

## THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD'S

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AMBROSE FLECK, O.P.

*"Render therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's;  
and to God, the things that are God's."*

(Matt. 22, 21.)



IN THESE few, simple words Our Divine Lord gives the fundamental principle which should guide the relations between Church\* and State. At the same time He establishes the foundation upon which is to be built the magnificent edifice of Catholic Political Philosophy by such men as Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Robert Bellarmine and Francis of Vittoria.

The principles are that old and it is our duty, in these modern times, to apply them to concrete instances. The theses have been proved and, once again, it is up to us to make use of their very logical conclusions to solve the problems that face us. Our world has forgotten what it means to be at peace and, like reeds tossing in the wind, our people are easily swayed by the logical illogicality of those who would deny God and His Law and make the State supreme.

Those who would enslave the world conceal their true intentions behind the shibboleths of, "peace," "prosperity," "freedom for all." This, then, is the time for study, for calm deliberation and for understanding. We must study the issues that face us; with calm deliberation we must apply the truths which the Church teaches and, understanding all the difficulties, we must live for God, in the State and through the Church. Lacordaire expresses this idea in a few, pithy words: "If you wish to found durable institutions, write the word obedience above liberty; above equality write hierarchy, above fraternity, veneration and above the august symbols of rights, the divine symbols of duties."

The present serious misunderstanding of true relationships between the Church and the State contributes greatly to civic disunity.

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\* When the term *Church* is used in this article it connotes the Catholic Church, unless otherwise noted. It is the Catholic Church above all others that has fought for *libertas Ecclesiae*.

For independence and freedom from each other does not necessitate a vast void of separation between these two societies or preclude mutual cooperation. It is necessary that the Church and the State cooperate, and this is so because man is a member of both.

#### TWO PERFECT SOCIETIES

Strange as it may seem at first glance, it is possible to compare a society to the human body: they are both organisms—society a moral organism and the human body a physical organism. Just as the perfect human body contains within itself the means and functions of its life, so too, the society which is perfect contains within itself the means and functions by which its peculiar mode of life is sustained. Therefore a "perfect society" will be a moral organism which is sufficient to itself in its own order and is dependent upon no other for the attainment of its own *particular* end. Both the Catholic Church and the State meet the demands of this definition. The Church leads men to a supernatural end using supernatural means given to it by Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the State exists and functions for the temporal happiness of human beings and employs material and temporal means to attain this end. Furthermore, neither the Church nor the State is directly dependent upon the other in its own *particular* sphere of activity.

Because they are both perfect societies, the Church and the State are supreme in their own orders. However, we must remember that the end of the State is the temporal happiness of man, while it is through the guidance and the aid of the Church that man gains his absolute, ultimate end—the salvation of his soul and eternal life with God. It is apparent that the Church enjoys a certain pre-eminence over the State because its sphere of influence is that of the spiritual and supernatural which is of a higher order than the merely temporal. It is clear, then, that the Church, in its own sphere, is in no way subordinate to any State; the proximate end of the latter is concerned with the temporal goods—the earthly happiness of its citizens—while the parallel end of the former is the salvation of souls.

The question poses itself, whether there ought to exist some connection between the Church and the State. This is a question of extreme gravity—particularly in our day—for under this consideration there must be laid down the general principles upon which a true harmony between the Church and the State ought to be based. These two perfect societies must join concordantly in their common striving for the end of the whole human race—the perfection of life according to the Gospel.

## COOPERATION—NOT SEPARATION

Just as it is opposed today, mutual cooperation between the Church and the State has met with opposition for centuries from men such as Kant and Machiavelli, who see in such a unification a so-called "Papocaesarism." These violent opinions have been refuted in the Syllabus of Pope Pius IX. What is coordinated and united by divine ordination can never be separated. God is the Author of both of these societies—He has coordinated and united them. But, it must be remembered, both are ordained to one ultimate end—eternal happiness. Consequently, there should never be an absolute rift between the Church and the State.

Because man is composed of two elements, the soul and the body, the totality of his goods is made up of things temporal, which are provided by the State, and of things spiritual, which are provided by the Church. A magnificent harmony and relation exists between the human soul and body; so there must exist a harmony, for the benefit of man, between the Church and the State. These are the two great forces of our world and a concord must exist between them in order to facilitate the carrying out of their proper operations. In other words, the Church needs the help of the State, and the latter must seek the aid of the former if they are both to operate at maximum efficiency.

