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## John F. Scarpa Conference on Law, Politics and Culture

THE INDIRECT MISSION OF THE CHURCH TO POLITICS

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**I**N my paper, I intend to deal primarily with the ideas of Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, on the relationship of the Church to politics. In order to set his ideas in context, I shall preface the main body of my paper with some brief remarks on the prior history of the problem.

### PREVIOUS HISTORY

Throughout history there has been within Christianity an ongoing debate about the mutual rights and duties of Church and State. Eastern Orthodoxy has generally followed *Eusebius of Caesarea*, who favored a virtual fusion of Church and State into a single society. In practice this theory led to the *Caesaropapism* (as it is commonly called) of emperors such as Justinian, who regarded himself as a priest-emperor, and to the domination of the Church by tyrannical czars such as Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great.

In the West, a certain dualism between Church and State has prevailed. The words of Jesus about rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's<sup>1</sup> have been interpreted as authorizing two distinct powers, the one temporal and the other spiritual. St. Ambrose as bishop of Milan treats the Emperor Theodosius as having full authority in civil matters but also as a son of the Church bound to obedience to the bishops in spiritual affairs. St. Augustine, in his *De Civitate Dei*, develops the idea of two overlapping cities, each having its own goals, membership and competence. Pope Gelasius in his letter to the Emperor Anastasius gives classic expression to the theory of the two powers, priestly and regal. The priesthood

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1. See *Matthew* 22:21 (Revised Standard) ("They said, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'").

has authority in things divine, pertaining to eternal salvation, whereas the civil power has charge of arrangements for regulating conduct in the earthly city. Kings are obliged to accept the rulings of the Church in spiritual matters, whereas bishops are bound to obey the civil law in secular matters.

The Gelasian theory, while distinguishing the two powers, left open many questions that would be disputed in the Middle Ages. For example, which power prevailed in matters where both powers seemed to have a legitimate interest? Papalists such as St. Bernard of Clairvaux gave priority to the spiritual authority on the ground that Christ had given both swords, the spiritual and the temporal, initially to Peter.<sup>2</sup> The State, therefore, derived its power from God through the mediation of the Church. On this ground St. Bonaventure and other so-called “political Augustinians” subordinated the political order to the Church. Papal canonists made sweeping claims for the spiritual authority wielded by popes. But, they were answered by secularist theologians and civil lawyers such as William of Ockham and Marsilius of Padua, who went to the opposite extreme, demanding that the Church be subject to temporal sovereigns.

Thomas Aquinas and his disciple John of Paris adopted a mediating position, teaching that natural law gives a measure of autonomy to each of the two powers. Both Church and State, they held, draw their authority immediately from God, the true and ultimate sovereign.

During the Counter-Reformation Robert Bellarmine advocated a certain separation between Church and State. He denied the power of the Pope to interfere directly in temporal affairs, but granted him “indirect power” to intervene in cases where the spiritual good of citizens required. Francisco Suarez developed a similar theory, giving a measure of autonomy to the secular, but providing for exceptions on occasion. Both Bellarmine and Suarez held that civil authority rested on the consensus of the governed. They, therefore, denied the divine right of kings as claimed by absolutist monarchs such as James I of England.

Since the time of Leo XIII at the end of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church has been increasingly critical of absolutist theories, whether monarchical or dictatorial. Pius XII cautiously laid the foundations for accepting a nonconfessional State in which a variety of religions would be tolerated.

The Encyclicals of Pope John XXIII and the documents of Vatican II seemed to favor something like the American democratic system, in which the government is accountable to the people, who actively take part in the political process. Vatican II recognized the mutual independence of the Church and the political community, each of which was self-governing in its own sphere of competence. It reserved the right of the Church to pass moral judgment on the actions of the State when the rights of persons or

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2. See *Luke* 22:38 (Revised Standard).

the salvation of souls was at stake, but it also taught that in implementing her judgment the Church may use only the means given in the gospel.

