

Christ the King & the Catholic State

The Political and Social Doctrine of the Church

Arnaud de Lassus points out:

In the doctrine of the Church, the social doctrine of the Church deals with the life of men in the temporal societies they constitute (from the family to the various intermediate bodies up to the State). Let us be more precise and say: it is “the application of the unchanging principles of moral theology to life in society.”¹

The social doctrine of the Church is also called “Christian Law”² inasmuch as it governs the family, the intermediate bodies and political society: Christian constitution and legislation of States, international law, and relationships between Church and State.

Is the Church really competent in political and social matters?

“In the portion of the social order coming into contact with the moral domain, the competence of the Church is indisputable to judge whether the bases of a given social organization are in conformity with the immutable order of things manifested by God through the natural law and Revelation,” said Pius XII (1876 – 1939 † 1958).³



The Institutions of the Church and of Christendom

As a rule, what are the ends of Church institutions?

Church institutions have a twofold end: a proximate end, which is the sanctification of its members, and a proper end specific to each: teaching, studies, missions, nursing...

What does “politics” mean?

According to the Social doctrine of the Church, in this domain there is a part known through **Revelation**, called **Political Theology**, e.g. the doctrine of the Social Kingship of Our Lord or the doctrine of the Two Swords. Another part can be known by **reason**; it is called **Political Philosophy**. Under this heading come the Principle of Subsidiarity, the Principle of Totality or the corporative organization of society. Both Political Theology and Political

1 - Arnaud DE LASSUS, *La Doctrine sociale de l'Église dans la crise doctrinale actuelle* [*The Social Doctrine of the Church in the Present Doctrinal Crisis*], Action Familiale et Scolaire, 31, rue Rennequin, 75017 Paris, nouvelle édition – December 2002, pp. 12-13, quoting Jean MADIRAN, *Une nouvelle dynastie* [*A New Dynasty*], *Itinéraires* No. 304, juin 1986.

2 - Arnaud DE LASSUS, *ibid.*, p. 50.

3 - Arnaud DE LASSUS, *ibid.*, p. 29, quoting PIUS XII's radio message of 1st June, 1941 for the 50th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*.

Philosophy belong to **Ethics** and must be distinguished from **Political Science** or **Political Sociology**, which is a “**Science.**” Fr. Meinvielle calls it Political Technique or even Political Prudence. ⁴

What are man’s ends?

According to St Thomas Aquinas:

The end towards which created things are directed by God is twofold: one which exceeds all proportion and faculty of created nature; and this end is life eternal, that consists in seeing God which is above the nature of every creature [...]. The other end, however, is proportionate to created nature, to which end a created being can attain according to the power of its nature.

What are the ends of the State?

Man and society are inseparable, since man was created as a “social” being. Consequently society also has a twofold end: the temporal Common Good or Common Welfare (the “perfectly good life,” *totum bene vivere*), the temporal common good of any society, because this former is divine, comes from God and leads to God”. Certainly, it is economical and material, but also includes the intellectual and moral good”. ⁵ This is so true that, in *Sapientiae Christianae*, Leo XIII (1810 – 1878 † 1903) observes:

If, then, a political government strives after external advantages only, and the achievement of a cultured and prosperous life; if, in administering public affairs, it is wont to put God aside, and show no solicitude for the upholding of moral law, it deflects woefully from its right course and from the injunctions of nature; nor should it be accounted as a society or a community of men, but only as the deceitful imitation or appearance of a society.

Let us nevertheless specify that the first end of the State belongs to the temporal order and that its secondary end, which belongs to the spiritual order, is merely “accidental”, since grace is not required by nature. The end of the State is not intrinsically supernatural. This is why, for his part, Arnaud Jaÿr explains that Christian political institutions have an “intrinsic finality”: the common good and an extrinsic finality: to lead the multitude to bliss by the establishment of Christendom. ⁶ This relates to what we wrote above about the “proximate end” (particular mission) and the “proper end” (sanctification) of institutions of the Church.

It is also worthy of notice that the supernatural end of the State, which is accidental to it, must be compared to the fact that man, created according to nature, was raised by God to the supernatural order, which is also, as it were, “accidental” to him. ⁷

Do a Catholic State and a Christian Monarchy have different ends?

