the idolatry of American civil religion is still not clear to the majority of Americans, which includes Christians. Maritain's confidence in the evolution of American civil religion was based on the conviction that places like America and Chile are already Christian, a conviction increasingly difficult to maintain today. But even among practicing Christians, the church has not been clear on the ambivalence of loyalty to nation-states that claim an ever-more-perfect monopoly on power and violence.⁶ This failure is why I find Maritain's comments not only on the state, but on the church, inadequate.

CHURCH AND LAITY

This brings us to Boyd's defense of Maritain's thought on the church and the laity. Boyd is right, of course, that Maritain's shortcomings do not mean there is nothing of worth in his thought for the contemporary theologian. Boyd cites a passage in *Liturgy and Contemplation* (1960) in which Maritain seeks to root "social justice" and authentic social life, as I do, in participation in the liturgy. For Maritain, thus belonging to the "Mystical Body" should be the Christian's primary identity. Mystical Body is Maritain's favored image for the church, including in his later works.⁷ In the fifth chapter of my book, I do a genealogy of the term "Mystical Body," following Henri de Lubac, and show how the shift in terminology from the church as *corpus verum* to the church as *corpus mysticum* often accompanied a certain disincarnation of the church. According to de Lubac, the shift occurred around the twelfth century as the gap widened between the visible and invisible church, the church as institution and as spiritual reality. De Lubac went on to criticize the twentieth-century rage for Mystical Body theology, worrying that the church as Mystical Body was not a real social body, but hovered above

the most deadly long-term effect of radiation from the bombs, and children were the population most severely affected. See Dan Listwa, "Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Long-Term Health Effects," Columbia University Center for Nuclear Studies, August 9, 2012, k1project.columbia.edu/news/hiroshima-and-nagasaki.

⁶ In a footnote, Boyd wonders how I would apply my critique of sacrifice in "new good wars" to the situation in Ukraine. I have in fact published an article recently on that very topic. See "No War is Good," *Commonweal* 150, no. 5 (May 2023): 28–30.

⁷ See for example, Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time*, trans. Michael Cuddihy (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), 176–83.

such bodies.⁸ The popularity of Mystical Body theology culminated in Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, published in 1943 in the middle of World War II. Pius XII wanted to provide hope for Christian unity above the fray, but the earthly reality was that belonging to the Mystical Body of Christ did not prevent Christians from slaughtering one another. The Body of Christ had been overly spiritualized; one could recognize the spiritual unity of Christians in the church precisely when they were trying to blow each others' limbs off.

Merely using the term "Mystical Body" for the church does not suffice to show that Maritain's church is disincarnated. Dorothy Day used the term, but rather than seeing the church as hovering over the war, she thought belonging to the same Body of Christ demanded that Christians refuse to kill one another. The key question is how body language for the church shakes out in social and political practice. Boyd acknowledges that "the embodied church receives little emphasis in Maritain's chief political writings," but points to language in Maritain's later works *The Peasant of the Garonne* (1966) and *On the Church of Christ* (1973) that emphasize the concrete temporal effects of the church on earth. Though these works were too late to have much effect in pre-Pinochet Chile, I appreciate Boyd's recovery of Maritain's mature ecclesiology. I recognize that Maritain was deeply concerned with the formation of the Christian in the church, especially by its liturgy; that Maritain had a profound sense of the action of the living Christ in the lives of Christians; that he wanted Christians' membership in the church to be their primary loyalty; that he wanted Christians to help witness to the Kingdom of God on earth, already present though always incomplete; that the temporal vocation of the Christian, though not the same as her spiritual one, was always and in everything animated by it; and that the church should neither shun the world nor kneel before it. Maritain certainly cannot be accused of being apolitical or attempting to derive politics from secular sources. At the same time, he was rightly trying to free the church from the entanglement of clerics with political power. I can see why Christians engaged in politics and business were excited by his call to overcome the separation between their temporal and spiritual vocations without asking the church to rule the world. None of this is discontinuous with the earlier Maritain—in discussing the church's role in politics in *Peasant of the Garonne*, he quotes extensively from his *Letter on Independence* from thirty years prior.

