

The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching

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Catholic Christianity holds that the life and teaching of Jesus Christ has public significance and carries with it implications for the structures and conduct of men and women living in society. Even when many Christians in the 2nd and 3rd centuries adopted an adversarial stance toward the larger society, they maintained their convictions that the practice of the Christian faith had concrete social consequences. The emergence of an explicit body of doctrine referred to as Catholic social teaching from the late nineteenth century up to the present has always depended upon a set of presuppositions about the nature and mission of the church in the world.

This essay will explore some of the ecclesiological foundations of modern Catholic social teaching by considering four distinct questions: (1) How ought we to conceive the church's relationship to the world? (2) What are the ecclesial processes operative in the formation of Catholic social teaching? (3) What is the authoritative status of Catholic social teaching and, correlatively, what is the appropriate response of the believer to this teaching? (4) What are the implications of Catholic social teaching for the life of the church itself?

THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD

This first section will address the most foundational of ecclesiological concerns in Catholic social teaching: how is the church to relate to the larger society. The development of Catholic social thought in

the mid-eighteenth century began in a period of ecclesiological upheaval. The various threats to the fundamental nature and structure of the church raised by the Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century had led to a one-sided stress on the visibility of the church. Catholic apologists like St. Robert Bellarmine saw the church as a visible society mirroring the institutional integrity of a secular city-state. In particular, Bellarmine reacted to Luther's denigration of the visible church by insisting that ecclesial institutions were integral to the very definition of the church. It is during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the church came to be seen as a societas perfecta, a "perfect society." The idea was not that the church was morally perfect but rather that it was completely self-sufficient, possessing all of the institutional resources necessary for the fulfillment of its mission.

With the Reformation, and later the Enlightenment, had come the gradual demise of Christendom, that uneasy partnership of church and culture that could be traced back to the fourth century. The Reformation rent asunder the precious unity of the western church of the Middle Ages, and when the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the rise of modern science, the emergence of nationalism and the age of reason, the medieval synthesis of church and culture was lost, replaced by suspicion and festering animosities. The Catholic church's stance toward the world moved from a confident if often combative engagement with society to a growing siege mentality.

This ecclesiological shift plays a vital role in the development of modern Catholic social teaching. Many ecclesiastical pronouncements on "worldly affairs," condemnations of unwarranted state interference in church matters, denunciations of anti-clericalism, and a repeated assertion of the state's obligation to preserve the right of Catholics to practice their faith, all reflected the church's negative judgment on the demise of Christendom and the rise of liberalism.¹ This siege mentality would only be strengthened by the French Revolution. As T. Howland Sanks observed, "if the Age of Reason had threatened the authority of the church in various intellectual spheres, the Age of Revolution threatened its very existence."²

The emergence of a Catholic social critique in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was occasioned in large part by the rise of industrialism and dramatic population shifts from rural areas to the cities. The result of these shifts was a profound sense of social dislocation and the creation of a new class, an “urban proletariat.”³ The church was quick to recognize the potentially dangerous social consequences of these developments. While the virulent anti-clericalism that came in the wake of the French Revolution abated to an extent, the tumultuous events of the nineteenth century only exacerbated the church’s defensive posture toward a world perceived as increasingly hostile to the church. Pope Gregory XVI produced a series of condemnations of various aspects of modern liberalism, and Pope Pius IX, initially open to the liberal impulse, was shocked by the wave of nationalist revolution that swept western Europe in 1848 and henceforward would share Gregory’s substantial repudiation of liberalism.

A certain ecclesial paternalism predominated in Catholicism’s engagement with the larger society. Michael Schuck has noted a common ecclesial metaphor running through papal pronouncements from Benedict XIV through the long pontificate of Pius IX—the shepherd and flock. Christ is consistently portrayed as the good shepherd,

correspondingly, the popes represent the world as a pasture. Unlike the Enlightenment’s heady optimism over a machine-like, controllable world, the popes’ pastoral image imparts a cautionary worldview. Though the pasture provides nourishment and rest for the flock, it also contains “trackless places,” “ravening wolves,” and evil men “in the clothing of sheep.”⁴

The sheep are expected to docilely heed the warnings of their shepherd the pope in avoiding the many evils of the age.

With the pontificate of Leo XIII in the late nineteenth century the church embarked on a more positive if still quite cautious engagement with the issues of the larger world. Yet, this stance was short lived. The violent reaction to Modernism early in the pontificate of Pope Pius X reinforced key elements of the siege mentality preponderant since the Reformation. A largely critical stance toward society continued in the first half of the twentieth century with the papacy issuing sharp rebukes of significant

elements of modern capitalism, socialism, industrialism and a continued program of state encroachment in church matters. Schuck observes that from Leo XIII to Pope Pius XII one can detect in the church's attitude toward the world a marked shift in metaphors. The pastoral metaphor of sheep/flock is replaced by the metaphor of "cosmological design" in which it is the task of the church to see that the natural order of things, indeed all of creation, fulfill its God-given end.⁵ Were it not for the effects of sin on human rationality humankind would be able to recognize the rational order of the universe. This defect in human nature demands the guidance of church teaching to assist humanity in the recognition of the divinely willed, cosmic order of things. Not surprisingly, the specific formulation of Catholic social teaching would make much greater use of natural law theory, congenial as that theory was to a viewpoint built on the rational ordering of the cosmos. This shift in perspective would also warrant ever more expansive claims to papal authority in the affairs of the world. It would be left for the pontificate of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council to re-conceive the church's relationship to the larger world.

CONCILIAR AND POST-CONCILIAR VIEWS OF THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD

The encyclicals of Pope John XXIII and Vatican II's Gaudium et spes, inaugurated a new stage in the church's perception of its engagement with the world. Pope John's two social encyclicals, Mater et magistra and Pacem in terris continued to articulate Catholic social teaching within the framework of natural law, but the tone of the documents reflected a new orientation of the church toward the world, one characterized by a desire for positive engagement.

The spirit of these documents, along with Pope John's stirring speech at the opening of the council, encouraged the council to establish a fresh period of interaction with the world. Yet, in spite of a broad agreement among the members of the council that a new stance toward the larger world was required, significant disagreements emerged when they attempted to flesh out the specific shape of this new stance.

Vatican II

Many depictions of the fault lines of conciliar debate focus on perduring disagreements between “progressive” bishops open to church reform and “traditionalists” who were resistant to reform. However, the lines of debate regarding the document that would become Gaudium et spes were quite different.⁶ Many bishops and periti belonging to the “progressive” camp disagreed with one another when it came to articulating an adequate exposition of the church’s relationship to the world. On the one hand there was a significant number who adopted a more Thomistic anthropology that granted a limited autonomy to the natural order and viewed grace not so much as a divine force sent to “fix” what was broken as a divine principle that transcendently elevated the natural order, bringing it to its perfection.⁷ Without wishing to deny the reality of human sinfulness, those who promoted this perspective were more willing to grant the limited, but still positive natural potentialities of the human person and human society, even as they acknowledged the need for these potentialities to find their fulfillment in the life of grace.

On the other hand, there were also many bishops and periti who advocated a more Augustinian anthropological perspective that would draw a sharp line between sin and grace. Grace was a divine force oriented toward the healing of a fundamentally broken human nature. For these council members and theologians, the natural order possessed no autonomous status, serving primarily as the arena for the working out of the drama between sin and grace in human history. These figures were quite concerned that early versions of the text seemed influenced by the neo-scholastic tendency to merely juxtapose the natural and supernatural orders rather than configuring them in their constitutive relation to one another.⁸ These bishops could not accept that events transpiring in the natural order could serve in any significant way as a preparation for the working of God's grace in the world.

Forty years after the promulgation of the pastoral constitution, these disputes are seen in a different light. Gaudium et spes has been accused of excessive optimism as regards its stance toward the world. Yet the document certainly affirmed the reality of human sin:

Often refusing to acknowledge God as their source, men and women have also upset the relationship which should link them to their final destiny; and at the same time they have broken the right order that should exist within themselves as well as between them and other people and all creatures (GS 13).

Later the constitution presents human history as a tale of humanity's "combat with the powers of evil" (GS 37). Nevertheless, on balance, the constitution's dominant tone is better reflected in the council's confident assertion that "the achievements of the human race are a sign of God's greatness and the fulfillment of his mysterious design" (GS 34).

Clearly emboldened by the theology of dialogue that Pope Paul VI outlined in his first encyclical, Ecclesiam suam, the council itself acknowledged the fruitfulness of a respectful dialogue with the world, and while insisting that the church had much to offer, the council also recognized that "it has profited from the history and development of humankind" (GS 44). A positive affirmation of the relative autonomy of the world is evident in the following passage:

That is why, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society (GS 39).

The crucial change in the title of the document in which the conjunction "and" was replaced by the preposition "in" suggests an understanding of the church's task to transform the world without negating the positive features of contemporary society. More importantly, the title presupposes a vital but hitherto neglected category for configuring the church's relationship to the world, namely the role of mission.

The missiological orientation of the church to the world was already announced in the council's Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Ad gentes: "The church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the holy Spirit."⁹ This document announces a theology of mission far removed from the late medieval and Counter Reformation view of church mission. At that time church mission was conceived as a quantitative and geographic expansion of the boundaries of the church and "manifested itself

supremely within the context of the European colonization of the non-western world.”¹⁰ With the new orientations of the council, church mission became a theological imperative.

Thus the church, at once a visible organization and a spiritual community, travels the same journey as all of humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world: it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God...the church then believes that through each of its members and its community as a whole it can help to make the human family and its history still more human (GS 40).

The council’s treatment of the church’s relationship to the world sought to preserve an uneasy tension between affirming legitimate human endeavors and insisting on the world’s need for transformation. This balancing act would continue in the later documents of Pope Paul VI. Pope John, Pope Paul and the council itself would gradually re-configure the church’s relationship to the world with the introduction of a new metaphor, that of a “dialogical journey.”¹¹

The Pontificate of Pope Paul VI

It is Pope Paul VI who offers the most developed reflections on applying the principle of dialogue to the church’s relationship to the world in his first encyclical, Ecclesiam suam. The pope conceives of Christian dialogue according to a series of concentric circles: the outer most circle calls for a dialogue with the entire human community, then moving inward there is the dialogue among all religious people, thirdly there is the dialogue among Christians, and finally a dialogue within Roman Catholicism. This dialogical spirit is maintained in Populorum progressio, which applies the principle of dialogue to the question of suffering and poverty in the third world. The pope calls for a new dialogue between civilizations and cultures based on the dignity of the human person and not on “commodities or technical skills” (PP 73). Such dialogue must pursue not merely economic development but integral human development.