At the conclusion of the Council, Pope Paul VI summarized the new situation by addressing political rulers in these words:

What does the Church ask of you today? She tells you in one of the major documents of this Council. She asks of you only liberty, the liberty to believe and to preach her faith, the freedom to love her God and serve Him, the freedom to live and to bring to men her message of life. Do not fear her.<sup>3</sup>

John Paul II often used similar language. In his Encyclical on Missionary Activity he declared: "the Church addresses people with full respect for their freedom. Her mission does not restrict freedom but rather promotes it. *The Church proposes; she imposes nothing.*"<sup>4</sup> In his Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* he asserted:

The Church respects the legitimate autonomy of the democratic order and is not entitled to express preferences for this or that institutional or constitutional solution. Her contribution to the political order is precisely her vision of the dignity of the person revealed in all its fullness in the mystery of the Incarnate Word.<sup>5</sup>

Attributing a relatively modest role to the State, Pope John Paul looked upon civil government as one ingredient or function of society alongside of the cultural, the economic and the religious.

#### POPE BENEDICT XVI'S DUALISM

Benedict XVI stands in the tradition of recent popes. Ever since his early years, he has been critical of systems that give the Church direct political responsibility. He interprets these views as contrary to the saying of Christ already mentioned: "[r]ender therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."<sup>6</sup> This saying, he maintains, opened up a new phase in the history of the relationship between politics and religion. It initiated the new idea that there were two societies, Church and State, related to each other but not identical with each other, neither possessing the character of totality. In contrast to pagan societies, Christianity does not recognize the State as the bearer of relig-

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3. Paul VI, Closing Message to Rulers, read by Cardinal Achille Liénart of Lille and Giovanni Colombo of Milan, in *THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II* 730 (Walter M. Abbott ed., Am. Press 1966).

4. JOHN PAUL II, ENCYCLICAL LETTER *REDEMPTORIS MISSIO* ¶ 39 (1990), in JOHN PAUL II: *THE ENCYCLICALS IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE* 143 (Joseph G. Donders ed., 2001).

5. JOHN PAUL II, ENCYCLICAL LETTER *CENTESIMUS ANNUS* ¶ 47 (1991), in JOHN PAUL II: *THE ENCYCLICALS IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE* 173 (Joseph G. Donders ed., 2001).

6. See *Matthew* 22:21 (Revised Standard).

ious authority. The Church, in turn, understands herself as a final moral authority that depends on voluntary adherence of her members and lacks power to impose civil penalties.<sup>7</sup>

The Christian ideal, according to Ratzinger, has often been violated in practice. In the Middle Ages and early modern times, Church and State have sometimes been blended too much into one another. The principle nevertheless stands. Unlike Islam, Christianity is dualistic in its conception of Church and this dualism is a fundamental condition of freedom. When the Church controls the State, consciences are coerced and freedom is harmed. Freedom is likewise impaired when the Church loses her status as a publicly relevant authority. The ideology of the State tends to become the law of the community. The problem, then, is to maintain a correct balance. The Church must make demands on the public law, but she must not seek to do the work of the State. She must retain her voluntary and spiritual character.<sup>8</sup>

During the two decades after Vatican II, Cardinal Ratzinger targeted political and liberation theology as threats to the proper distinction between Church and State. Liberation theology, centered in Latin America, politicized the gospel, turning the theological idea of the Kingdom of God into a kind of earthly utopia produced by sociopolitical praxis. Theologians such as Ernesto Cardenal held that the true mission of the Church was to be an instrument of liberation, helping to bring the society of the future to birth. Liberation theology took over from Marxism, the false doctrine that new social structures would produce citizens devoted to the universal good.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the 1980s Cardinal Ratzinger was one of the outstanding opponents of this kind of reductionism. In the language of Augustine, he maintained that the city of man can never become the city of God.<sup>10</sup> In the name of Christianity he opposed the myth that depicts the kingdom of God as the product of politics. Faith, for him, must seek to prevent the political from dominating the whole of life.<sup>11</sup> Karl Marx, whose work did much to inspire liberation theology, rejected the ideas of God and eternal life as distractions. He wanted people to confine their horizons strictly to the earth. But once the dimension of transcendence has been lost, it becomes impossible to safeguard moral norms of conduct. Human rights and human dignity are turned into tools of political power. Without a universal moral law given from on high, corruption abounds and society decays.

Modern Catholic political theory generally recognizes the free society in which the State has only limited functions legitimized by the consent of

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7. See CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER, CHURCH, ECUMENISM AND POLITICS: NEW ESSAYS IN ECCLESIOLOGY 160-61 (Crossroad 1988) [hereinafter ECUMENISM].