⁸ I lay out this argument in detail in chapter five of *Torture and Eucharist*. Those interested in de Lubac's thought can follow the footnotes there, most especially to his works *Corpus Mysticum* and *The Splendor of the Church*.

And yet there remains ambiguity in Maritain's thought represented by his declaration in that same section of *Peasant of the Garonne* that "I see in the Western world no more than three revolutionaries worthy of the name—Eduardo Frei in Chile, Saul Alinsky in America, . . . and myself in France."⁹ But Frei and Alinsky are very different figures. Frei was a devout Catholic and president of Chile, representing the Christian Democratic party, from 1964 to 1970. Alinsky was a pioneering community organizer, an agnostic who wrote *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) and *Rules for Radicals* (1971). Frei was a reformist, not a radical. Gustavo Gutiérrez wrote in 1971 that the followers of Maritain in Latin America had gone since the 1930s from the vanguard to being defenders of the status quo.¹⁰ To them, the structures of the world—the state and market—seemed given; Christians were to animate, shine the radiance of the Gospel within them, but were not called to change them fundamentally. Alinsky, on the other hand, wanted to change the world from the bottom up. He eschewed party politics, and instead focused on organizing local communities to change economic and political structures that kept them mired in poverty and exclusion. Alinsky began his career by working with local Catholic churches and the Archdiocese to create the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, which would challenge the meatpacking industry in Chicago. He would go on to found the Industrial Areas Foundation with Bishop Bernard Sheil, and worked with other grassroots organizations to reclaim the social capital of poor people against the power of corporations and the exclusionary—often racist—politics of the Democratic Party machine in Chicago.¹¹

There remains, it seems to me, an unresolved tension between Maritain's two favorite "revolutionaries" (besides himself). Maritain's ecclesiology most often favors Frei. As Boyd writes, even for the late Maritain "the church offers a soul to the social body: by offering saints who uplift its life." The church is still the soul of another body, and the spiritual enters the social body by way of influential individual Christians. The social body is something the church forms individuals to join, and once there, they allow "the Gospel's radiance to shine through mundane mediums such as 'a simple brotherly word' or 'the spontaneous manner of reacting to an event.'" Well-formed Christians work for corporations and join political parties in order to transform the world.

⁹ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 23; the ellipsis is in the original.

¹⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, revised ed., trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 36–41.

¹¹ Maritain maintained a lively correspondence with Alinsky. See Bernard E. Doering, ed., *The Philosopher and the Provocateur: The Correspondence of Jacques Maritain and Saul Alinsky* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

They are *helped* in this battle by the counsels they receive from the Church, and without which they could do no good; and they can even be *helped* in that respect by the Church in another fashion, in particular cases, when her ministers, facing an especially serious situation, judge it their duty to raise their voices and to intervene in the temporal order by a word of truth, giving witness to divine precepts. In any case, for the Church it is always only a question of helping the world to resolve its problems, not resolving them for it.¹²

Alinsky's radical democracy, on the other hand, sees the church not as well-formed individuals working in the system to achieve top-down change, but as communal bodies organizing at the grassroots to transform society from the bottom up by creating spaces of genuine economic justice and participation. This kind of church as body was able to resist the Pinochet regime in Chile; this is the story I tell in chapters five and six of *Torture and Eucharist*.

If Maritain is to be useful for the church going forward in a world where states and corporations together continue to centralize power, I would hope for a little more of the critical edge Alinsky brings. In *Peasant of the Garonne*, Maritain rightly warns against the Promethean tendencies of Marx and Teilhard, which would make humans gods in trying to divinize the world. But Maritain does not critique the idolatry of the state and market to which people are also sacrificed. In short, if Maritain's view of the state is insufficiently critical, as Boyd concedes, then his view of the church as individuals working within the state to animate it also is insufficiently critical. Others may disagree, but I would have liked his friendship with Alinsky to have penetrated his political thought and ecclesiology more deeply.