The ends are the same for any State, whether Catholic or not, for “a non-Catholic State is defective (or imperfect) State”, as Dom Bernard Rulleau points out. However, we can say that if usually, in pagan States, the supernatural aspect is either rejected, neglected or misguided, such is not the case, as a rule, either in a State that claims to be Catholic, or with a Catholic monarch, whose responsibilities the Church can confirm and which it specifies on the occasion of his coronation.

1 - *Summa Theologica*, I a, q. 23, quoted by Arnaud DE LASSUS, lecture given at our General Chapter on July 26th, 2009, p. 2.

2 - Fr. Julio MEINVIELLE, *Conception catholique de la Politique [A Catholic Conception of Politics]*, translated by Fr. François KNITTEL, éditions Iris, pp. 30 et 32.

3 - Arnaud JAYR, *Action politique et action sociale : que faire quand nos possibilités d’agir sont limitées*, [*Political Action and Social Action: What to Do When our Means are Limited*], article in *Action Familiale et Scolaire* newsletter (A.F.S.) No. 196, pp. 38-39.

4 - Cardinal GASPARRI, *Catéchisme catholique pour adultes [Catholic Catechism for Adults]*, Chabeuil, 1959, pp. 66-67, quoting St PAUL and several Popes.

The great theologian of the Political Doctrine of the Church at the time of the Wars of Religion and of the Council of Trent, Jean Boucher (1548 † 1644) acknowledges that the State has a specific end, which is to provide the “good life” with a view to the Common Good. But he stresses its last or ultimate end, which is to help people to reach eternal life. And he underlines this all the more because Protestants, Gallicans and the “Politics” (basically a political party disregarding the institutional necessity for the French King to be a Catholic) were “diffusing error in people’s mind by limiting the end of the State to its sole first end,” *i.e.* of the natural or material order. ⁸

What does St Thomas say about the supernatural end of the State?

In his *De Regno*, St Thomas Aquinas confirms the supernatural end of the State:

Hence, since the end of our present virtuous life is heavenly bliss, it therefore belongs to the king’s duty to provide what is fitting for the attainment of heavenly bliss, *i.e.* that he stipulates the things that lead to heavenly bliss and, inasmuch as possible, forbids what is opposed to them. ⁹

And he adds that “political science should be ordained to mankind’s supreme end, *i.e.* the quest and conquest of supreme beatitude”. ¹⁰

Does not this imply a submission of the State to the Magisterium of the Church?

Indeed. St Thomas says it: “What is the way, which leads to true beatitude, and what are the obstacles to it, this is known by the divine law, which is to be taught by the priest, according to this word of Malachi: ‘For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is *the angel* of the Lord of hosts.’ ” ¹¹



Christ the King

Does not all this correspond with the doctrine of the Social Kingship of Our Lord?

Jesus is King “by **nature** and by **conquest**”, says St Louis de Montfort. By His divine nature, as God the Creator, Christ is King of creation, and, by His human nature – by His Incarnation – He is also King of the universe as man. Moreover, in the supernatural order of grace, He is King by conquest as the Redeemer. This is why He must reign over men and society, and over the whole universe, in the **natural** order as well as in the **supernatural** order. ¹²

5 - Michel DEFAYE, *Jean Boucher, fondateur de la Ligue catholique parisienne* [Jean Boucher, the Founder of the Parisian Catholic League], in *Civitas*, magazine No. 32, June 2009.

6 - Translation, notes and annex in French by Rev. Fr. Bernard RULLEAU, published by Civitas in 2010. Fr. Julio MEINVILLE, *ibid.*, p. 34, also quotes this passage from the *De Regno*, I, 16 No. 823-824.

7 - Msgr. Henri DELASSUS, *La Mission posthume de sainte Jeanne d'Arc et le Règne social de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* [St Joan of Arc's Long-lived Mission and the Social Reign of Our Lord Jesus Christ], 1983 new edition by Éditions Sainte Jeanne d'Arc, les Guillots, 18260 Villegenon, p. 185.

8 - *Ibid.*, MI, 2, 7.