In Octogesima adveniens, written in celebration of the eightieth anniversary of Rerum novarum, Paul VI follows Gaudium et spes in situating Catholic social teaching within a theology of the church’s mission to the world. He emphasizes that all Christians are to engage the problems and issues of the world today, advocating what was sometimes referred to as the Cardijn-Method: “observe, judge, act.”¹² However his application of this method was quite different from that of John XXIII who also

referred to it in Mater et magistra. For Pope John the method was a way for the faithful to apply the universal principles of Catholic social teaching to a particular situation. However, Mary Elsbernd notes that for Pope Paul VI the starting point was

...reflection on the local situation by the local Christian community. The community then becomes the locus of dialogue between the situation and its traditions, namely Scripture and social teaching, in order to bring about action. The process is not application of ahistorical principles to situations, but dialogical discernment for action, emerging from concrete situations and the Christian traditions.¹³

The pope dared to suggest that Catholic social teaching could only emerge out of specific, regionally situated dialogue with societal concerns.

Two important events during Paul VI's pontificate further refined an ecclesiological framework for understanding the church's engagement with the world: the meeting of Latin American bishops in Medellin in 1968, and the 1971 meeting of the Synod of Bishops. In Medellin, Colombia, bishops from throughout Latin America gathered to assess the state of both the Latin American church and Latin American society in the spirit of the call for dialogue with the world found in Gaudium et spes. The fruit of this historic meeting was an ecclesiastical program for church renewal and a stringent critique of the unjust societal structures that were oppressing so many people in Latin America. The Medellin documents offered an unusual level of specificity to the kind of critical engagement with societal concerns that Vatican II had envisioned. The Medellin documents also provide a convenient marker for the emergence of theologies of liberation committed to furthering a biblically-inspired critique of unjust social structures and an often stinging rebuke of the church's complicity in social injustice. Liberation theologians have made a vital contribution to ongoing reflection on the church's relationship to the world. They have noted that the salvation that God promised and that the church is sent to announce includes the liberation of the human person from any social, political or economic structures that would prevent them from achieving their God-given dignity.

In 1971 bishops from throughout the world gathered at a world synod to address the topic, "Justice in the World." With the important statement of Medellin clearly on their minds, the bishops

declared that “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation” (JIM introduction). This statement was also one of the first church documents to note that the church itself has an obligation to justice in its own ecclesiastical structures and policies. I will return to this important development in the final section.

Finally, both the heightened sensitivity to the integrity and plurality of human cultures evident in Paul VI’s earlier writing and the liberative themes that were so pronounced in the Medellin documents are given fuller development in Paul VI’s important apostolic exhortation on evangelization, Evangelii nuntiandi. In this exhortation the pope re-framed the task of evangelization within the necessary engagement of the gospel with diverse cultures. The pope writes that “In the mind of the Lord the Church is universal by vocation and mission, but when she puts down her roots in a variety of cultural, social and human terrains, she takes on different external expressions and appearances in each part of the world ”¹⁴ For Paul VI the modern dichotomy that had emerged between faith and culture was “the drama of our time .”¹⁵ Although the pope resisted the politicization of Christian salvation, he also affirmed that Christian understandings of salvation do possess social and political dimensions.

The Pontificate of John Paul II

Pope John Paul II has continued to develop the new direction inaugurated by the council. At the same time, his large corpus of social teaching reflects some significant shifts in the dominant conciliar view of the church’s relation to the world. If Gaudium et spes had marked the beginning of a much more sophisticated treatment of the church’s engagement with human culture, this would receive new development in the pontificate of John Paul II. In 1982 the pope created the Pontifical Council for Culture. In connection with that event, John Paul II observed that “the synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith...A faith which does not become culture is a faith

which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not faithfully lived out..."¹⁶ We must also note, however, that this commitment often stood at odds with Vatican policies that reflected a deep seated suspicion of theologies of inculturation.

Further evidence for a shift in the pontificate of John Paul II is reflected in the conclusions of the extraordinary episcopal synod convened in 1985 to assess the reception of Vatican II. While the synod offered a ringing affirmation of the teaching of the council it did offer a much more cautionary assessment of Gaudium et spes:

...we affirm the great importance and timeliness of the pastoral constitution, Gaudium et spes. At the same time, however, we perceive that the signs of our time are in part different from those of the time of the council, with greater problems and anguish. Today, in fact, everywhere in the world we witness an increase in hunger, oppression, injustice and war, sufferings, terrorism, and other forms of violence of every sort. This requires a new and more profound theological reflection in order to interpret these signs in the light of the Gospel.¹⁷

This justifiable concern for the scope of human suffering and the pervasiveness of sinful social structures becomes a characteristic theme in the writing of John Paul II. Where liberation theology would stress the need to transform unjust social structures, the emphasis in the writing of John Paul II is placed more on the cultivation of a Christian personalism that speaks to the sinfulness of the human heart as the root cause of social injustice. Moreover, a more cautious but still dialogical stance toward the world has at times been interrupted by a kind of apocalypticism, as with his popular but overdrawn opposition of a "culture of death" and a "culture of life."¹⁸ This has led Thomas Shannon, borrowing the typology of H. Richard Niebuhr,¹⁹ to suggest that John Paul II has moved beyond Niebuhr's "Christ transforming culture" to an almost sectarian "Christ against culture."²⁰ Almost invariably, when the pope chooses to interpret the "signs of the times" in his encyclicals, the analysis highlights the negative features of the world today.

CONTEMPORARY NORTH AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

During the long pontificate of John Paul II three different theological frameworks for configuring the church's engagement with the world have emerged in North America. We might identify these as neo-conservative, radical and correlational.²¹

Neo-Conservative Cultural Engagement

Proponents of this form of church engagement with society share a generally positive assessment of the "American experiment" and are committed to the possibility of a fruitful conversation between Catholic belief and North American culture. The neo-conservatives find much to commend in the system of

democratic capitalism that has flourished in North America. For them many of the most important values held in the founding documents of the United States presuppose a Christian theism and a natural law framework and are quite congenial to Roman Catholic convictions.

Proponents of this perspective believe that the United States may have arrived at a “Catholic moment” in which a public philosophy funded by the Catholic natural law tradition can enhance the best of American values while purging it of its excesses. Scholars like George Weigel,²² Richard John Neuhaus²³ and Michael Novak,²⁴ all influenced in varying degrees by the public philosophy of John Courtney Murray, would agree that the church must participate in the formation of human culture by affirming social and political developments like democratic capitalism that are most in accord with Catholic teaching. They offer what some regard as a selective reading of the encyclicals of Pope John Paul II,²⁵ as affirming the compatibility between Catholic social teaching and a free market economy buttressed by a vibrant democratic polity.

Strikingly absent from the writings of these authors, however, is any sense that the “American experiment” might stand as a critique of Roman Catholicism, calling it, for example, to a greater affirmation of women’s rights and the development of more democratic decision-making structures. The neo-conservatives tend to over-identify the larger Catholic tradition with a set of magisterial pronouncements and to condemn any and all forms of dissent, seeing in the post-conciliar church a dangerous crisis of fidelity.

Radical Cultural Engagement

In contrast to the approach of the neo-conservatives, a second view of the church/world relationship has been inspired by the radical social witness of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, founders of the Catholic Worker movement, and the peace movement which emerged, in part, in response to the Vietnam war. A number of theologians, with quite distinct perspectives, have found inspiration in the counter-culturalism of these movements and their commitment to fundamental gospel values, non-violence and solidarity with the poor.

Some Catholic theologians and grassroots communities have also been influenced by the writing of the provocative Protestant ethicist Stanley Hauerwas. Hauerwas’s far-ranging writing combines a Barthian condemnation of Christian liberalism’s determination to make the human person and not God

the starting point for theological reflection, with an admiration for the prophetic witness of the free church tradition and that tradition's best known contemporary apologist, the late John Howard Yoder.²⁶ The task of the church, Hauerwas has famously insisted, is not to have a social ethic but to be a social ethic. Christians are to submit to the transformative power of communal existence in which they allow themselves to be shaped, within the life and practices of the church, by Christianity's distinctive story and vision. More recently, Catholic scholars like Michael Baxter,²⁷ Rodney Clapp,²⁸ Michael Budde²⁹ and William Cavanaugh³⁰ have brought this analysis into Catholic intellectual conversation. They reject the hegemony, as they see it, of the Christian appropriation of procedural liberalism which has resulted in the evacuation of any distinctive Christian identity from Catholic ethical thinking. They are also quite critical of capitalism and contend that Christianity has too often succumbed to the contemporary consumerist and commodifying impulses of global capitalism.

From a quite different perspective, David Schindler, editor of the English language edition of the theological journal, Communio has argued for a distinctive form of engagement with contemporary North American culture.³¹ He too would reject a procedural liberalism that would require Catholics to abandon their most basic religiously informed convictions in order to enter into public conversation. Rather, Schindler holds that Catholics must engage in "dialogue" only from a position that begins with the revealed truths of the Catholic faith.³² Drawing from the communio theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Schindler would assert, against the neo-conservatives, the incompatibility of Christianity and capitalism. Only a Trinitarian theology that affirms God as a communion of love is capable of transforming a culture obsessed with "having," "doing" and "making."

Yet one other example of a "radical" engagement with contemporary culture, born on English soil but increasingly influencing North American thinkers, is found in the writing of the Anglican theologian, John Milbank. Milbank is a somewhat idiosyncratic English intellectual who advocates a post-modern, or perhaps better, counter-modern view of western civilization under the influence of the

Enlightenment.³³ Milbank's wide ranging thought is difficult to summarize, but central to his project is an attempt to re-claim a Christian meta-narrative of human flourishing that is superior to secular social theories. This "radical orthodoxy," built around a neo-Augustinian account of society in which the church offers an exemplary form of human community, is not inclined toward any serious engagement with contemporary secular culture except by way of critique.