A more critical attitude to state violence would have helped in the case of Chile once the military took control. Boyd is right that Maritain recognizes the right of bishops to use their authority in the temporal realm when eternal salvation is at stake. Maritain's quote from Cajetan that Boyd cites is sufficient to refute my overstated critique of Maritain, for whom the power of the spiritual in the temporal is not always that of mere counsels. The Chilean Bishops' Conference did eventually issue a blanket order of excommunication for anyone participating in torture. The problem was not with the bishops but with the soldiers and secret police, most of them Catholics, who planned and facilitated and carried out the torture. The efficacy of a "word of truth" in the temporal sphere, as the block quote above puts it, depends in this case on well-formed soldiers who would recognize the bishops' moral authority. The problem is that the soldiers were trained to regard torture as a matter of state security and not of eternal salvation; the

¹² Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 205, emphasis in original.

soldiers were quite capable of a complete separation of the temporal from the spiritual when the security of the state was at stake. This complete separation is the fault of those elements of the church that regard the state's monopoly on violence as fully compatible with Christianity and loyalty to the nation-state simply as part of a Christian's duty. This wider problem with Christian formation is not Maritain's fault, but it does point to the need for a more critical attitude toward the state and its equation of security with violence.

With regard to the role of charity in the lives of individual laypeople, I accept Boyd's defense of the later Maritain against my charge that he denies direct access of the theological virtues to the temporal. Boyd points to passages in *Peasant of the Garonne* in which Maritain clearly states that love transforms justice, and does not merely provide an inchoate motivation for the Christian in the world. Maritain here does indeed want the love of God to have a transformative effect on every action the Christian takes. I would add that, in the same book, Maritain goes some way toward specifying the actual contours of love through the contemplative encounter with Jesus, whom we meet in the poor, sick, imprisoned, and so on.¹³ My complaint that Maritain writes mostly about "the spiritual" and not about the concrete shape of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection is answered here.

I am less ready to concede Boyd's rebuttal to my critique of Maritain on the relationship of ends to means and eternity to time. Boyd assimilates Maritain's passages on the necessity of dirty hands to Pope Francis's "insistence that priests should be close to the poor, like shepherds living with the smell of the sheep." Indeed, Pope Francis has recently used the metaphor of dirty hands himself, telling a group gathered at a center for the poor, elderly, and disabled in Lisbon that "there is no such thing as an abstract love, it doesn't exist," and that real love "gets its hands dirty" in the concrete circumstances of people's lives.¹⁴ But when Maritain uses the metaphor, he is talking explicitly about the Christian use of violence. He writes

It is clear that force and, generally speaking, what I have called the carnal means of war are not intrinsically bad, because they can be just. Theologians and moralists explain to us on what conditions these are just, and thereby they perform a work of mercy, enabling us to live on this earth. They do not take the lead, it is not their business to open new doors to violence; but once these doors are open, they justify what can be done, and give us light in order to advance into the dark defiles

¹³ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 234–239.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, quoted in "Impromptu Pope Says Real Love 'Gets its Hands Dirty,'" *Crux*, August 4, 2023, cruxnow.com/world-youth-day-lisbon/2023/08/impromptu-pope-says-real-love-gets-its-hands-dirty.

of history. . . . The worst anguish for the Christian is precisely to know that there can be justice in employing horrible means.¹⁵

The passage about staining our fingers without staining our hearts follows. For Francis, the metaphor calls us to the corporal works of mercy, summoning the relatively privileged to enter into the messiness and chaos of the lives of the marginalized. Dirty hands means a descent from power to love. For Maritain, by contrast, the metaphor is used to justify the necessary violence of those who exercise power for the common good. What Maritain calls “a work of mercy” is performed by moral theologians who “justify what can be done” once “new doors to violence” are opened. This must be one of the spiritual works of mercy which, as Boyd writes, outrank the corporal works of mercy in Maritain’s thought.