Without the help that the State can give it the Church will have difficulty in exercising its power. The Church is made up of living men who need temporal goods which can be best obtained through the State. Furthermore, it is an obligation of the State to protect the liberty of the Church and defend ecclesiastical laws of discipline.

On the other hand, the aid which the State receives from the Church is more necessary and of a higher order than is the help which the Church demands from the State, for the true Christian religion helps the State in many ways. This is true, first of all, because the State, through the Church, is joined to God and in this way receives the highest governing light. This is the greatest good which the State can obtain; through the Church it is brought in contact with the supernatural order.

The Church is of further aid to the State in that it has a moral doctrine for social life. This doctrine is one that is most efficacious, most firm and most noble. It orders the actions of the individual and of society to God, teaching men perfectly all their obligations toward Him, toward civil and domestic society and towards inferiors and superiors. Catholic morality is based on the bedrock of Divine Revelation and remains the same for all time because it is nothing other than

the eternal law of the Gospel. The dictates of this moral doctrine are in accord with right reason and, consequently, are most effectual.

The life, the very history of the Church, are indisputable confirmations of the many good things it has bestowed upon the State. During the first three centuries a pagan world was converted to Christianity; and in those latter centuries, called by many historians the "Dark Ages," the Church provided benefits for the people in every phase of domestic and social life. And now, in our times, the authority of the Church is scoffed at, and the result is chaos. Peace has fled from our world and will remain in hiding until there is a return to Christ and to His Church, until there is harmony between the State and the Church according to the Will of God.

#### SPHERES OF INFLUENCE OF CHURCH AND STATE

Despite their many similarities, there is a great difference between the Church and the State according to their different origins, ends and intrinsic natures. We must never forget, however, that the people as citizens and as Christian members of the Church are embraced by both the secular and the spiritual society. Yet, each of these societies has certain limitations indicated by their proximate ends and their different natures. Each of them is circumscribed as by a circle, to use the words of Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical *Immortale Dei*, inside of which each acts in accordance with its own independent rule of law.

The relation between Church and State may be more clearly visualized if we suppose two intersecting circles. The egg-shaped segment that is common to both circles is representative of the mixed matters where both societies have an interest, while the rest of each circle will fall strictly under the supreme rule of either Church or State.

Encompassed within the sphere of the Church are the Sacraments and their rightful administration by those called and ordained by legitimate authority. Within this boundary, too, fall the preaching of the Church's doctrine, the freedom of worship in accordance with that doctrine and the freedom of spiritual authorities to direct the clergy in the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline free from secular interference. The Church must be the independent mistress and the sovereign judge of her own affairs and whatever human affairs pertain in any way to this sphere are wholly subject to that sovereignty and judgment.

Because the purpose of the State—its end—is the protection and promotion of the common good, the means appropriate to the securing

of this end would necessarily fall within the sphere of influence of the State. The State's promotion of the common good may extend to the safeguarding and fostering of the individual's right to social, moral and spiritual security. Included under the common good protected by the State are the individual's right to life, liberty, property, association and reputation. All these rights exist prior to the State and its task is to protect and guarantee them, not abolish them.

With regard to the area of influence where both the Church and the State have authority to speak, such examples as education and matrimony may be cited. Thus, marriage between Catholics may be subject to two laws, canon law and civil law. A Catholic marriage is sacramental in character and is thus subject to the jurisdiction of the Church; but it also has temporal ramifications and the secular power has competence to regulate the civil effects of the contract.

The source of the indirect power of the Church in temporal matters is the superiority of the end of the Church over that of the State. Because of this superiority the Church has not only the right, but the duty to teach the State in matters of policy in so far as they concern the ultimate end of man, the salvation of souls and the glory of God. Using natural law or positive divine law as a firm basis, the Church has the power to judge what is morally right or wrong in politics. Likewise, it is the right and duty of the Church to judge concerning anything which falls within the realm of morals, determining what must be done or omitted for the salvation of souls; for Christ has ordained that the Church be our director and guide in the pursuit of eternal happiness.