Correlational Cultural Engagement

The majority of Catholic moral theologians and ecclesialogists in North America approach the engagement of church and culture from a perspective that must be distinguished from both the neo-conservative and radicalist perspectives. Because I believe this third approach represents a more fruitful perspective, I will explore its distinguishing features in more detail. We might characterize this third approach as one of correlational cultural engagement, drawing on David Tracy's description of the theological task as that of "mutually critical correlation."³⁴ Tracy has offered a compelling account of the public nature of theology conceived as a dialogue between a theological appropriation of the received Christian tradition and an analysis of the contemporary human situation. He understands the theological project to be largely hermeneutical, that is, theology must draw upon an interpretation of the received Christian tradition and an interpretation of the contemporary social situation and then attempt a correlation of the two. The "mutually critical correlation" between these two interpretations will differ, often dramatically, from situation to situation. In one specific context the Christian tradition will confront prophetically the contemporary situation that occasioned the theological reflection. At another point the tradition may find much to confirm. Often it will be a combination of affirmation and critique. Nor should we assume that it will always be the tradition that does the challenging or affirming. If this critical correlation is genuinely "mutual," the received Christian tradition will also, on occasion, be confronted by an interpretation of the contemporary situation. This way of describing the church's

relationship to the world has the signal advantage of allowing for any of a number of different correlations.

This correlational approach shares with the neo-conservatives a commitment to a positive engagement with North American culture. It is indebted as well to the Catholic natural law tradition. Nevertheless, a correlational approach goes beyond the construction of a public philosophy to affirm the value of the Christian theological heritage for public discourse. Those proposing a correlational cultural engagement believe that it is possible to construct not only a public philosophy but a public theology that seeks to bring the wealth of the Christian theological tradition to bear on social questions of broad import. Proponents of this view might include David Hollenbach,³⁵ Richard McBrien,³⁶ Kenneth and Michael Himes³⁷ and Charles Curran.³⁸ Many of these figures would also insist that the engagement with the larger culture cannot be uni-directional; there is often much that the church itself can learn from modernity. The American values of freedom, personal autonomy and participative decision-making are all values the church would do well to adopt.

Finally, the correlational approach would balance the Thomistic commitment to the relative autonomy of the created order with the Augustinian conviction that the world stands in need of transformation. One avenue for maintaining this balance has been to appeal to the sacramentality of the church.³⁹ Just as any sacrament, in order to function as such, must draw its “matter” from worldly realities, so too the church could not function as sacrament if it were not able to acknowledge the inherent goodness of the human community. It is the cultural “matter” of this community (e.g., institutions, social conventions and practices) that becomes within the church, not just any set of cultural constructions but the means through which the church can become a sign and instrument of God’s saving offer to the world.⁴⁰ As the sacramentality of the eucharist depends on the prior intelligibility of bread, wine, and the culture of the table, so too the sacramental character of the church presupposes substantive contact points with the ordinary, human experience of community. There is, in

other words, implicit in any claim to the church's own sacramentality, a necessary affirmation of the potential goodness of the social, political and economic communities that constitute human society. The sacramentality of the church is capable of incorporating, then, the Thomistic tradition's affirmation of the integrity of the natural order and the potentiality that lies therein for meaningful human community apart from the life of the church. Indeed Gaudium et spes makes this connection quite clear in article 42:

The church, moreover, acknowledges the good to be found in the social dynamism of today, especially in progress towards unity, healthy socialization, and civil and economic cooperation. The encouragement of unity is in harmony with the deepest nature of the church's mission, for it "is a sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race."

At the same time, the church, precisely as sacrament, offers to the world a vision of the world transformed, the very kingdom of God. The church is not itself the kingdom of God, but rather it "receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God" and in the church's sacramentality it stands before the world as "the seed and the beginning of that kingdom."⁴¹ So an assertion of the church's sacramentality also incorporates the Augustinian concern that the church's principal task is to communicate to the world a vision of its potential transformation. In the transformative memory that it maintains through its fidelity to scripture and its articulation of doctrine, in its distinctive ecclesial practices (e.g., almsgiving, acts of hospitality) and in its liturgical life, the church sacramentalizes, that is, makes concrete for the world, God's promise of salvation and the hope for the possibility of a transfigured world. As Francis Sullivan suggests, "the church is a sign of salvation by being a holy people, since holiness consists in the love of God and of neighbor."⁴²

Advocates of this correlational perspective will continue to insist that the church must *have* a social ethic capable of addressing the pressing issues of the times. Yet, with the advocates of radical Catholicism, they will also affirm that as a sacrament of universal salvation the church must be a social ethic in its distinctive communal patterns of interaction. At the heart of the liturgical movement lies the conviction of Virgil Michel and others that the liturgy, for example, should not simply be a vehicle for the message of peace and justice (as with the "peace and justice liturgies" so popular in the 70's and 80's), but rather the very doing of the liturgy forms the assembly into a just and peaceable community sent forth into the world.⁴³

These two features, the configuration of the church's engagement to the world as a dynamic and changing mutually critical correlation, and the affirmation of the church's nature as a sacramental sign to the world of God's saving offer, situate the correlational model as a mediating position between the neo-conservative and radical approaches. Nevertheless, those other approaches have made important contributions to our understanding of the church's engagement with North American culture. The neo-conservatives have certainly done much to encourage Catholics to enter more fully into American public life, confident that connections can be made between one's Catholic faith and civic obligation. The radical Catholic tradition brings into relief the distinctive aspects of Catholic Christian belief and stresses the way in which the moral life depends on the crucial character formation that comes from faithful discipleship and participation in the transformative practices of the Christian community.

The Ecclesial Process of Formulating Catholic Social Teaching

In the first half of the 20th century Catholic social teaching was drawn largely from the two major papal encyclicals, Rerum novarum and Quadragesimo anno. This was in keeping with a broader tendency to see Catholic doctrinal formulation as an exclusively papal prerogative. This reflected a trajectory of development in Catholic church authority begun with Pope Gregory XVI and coming to its term in the pontificate of Pius XII. During this period the magisterium gradually came to function as the proximate norm for church tradition. The operative ecclesiology was articulated with the greatest clarity in a 1906 encyclical of Pope Pius X, Vehementor nos:

It follows that the Church is essentially an *unequal* society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors .⁴⁴

This ecclesiology rested on a distinction first articulated by the 16th century theologian, Thomas Stapleton, between a teaching church (ecclesia docens) and a learning church (ecclesia discens or ecclesia docta). Within this framework, the learning church was reduced to a passive receptacle of that revelation given to the hierarchy. The result was a “trickle down” theory of revelation. Divine revelation was conceived as a depositum fidei, a collection of propositional truths in the firm possession of the magisterium. This positivistic theology of revelation too easily collapsed divine revelation into its historical mediations. Revelation was identified with a set of truths offered through apostolic succession to the hierarchy and through them, as through a conduit, to the laity whose sole ecclesial responsibility was to passively accept the teaching of the magisterium.

Within this schema, the ecclesial processes for the formulation of Catholic social teaching, as with any church teaching, were relatively straightforward. The magisterium, and practically speaking this meant the pope, drew from the treasury of divine truths to pronounce on one or another of the ills of contemporary society. The papacy rather uncritically presupposed that it already possessed, within the deposit of the faith, all the answers to the problems of the age. Reflecting on the development of Catholic social teaching at the end of the 19th century, Pope Pius XI asserted that

This grave conflict of opinions was accompanied by discussion not always of a peaceful nature. The eyes of all, as often in the past turned toward the Chair of Peter, sacred repository of the fullness of truth whence words of salvation are dispensed to the whole world. To the feet of Christ’s vicar on earth were seen to flock, in unprecedented numbers, specialists in social affairs, employers, the very workingmen themselves, begging with one voice that at last a safe road might be pointed out to them (QA 7).

This rather arrogant assertion reflected the dominant viewpoint in the Vatican up to the Second Vatican Council.

THE IMPORTANT SHIFTS INAUGURATED AT VATICAN II

Vatican II articulated both a theology of revelation and a vision of the church that would offer an alternative framework for considering the formulation of Catholic social teaching.

A New Theology of Revelation

The opening clause of Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei verbum, begins by describing the task of the council: “Hearing the Word of God reverently, and proclaiming it confidently....”⁴⁵ This introduces a major theme of the constitution, namely the primacy of the living Word of God, spoken from the beginning of creation, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, and proclaimed in the life of the church. The priority of the living Word of God is further reflected in the council’s

preference for speaking of truth in the singular rather than in the plural: “The most intimate truth thus revealed about God and human salvation shines forth for us in Christ, who is himself both the mediator and the sum total of revelation”⁴⁶ This theology of divine revelation begins with revealed truth understood not so much as a discrete body of information communicated in a set of propositional statements as truth communicated in the form of a relationship. God’s revelation is itself, then, an event of communion and of transformation; it calls for a dialogue between God and humankind. It is a Word offered to us in love by a God whose very being is love and it is by the power of God’s Spirit that we are able to respond to that Word.

The council affirmed that Jesus Christ was God’s definitive self-expression, the Word incarnate to which there is nothing left to be added. It also affirmed, however, that this Word is received by humanity in history; it is kept alive in the living memory of the church. As a dynamic, living Word, it speaks anew to each generation of believers. Therefore, God’s Word must continue to take new forms as it takes root in the minds and hearts of believers and in the life of the church. This is the understanding of tradition in its most dynamic sense, as God’s Word actualized in the life of the church.

The council writes:

The tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the church, with the help of the holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed. This comes about through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who, on succeeding to the office of bishop, have received the sure charism of truth. Thus, as the centuries go by, the church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in it⁴⁷

In this passage the council’s Christocentric theology of revelation as the living Word of God is conditioned pneumatologically as the council recognizes the decisive role of the Spirit.

It is in the Spirit that the church comes to *recognize* divine truth: “...the holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the church—and through it in the world—leads believers to the full truth and makes the word of Christ dwell in them in all its richness”⁴⁸ In Lumen

gentium 12, this ability to recognize and respond to God’s Word was called a “supernatural sense of the faith,” a gift given by the Spirit to all baptized believers.