I fully recognize that Maritain forbids doing intrinsically evil acts and does not think the end justifies any and all means. The corporal works of mercy are lower on Maritain’s hierarchy of means than they are on Francis’s, but I have no doubt that Maritain prefers nonviolent to violent means and less to more violence. For Maritain, however, the hierarchy of means for the state is different than it is for the individual. Maritain differentiates “individual ethics” from “political ethics” in the following passage from *Man and the State* I quote in my book:

For human life has two ultimate ends, the one subordinate to the other: an ultimate end *in a given order*, which is the terrestrial common good, or the *bonum vitae civilis*; and an *absolute* ultimate end, which is the transcendent, eternal common good. And individual ethics takes into account the subordinate ultimate end, but *directly aims* at the absolute ultimate one; whereas political ethics takes into account the absolute ultimate end, but its *direct aim* is the subordinate ultimate end, the good of the rational nature in its temporal achievement. Hence a specific difference of perspective between those two branches of Ethics.

Thus it is that many patterns of conduct of the body politic, which the pessimists of Machiavellianism turn to the advantage of political amorality—such as the use by the State of coercive force (even of means of war in case of absolute necessity against an unjust aggressor), the use of intelligence services and methods which should never corrupt people but cannot help utilizing corrupt people, the use of police methods which should never violate the human rights of people but cannot help being rough with them, a lot of selfishness and self-assertion which would be blamed in individuals, a permanent distrust and suspicion, a cleverness not necessarily mischievous but yet not candid with regard to the other States, or the toleration of certain evil deeds by the law, the recognition of the principle of the lesser evil and the recognition of the *fait accompli* (the so-called “statute of limitations”) which permits the retention of gains ill-gotten long ago, because new human ties and vital relationships

¹⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968), 246–248.

have infused them with new-born rights—all of these things are in reality ethically grounded.

The fear of soiling ourselves by entering the context of history is not virtue, but a way of escaping virtue.¹⁶

The hierarchy of means in political ethics demands that we prefer “the lesser evil.” In history, we nevertheless cannot avoid “soiling ourselves”; the intelligence services “cannot help utilizing corrupt people,” and the police “cannot help being rough.” This is a far cry from what Pope Francis means by “dirty hands,” which is the unavoidable consequence of incarnated love that pours itself out for and with the powerless.

For Maritain, the drama of dirty hands takes place because there is a tragic element to time. In *Integral Humanism*, he emphasizes that the fullness of the Kingdom of God is “outside time,”¹⁷ and writes that those engaged in the building of culture “are engaged in time and in the vicissitudes of time. Moreover, it can be said that none of them has clean hands.”¹⁸ In *Peasant of the Garonne*, as Boyd points out, he puts more emphasis on the Kingdom of God as already present in the world, but still the Gospel “forbids us to mix up the orders of finality by imagining that the goal of the temporal mission of the Christian is the coming of the kingdom of God on earth.”¹⁹ Maritain is rightly trying to emphasize that God, not we, brings the Kingdom, but the Kingdom will come in fullness only when God brings an end to time.²⁰ By way of contrast, Pope Francis has a more positive view of time; he juxtaposes it not with eternity but space, as in his oft-repeated phrase “Time is always much greater than space.”²¹ In *Evangelii Gaudium* he writes “One of the faults which we occasionally observe in sociopolitical activity is that spaces and power are preferred to time and processes. Giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion; it is to crystallize processes and presume to hold them back. Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces.”²²

¹⁶ Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 62–63.

¹⁷ Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 101.

¹⁸ Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 98.

¹⁹ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 203.

²⁰ “The coming of the kingdom would not, in that case, be a simple interruption of a becoming with no final term, it would be rather an *eruption* by which the divine glory would interrupt the earthly becoming, but in order to lead it, through a miraculous begetting, to that final term toward which it is tending with no power to reach it: no longer natural happiness, but supernatural beatitude” (Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 203).

²¹ Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, no. 57. See also Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 178.

²² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 223.

Francis agrees that we cannot achieve perfection in time through human effort. But his emphasis is on time not as a fallen condition but an opportunity to let grace unfold. Rather than dominating spaces, for which coercive power is required, we are called to initiate processes of accompaniment lower on the social scale. Appreciating time also means giving up obsession with short-term results, but Francis is interested not only with the quantity but also the quality of time. He wants Christians to look in hope to the Kingdom of God as a model for the present, unconstrained by what the world says is possible. I don't think Maritain would disagree, but a lot depends on the differing contexts for which Maritain and Francis are writing; Maritain seems to be writing for Christians in positions of power, whereas Francis is writing for a church he would like to seek the margins.