9 - St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, *True Devotion*, 38. Cf. our Rule I, 1. As Msgr. Ignacio BARREIRO CARAMBULA indicates, in his beautiful article *Christ the King within History, or after the Second Coming? Meaning of a subtle change in emphasis*, *Catholica* journal, summer 2009, p. 38: “though the doctrine of the kingship of Christ is relatively missing from the official teachings, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* indicates it again in its n. 2105, as a truth of the faith”, and page 45: “Although the doctrine of the Church did not change, as can be checked in the *Code of Canon Law* and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, its doctrine is adversely affected by the changes introduced in the liturgical reforms of PAUL VI”. These comments are all the more interesting since the Conciliar Church has emptied this doctrine from its content; it considers that the Kingship of Christ is to come only at the end of the world and not down here on earth. This is exemplified by the feast of Christ the King being moved to the end of the Liturgical Year, *i.e.*

But did not Christ say: “My kingdom is not of this world”?

He certainly did. It is not “of” this world means that it does not draw its origin from it, yet this Kingship is exercised “in” this world. ¹³

For instance, He came to remind Charles VII, through St Joan of Arc, and Louis XIV, through St Margaret Mary, of this. The king is merely the “Lieutenant” of Christ “, who is King of France, as He is likewise of other nations. The king of Portugal, for instance, acknowledged himself as Christ’s Lieutenant in 1646. ¹⁴ Hence, as we have already emphasized and as Fr. Rulleau points out: “We have to speak of a **political** Kingship”.

But, does not the origin of these institutions belong to the natural order?

Obviously enough, most of these institutions have natural roots. Such is the case with trade guilds or the monarchy, but in the countries of Christendom, Holy Mother Church Christianized them and conferred upon them a superadded aspect. This could go from the celebration of the patron saint of a guild to the Christian character of a professional oath, up to the sacramental of the coronation, thus transforming natural institutions into institutions of the Church or of Christendom.

Is not the natural order, created by God, self-sufficient?

It should be, but for two exceptions. On the one hand, reason, wounded together with nature by original sin, is no longer able to reach its end without the help of grace. ¹⁵ On the other hand, if, in the natural order, reason ought to have been able to reach the certitude of God’s existence and even the authenticity of Catholicism, reason cannot give Faith. The former belongs to the natural order and the latter to the supernatural order. Reason alone, supposing that it had not been wounded by original sin, could not turn an honest man into a believer.

The Catholic State

In the end, what is a Catholic State?

The Catholic State has been described by Pope Leo XIII in the Encyclical *Immortale Dei*, to which could certainly be added Encyclical *Quas Primas* by Pope Pius XI on the Kingship of Christ over nations.

A Catholic State is a State in which the temporal power is *united* with the Catholic spiritual power, while remaining *distinct* from the latter. The temporal power is *autonomous* in its own sphere, but nevertheless remains *subordinated* to the spiritual power. There is a link between the two: both work together for the glory of God and the good of the Christian people. ¹⁶

What are the characteristics of the Catholic State?

We number three characteristics.

at the end of the world (Doomsday). This is in full accordance with Paul VI’s promotion of the Secular State in our world: Christ must not reign on earth, He will reign in Heaven.

10 - Dom Bernard RULLEAU, O.S.B., op. cit., pp. 2-3. Page 3, the author emphasizes the fact that this kingship is not only spiritual, but also temporal.

11 - “The Christian King is lieutenant of Jesus Christ and no more,” according to Jean BOUCHER, quoted by Michel DEFAYE in the above mentioned article.

12 - This is what seems to have been forgotten in Fr. CELIER’s book *Le dieu mortel* [*The Mortal God*].

13 - Pierre MARTIN, *L’État catholique* [*The Catholic State*], Civitas, p. 3.

What is the 1st characteristic of the Catholic State?

First, a Catholic State is a State, which **professes the Catholic religion publicly**, *i.e.* it does not only acknowledge the origin of power, ¹⁷ and the end of men's lives on earth, but also worship Our Lord publicly [...], by stating that the only true religion in which God must be honoured is the Catholic religion. The Catholic State is careful to grant a prominent place to Christ and His Church in the political and social order – this can possibly done in a written Constitution or by a Concordat – in homage to the truth, in an official and exclusive manner as it was done in France under the Old Regime. ¹⁸

Supremacy is granted because Catholicism is the “State’s Religion”

For instance, a Catholic State must give a place of honour to the crucifix in schools, universities, civil service offices, tribunals, railway stations, harbours, and airports. On the occasion of great feasts, the head of State must attend religious ceremonies publicly.