This pneumatological perspective negates any attempt to conceive of God’s Word as the unique possession of any single group within the church, including the pope and bishops. God’s Word continues to abide in the whole church through the Holy Spirit. In fact, in the council’s listing of the ways in which the church grows in the truth, the preaching of the bishops is preceded by the role of the faithful. This represents an important expansion of the “traditioning” process of the church.

Since the council new light has been shed on this “traditioning” process through consideration of “ecclesial reception,” that is, the unique contribution of the whole faithful in actively appropriating church teaching and making it their own.⁴⁹ This new theology of revelation, when integrated into the renewed ecclesiology of the council, will offer a quite different framework for understanding the formulation of Catholic social teaching.

A Renewed Ecclesiology

The two slogans that characterized the work of the council, aggiornamento (an Italian word used to refer to the task to “bring the church up-to-date”) and ressourcement (a French word used to refer to the council’s determination to “return to the sources” of Christianity) were reflected in the council’s treatment of the church’s nature and mission. Both tasks were particularly evident in the constitution Lumen gentium, a document that reaffirmed some of the pre-conciliar developments in biblical and liturgical theology found in Pope Pius XII’s encyclical, Mystici corporis, while moving well beyond that document in several important respects.

The council soundly rejected the pyramidal model of the church as a societas inequalis in favor of a vision of the church as the new people of God grounded in the equality of all members by virtue of faith and baptism. This church was indeed, as Pope Pius XII taught, the mystical body of Christ, but it was also a temple of the Holy Spirit in which it was the Spirit who guided the church “in the way of all truth

and [bestowed] upon it different hierarchic and charismatic gifts....”⁵⁰ The council reaffirmed the nature of the church as an ordered communion, but it stressed the themes of collaboration and co-responsibility between the ordained and the laity. The ordained pastors were warned not to “quench the Spirit”⁵¹ but to “foster the many and varied gifts of the laity”⁵² and to recognize that the laity were entitled and sometimes even “duty bound to express their opinion on matters which concern the good of the church.”⁵³

The common view of the bishops as “vicars of the Roman pontiff” was decisively rejected as the council affirmed that bishops were truly “vicars and legates of Christ”⁵⁴ who served as “the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular churches.”⁵⁵ As members of the episcopal college, they shared with the bishop of Rome “supreme authority over the whole church.”⁵⁶

Catholic triumphalism was repudiated as the council acknowledged that the Christian community was not only a church of pilgrims but a “pilgrim church” that was “at once holy and always in need of purification” and which must follow “the path of penance and renewal.”⁵⁷ Thus, Christ summoned the church “to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is a human institution here on earth.”⁵⁸

The council also redressed a centuries long tendency to reduce the local church to a mere subdivision of the universal church as the bishops asserted that it was “in and from these [particular churches] that the one and unique catholic church exists.”⁵⁹ The council’s appropriation of a eucharistic ecclesiology from the patristic tradition led to a much richer, theological view of the local church. In each local church the faithful are “gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ,” and in each local church “the mystery of the Lord’s Supper is celebrated so that, by means of the flesh and blood of the Lord the whole brotherhood and sisterhood of the body may be welded together.”⁶⁰ The local or particular church was the locus for the realization of the universal church. By acknowledging the theological significance of the local church, the council also recognized the value of each church’s unique

gifts to the universal communion of churches. This important insight, only imperfectly developed at the council, along with the participation for the first time at an ecumenical council of bishops who truly came from throughout the world, led theologian Karl Rahner to assert that the “abiding significance of the Second Vatican Council” was its actualization of the church as a true “world church.”⁶¹ As such, this new actualization would demand a need for much greater recognition of diversity and pluralism within the churches and in the churches’ engagement with the world.

Gaudium et Spes: New Foundations for the Formulation of Catholic Social Teaching

The wedding of the council’s theology of revelation and its renewed ecclesiology was evident in the council’s most mature document, Gaudium et spes. At numerous points the pastoral constitution offers a more modest though still substantive view of the formulation of church social teaching.

The church is guardian of the deposit of God’s word and draws religious and moral principles from it, but it does not always have a ready answer to every question. Still, it is eager to associate the light of revelation with the experience of humanity in trying to clarify the course upon which it has recently entered (GS 33).

One should notice here the similarities to Tracy’s mutually critical correlation. The council suggests that church teaching ought to proceed, not from a deductive application of universal principles ready at hand, but from an association of the “light of revelation” with the “experience of humanity.” A major contribution of the council lay in its willingness to affirm what the church has to learn from the world. For example, in its Declaration on Religious Liberty the council acknowledged what it has learned from the growing consciousness in modern society of the human right to religious freedom (DH 1).

This ecclesial humility in the face of the relative autonomy of the world leads the council to exhort the laity to take the initiative in bringing their Christian faith to bear on contemporary issues.

For guidance and spiritual strength let them turn to the clergy; but let them realize that their pastors will not always be so expert as to have a ready answer to every problem, even every grave problem, that arises; this is not the role of the clergy; it is rather the task of lay people to shoulder their responsibilities under the guidance of Christian wisdom and with careful attention to the teaching authority of the church (GS 43).

The liberty that the baptized possess in the engagement of contemporary problems and issues brings with it the possibility that Christians might disagree regarding particular solutions to those problems. The council foresaw this possibility and warned:

...if one or other of the proposed solutions is readily perceived by many to be closely connected with the message of the Gospel, they ought to remember that in those cases no one is permitted to identify the authority of the church exclusively with his or her own opinion. Let them then, try to guide each other by sincere dialogue in a spirit of mutual charity and with a genuine concern for the common good above all (GS 43).

Almost four decades removed from the council, it is still remarkable to read these texts and to appreciate the seismic shift that took place at the council regarding both the dominant theology of revelation and its reinvigorated ecclesiology. The implications for our understanding of the ecclesial formation of Catholic social teaching are immense.

The emerging conciliar vision suggests that the ecclesial formation of Catholic social teaching occurs not through a kind of supernaturally infused knowledge first given to the hierarchy then applied to worldly concerns, but through the dynamic interactions of the whole church. God's Word is offered to the church in the power of the Spirit. The council presented the church not as the master of the Word of God but as its servant. The church must prayerfully "listen" for divine revelation as it is proclaimed in the scriptures, celebrated in the liturgy, critically reflected upon by the theological community and manifested in the testimony of the sensus fidelium, the graced testimony of the whole people of God. The council also acknowledged that the church, sent into the world in mission, must bring into respectful dialogue the received Christian tradition and the insights and concerns of the larger human community. This dialogue is not to be reduced to a kind of polite formality; the council dared to admit that in this dialogue the church has not only much to offer but also much to learn. Although the laity is to play an exemplary role in this engagement between revelation and worldly concerns, it is the whole church which is to participate in this dialogue as a "leaven" in the world. Finally, the council recognized that the scope of divine revelation is not so large as to remove any ambiguity regarding the appropriate Christian response to often significant social questions.

POST-CONCILIAR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

One of the first documents to reflect some of the ecclesiological shifts brought about at the council was Pope Paul VI's apostolic letter Octogesima adveniens. The crucial passage is found in article 4:

In the face of such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church. This social teaching has been worked out in the course of history and, notably, in this industrial era, since the historic date of the message of Pope Leo XIII on "the conditions of the workers"It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of good will, to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political, and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed.

Many commentators have noted the shift to a more historically conscious methodology evident in this letter.⁶² In particular, I would like to comment on two features of this letter. First, the document's application of the Cardijn method, mentioned above, implied that it is the whole Christian community that participates in the formulation of social teaching, not simply the hierarchy who pronounces universal principles to be applied by the laity. Second, the pope frankly acknowledged the difficulties inherent in the pre-conciliar model of church authority in which the papacy articulated universally binding principles. He appealed, implicitly, to the principle of subsidiarity, acknowledging that much of the formulation of Catholic social teaching must be undertaken by local communities.⁶³ The papal document presupposed the council's move toward the concept of a "world church" that places practical limits on papal teaching and advocates more regional church responses to diverse social situations.

The 1980's saw the American bishops adopt the insights of the council and Pope Paul VI. By issuing several major documents concerned with social analysis, they fulfilled the pope's call for regional communities to shoulder more of the load in the formulation of Catholic social teaching. By adopting a methodology, at least with respect to the pastoral letters, The Challenge of Peace and Economic Justice for All, that incorporated open listening sessions conducted in individual dioceses and by the drafting committee itself, the bishops took seriously the assumption of both Vatican II and Paul VI that all God's people and not only the hierarchy, must engage in the central processes of ecclesial discernment. In

the late 1980's the American bishops began the process of formulating a new pastoral letter on women. They initiated that process by employing the same methodology (e.g., widely distributed drafts and listening sessions) used with regard to their two earlier pastoral letters on social issues. Midway in the process, however, the bishops were notified by the Vatican that the overall process being employed was unacceptable and must be abandoned. Subsequent episcopal documents promulgated by the conference have abandoned the earlier methodology.