PAST AND PRESENT

Jacques Maritain was a significant figure in Catholic Europe and Latin America in the twentieth century because he helped the church navigate the end of Christendom. He tried to envision a Catholic political practice that would neither be nostalgic for its former direct access to state power nor simply succumb to the privatization of the faith and leave the secular world unchallenged by the Gospel. In France, the former tendency was represented by *Action Française*, the latter by those Catholics who so separated the natural from the supernatural—as was typical of neoscholastic thought—that they could not see the contradiction between their faith and support for the Vichy regime. Maritain envisioned cadres of well-formed lay Christians acting in public as Christians—but not “as Christians as such”²³—to make a better world in concert with non-Christians.

The results were mixed. In Europe, Christian Democrats inspired by Maritain led the rebuilding of Europe after World War II, helping to establish welfare states, the European Union, and NATO. Over time, Christian Democratic parties in Europe have drifted rightward; they are now the main conservative party in countries such as Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. In Latin America, Gutiérrez had noted the same rightward drift by the 1970s. Maritain's distinction of planes “amounted to a timid and basically ambiguous attempt.”²⁴ It bred moderates, children of the elites with an increasing tendency toward bourgeois developmentalism. In Chile, Christian Democrats have tended to be center-left; Frei and friends founded the Christian

²³ “On the plane of the temporal, I do not act *as a Christian as such*, but I should act *as Christian*, engaging only myself, not the Church, but engaging my whole self” (Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 294).

²⁴ Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 36.

Democratic party and, once elected president, Frei's administration launched an ambitious series of social programs aimed at alleviating poverty. In other Latin American countries, like El Salvador and Mexico, Christian Democrats have been right wing parties. In other countries, Maritain had other followers who were not Christian Democrats and took hard-right stances. In Chile, Jaime Guzmán, chief ideologue of the Pinochet regime, was a disciple of Maritain, and El Maestro's vocabulary leaps off every page of the Declaration of Principles Guzmán wrote for the military junta shortly after it assumed power: the individual's eternal end and transcendence over the social body, the differentiation of the political from the social, the responsibility of the state for the common good, the principle of subsidiarity, and more.²⁵ Frei himself supported the coup,²⁶ though he would later become a critic of the Pinochet regime.

Maritain, of course, would have hated the military regime in Chile. He anticipated that Christians in politics would take a range of different positions, but the Pinochet regime was clearly beyond the pale. There is no direct line from Maritain to Pinochet; that was never my point, as Boyd acknowledges. I am, however, interested in what lessons we can learn for the continued political relevance of the Gospel from the uses and misuses of Maritain's thought in Chile and elsewhere. The variety of positions associated with Maritain's followers indicates to me that the political relevance of the Gospel remains underspecified in Maritain's thought. The personal piety of the original cadres of Christian Democrats was not enough to ensure that the Gospel mandates to love enemies and embrace the poor were actually put into practice.

Gutiérrez was not the only one who thought so. Giuseppe Dossetti in Italy left the Christian Democratic party in the 1950s over its embrace of NATO and resistance to land reform, and instead became an advocate for what he called the "Gospel *sine glossa*": as Joseph Komonchak puts it, "He began to work for a renewal of the Church that might be able to promote a badly needed different form of politics."²⁷ In his interventions at Vatican II, Dossetti advocated for a

²⁵ Junta Militar de Gobierno, *Declaración de Principios del Gobierno de Chile*, www.archivochile.com/Dictadura_militar/doc_jm_gob_pino8/DMdocjm0005.pdf.

²⁶ He expressed his support in November 1973 in a letter to Mariano Rumor, the head of the worldwide Christian Democratic Union. See "Carta a Mariano Rumor, Presidente de la Union Mundial de la Democracia Cristiana," www.memoriachilena.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0023241.pdf.