What is the 2nd characteristic of the Catholic State?

Next, a Catholic State is a State whose **legislation is in conformity with natural and Christian law**. The Catholic State not only recognizes the existence of a natural moral law recalled by the Church [...] to which it must submit and which it must enforce in civil legislation for the common good of the citizens [...], but moreover, it acknowledges that the Church in its constant Magisterium is the sole guardian and sole authentic interpreter [...]. This precision is important: it implies that the Civil Code must always follow the Code of Canon Law, never be in contradiction with it, but, on the contrary, be inspired by it. To guarantee this second point, the Catholic State must, on the one hand, insert a reference to the Ten Commandments in the Constitution [...] and, on the other hand, recognized a civil effect to the sacraments, to marriage, for instance. ¹⁹

What is the 3rd characteristic of the Catholic State?

Lastly, a Catholic State is a State which **fosters the growth of the Catholic religion** and lends its support to the Church when it needs it, granting her not only freedom in its mission of preaching – development of its seminaries, charity, schools and hospitals in particular – but also its protection against enemies both from outside and inside the Church. ²⁰

At the same time, the State forbids or contains as much as possible the circulation of false notions and religions according to a certain “**tolerance**,” if justice and political prudence requires it for the common good as a “**lesser evil**.” The control of mass media is part of this, which means no “freedom of the press.”

What are the last Catholic States today?

Under pressure from Rome, various countries of South America, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and some Swiss cantons suppressed the statute of State religion formerly granted to Catholicism. As of

14 - “For there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God.” (Rm 13:1).

15 - Pierre MARTIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

16 - *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, quoting PIUS XII, *Address to the Sacred College and the Episcopate*, November 2nd, 1954, and St Thomas AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 122, art. 1.

17 - *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, in the footnotes: “Within the Church, the fight against Her enemies – freemasonry, from which the mask should be ‘torn away’ – ; and outside the Church, the help and support to the Papacy and protection of Christian minorities in the East particularly; the Christian political power exercises in that case its role as ‘temporal sword’, or ‘secular arm’, which is a duty for the political power, since ‘the royal power was given not only for the governance of the world, but most of all for the protection of the Church’, as emphasized by St Innocent Ist in his letter 29 to the Episcopal Council of Carthage (quoted by Pius IX in his Encyclical *Quanta Cura*)”.

now, the last Catholic States might be: Argentina, Andorra, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Haiti, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco, Poland, Salvador, a few Swiss cantons, and the Vatican.

Does God really will States to be Catholic?

This was in a way requested by God Himself to Constantine (“*In hoc signo vinces*”) or to Clovis after his victory. This was recalled through the intermediary of Joan of Arc, who specified to Charles VII that he was only the Lieutenant of Christ, Who is the King of France; through St Margaret Mary, who asked Louis XIV that the Sacred Heart be placed on his palaces, his arms and his standards, and through Claire Ferchaud, who told President Poincaré: “Our Lord, Who so much love the French, asks them to perform an act of Faith with regards to His divine Kingship and to request from their head of State that the image of His Sacred Heart, a sign of hope and salvation, becomes officially conspicuous on our national flag.”

Is the Catholicity of the State a constant doctrine of the Church?

Protesting against article 22 of the Charter (a Constitution granted by King Louis XVIII), Pope Pius VII (1742 – 1800 † 1823) wrote in a pastoral letter to the Bishop of Boulogne on April 29th, 1814:

By the very fact that liberty is granted to all religions without distinction, we confuse truth with error and we lower the holy and immaculate Bride of Christ, the Church, out of which there can be no salvation to the rank of heretical sects and even of Jewish perfidy [...]. Our astonishment and our grief were none the lesser when we read the 23rd article of the Constitution which keeps and allows the liberty of the press, a liberty which threatens Faith and morals with the greatest perils and with inevitable ruin. ²¹

In the *Syllabus*, among the errors having reference to modern Liberalism, Pius IX (1792 – 1846 † 1878) condemned the following proposition: “In the present days it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship.”

Leo XIII wrote, in his letter *E Giunto* dated July 19, 1889, to the emperor of Brazil:

Religious liberty, considered in its relationship with society, is founded on the principle that the State, even in a Catholic nation, is not bound to profess or favour any religion. It must remain indifferent to all, and account them all equal juridically speaking.