Since that time there has been a withdrawal of support from the methodological and ecclesial approaches first explored at Vatican II and then developed under Pope Paul VI. In the final decade of the 20th century and the initial years of the 21st century, we have seen a series of papal documents and Vatican instructions that reduce the ecclesial processes for the formulation of church doctrine to those tasks proper to the magisterium alone. In 1986 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published Libertatis conscientia in which it specified that it was the task of Christians, not to formulate church teaching, but only to apply that which had already been formulated.⁶⁴ The implication was that the church already possessed a self-contained, complete body of social teaching that needed only to be implemented by the faithful.⁶⁵

In 1998 Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter, Apostolos suos, was issued as a response to a plea made by bishops at the 1985 Extraordinary Synod for a doctrinal study of the authority of episcopal conferences. The document offered a helpful historical and theological framework for considering the important role of episcopal conferences. It also offered a set of norms that granted the authority of episcopal conferences to issue binding doctrinal statements, but only under very restrictive conditions: 1) such a document may only be issued in a plenary session and not by a committee or commission; 2) it must be unanimously approved by the entire conference or, 3) it must be approved by a two thirds majority and then receive a papal *recognitio*.⁶⁶

It is an ancient and theologically sound principle to require a high degree of church consensus prior to the issuance of a doctrinally binding document. However, the requirement of absolute unanimity far exceeds the rules established for any other gathering of bishops, whether in regional synod or ecumenical council, in the history of the church.⁶⁷ According to Francis Sullivan, the assumption of this document appears to be that there are only two levels of episcopal authority, that of the local bishop, and that of the whole college of bishops. By requiring absolute unanimity, Apostolos suos creates a situation where such a document would essentially carry no more authority than that of each individual bishop, since each individual bishop within a conference would have had to assent to the teaching. The other alternative, a two thirds majority with a recognitio from the Vatican, effectively shifts the authority of the document away from the episcopal conference and on to the papacy.⁶⁸

The rejection of the American bishops' process for drafting episcopal statements, the devaluation of the role of regional episcopal conferences in the formulation of church teaching, and the insufficiently developed employment of the synod of bishops, all have occurred under the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. At the same time, John Paul II has employed a questionable approach to the issuance of papal encyclicals and other papal documents. These documents are generally written in secret by a select few drafters in or close to the Vatican. No one outside a small inner circle has the opportunity to offer input into these drafts. The documents are often very long and filled with philosophical speculation, rendering them unreadable to all but a small intellectual elite. In light of the new ecclesiological perspectives that emerged from both the conciliar documents and post-conciliar reflection, this methodology must be challenged. It reflects nothing of the insight of the council that the whole church is the recipient of God's Word. It ignores the council's affirmation of the co-responsibility of the college of bishops, with the bishop of Rome, for the welfare of the whole church. It gives no place for the insight of the sense of the faithful nor does it recognize the council's insistence that the laity play a primary role in bringing the gospel into engagement with the issues and questions of our age. Finally

this methodology ignores the important insight of Paul VI that much of the dialogue between Christian faith and the concerns of our age must be engaged at the regional and even local level.

The full reception of the teaching of Vatican II remains incomplete. The more de-centered and contextual character of Pope Paul VI's approach to the formulation of Catholic social teaching stands in tension with the often sophisticated and perceptive but fundamentally papo-centric social analysis of Pope John Paul II. The unfolding of the life of the church in the first century of its third millennium will no doubt play a determinative role in the achievement of a more comprehensive reception of conciliar teaching.

The Authoritative Status of Catholic Social Teaching and the Appropriate Response of the Believer

This volume is dedicated to a study of Catholic social teaching. As was noted in the introduction, Catholic social teaching should not be equated with Catholic social ethics or Catholic social thought; both are much broader categories. Catholic social teaching includes the normative articulation of official church positions regarding social questions. A study of Catholic social teaching is in a sense a study of official pronouncements of the magisterium that function like a series of snapshots taken at given moments in history. These snapshots offer normative articulations of an always broader and more variegated tradition of Catholic social thought. These snapshots, however helpful and even necessary, can never do justice to the much richer ecclesial conversation out of which they emerged. These official teachings will tend to be conservative, often eschewing the controversial and even prophetic stand of the few in favor of positions that have some hope of achieving a broader consensus in the church (e.g., on the question of pacifism and just war theory). They will often avoid questions related to the social scientific bases of their positions, recognizing that it would be difficult to impose normatively positions based on highly contingent social-scientific data. The necessarily conservative cast of such documents suggests a difficulty inherent in a church committed to an authoritative teaching office. This becomes

particularly evident in a comparative analysis of Catholic social teaching with documents that have emerged from the World Council of Churches. In the latter instance, the goal of such documents is not to articulate a normative position but to speak prophetically to rather than for the churches. This distinction must be kept in mind as we consider the differentiated authoritative status of Catholic social teaching.

The Catholic tradition of social teaching has met with resistance in certain quarters of the American Catholic church. Many Catholics have taken issue with church positions on questions ranging from capital punishment to the first use of nuclear weapons. These disagreements, in turn, have raised important questions regarding the authoritative status of church teaching in general and Catholic social teaching in particular. The moral and dogmatic manuals of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often dealt with this question by employing a relatively sophisticated taxonomy for church teaching based on the assignment of certain “theological notes” to various doctrinal propositions.⁶⁹ Theological notes were formal judgments by theologians or the magisterium on the relationship of a doctrinal formulation to divine revelation. Their purpose was to safeguard the faith and prevent confusion between binding doctrines and theological opinion. This kind of detailed taxonomy had the advantage of making explicit an important but all too often neglected aspect of Catholic church teaching, the recognition that not all teaching was proposed, and should be received, with the same degree of authority. However, it relied on an overly propositional view of divine revelation and tended to overlook the fact that the Christian’s most profound response in faith was not to a particular dogma or doctrine but to the good news of Jesus Christ crucified and risen who in the Holy Spirit offers life to the world. The decisive Christian framework for responding to any and all church teaching is not one which treats church teaching as an atomistic set of propositions each of which demands a particular kind of assent. The decisive framework is that of Christian discipleship in which one submits to the transformative power of the Gospel and the distinctive practices of the Christian tradition while bringing that dynamic

tradition into critical engagement with the contemporary human situation. Still the question of assessing the authoritative status of particular formulations of Catholic social teaching cannot be avoided altogether. In the last fifteen years a more general taxonomy of church teaching has been articulated in various ecclesiastical documents.⁷⁰ The four principal categories of official church teaching that have emerged are: 1) dogma, 2) definitive doctrine, 3) authoritative (non-definitive) doctrine and 4) prudential admonitions and church discipline.

BASIC GRADATIONS IN THE AUTHORITY OF MAGISTERIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS

Among a large and diverse body of formal doctrinal teaching are those teachings of the church which have been proposed as divinely revealed either by solemn definition (by either pope or council) or by the ordinary and universal magisterium (the infallible teaching of the college of bishops is exercised when, while dispersed throughout the world and in communion with one another and the bishop of Rome, the bishops are in agreement that a particular teaching is to be held as definitive).⁷¹ These teachings, known as dogmas, are taught infallibly and therefore are irreversible in substance. Because a dogma is divinely revealed, it calls forth from the believer an assent of faith. An obstinate and sustained repudiation of these foundational principles would ordinarily place a person at odds with the most basic of Christian.

The second category, definitive doctrine, refers to teachings that have been “definitively proposed by the church.” The believer must “firmly accept and hold” these teachings as true. It must be noted that this is a relatively new category of church teaching. In the dogmatic manuals, the staple of seminary formation before the council, such teachings were considered part of “the secondary object of infallibility.” However, their status was never the subject of a dogmatic definition. Moreover, scholars have raised significant questions regarding the scope of this category of church teaching. Definitive doctrines are generally viewed as teachings necessary to safeguard and expound divine revelation with integrity. Yet some official statements expand the scope to include any teaching connected to divine

revelation by “logical” or “historical necessity.”⁷² Although Catholics are called “to embrace and hold as true” these teachings, the ecclesial consequences for failing to do so are unclear. In any event, this category does not come into play in any significant way in the area of Catholic social teaching.

A third category, authoritative (non-definitive) doctrine, refers to those teachings that have been taught authoritatively but not infallibly by the magisterium. These teachings contribute to a fuller understanding of God’s Word and its implications for the Christian life. They may emerge out of the church’s disciplined conversation between divine revelation and a critical comprehension of the pressing problems and issues of the age. Nevertheless, authoritative doctrines are those teachings which, for various reasons, the church is either not yet ready or not able to teach definitively. Often these may be teachings that are too far removed from divine revelation to be the matter for a dogmatic definition. At other times it may be that the doctrine’s precise relationship to divine revelation is not yet clear. In some instances an authoritative doctrine may be a teaching that has not fully “matured” within the consciousness of the church. Perhaps more scholarly work needs to be undertaken in evaluating its place in Scripture and tradition. It may be a teaching yet to be “received” by the faithful, or it may be a teaching, which, by the nature of that with which it is concerned, cannot be divinely revealed (e.g., it may depend on contingent data).

Because the church does not irrevocably bind itself to the revelatory character of these teachings, authoritative doctrines must be qualified as non-definitive or reversible. In other words, the possibility of a substantive reversal cannot, in principle, be excluded. The formal description of the response that believers are to give to such teaching is an “obsequium of will and intellect.” Essentially this means that the believer must make an honest attempt to assimilate this teaching into their religious consciousness. However, since the magisterium itself admits that there is a remote possibility of error, a failure to assimilate this teaching need not separate the Catholic from full and active participation in the life of the church.

Finally we might note the existence of doctrinal applications, prudential admonitions and church discipline. These determinations are doctrinal only in an analogous sense. Although all church teaching is in a sense pastoral in character, there are some ecclesiastical pronouncements which are explicitly pastoral, concerned not so much with the proclamation of God's Word as with offering prudential judgments regarding the soundness of theological and ecclesiological developments in the church, or regarding concrete guidelines for Christian action.

This category also includes legislative determinations regarding the disciplinary life of the church, as with the requirement of mandatory celibacy for the ministerial priesthood in the Latin rite. The prudential character of these pronouncements and disciplinary practices must be emphasized. The Spirit certainly assists the authoritative teachers of the church even in its prudential judgments, nevertheless, the guarantee of the Spirit is concerned primarily with preserving the church in fidelity to the Word, not with protecting it from unwise or imprudent disciplinary actions.⁷³ Catholics ought to attend respectfully to the appropriate admonitions and disciplinary decrees with a view to implementing the spirit of the law where such an implementation does not conflict with the demands of conscience.

Now we must consider how these gradations in doctrine relate to Catholic social teaching.

GRADATIONS OF AUTHORITY IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING.

Catholic social teaching certainly possesses a dogmatic foundation grounded in the Decalogue and the teaching of Jesus. Yet an important passage from Gaudium et spes suggests that the council was not convinced that all moral teaching was divinely revealed:

The church is guardian of the deposit of God's word and draws religious and moral principles from it, but it does not always have a ready answer to every question. Still, it is eager to associate the light of revelation with the experience of humanity in trying to clarify the course upon which it has recently entered (GS 33).

What is the nature of this distinction between moral principles drawn from God's Word and answers "to particular questions" which do not necessarily come from divine revelation?