8. See *id.* at 162-63.

9. See *id.* at 159.

10. See *id.* at 213.

11. See *id.* at 148.

the governed. In any such society the State cannot easily be understood as a *societas perfecta*. Far from being the source of all blessings, it is imperfect in the technical sense that it depends upon powers and forces beyond itself. Most fundamentally, it depends upon the ideas and behavior of its citizens, which it cannot exhaustively control.<sup>12</sup> Incapable of providing all the conditions for its own existence, it requires a preexistent society with a certain sustaining power. If the people do not support human dignity and human rights, or if they radically disagree about the nature of these rights, the State may lack the consensus it needs to perform its task.

Traditionally, the Church, like the State, has been viewed as a *societas perfecta*. Vatican II recognized that the Church was a society (*societas*) and was endowed by its divine Founder with inalienable hierarchical powers to teach, sanctify, and rule. But it refrained from calling the Church a *societas perfecta*, perhaps because the Church depends upon powers and forces beyond herself in order to accomplish her mission. Although the Church may insist on certain religious and moral truths, she cannot force anyone to accept them. To the extent that authorities in the Church are dependent on the good will and cooperation of others, the Church as a society is *imperfecta*.

Both Church and State therefore have intrinsic limitations. The Church cannot provide the coercive mechanisms needed to coordinate human behavior, but the State lacks the moral vision needed to motivate citizens to labor for the common good. If the State is to avoid political messianism, it must renounce political theology and operate in conformity with the requirements of ethics.

#### JUSTICE AND MORALITY IN THE STATE

The experiment of trying to achieve a political society without justice can end only in failure. Without ethical norms, the State loses moral authority and sinks to the level of a rubber band.<sup>13</sup> Human rights and human dignity lose their inviolability. A new barbarism is born in which sexuality is degraded into a source of cheap pleasure. The institution of marriage collapses, as does the family as the basic unit of society. Innocent human lives are no longer protected against crimes such as abortion and euthanasia, not to mention evils such as genocide. "Liberation from morality," says Ratzinger, "can of its nature be only liberation into tyranny."<sup>14</sup>

In the practical order, as in sound philosophical thinking, morality cannot survive in the absence of religion. A religion of pure reason lacks content and moral power. Revelation enables reason to rise to its true stature and grasp the essentials of the moral law. Western civilization

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12. See *id.* at 214.

13. See CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER, TURNING POINT FOR EUROPE? 131-32 (Ignatius Publishing 1994) [hereinafter TURNING POINT].

14. See RATZINGER, ECUMENISM, *supra* note 7, at 217-18.

learned the doctrine of human dignity from the biblical account of man being created in the image of God. It learned the doctrine of universal rights by reasoning from the biblical tradition, especially the *Decalogue*. These truths, essential for a civilization of justice and fraternal love, are intended for all peoples. Believers are not entitled to hoard them for themselves.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE PUBLIC CHARACTER OF FAITH

Pope Benedict does not shrink from insisting that the faith of the Church is public. The Church may not admit that her faith be treated as a merely private matter, as if it were intended only for some few.

It is often assumed that in a pluralistic society the State cannot recognize the claim of the Church to public validity. In that case there would be no way of getting beyond the following dilemma: "If the Church gives this claim up [to public validity] it no longer achieves for the state what the latter needs of it. But when the state accepts this claim it ceases to be pluralist and both state and Church are lost."<sup>16</sup> As I understand it, Pope Benedict has a twofold answer to this dilemma. In the first place, the State, without ceasing to be pluralist and tolerant of other views, can recognize as a historical fact that its basic framework of values is derived from biblical revelation, mediated to it by the Church. In so doing, he says, the State simply acknowledges its historical situation, the ground from which it cannot divorce itself without falsification. While the risk of theocracy must be resisted, that risk is not grave in most secular democracies today. The State therefore may allow public symbols such as the Bible and the Cross to be displayed to prevent the eradication of the transcendent from the consciousness of the citizens. Because the State needs public symbols of what sustains it, it may also recognize feast days and holy days as pointers to the transcendent. To this extent, Ratzinger concludes, a nonconfessional State can allow Christianity to appear publicly in its domain.<sup>17</sup>

The present Pope's second avenue of escape between the horns of the dilemma is to distinguish between the State and the society, meaning the civic community.<sup>18</sup> Some years ago, John Courtney Murray pointed out that although there is a separation of Church and State in the United States, there is no such separation between religion and society.<sup>19</sup> From the origins of the nation there has been a broad consensus regarding cer-

15. See RATZINGER, TURNING POINT, *supra* note 13, at 140-41.

16. See RATZINGER, ECUMENISM, *supra* note 7, at 218-19.

17. See *id.* at 219-20.

18. This seems to be implied in Ratzinger's *Letter to Marcello Pera*, in JOSEPH RATZINGER AND MARCELLO PERA, WITHOUT ROOTS: THE WEST, RELATIVISM, CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM 107-35 (Basic Books 2006) [hereinafter WITHOUT ROOTS].