#### THE IDEAL TYPE OF COOPERATION

The Catholic type of friendly cooperation between the Church and the Christian State would be epitomized in a legal agreement through concordats. Concord or unity of this type would mean mutual respect for the independence of each society in its own order. Such an ideal state of cooperation would mean the acknowledgment of canon law in matters that are clearly of a spiritual nature and financial support by the State of ecclesiastical institutions should they be unable to fulfill their functions with their own resources. It cannot be said that such a union as described here is of absolute necessity, for only in a country where the great majority of the people are Catholic could such a policy, with all its ramifications, be followed. Actually, conditions in our modern world make the separation of Church and State tolerable in the interest of the common good.

Full union between the Church and the State, exemplified in



England since the founding of the Established Church, and in the various forms of national churches in other predominantly Protestant countries, is not acceptable from the standpoint of Catholic doctrine. We must recognize the fact that any total absorption of the State by the Church or vice-versa would end in disaster for both. If the Church were to absorb the power and end of the State it would be in danger of using its spiritual power to further the political ends of the State which it has absorbed. By the same token, a State absorbing the Church would most certainly be tempted to abuse political power in the realm of religion and faith.

#### THE EVILS OF ABSOLUTE SEPARATION

The recognition of man's freedom of conscience in states without a unified religious majority, and the guarantee of governmental non-interference in the sphere of religion, has given rise to the modern concept of absolute separation of Church and State. The original intentions for such a course of action were good, but now the State has gone too far and not only abstains from any intervention in the sphere of spiritual matters, but has adopted an attitude of indifference with regard to the organized religious groups within its boundaries. As a result, two facets of man's character have been completely separated as they never should be—man as a church-member is separated from man as a citizen.

Basically, there are two types of separation of Church and State: the radical or militantly hostile type and the peaceful, friendly type. The former has been developed in countries where supernatural faith has been bluntly denied; Christian morality and the divine law are declared to be mythical conceptions, irreconcilable with modern science or with the revolution of the masses; or else they are the instruments of clerical superiority and of reactionary influence. As a result, Christian and divinely revealed law are to play no part in social and political life, but the State is to be governed entirely by the rules of science—political, social or revolutionary.

Here in the United States we find a good example of the peaceful, friendly type of separation of Church and State. While the Church is not recognized by the laws of the land as a perfect society with her own governing rules, its existence is not seriously threatened. The Church, as far as her organizational parts are concerned, is established under the civil law of the State like any other incorporated association. In such a State, it remains to the Church, therefore, only to admonish, advise and influence the faithful, and this only as far as the latter voluntarily accept such ecclesiastical admonition, advice

and solicitation. Although the laws and the Constitution of the United States of America enable the Church to live and work in beneficial security, this must not lead us to conclude that such a separation of these two societies is basically good, and should be considered an exemplification of the ideal in Church-State relations.

Some people in our country, implying that religion is an element foreign to the United States, would force an invalid type of separation of Church and State upon us. An attitude of this kind easily leads to a secularist philosophy and the result is a failure to center a country's social life in God; the consequence is a divorce of religion and morality from public affairs. A policy of indifference with regard to religious matters is dangerous because it makes fertile the idea that religion is merely a private and individual matter; that the State is above all religions; that man's right of conscience and religious liberty come from the State.

The words of Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical Letter *Immortale Dei*, in which he treats of the true relations which ought to exist between Church and State, are a most apt and authoritative summation of the proper roles of Church and State in regulating the lives of men:

There must exist between these two powers a certain orderly connection, which may be compared to the union of the soul and the body in man. The nature and scope of that connection can be determined only by having regard to the nature of each power, and by taking account of the relative excellence and nobility of their purpose. One of the two has for its proximate and chief object the well-being of this mortal life; the other the everlasting joys of heaven. Whatever, therefore, in things human is of a sacred character, whatever belongs either of its own nature or by reason of the end to which it is referred, to the salvation of souls, or to the worship of God, is subject to the power and judgment of the Church. Whatever is to be ranged under the civil and political order is rightly subject to the civil authority. Jesus Christ has Himself given command that what is Caesar's is to be rendered to Caesar and what belongs to God is to be rendered to God.