Roman Catholicism has always stressed the importance of human reason in the moral life. Catholicism has insisted that there is an identifiable moral structure to the universe (we can also speak of this as a moral “law” as long as we overlook the rigorist connotations of the word)⁷⁴ and that we are capable of discovering it through rational reflection on human experience. Because of human sinfulness, this is not as easy as it might be. For that reason, in addition to the employment of our powers of reason in reflection on our experience, we may also turn to divine revelation. We believe that God's saving Word calls us to moral conversion and a life dedicated to the achievement of virtue and goodness. Therefore at least some of what we might discover in the natural law through reasoned reflection on human experience is also confirmed in divine revelation. But does this hold for the entirety of the natural law? From the 16th through the 19th centuries it was not uncommon for theologians to teach that all of the natural law belonged to divine revelation, including the most specific of moral injunctions. Few theologians would hold this position today.

It may be helpful to distinguish between three integrally related categories of moral teachings. Of a more general nature are universal moral teachings regarding the law of love, the dignity of the human person, respect for human life, obligation to care for the environment. These affirmations constitute the very foundation of Catholic social teaching, would generally be considered dogmatic in character and, even though they have never been formally defined, demand of believers an assent of faith.

Most of the more specific contents of what we think of as Catholic social teaching belongs, however, to the next two levels: specific moral principles and the application of specific moral principles. Specific moral principles emerge out of the church's ecclesial reflection upon universal moral teachings in the light of theological inquiry, the insights of the human sciences and rational reflection on human experience. This complex ecclesial inquiry yields such specific moral principles as the affirmation of political, civic and economic human rights, the restrictive conditions that must exist in order to justify

capital punishment, the preferential option for the poor and the prohibition of the direct taking of innocent life.

These specific moral principles generally fall within the category described above as authoritative doctrine. These are teachings that possess a provisionally binding status but are not, in principle, irreversible. The main reason for seeing such teachings as non-dogmatic lies in the way in which, as these teachings attend more to specific moral issues, they are shaped by changing moral contexts and contingent empirical data. These more specific moral principles can be of great assistance in the moral life, but because they are dependent in part on changing circumstances they can only apply, as the medieval tradition put it, “in the majority of instances” (*ut in pluribus*). This dependence on changing empirical data presents a strong argument against considering such teachings as belonging to divine revelation. Consequently, it is the conclusion of many theologians that, while it is legitimate and necessary for the teaching office of the church to propose specific moral principles for the guidance of the faithful, these teachings are not divinely revealed and cannot be taught as dogma.⁷⁵ This means that Catholics must treat these teachings as more than mere opinions or pious exhortations but as normative church teaching that they must strive to integrate into their religious outlook. However, because they are not taught as irreversible, it is possible to imagine a Catholic who might be unable to accept a given teaching as reflective of God’s will for humankind and could legitimately withhold giving an internal assent to it.

At an even greater level of specificity are the concrete applications of specific moral principles. Here the dependence on changing contexts and contingent empirical data is even more pronounced than with specific moral principles. For example, the American bishops’ condemnation of first use of nuclear weapons constituted a quite concrete application of specific moral principles in a particular context. The American bishops acknowledged this category in the distinction they made between moral principles and their concrete application in two of their better known pastoral letters, The Challenge of

Peace and Economic Justice for All.⁷⁶ Regarding the latter category the bishops insisted that moral applications and prudential judgments must be given “serious attention and consideration by Catholics as they determine whether their moral judgments are consistent with the Gospel.”⁷⁷ Nevertheless, they admitted that Catholics might legitimately differ with the bishops regarding these moral applications and prudential judgments.

This schema for assessing the binding character of various Catholic social teachings is similar to that proposed by the American bishops except that, where the bishops wrote of two categories, moral principles and their applications, I am proposing here three categories: universal moral teachings (dogma), specific moral principles (authoritative doctrine), and moral applications. This schema or taxonomy of church teaching cannot do justice to the richness and multi-textured character of Catholic social teaching. As Catholic teaching has moved from the propositional emphasis of the moral manuals to a more persuasive and dialogical style of articulating church teaching, it will not be so easy to come to a ready and certain judgment regarding the precise authoritative status of one or another particular teaching. It remains, in no small part, for the theological community to assist the whole people of God in the important ecclesial discernment necessary if Catholics are to grasp the proper demands set before them by Catholic social teaching.

Conclusion: The Implications of Catholic Social Teaching for the Life of the Church

The Second Vatican Council plainly affirmed the sacramental nature of the church. The church is a “universal sacrament of salvation.”⁷⁸ This teaching highlights the sign value of the church itself. This sign value extends beyond preaching and teaching to the church’s visible structures and characteristic practices. If the salvation that the church preaches is not to be understood in a narrow and otherworldly fashion but as a genuinely “integral salvation,”⁷⁹ a salvation that attends not only to the spiritual but to the historical and social nature of the human person, then the call to justice is integral to

that message of salvation. This was explicitly affirmed in the 1971 Synod of Bishops' statement, Justitia in Mundo:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation (JIM 6).

As a sacramental sign and instrument of this integral salvation, the church must not only preach justice, it must embody justice in its structures and practices. This too was acknowledged in the 1971 synodal statement:

While the Church is bound to give witness to justice, she recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes. Hence we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and life style found within the Church itself (JIM 3).

It is, in part, because of the church's own sacramentality that theologians both during and after the council have debated whether it was appropriate to speak of the church, not only as a church of sinners but, in some sense, as a sinful church.⁸⁰ The council did not directly address this question, though one could argue that in speaking of the church not only as a church of pilgrims but as a pilgrim church, it had something of this issue in mind. The debate is not as esoteric as it seems. For those who oppose any attribution of sinfulness to the church, such a claim would contradict the biblical affirmation that the church is "the spotless bride of Christ." Others argue that to attribute sin, at least analogously, to the church itself, is only to acknowledge that the church may possess sinful structures and practices that can vitiate the sign value and therefore the very sacramentality of the church itself. To acknowledge unjust structures and practices in the church is to recognize that the church has the capacity not only to be a "universal sacrament of salvation" but also a counter-sign to the very message of salvation that it preaches. This is why the council spoke of the necessity of reform and renewal in the church:

Christ summons the church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is a human institution here on earth. Consequently, if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated—to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself—these should be set right at the opportune moment and in the proper way.⁸¹

This necessary reform and renewal must include the application of the social teaching of the church to the church's own structures and practices.

Justitia in Mundo called for fair wages for all who work for the church and, at the same time, for the church to administer its temporal goods in ways which bespeak its solidarity with the poor. The synod called for greater participation of the laity in church decision-making and they recognized the need for an appropriate freedom of expression and thought, advocating "a spirit of dialogue which preserves a legitimate diversity within the Church." The bishops also acknowledged the need for women to have

greater participation and share of responsibility in the life of the church. Many of these themes were picked up in the American bishops' 1986 pastoral letter, Economic Justice for All.⁸² Elsewhere the American bishops have also decried the presence of racism in the church.⁸³

In the more than three decades since the 1971 statement was issued, little has been done to address the injustice that abounds in church policies and structures.⁸⁴ Communities of professed religious women have for decades served the church for slave wages. Now they find themselves with an aging population and greatly diminished sources of income while facing soaring health care costs. The U.S. bishops conference is to be praised for its institution of an annual collection for professed religious women's communities, but one can only wonder whether this is too little, too late to redress the economic impoverishment of the many women religious who served so selflessly for so long.

Far too many Catholic employees in diocesan offices, parishes and schools receive considerably less than a fair wage and often work without the kind of basic contractual protection assumed in the private sector. The unionization of church employees is frequently discouraged as employees are told that their work should be viewed as a "vocation" or "ministry" that therefore cannot be compared to correlative positions in the secular business world. This avoids the fact, however, that many of these employees, unlike the clergy who often employ them, have families to provide for. Moreover, while women constitute the majority of lay church employees in both schools and parishes, they often encounter a church version of the "glass ceiling" as regards key positions for which they are canonically eligible. Standardized personnel policies, such as established procedures for job reviews, are still the exception rather than the norm.

It is also difficult to discern significant progress as regards the bishops' call for greater participation of the laity in decision-making processes. Although the 1983 Code of Canon Law has numerous provisions for lay participation in church decision-making, many of these provisions are inadequately developed. Restrictions on the role granted to the laity in church decision-making is

justified on several grounds. Many contend that according to canon law, the laity cannot exercise the power of governance. Yet recent canonical studies have called this into question, noting both historical instances in which the laity have exercised the power of governance and pointing out significant ambiguities in the current code on this question.⁸⁵

One often hears the slogan, “the church is not a democracy,” yet almost never does one hear its necessary ecclesiological correlate, “the church is also not an oligarchy.” In fact the church cannot be compared to any single political model for it is, uniquely, a spiritual communion constituted as such by the power of the Holy Spirit. Within the life of the church, unlike an oligarchy, power is not to be located in a select few. Ecclesialogically, power proceeds from baptism as a gift of the Spirit and can be defined as the capacity to fulfill one’s baptismal call and engage in effective action in service of the church’s life and mission. The power we receive through Christian initiation enables us to fulfill our calling as disciples of Jesus. We are empowered to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to pursue holiness, to love our neighbor, to care for the least, to work for justice, and to build up the body of Christ through the exercise of our particular gifts in service of the church. Any new empowerment, beyond that oriented toward our common discipleship, must be strictly a function of our entrance into some new ecclesial relation, as occurs in sacramental ordination. Power cannot be considered apart from a concrete ecclesial relationship, whether that relationship is constituted by sacramental initiation or ordination.

If the church is not an oligarchy it is also not a liberal democratic polity; the church does not, and ought not, make decisions based on the aggregate majority of private opinions on a given matter. As a spiritual communion bound to discern the will of God, the church should avoid any kind of majoritarianism. Its task is to cultivate a “holy conversation” in which each participant actualizes the sensus fidei (supernatural instinct for the faith) they received at baptism in order to discern the will of God rather than their private desires or preferences. These ecclesial discernment processes will acknowledge the indispensable role of ordained church leadership as guardians of the apostolic faith

while also remaining open to the prophetic voice that so often emerges outside of established institutional structures.