²⁷ Joseph Komonchak, "Augustine, Aquinas, or the Gospel *sine glossa*?: Divisions over *Gaudium et Spes*," in Austen Ivereigh, ed., *Unfinished Journey: The Church 40 Years after Vatican II: Essays for John Wilkins* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 106. For a fuller account, see my article "Ecclesial Ethics and the Gospel *Sine Glossa*: Sacramental Politics and the Love of the World," *Modern Theology* 36, no. 3 (July 2020): 501–523.

church that would embrace the active nonviolence of Jesus rather than issue bland calls for peace while accepting the compromises necessary for statecraft. He wanted a word from the council that would be “evangelical, which is the only discourse that can respond today to the anxiety of the peoples and that, for all its apparent unlikelihood, is the only true one, the only one that can banish war and make peace, not by human calculation but by the creative force of the Word of God.”²⁸ Dossetti was disappointed with *Gaudium et Spes* for its acceptance of Just War and the possession of nuclear weapons for deterrence. The problem, according to Dossetti, is that the church did not know how to speak the Gospel into the world of politics. Instead, *Gaudium et Spes* offered a “rational sociology that allows the presentation of an objective discourse to all men, that all men should accept,” leaving only “islands of a supernatural anthropology.”²⁹ And so “Catholics acted like accomplices”³⁰ to the state and its machines of war.

Maritain thought he could rely on lay Christians, well-formed in the Gospel, to take the spirit of the Gospel into the political realm without having to actually speak the Gospel directly in a post-Christendom world. They would act as Christians, but not as Christians as such. The problem, I continue to think, is that—like an immigrant language that eventually dies in the second or third generation if not spoken outside the home—the Gospel will fade if not spoken in public. The years since Maritain’s death seem to have borne this out; Christians went out to change the world and the world changed them instead. The piety of the first generation of Christian Democrats has not been replicated by succeeding generations. The Church in Europe and Latin America is shrinking for many reasons, but one is, I think, that it has been reluctant to enact the Gospel directly in addressing the problems of the day. Politics is understood solely as statecraft, and the compromises necessary to gain and keep power have either rendered the Gospel irrelevant or, worse, identified the Gospel with a narrow range of conservative positions on sexual and gender issues right-wing Catholics hope the state will coercively enforce.

In the current situation, I think the “badly needed different form of politics” of which Komonchak has written will not consist of getting more Christians into office and on the judiciary so that the Christian

²⁸ Giuseppe Dossetti, quoted in Joseph Komonchak, “The Redaction and Reception of *Gaudium et Spes*: Tensions within the Majority at Vatican II,” 16, jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/jak-views-of-gaudium-et-spes.pdf.

²⁹ Giuseppe Dossetti, “Per una valutazione globale del magistero del Vaticano II,” in *Vaticano II: Frammenti di una riflessione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 87, my translation.

³⁰ Dossetti, quoted in Komonchak, “Redaction and Reception,” 18.

heritage of the West will be respected and promoted. It is likely, rather, to take the form of Christians acting as creative minorities, forming grassroots organizations—as in Pinochet’s Chile—to enact the Gospel *sine glossa* while openly collaborating with those of other faiths or none. This is the kind of “politics” to which Pope Francis was calling the church when he asked every Catholic parish and religious community in Europe to take in one refugee family.³¹ Had this call been heeded, not only would tens of thousands of refugees have found shelter, but the church itself would be energized. The Old and New Christendoms are both dead; Christianity will survive and thrive in the West only by groups of Christians embracing the fullness of the Gospel, changing the world by changing themselves. Were Maritain writing today amidst a greatly diminished church in Europe, perhaps the critical edge and prophetic freedom he admired in Alinsky would have brought him to a similar conclusion. **M**

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³¹ Anthony Faiola and Michael Bimbaum, “Pope Calls on Europe’s Catholics to Take in Refugees,” *Washington Post*, September 6, 2015, www.washingtonpost.com/world/refugees-keep-streaming-into-europe-as-crisis-continues-unabated/2015/09/06/8a330572-5345-11e5-b225-90edbd49f362_story.html.