19. The distinction between State and society was fundamental to the thinking of John Courtney Murray. See JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY, RELIGIOUS LIBERTY: CATHOLIC STRUGGLES WITH PLURALISM 144-45 *passim* (J. Leon Hooper ed., Westminster/John Knox 1993).

tain moral and religious principles; for example, that the universal moral law is the foundation of society; that the legal order of society (the State) is subject to judgment by a law that is inherent in human nature; that the nation in all its aspects is under God. Conscious that the American consensus was threatened even in his day, Murray defended it for the benefits it had brought to the nation and to the Catholic Church herself.

While recognizing that the State in a pluralistic society cannot profess a given religion, Ratzinger maintains that members of the society can and should allow their religious convictions to be manifest in their speech and conduct. When it comes to legislation, he says, believers should avoid trying to impose laws that can only be recognized and enacted within the faith.<sup>20</sup> But they can allow their own reason to be instructed by revelation and strive to bring their fellow-citizens to see what they see. They know well that the only weapon they have to shape public opinion is the soundness of the arguments they are able to adduce. In developing a strictly philosophical ethics they will strive to keep it in harmony with the ethics of faith.<sup>21</sup>

As an example, Ratzinger proposes the question whether it may be permissible to abort an embryo that cannot be empirically demonstrated to be a human person. The legislator, without pretending to resolve the question of fact, should be aware that to permit the killing of the embryo is in effect to deny what may well be the right of the embryo to life. The ethical principle that innocent human life is sacred and inviolable is better preserved by treating the embryo from the first moment of its existence as having human and personal life.<sup>22</sup> Similar questions arise in many areas of bioethics. If the laws allow for procedures that Christian believers hold to be unjust, they should at least grant the right to conscientious objection, so that the faithful are not compelled to go against their moral convictions.

#### CIVIL RELIGION?

In a letter of 2005 to Marcello Pera, Cardinal Ratzinger took up at some length the question of civil religion. Following Alexis de Tocqueville, he describes the American civil religion as an unstated and implicit system of rules giving a certain spiritual foundation to the democracy. It originally functioned, Ratzinger observes, because of the Protestant-inspired combination of religious and moral convictions in

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20. See RATZINGER AND PERA, *WITHOUT ROOTS*, *supra* note 18, at 129 (referencing *Letter to Pera*).

21. See *id.* at 130-31.

22. See *id.* at 132. Benedict XVI is here commenting on the Instruction *Donum vitae* issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on February 22, 1987, which states that the magisterium has not expressly committed itself to an affirmation of a philosophical nature regarding the presence of personal life, but teaches that from the moment of conception the zygote must be treated as a person; text in *Origins* 16 (Mar. 19, 1987): 697, 699-711, at 701.

American society. This basic religious and moral orientation went beyond the single denominations and created the conditions for a shared, common freedom.<sup>23</sup> The American civil religion therefore arose from the fact that American society was built in great part by religious groups fleeing from the State-dominated religious establishments of Europe.

The separation of Church and State in the American system allows religion to be itself. Even if, juridically speaking, religion is private, it has a powerful presence on the public stage. In America, unlike Europe, most cultural institutions, such as universities and artistic organizations, are private. In his letter to Pera, Ratzinger muses over the question whether it might be possible for Europe to enjoy a kind of generalized Christian civil religion comparable to that which de Tocqueville found in the United States.