Finally, while it was not expressly mentioned in Justitia in Mundo, the principle of subsidiarity that first appeared in Catholic social teaching in Quadragesimo anno, has been applied to the life of the church in several church statements. Put simply, the principle of subsidiarity holds that higher levels of a society should not take on tasks and functions that can be accomplished better at lower levels. Pope Pius XII extended the sphere of application when he observed in 1946 that this principle, “valid for social life in all its grades” was valid “also for the life of the church without prejudice to its hierarchical structure.”⁸⁶ The principle was not explicitly mentioned in the documents of Vatican II, though several commentators believe it is implicit in several passages.⁸⁷ The 1967 synod of bishops approved ten principles for the revision of the code of canon law that explicitly mentioned the need to incorporate the principle of subsidiarity, apparently with the relationship of pope to bishops in mind.⁸⁸ The 1969 synod addressed episcopal collegiality and approved a brief statement calling for a clearer determination of the competency of the bishop as pastor of the particular church in view of the principle of subsidiarity.⁸⁹ The Preface to the revised Code of Canon Law explicitly mentions the principle though there is some disagreement regarding the degree to which it was in fact integrated into the revised code.

The application of subsidiarity to the life of the church requires that we transpose the socio-political principle into the ecclesiological framework determined by the integrity of the local church “in and out of which” the universal church is manifested.⁹⁰ If we admit that, at least analogically, it can be applied to the church, we might re-formulate that principle as follows: the pastoral authority with direct responsibility for a local community must have primary responsibility for pastoral ministry within that community and is expected to address, without external intervention, the pastoral issues that emerge there. Only when these issues appear insoluble at the local level and/or threaten the faith and unity of the church universal should one expect the intervention of “higher authority.”

Some who view subsidiarity as strictly a sociological principle have criticized its application to the church as inappropriate. They contend that the church is no mere sociological reality but a spiritual communion and therefore not subject to the sociological rules that apply to other secular institutions.⁹¹ Yet it is also possible to see subsidiarity as the concrete structural realization of what it means to say the universal church is a communion of churches.⁹² A communio-ecclesiology demands the preservation of the full integrity of the local church as the concrete presence of the one church of Christ in that place. Any exercise of authority at a level beyond the local can never be undertaken in a way that undermines that church's integrity. The exercise of "higher authority" must always be a means toward preserving the integrity of the local church and its communion with the other churches. This is why one must resist the tendency to identify subsidiarity with decentralization. The latter concept starts with the rights of the higher authority to intervention and then "concedes" authority to the lower levels. The principle of subsidiarity, on the other hand, begins with the relative autonomy of local authorities and demands justification for the intervention of higher authorities. In this view, many recent curial interventions in the affairs of the local churches cannot help but be viewed as contraventions of the principle of subsidiarity.⁹³

In this essay I have addressed several basic questions regarding the proper ecclesiological framework for understanding Catholic social teaching. Yet none is more vital than the question of justice in the church for it goes to the very integrity of Catholic social teaching itself. In the midst of the various debates about continuity and discontinuity in Catholic social teaching, a larger truth cannot be forgotten: to the extent that the church is seen to perpetuate unjust structures and policies, the enduring validity of its social teaching will be irrelevant. As the bishops reminded us in Justitia in Mundo: "anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes."

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For Further Reading

- Baum, Gregory. Compassion & Solidarity: The Church for Others. New York: Paulist, 1990. A slim but insightful set of reflections on the church as “an instrument for justice and a focus for human solidarity.”
- Bosch, David. Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991. A comprehensive study of the historical development of theologies of mission from an ecumenical perspective.
- Budde, Michael L. and Robert W. Brimlow, eds. The Church as Counterculture. Albany: SUNY Press, 2000. A collection of essays laying out the ecclesiological convictions of Catholic radicalism.
- Bühlmann, Walbert. With Eyes to See: Church and World in the Third Millennium. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989. Offers a challenging vision of the shape of the church in mission for the third millennium.
- Gaillardetz, Richard R. Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997. Addresses basic questions regarding the teaching authority of the pope and bishops, the various gradations of church doctrine and the appropriate response of believers to church teaching.
- Himes, Kenneth and Michael. Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology. New York: Paulist, 1993. The authors develop a public theology that draws on the Catholic doctrinal tradition (e.g., the trinity, original sin, the communion of saints) for resources in constructing a Catholic strategy for engagement with the world.
- Hughes, Kathleen and Mark Francis, eds. Living No Longer for Ourselves: Liturgy and Justice in the Nineties. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991. This collection of essays reflects on the role of the liturgy in shaping a church dedicated to the work of justice.
- Metz, Johann. The Emergent Church. New York: Crossroad, 1981. An important articulation of a leading political theologian who is calling the church to emerge out of what he sees as its present bourgeois, middle-class imprisonment.
- Neuhaus, Richard John. The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984. A neo-conservative examination of the convergence of Catholic political philosophy and American democratic values.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. Christ and Culture. New York: Harper & Row, 1951. In this theological classic Niebuhr identifies five consistent patterns of relating the Christian message to human culture.
- Sanks, T. Howland and John Coleman, eds. Reading the Signs of the Times: Resources for Social and Cultural Analysis. New York: Paulist, 1993. A collection of essays that considers the social mission of the church from the perspective of Catholic ecclesiology and the social sciences.

¹ “Liberalism” itself is a contested term, but as used here it refers to what, from Catholicism’s perspective, was a cultural perspective shaped by “the Lutheran revolt against the church’s authority and on behalf of free examination, in the naturalism of the Renaissance, in the Enlightenment’s repudiation of tradition, authority and community, in the secularization of the political sphere, in the possessive individualism of capitalist economics, and in the cultural anarchy produced by an unrestrained freedom of opinion, speech, and the press. Common to all these developments were an exaltation of the individual and a definition of freedom as exemption from external constraint.” Joseph Komonchak, “Vatican II and the Encounter between Catholicism and Liberalism,” in *Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to American Public Philosophy*, ed. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 76-99, at 76.

² T. Howland Sanks, *Salt, Leaven & Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 99.

³ Josef L. Altholz, *The Churches in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 137.

⁴ Michael J. Schuck, *That They Be One: The Social Teaching of the Papal Encyclicals 1740-1989* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 20.

⁵ Schuck, *That They Be One*, 67.

⁶ See commentary on *Gaudium et spes* in this volume.

⁷ See Komonchak, “Vatican II and the Encounter...,” 86-8.

⁸ See Joseph Ratzinger, “The Church and Man’s Calling: Introductory Article and Chapter I,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder, 1969), V: 119-20.

⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity* [Ad gentes], 2.

¹⁰ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 237.

¹¹ Schuck, That They Be One, 134.

¹² Fr. Joseph Cardijn was a Belgian priest who in the early 20th century played an important role in the Lay Apostolate movement.

¹³ Mary Elsbernd, "What Ever Happened to Octogesima Adveniens?" Theological Studies 56 (1995): 43.

¹⁴ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World [Evangelii nuntiandi] (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1975), 62.

¹⁵ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, 20.

¹⁶ L'Osservatore Romano, [English language edition] (June 28, 1982), 7.

¹⁷ "Final Report," Origins (1985): 449.

¹⁸ See SRS 24; CA 39; Evangelium vitae, 12, 19, 21, 24, 26, 28, 50, 64, 87, 95, 100.

¹⁹ Niebuhr claimed that it was possible to discover in the history of Christianity five basic types for conceiving the engagement of Christ and culture: 1) Christ against culture, 2) Christ of culture, 3) Christ above culture, 4) Christ and culture in paradox, 5) Christ transforming culture. H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

²⁰ Thomas Shannon, "Roman Catholic Social Thought: Historical, Methodological, and Analytic Perspectives." A paper presented at the Collegium Colloquium on Faith and Intellectual Life at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, June 21, 2000. URL: <http://www.fairfield.edu/collegiu/shannon.htm>.

²¹ For an alternative typology see Avery Dulles, "The Four Faces of American Catholicism," Louvain Studies 18 (1993): 99-109.

²² See George Weigel, Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy (New York: Paulist, 1989).

²³ See Richard John Neuhaus, The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

²⁴ Michael Novak, The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Free Press, 1993).

²⁵ Especially John Paul II's encyclical, Centesimus annus. See the commentary on Centesimus annus and the Curran essay, ??.

²⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, A Community of Character (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); with William H. Willimon, Resident Aliens (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989); With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology (Waco: Brazos Press, 2001).

²⁷ Michael J. Baxter, "Blowing the Dynamite of the Church': Catholic Radicalism from a Catholic Radicalist Perspective," in The Church as Counter-Culture, ed. Michael L. Budde and Robert W. Brimlow (New York: SUNY Press, 2000), 195-212; "Reintroducing Virgil Michel: Towards a Counter-Tradition of Catholic Social Ethics in the United States," Communio 24 (Fall, 1997): 499-528; "Review Essay: The Non-Catholic Character of the 'Public Church'," Theology Today 11 (April, 1995): 243-58.

²⁸ Rodney Clapp, "Practicing the Politics of Jesus," in The Church as Counter-Culture, 15-37.

²⁹ Michael Budde, The (Magic) Kingdom of God: Christianity and Global Culture Industries (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); with Robert W. Brimlow, Christianity Incorporated : How Big Business is Buying the Church (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002)

³⁰ William T. Cavanaugh, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House': The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," Modern Theology 11 (October, 1995): 377-420;

³¹ David Schindler, Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism and Liberation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

³² See David Schindler, "On the Catholic Common Ground Project: The Christological Foundations of Dialogue," Communio 26 (September, 1996): 165-70.

³³ John Milbank, Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991).

³⁴ David Tracy, The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 374ff.

³⁵ David Hollenbach, Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition (New York: Paulist, 1979).

³⁶ Richard McBrien, Caesar's Coin: Religion and Politics in America (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

³⁷ Kenneth and Michael Himes, Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology (New York: Paulist, 1993).

³⁸ Charles Curran, Directions in Catholic Social Ethics (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); Church and Morality: An Ecumenical and Catholic Approach (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

³⁹ The ancient view of the church as itself sacramental had already become a topic of renewed interest in the years prior to the council. See, Karl Rahner, The Church and the Sacraments (New York: Crossroad, 1963); Otto Semmelroth, Church and Sacrament (Notre Dame: Fides, 1965); Edward Schillebeeckx, Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965). It would be affirmed explicitly in several conciliar texts. Lumen gentium, 1 taught that "the church, in Christ, is a sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is of communion with God and the unity of the entire human race...." In chapter seven of that constitution the church is referred to as "a universal sacrament of salvation" (Lumen gentium 48) and both of these texts are quoted in Gaudium et spes. The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Ad gentes, begins with the following passage: "Having been sent by God to the nations to be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach

the gospel to all” (Ad gentes 1). The references in both *Gaudium et spes* and *Ad gentes* are particularly important because they suggest that the council members saw the sacramentality of the church as crucial to the church’s fulfillment of its mission to be a leaven in the world.