It is not here a question of a *de facto* tolerance, which, in some given circumstances may be conceded to dissident religions, but of a real recognition, in favour of these latter, of the same rights, which belong only to the one true religion that God has established in the world and pointed out by clear and precise features and signs, so that all may recognize it as such and embrace it. Moreover, such a liberty places on an equal footing truth and error, Faith and heresy, the Church of Jesus Christ and any human institution. It establishes a lamentable and disastrous separation between human society and God, its Author. Lastly, it leads to such sad consequences as the indifferentism of the State in religious matter, or what amounts to the same thing: its atheism.

St Pius X (1835 – 1903 † 1914), in his Encyclical *Vehementer* of 1906, stated: “That the State must be separated from the Church is a thesis absolutely false, a most pernicious error.”

Pius XI (1857 – 1922 † 1939) in his Encyclical *Quas Primas* of 1925 specified: “Nations will be reminded by the annual celebration of this feast that not only private individuals but also rulers and princes are bound to give public honour and obedience to Christ.”

18 - Arnaud DE LASSUS, *Connaissance élémentaire du Libéralisme catholique* [Elementary Knowledge of Catholic Liberalism], A.F.S., op. cit., p. 10.

In his 1945 Christmas message, Pius XII added: “Experience ought to have taught to all that politics directed towards eternal realities and God’s laws are the most realistic and the most concrete of politics. Realistic politicians who think otherwise only bring ruins about.”²²

We had to wait until Vatican II turn everything upside down to the opposite thesis officially stated, thanks especially to the Personalism and Jacques Maritain’s *Integral Humanism*; the Italian edition had a preface written with passion by Archbishop Montini.

Does it mean equal protection for Truth and error?

Yes. This enabled Archbishop Pie to make this famous retort to Napoleon III on May 15th, 1846:

Perhaps the Restoration has not done more than Your Excellency. But allow me to add that neither the Restoration nor You have done for God what ought to be done, because none of you stand his throne up again. Neither of you rejected the principles of the Revolution while, nevertheless, you fight its practical consequences, because the social Gospel, from which the State takes its inspiration, is still the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which, Sire, is nothing else than the formal denial of the Rights of God.

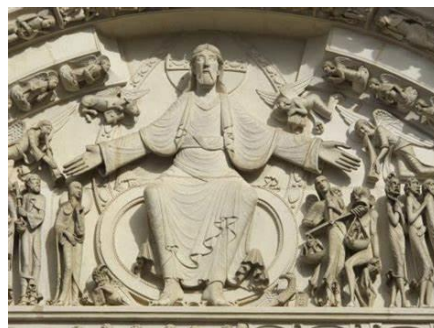
Now, it is God’s right to command to States as well as to individuals. Our Lord did not come on earth for another reason! He must reign, inspiring the laws, sanctifying morals, enlightening the teaching, guiding with His advices, regulating the action of the governments as well as of people governed. Everywhere where Christ does not exercise His Kingship, there is a disorder and decadence.

Now, I have the duty to tell You that Christ does not reign among you and that our Constitution is not, far from it, that of a Catholic and Christian State. Our public laws, true enough, establish the Catholic religion as that of the majority of the French, yet it adds that other religions are entitled to an equal protection. Is this not tantamount to claim that the Constitution protects both Truth and error? Well, Sire, do You know what Jesus Christ answers to governments guilty of such contradiction?

Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven and earth, tells them: “I too, governments which follow one another, overthrowing each other, grant you equal protection. I granted protection to the emperor, Your uncle; I granted the same protection to the Bourbon’s, the same protection to Louis Philippe, the same protection to the Republic, and to you also the same protection shall be granted.”

And he concluded:

Sire, when great statesmen, such as Your Majesty, object to me that the time has not come, I can only bow down because I am not a great statesman. But I am a bishop, and as such I answer: “The time has not come for Jesus Christ to reign? Well, then, the time has not come for governments to last.”²³



19 - Arnaud DE LASSUS, *ibid.*, p. 10.

20 - Fr. Théotime DE SAINT-JUST, O.M.C., *La Royauté sociale de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ d'après le cardinal Pie* [*The Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Cardinal Pie*], 1923, new edition jointly published by éditions de Chiré and éditions Sainte-Jeanne-d'Arc, 1988, pp. 76-79.