Cardinal Ratzinger's views on civil religion appear also in a lecture of 1992 given on his reception into the Institut de France. There he takes from de Tocqueville the principle that a free society cannot long survive without a citizenry committed to moral principles and values. He situates the public mission of Christian Churches in the world at this precise point. "It is conformable to the nature of the Church," he writes:

[T]o be separated from the State and for its faith to be unable to be imposed by the State, but for it to rest on the contrary on freely acquired convictions. . . . The Church must be not a State or a part of a State, but a community of conviction. She must also understand herself as responsible for the whole and as being unable to limit herself to herself. It pertains to her own freedom to be able to speak at the interior of liberty of the liberty of all, so that the moral forces of history may remain forces of the present and so that this evidence of values may revive, without which collective liberty is not possible.<sup>24</sup>

The first task of the Church, for Pope Benedict, is to be the Church, looking to God for grace and salvation. The more the Church focuses on social and political goals, the more she fails. We have here, he says, a purely empirical proof of the truth of Jesus' saying, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all the rest will be given you."<sup>25</sup> The identity of the Church is based on her mission to make God known and proclaim his Kingdom.<sup>26</sup>

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23. See RATZINGER AND PERA, WITHOUT ROOTS, *supra* note 18, at 108-09 (referencing *Letter to Pera*).

24. JOSEPH RATZINGER, VALEURS POUR UN TEMPS DE CRISE 22 (Parole et Silence 2005), translated in JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER, VALUES IN A TIME OF UPHEAVAL 52 (Ignatius Press 2006).

25. See *Matthew* 6:33 (Revised Standard).

26. See RATZINGER, TURNING POINT, *supra* note 13, at 174-75.

## "DEUS CARITAS EST"

In his Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict discusses the mission of the Church under the three traditional headings of ministries of the word (*kerygma*), the ministry of worship (*leitourgia*) and the ministry of service (*diakonia*). The third of these, *diakonia*, involves members of the Church in acting for the benefit of others, including those who are not Catholics or even Christians.

The action proper to the Church, according to the Encyclical, is charity—that is to say, the practice of disinterested love. This ministry of love, he says, is an *opus proprium* of the Church. Required of the Church by her very nature, the ministry of charity has been practiced from the very beginning, no less than the ministries of word and sacrament (32).<sup>27</sup> Not only are individuals in the Church bound to act charitably, but the Church herself needs to have charitable organizations.

To clarify the nature of Christian charity, the Pope discusses three characteristics. In the first place, charity is concrete. Responding directly to immediate needs and specific situations, the Church feeds the hungry, clothes the naked and performs the other services mentioned by Jesus in his parable of the Last Judgment (31a). Second, charity must be free of partisan strategies and ideological programs. An example of unacceptable ideology would be the Marxian strategy known as the program of impoverishment on the theory that to ameliorate the condition of the poor in a capitalist society would delay the necessary revolt of the masses (31b). Third, those who practice charity in the Church's name should never seek to impose the faith of the Church upon the beneficiaries. Christian witness is of course desirable, but in some cases, the Pope believes, charitable action is the most effective witness to Christ (31c).

In identifying the ministry of *diakonia* with charity, Pope Benedict is consciously and deliberately distinguishing it from justice. The Church, to be sure, cannot stand on the sidelines in the struggle for human rights and justice. In her ministry of word and sacrament, she must strive to form the consciences of the faithful so that they will have the moral strength and wisdom to fashion better social and legal structures. But it would be a mistake, Pope Benedict believes, for the Church to embroil herself in the battle to ascertain how justice can be achieved here and now, or how to go about making society more just (28). This is a political task that cannot be the Church's immediate responsibility. She can and must teach the authentic requirements of justice in society, but she would be going beyond her mission if she were to engage in making this teaching prevail in political life.

At this point, Pope Benedict makes a sharp distinction between clergy and laity. "The proximate duty to work for a just ordering of human soci-

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27. Numbers in parentheses in the text refer to paragraph numbers in BENE-  
DICT XVI, ENCYCLICAL LETTER *DEUS CARITAS EST* (2005).

ety," he declares, "pertains to the lay faithful."<sup>28</sup> The Pope here picks up on a distinction he had previously made as Cardinal Prefect of the CDF. In the second Instruction on Liberation Theology (1986) he wrote: "It is not for the pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political construction and organization of social life. This task forms part of the vocation of the laity acting on their own initiative with their fellow-citizens."<sup>29</sup>

To summarize the Pope's thinking on this matter, one may say that the direct and proper mission of the Church is to promote the faith and love that lead directly to salvation. The ordained are specifically charged with this ministry. But the ordering of social life in this world so that it conforms to the will of Christ and is oriented to his glory is also a legitimate Christian concern. The struggle for justice in the social sphere, important though it be, involves the adoption of programs that are tied to social and political judgments not given in the gospel. For the hierarchical Church to adopt particular programs on these controversial matters would divide the faithful against one another on the basis of prudential judgments that are not matters of faith. Such action by the clergy would in addition unduly restrict the freedom of the laity in using their own judgment in matters in which they have special competence by reason of their vocation, training and experience. Those who are deputed to speak in the name of the Church, therefore, will do well to avoid proclaiming contingent conclusions on the basis of their personal political judgment.