⁴⁰ See David Hollenbach, “A Prophetic Church and the Catholic Sacramental Imagination,” in *The Faith that Does Justice*, ed. John Haughey (New York: Paulist, 1977), 234-63.

⁴¹ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* [*Lumen gentium*], 5.

⁴² Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (New York: Paulist, 1988), 123.

⁴³ For a helpful collection of essays on the integral connection between liturgy and justice see, *Living No Longer for Ourselves: Liturgy and Justice in the Nineties*, ed. Kathleen Hughes, and Mark R. Francis (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991). For a treatment of Virgil Michel’s thought on this connection see, R. W. Franklin and Robert L. Spaeth, *Virgil Michel: American Catholic* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1988).

⁴⁴ Pope Pius X, *Vehementor nos*, 8. English translation from *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 3, ed. Claudia Carlen. (New York: McGrath, 1981) 47-8.

⁴⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* [*Dei Verbum*], 1.

⁴⁶ *Dei Verbum*, 2.

⁴⁷ *Dei Verbum*, 8

⁴⁸ *Dei Verbum*, 8.

⁴⁹ For more on the theology of ecclesial reception see Yves Congar, “La ‘réception’ comme réalité ecclesiologique,” in *Église et papauté: Regards historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 229-66 [For an abbreviated English translation see “Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality,” in *Election and Consensus in the Church* {*Concilium 77*}, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Anton Weiler (New York: Herder, 1972), 43-68. For other notable studies on the topic see, J.M.R. Tillard, “Tradition, Reception,” in *The Quadrilog*.

Tradition and the Future of Ecumenism [Festschrift for George Tavard] (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 328-43; "Reception—Communion," One in Christ 28 (1992): 307-22; Hermann J. Pottmeyer, "Reception and Submission," The Jurist 51 (1991): 269-92.

⁵⁰ Lumen gentium, 4.

⁵¹ Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity [Apostolicam actuositatem], 3.

⁵² Second Vatican Council, Decree on Priestly Ministry and Life [Presbyterorum ordinis], 9.

⁵³ Lumen gentium, 37.

⁵⁴ Lumen gentium, 27

⁵⁵ Lumen gentium, 23.

⁵⁶ Lumen gentium, 22.

⁵⁷ Lumen gentium, 8.

⁵⁸ Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism [Unitatis redintegratio], 6.

⁵⁹ Lumen gentium, 23.

⁶⁰ Lumen gentium, 26.

⁶¹ See Karl Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," in Theological Investigations, vol.20. (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 90-102.

⁶² See Elsbernd, "What Ever Happened to Octogesima adveniens?"; Shannon, "Roman Catholic Social Thought..."

⁶³ On this point see Kenneth Himes, "The Local Church as a Mediating Structure," Social Thought (1986): 23-30.

⁶⁴ Libertatis conscientia, Origins 15 (April, 1986): 513-28.

⁶⁵ See the analysis of this document in Elsbernd, "What Ever Happened to...," 52-3.

⁶⁶ Apostolos Suos, Origins 28 (July, 1998): 152-8.

⁶⁷ For an analysis of this document see Francis A. Sullivan, "The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conferences," Theological Studies 63 (2002): 472-93; Ladislav Orsy, "Episcopal Conferences and the Power of the Spirit," The Jurist 59 (1999): 409-431.

⁶⁸ Technically, this is not the intent of the *recognitio*. According to canon law, the *recognitio* represents nothing more than an administrative act of the holy see confirming that a given document does not violate church teaching or current law. In practice, however, the conferral or refusal of a *recognitio* has gone far beyond the limited role intended for it in canon law to give the Vatican substantial veto authority. See Ulrich Rhode, "Die *Recognitio* von Statuten, Dekreten und Liturgischen Büchern," Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht 169 (2000): 433-68.

⁶⁹ A typical example can be found in Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma (4th ed., St. Louis: Herder, 1960), 9-10. See also Joseph Salaverri Sacrae theologiae summa, vol. 1 (3rd edition, Madrid: BAC, 1955), 781-96. For an in-depth treatment of the role of theological notes and censures see Sixtus Cartechini, De valore notarum theologiarum et de criteriis ad eas dignoscendas (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1951). See also Harold E. Ernst, "The Theological Notes and the Interpretation of Doctrine," Theological Studies 63 (December, 2002): 813-25.

⁷⁰ See for example, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity," Origins 18 (March 16, 1989): 661-3; "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," Origins 20 (July 5, 1990): 117-26. For an in-depth consideration of these distinctions see Richard R. Gaillardetz, Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 101-27, 258-71.

⁷¹ See *Lumen gentium*, 25.

⁷² This formulation was found in the CDF "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," 121. The definitive study on the history of this category of church teaching is Jean-Francois Chiron, L'infaillibilité et son objet: L'autorité du magistère infaillible de l'Église s'étend-elle aux vérités

non révélées? (Paris: Cerf, 1999). See also Christoph Theobald, "Le développement de la notion des 'vérités historiquement et logiquement connexes avec la Révélation,' de Vatican I à Vatican II," Cristianesimo nella storia 21 (2000) 37-70; Richard R. Gaillardetz, "Ad tuendam fidem: An Emerging Pattern in Current Papal Teaching," New Theology Review 12 (February, 1999) 43-51; Bernard Sesboué, "À propos du 'Motu Proprio' de Jean-Paul II, Ad tuendam fidem," Études 389 (1998) 357-67; Ladislav Orsy, "Von der Autorität kirchlicher Dokumente," Stimmen der Zeit 216 (1998) 735-40; Joseph Ratzinger, "Stellungnahme," Stimmen der Zeit 216 (1998) 735-40; Francis A. Sullivan, "The 'Secondary Object of Infallibility,'" Theological Studies 54 (1993): 536-550.

⁷³ Ladislav Orsy, The Church: Teaching and Learning (Wilmington: Glazier, 1987), 76-8.

⁷⁴ For a consideration of the ambiguities inherent in speaking of a moral "law" see Mahoney, "The Language of Law," in The Making of Moral Theology (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 224-58. See also Jean Porter, Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁷⁵ See John Boyle, "The Natural Law and the Magisterium," in Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995) 43-62; Richard A. McCormick, Corrective Vision: Explorations in Moral Theology (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 86-89; Franz Böckle, "Le magistère de l'Église in matière morale," Revue théologique de Louvain 19 (1989) 3-16; Francis A. Sullivan, "Some Observations on the New Formula for the Profession of Faith," Gregorianum 70 (1989): 552-4; André Naud, Le magistère incertain (Montreal: Fides, 1989), 77-121; Karl Rahner, "Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church," Theological Investigations, vol. 14 (New York: Seabury, 1976), 3-23.

⁷⁶ See Challenge of Peace, in Catholic Social Thought, para. 10; Economic Justice for All, in Catholic Social Thought, para. 135.

⁷⁷ Challenge of Peace, 10.

⁷⁸ Lumen gentium, 48; GS 45; Ad gentes 1.

⁷⁹ This understanding of the church as a sacrament of “integral salvation” is taken from Sullivan, The Church We Believe In, 132-51.

⁸⁰ Karl Rahner wrote two classic essays on this topic: “The Church of Sinners” and “The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II,” in Theological Investigations, vol. 6. (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 253-94. See also an earlier essay by Hans Urs von Balthasar, “‘Casta Meretrix’ in Sponsa Verbi: Skizzen zur Theologie, vol. 2 (Einsiedeln, 1961), 203-305.

⁸¹ Unitatis redintegratio, 6.

⁸² Economic Justice for All, 347-58.

⁸³ What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger, 1984), 20.

⁸⁴ For an assessment of the North American church on this question see Bishop Raymond A. Lucker, “Justice in the Church: The Church as Example,” in One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought: Celebration and Challenge, ed. John A. Coleman (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 88-100.

⁸⁵ See James Coriden, “Lay Persons and the Power of Governance,” The Jurist 59 (1999): 335-47; John P. Beal, “The Exercise of the Power of Governance by Lay People: State of the Question,” The Jurist 55 (1995): 1-92; James H. Provost, “The Participation of the Laity in the Governance of the Church,” Studia Canonica 17 (1983): 417-48; John M. Huels, “Another Look at Lay Jurisdiction,” The Jurist 41 (1981): 59-80; J. James Cuneo, “The Power of Jurisdiction: Empowerment for Church Functioning and Mission Distinct from the Power of Orders,” The Jurist 39 (1979): 183-219.

⁸⁶ Pope Pius XII made this statement in an address to newly created cardinals, AAS 38 (1946): 144-5. He reaffirmed the ecclesial implications of the principle of subsidiarity in an address to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in 1957. Cf. AAS 49 (1957): 926-8.

⁸⁷ Joseph Komonchak, "Subsidiarity and the Church: The State of the Question," The Jurist 48 (1988): 298-349, at 309-12.

⁸⁸ For the principles themselves see, Xavier Ochoa, Leges Ecclesiae post Codicem iuris canonici editae, Volumen III (Rome, 1972), 5253-75. For a discussion of their significance see Ad Leys, Ecclesiological Impacts of the Principle of Subsidiarity, Kampen: Kok, 1995), 89-93.

⁸⁹ Cited in Leys, 95.

⁹⁰ Lumen gentium 23. Opponents of the application of subsidiarity to the life of the church, such as canonist Eugenio Corecco, do not attend sufficiently to the theological relationship between the local and the universal church and thus fail to recognize that the church as communion is always being realized within the specificity of the local churches. See Leys, 187ff.

⁹¹ For a review of this argument see Leys, 113-19; Komonchak, "Subsidiarity and the Church ...," 336-7.

⁹² J.M.-R. Tillard, Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 275-83.

⁹³ Some recent examples regarding curial intervention in the North American church would include interventions in the translations of biblical and liturgical texts, the renovations of the cathedral in Milwaukee and the American implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the apostolic constitution on Catholic higher education.