A superficial reading of the Encyclical might give the impression that the Pope is making a dichotomy between charity and justice, assigning charity to the Church and justice to the State. But a more careful reading reveals that the Encyclical endorses no separation between charity and justice. In inculcating charity, it teaches, the Church disposes people to work for justice, because injustice is always contrary to charity. Charity includes justice, even while transcending it. And the State, in providing for justice, encourages charitable organizations, which supplement its own work by taking care of persons in need of help. The State cannot provide for every need without relying on subsidiary organizations of many kinds, including some that are dedicated to works of charity (28b).

Pope Benedict in his Encyclical delineates the specific responsibilities of Church and State so as to prevent confusion between the two. The State has no mandate to preach Christian doctrine with authority, and the Church has no mandate to decide what structures of secular society are in fact conducive to justice in the world. The Church does, however, promote justice by her efforts to overcome prejudices and blindness that impair people's ethical vision (28a).

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28. BENEDICT XVI, ENCYCLICAL LETTER *DEUS CARITAS EST* ¶ 29 (2005). I have slightly modified the published translation to bring it into closer conformity with the Latin.

29. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, INSTRUCTION ON CHRISTIAN FREEDOM AND LIBERATION, *LIBERTATIS CONSCIENTIA* ¶ 80 (Vatican Polyglot Press 1986).

## POPE BENEDICT XVI'S CORRECTIVE

In many respects, Pope Benedict XVI is building on the teaching of Vatican II. According to the Council, the Church is not bound to any particular social, political or economic system (GS 42). The laity, said the Council, should not look to their pastors to give authoritative solutions to every social question, however complicated it may be. In these matters the laity should not hesitate to take on their own distinctive role.<sup>30</sup> They should always be careful to make a clear distinction between what they do in their own name as citizens, whether as individuals or in associations, and what they do in the name of the Church, under the guidance of her shepherds.<sup>31</sup>

The teaching of Pope Benedict seems to me to be in line with these utterances of Vatican II and with the teaching of John Paul II, who strove to extricate the Church from excessive involvement in partisan politics. The present Pope may also be seeking to clarify or even correct the 1971 Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. In its final statement it declared:

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.<sup>32</sup>

The same document went on to say:

The mission of preaching the gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of man even in his present existence in this world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the men of our times.<sup>33</sup>

These statements, to the best of my knowledge, never received papal approval. As unapproved Synod declarations, they have no binding authority.

Pope Benedict, as I read him, does not contradict the Synod statements I have quoted, but he would insist on adding that action on behalf of justice, to the extent that it involves political programs, is not the business of the Church as such. It belongs to the specific responsibility of the laity, who may not hold the Church responsible for their particular legislative, administrative and judicial proposals. Those who preach the gospel

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30. See PASTORAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD: GAUDIUM ET SPES ¶ 43, available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

31. See *id.* ¶ 76.

32. Synod of Bishops, Second General Assembly, *Justice in the World, in THE GOSPEL OF PEACE AND JUSTICE* 514 (Joseph Gremillion ed., Orbis Books 1976).

33. *Id.* at 521.

should not endorse concrete measures in the sociopolitical sphere as if they were matters of faith. The duality between the things of God and the things of Caesar should be preserved for the benefit of Church and State alike.

During the aftermath of Vatican II, large numbers of Catholics, including clergy and religious, turned away from properly religious activities, deeming it preferable to engage in secular service and political activism. Cardinal Ratzinger was among those who most acutely perceived the fallacies in this strategy. As Pope he will, I presume, continue to call the Church to prayer, worship, evangelization and the cultivation of personal holiness. Because charity is the measure of holiness, he will continue to promote it, but he will not confuse it with purely human schemes for social reconstruction.